

Proposed 2026 Spending Plan for the New Jersey Synod

February 1, 2026 through January 31, 2027

This proposed plan provides the financial support for carrying out the synod's missions and objectives. This plan was developed in collaboration with the Fiscal Management, Administration and Property Committee. The Synod Council recommends approval of this plan by the Synod Assembly.

Income Supporting the Spending Plan is primarily Mission Support gifts from congregations, distributions from restricted funds, and interest income.

	2024 Actual		2025 Approved Spending Plan		2026 Proposed Spending Plan	
Mission Support	1,676,875	83%	1,600,000	78%	1,600,000	75%
Restricted Fund draws		9%		18%		21%
Restricted support for Mission Development	68,750		142,500		75,500	
OSEF support for Bishop's Office	-		105,000		135,000	
Health Benefit Assistance	-		10,000		10,000	
United Seminary Endowment support	10,000		10,000		40,000	
Advocacy Ministry Support					35,000	
Endowment support for Candidacy	40,978		29,360		45,000	
Summer Programs Support					20,000	
Stewardship support	22		1,000		1,000	
Endowment for Staff Housing Support	-		6,000		6,000	
Endowment to Support Cross Roads	22,000		26,000		38,500	
Wurffel Administrative Support	8,500		8,000		8,000	
EMU Support	8,700		-		-	
Mission Development - Property Manager	30,355		25,240		25,900	
ELCA support to the NJ Synod		< 1%		< 1%		< 1%
ELCA support for Mission Director	10,000		10,000		10,000	
Other income		7%		< 1%		4%
Individual Contribution Support	5,280		-		-	
Special Giving Operations Support	-		-		-	
Thrivent Choice	816		1,200		1,200	
Interest Income - All Banks	142,811		80,000		80,000	
Total Income	2,025,087		2,054,300		2,131,100	

Mission Support is the congregation gifts to support the work of our synod. Mission Support provided 83% of the spending plan income in 2024 and is forecast to provide 75% of income in 2026.

Restricted Fund draws describes the money drawn from restricted funds to support synod programs. This money supports congregations and missions within New Jersey, the United Lutheran seminary, pastoral candidates, Cross Roads Camp, programs supporting church pastors, stewardship programming, and management of the synod properties. The approval of this spending plan explicitly approves spending this money from these restricted funds.

Other Income includes personal gifts to the synod, Thrivent Choice dollars and interest income.

Ministries and Expenditures

Section 1: ELCA Churchwide and Ministry Partners supports partners in ministry within New Jersey, within our ELCA region, and across the churchwide organization. Half of Mission Support gifts received by the synod are given to ELCA churchwide.

	2024 Actual	2025 Approved Spending Plan	2026 Proposed Spending Plan
ELCA Share of Mission Support	838,541	800,000	800,000
United Lutheran Seminary	100,000	100,000	130,000
Cross Roads Outdoor Ministries	32,000	36,000	50,000
Lutheran Archives Center	2,500	2,500	5,000
New Jersey Interfaith Coalition	500	1,000	35,000
Seafarers and International House	2,000	2,000	5,000
Other	1,500		
	977,041	941,500	1,025,000
Percentage of spending plan	49%	46%	48%

Increases in support are proposed for several mission partners, most notably we anticipate LEAMNJ (Lutherans Engaging in Advocacy Ministry) becoming part of the New Jersey Interfaith Coalition. The increase in support for the coalition is the synod continuing to support advocacy ministry.

48% of the proposed spending plan supports ELCA Churchwide and Ministry Partners.

Section 2. Strengthening Congregations focuses on the processes and programs that strengthen congregations' capabilities and facilitate collaborative ministry across our synod.

	2024 Actual	2025 Approved Spending Plan	2026 Proposed Spending Plan
Assistants to the Bishop and staff support	316,378	325,242	333,083
Youth Ministry programs	40,542	40,500	56,500
Synod Continuing Education	-	2,000	2,000
Discipling and Witness Team	-	1,000	1,000
Justice and Peace Mission Teams	300	1,000	1,000
Synod Communications	4,185	9,000	9,000
Stewardship Resource Development	22	1,000	1,000
	361,427	379,742	403,583
Percentage of spending plan	18%	19%	19%

Strengthening Congregations within the New Jersey Synod includes:

- Ministering to congregations and pastors in need
- Assistants to the bishop and staff personnel supporting congregations
- Youth Ministry leadership, programs and grants
- Advocacy Ministry leadership
- Discipleship and Witness Mission Team
- Justice and Peace Mission Team
- Synod-wide communications
- Development and production of congregational Stewardship resources

The increase in Youth Ministry programs support grants to congregations for Summer Programs.

Section 3: Outreach Supporting Congregations

	2024 Actual	2025 Approved Spending Plan	2026 Proposed Spending Plan
Congregational Vitality	72,250	142,500	75,500
Percentage of spending plan	4%	7%	4%

Congregational Vitality enables new expressions of ministry in our Synod, assists the start-up of new missions and revitalizes existing congregations. During 2024 the synod supported Bridge of Peace in Camden; Christus in Camden; Santa Isabel in Elizabeth; Trinity in Jersey City; Emanuel in New Brunswick; Misión Luterana Reconciliación in Pennsauken; St. John in Passaic; St. Matthew in Secaucus; St Bartholomew in Trenton; and the Santa Isabel Ministry to Immigrants in Detention.

Section 4: Office of the Bishop guides and supports congregations and clergy, funds synodical and legal processes, and nurtures church leadership.

	2024 Actual	2025 Approved Spending Plan	2026 Proposed Spending Plan
The Bishop and staff support	231,504	240,085	246,333
Candidacy and seminarians	40,978	29,360	45,000
Pastoral supply coordination	3,715	3,710	4,213
First Call Pastoral support	7,985	7,420	7,725
Ecumenical and interfaith programs	-	1,300	1,300
Synod ordinations and special events	2,826	3,000	3,000
Synod Assembly and Assembly reserve	12,500	12,500	12,500
	299,508	297,375	320,071
Percentage of spending plan	15%	14%	15%

The bishop's office leads and administers:

- Congregational vacancy and call processes
- Seminarian formation and identifying clergy candidates
- Guidance, training and help to all first-call pastors
- Interaction and dialogue with other religious and ministry partner organizations
- Synod gatherings such as the Synod Assembly and Ministerium Day
- Pastoral supply for congregations

15% of the proposed synod spending plan supports the Office of the Bishop.

Section 5: Oversight and Planning for the Sake of the Mission provides the administrative requirements of running the synod organization including travel for staff and volunteers, maintaining the synod properties, managing finances, and fulfilling legal and regulatory obligations.

	2024 Actual	2025 Approved Spending Plan	2026 Proposed Spending Plan
Staff support	112,954	116,140	119,684
Staff Travel Expenses	15,381	17,000	17,000
Volunteers Meeting & Travel	2,803	6,000	6,000
Audit, Legal and Insurance	38,905	40,000	40,000
Property management	74,727	74,670	77,530
Supplies and services	38,616	37,100	43,800
	283,388	290,910	304,013
Percentage of spending plan	14%	14%	14%

Summary

The proposed Spending Plan supports the New Jersey Synod missions and programs, balancing expenses with expected revenues.

	2023 Actual	2025 Approved Spending Plan	2026 Proposed Spending Plan
TOTAL EXPENSES	1,993,615	2,052,027	2,128,168
TOTAL INCOME	2,025,087	2,054,300	2,131,100
SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	31,472 < 2%	2,273 < 1%	2,932 < 1%

Proposed **THAT the Synod Assembly approve the proposed 2026 Spending Plan.**