



# 2023 HANDBOOK

Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly

May 16-18, 2023

El Paso, Texas

El Paso Convention Center

# THE ASSEMBLY: CRUZANDO FRONTERAS

“CROSSING BORDERS” THIS ASSEMBLY IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMMERSE OURSELVES IN THE LANDSCAPE, THE CULTURE, THE PEOPLE, AND THE MINISTRIES OF THE BORDERLANDS.

## WHAT TO BRING

- Passport (necessary for crossing back in the U.S. after visiting Ciudad Juarez)
- ID and Insurance Card
- Completed Health Form ([PDF](#))
- Phone, tablet, or computer for accessing documents and voting (we will have a voting station available for those who do not have their own device)
- Water bottle (please stay hydrated!)
- Hat, sunglasses, sunblock, and lip balm
- Comfortable clothing
- Cash for gifts/souvenirs – a Mercado featuring local vendors is located in the El Paso Room
- Offerings – cash, checks, and QR code
- Gift cards for Refugee Ministries (Walmart, Target, Albertson’s, Sam’s Club)
- Bag/Tote for assembly materials and snacks
- Physical Donations for Refugees (new items only – see the Packing List below for more details)

[Border Immersion Pre-Arrival Preparation Guide](#)

[Rocky Mountain Synod Border Immersion Day - Packing List](#)

[Health History Form](#)

[Glossary of Terms related to Migration](#)

## MERCADO

The Assembly Mercado is an opportunity to enjoy and purchase the work of local artisans.

The Mercado is located in the Convention Center, El Paso Room and the hours of operation are:

Tuesday, May 16 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. and 5:15 - 8:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 17 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 18 8:00 – 10:30 a.m.

# SCHEDULE

## Tuesday, May 16

- 2:00 p.m. Registration Opens – Convention Center, Mt. Franklin Lobby  
Exhibit Set-up – Hall A  
Mercado Set-up – El Paso Room
- 2:30-3:30 p.m. Choir Rehearsal – Hall A
- 3:30 p.m. Matachines (native dancers) -- Mt. Franklin Lobby
- 4:00 p.m. Welcome to El Paso! – Hall A  
Opening Worship
- 5:00 p.m. Dinner – Del Norte Lobby, Hall A  
Business Dinner – Del Norte Lobby, Juarez Room
- 6:30 p.m. Opening of the Assembly/Reports/Business – Hall A

## Wednesday, May 17

- 6:30-8:00 a.m. Breakfast – Convention Center, Del Norte Lobby, Hall A
- 8:00 a.m. Bible Study & Morning Prayer
- 9:00 a.m. Keynote
- 10:30 a.m.–3:00 p.m. Immersions – various sites  
Convention Center Immersion – Juarez Room
- 4:30 p.m. Immersion Panel (legal presentation + Q&A) – Hall A
- 5:30 p.m. Reception – Hall A
- 6:00 p.m. Evening Fiesta Dinner  
Ordination Anniversary Celebration
- 7:30 p.m. Evening Prayer

## Thursday, May 18

- 6:30-8:00 a.m. Breakfast – Convention Center, Del Norte Lobby, Hall A
- 8:00 a.m. Bible Study & Morning Prayer
- 8:30 a.m. Assembly Reports/Business
- 9:45 a.m. Choir Rehearsal at Sacred Heart
- 11:00 a.m. Closing Worship at Sacred Heart  
602 S. Oregon Street  
El Paso, TX 79901

## OFFERINGS

All Assembly Offerings will benefit the ministries of Cristo Rey, Milagro Frontera, Border Servant Corps, and their partners in ministry.

Cash, check, and online donations are all welcome – Thank you for your generosity! Scan the QR, select “Border Ministry Offering” from the Tithely menu and enter your information.

Never scanned a QR code? Aim your phone camera at the code and tap on the screen.



## ASSEMBLY GUESTS



Rev. Dr. David Vásquez-Levy serves as President of Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California –a progressive, multid denominational seminary and center for social justice that prepares theologically and spiritually rooted leaders to work for the well-being of all.

A committed pastor, a nationally recognized higher education and immigration leader, and a sought-after speaker, Vásquez-Levy leads at the intersection of faith, higher education, and social change.

## ASSEMBLY GUESTS (continued)



For the past 40 years, Ruben Garcia has served as the Director of the Annunciation House, an organization that works with people on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border to help people immigrate or determine their next steps after deportation. [Read more>](#)



The Rev. Dr. Philip C. Hirsch is working to bring about the revitalization of ELCA congregations in the United States by recruiting, training, and supporting leaders. He has a passion for the Gospel of Jesus Christ and for helping new people find faith and Christian community. He believes the church can and will grow younger and more diverse and that there is nothing more powerful than God's love because it can transform first the human heart and then the world.

## VOTING MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Study the pre-assembly materials.
2. Attend all sessions of the assembly.
3. Participate in all legislative actions. Vote. If the issue is not clear, ask the chair for clarification.
4. Share the information and actions of the assembly with your congregation! Teach your congregation what you learned, and help your congregation to know about their work of ministry beyond your local parish

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following information will assist each voting member in the discharge of responsibility. Some material is taken from the Constitution and Bylaws of the Rocky Mountain Synod and will be identified by the symbol: “RMSC.”

## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The church was constituted on January 1, 1988 from the previous church bodies of The American Lutheran Church, Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and Lutheran Church in America. Spanning the United States and the Caribbean, the ELCA consists of 65 synods. The Rocky Mountain Synod is one of five synods in Region 2.

## ELCA Regions

The ELCA is divided into nine regions, which are points of connection and ministry for each of the synods in the various regions. Regions work together, especially in terms of the call process for rostered leaders.

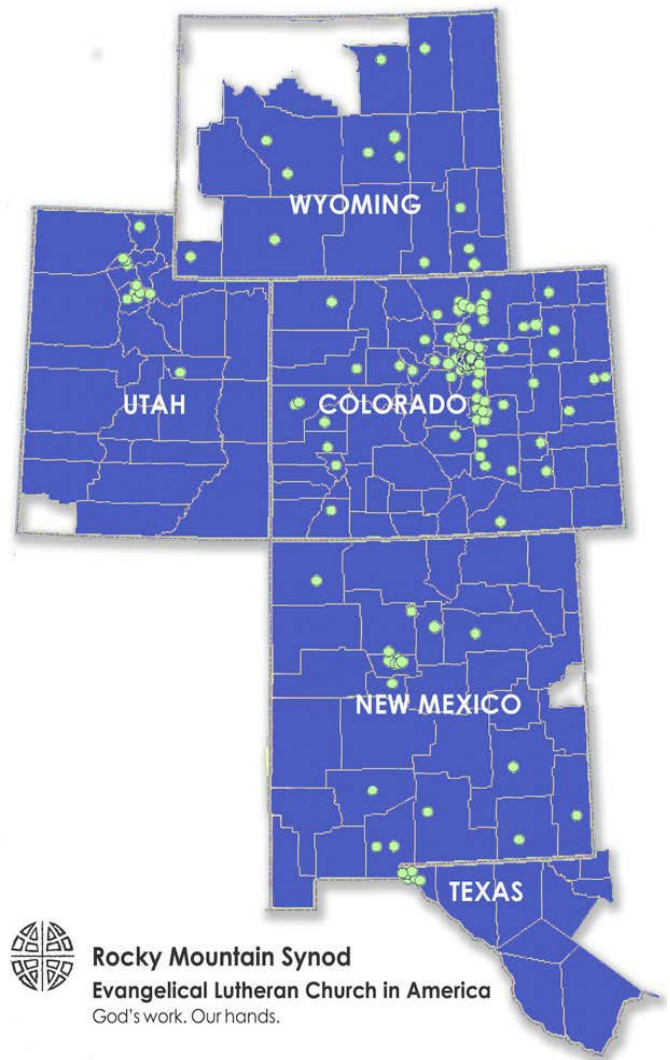
## The Synod

The Rocky Mountain Synod is comprised of 159 congregations. The territory of the Rocky Mountain Synod is the states of COLORADO; NEW MEXICO, excluding Curry county; UTAH excluding Washington county; WYOMING, excluding the counties of Big Horn, Lincoln, Park, Sheridan, Teton, and Washakie; and including in TEXAS only the counties of Brewster, Culberson, El Paso, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Loving, Presidio, Reeves, Ward, and Winkler.

## Purpose of the Synod

To participate in God's mission, this synod as a part of the church shall:

1. Proclaim God's saving Gospel of justification by grace for Christ's sake through faith alone, according to the apostolic witness in the Holy Scripture, preserving and transmitting the Gospel faithfully to future generations.
2. Carry out Christ's Great Commission by reaching out to all people to bring them to faith in Christ and by doing all ministry with a global



- awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier of all.
3. Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, standing with the poor and powerless, and committing itself to their needs.
  4. Worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.
  5. Nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.
  6. Manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives. (RMSC S6.02)

### **Synod Council Functions**

- Be the Board of Directors of the synod and serve as its interim legislative authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly.
- Exercise trusteeship responsibilities on behalf of the synod.
- Recommend program goals and budgets to the regular meetings of the Synod Assembly.
- Carry out the resolutions of the Synod Assembly.
- Provide for an annual review of the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament (Pastor) and Ministers of Word and Service (Deacon) and make a report to the Synod Assembly of the actions in this regard.
- Issue letters of call to pastors and deacons who are serving in specialized ministry, as authorized by Chapter 7 of the constitution and bylaws of the ELCA.
- Promote the interests of the ELCA.
- Provide oversight and coordinate the work of the Boards, Commissions, Committees and all other synodical entities.
- Determine the time and place for each Synod Assembly and oversee the agenda and program.
- Elect the representatives of the synod, who are to serve, in addition to the bishop, ex-officio, on the governing bodies of institutions and agencies to which this synod relates.
- Elect the representatives to the Regional Council. (RMSC S10.03.0)

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

## ELCA TERMS

**1517 Media** • 1517 Media is a nonprofit corporation that provides pastors, educators, worship planners and members of the ELCA with products and services that communicate the Gospel, enhance faith and enrich the life of the Christian community from a Lutheran perspective.

**Conference of Bishops** • The 65 bishops of the ELCA meeting for prayer, deliberation, and discernment.

**Church Council** • The governing board of the ELCA, entrusted with the business of the ELCA between triennial churchwide assemblies.

**Churchwide** • Term referring to any ministry, process, or emphasis carried out across the entire ELCA. The term is also used to refer to the headquarters of the ELCA in Chicago, Illinois, which is housed in the ELCA Lutheran Center near O'Hare airport.

**ELCA** • Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Denominational title), formed by the 1988 merger of the American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC). The three expressions of this church body are the congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization headquartered in Chicago. The ELCA has approximately 3.14 million members in 8,894 congregations (2020 statistics)

**Full Communion** • A relationship between Christian denominations in which each fully accepts the validity of the other's ministry and sacraments.

**Full Communion Partners** • In the ELCA this term refers to those denominations with which we enjoy full-communion relationships: Episcopal Church USA, United Methodist Church USA, Moravian, Presbyterian Church USA, Reformed, and United Church of Christ.

**Portico** • Portico, a nonprofit corporation based in Minnesota, provides retirement, health and related benefits and services to enhance the well-being of nearly 50,000 pastors, deacons, employees and their families. The vision of Portico is for those they serve to lead healthy lives and achieve financial security.

**Presiding Bishop** • The pastor elected by the churchwide assembly to lead the ministry of the entire ELCA; currently serving is Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton.

**Region 2** • One of 9 regions of the ELCA and includes 5 synods.



## SYNOD TERMS

**Bishop** • The pastor elected by the Synod Assembly to lead a synod of the ELCA; currently serving the RMS is Bishop James Gonia.

**Conference** • A geographical grouping of congregations within the synod. Ten in the RMS: Wyoming, Utah, North Colorado, Boulder-Broomfield, Metro East, Metro West, Metro South, Southeast Colorado, North New Mexico, and Border.



**DEM** • Director for Evangelical Mission who is called by churchwide to serve in the Rocky Mountain Synod; currently serving the RMS is Pastor Dana Peterson.  
**Executive Committee** • Four officers and four at-large members of the Synod Council.  
**Office of the Bishop** • Located in Denver, Colorado, where the bishop and staff facilitate our ministry together. The Office of the Bishop is on the campus of the **RMS Lutheran Center** at 7375 Samuel Drive, Denver, CO 80221.  
**RMS** • Rocky Mountain Synod  
**Synod** • In the ELCA, one of 65 geographical units or expressions of the church.  
**Synod Council** • The elected leaders of a synod, including laity and clergy, the vice president, secretary, treasurer, and bishop.

## **LEADERSHIP TERMS**

**Candidacy** • The process by which those discerning a call to ministry are supported and guided through the process of Entrance, Endorsement, and Approval as they prepare for ministry vocations as rostered ministers.  
**Deacon** • A rostered minister called and ordained to the ministry of Word and Service.  
**Dean** • A rostered minister chosen to lead one of the conferences within a synod.  
**Interim** • A rostered minister who is serving a ministry between two called persons.  
**Intern** • A candidate for ministry who is on staff of a ministry as part of their candidacy process.  
**Lay Person** • A person who is not ordained.  
**Officers** • The officers of the synod are the Bishop, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.  
**On Leave From Call** • rostered pastors and deacons who are currently without a call to a ministry.  
**Pastor** • A rostered minister called and ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament.  
**Roster, Rostered** • The Roster is the official list of all the pastors and deacons in the ELCA. A leader who appears on this list is said to be “rostered.”  
**Transition Ministry** • The process of matching the gifts of rostered leaders with a new ministry opportunity.

## **RELATED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

**Seminary** • The theological educational institutions that train rostered ministers and ministry professionals in the ELCA. There are 9 Lutheran Seminaries in the US.  
**PLTS** • Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (Berkeley, CA) is the Seminary in the territory of Region 2  
**CLU** • California Lutheran University is the one ELCA university in Region 2, one of 27 ELCA Colleges and Universities nationwide.  
**Wartburg West** • Wartburg College is a college of the ELCA in Waverly, Iowa, with the Wartburg West Urban Semester located for more than 30 years in Denver, Colorado.

## **ASSEMBLY TERMS**

**Memorial** • A document which is considered by the voting members of a Synod Assembly, asking the Churchwide Assembly to take a position or initiate an action related to a specific issue.  
Memorials are adopted, or they fail.  
**Plenary** • A full session of all voting members in which business is conducted and reports are heard.  
**Reference and Counsel** • This committee reviews all resolutions and memorials prior to their consideration at an assembly.  
**Resolution** • Requests for actions, priorities, or positions are brought before the assembly in the form of a resolution. Resolutions are adopted, or they fail.  
**Visitor** • Any person who attends an assembly to observe, not as a voting member.

**Voting Member** • At an assembly of this church, an individual elected to listen, discern, and decide on behalf of the whole church. (The term, “delegate” is not used in relation to assemblies.)

## **RULES OF PROCEDURE**

1. To the extent consistent with these rules of procedure, Robert's Rules of Order latest edition shall govern.
2. The voting members of the assembly shall include:
  - A. A minimum of one lay member elected by each congregation with fewer than 175 baptized members and a minimum of two lay members elected by each congregation with 175 or more baptized members, normally one of whom shall be male and one of whom shall be female.
  - B. In addition, based upon baptized membership records for the previous year
    - (1) Congregations having membership of 650 to 1,199 baptized members shall be allowed one additional lay voting member (male or female).
    - (2) Congregations having membership of 1,200 or more baptized members shall be allowed two additional lay voting members (one male and one female).
  - C. In the selection of voting members, congregations are urged to be aware of the matter of inclusiveness of persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English.
  - D. All ordained ministers under call on the roster of the Rocky Mountain Synod.
  - E. All ordained ministers from church bodies with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established...shall have voice and vote during the period of the ordained ministers' service in a congregation of this synod.
  - F. Ten percent of the retired pastors on the roster of the Rocky Mountain Synod as well as ten percent of the retired deacons.
  - G. All retired pastors on the roster of this synod who are currently serving as interim pastors and all pastors on leave from call on the roster of this synod who are currently serving as interim pastors and who are in attendance at the assembly.
  - H. All deacons under call or on leave from call, of the official Word and Service roster of this synod shall be voting members.
  - I. The lay officers of the synod and the lay members of the Synod Council shall be voting members.
  - J. Retired rostered ministers on the roster of this synod other than those selected to represent the ten percent representation (see F above), shall have the privilege of voice but not vote at all meetings of the Synod Assembly. The Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and such other official representatives of this church as may be designated by the Church Council shall also have voice

but not vote in meetings of the Synod Assembly. Ordained clergy on other denominational rosters with whom

there is no full communion partnership who are serving in shared ELCA ministries in the Rocky Mountain Synod shall have voice but not vote in meetings of the Synod Assembly. Like privileges shall be accorded to those additional persons whom the Synod Assembly shall from time to time designate.

3. Privilege of the Floor

- A. The Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and such other official representatives of this church as may be designated by the Church Council shall also have voice but not vote in meetings of the Synod Assembly.
  - B. Ordained clergy on other denominational rosters serving in shared ELCA ministries in the Rocky Mountain Synod shall have voice but not vote in meetings of the Synod Assembly.
  - C. Like privileges shall be accorded to those additional persons whom the Synod Assembly shall from time to time designate. Like privileges shall be accorded to persons in connection with their reports, such as chairpersons of synodical committees, representatives of the institutions and agencies related to or officially recognized by this synod and the president of the Synodical Women's Organization of the ELCA.
4. The Chairperson of the Synod Assembly shall be the Bishop of the Rocky Mountain Synod.
  5. The Secretary of the Synod Assembly shall be the secretary of the Rocky Mountain Synod.
  6. The bishop, in consultation with the Synod Council, shall appoint a Committee on Reference and Counsel to review all proposed changes or additions to the Constitution and bylaws and other items submitted which are not germane to items contained in the stated agenda of the Synod Assembly
  7. Other committees to serve the Synod Assembly shall be appointed by the bishop.
  8. With the consent of the Assembly, the chairperson shall have the authority to call items of business before the Assembly in whatever order he or she considers most expedient for the conduct of the Assembly's business
  9. In the elections to be held at this Assembly, a majority of votes cast shall be necessary for election.
  10. Candidates nominated from the floor may complete the standard Application for Nomination form. A biography abstracted from the Application can be distributed. No other documents from the candidates will be permitted to be distributed. Due to the shortened nature of this assembly, nominees from the floor must have Nomination form ready to submit immediately upon nomination.
  11. Any proposal to appropriate funds, whether by amendment to the budget or otherwise, which is presented to a meeting of the Synod Assembly without the approval of the Synod Council, shall require a two-thirds vote of the assembly for adoption. (RMSC S7.32.14)
  12. Speeches during debate on any items before this assembly shall be limited to three minutes.

# GUIDELINES FOR THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

The assembly is meant to be a meaningful experience for all. Everyone should feel free to participate. Good order at an assembly is not intended to restrict participation but to protect the rights of each voting member. The following guidelines (from Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised) are to help in understanding the business proceedings. The Bishop hopes they will be of assistance in enabling you to participate in the necessary business.

**Obtaining the Floor** - Prior to a voting member speaking in the assembly, whether to make a motion or to engage in debate, it is necessary to obtain the floor. When no one else "has the floor," the voting member may address the chairperson saying, "Bishop Gonia." If recognized by the chair, the voting member is then entitled to speak, first stating his/her name and congregation.

**Making a Motion** - When presenting a motion to the assembly, a copy must be written out and given to the secretary.

**Amendments to Motions** - When a motion brought before an assembly does not meet with ready acceptance by all the voting members, and if it can be made more suitable or acceptable in an altered form, a proposal to modify the wording can be introduced by making a motion to amend.

**"Previous Question"** - To move the "previous question" is to bring the assembly to an immediate decision as to whether debate on a motion should cease. It is not debatable. If adopted, the assembly proceeds, without further debate, to vote at once on the pending question(s). A two-thirds vote is required to close debate.

## SPECIFICS FOR 2023 ELECTIONS

**Red and green cards** are provided in your assembly packet. Please hold ONE card high as you are voting for or against an assembly action. Do not lift the two cards together, as that is visible from the rear of the hall and gives a false vote impression.

**Assembly Voting Members will use a cell phone or tablet** to vote, using the same system we used during our electronic meetings during the pandemic. Please bring a device. If you do not have one, you can use a friend's device, or a voting tablet will be available. Voting members will receive a security code upon registration. Please download the Ballot Click mobile app from the App Store or Google Play store and try the test vote "Who is the best athlete of all time?". Feel free to provide a write-in vote in this test, as we will be using the system again next year for the bishop election, which requires write in votes. Instructions for voting will be given during the meeting.

Nominations from the floor will be received. Prior to coming to the microphone, the nomination paper on each table must be completed and then submitted at that time. Then, anyone who is nominated must complete the online bio form prior to 6 p.m. on the first day of the assembly.

Voting will be real-time during the meeting.

- [Memorials](#)
- [Resolutions](#)

## NOMINATIONS

### Synod Secretary

**Rev. Alicia Harker-** Regional Director of Spiritual Care and Ministry Integration - Front Range  
Evergreen Lutheran Church – member for 4 years

- I currently serve in a synod council-based call in a context outside the local parish and am deeply grateful for the ability to serve in my ministry calling with the support and sending of the synod council. Firmly believing my call to serve in ministry is not limited to the professional work I engage but is also lived out in my relationship and service with my local congregation, my community and the larger church. Serving as synod council secretary would be an extension of that call and in service to Christ and the mission of the Rocky Mountain Synod. I feel a call to be more connected in service in the broader church context.
- Skills and Experience: excellent communication, administrative and organizational skills; prior judicatory experience, and although in a different denomination, I bring, perhaps, a fresh perspective and ecumenical insight; a deep commitment to collegiality and cooperation and a call to serve in partnership with others in our synod.
- Service Activity:
  - member of the children, youth and families board at Evergreen Lutheran Church (approximately 2020-2022) prior denomination volunteer leadership in camp and conference ministries (approximately 1998-2006)
  - prior denomination - Area (North Texas, Tres Rios and Trinity Brazos Areas) and Christian Church in the Southwest Regional Committee on Ministry and Committee on Ministry member and secretary for some of those years in each area and for the region (approximately 2004-2008; 2010-2016)
  - prior services as Trinity Brazos Area Minister (served during a period of reorganization), overseeing 54 congregations and 260 clergy in 19 counties of Texas. (2016-2017)

**Rev. Michael Vinson-** St. Peter Lutheran Church, Greenwood Village, CO

St. Peter Lutheran Church, Greenwood Village, CO – member for 1.5 months

- I have a sense that God continues to develop me as a leader in Christ's church. I have served on the Indiana-Kentucky synod council, and have had the experience of a year on the executive committee. As RMS Synod secretary, I see an opportunity to grow in church governance and thrive in an area I excel at.
- Skills and Experience: I have led the updating of ministries governing documents to include updating of 2 congregation's constitution. I have served on a synod council and have executive committee experience. Along with serving on boards presently and in the past, I

have authored an ELCA Churchwide resolution that received a pass vote. I also believe I can keep acceptable minutes and disseminate reports as required.

- Service Activity:
  - Life Member, National African Descent Lutheran Association 2011-present
  - Primary Author, Policy Resolution CA19.04.15, Emanuel 9 Commemoration (Passed)
  - National Pastoral Advisor, Beta Sigma Psi National Lutheran Fraternity 2015- present
  - Indiana-Kentucky Synod Council member, 1 year on executive committee 2016-2020

## Lay Synod Council Metro West

### **Scot Beu Burke** - non-profit worker

- Nativity Lutheran Church, Commerce City, CO – member for 55 yrs.
- I'm highly qualified.
- Skills and Experience: Extensive non-profit background. Experienced music ministry provider. Frustrated observer of ELCA's decline.
- Service Activity:
  - Front desk receptionist in the Office of the "Bishop" (Episcopal Diocese of Colorado), 2017-2019
  - Delegate (voting member) at Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly, 2014
  - Office manager at St. Mark's in Aurora, CO, 2012-2013

### **Ken Maldonado** - Executive Director of Domus Pacis Family Respite, Inc.

- Lord of the Mountains Lutheran Church, Dillon, CO – member 1 yrs.
- I am a cradle Catholic, and very devout throughout my life, serving in choir, altar boy, and youth missions. I moved away from the church after college and moving to NYC. Through family I found my way back to the church when I moved to CO and served as a sacristan, reader and in the Kitchen Ministry for two years. When I met Kevin, the man who would become my husband they asked me to leave the church. Kevin was raised Lutheran and we searched for a church together, and once we attended services at Lord of the Mountain we fell right in and joined. Before being asked to leave the catholic church I was already feeling a strong calling to be more of service, and already knew that my desire to serve more would not be allowed. I study theology on my own voraciously, and I am going through discernment right now, and this is another step for me in figuring out how I can be of service to God and my community. I wish I would have found the Lutheran Church earlier in life. For the first time I feel completely and totally loved and accepted in my faith and in my identity. My faith will always instill in me a desire to serve God and my faith community. I have finally found a home where I can be gay, a person of faith, and be of service. I want to serve and continue to explore my new found home in the Lutheran Church. God has provided me with many talents, and my Christian faith warrants that I be of service, which I do so with joy.
- Skills and Experience: I have worked in the non-profit sector for over 35 years. Fifteen of those years as a development/fundraising manager or director. Fifteen more as a performing arts producer/director, and the rest as an executive director of a Cancer respite

- program. I have also served on a number of regional and national boards, as well as numerous committees. I am also serving as one of the "lay" voting members for Lord of the Mountains, attending the Rocky Mountain Synod in May 2023.
- Service Activity:
    - (2019- Present) Domus Pacis Family Respite: is a God directed non-profit that serves families with a member who has cancer or a terminal illness. In 2019, before heading to the Holy Land, I went into prayer, knowing that all I wanted out of my pilgrimage was direction in the next chapter of my life. The first night there, on the Sea of Galilee, I met the founders of Domus Pacis and learned that they had been searching for a new director and had not been able to find the right match. Since then, as their new director I have been able to serve over 335 families dealing with challenging medical journeys.
    - (2015-2019) Homeless: after leaving NYC my efforts were focused on the homeless, both in employment at La Puente, a homeless shelter and food bank in Southern Colorado, and later as a volunteer at Corpus Christi House in Boise, ID. Prior to this, while living in NYC I would conduct my own outreach to the homeless with HIV/AIDS that lived in my Harlem neighborhood (2012-2015).
    - Even though I do not have past congregational and synodical service activities, my entire professional career has been driven by my faith and my commitment to always use my talents and efforts to serve. My non-profit employment has had me working in inner-city housing, children's services, HIV/AIDS clinics, HIV/AIDS advocacy, homelessness, food insecurity, and now with families dealing with cancer. Prior to joining the Lutheran Church my service work has also included the kitchen ministry with Summit Catholic and the food bank with Father Dyer Methodist Church. Currently I am also assisting with the development of a Young Life chapter in the county.

**Larry Patella - Retired Chemical Engineer**

- Evergreen Lutheran Church, Evergreen, CO – member for 13 yrs.
- I have talents like everyone else. I sense it is time to share them with the larger church during this time of re-orienting America's churches.
- Skills and Experience: Most recently, I was an alternate member of our Call Committee, which many RMS churches find themselves in that process. I led our congregation's SAS team as a member of the first SAS synod cohort. We were very successful in our efforts, which installed our AV system. I have been on our Congregation Council for six years and led our Constitution Re-write Committee, which was over ten years out of date. I try to bring an engineering pragmatic approach to problem solving but with a Christ led optimism.
- Service Activities:
  - Congregation Council Member as Lay Ministry Board Chair – 2017-Present  
Congregation Council Secretary - 2015-2016
  - Audio/Visual Supervisor - 2019 - Current - I have supervised the installation, trained others and operated our AV system. During the pandemic when we all went 100% virtual worship, I was the sole operator for four months. We were fortunate enough to have had our system installed in 2019.
  - ELCA's SAS Implementation Team Chair - 2017 - 2019 - Our giving increased by over 15% the first year of implementation, which funded our AV system installation.

- [Constitutional Changes Explanation and Rationale](#)
- [Proposed Constitutional Changes](#)
- [Updated revision recommended by the Campus Ministry Committee, March, 2023](#)
- [Updated revision recommended by the Global Church Network, March, 2023](#)
  
- [RMS Proposed Budget Report 2023-24](#)
- [RMS Congregation Mission Support 2022](#)
- [RMS Balance Sheet, Jan. 31, 2023](#)
- [RMS Statement of Revenues Expenditures, Jan. 31, 2023](#)



# SYNOD OFFICERS AND SYNOD COUNCIL

## **Synod Officers**

Rev. James Gonia, Bishop, 2024  
Ms. Ruth Hoffman, Vice President, 2025  
Ms. Susan Mitchell, Secretary, 2023  
Ms. Susan Sharkey, Treasurer 2024

## **Synod Council**

Ms. Lynette Schurdevin, 2026  
Mr. Ray Ferry, 2026  
Mr. Jeff Fairfax, 2026  
Ms. Jody Brammer-Hoelter, 2024  
Mr. Tim Orłowski, 2026  
Ms. Andraïne Sinaga, 2026  
Ms. Amelia Thomas, 2024  
Mr. Jim Wasseen, 2024  
Rev. Chelsea Achterberg, 2026  
Rev. Chris Hjelmstad, 2024  
Rev. Julie Brooks, 2024  
Rev. Eric Allert, 2024  
Rev. Dan Tisdell, 2024  
Rev. Debra Jimenez, 2026

## **Reference and Counsel Committee**

Rev. Stephanie Kopsch, Chair of Committee  
Mr. Kurt Rager, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry NM  
Mr. Peter Severson, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry CO  
Deacon Jan Krakow

## **Parliamentarian**

Mr. Kirby Glad, PRP

## **Board and Committee Chairs or Staff Liaisons**

3E – Deacon Sarah Bjornebo  
Campus Ministry Committee – Rev. Dan Tisdell  
Candidacy Committee – Rev. Laura Bostrom  
Congregational Ministries Board – Bishop Jim Gonia  
Disaster Response RMS – Bishop Jim Gonia  
Excellence in Leadership Board – Dr. John Price  
Finance Committee – Mr. Gary Philpy  
Global Church Committee – Rev. Diana Linden-Johnson  
Hunger Network – Ms. Carol McDivitt  
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry Policy Committees – Ms. Terri Christiansen (NM); Ms. Holly Massie (CO)  
Lutheran Men in Mission – Mr. Herb Hergott  
Messiah Mountain Retreat Center – Deacon Linda Bobbitt  
Mission Outreach Board – Rev. Dana Peterson  
Rocky Mountain Synod Women’s Organization – Anna Thompson

## **RMS Ministry Partners**

Border Servant Corps – Ms. Kari Lenander  
Eben Ezer Lutheran Care Center – Ms. Shelly Griffith  
Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp – Mr. Dave Jarvis  
Sky Ranch Lutheran Camp – Ms. Lori Bode  
Urban Servant Corps – Ms. Krista Kilgus  
Veteran Servant Corps Project – Ms. Vicki Daub

## **New to the Synod since last Assembly**

Rev. Lindsay Bates  
Rev. Rode Molla  
Rev. Karen Matuska  
Rev. Veronica Gould  
Rev. Katheryn Gauger  
Rev. Fredrick Lampe  
Rev. Kari Reiquam\*  
Rev. Karen Ullstad  
Rev. Brian Erickson  
Rev. Norma Cooper  
Rev. Frederick Alpers  
Rev. Jeffery Zust  
Rev. Paul R. Olsen  
Rev. Kathryn A Schlechter

## **Rostered Minister Anniversaries**

### **Five Years**

Rev. Kimberly Law

### **Ten Years**

Rev. Andrea Doeden  
Rev. Caitlin Palm Trussell  
Rev. Daniel E Carlson  
Rev. Gail G Mundt  
Rev. Katherine J Chullino  
Rev. Elizabeth A Reinking  
Rev. Theresa A Schjang

### **Fifteen Years**

Rev. Daniel B Smith  
Rev. Harvey J Johnson  
Rev. Julie M McNitt  
Rev. Katherine A Davidson  
Rev. Leta C Behrens  
Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber  
Rev. Ronald G Hartman  
Rev. Todd Payne

### **Twenty Years**

Rev. Delores J Watson  
Rev. Michael A TeKrony  
Rev. Stacie E Dougherty  
Rev. Stacy A Payne  
Rev. Steven Leiser  
Rev. Todd C Hawkins  
Rev. Travis D Norton

### **Twenty-five Years**

Rev. Deacon Jennifer A Mc Bride  
Rev. Cynthia R Josephson  
Rev. David E Cruson  
Rev. Dena L Williams  
Rev. Eugene R Zeller  
Rev. JoAnn Neal  
Rev. Kathleen M Armstrong  
Rev. Matthew E Weber  
Rev. Rosemary Sanchez-Guzman  
Rev. Shauna K Hannan

### **Thirty Years**

Rev. Barbara A Martens  
Rev. Michael A Jeffrey  
Rev. Michael E Tassler  
Rev. Rodney R Hank  
Rev Stephanie Kopsch  
Rev. Kathryn A Schlechter

### **Thirty-five Years**

Rev. James Gonia – Bishop  
Rev. Carol R Gesalman  
Rev. David P Nichols  
Rev. Eric R Meyners  
Rev. Gary A Sandberg  
Rev. Harry M Laubach Jr  
Rev. Kent A Mueller  
Rev. Kristi K Beebe  
Rev. Michael E Ross  
Rev. Ronald Powers

### **Forty Years**

Rev. Beverly R Piro  
Rev. Fredrick P Lampe  
Rev. Janice Kibler  
Rev Janice Erickson-Pearson  
Rev. Kevin R Maly  
Rev. Robert H Kippley  
Rev. Timothy N Drom

### **Forty-five Years**

Rev. Frank E Philipp  
Rev. George E Meister IV  
Rev. Gordon J Young  
Rev. Mark A Peterson  
Rev. Merlyn D Hartzler  
Rev. Michael O Hamilton  
Rev Michael R Rime  
Rev. Michael V Degner  
Rev. Paul J Bodin  
Rev. Richard L Schwenkmeyer  
Rev. S Patrice Von Stroh  
Rev. Scott C. Jorgenson

**Fifty Years**

Rev. Deacon Margaret K H Tsan  
Rev. Allan C Bjornberg  
Rev. Daniel H Mangler  
Rev. John W Orwig  
Rev. Stephen J Heetland

**Fifty-five Years**

Rev. Glenn A Isernhagen  
Rev. Paul A Hofer  
Rev. Roger W Rapp  
Rev. Wi Jo Kang  
Rev. Phillip R Baker

**Sixty Years**

Rev. H Henry Maertens  
Rev. Kenneth D Thurow  
Rev. R Philip Moeller

**Sixty-Five Years**

Rev. Marvin V Ritterling

**Deceased Rostered Ministers**

Rev. William Behrens  
Deacon Cassandra Olson  
Rev. David Peters  
Rev. Graham Rinehart  
Rev. Maria T. Wette  
Rev. Deacon Dorothy Stenman  
Rev. Sandy Hanwatt  
Rev. Laurel Alexander  
Rev. Dennis Dickman  
Rev. Wayne Weissenbuehler

## **Office of the Bishop Staff**

\*denotes part time staff members

Rev. Jim Gonia, Bishop

Rev. Barbara Berry-Bailey, Special Assistant for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion\*

Deacon Sarah Bjornebo, Assistant to the Bishop for Communication and Innovation and Program

Director for 3E Lilly Grant

Father Quirino Cornejo, Minister for Multicultural Witness\*

Mr. Jon Johnson, Finance Director and Human Resources

Ms. Kinna Kemp, Faith Formation Coordinator\*

Ms. Tina Kvitek, Assistant to the Bishop for Generosity

Rev. Diana Linden-Johnson, Assistant to the Bishop for Rostered Ministry

Mr. Andrew Nakatani, Communications Assistant\*

Rev. Dana Peterson, Assistant to the Bishop for Congregational Vitality and Director for Evangelical Mission

Ms. Yvonne Wilken, Administrator

Mr. Kurt Rager, Director of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry, New Mexico

Mr. Peter Severson, Director of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry, Colorado

## **Transitions Ministry**

Deacon Janice Zimbelman, Transition Ministry Director\*

Ms. Rachel Line, Transitions Administrator\*

Ms. Janice Ladd-Horkey, Associate for Candidate Identification\*

Rev. Mandy Achterberg, Transition Coach\*

Rev. Will Johnson, Transition Coach\*

Rev. Pam Stofferahn, Transitions Coach\*

Rev. Christina Higuera-Street, Transitions Coach\*

Rev. Libbie Reinking, Transition Coach\*

Rev. Dominic Palacios, Transition Consultant\*

### **Excellence in Leadership**

Rev. Sarah Moening, Director of Excellence in Leadership\*  
Dana Anderson, Program Manager for EiL Community\*  
Rev. Mandy Achterberg , Program Manager for Promotion, Communications and Registration\*  
Deacon Missy Bonser, EiL Trainer\*  
Rev. Lou Blanchard, EiL Trainer\*  
Rev. Julie Brooks , EiL Trainer\*  
Rev. Katie Emery, EiL Trainer\*  
Phil Evans, EiL Trainer\*  
Rev. Kim Gonia, EiL Trainer\*  
Rev. Will Johnson. EiL Trainer\*  
Rev. Katie Kline , EiL Trainer\*  
Tina Kvitek , EiL Trainer\*  
Rev. Diana Linden-Johnson, EiL Trainer\*  
Becky Near , EiL Trainer\*  
Rev. Inga Oyan-Longbrake, EiL Trainer\*  
Rev. Peggy Paugh Leuzinger , EiL Trainer\*  
Rev. Kristin Schultz, EiL Trainer\*  
Rev. Jennifer Shaw, EiL Trainer\*  
Rev. Penny Walsh, EiL Trainer\*  
Rev. Sara Wirth, EiL Trainer\*

### **Messiah Mountain Retreat Center Site Managers in Residence**

Ms. Jen Engquist and Mr. Matt Bishop, MMRC Site Managers



*“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” (Matthew 28:18-20).*

Dear siblings in Christ,

We know the gospel changes lives and that God’s power and grace are real and at work today. Together we are called to bear God’s creative and redeeming word to all the world. What if we could make God known to more people? To the child who’s never heard of Jesus? To young adults who are trying to make sense of the world? To older adults who often feel lonely and isolated?

Our purpose – “to activate each of us so that more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love” – is an expression of our calling and our longing for others to know the love of God in Christ Jesus. We live out our purpose through worship and service, in our congregations and communities, through our individual vocations and our collective work as church together.

Many of you have wondered why we set a goal to reach one million new, young and diverse people. We believe that each of us is made in the image of God, redeemed by Jesus on the cross, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Our focus on young and diverse people is not exclusive but an acknowledgment that younger and more diverse people are disproportionately missing from our pews and gatherings. We are challenging one another to reach out across differences of all sorts to meet our neighbors.

Setting a goal to engage with one million is a way for us to know whether the work we are doing is, in fact, reaching new people. It encourages us to work together to be a church that cares about the world around us and is effective and faithful in responding to God’s call.

Join us on this future-focused journey to widen our welcome and break down the barriers that keep people from engaging with the church. Together, we can help people experience the difference God’s grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation.

In Christ,



The Rev. Elizabeth A.  
Eaton Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America

*“Jesús se acercó entonces a ellos y les dijo: ---Se me ha dado toda autoridad en el cielo y en la tierra. Por tanto, vayan y hagan discípulos de todas las naciones, bautizándolos en el nombre del Padre y del Hijo y del Espíritu Santo, enseñándoles a obedecer todo lo que les he mandado a ustedes. Y les aseguro que estaré con ustedes siempre, hasta el fin del mundo” (Mateo 28:18-20).*

Queridos(as) hermanos(as) en Cristo:

Sabemos que el evangelio cambia vidas, y que el poder y la gracia de Dios son reales y están obrando hoy. Juntos somos llamados a llevar la palabra creadora y redentora de Dios a todo el mundo. ¿Qué pasaría si pudiéramos dar a conocer a Dios a más personas? ¿Al niño que nunca ha oído hablar de Jesús? ¿A los adultos jóvenes que están tratando de entender el mundo? ¿A los adultos mayores que a menudo se sienten solos y aislados?

Nuestro propósito —activar a cada uno de nosotros para que más personas conozcan el camino de Jesús y descubran la comunidad, la justicia y el amor— es una expresión de nuestra llamada y nuestro anhelo de que otros conozcan el amor de Dios en Cristo Jesús. Vivimos nuestro propósito a través de la adoración y el servicio, en nuestras congregaciones y comunidades, a través de nuestras vocaciones individuales y nuestro trabajo colectivo como iglesia juntos.

Muchos de ustedes se han preguntado por qué fijamos la meta de alcanzar a un millón de personas nuevas, jóvenes y diversas. Creemos que cada uno de nosotros está hecho a imagen de Dios, redimido por Jesús en la cruz y lleno del Espíritu Santo. Nuestro enfoque en las personas jóvenes y diversas no es exclusivo, sino un reconocimiento de que las personas más jóvenes y diversas están desproporcionadamente ausentes de nuestras bancas y reuniones. Nos estamos desafiando unos a otros a avanzar a través de diferencias de todo tipo para conocer a nuestros vecinos.

La meta de comprometernos con un millón es una forma de saber si el trabajo que hacemos está, en efecto, llegando a nuevas personas. Nos anima a trabajar juntos para ser una iglesia que se preocupa por el mundo que nos rodea y que es eficaz y fiel en su respuesta al llamado de Dios.

Únase a nosotros en esta jornada concentrada en el futuro para extender nuestra bienvenida y romper las barreras que impiden que las personas participen en la iglesia. Juntos podemos ayudar a la gente a experimentar la diferencia que la gracia y el amor de Dios en Cristo hacen en todas las personas y la creación.

En Cristo,

La Rvda. Elizabeth A.  
Eaton Obispa Presidente  
Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en América