



Grand Canyon Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

November 12, 2025

Dear Siblings in Christ,

2025 has been a year for calling. A year of voices heard, lives transformed, and ministries born anew.

Thanks to your faithful congregational mission support, the Grand Canyon Synod is celebrating a historic milestone: **six ordinations so far this year, plus Vicar Wanda Frenchman's ordination scheduled for December 11th makes it seven!** Also, for the first time in our synod's history, we have welcomed two deacons into Word and Service Ministry!

Your gifts not only sustain ministry, they multiply it!

We give thanks for all who have answered God's call to ordained ministry in 2025.

Each of these seven ordinations represents years of prayer, study, discernment, and community support. Each a celebration of God's faithfulness and yours.

I would like to share the story of one of our newly ordained leaders, Pastor Solomon Kuch, whose story invites us to witness what happens when God's call meets courage, community, and support.



Dcn. Wendi Van Beek
UofA Campus Ministry



Dcn. Emma Janzen
Resurrection, Oro Valley



Rev. Jarrod Iversen
Central, Arizona City



Rev. Kevin Anderson
Spirit of Hope, Mesa



Rev. Kylee Bestenlehner
Peace, Peoria



Rev. Solomon Kuch
Emmanuel, Glendale

On August 24, 2025, Pastor Solomon was ordained as pastor to Emmanuel Sudanese Lutheran Fellowship in Glendale, Arizona. His journey to that moment was anything but easy.

A refugee from South Sudan, Pastor Solomon has led Emmanuel for five years while working 12-hour night shifts at the Arizona State Mental Hospital, raising six children with his wonderful wife Elizabeth, and completing seminary studies. During that time, he served his congregation faithfully without formal recognition as a rostered leader.

Continue on next page...

Emmanuel is a vibrant faith community of more than 200 South Sudanese refugees and second-generation families. The congregation includes 33 family units living in 11 cities across the Valley, creating a mission field that spans over 1,000 square miles. Seventy percent of the congregation is under the age of 18. These children and youth are growing up as first-generation Americans, shaped by both the trauma and the faith of their parents who fled war and displacement.

Now ordained, Solomon's vision is taking new shape.

He is deepening pastoral care for far-flung families, mentoring the congregation's over 140 children and youth, and nurturing a spiritual home that speaks both Dinka and English speakers, connecting heritage and hope in a shared life of faith.

This is what leadership looks like when a community is empowered to call one of its own.

Your Mission Support Makes This Possible

Because of your generosity, the Grand Canyon Synod is able to walk alongside leaders like Solomon as they discern and follow God's call. Your congregation's mission support provides:

- **Candidacy support** through the synod's candidacy committee, made up of lay and rostered leaders who accompany candidates through every step of the process
- **Seminary financial assistance** that helps reduce the burden of tuition and student debt
- **Resources and staff support** for ethnic-specific ministries and vulnerable communities
- **Congregational transition support**, including interim ministry when needed, to prepare congregations for new pastoral and diaconal leadership

We Are Blessed to Be a Blessing

Because of your commitment to this shared ministry, every congregation, regardless of language, culture, or geography, can welcome the leadership God is raising up in their midst. In the Grand Canyon Synod, we are communicating Jesus, connecting people, and creating possibilities for all to hear and respond to God's call. Thank you for being the church together!

With gratitude for your partnership in ministry,



The Rev. Deborah K. Hutterer
Bishop, Grand Canyon Synod of the ELCA



Rev. Kuch receives his ordination stole.
Pictured: Rev. Peter Perry & Bishop Hutterer