

Manual for Synod Council Training and Formation Metropolitan New York Synod

September, 2012
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Introduction

The working group on Synod Council Culture and Process was convened by Pastor Jonathan Linman, Assistant to the Bishop for Formation, with two primary goals: first, improving the efficiency of the Synod Council and thus assisting that body in overseeing synod operations, and second, making service on the Synod Council a more fulfilling experience for its individual members.

The five members of the working group—Pastor Edward Barnett, Council Vice-President Maria del Toro, council member John Malone, and Renée Wicklund, in addition to Pastor Linman—met roughly on a monthly basis from August 2010 through February 2011. Their early sessions were devoted to brainstorming, to posing the questions that would underlie their goals:

- How do Synod Council members understand their role, and what guidance are they given to perform that role?
- Are Synod Council meetings structured in a manner to accomplish necessary business in a collegial and Christ-centered atmosphere, and do they make council members *want* to participate?
- How do individual congregations, and our synod at large, view the Synod Council?

From these questions, the working group prepared a list of topics and set to work making recommendations. Working group members drew upon their own experience as current or former council members, ELCA churchwide documents, the Synod Constitution, *Robert's Rules of Order*, resources for non-profit businesses, and, of course, scripture. They collaborated in face-to-face meetings and circulated and revised drafts between meetings. At the November 2010 Synod Council retreat, the working group reported on its work and sought additional guidance from council members themselves, including member profiles.

In the end, the working group produced documents that taken together can constitute a manual for the training and formation of Synod Council members. It is our hope and prayer that this material will serve the formation of the Metropolitan New York Synod Council as a community of spiritual and missional leaders.

In Christ,

The Rev. Edward Barnett
Maria del Toro
The Rev. Jonathan Linman
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I. A. Legal Overview for Synod Council Members

The Synod Council is not just a consulting or advising group; it serves as the Board of Directors for the Metropolitan New York Synod. Based upon this status as the governing body of a large not-for-profit organization, the law imposes certain important obligations upon the conduct of Synod Council members. A full explanation of those obligations is not possible in this short space—the ELCA website, *elca.org/synodadministration*, is a good starting place for more information—but every council member should keep the following points in mind:

The Synod Council has three basic legal responsibilities:

- (1) **Governance**, or serving as the interim legislative authority to develop and approve policies and objectives when the main governing body, the Synod Assembly, is not in session;
- (2) **Care of resources**, or ensuring that the assets are appropriately assigned and do not waste away or deteriorate, and that resources are available to carry out the synod's programs; and
- (3) **Accounting to the public**, or answering to the synod and to the public at large for the use of resources in accord with the synod's charter.

Some ways in which the synod, and the Synod Council, should consider meeting its obligations are by maintaining a functioning audit committee; by requesting the bishop and treasurer to attest publicly to the soundness of the synod's records and record-keeping; by adopting and following a covenant of conduct for Synod Council members, the bishop, officers, and executive synod staff members; and by carefully scrutinizing any transaction between the synod and a party with special interests.

A Synod Council member has three basic legal obligations:

- (1) **A duty of care**, or the responsibility to perform his/her role in good faith, exercising at least as much care as a reasonably prudent person would in similar circumstances, and acting in the best interest of the synod;
- (2) **A duty of loyalty**, or the responsibility to make sure that any decisions or actions are in the best interest of the synod, instead of any individual or other party who might have different interests; and
- (3) **Fidelity of purpose**, or the responsibility to understand the purpose for which the synod exists, and to make sure that any decisions or actions he/she takes are designed to further that purpose.

Some ways in which a Synod Council member should consider meeting these obligations are by reading carefully all materials in advance of each meeting; by asking questions or requesting consultation with an authority where appropriate; by exercising caution when speaking to others about the work of the Synod Council, so as to avoid the appearance of being a spokesperson for the synod; by reading and by adhering to the synod's conflict-of-interest policy; and by understanding the synod's charter and the types of actions that further the synod's purpose.

The synod and Synod Council members may face legal claims.

On occasion, a person or organization may make a legal claim against the synod, its officers, or members of the Synod Council. Some examples of such claims include (1) a third-party claim of negligence, asserted by a party that claims to have been damaged by the failure of an officer or Synod Council member to carry out his duties properly; (2) a derivative action, asserted by a party that claims the synod's own interests were harmed by the actions of an officer or Synod Council member; or (3) a statutory claim, based on liability under laws that govern the conduct of officers and Synod Council members.

Synod Council members often ask what would happen if a claim were asserted against them, and whether they would be individually liable for damages. Although every situation is different, some protections exist for Synod Council members. The Volunteer Protection Act of 1977 relieves a volunteer from liability for claims made by a third party in certain circumstances; at a minimum, a Synod Council member must have acted reasonably and within the scope of his duties for the synod. In addition, under its constitution, the synod would usually be expected to provide legal counsel and, where appropriate, indemnification to any Synod Council member facing a claim based upon conduct that occurred in the scope of his duties.

In summary—

Remember that agreeing to become a member of the Synod Council carries important ethical and legal responsibilities. The best way to fulfill those responsibilities is to be a conscientious, active, and prepared participant in Synod Council business.

I. B. Council Member Covenant of Conduct

As members of the Metropolitan New York Synod Council,

- We will engage each other as if meeting Christ himself, being respectful of each other as children of God, created in God’s image, as well as being respectful of the offices we and others hold.
- In the instances when necessary and duly determined according to established guidelines, we will maintain confidentiality on matters deemed confidential by the Synod Council when it meets in Executive Session, and will honor clearly articulated processes and timelines for communicating Synod Council decisions.
- We will pray for each other and for the work, ministries and mission of the Metropolitan New York Synod and publicly support the decisions of the Synod Council.
- We will seek to cultivate in our discourse dimensions of the fruit of the Spirit -- “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23a, NRSV).
- We will engage our work and each other with discerning hearts and minds, focusing on the mission of the church and in keeping with the Lutheran theological tradition.
- We will have the courage to engage each other and our work, asking discerning questions, and speaking the truth in love, being respectful of *Roberts Rules* and other guides for discourse and strive to reach consensus on decisions.
- We will cultivate a climate in which all can speak and be heard.
- We will converse through the Vice President, who recognizes each speaker by name
- We will value and respect the diversity of opinion and racial, ethnic and cultural background represented in Metropolitan New York Synod.
- We will be adequately prepared for meetings, having read supporting documents thoughtfully and prayerfully and will remain engaged and focused during meetings by placing our mobile phones on vibrate and used for emergency use only.
- We will undertake the goals and mission of *For Such a Time as This: 2013-2023 Strategic Plan*, adopted by the 2012 Synod Assembly.
- We will undertake our work in keeping with constitutional provisions for the Synod Council and according to duly established visions and plans for mission, particularly those agreed upon at synod assemblies.
- We will commit to regular attendance at Synod Council meetings, arriving on time and remaining for the entirety of the meetings. Notification of absences should be made via email to the Vice President and the Secretary (preferably in advance).
- We will participate in the Synod Council’s annual retreat and attend synod events.
- We will seek to embody the interdependence we enjoy as church, building relationships with leaders, congregations and ministries of the synod through such initiatives as visits to contexts for ministry.

Signed, _____ Date: _

Printed Name: _

Please note this is your copy of the covenant. There is another copy in Appendix D for you to sign and return.

I. C. Spiritual Engagement and Devotion

Theological Rationale:

- “It is also taught among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel” (from Article VII, *Augsburg Confession*). Church happens—in congregational, synodical and churchwide settings—whenever the Holy Spirit gathers the faithful around word and sacraments, the means of grace. In this light, church most certainly also occurs when the Synod Council gathers for its meetings, when our work is centered on the means of grace.
- To be meaningfully gathered around the means of grace sets the stage for faithful and effective undertaking of synodical business, keeping God’s people focused on the central things of faith for our discernment of what God would have us do in mission and ministry in the world.
- To be gathered around the means of grace gives us the Holy Spirit’s energy to do the work God has given us to do, and keeps us rooted in good news when otherwise we might be weighed down by the troubles of church and world.
- Thus, these principles and suggestions as guides for preparing occasions for Synod Council spiritual engagement and devotion.

Guiding Principles:

- Opportunities for spiritual and devotional engagement at Synod Council meetings focus on prayerful engagement with God’s word in Scripture and regular remembrance of baptism and the celebration of Holy Communion.
- It is desirable that such occasions make use of the wide array of liturgical resources available in our church.
- However, spiritual and devotional engagement need not follow liturgical orders of service. Opportunities abound in giving expression to a wide variety of devotional and spiritual practices, especially those that reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of our synod.
- In planning for these occasions, we honor and make regular use of the calendar of festivals, lesser festivals and commemorations found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)*, that we may learn more about the witness to the faith of church leaders throughout the centuries and be edified by our participation in the communion of saints.
- It is also desirable to use resources that lift up in prayer various ministries and missional themes on a calendar rotation, that a wide array of congregational, synodical and churchwide ministries get our devotional attention.
- Spiritual and devotional engagement at Synod Council is integral to our proceedings and should not be seen merely as a formality to begin and end meetings. That is to say, such engagement is best integrated organically into the whole agenda of a Synod Council meeting.
- While such engagement is integral, though, it is important to balance agenda time and attention in relation to other matters before Synod Council, that all matters be given their due.
- It is desirable that every member of Synod Council have occasion to share in leading the

council in devotional and spiritual exercise, balancing especially lay and clergy leadership, and following a calendar of devotional leadership on which council members sign up.

- The Assistant to the Bishop for Formation is available to Synod Council members for consultation concerning devotions and worship planning, also providing templates and other resources for services and spiritual practices.
- Occasions for spiritual and devotional engagement at best result in building community and deepening levels of trust as well as giving opportunity for conversation toward bearing witness to the hope that is in us.
- Synod Council-related devotional practice need not be limited to Synod Council meetings. That is to say, it is desirable that members of Synod Council regularly pray for each other and the congregations, ministries and leaders in our synod. To engage in such prayer is a role expectation of all Synod Council members.
- It is likewise desirable that prayer be undertaken prior to difficult decisions on the part of the Synod Council, that our work is cradled by petition that God's will be done.

Practical Suggestions and Possible Activities:

- Keep it simple, but meaningful and experiential.
- These occasions may be 10 to 15 minutes long; celebration of the Holy Communion takes longer, but typically not longer than 30 minutes.
- Evening prayer can begin evening meetings.
- Night prayer may conclude evening meetings.
- For all-day meetings, morning prayer or Holy Communion can begin the meeting, with occasion for mid-day prayer at lunch time.
- If Synod Council meetings fall on festivals or lesser festivals specified in the calendar found in ELW, the Holy Eucharist is celebrated.
- Other ideas for spiritual engagement and devotion:
 - Brief Bible studies
 - Occasions for *lectio divina* (sacred reading) or “Dwelling with the Word,” that is, opportunities for Synod Council members to testify to the meanings of particular biblical passages in their lives
 - Occasions for mutual conversation and consolation among Synod Council members
 - Brief hymn sings
 - Occasions for silent, contemplative prayer
 - Occasions for prayer throughout meetings, seeking the Spirit's guidance for discernment and decision-making
- Synod Council members may join together in teams (for example, of lay and clergy members) to plan and lead these occasions.
- Again, the Assistant to the Bishop for Formation is available to give guidance and to provide resources.

II. A. Synod Council Member Profile and Directory

The purpose of the directory and the member profile is to deepen our knowledge of each other and thus contribute to the nurturing of Christian community within the Synod Council. A profile to be filled out is available in Appendix E. The most current directory will be available under a separate cover.

II. B. Clarifications of Roles

Synod Council

The constitution describes the Synod Council as: “**the board of directors** of this synod and shall serve as its **interim legislative authority** between meetings of the Synod Assembly. It may make decisions which are not in conflict with actions taken by the Synod Assembly or which are not precluded by provisions of this constitution or the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.” (†S10.02).

Its top three functions are to “a. Exercise **trusteeship** responsibilities on behalf of the synod. b. **Recommend program goals and budgets** to the regular meetings of the Synod Assembly. c. Carry out the resolutions of the Synod Assembly.” (†S10.03). In the recommendation of program goals and budgets there is implied a function of long range planning and visioning.

The Synod Council meets regularly. The constitution stipulates at least three meetings annually (S10.07.01).

There is provision for voting by mail and electronic means. This is necessitated by the council fiduciary responsibilities largely regarding real property transactions (S10.02.01).

Members of the Synod Council

Members of the Council act as baptized Christians, active in their congregations, and called to serve the church as a member. This involves, first and foremost, the spiritual commitment to Christ and the church. Secondly, it involves practical and legal responsibilities. The constitution deals with the seriousness of these commitments only by provision regarding regular attendance. “Any member of the Synod Council who is absent from four (4) successive regularly scheduled meetings of the Council or whose overall attendance is less than 50% in a twelve (12) month period shall have their office at once declared vacant and a replacement shall be provided in accordance with S10.03.f” (S10.06.01).

Bishop

The office with the most clearly delineated job description in the synod structure is that of the Synod Bishop. The Synod Bishop is first of all a minister of word and sacrament. The Synod Bishop relates to synod assembly, council, Executive Committee, committees, the ministerium and other rostered lay leaders, related ministries, other churches (especially full communion partners), Conference of Bishops, The Lutheran World Federation, as well as the Churchwide Assembly. He/she is the chief minister of discipline. He/she fulfills all of these tasks as part of his/her pastoral ministry in the wider church. According to the Synod Constitution the Synod Bishop is charged to “ensure that the constitution and bylaws of the synod and of the churchwide organization are duly observed within this synod, and that the actions of the synod in conformity therewith are carried into effect...” (†S8.12.i).

Secondarily, the Synod Bishop is the “president of the synod corporation and be the chief executive and administrative officer of this synod.” (†S8.12.i). Although he/she can be seen as the principal word and sacrament minister over all of the congregations within the synod, the constitution describes his/her work also as one of governing the administration of the synod apparatus.

The Synod Bishop is thus both its spiritual shepherd as well as its chief executive officer. The Bishop’s interaction/leadership with/of the Synod Council is primarily his/her preparation of the agendas for meetings of the Executive Committee and council, his/her report to the council and then participation in deliberations. This means that as a minister to word and sacrament he/she has God’s authority to oversee the council, but simultaneously, as the CEO, to carry out the decisions of the Synod Council and the assembly. The Synod Bishop is pastor to the rostered leaders, congregations, and ministries of our synod.

Vice President

The Vice President chairs the Synod Council meeting. As Chair of the Council, the Vice President is responsible to see that it functions at the highest possible level. He/She is responsible to make sure that all voices are heard, that conversation and deliberation are fully facilitated, and persons are held accountable to their duties in keeping with the synod council covenant of conduct (page 5 and Appendix D).

Secretary

The Secretary keeps the records, minutes and official documents. The Secretary has knowledge of such documents, laws, rules and procedures.

Treasurer

The Treasurer reports to the Synod Council and Synod Assembly, working in cooperation with the Bishop, the Vice President and the Secretary. He/she is the Chief Financial Officer of the Synod and in that role is a member of the Synod Council, the Executive Committee and the Financial Management Committee.

The Treasurer has no discrete operating functions but is responsible for supervising the following: (1) the management of the synod’s accounting operations, (2) the investment of synod’s funds with the authorization of the Synod Council, (3) the receipt, acknowledgement and record keeping of contributions to the synod, and (4) the rendering at each regular Synod Assembly meeting of an audited report of the synod’s books of account.

The Treasurer provides this review and supervision by working closely with the bishop, the Assistant to the Bishop for Administration and other members of synod staff and committee members as required. He/she actively participates in the preparation of the synod’s budgets and plans.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee consists of the four officers and four others elected from the Synod Council. These four other positions are elected annually. The Constitution states that the Executive Committee will “a. Confer with the bishop on matters to come before the Synod Council; and b. Review items to come before the Synod Council with the purpose of facilitating deliberation and action in the Council meetings.” (S11.01.01).

Strategic Plan

At the time of this writing (September 2012), *For Such a Time as This: 2013-2023 Strategic Plan* is under development. As we move forward into implementation, other committees will be formed in line with the mission of the plan. A copy of the strategic plan is found in Appendix A.

II. C. Position Descriptions for Assistants to the Bishop

Senior Assistant to the Bishop

The Senior Assistant to the Bishop ensures the Bishop has the administrative and resource support needed to successfully fulfill the role and responsibilities of the position, and provides the critical communications and coordination link between the Bishop and synod staff, pastors, other rostered leaders, churchwide representatives, synod leaders, congregational leaders, community and agency leaders. Provides support to the Executive Committee and the Synod Council and works collaboratively with the Steering Committee in the implementation of the strategic plan.

Assistant to the Bishop for Congregations

Assists congregations in all phases of the call process. Works with pastors and other rostered leaders in the mobility process, provides oversight for interim pastors, provides leadership training events for congregations through the use of tools such as Healthy Congregations and acts as the bishop's liaison with the deans.

Assistant to the Bishop for Faith and Leadership Formation

As pastor and teaching theologian of the church, assists in the implementation of faith formation initiatives, the Five Years of God's Creative Grace emphasis and the synod coordinator for the 2017 commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. Shares in administrative oversight of the following synodical ministries: campus ministry; candidacy; Children, Youth and Family Ministry Network; Diakonia Program; First Call Theological Education; Fund for Leaders; Lutheran Schools Association; synodical deacons; and the Trexler Grant Program. Plans, coordinates and leads experiential and educational events for constituents of the synod as well as occasions for spiritual direction and formation. Responsible for synodical retreats and the synod office chapel, ministerium meetings and continuing education and wellness initiatives for rostered leaders.

Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission / Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM)

Responsible for the development and coordination of synodical missional strategy including the development and support of new starts, renewing congregations, ethnic ministries, and ministries among people living in poverty. Responsible for the support of stewardship and mission support ministries. Works in partnership with synodical, regional and other churchwide staff.

Assistant to the Bishop for Global & Multicultural Mission

Responsible for the development and coordination of multicultural mission. Acts as the synod's liaison with the Multicultural Commission and relates and assists ethnic specific communities. Works in collaboration with the assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission (ethnic ministries). Serves as staff liaison with the Global Mission Commission with specific responsibilities of the Tanzania Companion Synod Committee.

Assistant to the Bishop for Finance and Administration

Responsible for coordinating all financial, legal and administrative concerns for the synod including financial management, office management, human resources management, management

information systems, and management of property owned by the synod. Provides advice and counsel to congregations of the synod when requested on financial, tax and payroll matters.

Assistant to the Bishop for Communications & Events

The Assistant to the Bishop for Communications & Events is responsible for sharing the message and work of the synod strategic plan internally to leaders and members of congregations, and externally to the people of Metropolitan New York. The position ensures all avenues of communications are consistent with the ELCA principles and brand. Works collaboratively with the Bishop, Senior Assistant and consultant to develop and execute external communications and public relations. Coordinates and oversees all aspects of the annual synod assembly and major synod events.

II. D. The Role of the Assistants to the Bishop at Synod Council Meetings

The Assistants to the Bishop play a vital role in the day to day operations of the synod as well as providing valuable information for Synod Council deliberations and votes. Also of importance, the Assistants to the Bishop should be aware of information, the thoughts of the Synod Council, and decisions of the council in order to be better prepared to exercise their functions.

However, as Assistants to the Bishop have no constitutional authority, it is important to clearly identify their role and responsibilities in relation to the Synod Council and, specifically, to Synod Council meetings.

Therefore, in an effort to clarify the function and conduct related to the Assistants to the Bishops at Synod Council meetings, the following will be observed at council meetings:

- 1) Assistants to the Bishop will be normally present at Synod Council meetings.
- 2) Seating – The Assistants to the Bishop will sit apart from the Synod Council table and, whenever possible, be given a table of their own.
- 3) Identification – The tent cards used for identification of Assistants to the Bishop will be a different color than the voting members of the Synod Council.
- 4) Participation – The Assistants to the Bishop will be allowed to participate in Synod Council Meeting discussions when, a) they are called upon by the Chair, and, b) when asked to be recognized by the Chair as having information pertinent and helpful to the voting members' deliberation.
- 5) Reporting – Assistants to the Bishop will report on a quarterly basis with an oral report to be given annually. These oral reports will be staggered on a rotation.

III. A. TIPS FOR USING ROBERT’S RULES OF ORDER

The Synod Council is the board of the synod. The most productive Synod Council meetings, as in the case of any board meeting, are those that allow an open yet controlled discussion in a relaxed atmosphere. When deciding on important issues, many synod councils conduct their meetings using *Robert’s Rules of Order*. The following are a few of the key rules for discussion:

- 1) Before an issue can be discussed, a Synod Council member must call for a motion.
- 2) Discussion comes after the motion is seconded and before any vote.
- 3) Motions are amended by insertion, addition, striking out, or substitution.
- 4) A motion may have only two amendments and the second must apply to the first.
- 5) The chairperson should always restate the motion and any amendments.
- 6) A Synod Council member who senses that discussion is complete may ask, “Are you ready for the question?”
- 7) A motion postponed indefinitely is dead, at least until the next meeting.
- 8) Debate may be limited by general consent, e.g., “If no one objects, we will limit debate to five more minutes.” Overriding an objection requires a two-thirds vote.
- 9) A motion to recess for a specific amount of time is not debatable and may be useful for cooling debate or caucusing in order to decide the best way to proceed.
- 10) The chairperson should announce the results of a vote and the effect of the decision. For example, “The ayes have it and the bill will be paid.”

The procedure for debate

- always is confined to the pending motion,
- may be started by the person who made the motion,
- requires recognition of the speaker by the chairperson,
- is directed to the chairperson,
- gives all a chance to speak before any person speaks twice, and
- prohibits the motion-maker from speaking against the motion

III. B. Organization of the Agenda

I. Agenda.

- A. Order of discussion. All old business should be handled before the scheduled items on the agenda. This prevents the continued tabling of old business simply because the council is too exhausted to continue discussion, and prioritizes situations that have been waiting longer for resolution.
- B. Subject introductions. Each item of old or new business should be introduced with a one-minute synopsis from a member of the Executive Committee. The synopsis should include such items as the history of the site/situation; previous Synod Council discussion on the matter, and the result thereof; and any recommendation offered by the Executive Committee, and the rationale for that recommendation. These synopses should also be provided in written form in the materials circulated for each meeting.
- C. Questions. A brief period should be offered following each subject introduction for questions about the history of the topic or applicable by-laws. This time shall not be given to discussion of the issues unless all questions have been answered.
- D. Open discussion. The agenda should reserve a block of time before new business for an open discussion on the topic of *doing* ministry, i.e., the synod's mission and purpose, and how the synod is meeting (or failing to meet) that purpose. The Vice-President shall endeavor (to the extent practicable) to solicit discussion from a wide variety of council members, and to ensure that the conversation is not dominated by the same few voices at each meeting. Open discussion should end with, as appropriate, follow-up assignments from the vice-president, or an opportunity for council members to volunteer for additional involvement.
- E. The Vice-President's summary. The Vice-President should open the business portion of the meeting with a summary of actions previously taken, assignments made, timelines for completion, and (where appropriate) indications of progress.
- F. The Synod Bishop's report. The bishop should be encouraged, in his/her report, to distinguish and highlight specific action items regarding any new business at hand for the council, and to address progress regarding any items of old business.
- G. Report from around the synod. Council members may be encouraged to report briefly on activities within their own conferences or within the synod.

II. Process.

- A. Time frames. Each agenda item should have a suggested time frame. The Vice-President should call the question one minute prior to the time limit, and if no vote is to be taken, should table the issue with appropriate assignments for follow-up.

- B. Courtesy in discussion. Council members should refrain from speaking to an issue more than once until any member who wishes to be heard has had the opportunity. If no one wishes to speak except those who have already spoken, the Vice-President may pause to inquire whether anyone has questions or needs additional information before recognizing anyone to speak a second time.
 - C. Pausing for closed discussion. When it appears that additional discussion on an agenda item may no longer be fruitful, the Vice-President should enjoy the option of calling for a three-minute break for council members to discuss amongst themselves, in the hope that sub-discussions and thought time can bring the group as a whole closer to agreement.
 - D. Preparation. Materials for each meeting are emailed to council members at least a week before the meeting (with Executive Committee meetings scheduled to accommodate this). Council members are expected to review all materials in advance. The materials will be printed and waiting for members when they arrive at the meeting.
- III. Scheduling of meetings.
- A. Saturday meetings. At least three Saturday meetings should be held during the year, without canceling monthly mid-week meetings. The Saturday meetings should specify both a beginning time and an end time, in order to temper expectations and to assist council members in planning. Saturday meetings should preferably be “retreat style,” with worship and additional opportunity for open discussion.
 - B. Presentations. Presentations from around the synod are welcome and encouraged but should be scheduled for Saturday meetings, and with a specific time limit given to the presenter in advance.

III. C. Observer Process

The Idea, Process, and Rationale:

- Occasions for taking a step back to see the bigger picture of our Synod Council life together are crucial to Synod Council formation and development. The observer process provides a way of consistently seeing that bigger picture.
- Members of Synod Council will take turns on rotation observing our work and the quality of our life together at meetings, taking notes on a template form that articulates areas of focus for observation and makes for simplicity and consistency of reporting.
- At the meeting's end before adjournment, the observer would normally briefly summarize his/her observations, speaking the truth in love. Conversation may ensue.
- Observations would give cues for further efforts at council formation and training, areas needing improvement.
- These notes would be kept on file for use, for example, by those responsible for Synod Council formation/board development.
- Compiled notes would also serve a means for assessing progress of Synod Council formation and development.
- Occasionally it could be salutary to invite observers who are not members of Synod Council (e.g., teaching theologians, churchwide staff members, other leaders in Metropolitan New York Synod).

Areas for Observation (to be included on a template report form):

- Did we attend thoughtfully to each agenda item before us, giving appropriate weight to each such that the broad spectrum of synodical ministries and mission was reviewed, and giving evidence that council members are well prepared for the meeting?
- Did we undertake our work effectively in terms of and in keeping with constitutional provisions for Synod Council, and according to our agreed upon vision for our synod and missional plans?
- Was our work undertaken in keeping with decisions of Synod Assemblies?
- How effectively did we do our work in terms of rules governing our discourse, for example, *Roberts Rules of Order*?
- Did we engage each other according to our covenant of conduct?
- Was the tone of discourse respectful and in keeping with dimensions of the fruit of the Spirit -- "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23a)?
- Did all have a chance to speak and to be heard? Did some members dominate conversation?
- Was insensitivity evident in terms of racism, sexism, classism and other forms of discrimination? Did we embody cultural competence in our engagement with each other?
- Was our discourse theologically sound and rooted in our Lutheran, confessional theological tradition?
- Was our discourse focused on the mission of the church?
- Did the meeting give evidence of being experientially grounded in the means of grace?
- Was there evidence of the movement of the Holy Spirit?
- In the end, was it clear in terms of action items, who does what, when, how and why?

- Did discourse reflect and honor the diversity of opinion and background represented on the Synod Council as a body?
- As Synod Council is a body that engages in communal discernment, was discourse discerning of the Holy Spirit's creative work amongst us?

The form to aid in this process is found in Appendix C.

Appendix A: For Such a Time as This: 2013-2023 Strategic Plan

Metropolitan New York Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 2013 – 2023 Strategic Plan

Mission Statement

Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered and sent for the sake of the world.

Vision Statement

CLAIMED: by God's grace for the sake of the world, we are a new creation through God's living Word by the power of the Holy Spirit;

GATHERED: by God's grace for the sake of the world, we will live among God's faithful people, hear God's Word and share Christ's supper;

SENT: by God's grace for the sake of the world, we will proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, serve all people following the example of our Lord Jesus and strive for justice and peace in the world.

Key Strategies

Claimed

The objective of the Claimed Strategy is to help people grow in their faith through interaction and engagement with the Lutheran tradition.

The three areas of focus will be:

- Communication – share a clear, concise, compelling message of the Lutheran identity through a variety of methods and media
- Connection – provide a variety of opportunities for individuals and families to participate in the network of Lutheran ministries
- Commitment – challenge people to grow deeper in their faith through the development of new and renewed initiatives

The Synod Council Executive Committee will commission a Claimed Strategy Committee to develop this strategy and make recommendations back to the Synod Council Executive Committee.

Gathered

The objective of the Gathered Strategy is to ensure that Word and Sacrament ministry is provided in the metropolitan New York area.

The three areas of focus will be:

- Locations – determine the congregations and church facilities needed to meet the objective of this strategy
- Leadership – recruit, equip and support pastors and lay leaders to execute this strategy
- Ministries – develop new and renewed ministries to enhance this strategy

The Synod Council Executive Committee will commission a Gathered Strategy Committee to develop this strategy and make recommendations back to the Synod Council Executive Committee.

Sent

The objective of the Sent Strategy is to network congregations, ministries and leaders to proclaim the Gospel while responding to specific societal needs and issues.

The three areas of focus will be:

- Services – develop and deliver programs in our communities that help people in words and deeds
- Partnerships – determine organizations and ministries to support
- Advocacy – speak on specific justice and peace issues

The Synod Council Executive Committee will commission a Sent Strategy Committee to develop this strategy and make recommendations back to the Synod Council Executive Committee.

Strategy Enablers

Unity & Diversity

As on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13), the Holy Spirit still empowers God's diverse people to be together and to understand each other, and share in proclaiming God's deeds of power with a united voice in a diverse world. To help us so to preach the Gospel, the Metropolitan New York Synod will nurture racial, ethnic and cultural awareness and sensitivity in the hearts, minds, souls and behavior of all of God's people in our synod and synodical programs, policies and procedures.

Finance

The bishop will continue to appoint a Financial Management Committee. The Synod Council is responsible for the allocation and stewardship of assets. Using this direction, the Financial Management Committee will:

- Manage assets from all sources
- Develop a budget with a priority on enabling key strategies
- Allocate 100% of the net proceeds from the sales of synod owned property to the Synod Restricted Funds to support the key strategies as directed by the Synod Council.

Leadership

- The current constitutional governance system of Synod Assembly, Synod Council, Executive Committee, Conferences and Deans remains in place.
- The Synod Council Executive Committee is charged to direct and coordinate the key strategies. The Executive Committee receives input from the Conferences and Deans and reports to the Synod Council, which reports to the Synod Assembly.
- Other committees of the Synod Council include:
 - Claimed Strategy Committee
 - Gathered Strategy Committee
 - Sent Strategy Committee
 - Financial Management Committee
- The bishop will be charged with execution of the key strategies and working with the Synod Council Executive Committee. Other synod staff positions will be created, filled, developed, and evaluated based on the key strategies.
- Synod offices, technology, and other support will be evaluated based on the key strategies

Financial Development

The Synod Council will establish a financial development plan to secure resources for key strategies.

Appendix B: Considering the Work of the Synod Council

This is a sample of the form that is used from time to time to evaluate the work of the council.

I. How long have you been a member of the Synod Council? (years) _

How intentional are you about your participation in the work of the Synod Council?

Very Moderately Not intentional

II. Would it be possible for you to be more active than you are now?

Yes No

Is there anything preventing you from being more active? Yes No If so, what?

Do you see your involvement on the Synod Council:

Increasing in the near future

Staying the same as now

Decreasing in the near future

III. To what extent do you know other council members?

Know all Know many Know few

IV. On a scale of 1 [Low] to 5 [High], how effective was your orientation to the council when you became a member?

1 2 3 4 5 Had no Orientation

V. Please rate the Vice-President's leadership with respect to the following:

	[low]				[high]
Conducting Effective Meetings	1	2	3	4	5
Delegation	1	2	3	4	5
Establishing Objectives	1	2	3	4	5
Achieving Objectives	1	2	3	4	5
Presenting Reports	1	2	3	4	5

What changes do you feel could improve the effectiveness of the Vice-President?

VI. One of your roles as a Synod Council member is to advocate for the work and mission of the synod externally and internally. Please rate how well you meet this expectation:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exceed Expectations | <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally Meet Expectations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meet Expectations | <input type="checkbox"/> Unaware of Expectations |

VII. Please check ALL boxes below that describe your synod involvement (committee or task force):

- I am on at least one committee
- I attend most meetings
- My committee is clear about function
- The staff working with the committee understands their role
- The staff working with the committee needs training
- I understand the importance of committee work
- I do not understand the need for committees
- I chair a committee
- I participate in _____

VIII. Do you experience any concern regarding the Synod Council, committee or task force meeting frequency or schedule?

- Yes
- No

Comments: _____

IX. What is your perception of the skills and attitude of synod staff/Assistants to the Bishop as they perform their work with the Synod Council?

- Work extremely well with Council
- Work well with Council
- Do not work well with Council

Please explain: _____

X. On a scale of 1 [low] to 5 [high], how strongly do you think that the Synod Council is committed to stewardship?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Comments: _____

On a scale of 1 [low] to 5 [high], how strongly are you committed to your own personal stewardship?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Comments: _____

XI. What one thing, as a Synod Council member, that you believe would **most** improve the Synod Council?

XII. What methods do you see as useful for cultivating prospects for Synod Council membership?

Appendix C:
Synod Council Meeting Observer's Guide + Metropolitan New York Synod

Please offer your observations concerning the following areas, describing your experience of the meeting (rather than offering critical analysis):

Describe the ways in which you felt God was present during the meeting. To what extent did the meeting agenda serve the mission to which God has called for such a time as this?

Do you have the sense that Council members were engaged and well prepared for the meeting?

Describe the extent to which we undertook our work in keeping with: our Lutheran tradition, constitutional and legal provisions for the Synod Council, Synod Assembly actions, Roberts Rules of order, and our strategic plan.

Did we engage each other according to our covenant of conduct? For example, was the tone of conversation respectful and did it reflect dimensions of the fruit of the Spirit -- "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 4:22-23a)? Did all have a chance to speak and to be heard? Did some members dominate conversation?

To what extent did our deliberations reflect and honor the diversity of opinion and background represented on the Synod Council as a body, giving evidence of sensitivity to and awareness of our racial and ethnic diversity?

In the end, were actions items clear in terms of who does what, when, how and why?

Appendix D: Council Member Covenant of Conduct

As members of the Metropolitan New York Synod Council,

- We will engage each other as if meeting Christ himself, being respectful of each other as children of God, created in God’s image, as well as being respectful of the offices we and others hold.
- In the instances when necessary and duly determined according to established guidelines, we will maintain confidentiality on matters deemed confidential by the Synod Council when it meets in Executive Session, and will honor clearly articulated processes and timelines for communicating Synod Council decisions.
- We will pray for each other and for the work, ministries and mission of the Metropolitan New York Synod and publicly support the decisions of the Synod Council.
- We will seek to cultivate in our discourse dimensions of the fruit of the Spirit -- “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23a, NRSV).
- We will engage our work and each other with discerning hearts and minds, focusing on the mission of the church and in keeping with the Lutheran theological tradition.
- We will have the courage to engage each other and our work, asking discerning questions, and speaking the truth in love, being respectful of *Roberts Rules* and other guides for discourse and strive to reach consensus on decisions.
- We will cultivate a climate in which all can speak and be heard.
- We will converse through the Vice President, who recognizes each speaker by name
- We will value and respect the diversity of opinion and racial, ethnic and cultural background represented in Metropolitan New York Synod.
- We will be adequately prepared for meetings, having read supporting documents thoughtfully and prayerfully and will remain engaged and focused during meetings by placing our mobile phones on vibrate and used for emergency use only.
- We will undertake the goals and mission of *For Such a Time as This: 2013-2023 Strategic Plan*, adopted by the 2012 Synod Assembly.
- We will undertake our work in keeping with constitutional provisions for the Synod Council and according to duly established visions and plans for mission, particularly those agreed upon at synod assemblies.
- We will commit to regular attendance at Synod Council meetings, arriving on time and remaining for the entirety of the meetings. Notification of absences should be made via email to the Vice President and the Secretary (preferably in advance).
- We will participate in the Synod Council’s annual retreat and attend synod events.
- We will seek to embody the interdependence we enjoy as church, building relationships with leaders, congregations and ministries of the synod through such initiatives as visits to contexts for ministry.

Signed, _____ Date: _

Printed Name: _

Appendix E: Synod Council Member Profile

Name _____ Spouse / Partner _

Home Address _

City, State Zip _

Home Phone _____

Church_

Employer _____ Type of Business _

Title _____

Address _____

City, State Zip _

Work Phone (____) _____ Fax (____) _____

E-Mail _____

Preferred mailing address (check one): Home Business

HISTORY OF CHURCH INVOLVEMENT AND FAITH LIFE

Please describe your religious background, highlights of your faith experience and how God has been active in your life, as well as church involvement, including any leadership positions

CAREER SUMMARY

Employer	Position Held	Dates

EDUCATION

High School or University	Degree Earned	Field of Study	Date

BUSINESS / PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Organization	Position Held	Term

CIVIC / PHILANTHROPIC AFFILIATIONS

Organization	Position Held	Term

AWARDS / HONORARY DEGREES / OTHER HONORS

SPECIAL INTERESTS, SKILLS, TALENTS, ETC. (Explain how they would assist you in your work in the Synod Council)
