

**TEXAS-LOUISIANA GULF COAST SYNOD
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING**

Date of Meeting: March 15th, 2025

Venue: St Francis of the City, 5700 Lawndale, Houston, TX 77023

Attendees: Bishop Mike, Robert Rivera, Paul Antolik, Caleb Parks, Rev. Ariel Otterstad, Rev. Sergio Rodriguez, Lucky Sahualla, Irene Del Arco, Rev. Anthony Chatman, Rev. Chon Pugh, Adele Montgomery, Isabelle Williams, Deidre Hayes, Taylor Rivera

Absent: Kellie Escovy

Staff: Rev. José Luis Escalera, Rev. Tracey Breashears-Schultz

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 am. Pastor Jose provided insight into the life and ministry of St Francis of the City and led us on a tour of the facility. Devotion was led by Pastor Anthony.

Actions Taken

1. Motion to approve the Consent Agenda, which comprised Agenda and Minutes approval as well as an appointment to the Wartburg Seminary Board.
 - a. Move - Sergio, Second - Taylor.
2. Motion to recommend the budget proposal to Synod Assembly
 - a. Move - Sergio, Second - Anthony.
3. Motion to accept the Gift Acceptance Guidelines with amendments.
 - a. Move - Lucky, Second - Paul.
4. Motion to approve the Standing Rules for Bishop's Election.
 - a. Move - Paul, Second - Adele.
5. Motion to Adjourn.
 - a. Move - Paul, Second - Anthony.

Discussion

1. Bishop's Report - Bishop Mike Rinehart
 - a. Bishop Mike gave a "State of the Synod"

- b. Notable touchpoints: Many lasts for Bishop Mike, Ecumenical Relations, Upcoming Churchwide Assembly, and Bishop Transition

2. Vice President's Report - Robert

- a. Overview of Bishop's Election at Synod Assembly, including an approval of standing rules for the election and a report on the Election process and the associated roles for that election.
- b. Synod Council Transitional Meeting on June 21st at St James.
- c. Recap of the Pre-Election Meetings. Many good conversations came about from this process.
- d. Bishop's Installation is scheduled for Sept 7th at Living Word in Katy.

4. Treasurer's Report – Paul

- a. Mission share has dropped, which means the Synod struggles but also indicates congregations are struggling as well.
- b. Staff has made great efforts to cut down on Administrative Costs, and Mission spending has been moved around as well.

5. Secretary's Report - Caleb

- a. Report mainly consisted of upcoming Nominations and Elections.
- b. Consultation and Discipline Committees have a number of vacancies to fill.
- c. The Secretary's Report for Synod Assembly will consist of a review of the Synod Constitution on common misconceptions of the role of the Synod.

6. Bishop's Associate for Leadership Report - Pastor Tracey Breashears-Schultz

- a. Deacon Candidates are on the rise, God is stirring something up.
- b. Bookkeeper Transition has resulted in a delay in the reporting on funding from the LiveOn Fund
- c. 25 Congregations in the Call Process. There have been interviews and even two calls extended since our last meeting, so progress is taking place here despite persistent pastor shortage.
- d. Compensation Guidelines will remain the same for 2026 as they currently are for 2025 in recognition of the financial challenges of our congregations. This is a difficult determination, but ultimately a necessary one for the realities of the time.

7. Bishop's Associate for Ministry Report - Pastor Jose Luis Escalera

- a. Finances are affecting Mission Partners much in the same way it is affecting our congregations. Many are struggling despite doing wonderful work and ministry.
- b. Evaluations of our Mission Partners are upcoming.
- c. Immigrant-serving ministries have been particularly affected by the political climate.

Meeting adjourned at 1:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Caleb Parks
Synod Secretary