



To: Congregational Treasurers
Rostered Ministers Serving Congregations

From: Fred Mertz, Treasurer
Mandi Walker, Manager of Finance and Administration

Date: December 13, 2024

Re: 2024 Year-end and Other Important Financial Matters

Due to the ongoing Canada Post strike, a hardcopy version of this communication will not be mailed to congregational treasurers. Although intended primarily for congregational treasurers, it is also important that rostered ministers and other congregational leaders be aware of this information so should you require a hardcopy, please email Mandi Walker and one will be sent following the resolution of the strike.

To facilitate access to the URL link references, a copy of this communication has been posted online – to find the online version, go to the home page of the Eastern Synod website (<http://www.easternsynod.org/>), scroll down to the rose coloured box titled 'Treasurers/Financial Info', click the drop down arrow, select 'News Updates' and click on the "Search" button.

If you have questions related to this communication, please contact Mandi Walker (email: mwalker@elcic.ca; toll-free phone: 1-877-373-5242, Ext 223) or Fred Mertz: Email: fmertz@elcic.ca Toll free: 1-877-373-5242 (Ext 224)

Dear Treasurers and Pastors,

As Mandi and I write to you a few short months into my term as your new Synod Treasurer, I want to express my appreciation for the opportunity to engage with you and witness the tremendous work being done in our Synod. Thank you for your dedication!

As a new member among many experienced church treasurers, I'm seeing many of the joys and challenges that come with your role. As a resource to assist you in fulfilling your responsibilities in the coming year, you will find below a summary of important time-sensitive information related to the upcoming year-end, several changes that have occurred this past year, and reminders about key financial matters.

A. PERSONNEL CHANGES AT SYNOD OFFICE

2024 has seen a lot of changes in the Synod office!!!

At Assembly 2024 we elected a new Bishop, Carla Blakley (cblakley@elcic.ca), to her 1st term as Bishop of the Eastern Synod. Bishop Carla has hit the ground running at the synod office and has great vision for the future of the Synod. We are thankful for the support and welcome that has been shown to Bishop Carla since she started in her new role.

At Assembly 2024, we also elected new officers as follows:

- Chris Hulan, Secretary (chulan@elcic.ca)
- Fred Mertz, Treasurer (fmertz@elcic.ca)
- Sara Whynot, Vice-Chair (swhynot@elcic.ca)

We are grateful for the gifts that are brought by each of them, and we ask for your continued prayers and support for the new Bishop and officers as they find their way in their new positions.

Assistant to the Bishop Rev. Christie Morrow-Wolfe (cmorrow-wolfe@elcic.ca) has transitioned to full time at the synod office, taking on responsibility for the Candidacy and Call Process portfolios while continuing with the responsibility for the Youth and Young Adult (YAYA) and Stewardship portfolios.

Rafael Rodriguez (rrodriguez@elcic.ca), Director of Public Policy & Service Ministries, has moved from 25% to 50% time, reflecting the Synod's commitment to the portfolios that he is responsible for. Rafael will also be working with Christie on the YAYA portfolio.

B. 2024 YEAR-END CLOSE

The Synod's books for 2024 will close at noon on Monday, January 20th, 2025. In order to be credited for 2025, all remaining remittances of benevolence and other offerings must be received at the synod office by noon on this date. Please note that due to the synod's tight year-end and auditing schedule, no extensions will be possible.

Benevolence remittances that we've received as of October 31st are tracking almost 6% behind those received for the comparable period in 2023. The 2024 budget anticipated a 5% decline, so this decrease is slightly more than expected. We are still hopeful that we will be able to close some of this gap between now and the end of the year.

In spite of these challenges, we are grateful for the many congregations that have maintained or increased their benevolence giving. Should your congregation be in a position to make an additional contribution to benevolence over and above what you have budgeted, as always your “second mile” gifts continue to be especially appreciated! A special thanks to those congregations that have already made an additional gift.

We remain incredibly grateful to all congregations who, regardless of their situation, strive to rise to this challenge and continue to remit their offerings month by month. We truly appreciate all your efforts.

Although our preferred practice is that benevolence and other offerings directed to the synod be given (and receipted) through the local congregation, occasionally gifts from individuals are sent directly to the synod office. As is the case in each congregation, ***if a donation from an individual is received after December 31st, 2024, the synod will not be able to date it for the 2024 taxation year.***

The 2024 fourth quarter statements will be mailed to congregational treasurers and chairpersons in early February 2025. When these arrive, please check your statement closely as these figures will be included in the year-end audit of the synod’s financial statements. Any discrepancies from your records should be reported promptly to Danielle Arsenault at darsenault@elcic.ca or 1-877-373-5242 ext. 217.

C. LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025

Your Congregation’s 2025 Benevolence Commitment

As you finalize your budget for next year, we request that you and your church council/board prayerfully consider your benevolence budget line for 2025. If you’ve not had the chance, please take a moment to review the “[Stewardship & Generous Giving](#)” resources on the synod website, including the resource on “Our Benevolence Story”. Available in video and hardcopy/download formats, “Our Benevolence Story” explains how your benevolence offerings support the various ministries of the Eastern Synod and wider church. There are also instructions on how to order hardcopies of this resource if you wish to distribute these instead of, or in addition to, using the various digital versions in your weekly bulletins, newsletters, annual reports, etc. We are grateful to each of you for the important role that you play as advocates for the ministries of the wider church. Thank you!

We encourage all congregations to set and communicate a benevolence commitment for the upcoming year and include this amount as part of your congregational budget. Your continued support allows the Synod to be an effective partner in mission and ministry, both locally and worldwide. Rostered ministers, please keep in mind that you are responsible for ensuring that your congregation’s 2025 “Commitment Amount” to Regular (General/Undesignated) Benevolence, along with other items in the annual

parochial report, are submitted by the March 31st, 2025 deadline. The ELCIC national office will provide more information early in the new year.

Your Congregation's 2025 Remittances to Synod Office

When submitting your 2025 remittances to the synod office, please use the 2025 version of the Congregational Remittance form to accompany your cheque. As these forms change from year to year, using the current version of the form will help to ensure that your offerings are recorded accurately. Please remember to complete the section at the top of the form, including your congregation number, each time you send a remittance so that we are able to contact the correct person if we have any questions. If your congregational treasurer or other contact information has changed, please send the new information to Liz and/or Cindy at the email addresses on the remittance form.

As of the writing of this newsletter, Canada Post is on strike with no resolution in sight. Both a fillable PDF and printed version of the 2025 forms will be available on the synod website in early 2025. These can be found by going to the home page of the Eastern Synod website (<http://www.easternsynod.org/>), scroll down to the rose coloured box titled "Treasurers/Financial Info", click the drop down arrow, select "Forms" and click on the "Search" button.

In addition to mailing your remittance cheques to the synod office, we are able to receive e-transfers from those congregations that have the capability to make digital disbursements from their bank account using a two-person authorization process. For more details, please contact Danielle Arsenault (darsenault@elcic.ca or 1-877-373-5242 ext. 217).

D. 2025 BUDGETING CONSIDERATIONS

Compensation Schedule

A copy of the Synod's [2025 Compensation Schedule](#) is posted on the synod's website in the Treasurer/Financial section. This information provides guidance for budgeting salaries/benefits for rostered ministers and/or pastoral supply. Questions about the information in this schedule should be referred to Rev. Christie Morrow-Wolfe (cmorrow-wolfe@elcic.ca; 1-877-373-5242, Ext 212).

Other Budgeting Considerations

ELCIC Group Services Inc.'s (GSI) [Fall 2024 Treasurers Newsletter](#) was recently sent to all congregational treasurers and included details on a number of important items, including 2025 benefit premium rates, a reminder about the opportunity that is available to plan members to reselect their benefits module option for 2025 and other important information.

E. 2024 YEAR-END TAX REPORTING

REMINDER FOR 2024: T4 Reporting Requirement - Employees Paying A Portion of Health and Dental Premiums

Although premiums for the GSI Health and Dental Plan are the responsibility of the employer, some employees may have opted for a module with a higher level of coverage than that provided by their congregation and are paying the incremental premium associated with this additional coverage. Please note that any employee-paid premiums are considered to be medical expenses and eligible for a tax deduction. As such, be sure to include the amount of any employee-paid premiums in Box 85 of the employee's T4 so the employee is able to easily claim this deduction when they file their 2024 income tax return.

Other

The ELCIC national office and ELCIC Group Services Inc. provide excellent resources for congregational treasurers and others involved in congregational finances:

- ***The ELCIC Treasurer's Information Booklet*** – The most current version is posted on the ELCIC website (www.elcic.ca - under "Resources - Treasurer's Resources"). Plans are underway to make significant updates and improvements to this resource in 2024.
- ***Payroll, Pension and Benefit Information*** – Detailed guidance on these matters, including several calculation worksheets, is available on the ELCIC Group Services Inc. website (www.elcicgsi.ca – under the "[Employers](#)" section).

F. CHARITY INFORMATION RETURN (T3010)

As a reminder, congregations are required to file their Charity Information Return (T3010) no later than six months following their fiscal yearend. This means that congregations with a fiscal year end of December 31, 2024 must file their T3010 and supporting schedule by June 30, 2025.

In 2023 the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) announced changes to the T3010 to reflect new reporting requirements. Congregations must use version 24 of the T3010 for 2024 filings. If you are using CRA's "My Business Account" to prepare and submit this form, the correct version of the form will be provided to you automatically. However, if you are preparing this form manually, be sure to select the correct version of the form from [CRA's website](#).

G. PROPERTY AND LIABILITY INSURANCE

It's important that congregations review their insurance coverage periodically to ensure they are not exposed to certain risks. For example, check for items such as:

- Are your insured amounts up to date?
- Does your property coverage provide protection in the case of overland flooding or a sewage backup?
- Was your policy recently amended by your insurer so that it no longer includes coverage related to COVID and other infection diseases?
- Do you have coverage for abuse/harassment?

Although you and your church council may ultimately determine that your congregation can't afford to be insured for every risk, it's important to understand what types of events are and are not covered.

Congregations Insured through Aon / Ecclesiastical

Hopefully you have noticed that Aon has implemented a number of service improvements over the past year, and is now significantly more responsive to congregational inquiries.

Please note that Aon contact in the [ELCIC Treasurers' Booklet](#) is **out of date**. Current contacts are as follows. In addition, to ensure faster service, please be sure to copy elcic@aon.ca on all correspondence to Aon:

Location	Synod	Aon Contact 1	Aon Contact 2
Toronto	Eastern Synod (Ontario)	Rob Ferguson rob.ferguson@aon.ca 204-997-9058	Babatunde Awofisan 204-934-2744 babtunde.awofisan@aon.ca
Montreal	Eastern Synod (Quebec)	Boland Antoine boland.antoine@aon.ca 514-840-7852	Lyubov Desjardins lyubov.desjardins@aon.ca 514-982-5346
Halifax	Eastern Synod (Maritimes)	Rob Ferguson rob.ferguson@aon.ca 204-997-9058	Babatunde Awofisan 204-934-2744 babtunde.awofisan@aon.ca

H. DONATIONS OF SECURITIES

Did you know that donations of securities and mutual funds provide a very tax-efficient way for donors to make charitable donations because tax on capital gains can be avoided? To accept these types of donations a brokerage account is required. Charitus ([Charitus](#)) previously known as ELFEC, is a charitable foundation that serves congregations across the ELCIC and offers assistance to congregation by providing brokerage services to facilitate these types of donations. And although organizations such as CanadaHelps.org, offer the same services, Charitus offers these services at much lower fees.

For further information email Charitus' Director of Finance and Marketing, Krista Kuehnbaum (krista@charitus.ca) or call toll-free (1-888-308-9461).

I. AUTHORIZED APPEALS FOR 2025

The synodical constitution stipulates that "special appeals to congregations for the raising of funds shall require the consent of the convention or the synod council". It has been the practice of Synod Council to provide some guidance to congregations by designating a limited number of authorized synodical appeals and by communicating these priorities to each congregation on an annual basis. In addition to ELCIC approved ministries (e.g. Canadian Lutheran World Relief, ELCIC Praise Appeal), Synod Council has authorized the following appeals for 2025:

- ***St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Kitchener*** – CTV Television Ministry Appeal

It is understood that offerings for special appeals such as these are expected to be above and beyond, not in lieu of, regular benevolence offerings.

J. ONTARIO CORPORATIONS ACT (ONCA)

After more than a decade, the Province of Ontario has finally enacted the *Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010*. This new legislation has implications for all congregations that are currently incorporated in Ontario under the previous *Corporations Act*. All congregations that are incorporated in Ontario were required to make any necessary changes to provisions in their governing documents to bring them into conformity with ONCA by October 18, 2024. If you have not already transitioned to the new requirements, please contact the Secretary of the Synod, Chris Hulan (chulan@elcic.ca) as soon as possible for guidance in bringing your congregation into compliance with the Act.

Although most of the changes that have been introduced by ONCA are unrelated to congregational financial issues, the requirements for an audit have been relaxed somewhat. For more information, refer to the document "[Do We Need a Financial Audit at Year-end?](#)" posted on the synod's website.

K. OTHER INFORMATION

For many years, Keith Myra was our go-to for all things “Treasurer”, and we are so grateful for all of his years of faithful service to the synod and to the congregations. Keith retired in June 2024, so moving forward please reach out to Mandi Walker, Manager of Finance and Administration (mwalker@elcic.ca 1-877-373-5242, Ext 223) for any congregational finance questions.

Finally, a reminder that the Treasurers/Financial Information section on the home page of the Eastern Synod website (www.easternsynod.org) provides a wealth of information and previous communications for treasurers that are of ongoing importance. If you haven't done so, you may wish to check this out.

Wishing You and Yours a Blessed Advent Season, a Merry Christmas and



All the best in 2025!