



BULLETIN

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

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - INTERNATIONAL

AND THE

LUTHERAN WORLD PARISH

POST SYNOD 2026



++Robert W. Hotes, Archbishop

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

It was a joy to come together as the 2026 LC-I Synod Assembly. The delegated representatives of the communities of faith of the Lutheran Church-International joined together to give thanks and praise for the ministries that God has given us and the grace to undertake in His name during the time since the 2025 Synod Assembly.

In my opinion, based on decades of experience as a member and leader in the LC-I, we have every reason to believe that God has a special role for the LC-I in the years to come. In this edition of the BULLETIN, LC-I Vice President Mitzi Eberhardt has provided an overview of the events and actions of the Synod delegates at the Assembly, as we continue in our more than fifty years of service as a part of the One, Holy, catholic and apostolic church.

Evidence supports that we have grown and developed into a church body that at least is on the path to becoming the part of the universal Body of Christ on earth that the Lord God intended us to be. We are evangelical, following Christ's commission. And we are a true part of the church catholic in the Augsburg Lutheran understanding. I am humbly grateful to have been part of this work in the role of archbishop. While it is unfortunately necessary for me now to retire from this role within the LC-I, I intend to help the new archbishop as he wishes, according to my abilities.

Perhaps the most important action of the Synod Assembly was the selection of candidates for election to the office of archbishop at the 2027 Synod gathering in Lyons, New York. The process was very ably managed by Synod parliamentarian Bishop Richard Horn. The balloting process went smoothly and professionally. It resulted in the identification and nomination of three candidates for the office: Bishops Aubrey Bougher, Richard Horn, and Rodney Eberhardt, in order of their seniority in the order of bishop. Bishop Jeffrey Bishoff elected not to stand for the office.

The LC-I is very blessed to have candidates that are willing to serve Christ's Church in this capacity. It is a role that demands commitment and strong leadership skills. It is not a sinecure, nor is it a reward for past service. The office is, instead, a call to activity by God's grace in support of the entire church body that is the LC-I.

The following excerpts from the LC-I Constitution provide an overview of the responsibilities of the archbishop:

Article VI THE ARCHBISHOP

*Article VI, Section 1: **Archbishop, Office and Authority*** One pastor or bishop of the Lutheran Church - International shall be elected to serve as Archbishop and shall be the chief administrative and executive officer of the Lutheran Church - International without term until his death, resignation, or removal. The Archbishop shall chair the Executive Board (Article V, Section 5.2). If the Archbishop becomes the subject of charges which could result in his removal from office, the matter would be handled by the Executive Board (Article IV, Section 10.2), with authority to temporarily suspend him until the next Annual Synod, the duties being filled as described in Article V, Section 5.3.

*Article VI, Section 2: **Archbishop, Requirements for the Office*** The Archbishop shall be a God-fearing man, pious and firmly established in evangelical and missionary zeal, of good judgment, just, and with a strong desire for fellowship among God's people. He shall give evidence by life and testimony that he is a sinner saved by God's grace, with an earnest desire and passion to be true to the heavenly vision of his calling and service to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Archbishop shall be an ordained bishop or pastor of the Lutheran Church – International prior to his election as Archbishop.

*Article VI, Section 3: **Archbishop, Duties of the Office*** The Archbishop shall serve as the chair of the Executive Board and the chief administrative and executive officer of the Lutheran Church – International, and he shall oversee the life and work of the Lutheran Church - International in ways that glorify Jesus Christ. The responsibilities of the office of Archbishop are: a. preside at the Annual Synod (Article V, Section 1); b. preside at meetings of the Executive Board (Article V, Section 5.1); c. give pastoral oversight to all ministers and communities of faith in the Lutheran Church - International, and particularly to the other bishops in their oversight responsibilities and care of souls; d. preside or appoint another bishop to preside at the Ordination of candidates for the Orders of Deacons and Pastors approved by the Executive Board of the Lutheran Church - International; e. preside at the Ordination of Bishops of the Lutheran Church - International, with other bishops as required; f. report his activities and recommendations to the Executive Board and to the Annual Synod; g. exercise general supervision of all activities and responsibilities of the Lutheran Church – International; h. fulfill the duties of the office as described elsewhere in the Constitution and By-Laws of the Lutheran Church - International; and i. nominate or appoint, depending on the position, those needed in various positions of leadership in the Lutheran Church – International.

*Article VI, Section 4: **Expansion of the Church*** Acting under the authority and guidance of the Executive Board, the Archbishop shall oversee the administration of the Lutheran Church - International as structured including the expansion of mission and ministry. He may specify areas of mission outreach and development and assign leadership to a bishop to serve as a Missionary Bishop. When needed, the Archbishop may assign leadership to a coordinating pastor or dean.

*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.

*Article VI, Section 6: **Archbishop, Incapacity or Inability to Fulfill Duties*** If the Archbishop is unable to fulfill the duties of the office, and at the request of the Archbishop or by action of the Executive Board in consultation with medical and legal counsel, an interim Apostolic Administrator elected by a two-thirds written vote of the Executive Board shall temporarily assume both the administrative and spiritual duties of the Archbishop until the Archbishop can resume the responsibilities of the office or until the next Annual Synod (Article V, Section 5.3). Upon the death, resignation, or removal of the Archbishop, the Apostolic Administrator shall serve in the place of the Archbishop until a new Archbishop is elected and installed.

The full LC-I Constitution and Bylaws are available on the website.

The role of LC-I archbishop is a position or office within the church body as a whole. He represents the LC-I under the Constitution and the discipline of the Gospel and the LC-I Board of Directors. Consecration, as a bishop or any other office within the church, is different from ordination. It is not just an honorific title. While the office is worthy of respect to be effective, it demands hard work and dedication as servant to the welfare of the church body and the entire Church catholic.

The archbishop's role has two aspects: As the executive officer of a not-for-profit corporation, the archbishop is responsible for the correct functioning of the organization under governmental regulations, in line with the provisions of the LC-Constitution. As the leader of the bishops of a part of the One, Holy, and Apostolic Church, it entails leadership and support to all members of the church body, but especially to the other bishops. It is an honor and a task to be "primus inter pares," first among equals. As the consecrating and ordaining officer of LC-I clergy, the archbishop continues the historical line of apostolic succession to his successor in that office.

I have found the role to be demanding, but also rewarding, because God's grace always supports ministries in His name when they are undertaken prayerfully and with the correct intentions. I always tried my best to do so. But I acknowledge my weaknesses and mistakes. They were the result of my failings, not the Lord's.

In my experience, the role of Archbishop requires humility and a sense of humor, in addition to the Scriptural requirements and qualifications noted in Timothy and Titus. Moreover, the willingness to listen and respond to the needs of members and the ability and means to communicate effectively and efficiently are important to the archepiscopal ministry.

Importantly, the archbishop should believe in the mission of the LC-I and be willing to put the welfare of the church body above his personal desires and opinions. It is not a purely ceremonial role. The archbishop is, in fact and deed, the bishop to the bishops as well as a leader for all members of the LC-I family.

The early Christian communities saw qualifications for the role of bishop (and therefore for the role of archbishop), as:

- **Moral integrity** (above reproach, disciplined life)
- **Domestic leadership** (household as a micro-church)
- **Teaching authority** (apt to teach, able to refute error)
- **Spiritual maturity** (not a novice)

- **Public witness** (good reputation with outsiders)

These understandings formed the basis for later Christian ordination rites and canonical norms. And they are valid for the role of archbishop as well. Here is the basis in Scripture:

Biblical Qualifications for Ministers (Bishops/Overseers)

1 Timothy 3:1–7 vs. Titus 1:5–9

Qualification	1 Timothy 3:1–7	Titus 1:5–9
Above reproach / blameless	Yes	Yes
Husband of one wife	Yes	Yes
Faithful children	Implied (household well-managed)	Explicit: children faithful, not accused of dissipation
Temperate / sober-minded	Yes	Yes (self-controlled)
Self-controlled	Yes	Yes
Respectable / orderly	Yes	Implied (upright, disciplined)
Hospitable	Yes	Yes
Able to teach	Yes	Yes (able to exhort and refute)
Not given to drunkenness	Yes	Yes
Not violent	Yes	Yes
Gentle	Yes	Implied (not quick-tempered)
Not quarrelsome	Yes	Implied (not arrogant, not quick-tempered)
Not a lover of money	Yes	Yes (not greedy for gain)
Manages household well	Yes	Implied (faithful children)
Not a recent convert	Yes	Not stated
Good reputation with outsiders	Yes	Not stated
Not arrogant	Not stated	Yes
Not quick-tempered	Not stated	Yes
Lover of good	Not stated	Yes
Upright, holy, disciplined	Not stated	Yes
Holds firmly to sound doctrine	Implied (able to teach)	Explicit

- **1 Timothy** emphasizes *public reputation, maturity, and household leadership*.
- **Titus** emphasizes *moral character, doctrinal integrity, and disciplined life*.

Additional Related Passages

These do not list qualifications formally but describe the character and responsibilities of pastoral leaders:

- **Acts 20:28–35** — Paul’s charge to the Ephesian elders
- **1 Peter 5:1–4** — Shepherding willingly, not domineering
- **2 Timothy 2:24–26** — The Lord’s servant must be gentle, able to teach, patient
- **Hebrews 13:7, 17** — Leaders must be examples of faith and integrity

To aid us in facilitating the work of the Holy Spirit in electing the next archbishop, I am asking the following:

***That each of the three candidates prepare a brief statement (one or two paragraphs) addressing his vision for the future of the LC-I and be ready to discuss that vision at the 2027 Synod Assembly. The statement should address the means needed for accomplishment toward that vision and how he proposes to meet those needs.**

***That all members of the LC-I offer special prayers for the work of the Holy Spirit in our election of the next archbishop and prayerfully consider the qualifications as they relate to the future of the LC-I.**

The election of the next archbishop will be a critical milestone in the history of the LC-I. God has blessed us with the means for a bright future in His service. May we be grateful for the opportunities that lie ahead.

May God continue to bless us and keep us in His care,
Your servant and brother,
++Robert

***These statements will be published in the BULLETIN prior to the Synod Assembly**



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 at: dbldoc@sbcglobal.net.

WE PRAY FOR...

Every place where conflict rages, sow seeds of calm and openness to reconciliation especially Ukraine, Israel, Iran, the Middle East, Africa, Venezuela and even our own nation.

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.

All leaders of the world, especially our own president, Donald, that you would strengthen their resolve and work for peace in their nations.

All bishops, pastors, deacons, deaconesses, and church workers, that as they preach and teach the Word, all who hear may believe.

Those suffering through natural disasters in other parts of the world.

All who suffer persecution for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, especially those in the LC-I family in Asia.

Those suffering from illnesses in mind, body or spirit, especially those in the LC-I family.

The Very Rev. Father William Babbitt as he recovers from his recent surgery.

For Bishop Horn for health concerns.

Those who mourn the deaths of loved ones from disease and disaster, from violence and war.

Diane Goad for healing and the return of health.

Darlene Gies, as she mourns the loss of her husband, William.

The family of Bishop Cepero as they mourn the death of their husband and father.

Patrick Rooney, as he recovers from health issues.

Deacon Norbert Mayer as he recovers from surgery.

Phyllis Bischoff, mother of Bishop Jeffrey, who is facing health issues, and for Michelle, her daughter, who is caring for her.

The people of Ontario, Canada, and their Police Services as they remember two of their police heroes, Constable Tarun Bali and Constable Marc Pinizzotto.

Firefighters and other first responders in lives of service that they be protected from all danger and harm.

Those planning the 2027 LC-I Synod Assembly.

WE PRAY WITH THANKSGIVING...

For our Executive Board as they work to further the mission and ministry of our Synod.

For all members of the Lutheran World Parish.

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*We give back to you, O God, those whom you gave to us.
You did not lose them when you gave them to us, and we do not lose them by their return to you.
Your dear Son has taught us that life is eternal and love cannot die.
So death is only a horizon, and a horizon is only the limit of our sight.
Open our eyes to see more clearly, and draw us closer to you that we
may know that we are nearer to our loved ones who are with you.
You have told us that you are preparing a place for us,
prepare us also for that happy place,
That where you are we may also be always, O dear Lord of life and death.
William Penn (1644-1718)*

IN MEMORIAM



The Rt. Reverend Juan O. Cepero
Missionary Bishop,
Caribbean and
Hispanic Ministries

On July 5, 2026, we were saddened to learn that Bishop Juan O. Cepero joined the saints triumphant. His family was deeply grateful for your prayers, messages, calls, and the love you showed them throughout the days before his death. Your friendship and support were a great source of comfort to them.

The family asks you to continue to keep Carmen, his wife, and the whole Cepero family in your prayers.

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

We give you thanks, almighty and gracious God, that you have fed us with heavenly food, the body and blood of your Son, uniting us through him in the fellowship of your Spirit. We thank you for raising up among us faithful servants for the ministry of Word and Sacrament, especially your servants, Juan and William, who exemplified in word and deed the Gospel of your Son. Grant that we, with Juan and William, may serve you now in the Church on earth and rejoice before you forever. Amen.



William Leonhardt Fredrick Gies, known to his loved ones as Bill, was born on May 17th, 1962, to a loving father and mother in Milwaukee WI. He was the eldest of three children with two younger sisters. After attending Concordia University Milwaukee Campus and Concordia Lutheran Seminary St. Louis, MO, he served his vicarage in Detroit, MI.

His first call was to Tennessee, before the Lord led him to shepherd His people in Maryland. In recent years he had the privilege of leading God's people in worship serving as a supply pastor to LC-I, NALC, ELCM congregations not only in Maryland but across the Mid-Atlantic region.

Bill was a member of The Society of the Holy Trinity (STS), having subscribed to the rule of the ministerium in the second year of its existence.

Bill was a proud Eagle Scout and member of the Order of the Arrow. His joy found in the outdoors continued throughout his life, and in his later years he could regularly be found walking

in the woods talking with God. If the weather was nice, you could count on him returning home with his shoes in hand and his feet covered in dirt. When he wasn't getting intentionally lost in nature, he was bringing joy to his friends and family in the form of feeding them his latest vegetarian culinary masterpiece. If you'd eaten it before, he'd be sure to make it even better to win you over to home cooking.

While he was known for his strong and beautiful singing voice, he was also an accomplished and enthusiastic amateur musician, having played the violin for nearly 50 years. His passionate consumption of music and art influenced many facets of his life, notably in his love of classic rock, namely, The Beatles, leading to his grandchildren affectionately calling him "Grandude."

Bill is survived by his wife, Darlene, of over 14 years; his son, daughter-in-law, and their two children; his daughter and new son-in-law; his mother, two sisters, two nephews, niece and numerous other loving family members. His loved ones find comfort and solace knowing that he is home with his Lord.

A Memorial Service with Eucharist will be held on Wednesday, September 23, 2026 at 11:00 a.m. Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, 2086 Parkview Avenue, Abington, PA. Reception to follow. For those who cannot attend in person, a livestream will be available.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks you consider donating in memory of Bill to one of the charities listed below:

The American Red Cross-Southeast Chapter
2600 W. Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53233
414-342-8680

American Heart Association
<https://www.heart.org>

NALC Disaster Relief Fund
c/o St. Matthew Lutheran Church
3620 Redrose Farm Road
Baltimore, MD 21220
Email: office@stmatthewbq.org

Old Zion Lutheran Church
c/o Joan Wachlin
2012 Wallace
Philadelphia, PA 19130.

Highlights of Synod Assembly XXVII

On Monday, July 13, 2027, 20 attendees gathered at Ciccino's Italian Restaurant, Waterloo, NY in the Finger Lakes Region, for the Bishop's Dinner.

We gathered at First Lutheran Church, Lyons, NY on Tuesday for the beginning of Synod Assembly. Visitors attending were The Rt. Rev. Dan Funk, Bishop of the Anglican Convocation of Churches, Holy Cross, Hyattstown, MD and Deacon Adrainne J. Gray, Executive Director of the Lutheran Diaconal Association, from Atlanta, GA, both brought greetings to the assembly.

The Opening Eucharist was led by The Rev. William H. Wigmore III as celebrant and The Rt. Rev. Rodney L. Eberhardt as preacher. Serving as deacon was The Rev. Deacon Helena Morris and as lector was Mitzi Eberhardt, Vice President.

Due to the announced retirement of Archbishop Hotes in 2027, a nominating ballot was done until there were three candidates – Bishop Aubrey Bougher, Bishop Rodney Eberhardt and Bishop Horn. The vote for archbishop will be conducted at the Synod Assembly in 2027.

Anniversaries were noted and certificates were presented to the following: Episcopal: Bishop Bougher 20 years, Bishop Horn 10 years; Priestly: Father Babbitt 30 years, Father Fortune 65 years, Father Hebbeler 25 years, Father Rainis 15 years and Father Wigmore 10 years; Deacon: Sevika Sooppersaud 35 years; Deaconess: Christine Stephenson 10 years. Congratulations to all for your service in Word and Sacrament.

After lunch, The Rev. Terrence Weber, STS KTJ, gave a presentation on Apostolic Succession. This presentation appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

After the various Houses met, the following were elected: Vice President, Mitzi Eberhardt, Secretary, Bishop Jeffrey Bischoff.

Tuesday Vespers was led by Bishop Bougher with Father Peter Jacobson serving as the lector. Wednesday Matins was led by Bishop Bischoff with The Rev. Deacon Sam Sooppersaud serving as lector.

The Solemn Pontifical Synodical Holy Eucharist was celebrated with the affirmation of The Rev. Peter Jacobson, and the Installation of Officers and the Closing of Synod. The Presiding Minister and Preacher was The Most Rev. Dr. Robert W. Hotes, Concelebrating Ministers were the Bishops of the LC-I. Serving as deacon was The Rev. Deacon Eric Frank, Lector was Mitzi Eberhardt as Vice President, Archbishop's Chaplain was The Rev. William H. Wigmore III, Master of Ceremonies was The Rev. Terrence L. Weber.

Special thanks to The Rev. Jack Whritenour who supplied music for our services, which greatly enhanced our worship.

Synod Assembly XXVIII next year will be the week of June 20, 2027 at First Lutheran Church, Lyons, New York. Information on reservations will be provided when available in 2027.



Seen in the parking lot at Synod 😊

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

**Presentation on “Apostolic Succession” to the Annual Synod of
The Lutheran Church – International
World Lutheran Parish
Lyons, New York on July 14, 2026**

by The Reverend Terrence L Weber, STS, KTJ

I was asked by our archbishop to prepare a presentation for this assembly on the topic of “Apostolic Succession,” not that I am any authority on the subject, but over the years I have cultivated an interest in the ecclesial development of certain doctrines and traditions of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.

I propose to follow this path: first, a working definition of apostolic succession, then how the early church fathers contributed to the development of this doctrine, then what the reformers understood about apostolic succession, and finally, with two millennia of history behind us how does the church value apostolic succession today.

First then, let me begin by offering this definition of apostolic succession: “*Apostolic Succession is the unbroken, continuous line of bishops having the spiritual authority to govern, teach, and administer the church dating back to the Twelve Apostles.*” The apostles were personally called, set apart, commissioned, and sent out by Our Lord Jesus Christ. These twelve were witnesses of Jesus’ teachings and miracles, His suffering and death, but most importantly, they were eyewitnesses of His resurrection from the dead.

We understand how today certain bishops, most notably Roman Catholic, can trace their spiritual authority in a continuous line back to the apostles and ultimately to Christ Himself. But how did it become the norm? The apostles and those who came after them believed that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit men selected as successors would receive the spiritual authority to preach, teach, and govern the church from their generation into the next. It was believed that by the laying on of hands the Holy Spirit was imparted **making these successors literally eyewitnesses to the resurrection**. From this early beginning it took centuries to completely develop what is understood about apostolic succession today.

Let us look at some prominent early church fathers and how they contributed to the development of apostolic succession.

But, before we do that, let me first ask, “*Why did the early church fathers feel a need to create and develop a teaching of apostolic succession?*” The answer – **it was all about church authority**. In the post-Pentecost church, it was a question of who had the legitimate authority to govern, who had the legitimate authority to establish communities of faith, who had the legitimate authority to preach and teach, who had the legitimate authority to discipline and absolve, who had the legitimate authority to assemble a biblical canon? All these questions were extremely important for the infant church. And the church, through her fathers, all wrestled with these questions carefully in order to create a sacred tradition that would substantiate apostolic succession against those who sought to destroy the church.

Probably the earliest father to initially wrestle with apostolic succession was **St Clement of Rome** (35-100). He was a prominent churchman of the first century. In fact, Tertullian tells us that Clement was ordained by St Peter himself. Later, Irenaeus of Lyons, writing in the second century said that, “*Clement saw the blessed apostles themselves and often conferred with them.*” Around 96, Clement wrote his earliest surviving letter to the church at Corinth articulating his thoughts of apostolic succession. He wrote, “*Our apostles also knew, through Our*

Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be contention over the bishop's office. So, for this cause, having received complete foreknowledge, they appointed leaders and gave their offices a permanent character; that is, when they died, other approved men would succeed automatically to their ministry." Clement repeatedly argued that church authority came directly from Jesus Christ through the apostles and their successors.

To summarize, St Clement's framework for apostolic succession included these points:

- Divine Commission: Clement argued that God sent Jesus Christ, who in turn, called and sent the apostles.
- Appointed Leaders: The apostles went out preaching and appointed their disciples – testing them by the Holy Spirit – to serve as bishops for future generations.
- Perpetual Succession: Knowing that disputes over leadership would arise the apostles established a formal ***"rule of succession"*** so that when they died, other approved men would step in and take over their ministry.
- An Unbroken Line: Because the bishops of the church were placed in their positions by Christ, Clement argued that they could not be removed without just cause.

St Clement's emphasis on the orderly transmission of authority served as a foundational test for the tradition of apostolic succession in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches today.

By the second century **St Ignatius of Antioch** (35-110) established the three-fold ministry – of bishops, presbyters, and deacons – to preserve correct teaching and the unity of the church. He taught that the bishop represents Christ ensuring spiritual continuity with the past.

Ignatius wrote in 107, *"The means of securing unity in the local church is twofold: 1) the bishop and, 2) the eucharist at which he presides . . . You must follow the bishop as Jesus Christ followed the Father and follow the council of presbyters as you would the apostles . . . Let no one do anything that has to do with the church without the bishop. Only under the authority of the bishop is the eucharist considered valid . . . Whatever the bishop approves is also pleasing to God, in order that everything you do may be trustworthy and valid."*

To summarize what St Ignatius taught concerning succession:

- Presbytery as the Apostles: The bishops are the earthly council of the apostles to carry out the appointments of Jesus Christ.
- Unity with the Bishop: *"Wherever the bishop shall appear, even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church."*
- Preserve Tradition: Preserving and protecting the church meant adhering to the teaching authority of the bishops and their successors.

In the second century **St Irenaeus of Lyons** (120-202) wrote extensively against the Gnostic heresy. For him safeguarding the legitimate teaching authority of the church meant adhering to a strict lineage of apostolic succession. Irenaeus wrote, *"The tradition received from the apostles has come down to us through the succession of the bishops. It is necessary that every church should agree because her apostolic tradition is safe guarded in this way."* Irenaeus compiled a list of various bishops throughout the years that have succeeded one another going back to the apostles. He finally writes, *"By this order and succession, the tradition that is in the church from the apostles and the preaching of the truth have come down to us. And this is the fullest proof that it is one and the same life-giving faith that has been preserved in the church from the apostles until now."*

Irenaeus, who was a disciple of St Polycarp (himself a disciple of the apostle St John), also used this apostolic lineage as a weapon against Gnostic heretics. Here are his key concepts:

- Historical Accountability: There was a visible legitimate tradition passed from the apostles to men they appointed as bishops.
- Traceable Lineage: He challenged Gnostic heretics to prove their authority.

- Guardian of Truth: Succession functions primarily as a protector of correct doctrine.
- Unity of the Church: Those committed to the authority of the bishop remained in unity.

One more second century father, **Tertullian** (160-225). Concerning the successors to the apostles he wrote, *“Let them (the heretics) exhibit the origins of their churches, coming down from the beginning by succession in such a way that their first bishop had for his predecessor one of the apostles. For this is how the apostolic churches record their origins. In just the same way the other churches produced men who were appointed to the office of bishop by the apostles and so transmitted the apostolic seed to them.”*

Like Irenaeus, Tertullian also used apostolic succession as a defense against heresy. He maintained that having doctrinal unity with the apostles was the ultimate test of legitimate spiritual authority. While Tertullian argued for the necessity of apostolic succession, he was the first church father who emphasized that **correct teaching of apostolic doctrine was the supreme test over lineage**. This thought would be picked up later by the reformers.

Jumping to the Middle Ages, **St Thomas Aquinas** (1225-1274) framed succession as the unbroken, divinely instituted transmission of spiritual authority from Christ to the apostles to their successors. His key thoughts are scattered throughout his *Summa*. Aquinas argued that Christ established a visible hierarchy to maintain unity and truth in the church. He taught that through the sacrament of ordination bishops and those they ordained received an indelible character (*character indelebilis*) that legally and spiritually linked them directly to the authority given to the twelve apostles by Christ. Aquinas’ teachings on succession were: the necessity for visible unity in the church, the power of order and jurisdiction in the church, and the mirroring of divine authority.

In addition to St Thomas Aquinas there were other prominent theologians from the Middle Ages who emerged in support of apostolic succession. Theologians such as **Anselm of Canterbury** (1033-1109), **St Bonaventure** (1221-1274), and **John of Paris** (1255-1306).

Permit me to finish this second section with a quote from a modern-day theologian. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as Pope Benedict XVI wrote, *“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 apostles teaching was to be in succession of the apostles . . . Through apostolic succession then it is Christ who reaches us; in the word of the apostles and their successors it is He who speaks to us; through their hands it is He who acts in the sacraments; in their gaze it is His gaze that envelopes us and makes us feel loved, welcomed in the heart of God. And even today, as at the beginning, Christ himself is the true shepherd and guardian of our souls, which we follow with great confidence, gratitude, and joy.”*

Obviously, we have quickly moved across many centuries. Now we turn our attention to the 16th century Reformation and what the reformers, primarily Martin Luther, taught about apostolic succession.

By now in the 16th century the sacred tradition of apostolic succession in the western church was well established as a fundamental teaching for the governance of the church. But, then came the Reformation. **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) rejected the teaching of an unbroken, continuous line of bishops in apostolic succession. Luther contended that such an unbroken line of succession could not be proven. He viewed the hierarchical structures of his day as a humanly invented tradition rather than divinely commanded by God. But Luther did shift his focus on apostolic succession **from an unbroken line of bishops to an unbroken continuity of pure apostolic teaching**.

Like many of the teachings coming from the Reformation the focus was now on Scriptural authority, and in this case, the Scriptural authority to validate one’s ordination as legitimate. Rejecting the established tradition of apostolic succession, Luther maintained, as many others previously did, **three necessary components for a valid**

ordination: Scripture, prayer, and the laying on of hands, all drawn from Holy Scripture. These three linked a person to Jesus Christ and the apostles' teaching thus giving their ordination its legitimacy.

Here are some key thoughts of Martin Luther on apostolic succession:

- **Supremacy of the Word:** Luther argued that true apostolic succession lies in the *unbroken succession of apostolic doctrine*, the Word of God. He believed that whoever preaches the pure Gospel and administers the Sacraments as Christ instituted them **stands in direct succession to the apostles**. The continuity and unity of the church is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit working through the Word, not by a succession of bishops.
- **The Priesthood of All Believers:** Luther viewed the apostolic ministry as a function of the Gospel, rather than a special, hierarchical transmission of sacramental authority through an elite group of bishops.
- **Presbyterial Ordination:** Because Luther rejected the necessity of bishops, he held that local pastors and congregations have the right of authority to call and ordain their own ministers. Luther did not view ordination as a sacrament. He considered it a rite or a useful church order to publicly recognize a pastor approved for the public office of the ministry.
- **Doctrinal Fidelity over Lineage:** Luther asserted that the apostles were called, set apart, and commissioned by God, not by man. If a church's teaching deviates from the teachings of the apostles, its claimed physical lineage is rendered invalid.

Initially, in the beginning, Martin Luther did not want to abandon apostolic succession. So, how was it that after 1500 years of the tradition of apostolic succession did the church so quickly abandon it because one man said it was wrong? Remember, in the first century church, apostolic succession was one of the key teachings to prove her divine right to exist as a church. At that time, succession was one of the components that guaranteed a unified fidelity to apostolic teaching, but the church of the 16th century had become corrupt in every way. For example, simony was an accepted practice in the buying and selling of church offices. Luther wanted only to reform the church from her corruption. In the end, many teachings in the church of Luther's day were either modified, reformed or eliminated, apostolic succession was one of them.

Because Roman Catholic bishops refused to ordain Lutheran pastors unless those pastors renounced the teachings of the Reformation, Luther was forced to bypass the traditional bishops to ensure the Gospel would still be proclaimed in all purity. Luther found it necessary to implement new reforms regarding ordination. While he himself was ordained in apostolic succession, Luther argued that any properly ordained and called pastor has the right to ordain those who would follow as bishops and pastors. It is recorded that Luther himself ordained several men into the Lutheran ministry. Luther also put together several ordination liturgies that were widely used by several reforming groups in and around Germany for many years.

Historically, while the German Lutheran territories functioned without bishops in apostolic succession, the Scandinavian Lutherans retained the historic episcopal lineage of succession. However, even where this historic line of succession was faithfully kept, it was viewed as a beneficial tradition (*adiaphora*) rather than a strict theological requirement.

Knowingly or unknowingly, Lutherans believed that their bishops and pastors were ordained into the "*apostolic tree*" by the laying on of hands and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus laid his hands on his apostles, who laid their hands on their disciples, who laid their hands on their successors, in order that "*the purity of the Gospel be maintained and the Sacraments rightly administered.*"

A brief word about the Lutheran Confessions. Like Luther, the Confessions defined apostolic succession *by shifting the focus away from a physical lineage of bishops to a faithful transmission of apostolic teaching rooted in the Gospel*. The Confessions did not require an unbroken line of bishops to validate ordination.

We come to the last section of this presentation, “*What is the value of apostolic succession today for the church?*” From our Lutheran understanding apostolic succession lies primarily in **the continuous proclamation and teaching of the apostolic faith** rather than an unbroken, physical chain of ordinations. As Luther clearly reminded us, true apostolic succession means to preach the Gospel correctly and administer the Sacraments rightly. Our Lutheran understanding of apostolic succession today is not dependent on a person’s priestly succession. To stand in the “succession of the apostles” means that Jesus Christ extends an invitation to those whom He calls as bishops, presbyters, and deacons and then sends them out to proclaim the truth of that apostolic teaching.

In a recent conversation with Archbishop Hotes, he noted that “*Apostolic Succession is a gift to the church.*” As members of the ministerium of the Lutheran Church – International we all are fortunate to enjoy and share in this beneficial gift. The archbishop continued his thoughts, “*For those in the evangelical catholic understanding of the church, apostolic succession is a sign of unity in Christ’s body on earth. The role of bishops and pastors focuses on the unity and continuity of the universal church as the Lutheran reformers understood it.*” By the laying on of hands and prayer our ordination brings us into unity with Jesus Christ and His church, together with the apostles and their successors.

Is it not a unique gift that as the ministerium of the Lutheran Church – International we are able to stand in the sacred tradition of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church in offering up our ministries in the “*succession of the apostles*” to the greater glory of God Himself?

Apostolic Succession among non-Roman Christian Churches

Eastern Orthodox: *Greek, Russian, Antiochian*

Oriental Orthodox: *Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Malakara*

Assyrian Church of the East: *Churches founded by SS Thomas and Bartholomew*

Old Catholic

Anglican

Episcopal

Moravian Churches (Unitas Fratrum): *United States, Great Britain, Ireland, Czech Republic, Tanzania, Latin America, Caribbean*

Various Lutheran Churches: *Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Ireland, Latvia, Estonia, Iceland, Kenya, Lutheran Church – International, Lutheran World Parish*



Thank you to all the persons who helped in so many ways to make our XXVII Synod Assembly a success by attending, participating and giving of your talents. You make our community of faith a gift to all.

In gratitude,

Executive Board of the LC-I

2026-2027 LC-I OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE BOARD

(Terms End As Indicated)

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UPCOMING 2027 SYNOD INFO

Annual Synod XXVIII

Week of June 20, 2027

LOCATION:

First Lutheran Church
35 Broad Street
Lyons, New York

(In the heart of the Finger Lakes Region)

**More details on next year's
Synod Assembly will be printed
here as information becomes
available. Please mark your
calendars for the date!!**

ANNUAL DUES

Please note that annual dues are **required** of clergy and lay ministers 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 the Archbishop upon your request and approval by the Executive Board.

See form for submitting dues on the last page of this newsletter.

**DEADLINE FOR
ADVENT/CHRISTMASTIDE
NEWSLETTER IS MONDAY,
NOVEMBER 2.**

The following photographs on the next several pages show you our time together as members of Christ in worship, business, and fellowship at Synod Assembly XXVII. Thanks to Bishop Horn as our photographer.



Bishop's Dinner



First Lutheran Church Welcome to the LC-I



Opening Eucharist



Our organist, The Rev. Jack Whritenour



Bishop Eberhardt, Preacher at Opening Eucharist



Opening Eucharist



Deacon Adrainne Gray with Greetings



Synod Participants

Archbishop Hotes and Bishop Bischoff



Kitchen Staff with Pastor Wigmore



Anniversary Celebrants



Vespers, Bishop Bougher and Pastor Jacobson



Matins– Bishop Bischoff`



Deacon Sam Sooppersaud-Serving at Matins



**Presenter- The Rev. Terrence Weber STS KTJ
On Apostolic Succession**



**Archbishop Hotes Preaching at
The Pontifical Closing Eucharist**



Archbishop and Bishops Before the Pontifical Closing Eucharist



Affirmation of Ordination – The Rev. Peter Jacobson



Installation of the Vice President and Secretary



Toast for Our Newest Priestly Member – The Rev. Peter Jacobson with the Archbishop



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

Reminder – 2027 Dues

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

CLERGY AND LAY MINISTERS 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 ministers 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.

LUTHERAN CHURCH – INTERNATIONAL

2027 MEMBERSHIP DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

_____ 2027 Dues for Ministerial Members: \$75

_____ 2027 Dues for Congregations and Communities of Faith: \$150

_____ Gift _____ Bequest (Amount) _____

_____ In Memory of _____ 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 (215-416-9591)

SPECIAL NOTE: Unable to meet your responsibility for 2027 dues? Contact your bishop as soon as possible.