

September 2025

National Church Council Meeting Highlights

The ELCIC's National Church Council (NCC) met September 25–27, 2025 for their first meeting as a new council following elections at the 2025 ELCIC National Convention held in July. The meeting also marked the first council gathering with our National Bishop, Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer, also elected at the recent national convention.

The following are a few highlights from the council meeting. For specific wording on motions and additional actions from the meeting, please view the draft minutes which will be available online: <https://elcic.ca/national-church-council/>.

The meeting was marked by openness, engagement and participation. Worship was structured around gathering, Word, meal and sending, and was beautifully and thoughtfully led by Rev. Dr. Kimber McNabb, Eastern Synod. Council members reflected on the text from Luke 24:13–35, *The Walk to Emmaus* and were invited into reflection around “what crossroads do you find yourself at.” Also used during worship time was the 2025 Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth (CLAY) prayer. The CLAY prayer uses the unedited responses of youth participants to questions such as, “what is the key message of Jesus that you think the church has forgotten and needs to remember” and “what is one gift you see in the church that you want to draw the church’s attention to.” The full CLAY prayer can be found here: <https://claygathering.ca/prayer-for-the-church/>.

Facing Today – Dreaming for the Future

Canon Ian Alexander, a member of the consultant team for the three-year church engagement initiative, Facing Today – Dreaming of the Future, was in attendance for the entirety of the council meeting. The consulting team, along with a newly formed steering committee, is exploring questions around, “What does it mean to be a church today, and for the future?” with the goal of guiding positive transformation within the ELCIC’s national and synodical structures. The initiative will consider current financial realities and the evolving landscapes of congregations across the country, while creating space for meaningful conversations about what it means to be the church in the years ahead.

Canon Alexander led two sessions with council members during the meeting, drawing again on the text from Luke 24: 13–35. In small groups, members returned to the text several times, reflecting on how the story might be heard from the perspective of someone in the ELCIC today—walking, wondering and receiving surprising news along the way.

Consultants and the steering committee are currently in the first phase of the initiative, focusing on deep, intentional listening. This is a year-long focus on listening and learning, with the committee utilizing various engagement methods to connect with as many ELCIC members as possible, gathering feedback on the hopes and aspirations of church members for the future of the ELCIC.

2025 ELCIC National Convention and Pre-Identification Process

NCC members spent time reflecting on the recent national convention and the pre-identification process around the National Bishop election. In their reflections, members highlighted worship and music at convention, broad participation and discussion, and the sense that convention was well organized. They noted the significance of honouring the Anniversary of Women's Ordination in the opening worship service, and the importance placed on working towards the ELCIC's young adult quota for 20% of delegates—this year marked the closest the church has come to reaching that target. Members also identified areas for future consideration, including ensuring adequate time for discussion, how tight the agenda felt at times, and engagement of volunteers.

This was the first time the ELCIC National Convention utilized a pre-identification process leading up to the election of a National Bishop. Reflections on the process included ensuring delegates, and the wider church were fully informed about the process, including that pre-identification does not mean 'nomination,' as well as exploring the purpose and history of the ecclesiastical ballot. The process was developed following a review of how several ELCIC synods led into their synod bishop elections in 2024, along with a review of processes within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Creation of a Youth and Young Adult Advisory Committee and Motions from Convention

NCC members approved a motion brought forward from convention that will see the creation of a national youth and young adult advisory board. Young adult delegates, who brought forward the motion at convention, cited the need for creating space for youth within existing ELCIC structures, and providing consistent and collaborative space for youth and young adults among peers across Canada to share their voices, experiences and faith with church leadership—ensuring their presence is not only welcomed but valued.

Following the motion, council brought forward and approved a motion to invite two members of the youth and young adults advisory board to attend future NCC meetings with voice. As well, in the spirit of full communion, council approved a motion to invite a member of the Moravian Church in Canada to attend future NCC meetings, also with voice.

Several motions brought forward at convention and referred to National Church Council also resulted in action by council members, including:

- A working group will be created to look at the 1995 Statement to the Jewish Communities in Canada and report back to NCC.
- The development of a workshop on "Embracing Inclusion: Cultivating a Welcoming and Accessible Church Community" will be part of a pilot project rolled out shortly.
- A working group will look at the 1991 Stewards of Creation Respect for Human Life document and report back to NCC.
- Several motions that impact potential bylaw changes will be reviewed by the Constitution Committee.
- A motion calling for a program for installation of renewable sources of clean energy will be reviewed by the Task Force for Carbon Neutrality.

40th Anniversary of the ELCIC

2026 will mark 40 years of the ELCIC. This is a unique opportunity in the life of our church to remember our past, give thanks for our present and look forward to the future. NCC members took time to consider the impact of 40 years of our church, along with brainstorming around what would highlight and bring meaning to the anniversary. While plans are still being developed, we are excited to consider how we might inspire generosity and engagement in the church through storytelling, worship and connection.

Task Force New Name

Council members approved a motion to change the name of the Task Force on Addressing Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia. The task force will now be called *Affirming Grace: Diversity, equity and inclusion for all*. The new name reflects a more open and invitational message of inclusion and affirmation.

Special Guest

NCC welcomed special guest Bishop Leila Ortiz, attending on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This was Bishop Ortiz's second time attending NCC. She shared highlights from the recent ELCA Assembly, including the election of Rev. Yehiel Curry who will serve as the new Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, and gave insight into the current landscape of the United States.

Installation Service

Following the conclusion of the meeting, council members, bishops, and special guests were in attendance for the installation of Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer as the church's fifth National Bishop. Taking place at Faith Lutheran Church in Winnipeg, MB, the gathering brought together rostered leaders, ELCIC members, staff and ecumenical guests. The service was filled with the beauty of choir and musicians, lifting hearts in joyous song, and with prayers carrying deep meaning and hope. A recording of the service can be viewed on the ELCIC youtube page: https://www.youtube.com/live/dqKcuQrpS8I?si=gDHEHSNq_jw-67kO.

Next Meeting

At the meeting, council determined that they would utilize technology to consider a more frequent meeting schedule, with perhaps November, January and May meetings being online. Council will continue to meet in-person in March (following its usual pattern of March and September in person meetings). Council carried a motion that will see the March 2026 meeting taking place in Calgary, AB—at a retreat centre as a means to reduce overall costs.