

Synod Council Retreat and Meeting

Synod Council, conference deans, and synod staff gathered September 11–12 at Ebert Ranch for a retreat focused on leadership, anti-racism and intercultural formation, and the Synod's ongoing strategic discernment.

The retreat began by “gathering the threads” of the Synod's journey and connecting our current four focus areas — **Growing Disciples, Developing Leaders, Embracing Differences, and Transforming Communities** — with the work already underway across the Synod. Participants also engaged in anti-racism and intercultural formation with JustMove, examining how patterns, relationships, and systems shape the way we lead. As part of that work, participants made commitments about how we will continue growing in anti-racism, diversity, and beloved community together.

The retreat concluded with a discernment exercise around what the Synod might **Strengthen, Imagine, Reshape, and Release**. Among the strongest themes were lay leadership and leader development, justice and accompaniment, communication and storytelling, the cost of pastoral leadership for smaller congregations, and the need to keep examining how some existing ministries and structures might be reshaped for the future.

Following the retreat, Synod Council moved into its regular business meeting. All items on the agenda were approved. Among other actions, Council approved updates to restricted accounts, revised personnel policies, a new lodging policy for synod business, the 2027 Portico health plan election for synod staff, leadership grants, roster and call-related actions, and several ministry authorizations and deauthorizations. Council also received financial reports, the Office of the Bishop report, the Vice President's report, and other regular committee reports.

The weekend gave Synod Council, deans, and staff a clearer shared framework for asking where God is already at work, where deeper investment may be needed, what may need to be reshaped, and what the next faithful steps might be.