



# BULLETIN

BRINGING GOD'S MESSAGE OF LOVE IN CHRIST JESUS TO ALL THE WORLD

## The Lutheran Church-International and the Lutheran World Parish

### *Advent-Christmastide 2025*



#### *A Message from the Archbishop -*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lutheran Church-International Family,

My fervent prayer is that we all may be deeply blessed during this Holy Season. Building on the recollection of God's mercy to us through the Feast of All Saints, we enter a period of thanksgiving for the fulfillment of the promise of salvation in Jesus Christ and of grateful expectation of God's continued blessings upon the life and ministries of the LC-I. As we share with deep gratitude the remembrance of all the wonderful things that Christ has done for us, through the community of faith that is the LC-I, we look forward to Advent and the joy of Christmastide.

I am grateful that God has richly blessed me in providing an opportunity for me to serve in leadership of the LC-I for approximately 20 years. Through His grace my service toward the Kingdom of God has been enabled and enriched on a daily basis. Now, through prayers and discernment, I recognize that the time for me to announce my retirement as archbishop has come.

In far too many cases such announcements from the leadership of ecclesiastical bodies come as a result of conflict of ideologies or behavioral allegations. Please be assured and comforted in the knowledge that such is not the case here. God is calling me to accept the challenge of caring for important family needs. And while my human preferences would lead me to soldier on as archbishop, I accept His command to bend my will to His.

The welfare of the LC-I is very close to my heart. I continue to believe that the LC-I has an important role to play in the life of the universal Christian church, the "Bride of Christ." Under the leadership of the new archbishop, I intend to contribute to the life of the LC-I as I am able and as deemed appropriate by the Board. I place my trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In consultation with the bishops and the Executive Board, it is planned that my retirement will take effect after the Synod gathering in 2027 when it is expected that the new archbishop will be installed. Until then, I will strive to perform all duties of the archbishop's office with energy, attention, and Christian love as God permits.

Bishop Richard Horn has prepared an article detailing the proce-



++Robert W. Hotes, Archbishop

cedure for the election of an archbishop and the requirements for voting qualifications at the synod assembly.

One of the great gifts that God had bestowed upon the LC-I is, in my opinion, a genuinely Lutheran understanding of the nature of the Universal Church. For those of us in the LC-I family, a key sign of the continuity of Christ's church on earth is found in the expression of the historic apostolic succession of bishops within the church universal. Observance and maintenance of the historic succession is not an end in itself, but an aid to the performance of ministry and life in Christ. I firmly believe that an understanding of the nature of the historic apostolic succession is important for the continued vitality of the LC-I. In my opinion, such an understanding will be one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that will strengthen us in this time of transition.

The LC-I recognizes the formal apostolic succession of its bishops and clergy as a precious heritage and gift to the Christian Church universal. We hold that it should be observed and cherished as a mark of the continuity of Christian faith and ministry. Therefore, without offering judgment on those sacramental ministries that have been conducted with good faith and proper form by those who have not been afforded the benefit of linkage through the historic succession in past ministry, all members of the LC-I clergy are brought into the historic apostolic succession through means of an affirmation of ordination at the hands of bishops within the valid lines of succession.

As Evangelical Catholics in the Lutheran understanding of the Universal Christian Church, we in the LC-I hold that the historic succession is an integral part of the character of our life and ministry in Christ. A full delineation of our lines of apostolic succession is available on the LC-I website. For the benefit of the Church Universal, we are also preparing theological position papers on the subject. Father Terrence Weber has provided an excellent theological paper on the historic apostolic succession which appears in this issue of the BULLETIN.

The notes that follow provide a rudimentary framework for understanding the theological importance of the historic apostolic succession. They are provided for information, prayer, and discussion.

**Apostolic succession is the theological principle that ensures continuity of the Church’s authority, teaching, and sacramental life through an unbroken line of bishops tracing back to the apostles.** It is foundational in Catholic, Orthodox, and some Anglican and Lutheran traditions, affirming both historical legitimacy and doctrinal fidelity. The LC-I is among the Lutheran church bodies that affirm the significance of historic apostolic succession.

Below is an outline of the major theological points supporting its observance. It has been prepared with artificial intelligence search engines\* as a base research tool and I have added comments related to our interests in LC-I. It is offered for overview information only.

## 1. Divine Institution and Christ’s Commission

- **Christ as the source:** Apostolic succession begins with Jesus Christ, who chose and commissioned the apostles to continue His mission (cf. John 20:21; Matthew 28:19–20).
- **Transmission of authority:** The apostles were given authority to teach, sanctify, and govern, which they passed on through the laying on of hands (cf. Acts 6:6; 1 Timothy 4:14).

## 2. Scriptural and Patristic Foundations

- **Biblical precedent:** Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus reflect early examples of succession and pastoral oversight (cf. 2 Timothy 2:2).
- **Early Church witness:** Clement of Rome (c. 96 AD) affirms that apostles appointed bishops and instructed them to continue this practice.

## 3. Ecclesial Identity and Apostolicity

- **Mark of the true Church:** According to the Nicene Creed, the Church is “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.” Apostolic succession is a visible sign of this apostolicity.
- **Organic continuity:** The Church is not merely a spiritual community but a structured body with historical continuity through episcopal succession. The LC-I is an integral component of this one, holy, catholic, and apostolic body of Christ.

## 4. Sacramental Validity and Unity

- **Eucharistic theology:** Valid celebration of the Eucharist requires a bishop or priest ordained within apostolic succession, ensuring sacramental integrity.
- **Unity of faith:** Bishops in apostolic succession serve as guarantors of doctrinal fidelity and communion with the universal Church.

## 5. Tradition and Magisterium

- **Living Tradition:** Apostolic succession safeguards the transmission of the “deposit of faith” (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:15), interpreted authentically by the Magisterium.
- **Normative interpretation:** Scripture is read within the Church’s tradition, which recognizes and preserves its inspired character.

## 6. Ecumenical Implications

- **Dialogue and recognition:** Apostolic succession plays a critical role in ecumenical discussions, especially between Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican communities.
- **Challenges and discernment:** The recognition of succession in other traditions involves theological and historical discernment, often centered on episcopal consecration and communion in faith.

The comparative chart below outlines how different Christian traditions understand and observe **apostolic succession**, highlighting key theological points and practical implications:

**Comparative Overview of Apostolic Succession**

Tradition	Theological Basis	Mode of Succession	Role of Bishops	Sacramental Validity	Ecumenical Recognition
<b>Roman Catholic</b>	Christ’s commission to apostles; Petrine primacy	Unbroken episcopal lineage via laying on of hands	Guardians of doctrine, unity, and sacramental life	Essential for valid Eucharist and ordination	Recognizes Orthodox and some Anglican succession
<b>Eastern Orthodox</b>	Apostolic foundation; conciliar continuity	Lineage through canonical bishops in communion	Preservers of Holy Tradition and liturgical integrity	Necessary for valid sacraments	Recognizes Catholic succession; cautious with others

Tradition	Theological Basis	Mode of Succession	Role of Bishops	Sacramental Validity	Ecumenical Recognition
<b>Anglican (High Church)</b>	Apostolic foundation; Reformation continuity	Maintained through historic episcopate	Overseers of Word and Sacrament; pastoral leaders	Generally affirmed, though debated internally	Recognized by some Orthodox and Catholic theologians
<b>Lutheran (select bodies such the LC-I and the Church of Sweden)</b>	Apostolic teaching continuity	Some maintain historic episcopate; others emphasize doctrinal fidelity	Teachers and pastors of the Gospel	For most Lutheran church bodies, validity is tied exclusively to Word and faith, not formal succession. Maintaining that apostolic succession is tied to word and faith but that the historic apostolic succession is an important gift to the universal church, the LC-I requires affirmation of ordination of clergy who join while being already ordained but does not re-ordain " <i>sub-conditione</i> ".	Mixed recognition; not universally affirmed
<b>Reformed / Presbyterian</b>	Apostolic doctrine, not episcopal lineage	Succession of teaching office, not bishops	Elders and ministers uphold Scripture	Sacraments valid by faith and proper administration	Apostolic succession not emphasized
<b>Methodist (some branches)</b>	Apostolic mission and holiness tradition	Some maintain episcopal succession; others symbolic	Spiritual leaders and organizers	Sacraments valid through faith and community	Generally, not recognized by Catholic/Orthodox
<b>Pentecostal / Evangelical</b>	Apostolic power and spiritual gifts	Succession through Spirit-led leadership	Pastors and apostles by calling, not lineage	Validity through Spirit's presence	Apostolic succession not observed

**The Council of Utrecht (1889) affirmed the principles of the ancient undivided Church and rejected several Roman Catholic dogmas introduced in the 19th century, especially papal infallibility and the Immaculate Conception. Lutherans would agree that Scripture does not support these ideas.**

The 1889 gathering of bishops who formed the *Union of Utrecht*, the federation of Old Catholic Churches. Their foundational document, the **Declaration of Utrecht**, laid out key theological positions that distinguished them from the Roman Catholic Church:

#### Core Teachings of the Council of Utrecht

- **Adherence to the Ancient Church:** The bishops affirmed the principle of *St. Vincent of Lérins*: “Hold fast to that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all.” They committed to the faith of the early Church as expressed in the ecumenical councils of the first millennium.
- **Rejection of Papal Infallibility:** They rejected the Vatican I decree (1870) that declared the Pope infallible in matters of faith and morals. They viewed this as a rupture with the ancient Church’s collegial and conciliar structure.
- **Rejection of the Immaculate Conception:** The dogma proclaimed by Pope Pius IX in 1854 was rejected as lacking scriptural and patristic foundation.
- **Selective Acceptance of Trent:** While they accepted the Council of Trent’s dogmatic teachings when aligned with ancient tradition, they rejected its disciplinary decrees.
- **Primacy of Rome Reinterpreted:** They acknowledged the historical primacy of the Bishop of Rome as *primus inter pares* (first among equals), but not as possessing universal jurisdiction.
- **Rejection of Later Roman Decrees:** They opposed other papal documents such as *Unigenitus*, *Auctorem fidei*, and the *Syllabus of Errors* (1864), insofar as they contradicted ancient doctrine.

## Historical Context

The Council was convened in response to the First Vatican Council and the growing centralization of authority in Rome. The bishops who gathered in Utrecht represented churches that had separated from Rome over issues of doctrine and governance, especially in the Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland. Their goal was to preserve Catholic tradition without innovations they deemed unbiblical or unhistorical. In my opinion, that is a stance compatible with the Augsburg Confession. It is the underpinning of the Evangelical Catholic and Lutheran theological position maintained by the LC-I.

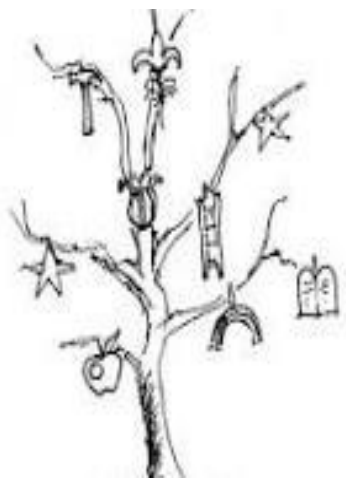
In my time of service as archbishop, it was my privilege and joy to be the means through which the apostolic succession in the tradition of Utrecht was conveyed to the bishops and clergy of the LC-I. By God's grace and with the consent of Bishop Huron Manning, the then Presiding Bishop of the Southern Episcopal Church, an Anglican Church Body holding the Old Catholic apostolic succession from Utrecht, I was able to be the principal consecrator for all but one of our LC-I bishops. My brother bishop Juan Cepero was already in the succession when he joined us. Through our mutual understanding and respect, the unity in faith of the LC-I through Christ's foundation and apostolic provenance is firmly evident. In our Lutheran understanding of the Universal Church, we stand firm in the faith once delivered.

Encouraged by our fidelity to apostolic tradition in the Lutheran understanding as expressed in the Augsburg Confession, infused with grace in praising the Lord in prayer and liturgy, we can humbly and joyfully go forward in Christian faith, life, and ministry as we journey together towards Christ's heavenly kingdom.

May God continue to bless the LC-I and keep us in His care,

++Robert, Archbishop

*\*Please forgive any errors of fact or clumsiness of form in this letter due to failures of human or artificial intelligence.*



## THE JESSE TREE



## SPECIAL PRAYER REQUESTS

These prayers have been requested through communication to the Archbishop's office. Please include them in your personal prayers and in the prayers of your congregation. Prayers, thoughts, and joyful remembrances may be sent to the Archbishop: [dbldoc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dbldoc@sbcglobal.net).

### WE PRAY FOR...

- ◆ For the families who have been reunited with loved ones released from captivity in the Middle East that they may be restored to health and wholeness.
- ◆ For all captives who have been deprived of their freedom throughout the world, that the hearts of leaders of all nations may be filled with compassion and forgiveness.
- ◆ For those suffering from illnesses in mind, body or spirit, especially those in the LC-I family.
- ◆ For those suffering through wars and natural disasters in other parts of the world.
- ◆ For all who suffer persecution for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, especially those in the LC-I family in Asia.
- ◆ For those planning the 2026 LC-I Synod Assembly.
- ◆ For Bishop Rodney Eberhardt, as he continues his recovery from open-heart surgery.
- ◆ For Pastor Robert Rainis, as he continues his recovery from heart surgery.
- ◆ For the people of Ukraine, as they continue to fight for their freedom and independence.
- ◆ Those who mourn the deaths of loved ones from disease and disaster, from violence and war.
- ◆ For Michael and Martin Ettlemeyer, as they mourn the loss of their mother, Virginia (Ginny) Ettlemeyer, widow of Pr. Ettlemeyer.
- ◆ For Deacon Eric Frank and the members of Zion, W. Jefferson, Ohio.
- ◆ For those who seek freedom from repression, torture and death, as they seek asylum in the United States.
- ◆ For firefighters and other first responders in lives of service that they be protected from all danger and harm.
- ◆ For our President and all elected officials, give them wisdom and strength to know God's will and to do it. Help them to remember that they are called to serve the people as lovers of truth and civil justice.
- ◆ For the family of Deacon Anna P. Haye, especially her daughter Elena, as she mourns the loss of her mother.
- ◆ For the congregation of St. Paul's, Coney Island, as they mourn the loss of their deacon, Anna Haye.



- ◆ For healing of Bobby and Charlie, members of Deacon Eric's family.
- ◆ For special intentions of Pastor/President of the ELCM Roy Steward.
- ◆ For the Deacons and Deaconesses of the Lutheran Diac-  
onal Association.

#### WE PRAY WITH THANKSGIVING...

- ◆ For our Synod officers and members of our Executive Board as they work to further the mission and ministry of our Synod.
- ◆ For all of our rostered LC-I pastors and deacons, that they may be blessed as they work with us for the building of the Kingdom.
- ◆ For Pastors Peter Jacobson and Isaiah Bai who will receive historic succession at our Synod Assembly in July 2026.
- ◆ For all the saints in the Church Militant, and in thanksgiving for all the saints in the Church Triumphant.
- ◆ For all members of the Lutheran World Parish.
- ◆ For our Archbishop who so personally exemplifies the love of Christ in his pastoral and priestly ministry as he shepherds our flock.

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#### BULLETIN

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The people, clergy, and bishops  
of the LC-I contributing

#### To Our Readers

The Editors of the LC-I and Lutheran World Parish BULLETIN are always eager to receive news of interest to the friends, members, and ministries of the LC-I. Articles in this BULLETIN reflect the opinions of their authors and are not to be understood as official statements by the LC-I.

All items must have relevance to the identity and mission of the LC-I as expressed in our Constitution. A copy of the Constitution is available on the LC-I website.\*

The LC-I reserves the right to approve all content as well as the right to copyright any material published with permission of the authors.

**The deadline for articles for our Lent—Easter issue is Friday, March 6, 2026.**

Please help us with relevant materials to make the upcoming season more meaningful than ever for our readers.

\*<https://lutheranchurchinternational.org>



This photo captures a recent class session for our local LifeWise Academy program in Montpelier, Ohio which provides voluntary Bible instruction to our public school students during school hours.

The class was led by Deacon Eric Frank, a dedicated servant of God and our community as well as a minister at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in West Jefferson Ohio. The lesson focused on the Old Testament story of Samson, a Judge of Israel, a story of God's great strength and how He works through flawed people to accomplish His purpose.

This picture shows how the LifeWise program, supported by our local churches, is bringing the Gospel to the next generation in a structured, off-site setting.

#### ANNUAL DUES

Please note that annual dues are **required** of ministerial members in the amount of \$75 and for communities of faith in the amount of \$150 each year in order to be in good standing.

They are due on January 1st of each year unless waived by your Bishop or Archbishop upon your request and approval by the Executive Board.

See form for submitting dues on page 13 of this newsletter.

## 2025-2026 LC-I OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE BOARD

*(Terms end as indicated)*

### Archbishop

The Most Reverend Doctor Robert W. Hotes  
Archbishop@LutheranChurchInternational.org

### Vice President (2026)

Mitzi Eberhardt  
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### Secretary (2026)

The Right Reverend Jeffrey D. Bischoff  
Bishop, Mid-America Diocese  
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### Treasurer (2028)

The Reverend William H. Wigmore III  
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Alice Smith  
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### Clergy Representative (2028)

The Reverend Deacon Eric Frank  
EFrank0318@gmail.com

### Bishop, Northeastern Diocese

The Right Reverend Dr. Aubrey N. Bougher  
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### Bishop, Caribbean Missionary Diocese

The Right Reverend Juan O. Cepero  
BpJuan@gmail.com

### Bishop, Southern Diocese

The Right Reverend Rodney L. Eberhardt  
RevRodney14@gmail.com

### Missionary Bishop

The Right Reverend Richard W. Horn  
Bp.RWHorn@gmail.com



## UPCOMING 2026 SYNOD INFO

### Annual Synod XXVII

### JULY 13-15, 2026

The Synod will start with the Bishops' Dinner and Meeting on Monday evening, July 13, and end after the Closing Pontifical Eucharist on Wednesday, July 15.

### LOCATION:

First Lutheran Church  
35 Broad Street,  
Lyons, New York  
*(In the heart of the Finger Lakes Region)*

**Hotel:** Microtel by Wyndham, 434 East Union Street, Newark, NY. We have secured a block of rooms at the room rate of \$109 per night. Complimentary breakfast is provided.

**Group Name:** Lutheran Church International

**Arrival Date:** Monday, 13 July 2026

**Departure Date:** Wednesday, 15 July 2026

**Cutoff Date:** Saturday, June 13, 2026

### Booking Link:

<https://www.wyndhamhotels.com/microtel/newark-new-york/microtel-inn-and-suites-newark-ny/rooms-rates?&checkInDate=07/13/2026&checkOutDate=07/15/2026&groupCode=071326LUT>

### Group Code:

Visit : <https://www.wyndhamhotels.com/microtel/newark-new-york/microtel-inn-and-suites-newark-ny/overview?CID=LC:5b3ss9kd80xe5ox:56061&iata=00093796>

Select Arrival & Departure Dates

Use Group Code: **071326LUT**

### By Phone:

Call Reservations at 315-359-9181

Reference **Lutheran Church International** when making reservations

Limited financial assistance may be available for attendance at the 2026 Synod gathering. Consideration will be based on individual cases. Those interested should make their requests known to their Bishop Ordinary. Approval will be determined by the LC-I Board.

## POINTS OF VIEW...

(Note: The reflections presented in this section are the opinions of the individual authors and are not official statements by the LC-I Board or its officers.)

### “Some Thoughts about Apostolic Succession”

by The Reverend Terrence L Weber, STS, KTJ

A few months ago, I attended a Roman Catholic Mass. It just happened to be the day after Archbishop Hotes had asked me whether I would be interested in writing an article on Apostolic Succession. Obviously, I was honored. I quickly said “yes.” So, as I was listening to the priest praying the Roman Canon of the Eucharistic Prayer, “. . . together with your servant Leo our Pope and Gregory our Bishop, and **all those who, holding to the truth, hand on the catholic and apostolic faith,**” it dawned on me -- Apostolic Succession has to do with the handing on of the Christian faith. Acts 2:42 immediately came to mind, “*They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.*”

Let us begin. First, I want to set forth the Roman Catholic understanding of Apostolic Succession. That will be the easier part of this paper. It seems to me that Lutherans use Roman Catholic teaching and practice as a starting point to then set forth their own understanding of a given topic. From that beginning I will discuss how Lutherans understand Apostolic Succession. That will not be as easy. And finally, for another time perhaps, I would like to discuss any similarities that Roman Catholics and Lutherans share regarding Apostolic Succession.

Simply said for Roman Catholics Apostolic Succession is the ongoing succession of the Twelve Apostles and their successors as church leaders. It was the Apostles who were called, set apart, commissioned, and sent out by Our Lord Jesus into the first century church. After all, these Twelve were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ teaching, His miracles, His suffering and death, but most importantly, of His triumphant resurrection from the dead. Soon, however, the apostolic church was confronted with a practical question, “*Who will take the place of these eyewitnesses once their earthly life is over? Who will have the authority to preach, teach, and lead as the Apostles did?*” The Apostles, in answering those questions, saw to it that the church had men who were properly set apart as their successors. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit these successors, now referred to as bishops, would continue the work of preaching, teaching, and leading the church into the next generation and beyond. So, the standard was set. From one generation to another the authority to lead the church came through the Apostles and their successors who received their authority directly from Jesus Christ.

But it’s a little more complex than that. To properly understand Apostolic Succession in the Roman Church we need to see it within the context of their Tradition. Remember, for Roman Catholics Tradition is placed on the same level as Holy Scripture. As Scripture is normative so is Tradition for Rome. Pope Benedict XVI wrote, “*Tradition is not fundamentally specific doctrines taught by the apostles, but rather the authority divinely given to the apostles and subsequently transmitted to their successors.*” Benedict continued, “*The apostles established bishops in the churches they founded during their missionary activity. The apostles then gave these bishops the authority to preside over local church communities. The way one was guaranteed to be in the line of the teaching of the apostles was to be in communion with the suc-*

*cession of the apostles, the bishops.*” Apostolic Succession not only linked the ordained priest back to the teaching of the Apostles, and ultimately Christ Himself, but imparts a divine authority to lead the church in their generation.

In summary, every Roman Catholic priest has been ordained by a bishop who stands in the direct line of succession to the Apostles. Therefore, every bishop or priest has the divine right and authority to be the “*persona Christi*” in leading and governing the church.

One last thought before we move on. Roman Catholic theologians all agree that throughout history there have been lapses in this succession. Nevertheless, Roman Catholics are scrupulous in keeping track of their apostolic lineage because it gives a divine legitimacy to their priesthood.

Now we turn to the Lutheran understanding of Apostolic Succession. Though some Lutherans subscribe to Apostolic Succession most Lutherans have a different understanding and do not. Dr. Martin Luther, himself ordained according in Apostolic Succession, wanted for good reasons to continue Apostolic Succession after the Reformation. But there was a practical reason why this never happened -- very few Roman Catholic bishops ever became Lutheran so that the line of succession was broken. This cannot, however, be said about the Scandinavian Lutherans where succession was preserved.

As the Reformation gained momentum and moved forward Martin Luther was not so much concerned about having the right episcopal lineage to validate their ordinations. He was concerned with having the Scriptural authority to legitimate the ordination of priests. Luther maintained three components necessary for a valid ordination: Scripture, prayer, and laying on of hands, all drawn from Scripture itself. For Luther, these three components linked the person to Jesus Christ and the Apostles thus giving their Lutheran ordination its authority and legitimacy.

In a recent conversation with our Archbishop, he noted that “*Apostolic Succession is a gift to the church.*” Yes, as members of the ministerium of the Lutheran Church – International we all are fortunate to enjoy this venerable gift. For the most part, all of us practice or have practiced our ministries without the gift of Apostolic Succession until we were received into the LCI. But, for those in other Lutheran communities there is no reason to say their ordinations to preach, teach, and lead the church is any less valid. A person ordained according to their denominational criteria and if Scripture, prayer, and laying on of hands were an integral part of the sacred rite then that ordination and subsequent ministry has its authority in line with the teaching of the Twelve Apostles and their successors. We literally are linked to them as eyewitnesses of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

While it is interesting for bishops and pastors, theologians and historians to study the gift of Apostolic Succession there can be a deeper understanding for our conversations. I direct your attention to what Pope Benedict wrote, “*Apostolic Succession means the continuity of the unity of faith.*” In fact, in the post-synod issue of our LCI newsletter, Archbishop Hotes reflected on this very thought. “*For those in the evangelical catholic understanding of the church, it is a sign of unity in Christ’s body on earth, the Christian church . . . The role of bishops focuses on the unity and continuity of the universal Christian church as the Lutheran reformers understood it.*”

Our Lutheran understanding of the authority to preach the Gospel, administer the Sacraments, and lead the church is not de-



pendent on one's sacerdotal succession or not. The authority of our Lutheran ordination depends on the Divine Call that Christ extends to those whom He selects as church leaders. That call brings us into a unity with Jesus Christ and His church, with the Apostles and their successors. It is a call that will be with us until the end of time. Daily we thank Almighty God for the gift of our ordination, that we stand with that "*great cloud of witnesses*" who are able to proclaim the Cross and Open Tomb for forgiveness, life, and salvation of the whole world.

~ ❧ ~

## *Welcome Pastors Jacobson and Bai to the LC-I Family*



The Rev. Peter C. Jacobson

The son of a Lutheran pastor, Peter Jacobson was born and raised in Nebraska where his father served parishes. After graduating from High School in 1980, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in History and Humanities from Dana College, Blair, Nebraska in 1984. He attended the University of Nebraska-

College of Law in Lincoln 1984-1985, before entering Luther-Northwestern Theological Seminary (now Luther Seminary), St. Paul, Minnesota in 1985. While on vicarage at Trinity Lutheran in Sibley, Iowa, he met his future wife, Anne Shelp, from Sheldon, Iowa. He received a Master of Divinity degree from Luther-Northwestern in 1989.

Father Jacobson was ordained at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Beatrice, Nebraska on June 21, 1989, and served as Pastor of American Lutheran Church in Castlewood, South Dakota from 1989 to 1992. From 1992 to 2002, he served as Associate Pastor at Grace Lutheran Church in Lincoln and served for three as Dean of Clergy of the Lincoln Cluster (ELCA).

Since 2002, Father Jacobson has served as the Pastor of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Wichita, Kansas. He has been a member of the pan-Lutheran ministerium, the "Society of the Holy Trinity", since 2001, and served for six years as the Dean of the Sangre de Cristo Chapter.

Father Jacobson and his wife Anne were married in 1989; Anne is a Licensed Master Social Worker for the Wichita School District. They have two daughters, two sons, and three granddaughters.

## The Rev. Dr. Yuwei Isaiah Bai

**Chaplain (CPT) Yuwei Isaiah Bai** currently serves as the **Battalion Chaplain** for the **57th Expeditionary Signal Battalion—Enhanced at Fort Hood, Texas**. He assumed his current duties on 16 September 2024.

### Education and Ordination

Chaplain Bai's professional journey began in Shanghai, China, where he was born. He initially pursued higher education at the University of Oregon, majoring in Business Administration starting in 2012. Sensing a vocational calling to ministry, he transferred to New Hope Christian College (formerly Eugene Bible College), graduating in 2017. Having lived in Oregon for six years, he proudly considers it his second home.

He continued his theological studies at the Lutheran Brethren Seminary in Minnesota, where he earned a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree in 2020. Following his M.Div., he was ordained as a Pastor in the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC). Demonstrating a commitment to advanced scholarship, Chaplain Bai completed his Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) degree in 2024 from Talbot School of Theology at Biola University, specializing in the Advanced Biblical Preaching track.

### Military Service

Driven by a profound call to serve those who serve this nation, Chaplain Bai was commissioned as a Chaplain in the Minnesota Army National Guard. He was initially assigned to the 2-136th Combined Arms Battalion, 1/34 ABCT, 34th Infantry Division, Minnesota National Guard.

Chaplain Bai is a distinguished graduate of the Chaplain Basic Officer Leader Course (CHBOLC), where he earned placement on the highly selective Commandant's List upon graduation in December 2023.

In August 2024, Chaplain Bai transitioned to the Active-Duty Component of the United States Army. He is currently serving with the 57th Expeditionary Signal Battalion—Enhanced, 11th Corps Signal Brigade, Fort Cavazos, TX.

### Personal Life

Chaplain Bai is married to his wife, Kaitlin, and they have been blessed with nine years of marriage and three children: Hannah, Samantha, and Cyrus.

### A little humor...

#### Wedding—Just Following Instructions!

**Priest (to Groom): "Repeat after me"**

**Groom: "After me."**

**Priest (to the Bride): "Is he serious?"**

**Bride: "No. His name is Darryl."**



## **Constitutional Procedure for Election of Archbishop**

### ***The procedure for Election of an Archbishop as well as the requirements for the Office of Bishop:***

#### **Article VI, Section 5: Archbishop, Election of**

When it is known that in the next year a new Archbishop is to be elected, the House of Bishops shall provide assistance to the Executive Board and to the Annual Synod in identifying candidates for the Office of Archbishop. Nominations shall be made by ecclesiastical written ballot for this office at the Annual Synod by all entitled to vote. Only those who are currently pastors or bishops of the Lutheran Church - International entitled to vote and hold office are eligible to be candidates, except that a pastor should have served in the office of Pastor for at least ten years. If a pastor is nominated who is not a bishop, he shall fulfill all the requirements for the election and ordination of a bishop (*Article IV, Sections 5.2, 5.3, 5.4*). No more than three nominees shall be selected, balloting taking place until only three candidates remain. During the following year a time of discernment is held. Candidates who remain in nomination at the Annual Synod of election shall be the only nominees allowed. The election shall be conducted as described in *Article IV, Section 5.3*: a unanimous written vote of the House of Bishops present and voting, a three-quarters majority of the House of Clergy present and voting, and a simple majority of the House of Delegates present and voting shall constitute election of the candidate. A pastor elected Archbishop shall be ordained a Bishop and installed as Archbishop at the same service. A bishop elected Archbishop shall be installed at the main liturgy of the Annual Synod at which he is elected. The installation shall be conducted by the outgoing Archbishop, or if the outgoing Archbishop is unable, by the longest-serving other Lutheran Church - International bishop present at that Annual Synod. The authority to preside over administrative matters comes with the installation. If a pastor is elected and the installation delayed until ordination as a Bishop, the Annual Synod may vote to name the Archbishop-elect "Apostolic Administrator" and to serve in that administrative capacity until his ordination as a Bishop and installation as Archbishop. If no candidate is elected and the Holy Spirit leads the Annual Synod to a candidate not previously nominated, a unanimous vote of all three Houses is required for election. If no election has been completed, the procedure begins anew.

#### **REFERENCED ARTICLES:**

##### **Article IV, Section 5.2: Bishops, Qualification**

Bishops are expected to exhibit the qualities for the office of Bishop stated in the Pauline and Johannine epistles of the New Testament. Bishops are viewed as successors to the apostolic office, as recorded in the New Testament, and should have served in the office of Pastor for at least ten years. The office of Bishop is permanent in duration and universal in its utilization in the Churches, conferred by a rite of Ordination.

##### **Article IV, Section 5.3: Bishops, Selection of**

Pastors selected to be Bishops of the Lutheran Church - International shall be nominated at an Annual Synod of the Lutheran Church - International. The nomination may be put forward at the request of a Diocesan Synod (*Article V, Section 6.2*) or by a member of any House, but either the nomination or a second to the nomination must be made by a member of the House of Bishops to designate the nominee as a candidate for the Order of Bishops. Candidates shall have a period of discernment lasting no more than one year to accept or decline nomination. Candidates who accept nomination shall then be presented to the next Annual Synod for election. The presiding officer, who shall be a bishop in the Lutheran Church - International, shall lead in an invocation of the Holy Spirit after which the ballots for bishop shall be cast by written (secret) vote. A unanimous written vote of the House of Bishops present and voting, a three-quarters majority of the House of Clergy present and voting, and a simple majority of the House of Delegates present and voting shall constitute election of the candidate. Having accepted nomination, the candidate shall indicate his acceptance of the election, which completes the process of election. A date and place for the ordination of the bishop shall be set by the House of Bishops, including the bishop-elect, to be administered prior to the next Annual Synod.

#### Article IV, Section 5.4: Bishops, Selection of when urgent

When the Annual Synod, for reasons of apparent urgency recognized by a simple majority of each House, determines that an election must occur without the year of discernment, an election may be conducted at the same Annual Synod at which the nomination is made. The election procedure (Article IV, Section 5.3) shall occur at a session other than the session in which the Houses adopt a motion to exercise this procedure and in which the nomination is presented and accepted. This shall not be the normal procedure of election, but is to be used only in a time of unexpected urgency.

#### +Richard

The Rt. Rev. Richard W. Horn, Missionary Bishop serving the Western Diocese of the Lutheran Church - International

### *In Memoriam*

## Virginia Ettlemeyer

Virginia (Nelsen) Ettlemeyer died September 29, 2025, in Holmdel, NJ after a long illness. She was born December 30, 1947, in Bayshore, Long Island, NY and grew up in Selden, Stony Brook and Smithtown, NY.

Ginny graduated from Smithtown High School in 1966 and attended Wagner College, Staten Island, NY, receiving her B.S. in Nursing degree in 1970. It was at Wagner that Ginny met her future husband, the Rev. Gary V. Ettlemeyer. They were married for 55 years, building a life together on the East End of Long Island; Yonkers and Lynbrook, NY; and Glen Gardner and Belvidere, NJ.

Ginny retired after a fruitful career in ICU/CCU nursing, providing private critical care nursing, and working in Post-partum Maternity Care. She was a loving mother, grandmother, sister and aunt. She liked nothing more than to be with family for special occasions or just "being together" as often as possible. Ginny was also a devoted "Reverend Mother" to the parishes she and Gary served during 41 years of Lutheran pastoral ministry.

Ginny loved bird watching, sewing, embroidery and quilting, having served on the quilting guild at Spruce Run Evangelical Lutheran Church, Glen Gardner, NJ, for many years, where Gary served as pastor for 21 years until his retirement in 2019.

Ginny and Gary had two sons and three grandchildren: Michael (married to Annelies van der Wateren – son, Andrew Robert) and Martin (married to Frances X. Carias – children, Gary Thomas and Sophia Grace). She is also survived by her brother, Chris Nelsen of Fulton, NY, and sister, Nancy (Nelsen) Caravan of Phoenix, NY. She was predeceased by her husband, Gary, and parents, Martin and Millie (Tanck) Nelsen.

Visitation will be at the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, 168 NJ-94, Blairstown, NJ from 12-1 p.m. on Saturday, October 4. A Funeral Mass will be held at 1 p.m. immediately following visitation at the church. A private graveside service will be held at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Sleepy Hollow, NY at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, October 6.

The family has requested that in lieu of flowers donations be made to Lutheran Church International: <https://lutheranchurchinternational.org>.

## Anna P. Haye

Deacon Anna P. Haye died on August 21, 2025, in Coney Island, Brooklyn, NY after a long illness. She served as the Diocesan Deacon of the Northeastern Diocese at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Coney Island, Brooklyn, NY since her ordination on June 4, 2006.

Her funeral Mass was held at St. Paul's on September 9, 2025 and Bishop Bougher presiding and Pastors Thomas Robson and Robert Rainis assisting. Internment was in New Jersey. Anna is survived by her daughter Elena.

*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord for they rest from their labors.*

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# REGISTRATION FORM

**Annual Synod of the Lutheran Church-International**  
**Monday, July 13 to Wednesday, July 15, 2026**  
**Annual Synod Registration \$65.00/person**

Number Attending \_\_\_\_\_ Registration Confirmed \_\_\_\_\_ Registration PAID by \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

SEND TO:     **The Rev. William Wigmore III, Treasurer**  
                  **15 High Street**  
                  **Lyons, NY 14489**  
  
OR             **PastorWigmore@gmail.com (215-416-9591)**

===== PLEASE RETURN THE ABOVE WITH YOUR REGISTRATION FEE =====

## **Annual Synod XXVII of the Lutheran Church-International** **July 13–15, 2026**

*Hosted by Lutheran Church-International Northeastern Diocese*

### **Location:**

First Lutheran Church  
35 Broad Street, Lyons, NY 14489

Annual Synod Registration: \$65.00/person  
*(INCLUDES MEALS, BEVERAGES AND SNACKS AT SYNOD)*  
*(BREAKFAST IS COMPLIMENTARY AT THE HOTEL)*

### **Hotel Accommodations:**

Microtel by Wyndham  
434 East Union Street  
Newark, NY 14513  
Phone: 315-359-9181 *(for reservations)*

Please be sure to mention Lutheran Church-International when you make your reservations!

**\$109.00/Night. Includes Complimentary Breakfast Buffet.**

**PLEASE NOTE:** The Annual Synod is Monday, July 13 to Wednesday, July 15, 2026. The normal order of business and worship for the Annual Synod is to be conducted Tuesday and Wednesday. **Monday** is set aside for the Pre-Synod/Executive Board meeting and dinner. You are reminded to make reservations for your stay by **JUNE 13, 2026** in order to receive the special daily room rate.

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Annual Synod Registration





First Lutheran Church, Lyons, New York  
LC-I Headquarters Church and Archbishop's Office

## Reminder—2026 Dues

**FOR CONTINUING SUPPORT OF THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE LC-I**

**CLERGY AND LAY MINISTER MEMBERSHIP DUES: \$75.00 USD**

**CONGREGATIONS / COMMUNITIES OF FAITH MEMBERSHIP DUES: \$150.00 USD**

Please maintain your good standing and credentialing! The dues are required for ordained and lay members and communities of faith who have been received and included on the official ministerial roster of the LC-I. All additional contributions, gifts, and bequests are gratefully received.

SPECIAL NOTE: Unable to meet your responsibility for 2026 dues? Contact your bishop as soon as possible.

### LUTHERAN CHURCH – INTERNATIONAL

#### 2026 MEMBERSHIP DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

\_\_\_\_\_ 2026 Dues for Ministerial Members: \$75

\_\_\_\_\_ 2026 Dues for Congregations and Communities of Faith: \$150

\_\_\_\_\_ Gift \_\_\_\_\_ Bequest (Amount) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ In Memory \_\_\_\_\_ In Thankfulness

For \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_ or Electronic Funds Transfer: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

SEND TO: The Rev. William Wigmore, Treasurer

15 High Street

Lyons NY 14489

OR PastorWigmore@gmail.com (1-215-416-9591)

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Synod Dues and Thank Offerings