



**GO.
PREACH.
EQUIP.
SERVE.
LIVE.
INVITE.**

SOUTH DAKOTA SYNOD STUDY
2019 BISHOP ELECTION



South Dakota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The election for the South Dakota Synod Bishop will be held at the 2019 Synod Assembly. Bishop David Zellmer has served two terms and by the South Dakota Synod Constitution Bylaws (S8.51.10) is ineligible for a third term. When Bishop Zellmer was first elected, there was no requirement for a Synod Study. At his reelection in 2013, there was not requirement for a study if there was an incumbent Bishop. Churchwide ELCA now requires a synod study for every election and this is incorporated into the South Dakota Synod Constitution as S9.04.A18 , which states “the Synod Council shall arrange for a synod study to be completed by the Synod Council meeting the fall prior to the beginning of the election process. The synod study shall be distributed to rostered ministers and congregations of the synod six months prior to the election providing guidance throughout this synod as potential nominees for bishop are identified.”

In compliance with this requirement, the Synod Council appointed a committee to complete the Synod Study. The committee consists of:

Rev. Jackie Braun, co-chair
Dennis Thompson, co-chair
John Rasmussen
Scott Parsley
Rev. Marcia Sylvester
Reid Christopherson
Revs Ben & Kristen Eisele

Working with the ELCA Department for Research and Evaluation, the committee developed and distributed the survey. In July and August, Synod leaders, rostered leaders, congregations and members of congregations in the South Dakota Synod were asked to participate in the online survey. Three hundred twenty one responses were received. In addition to assisting with the survey, the Department of Research and Evaluation also provided report titled “A Statistical Overview of the South Dakota Synod, with Comparisons to the Montana, Southwestern Minnesota, Western North Dakota and Eastern North Dakota Synods”. These are the Synods that border the South Dakota Synod. The complete reports for the survey and the statistical report are included after this summary as Appendix I and II.

During the same time as the survey, the SD Synod Evangelical and Outreach committee held Rural Round-ups in each of the seven conferences. These focus groups results were not part of the survey but the results are similar to the survey results and provide insight into the South Dakota Synod. Their executive summary is included as Appendix III to this report.

WHO WE ARE – THE SOUTH DAKOTA SYNOD

Vision of the South Dakota Synod

That All May be Fed

Nurtured in Word and Sacrament, God sends us to become a joyful sign of God's abundant blessing as we:

- **proclaim** the good news of Jesus to every hungry soul,
- **share** compassion with all who suffer, and
- **feed** all whose bodies lack nourishment.

CORE VALUES

Prayer, Human Dignity, Gratitude, The Neighbor, Grace

WE COMMIT OURSELVES TO

- Pray without ceasing,
- Respect the sacred dignity of every human being,
- Cultivate a deep sense of gratitude to God, the giver of all good things,
- Seek out and befriend the neighbor,
- Remain humble in the conviction that our calling comes purely by the grace of God.

The South Dakota Synod covers the entire state of South Dakota. South Dakota has an estimated population of 889,876 as of 2018. The largest concentrations of population are Sioux Falls and Rapid City. The two counties in which Sioux Falls lies (Minnehaha and Lincoln) have a combined population of 253,803. Rapid City is in Pennington County, which has a population of 112,929. Sioux Falls and Rapid City are also experiencing the greatest growth. While the three counties account for 41% of South Dakota's total population in 2018, they are projected to account for 69% of the state's growth of 47,560 people over the next five years. More information on South Dakota demographics can be found at the churchwide website, ELCA.org under Research and Evaluation.

There are 205 congregations in the Synod, which are further subdivided into 7 conferences. The 2017 estimated baptized membership is 100,764 or about 494 baptized members per congregation. Baptized membership, both as a percentage of the population and in actual numbers is in decline; however, the gap between members received and removed is narrowing in recent years.

In addition to its 205 congregations, the Synod includes other ELCA ministries such as: Augustana University (where the Synod Office is located), Lutheran Campus Ministries in Vermillion, Brookings, Aberdeen, Spearfish and Rapid City, Lutherans Outdoors Bible Camps, Table of Grace, Church on the Street and Multicultural Ministries, such as Lutheran

Lakota Shared Ministries, Woyatan Lutheran, Pueblo De Dios, and First Lutheran African Ministries. We also join hands with two companion Synods, Nicaragua and Cameroon.

Summary of Survey Responses

Strengths of the Bishop

Participants of the survey felt that the next Bishop's most important strengths will need to be working with congregations during crisis and transitions (47% of participants), developing and caring for rostered leaders (42%), and developing leaders (35%). Also included in the top five strengths are talent around conflict management (27%) and strategic planning (24%).

What areas do you hope the SD Synod will develop, grow and/or support in the coming years?

The respondents to this question rated developing church leaders as the highest area of growth, development, and support for the South Dakota Synod (54%). This was followed by rural ministry (36%) and by children and youth faith formation (26%). More than one in five ranked financial stewardship & sustainability as important (23%). Lowest in the ranking was international mission partners at 2.5%.

Several of the survey questions requested a narrative answer. The following is a brief summary of the responses to those questions. Keyword searches were used to gather general trends and information. Isolated responses or sentiments are generally not in this summary.

What should the synod's bishop expect of congregations in the synod in the next six years?

- The question's language of "should" was answered in roughly two slightly different but still useful ways. Responders seemed to answer this question either as...
 - Suggestions or criticisms of what congregations *should* (i.e., "ought to") do in support of the bishop, or
 - Reporting what a new bishop *can* reasonably expect in congregations.
- The keyword "support" occurs 112 times.
 - Most uses were referring to support in prayer, financial contributions to the synod, support of ministries, and involvement in synod activities.
 - "Prayer" occurs 41 times, all in terms of a support offered to a bishop.
 - Support through "Ideas," "feedback," and "engagement" also occurred (~10 instances).
- A number of responses (~25) mention community and context. Most of these suggest that congregations *should* be expected to innovatively serve their own communities and contexts and reach beyond their walls.
 - Responses are unclear as to whether this is a lacking/growing edge that is *not* happening, or whether it is ongoing mission practice.
- Leadership (from congregations) was a prevalent theme in several senses:

- Partnership in identifying and *raising up* new leaders.
- *Participation of* congregational leaders in the synod's activities.
- Encouragements of leadership and congregations to better connect with the synod and one another.
- (Related to the above,) Several responses suggested an expectation of unity and community between congregations and leaders for common mission.
- A portion of the responses (~20) suggests an experience or expectation of decline in small town and rural congregations.
 - Some responses also expect financial difficulties related to waning memberships, with related concerns about mission support and calling/retaining pastors.
 - Change was also a keyword here regarding willingness to change, a fear of change, and the necessity of change in focus to rural areas.

What should congregations in the synod expect of the bishop in the next six years?

- "Leadership" and "Leaders" were recurring words, in terms of:
 - Providing visionary leadership in a variety of situations.
 - Supporting existing leaders of all kinds in congregations
 - Raising up and recruiting lay and rostered leaders.
- Relationship and interaction: Many responses indicated continued or increased desire for developing and continuing contact and relationships with congregations.
 - Words such as "communication," "visibility," "engagement," "connections," and "visit" occur throughout the responses, indicating desire for attention to relationship.
 - Continued contact through vacancies, transition, or closing were mentioned.
 - Attention to and interaction with rural areas was repeated.
 - Some suggested encouraging relationships and resource sharing between churches.
- "Support" occurred 53 times:
 - in transition, in finding leaders, of pastors, in crisis, of rural congregations, and more.
- "Pastor" (or "pastors") occurred ~50 times:
 - Most occurrences were in the sense of supporting or "being a pastor to pastors"
 - Many referred to finding new or retaining pastors, or positioning helping mid-late career or transitioning pastors.
 - A few indicated being a model or example for pastors, and enforcing ethical behavior.
- Advocacy, understanding, and politics: Responses included hoping for (new or continued) work in advocacy, community, ecumenical, and social issues. There were a small number of responses that were wary of overly focusing on social issues.

- Similarly, some responses indicated a greater interest in the ELCA and churchwide, while a few others asked for greater focus locally and minding a conservative social climate.
- Rural communities were again mentioned: advocating politically for rural communities is appreciated, while understanding differing political and social climates.

What is your congregation celebrating right now?

- Forty-two responses celebrated youth ministry and engagement in some manner.
 - Nine were proud of the fact that the congregation was able to send their youth to the ELCA Youth Gathering.
- “New” and “Growth” of the congregations were also being celebrated; 21 responses indicated something “new” with 14 responses indicating “growth”.
- Pastors and leadership were important to many congregations with 36 responses indicating the celebration of having a great pastor, celebrating ordination anniversaries, and good pastoral leadership. One response lamented about the need for a full-time pastor.
- Six responses indicated “Nothing” or “Not much” was being celebrated.

With what is your congregation struggling?

- Two issues (that seem to be connected) emerged as common struggles for most congregations; lack of attendance and financial struggles.
 - Lack of members (51 responses), low attendance (40 responses), lack of youth or young families (17 responses), low numbers (16 responses) and no or weak leadership (13 responses).
 - Financial struggles (30 responses), building maintenance (6 responses) and low giving (8 responses) were also identified as struggles for congregations.
 - Demands on the pastor, transition between pastors, lack of permanent pastors, shortage of pastors in the Synod, lack of Synod support and lack of church personnel seem to be issues for several churches.
 - Other issues that seem to cause struggles for congregations is the status quo; no vision and no change because “this is the way it has always been done”.
 - Specific struggles include two congregations joining together, competition with other churches in area, aging congregations, rural congregations, and competition with other activities.

For what is your congregation hoping?

- There are common themes that emerge from the responses: increased growth of the church, increased congregation and community involvement, and the longevity of the greater church.
- The keyword “more” was used 40 times in the responses. These included reference to more members, more member involvement, more community involvement, and more financial security.
- The term Pastor yielded 22 responses, several were for continued support of their pastoral leadership, but many were for newly called pastors.
- Many congregations are hoping for younger families to join the church and bring their youth back with 21 responses indicating this.
- The keyword “growth” appears in 23 responses. Interestingly, growth of numbers was certainly one of the categories, but growth in mission, faith, relationships were also very prominent.
- Several responses were concerned about financial security and the quality of leadership in the congregation.

Respondents

About half of the respondents said they or their congregation interacted with the current bishop at a synod assembly or invited the bishop to preach at their congregation. Some respondents (30%) noted they were at a congregational meeting with the bishop or had direct contact with the bishop (38%).

More than half of the respondents (60%) are members of an ELCA congregation and nearly 44% held or currently have a leadership role in a congregation: 25% are rostered ministers in the ELCA. About two in three respondents were over the age of 50 while 32% are between 61 and 70. More than 60% have attended worship at a South Dakota synod congregation for more than 25 years. About half (45%) are in a rural or small town and 53% identified as female.

Appendix I

Introduction

The South Dakota Synod along with Research and Evaluation, part of the ELCA's Office of the Presiding Bishop, made an online questionnaire available to members of the synod between July 1st and August 21st 2018, with the intention of finding out what members of the synod wanted in a new bishop as well as offering some insight as to what was happening in congregations. A total of 321 responses were received by the deadline and a summary of the results follows.

Gifts

While no particular strength or gift was identified by 50 percent or more of respondents as most important for the new bishop to be effective, a plurality (47%) think the next bishop will need to work with congregations during crisis and transitions; 42 percent feel she or he will need to develop new pastors and deacons and care for them, while 35 percent feel the new bishop will need to develop leaders. About 27 percent feel they will need talents around conflict management and 24 percent feel strategy planning will be a most important gift.

Most respondents feel the South Dakota Synod [office and staff] will work on developing leaders (54%) while less (36%) feel it is important to focus on rural ministry and still fewer (26%) feel the faith formation of children and youth will be areas of focus in the coming years.

Expectations

The synod bishop can expect support and money from congregations (23%), as well as declining membership, struggles and challenges experienced by rural congregations (16%) over the next six years. Congregations should be able to expect leadership from the office (27%), support, help, understanding and participation (18%) as well as the office serving as a pastor to pastors in the area (13%).

Congregational struggles, achievements and hopes

About one in five congregations are celebrating their youth, family, and/or children ministry, while 13 percent are happy to have a pastor, and some are celebrating an anniversary of sorts. Congregations are struggling with a lack of members (22%), lack of money (20%) and attendance being down (13%). Related, congregations are hoping for more members (21%), to reach out with God's love (15%) and leadership, presumably in the form of a called rostered minister (12%).

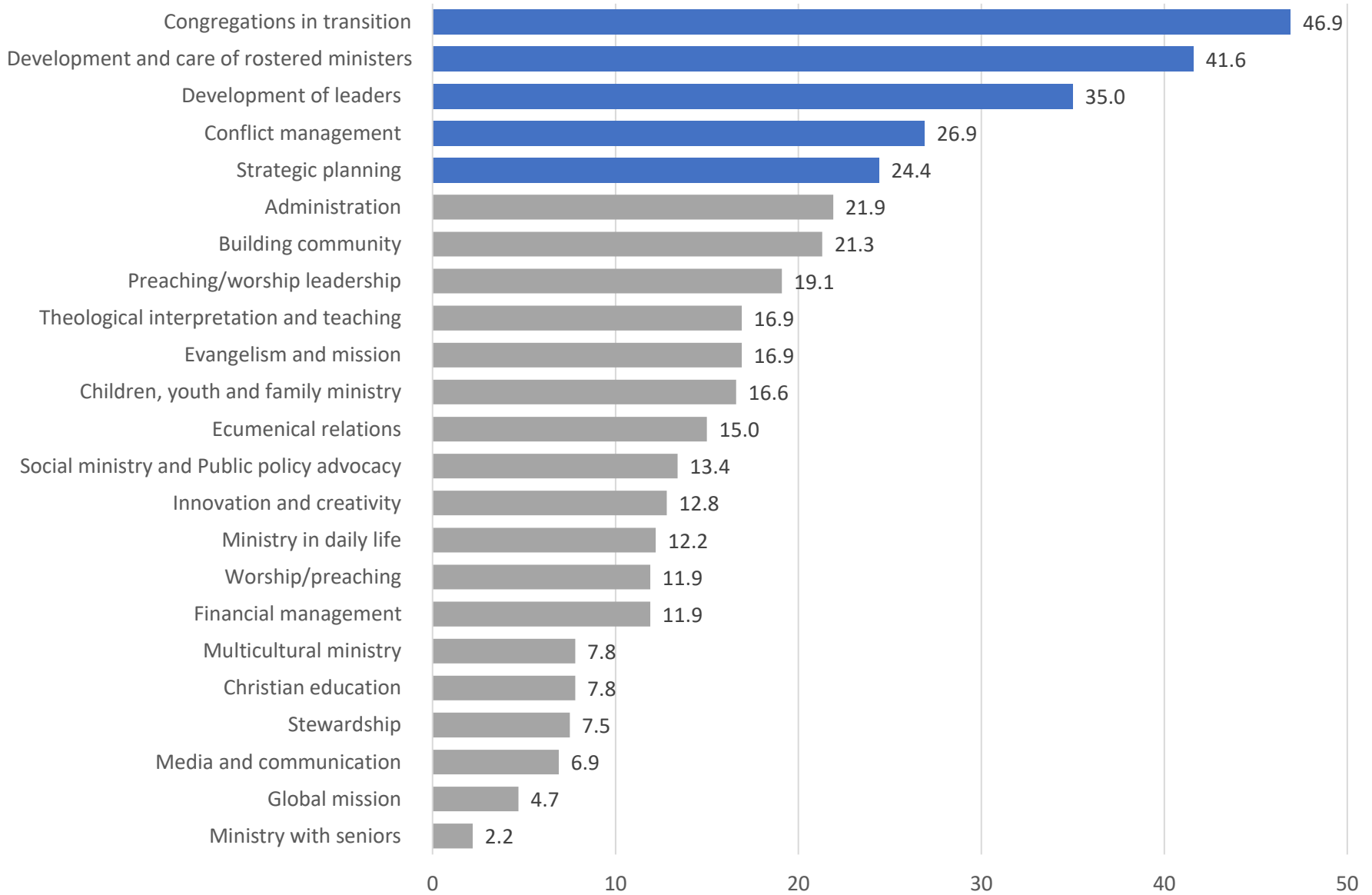
Respondents

About half of the respondents said they or their congregation interacted with the current bishop at a synod assembly or invited the bishop to preach at their congregation. Some respondents (30%) noted they were at a congregational meeting with the bishop or had direct contact with the bishop (38%).

More than half of respondents (60%) are members of an ELCA congregation and nearly 44 percent held or currently have a leadership role in a congregation; 25% are rostered ministers in the ELCA. About two in three respondents were over the age of 50 while 32 percent are between 61 and 70. More than 60 percent have attended worship at a South Dakota synod congregation for more than 25 years. About half (45 percent) are in a rural or small towns and 53 percent identified as female.

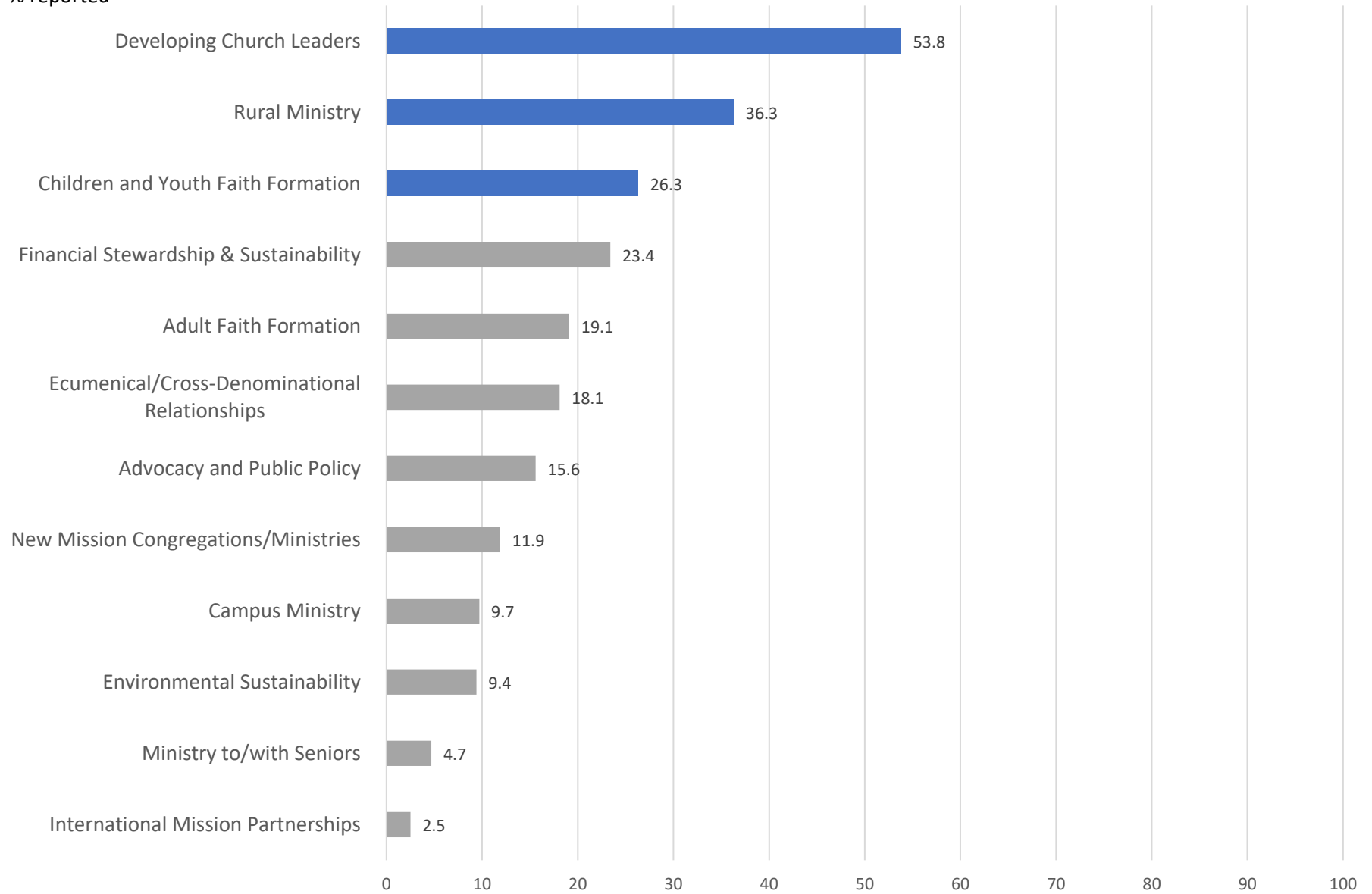
The five most important strengths and gifts the bishop must have to be effective are: **working with congregations in transition; developing rostered ministers and leaders; conflict management; and strategic planning.**

% reported

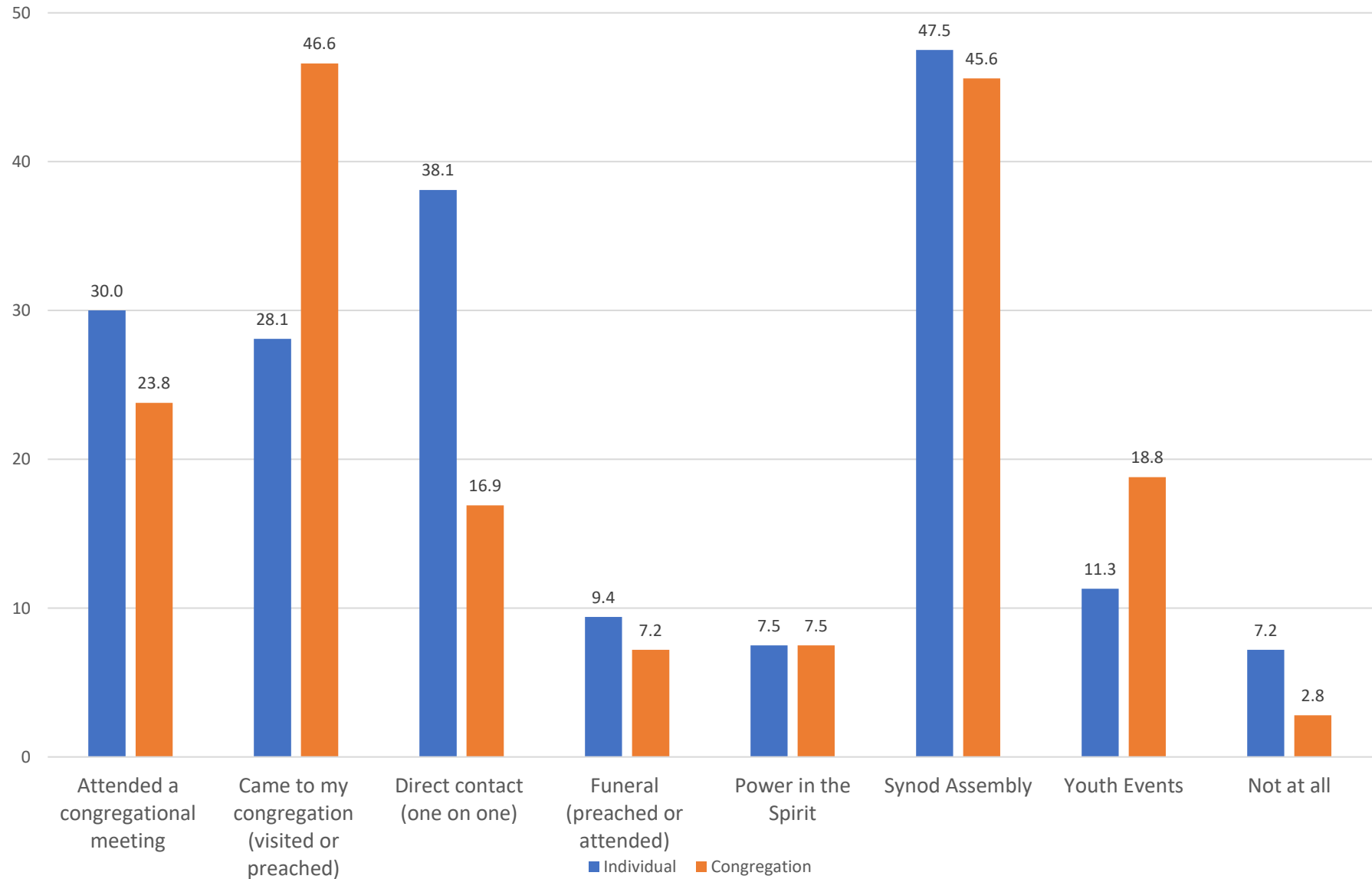


The three areas of growth, development, and/or support for the South Dakota Synod in the coming years are: **developing church leaders, rural ministry, and children and youth faith formation.**

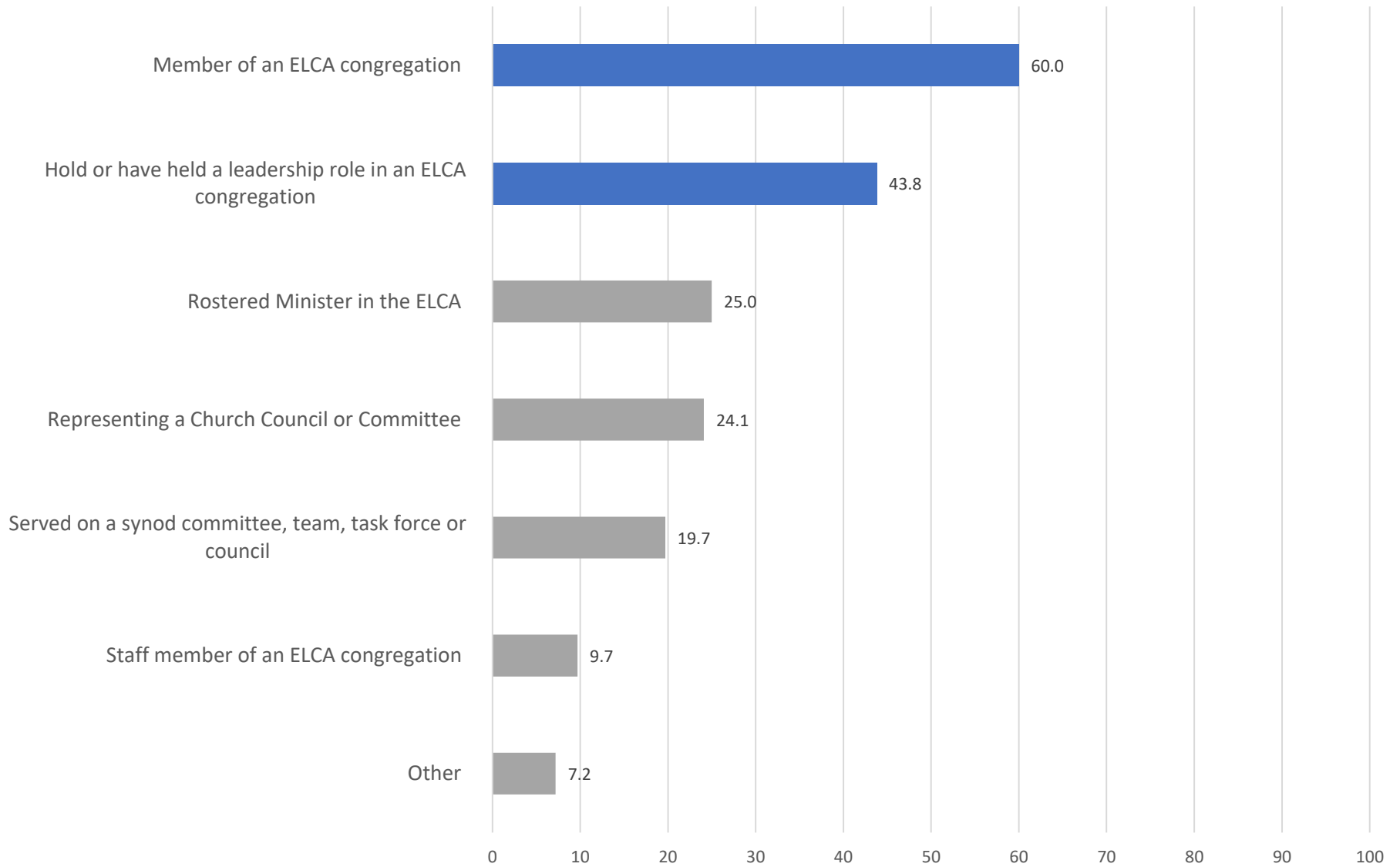
% reported



Individuals were more likely to interact with the bishop at a Synod Assembly whereas congregations were more likely to interact via a visit or sermon from the bishop.

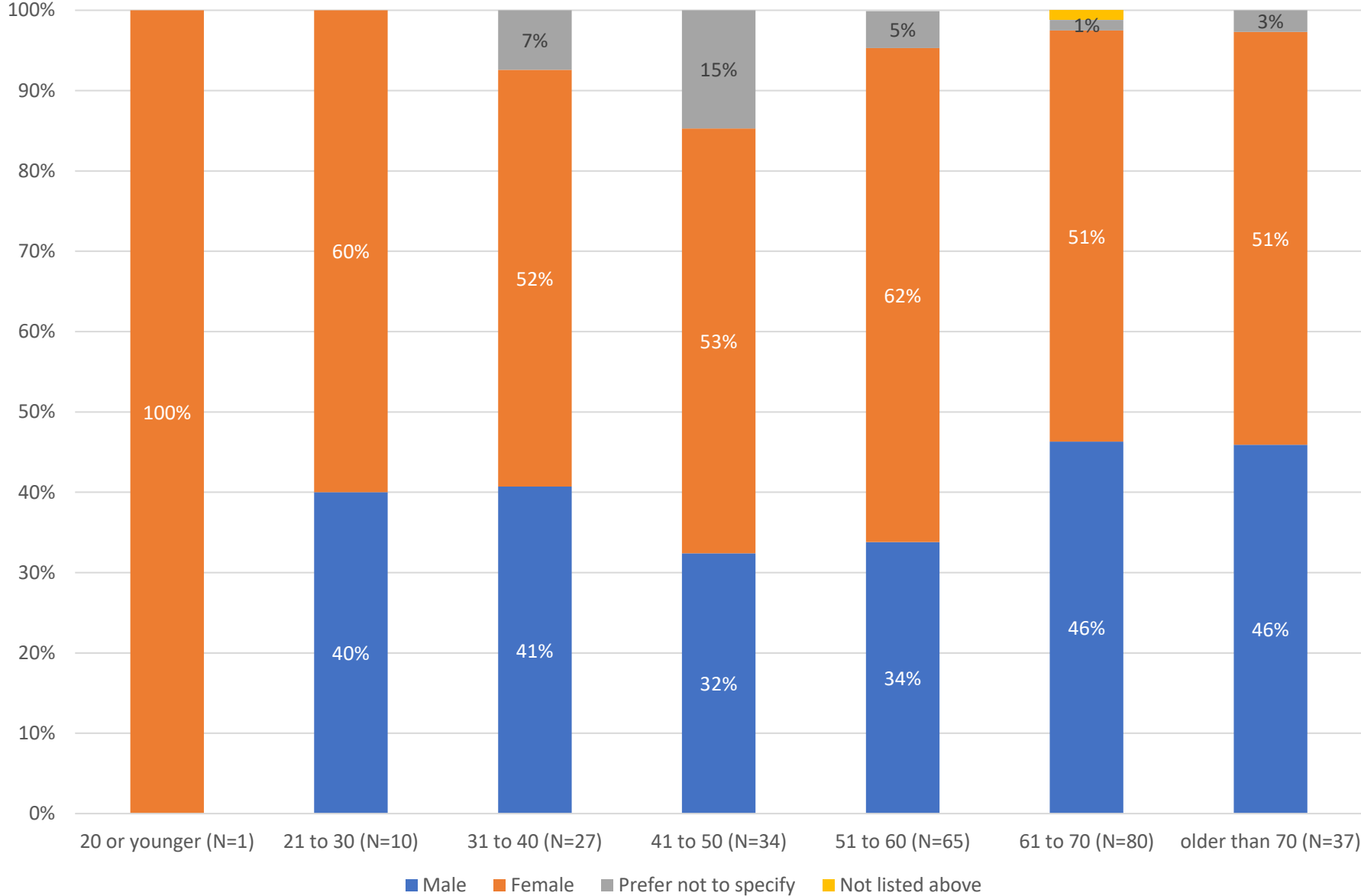


Most respondents are **members of an ELCA congregation** and **many currently have or held a leadership role**.
% reported

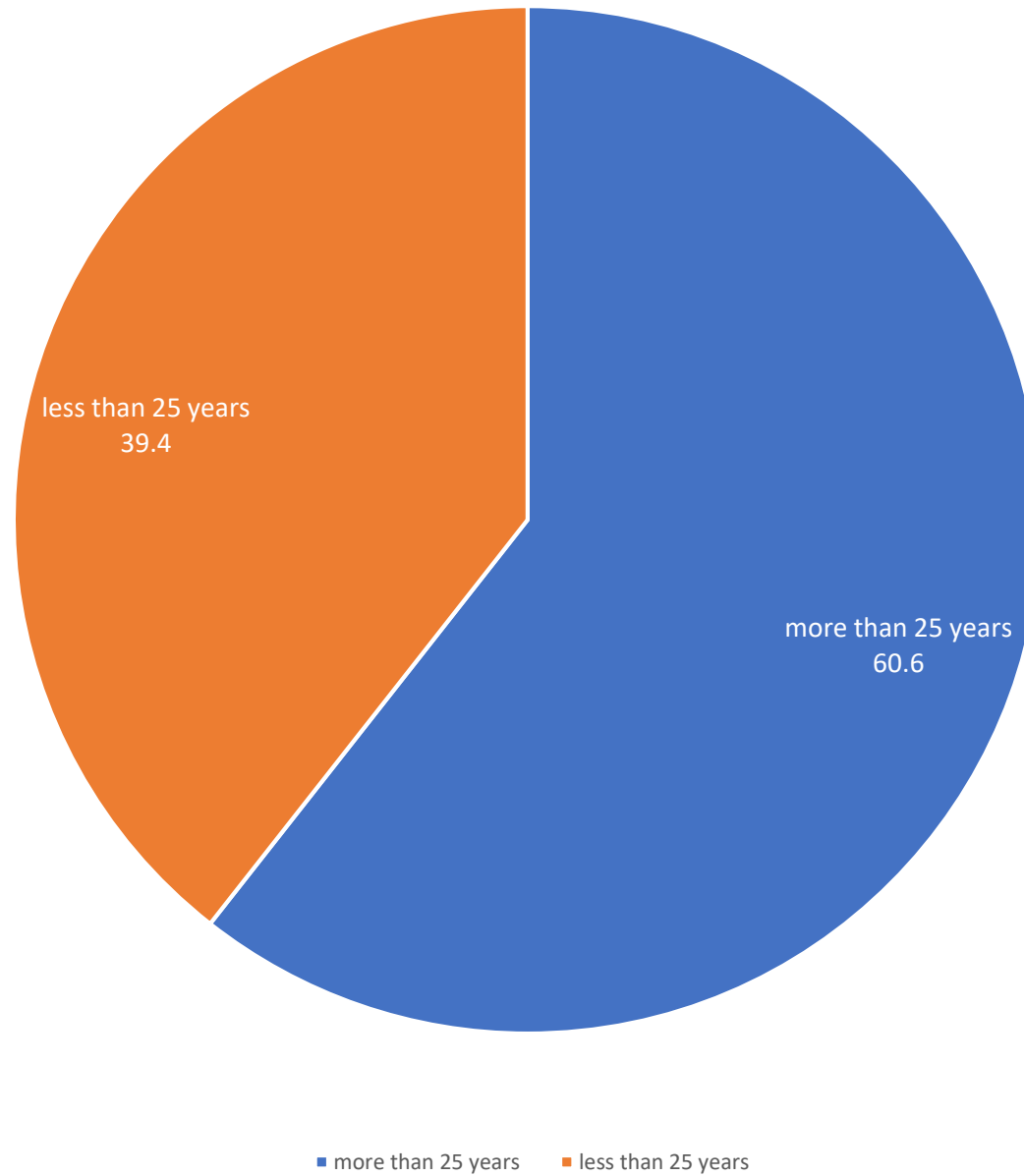


Respondents were mostly female and 51 or older.

% reported

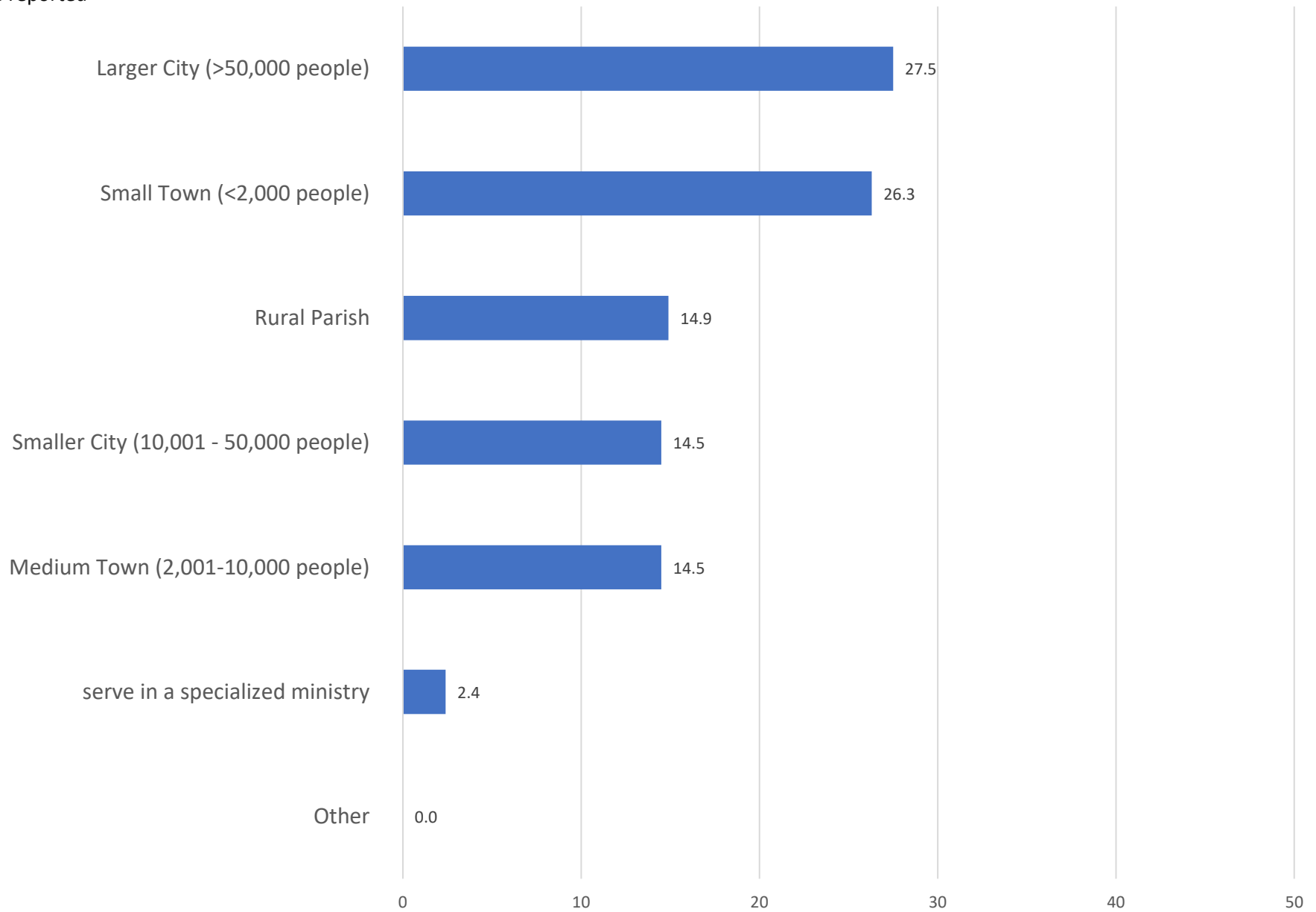


Three in five respondents have attended an ELCA congregation for **more than 25 years**.
% reported



While many respondents live in a larger city, nearly half are in **a small town or rural parish**.

% reported



1. Using the list below, identify the strengths and gifts you think will be most important for the effectiveness of the new bishop. Please look through the list of gifts first, then choose the five (5) gifts you feel are most important.

% reported

46.9	Working with congregations during crisis and transition
41.6	Developing and general care of pastors and deacons
35.0	Development of leaders
26.9	Conflict management
24.4	Strategic planning
21.9	Administration
21.3	Building community
19.1	Preaching/worship leadership
16.9	Evangelism and mission
16.9	Theological interpretation and teaching
16.6	Children, youth and family ministry
15.0	Ecumenical relations
13.4	Social ministry and Public policy advocacy
12.8	Innovation and creativity
12.2	Ministry in daily life
11.9	Financial management
11.9	Worship/preaching
7.8	Christian education
7.8	Multicultural ministry
7.5	Stewardship
6.9	Media and communication
4.7	Global mission
2.2	Ministry with seniors

If the strength you think will be needed is not listed above, please enter it below.

2. Which of the following areas of ministry do you hope the SD Synod will develop, grow and/or support in the coming years? (Pick up to three.)

% reported

53.8	Developing Church Leaders
36.3	Rural Ministry
26.3	Children and Youth Faith Formation
23.4	Financial Stewardship & Sustainability
19.1	Adult Faith Formation
18.1	Ecumenical/Cross-Denominational Relationships
15.6	Advocacy and Public Policy
11.9	New Mission Congregations/Ministries
9.7	Campus Ministry
9.4	Environmental Sustainability
4.7	Ministry to/with Seniors
2.5	International Mission Partnerships

3. What should the synod's bishop expect of congregations in the synod in the next six years?

- Support and money (23%)
- Declining membership, struggling congregations, rural challenges (16%)
- Support of the bishop (9%)

4. What should congregations in the synod expect of the bishop in the next six years?

- Leadership (27%)
- Support/help/understanding/participation (18%)
- Being a pastor to pastors (13%)

5. What is your congregation celebrating right now?

- Youth/children/family ministry (22%)
- That we have a pastor (13%)
- An anniversary of sorts (8%)

6. With what is your congregation struggling?

- Lack of members (23%)
- Financial stewardship (20%)
- Attendance (13%)

7. For what is your congregation hoping?

- More active members (21%)
- To be reach with God's love (15%)
- Leadership (12%)

8. How have you and/or your congregation interacted with the bishop in the last six years?
% reported

	You	Your Congregation
a. Attended a congregational meeting	30.0	23.8
b. Came to my congregation (visited or preached)	28.1	46.6
c. Direct contact (one on one)	38.1	16.9
d. Funeral (preached or attended)	9.4	7.2
e. Power in the Spirit	7.5	7.5
f. Synod Assembly	47.5	45.6
g. Youth Events	11.3	18.8
h. Not at all	7.2	2.8

9. Which of the following best describes you? (Choose all that apply.)

% reported

- 60.0 Member of an ELCA congregation
- 43.8 Hold or have held a leadership role in an ELCA congregation
- 25.0 Rostered Minister in the ELCA
- 9.7 Staff member of an ELCA congregation
- 19.7 Served on a synod committee, team, task force or council
- 24.1 Representing a Church Council or Committee
- 7.2 Other

10. How old are you?

% reported

- 0.4 20 or younger
- 3.9 21 to 30
- 10.6 31 to 40
- 13.4 41 to 50
- 25.2 51 to 60
- 31.9 61 to 70
- 14.6 older than 70

11. How many years have you worshiped at a congregation which is part of the South Dakota Synod?

% reported

- 1.2 Less than 1 year
- 8.0 1 to 5 years
- 9.6 6 to 10 years
- 8.0 11 to 15 years
- 6.8 16 to 20 years
- 6.0 21 to 25 years
- 60.6 more than 25 years

12. Which of the following best describes the context of your congregation?

% reported

- 14.9 Rural Parish
- 26.3 Small Town (<2,000 people)
- 14.5 Medium Town (2,001-10,000 people)
- 14.5 Smaller City (10,001 - 50,000 people)
- 27.5 Larger City (>50,000 people)
- 2.4 serve in a specialized ministry
- 0.0 Other

13. Tell us your gender.

% reported

40.6	Male
53.9	Female
5.1	Prefer not to specify
0.4	Not listed above

14. Is there anything else you'd like to share?

The following pages contained comments made by respondents to the open-ended questions contained on the South Dakota Synod Bishop Election Questionnaire. They were edited for clarity.

3. What should the synod's bishop expect of congregations in the synod in the next six years?

- Congregations should be involved in their communities in doing good things such as helping with their local food pantry, back pack programs, raising money for LO programs, and sending money to the SD Synod for people in need in other countries.
- I think the bishop should expect congregations to be diligent in studying scripture, adult education and faith formation, and living faithfully and prophetically in South Dakota, addressing issues of social and economic injustice.
- an openness to expand their ministry beyond the walls of the church building- to bring the message to all people, not just the people who look like us and believe the same as us. Respect! (may not always agree or like decisions made but respect why they are made)
- It is hard to generalize, but I would hope that many congregations will serve their communities, support the larger church, and strive to be faithful in their contexts.
- Community involvement - cross denominational relationships. Financial support
- I do not know.
- Not sure at this point.
- I'm not sure
- Each one submits to an assessment process of ministry based on the Natural Church Development program periodically.
- Participate with leaders in churches to recognize the needs and concerns of the churches that are in small communities. Focus on how a church can contribute in community needs.
- Develop and implement strategies for responding to our new reality
- A willingness to understand their context of ministry is much broader than just who comes to worship. That is, congregations would be driven by the Great Commission to share resources and ideas with other congregations.
- Prayer. Supporting the decisions of the Synod concerning policies and procedures put forth for the congregations for the betterment of the ELCA church. Financial support for the mission of the Synod. Support through congregational representatives on committees as needed. Willingness of lay people to serve in various Synod positions.
- prayers and support congregations sharing the faith within the congregation and beyond
- prayers of support
- Prayers
- Prayer support, fiscal support, open to change and growth in a variety of areas.
- Prayer and financial support. Care and compassion
- Prayerful support and increasing benevolence.
- Prayer and strong support in all ways.
- Prayers, support, open lines of communication, trust, participation in the synod and larger church, and the application of Luther's take on the eighth commandment about all our

neighbors--to "come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light."

- Prayer support Leadership support Financial support
- Prayer, effective, honest & grace-filled communication, financial support for the work of the synod, active engagement in the life of the synod's missions and ministries.
- Prayer support, innovative thinking, being open to new ideas and opportunities.
- Prayer, willingness to change & try new things for the sake of the gospel, financial support
- Prayers of support, working with the bishop to develop local leaders
- Steady level of attendance and numbers, but not growing.
- A desire to grow and be sustainable, prayer support
- Attempt to grow present congregations. Maintain attendance and involvement.
- That they would be leaders in their communities in the development of better race relations, and that they would be good examples of environmental stewardship.
- The bishop should expect respect and consideration from congregations - prayerfully and financially - and should be viewed as someone we need to listen to. We should be caring for the bishop as much as we expect the bishop to care for us.
- The bishop deserves to be treated respectfully.
- The Bishop should expect weirdness from congregations over the next six years. One of my favorite lines from Peter Stieknke's "Healthy Congregations" is, "Whenever there is a period of becoming or change, there is weirdness." Not only will congregations be experiencing a change in bishop over the next few years, but in this time frame congregations within the synod should be exploring ministry beyond their "normal" and becoming the church in this future season. The synod's next bishop should expect congregations to "become" the church in a new and different way. The bishop should expect congregations to make mistakes. The bishop should expect congregations to stumble upon unintended ways in which to proclaim the gospel and serve our neighbors. The bishop should expect new relationships between ministries and congregations within the synod and from outside the synod.
- Support through prayer and offerings.
- Financial support for mission partners. Encouragement of parish pastors to attend clergy gatherings for continuing education, etc. Be realistic caretakers of those who are called to minister among us.
- That he, she is given support through meeting our financial obligations to the Synod, and through our prayers.
- The bishop can expect support through prayer, monetary support of the synod's ministries and input as to what is needed in the synod.
- Congregational support, prayers & To be more involved in synod activities, meetings & leadership councils.
- Support - lifting her/him up; financial support of ministries; feedback (good or bad) in a positive way; coming to the table to ask the questions of "what do we want to be about in this synod", "How can we help move forward as Christians"
- Participation, Christian giving and willingness to share the Gospel.
- continued support of the synod.
- financial giving

- The synod's bishop should expect prayerful support of the office of the bishop and increased giving to Mission Support by congregations.
- Continued support
- Support. Prayer support, financial support, volunteer support, enthusiasm, having the bishop's back.
- Continued mission support. Prayer A lively engagement.
- Outreach, stewardship and making sure that our young people have a good strong base for their faith by encouraging faith-based activities.
- support - not just financial, involvement in assemblies and when the Bishop comes to your area
- Financial support of the Synod. Honest comments on the work that the Bishop is doing and how it affects the congregations. Involvement in the congregations and Synod
- Continued prayer and financial support needed to succeed in sharing God's word daily with all congregations and all peoples.
- Support financially and prayer. Expect to be held accountable for time and money.
- A strong financial commitment to the Synod and related ministries.
- Increased financial support
- Support of the synod through events and fundraisers.
- Continued financial and prayer support for the future. Additional support for our youth camps and national conventions.
- Financial and emotional support
- Should expect congregations to support the office of bishop with prayers, money time and talents.
- Congregations should pray for the synod and financially support the synod. Congregations should think outside their walls and do ministry inside and outside their walls.
- Support, organizational and financial; involvement of individuals; working with the poor; caring for the poor; care for immigrants; care for Native-Americans
- Continued and increased engagement in the ministries and projects of the Synod and ELCA.
- Continued support
- stewardship support being a partner in mission personal relationship with bishop and staff
- support - both financially and prayerfully open communication
- Financial support Involvement
- More financial support so the bishop doesn't have to spend time on all the fund-raising gimmicks ;
- The bishop should expect congregation's financial support of synod and churchwide ministries, prayer, trust.
- Support in his/her decision-making for all ELCA churches in South Dakota.
- Support in crisis
- Support (financial and otherwise) and encouragement. A commitment to remaining faithful to listen to the call and word of God. Openness to new and creative ideas. Trust that God's spirit is at work through the bishop and through the whole church, even in its brokenness.
- Financial support.
- Loyalty and reasonable financial support
- Support of synod meetings and activities

- Support Prayer
- Congregational participation and financial support. Prayers
- The bishop should expect that congregations will be supportive through prayer and financially.
- support
- Support
- I would expect that the bishop will see continued decline in numbers in rural congregations. Along with this there would most likely be a decrease in giving in those congregations which will ultimately affect the synod office.
- Expect that the church membership is changing and support.
- rapidly declining numbers of people in the pews
- There is a decreasing membership in our rural areas. This is caused by death, people who have stopped coming to church or have chosen a different denomination. Because of the decrease in membership, our support to ministries is also decreasing. The decrease in membership also makes it difficult to hold full-time ministers.
- The rural areas will be struggling to get a minister.
- It will become increasingly more difficult to fill pulpits in rural areas. Without significant changes in synod priorities, small and rural churches will continue to feel ignored and unappreciated by, as well as disconnected from the larger church.
- Many of our churches/congregations are struggling financially and membership is not growing. Many of these same churches did not take advantage of the wonderful resources that were offered by the Synod to renew and strengthen these churches. I would recommend training individuals within these congregations that could offer the training and support that these congregations need on an on-going basis. Every church needs to identify their strengths, needs and goals for the future. Some are doing well with this and some need more support and assistance. Sometimes there is a disconnect between the Synod and the congregations. Nurturing those relationships and being present to not only share information about all the things that the Synod is doing and asking for support but asking congregations what they need from the Synod.
- Not sure I can fully answer this. I expect that many more rural congregations will be faced with difficulties in terms of transition and more urban congregations will continue to grow. The difficulty will be in managing these dueling realities.
- struggling to cope with continued decline in membership and participation. Helping them find new ways of being the church.
- MOST SMALLER CONGREGATIONS WILL BE HAVING PROBLEMS.
- Congregations across the Synod are and will continue to be concerned about retaining their current pastor and/or calling another pastor. Many of these congregations believe they may have to close if they can't find a pastor.
- Memberships declining and more difficulty in paying the Synod. More of our decreased income needed locally.
- In general, as the membership and participation in SD's ELCA churches declines, there will be less money contributed to the SD Synod. For some congregations it will become increasingly difficult to afford a pastor. Many will have to decide whether they will become part of a 2-point

(or more) parish, or close. As offerings decline the stress will likely lead to conflicts in congregations.

- Many congregations continue to be inwardly focused with low presence in their communities and representation at community events. How can they reach the people, proclaim the gospel, and be in the community (but not OF the community) otherwise? Get out of the pew and into the community. Yeah, and doing public VBS, a turkey supper, and stuff like that at your own place isn't it. Get out of your building. Get off your property. Get engaged.
- Small congregations are hurting and closing so attention needs to be directed at rural areas instead of putting all the eggs in the baskets of the larger churches.
- Congregations in transition, particularly rural (church growth and decline, pastors retiring, new pastors coming in or more congregations in the call process)
- Small congregations closing
- Lack of vision, grief over change, frustration over apparent lack of care from the Bishop's office, requests for help from congregation and pastors over conflict, continued mission support dollars for strong staff, the Holy Spirit to surprise us all.
- Struggle to keep membership up
- A continued struggle with an aging population, paired with a need to reach out to younger people who have no church experience whatsoever.
- Continued concerns about a changing world and therefore changing church and ministry. This calls us to our core and most vital identities. Need for shared leadership both in congregations and beyond. Need for skills in listening to the next generation[s].
- Rural churches will have less attendance and will struggle to meet their financial obligations. While there will be growth in more populated cities.
- Struggling with declining participation, solid church-people people moving away, aging, dying etc.
- Synod bishop needs to understand the priority of congregations is their own success before branching out beyond local community. Especially small, rural congregations.
- declining numbers in congregations, and a strong need for pastoral care, clarification about the mission of the church (proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ) and how that is and is not impacted by declining membership
- I think congregations will continue to struggle with membership/attendance especially as the older generation continues aging. Continued financial support for the synod at current levels may become more of a struggle, again as congregation's attendance declines.
- The bishop should expect to have challenges with declining membership in many churches. Many of our young families struggle to balance church life with all the activities their children are involved with. As a result, we see many of those families only once or twice a month.
- The new ministries mentioned above MUST include thoughtful re-alignments of parishes struggling to do ministry. The bishop should be able to expect support for a visionary synod. Such vision needs to be interpreted to the pew sitters as well as congregational leaders. I don't believe the bishop will ever get --- or should expect --- unlimited and unquestioning support for all that goes on beyond the congregation's ZIP Code.
- Greater financial support.

- Declining and aging membership will mean continuing financial decline. The next bishop must appreciate that and plan accordingly.
- As our members continue to age we will see a shift in stewardship, attendance, and leadership. If Churchwide and leaders in our churches continue to push social justice as its agenda versus word and sacrament, thus making disciples as Jesus commanded, our denomination is in big trouble.
- The bishop should expect congregations to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit even if that means some change. He/she should expect teamwork from congregations. Continued support in prayer, finances and doing their part in the work of the Synod. The bishop should also expect some conflict and disagreement because we are the Church.
- Our prayers, our financial report, that we will be challenging all he or she does.
- I would hope congregations could be honest if they disagree with a Bishop, that they would be praying for him.
- Fear of change and newness. Hopeful support.
- Changes in church governance structure Support of strategic initiatives set forth Clergy development Community mission initiatives Support and sharing education and communication on social issues for them to each have a strategic plan Ways that connect faith with everyday life in addition to SUNDAY worship Support of camp ministry
- I don't know about expecting but be prepared to put out fires around. And
- I think the next bishop should expect congregations to be accountable to our mission starts and our support of them. I think they should also expect congregations to be in more or better conversation with the synod about creative ways of doing ministry across our different contexts.
- commitment, prayer, honesty, hope
- The bishop can expect involvement of faithful people who have diverse expectations of what "church" means to them and what role it takes in their lives! Small congregations will continue to struggle, especially if they do not feel valued by the larger church.
- They will be transforming, questioning, and extended.
- To be concerned about getting another generation of Lutheran preachers and not Lutheran social justice advocates.
- Nurturing new leaders Belief in power of prayer for all
- a growing number of "openings" with more pastors retiring and fewer students in seminary.
- Identification of ministry candidates
- A growing need for helping with recruiting and developing congregational leaders - with flexibility in expectations of both leaders and congregations. Times are changing, and the candidacy and call process needs to reflect that.
- Involvement & congregation growth of more young people and young families.
- That they deepen the faith of members, that they "seek the welfare of the city in which they live", that they grow inter-generational relationships, that the provider e radical hospitality, that they seek long term vision for how to be church in changing culture and demographics
- Congregations need to take ownership of their own ministry and gifts. We need to celebrate the gifts we have and embrace the Holy Spirit's work to raise up new ministries. Rather than bemoaning the congregation's decline in membership and "what used to be," celebrate the ministry we are doing here and now and look for ways to live out our call as Christ's disciples in

our community. Living and working in the community and not only within the walls of the church.

- To find creative ways to be church together. Ways we haven't thought of yet. Old ways might not work in some places. Folks are running crazy with work and so many awesome choices outside of being church together. How can being church together be one of those choices that moves to the front of the craziness?
- An eagerness to grow, try new things, but need a leader to guide us.
- To grow with all the congregations as one.
- Increase congregational membership and participation
- They should expect a growth and a unity in the congregations
- Growth in mission
- To give 10% or more of budget to the work of the Synod's Mission Plan Cooperate together to encourage the work of the Synod and ELCA ministries. Pray for the Bishop and staff. Invite the Bishop for a visit.
- To maintain or grow the congregation in terms of membership and financial contributions.
- growth in families of believers even if the financial commitment is down.
- Support from lay and pastoral members.
- To pray for and support their pastors.
- Support and ideas
- Support from the pastors and members of the congregations he/she will serve. New ideas and plans to make the church stronger. Respect for the position.
- support of the bishop and his/her ministry focus; commitment to our own growth as a congregation
- Call and care for Pastors. Find ways of caring for people beyond ourselves Use stewardship to promote ministry in SD, America, and around the world
- Support and prayers for ministry in South Dakota. And offer creativity for Rural ministry and insight.
- Support and that our congregation is changing.
- Support and communication.
- support and input
- To preach and spread the gospel to all.
- That congregations will focus on proclaiming the gospel in their contexts in word and deed, reach out to the needy and those missing from church, and work on ways to help all members recognize and live out their callings as members of the Body of Christ.
- For congregations to have vibrant worship that creates disciples who are active in using their hands for God's work. For congregation to connect with each other through conferences and WELCA and with the synod and support the synod's ministries as their own.
- That congregations will be responsible to their members' needs for revelation of God's Word and of God's Plan for their daily lives. The congregations will provide honest and charitable feedback to the synod and the decisions made by the synod. The congregations will support the decisions made by the selected bishop.

- That they would continue to be faithful in their witness to the gospel. That they would continue to pass on the understandings and insights of Martin Luther. They should also engage the community in which they serve and find ways to serve those whom they engage.
- To plant more
- preach the gospel, care for their people, reach out to the world with a word of hope in Christ
- To look beyond the walls of their church building and serve ALL our neighbors
- Increased faith in Jesus Christ and new believers.
- Continued emphasis on the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ in worship, education, and mission. Congregations should work collectively in their mission to proclaim and serve Christ, reaching beyond our wall, connecting with the everyday lives of their members.
- That they would live out the calling of the gospel of Jesus Christ--reaching out to their communities in love and service.
- The congregations are working hard to share the gospel inside the walls of the church AND beyond.
- The bishop should expect support in various forms in the form of prayer and feedback in the next six years.
- To support the bishop in pastoral ministry and the care and nurture of the clergy and those leading congregations who are not ordained.
- I believe congregations have a moral obligation to support the primary missions of our ELCA.
- The bishop should expect input on policies and current issues as well as open invitations to visit and lead worship in all South Dakota churches, not just around Sioux Falls.
- Faithfulness in mission and ministry Prayerful support Generosity in spirit Joyfulness in serving Passion for proclaiming the gospel Steadfast accompaniment of all our neighbors
- Partnership in God's work
- The bishop should expect respect and support from the congregations.
- to show good faith and support
- A closer connection to the synod for ministry support
- Their support and prayers.
- Be engaged in mission and discipleship.
- faith, support & participation
- Their support in furthering the theme of God's work, our hands
- To be supportive and active.
- Better involvement with synod affairs and synod offerings.
- Support and meaningful leadership
- partnership, prayers for the bishop and synod leaders, openness to where the Spirit is calling
- Willingness to grow.
- Willingness to try new directions.
- He or she should expect them to be attentive - paying attention to communications from the Synod ofc and Churchwide organization. They can expect that congregations will be faithful to the Gospel witness in their location, and that they will strive to build up leaders who are willing and able to serve not only within their own congregations, but also beyond. Finally, they should expect that congregations make a faithful effort to offer generous mission support.

- To be involved in mission as stated by synod: reaching out and ministering to all in communities, being servants to those in SD, US, and other world communities, keeping members apprised of issues and ways to be servants, and promoting and facilitating all members being involved in Bible Studies from the Lutheran perspective.
- To work together for the proclamation of the Word. To support the bishop and give him/her the time to make the office their own.
- More connectedness. The leaders, lay leaders, and congregations need to be more united. This is not about power. This is about being church together.
- A re-commitment to the mission of the greater Church. Respect for the South Dakota synod. Feel more closely and personally attached to our synod.
- Working together identifying strengths and gifts
- A close working partnership.
- Better communication
- A willingness to work as a team, supporting the ministry of the Synod, through solid communication. An understanding that if there is a transition to a new leader, there will be a time of learning and growing into the role & responsibilities.
- Our congregations need to know and help each other to strengthen our faith so we can reach out to others in need in our community and world.
- Working together to achieve peace within the communities of all believers and non-believers.
- Cooperation with other religious groups especially in reaching minorities.
- Be supportive and open to new ideas
- Willingness to work together for the advancement of God's mission. Willingness to grow in their financial commitment/mission support.
- Open dialog
- Accountability of congregations and their leaders must be transparent. Pastors and Deacons and lay leaders can be a blessing to others in each conference, and they can also be blessed by being faithful to rostered leaders' groups, as well as the entire synod of South Dakota. I am sad to see a few pastors in our conference who never attend anything outside of their own congregations. They are missing a lot of good, new information, as well as strong connections which enhance the life of each congregation. I have met lay people who have never heard of great things happening in our synod which could have helped them. Their pastors do not keep in touch. If there's a way to almost make it mandatory for leaders to attend certain supportive gatherings, that would be helpful.

4. What should congregations in the synod expect of the bishop in the next six years?

- Youth & Children ministries as well as focusing on family ministry
- Working together to achieve peace within the communities of all believers and non-believers.
- Working together identifying strengths and gifts.
- We would like more support in finding good, qualified people to lead our worship services. Especially those in rural communities.

- We will need help and understanding at Graceful Hills Parish. We are an aging congregation with few volunteers except for us who are retired.
- We should see the bishop supporting the pastors and congregations of the synod. There are currently many churches in the synod that are looking for pastors, and this seems to be a situation that is getting worse. I am pleased with the synod's work with the Kairos program and hope that program or one like it will continue.
- We pray diligently for a bishop that seeks to be responsive to needs --- and the initial response must come quickly, even if the final resolution takes time, energy and hard, slogging work.
- We need a Bishop who can deal with conflict effectively, one who understands the complexities of the role, and one who continues to be engaged with the people of the SD synod.
- Ways to lessen the financial burden on rural churches. By either more combining of parishes, younger ministers so their wages are less or consider them being an outreach parish and give them synod supporter.
- Visibility, time spent west river and trying to make us one church - not west river, rural and Sioux Falls area
- visibility and personnel messages to individual congregations
- Unity within the ELCA.
- Understanding of change. support for new or different ideas.
- Try to get out in the congregations as much as possible, especially those that are struggling. Recruit new pastors and retain the present ones.
- Treat all congregations the same and financially responsible.
- total membership and attendance
- To work with pastors/congregations in crisis, and to work to place/keep pastors in congregations.
- To take notice of congregations. What we are doing on the front lines. Not the other way around. It is not expected for congregations to notice all the cool things and places the bishop is doing and going. No. The bishop is to take notice of congregations. Work the congregation-circuit. Learn from us and we from the bishop. It is a constant dialogue. Somewhere along the way, the dialogue stopped.
- To support Luther House of Study and the great work they do in providing capable leaders for the future.
- To support congregations in ALL ministry aspects.
- To listen and be concerned for the issues facing all congregations, not just the larger ones or the ones located in the cities. To be active in finding pastors for smaller congregations. To continue to effort to raise up all leaders. To provide guidance for social issues at the state, national and global levels.
- To lead a mobile, transforming, aging, and creative church leadership and membership to a passionate walk with Christ.
- To help us adapt to the future.
- To help them usher in the next generation of pastors by working with local entities such as the Luther House of Study, rather than trying to support an old failing model
- to help develop ideas for issues and struggles in their church

- To faithfully lead us forward, to cultivate and nurture new pastors/leaders, to embrace new forms of worship that appeal to younger generations
- To encourage them to plant more congregations
- To be with them, to hear them, to walk alongside them.
- To be present to be engaging to be supportive
- To be humble and kind. Stand up for the smaller churches.
- To be engaged with the church's and the pastors.
- To be available to the congregations and clergy of the South Dakota Synod. To shepherd and support roused members of the synod, providing support and encouragement in the mission that we share. To promote the mission and ministry of the ELCA, both locally and globally.
- To be active in the local congregations.
- To be able to see the intricate relationship between the rural communities and the rural churches in SD
- To be a pastor to pastors.
- To be a pastor to our pastors. To visit and pray with the clergy as well as lay leaders in our congregations at least annually. To be an advocate for faithful continuing ed from all the clergy and lay leadership and to develop letters of call and salary packages which encourage our clergy to stay in the Synod and to reject the letters of call which come into the office that are unreasonable and written with a lack of faith and hope.
- to be a leader moving forward in the years to come
- To be a leader in the Synod and Congregations. Visitations to the congregations. Listening to the congregations.
- To be a leader and take the church in the direction that Christ would want it to go
- The office of the bishop should provide support and resources and encouragement for congregation and be a model of leadership in times of conflict.
- The next bishop should be acutely aware of the clergy shortage rural congregations are experiencing and will continue to experience. Thus, the next bishop needs to be open to thinking outside the box when it comes to identifying and educating people to fill these pulpits. In other words, the old seminary model is not working!
- The new bishop will need skills in 1) Conflict management. 2) Gently helping congregations assess their long-term future and plan appropriately. 3) Remembering that this is conservative South Dakota, the bishop will need to communicate a more middle-of-the-road theological perspective (as compared to the rather liberal perspective of the national body of the ELCA). If the bishop cannot or will not do this, the dropout and disengagement of lay members will likely increase. 4) Integrity. Expecting of him or herself the same behaviors and self-restraint expected of synod pastors. 5) Less focus on personal accomplishments and more focus on what we are doing together.
- The congregations should expect the bishop to know who they are, be available to offer support, issue guidance and statements on current events or situations when needed and pay a visit to the congregation at some point.
- The bishop will work with the small rural congregations in creating partnerships with other congregations to provide stable leadership from the pulpit.

- The Bishop will pray for them, be in relationship with their pastor. The Bishop should be available to them and help them to give the pastor a sabbatical.
- The Bishop should cast a vision for what the church of the 21st century can be, and congregations should expect that. They should also expect that the Bishop will represent the church faithfully, according to our common understanding of the Gospel, in the places of pain, conflict and difficulty across our state. They should also expect the Bishop to serve, as much as possible, as a pastor to pastors. Finally, they should expect the Bishop to be responsive and attentive to the administrative matters that are a normal part of synodical ministry - call process, candidacy, conflict intervention, leadership development and stewardship of the synods resources.
- The bishop should be honest and forthright in dealings with congregations and pastoral staff.
- The bishop should be expected to grasp the theological issues facing the specific types of churches that grow within the synod, i.e.--rural churches often have a different theological base than city churches. To this end, the bishop needs to accept where the congregations are and be able to see a vision of how to transform each type of church to the next level of spiritual understanding and to be humble in approach.
- The bishop should be a knowledgeable leader in the Lutheran Church, should support rural congregations, continue to support ministry needs of younger generations in our churches and help find ways to attract those that do not go to church.
- The bishop casts the vision for the synod; he or she is the one who determines the path and direction of the synod for the next few years. They look at the big picture, not just of our synod, but of the entire ELCA, and the global church to see where God is calling all of us. The bishop looks at the synod and sees where there is struggle in congregations, such as in rural areas, and brings a team of creative people together to brainstorm ways to support and enliven rural ministry. The bishop is never an island all to themselves; they must work in conjunction with others who will encourage, as well as challenge, their ideas and initiatives.
- The bishop and staff need to be more concerned about rural/small town congregations and not just be concerned about the larger congregations and the congregations around Sioux Falls.
- The assistance to grow their congregations
- That the bishop would work to expand the pool of available rostered leaders willing to serve in South Dakota. And that the bishop would be a congregation's advocate in times of transition.
- That the Bishop would be a leader in the building of better race relations in this state and beyond and strengthen our connections to mission partner congregations.
- That the bishop will develop and encourage paid and unpaid leaders of congregations in the synod. Congregations might also expect that the bishop will play a leading role in helping leaders of congregations develop cultures of calling where they serve.
- That she/he will help build relationships and networks so that we might do is try well and support one another, that she/he will bring out gifts from individuals and congregations to serve the greater church, that she/he will provide support in transitions and conflict, that she/he will support pastors especially those in mid-career when change of call may be hard to find, that she/he will find creative ways to be church in changing culture
- That he/she will further the work of the church, emphasizing the ELCA's views of inclusivity

- That he would pray for the congregations he serves. That he would try to come to west river functions and make sure they are involved in things.
- Support. Prayer support, leadership support, vision and long-range planning, careful consideration of issues but then decisive action, enthusiasm
- Support, creative worship and stewardship help. Encouragement for the ministry of word and Sacrament. Confirmation and Senior members support. And serious concern for the Pastoral well-being of each Pastor and congregation.
- Support, communication and development of leaders.
- Support, leadership, new ideas.
- Support Visits to churches Leadership
- support in keeping Sunday for worship
- Support in crisis
- Support in all areas - pulpit supply - financially - membership
- Support if they need a new minister, creative and responsive in filling vacancies, and attention if there are needs.
- Support during times of need. Interest in the churches. Getting to know our church family.
- Support and promote the work of mission partners in the S.D. Synod, especially those that have a proven track record of success. look for new ways, and new possibilities for this synod to be of service to its congregations, or to partner with other denominations to help meet the needs of S.D.'s less fortunate. Visiting and taking part in worship at as many parishes as possible is a good way to keep in touch and build bonds of trust.
- Support and influence Pastors to be innovative in their teaching, preaching, and community involvement.
- Support and guidance through the call process. Care of their pastors.
- Support and guidance into the future. While respecting our past we need to look ahead to how Lutheranism and indeed Christianity can become more accessible to those who we call unchurched.
- Support and attention to the realities of all congregations, including rural ministries.
- support
- Strong leadership with respect to bringing people to Church on a weekly basis. Encouraging our older pastors to have contemporary services for younger parents and youth. If you can get people to attend regularly there is a greater change of taking care of the financial needs of the congregation verses when the church is empty.
- Strategic planning for growth for the SD Synod. Focus on this rather than the social policies/progressive activism.
- Spiritual leadership
- Someone who is available to talk to and act if appropriate; advisor for congregations and their elected leadership.
- Someone who continues to show care for our rostered leaders and the congregations who find themselves on the rural "fringes" of our synod. A person who keeps communication open with all congregations as best as they are able through the help of their staff. I think some congregations see the synod office as some bigger entity that you only talk to if there is a problem. I would like to see that impression dispelled.

- Someone who can innovatively help provide congregations with other spiritual formation and educational tools to continue lifting lay leadership spiritual connectedness even within high functioning/active congregations.
- Sincere leadership executed with integrity and a clear understanding of call to ministry
- Shepherding in their goals
- same as above
- SALARIES FOR PASTOR'S WILL BE HARD TO KEEP UP WITH THE GUIDELINES.
- Rural ministry visits each church and explain goals and expectations
- Rural congregations would benefit from visits by the bishop and/or synod staff for reasons other than pastoral needs.
- Recruiting leaders for churches in need, putting forth the ELCA message , and educating parishioners on the ELCA theology.
- Prophetic preaching guiding them into enlightened political and social action.
- Professional, transparent, spiritual, kindness and caring, open and honest communication and leadership.
- Presence and encouragement
- preach the gospel, care for their people, reach out to the world with a word of hope in Christ
- prayers and support
- Prayerful, humble leadership Prophetic preaching Compassionate shepherding A unifying vision for ministry
- Prayerful guidance during changes in church attendance and church goals.
- Prayer, effective, honest & grace-filled communication, engagement in congregational life on whatever level it will be needed (transition, conflict, milestone, general needs ...)
- Prayer support, encouragement and resources for growth areas, a personal visit.
- Positions on social issues Development of our pastors to manage large congregations thus providing leadership and staff development training Guidance for doing strategic planning Tips for governance changes that will help congregations to function well Collaborative opportunities with other entities also interested in common goals related to social issues and meeting community needs Training for church leadership Tools to assess congregation health and mission impact Effective governance policies
- personal visit and encouragement
- Pastoral presence, innovative thinking, ability and willingness to reach across gender and political lines. A greater emphasis on service, a kinder and more gentle and moral leadership to offset the current political climate.
- Passion, enthusiasm, inspiration and encouragement. Speaking the truth in love. Strong administrative skills and wise stewardship.
- Partnership, wisdom during ambiguity.
- Overall leadership to guide congregations as they face dwindling congregations & financial hardships especially in our rural areas. The ability to oversee programs & ensure they can work for both large and small congregations.
- One who relates to the whole synod, not just certain regions (Sioux Falls and the southeastern part of the state, Rapid City, Pierre.) One who is sounding a voice for the good of all of God's children and calling our elected officials to voice concern for the church.

- Not sure
- New ideas brought forth.
- Much more collaboration with ALL churches in the synod. New ideas of leadership and administration. The hierarchical model has not worked in business and certainly not in churches. We need a bishop that truly understands the priesthood of believers and the Body of Christ. That includes everyone, not just the big churches with multiple staffs. We need deployed staff. Pastors and deacons need to know the Bishop is backing them up. We don't need a Bishop who is a disciplinarian and disciplines pastors, unless they are being unethical in their views and behavior. The synod needs a policy of behavior expectations for pastors and not the one they have now. Practical everyday guidelines. Pastors get away with many unethical behaviors.
- more contact with churches
- Maybe some radical change is needed to reverse the declining attendance trend. What that maybe I don't know. It's too easy to continue the status quo and just live with what we've got. We need strong local & synod leadership to 'shake things up'. Obviously on a local level there needs more accountability and action but from the synod (and even the bigger church) a strong voice & strong leadership will be appreciated.
- listening to and support of our congregational needs; presence, visibility
- Listening
- Listen; show up; care for the leaders; if he or she doesn't know answers to procedural questions, find someone who does; raise up leaders around him or her that can fill in gaps that he or she is not as gifted at.
- Let's see the Bishop spend A LOT less time running around proclaiming partnerships with other faiths, SJW'ing, and all the other PR stuff and see him visiting congregations to encourage scriptural teaching and proclaiming the magnificence of the One True God and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It's fine to run around and get along with our Muslim brothers, but let's make sure we're talking about Jesus with them. The other thing he ought to be doing is looking around at South Dakota and our values here, rather than pushing ELCA's national, coast-influence liberalism here. We don't want it. Knock it off.
- less support at the synodical level with there being less resources.
- Leading congregations in their faith ministries and supporting their pastors as well as filling vacancies.
- Leading congregations and challenging us to grow in new ways.
- Leadership that understands the changes in culture and generations as it relates to ministry and engagement in the church.
- Leadership that addresses the racial issues in SD and good fiscal policy.
- Leadership in ministry and stewardship services.
- Leadership in methods that would help all congregations be better equipped to share God's word with all people. Teaching and empowering others to carry out the work of the synod.
- Leadership and vision. Also, developing future leaders.
- Leadership and stability.
- Leadership
- integrity, clarity, communication, care

- Inspiring sermons, public leadership, prompt staff contact, vision casting, evangelism and adult discipleship resources
- innovative ideas for serving small rural congregations
- Increasing pastor retention Solidifying the teaching of Christ Unwavering devotion to core church principles
- I would like to see the bishop out visiting congregations. Bishop Zellmer has been great about building relationships; I hope the next bishop continues that work.
- I would like to see improved communication, not only between the Bishop and local congregations, but with associates to the Bishop. This is crucial in times of transition. So many congregations have complained about long interims and times of waiting for a new pastor. I believe they truly understand the shortage of rostered leaders, but they have been left to feel "lonely". Communication and empathy of any kind is very helpful. It is important for the Bishop to come in person, sometime, at least once to each congregation. Some, around us have celebrated big anniversaries and have never seen a Bishop, whereas, other congregations closer to Sioux Falls have had the Bishop visit several times within a short period. A Bishop must continue to be aware of political advocacy, anything affecting the lives and livelihood of our people, especially rural situations. This has been very good, and I hope it will continue with the next person.
- I would like to see a bishop who is more involved with the congregations - perhaps making "surprise" or planned visits to each congregation throughout the term. I think there would be more interest in what is going on at the synod and churchwide level with more one on one contact with the bishop. People are not so willing to give up time to attend a meeting but would be open to conversation before or after church.
- I think the new bishop will need to be a creative thinker, "think outside of the box", especially in how to keep our youth involved with and committed to the church to maintain and build membership. Developing altruism in all members is important, too.
- I think congregations should expect the bishop to be a spiritual and religious leader who interprets the gospel in a world and culture filled with injustice, prejudice, violence, and inequality. I think the bishop should challenge the churches in South Dakota to take seriously the gospel in addressing the issues facing our society.
- I hope for deliberate and intensified discussion about the gift of being together--people feel very isolated. Our current bishop rarely talks about what it means to be church, to be together, knit as community and finding strength in one another. Bible study will equip this readily. The pace of change requires flexible imagination of all of us.
- I do not know.
- Honesty and integrity based in a love of Christ Jesus. Care and compassion Remembering the small congregations and rural sites.
- His/her leadership in facing the unique challenges which they face. Resources to help resolving them,
- His or her's prayers, and to dream dreams and proclaim grace.
- Help with that change
- Help in preparing ministers

- help ease political divisions: help enter conversations with congregations on same sex marriage, refugees, gun control,
- He/she will be a wise and faithful leader who is accessible to both pastors and lay people.
- Have the pastor's and congregation's back Conflict management Help congregations to find good pastors Help pastors find good congregations. Ecumenical Take social stances that are Biblically caring and loving to others
- Grounded in faith, open to future, visions for how to engage people in meaningful relationship with God and participation in mission and ministry.
- good question
- Forward thinking leadership All have gifts to offer Create positives for youth
- For the bishop to be visible, not just his staff, but for the bishop to get out and be in congregations.
- Focus on getting more people to join the ministry.
- Faithful leadership, representation in the state, especially regarding justice issues, and concern for pastors and congregations.
- even handed support of all congregations, both large and small, east river and west river ability to work ethically in dealing with conflict in congregations be supportive of congregation's called pastors and rostered leaders
- encouragement and guidance, advocacy for important concerns, like the environment and social justice
- Ecumenical leadership
- each congregation, no matter how small or remote, deserves to have their limitations (like lack of internet access) be acknowledged and accommodations made.
- direction, guidance, leadership
- Development of leaders Financial stewardship and sustainability offerings for congregations At least an initial 3-year strategic plan for the synod Creativity and willingness to do the hard things for the sake of the gospel
- Courageous, verbal and active advocacy of dispossessed people throughout the state and nation.
- Conversations about transition and change (before the doors close).
- Continued leadership at the state level for improved relations with immigrants, cooperation with state agencies for social services, and youth programs.
- connection, vision, strategy
- Congregations will expect the bishop to care about them no matter their size or financial abilities. Expect a bishop who is grounded in the Lutheran faith, doctrine and Scriptural interpretation. A bishop who is willing to honor the past while being present in today and looking forward and planning for the future. A bishop who is willing to listen more than he/she talks even when they don't agree. Expect a bishop who pushes us out of our comfort zone. A bishop who acknowledges our gifts and strengths while continuing to encourage us to work on our areas of growth as a Synod and as individual congregations. Expect a bishop and staff who are available Expect a bishop they will not always agree with
- Congregations should see the Bishop on a regular basis.

- Congregations should expect the Bishop to be concerned about them no matter their size or geographic location. We expect him/her to seriously consider the suggestions and/or concerns of the laity when considering policies and procedures. To uphold the doctrine of the ELCA.
- Congregations should expect support, communication and a development of good leaders for our churches.
- Congregations should expect a person who continues to grow in faith and understanding of the flock that is given. This person needs to be steadfast in prayer and personal reflection, have finely tuned skills of conflict management, and love for the congregations in the Synod and around the world.
- Congregations should expect a listening ear when voicing concerns and ideas for developing programs. Congregations calling pastors should expect frequent communication and assistance from the bishop and assistants during the call and transition process.
- Congregations should expect a bishop who is sensitive to the needs of all congregations
- Congregations should expect a bishop to be worthy of trust, of a servant's heart, committed to pastoral care of congregations and leaders in his/her charge.
- Congregations should be given support and treated with respect.
- Congregations should be able to expect help and support, especially when they are without a pastor. Bishops and the synod office should take a leadership role in finding possible solutions for these small congregations, be it part time ministers, lay leaders, merging or closing. Congregations should not be left on their own or ignored.
- Congregations can expect a person who will do their best to respond to the call they receive... Congregations can expect change...
- Concern for and support of both them and their pastors, recognition of the challenges and strengths of rural ministry.
- Companionate leadership
- communication relationships strengthened
- Challenge strong congregations to assist weaker congregations in our calling to minister to needy. This may be including mentoring, sharing staff, combining adult and/or youth programs, musicians, etc. Bigger is not always better.
- Casting the vision for the future, provide resources for pastors to bring needed change and the cover their six when resistance happens
- Bringing people to faith and uniting those who are believers in their relationship with Christ. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God". . . Matthew 6:33
- Being able to name each rostered and lay leader in synod Prayer and theological interpretation Honesty
- Be more in tune with the dynamics, needs, goals of the congregation Provide for pastoral care for the leaders that is deacons and pastors
- Be available to visit with congregations upon request and just stop when is possible. Pray for congregations and pastoral staffs of congregations and try to acknowledge in writing the special prayers.
- At first, congregations should also expect weirdness from the bishop. There will be a lot of becoming and change for this person and her staff. Congregations should expect the bishop to support them as they imagine how God is calling them to be the church and as they try new

relationships, approaches, ministries, etc.... Congregations in the synod should expect a bishop who is curious about their story, their call, and their vision for ministry. Congregations should not expect a bishop who is eager to share her story, accomplishments, etc., but instead a bishop who wants to support and encourage the work of the congregation. Congregations should expect a bishop who is an expert listener!

- assistance with pastoral vacancies - congregational support and guidance as well as clergy leadership development
- Assistance and prayer in growing and supporting small congregations and keeping small congregations strong.
- As little as needed
- All that I have listed above, as well as being a pastor to the other leaders of the church--further equipping them to live out their callings. In addition, congregations should expect the bishop to proclaim the good news, freely utilize the office of the keys, and trust in the ongoing and faith-giving work of the Holy Spirit.
- All persons are important and to be respected and affirmed. Get rid of the cronyism.
- Aiding a congregation in expanding, their membership rolls and encouraging ministry with all age groups.
- Active leadership, willingness to advocate for people in need, both here and abroad.
- A person able to set time, financial and ministry priorities. Rather than going in all sorts of different directions, prioritize ministry and Gospel needs. The small stuff (including perpetually conflicted congregations) can suck the energy and time away from growth in faith and ministry. The new bishop needs to spend less time in the air (flying to foreign countries and all over the USA) and work to develop South Dakota. Many of the things the current bishop has done internationally and throughout the nation, could have been done by others.
- a listening ear
- A leader who can pilot a course through tough times, while confronting controversial issues of our world.
- A greater understanding of the pressures facing congregations, especially smaller rural congregations, several which will be looking at closing. Congregations will look to the bishop to help guide them through difficult times.
- A genuine leader that uses his/her talents and leadership to advocate for the afflicted, care for our pastors and deacons, and be a role model for all in the synod. When there is crisis in the world, we turn to our bishop for pastoral care and messages. Also, our next bishop will need to be able to build relationships with community partners as well as in our government. Bishop Zellmer has built several philanthropic relationships and has good partnerships within our state and federal government.
- A competent, faithful leader to help cast vision for Christ's church. A bridge-builder whose primary posture is one of listening. A hopeful person. Someone who innovates and takes risks. A lover of people and God's whole creation.
- A bridge builder, community organizer and a leader of what the Church needs to be in the 21st Century considering growing nationalism we are called to be a church outside our walls, outside our borders and outside our comfort zone. The Bishop needs to reflect this and champion it!
- A bishop with great pastoral care skills.

- A bishop who has an understanding and compassion for all congregations and all people - certainly for the needs of congregations in Western South Dakota!
- A bishop that will connect with congregations and recognize the needs and issues that the church is going through.
- A bishop that shepherds the rostered leaders of this synod, as well as developing and training lay leaders for the challenges ahead. We need a leader who helps congregations navigate the needed changes for our current cultural and economic times. The larger church continues to focus on easy to categorize numbers like membership instead of focusing on mission in community and world. We need leadership that helps rostered and lay leaders to learn new ways of being church and Christians. Help us move from theology of scarcity (less members, less money, desire for past glory days) to theology of abundance (focus on mission, new partnerships with neighboring ELCA congregations, reimagined purpose and meaning).
- A bishop should be someone who will appreciate the ministries which are being done and that ministry comes in all shapes and sizes. The bishop should also understand that vitality can be measured in many ways beyond what is measured on the annual parochial report. The bishop should surround their self with skilled people who will serve and support the mission and vision of the South Dakota Synod.
- -Be a role model in behavior and faith (true to gospel & Lutheran perspectives) for pastors and those in congregational church leadership - and for congregations and the public. -Facilitate congregations to be true to the gospel and Lutheran teachings and ELCA mission, through statements and developing/facilitating the giving of many educational opportunities. -Have leadership/faith/healing/communication skills in helping individual pastors, those in ministry, those in congregational leadership, and/or congregations in crisis and/or transitions. [be a pastor to pastors, deacons, and others in ministry as well as facilitator of having congregations stay true to the Gospel and Lutheran teachings, and facilitator of healing in congregations] -Be a public voice for the SD ELCA on social issues and ecumenical issues - facilitate public forums. (like what doing on hunger, SD legislature day, other) Be VOCAL as to how we carry out in daily life the mission of the church to feed and care for the hungry, thirsty, those without clothes, those in need of any kind, those in prison (and getting out of prison), in SD and around the world, etc. as Jesus commands. Would like to see more inform. given to congregations and the public on the work of Lutheran World Relief!!!

5. What is your congregation celebrating right now?

- Youth, children and families
- Youth ministry. We have an involved, active Pastor.
- Youth ministry and youth education Having a good pastor
- Youth involvement (National Youth Gathering, day camp, etc.) and new members.
- Youth engagement
- Youth and family ministry.
- youth and children's ministry, ongoing and growing 90-year anniversary healthy, supportive relationships effective outreach to new families
- Working together in a parish, making it possible to do more than they could alone.

- We've cut our mortgage debt in half in three years (\$4.2 million to \$2.1 million) and are working toward paying it off in full by 2021 Vibrant and growing Children, Youth, and Family ministry Joyful generosity expressed through our benevolence and mission support
- We're debt-free, not long after upgrading our facilities, which is a wonderful position to be in.
- We're a small congregation with 3rd and 4th generation members. We're like family.
- We recently celebrated our 100th anniversary. We are certainly enjoying our time with the current interim pastor, Pastor Will Olsen.
- We just had a Youth Gathering Team return from Houston. It had been several Youth Gatherings since our congregation had anyone attend. We have great numbers of youth in Pre-Confirmation and Confirmation.
- We have some good stuff happening. But need to rejoice in that.
- We have a very strong youth program, due to a dedicated few that have worked very hard over the last few years.
- We currently have a great pastor, Jonathan Steiner.
- We celebrate our unique ability to bond and pray for our members in need as well as assist our members and community with a loving Christian hand in projects and fellowship.
- we celebrate daily that we have a pastor to lead our congregation and that we can reach beyond our membership to bring the word of God to others
- We are not celebrating anything currently.
- We are having a Mission Day, involving tying quits, putting together kits, etc. It is involving all ages, kids and elders alike.
- We are going through a visioning process for direction on future ministry. We are celebrating the history of our congregation in its ministry, paying off the building mortgage, and the diversity of our congregation.
- We are excited with the merging of two congregations into one.
- We are doing some long-awaited major work on the facility as well as getting used to once again a pastor who is in a permanent call with us.
- We are celebrating the education of youth and support to the community in our mission.
- We are celebrating the discernment of a new mission statement and vision statement. We are celebrating God's guidance in discerning these statements. We are celebrating that these two statements will give us focus for our energy and resources. We are also celebrating the energy God is giving to the many aspects of our life together as a congregation. There is Godly energy in our monthly gatherings around food, our worship, the community garden we host, weekly ultimate Frisbee games, and outreach to Hill City.
- We are celebrating the 40th anniversary of ordination for our current pastor. We also celebrate that, as a rural church, we are still well attended and strong.
- We are celebrating our vibrant Wednesday ministry! During the school year we pick children up from the elementary school on Wednesday's and bring them to church for what we call "Wednesday Night Life" where they learn Bible stories and connect their faith to their everyday lives. We then have a meal, then worship. Our worship on Wednesday's is different every week, and truly engages those present. We then have adult Bible study and confirmation classes after worship. During the summer we have campfire worship in our outdoor worship space on Wednesday's, which has been very well attended this year. It's very casual, including a

discussion rather than a traditional sermon. We are also celebrating our junior and senior high school youth ministry, which is active.

- We are celebrating our joy with our pastor who came to us about 3 years ago. He is a blessing.
- We are celebrating our 135th year as a church.
- We are celebrating ongoing health and vitality. In the coming year we will be working at cultivating a culture of calling as part of a national initiative. We are also planning on expanding our physical space and holding a capital campaign to raise funds for the expansion.
- We are celebrating good pastoral leadership, a culture of shared community and mutual support, and a strong sense of looking beyond ourselves, both local and global.
- We are celebrating being in the black financially. Our church numbers are growing and giving is going up!
- We are celebrating a youth program that continues to be vibrant and growing.
- We are celebrating a strong children's and youth ministry. We are celebrating continued ministry in our two of our three small rural congregations.
- We are celebrating a renewed interest in mission, looking beyond the walls of the congregation and seeing where God is leading us.
- We are celebrating a refreshing time of "settling in" after some rough times in 2009 and following. We are celebrating the new programs which creatively enhance theological education of leaders. We are happy to see the Kairos program working well. We are happy that the "Listen, God is Calling" campaign has attracted more pastors to South Dakota. We celebrate the great numbers of youth who attend the Large Triennial Gatherings. We are celebrating refreshing, and excited new pastors who are well trained. I think people celebrate being able to talk to each other, to their pastor, and to their Bishop, and being heard when they share their deepest concerns. We celebrate when we feel like "family" in our congregations.
- We are beginning to develop a relationship with the Muslim community in Sioux Falls and we are celebrating this partnership.
- We are a small rural congregation close to Sioux Falls in our 146th year. We are becoming older. We were a neighborhood church but now we are a destination church. Our children population is shrinking. That is not a good sign. We cannot pay for a full-time shepherd. We are doubling our efforts to reach out to others in need. We have held two annual events that reach out to others. It is a celebration. If it is GOD's will we shall overcome.
- Visioning and strategic planning to move into how to love our neighbors
- The talents of all the volunteers.
- The strong leadership of our pastor. The fundamental beliefs of the Lutheran faith.
- The spirit at work through the diversity of God's creation! Interfaith initiatives, robust worship life, a variety of voices.
- The saving love of our Lord, grace, fellowship, and each other.
- The ministry which we do to care for our "neighbors". We are serving many people each day a simple meal. We offer support in other tangible ways as well such as assistance with identifying documents. We celebrate our tradition of being a congregation which serves. Our service also takes shape with our relationship with the community of Two Strike on the Rosebud Reservation, an annual family camp and Christmas Party sponsored by Trinity each year.

- The ministry that we share with our brothers and sisters in Christ within our community and world. We are grateful for the many ways in which God has blessed our congregation through the years.
- The many ways we serve can serve God through our benevolence Progress on our strategic plan goals Our wonderful pastors Positive results from our congregational vitality survey Approval of initiative of using some of our property to assist the working poor to become home owners
- The involvement of the youth in the congregation and community
- The growth of young families and returning kids to the farm. A Pastor.
- The grow in youth taking part in the church.
- The Gospel
- The excitement of being able to send seven youths to the National Youth Gathering in Houston
- The arrival of a new pastor and the energy and love of sharing God's word that he has brought to our congregation.
- the arrival of a new pastor after a long wait
- the "noise" that comes with children (not many but "enough" to make occasional noise). A strong presence within the community
- That we received a pastor from the Luther House of Study
- That they are continuing to do ministry after 101 years. They appear to appreciate the Interim Pastor.
- Tailgating during the summer enjoying each other
- Tailgate parties throughout the summer.
- Summer. rain. Families -- marriages, baptisms, anniversaries.
- Summer vacations.
- Strong yet welcoming leadership
- Still keeping our church going despite no Pastor physically for a year now.
- Stability and slow growth, many young families.
- Some shared ministry and worship (2-point parish) including Mission Fest, some joint worship services One celebrates Mission.
- some new members and BEING part of the community - our downtown involvement and caring for the poor, including friends on the Rosebud
- Significant growth based largely on excellent youth/family ministry; health; changeover in staff (that also comes with a sense of grief).
- Service to others.
- Repairs
- Remodeling that will make it easier for the elderly to get to the pastors' offices
- Reduction of debt
- Receiving a new Pastor
- preaching the gospel, caring for people
- Positive, welcoming attitude and getting repairs made that have been decades in the making
- Pentecost
- Partnership
- Paid off our mortgage and visioning in process.

- Paid off mortgage - 100-year history - our church family each day. Our wonderful interim - Will Olsen.
- Our pastors! Our beautiful church homes.
- Our partnership with the Latino community.
- Our mission work and our youth
- Our continued strength and excellent programs and our wonderful church family.
- Our congregation is celebrating the work of the Holy Spirit through as seen in the work of our family of faith. We are seeing new faces in worship and in the everyday life of the congregation. We are seeing a growth in our children and youth ministries. We are seeing more adults involved the everyday mission and ministries of our congregation. We are celebrating the healthy work of the Council and committees.
- Our congregation is celebrating right now a wonderful influx of young couples/families, with babies being born all over the place! A large re-siding project was completed of the church building and youth barn in 2017. There has been a sort of resurgence of participation in the Sunday School class for adults. We are blessed to have a Pastor with strong people skills, who clearly loves the congregation and is in the process of "getting to know" people on a deep level. Though small in numbers, there is strong support for the youth of the congregation: participation in the National Youth Gathering is a priority.
- our community outreach ministries; leadership development within our congregation; becoming a more welcoming faith community that is open to diversity
- Our church is celebrating summer and the wonderful talents that are provided by the broad spectrum of people that worship with us during this season of the year.
- nothing...our congregation is struggling to the point of depletion, in my opinion
- Nothing
- Nothing
- Nothing
- Not too much of anything except Jesus' resurrection and promise of eternal life.
- New ways for the council to work Finding stewardship to do ministry Young families Children in worship and Sunday School
- New pastor just installed this past summer.
- new pastor
- New partnerships.
- New opportunities for mission in our community and beyond.
- New facility, strong membership, strong financial contributions, and outreach to youth.
- New associate pastor.
- N/A I am in the process of changing churches to Eastside Lutheran so don't know the answer to this question.
- Most recently, Hezekiah House initiative. Looking toward faithful and glad celebration of 75 years as people of God.
- Mission - many wonderful ways we serve our community and beyond. Milestone Ministry has been a wonderful way to involve families. Solid worship.
- Many newborns.
- Lots of energy around children and youth ministry.

- Life.
- last year was our 100th year celebration
- Large expansion, congregational giving is strong, room to grow, adult baptisms
- Kids and Youth
- Innovation in ministry models
- Increased attendance
- History, God's grace and presence with us
- History of very good ministries, wonderful facility & generally good ministries.
- helping our friends in downtown Rapid City
- Having looked ahead to the next question, I think our congregation is celebrating the fact that we're not really struggling right now. Over all we're in a pretty good place. Babies are being born so we see a future ahead. Our pastor is young energetic, talented, and conscientious in his ministry. Over all people seem fairly content.
- Having an ordained minister.
- Having a renewed youth program. We sent 4 to the Youth Gathering in Houston after not sending anyone in 22 years.
- Having a pastor and being alive.
- having a minister that wants to stay and likes it here
- Growth.
- Growth, faith on fire, fellowship, ministries within and outside our church walls.
- Growth of younger families, an excitement for the future and how we might reach out to neighbors, a strong sense of welcome and hospitality
- Growth in number of younger families becoming active in the church; and the number of babies being celebrated throughout the congregation membership.
- Growth in membership. Vitality within the community. Engagement of some folks.
- growth and building.
- Growth among young families, compassionate pastor and talented musicians.
- growth
- Growing Sunday school and youth participation, involvement in community leadership, new leaders stepping up.
- Growing adult education.
- Great worship. The gifts of young people. Global connections.
- great worship growing spirituality positive attitudes
- Great staff team, involvement in many outreach programs.
- Great leadership
- Great children and confirmation programs that focus on how to put faith into action in daily life. Deep ecumenical partnerships with community denominations including Catholics and Missouri Lutherans.
- Good pastoral leadership
- Good Christian community
- God's always present love and grace! The gifts our members continue to share - some known, others newly discovered...
- God's works Our Hands

- Every time our young people do something, we celebrate. Every time they go on a mission trip, they pair up in their mentor groups, they gather for VBS, they sing for worship, they sign on for Peer Ministry, they lead worship- we celebrate.
- Entering a Strategic Planning Process to discern what God is calling us to do in our neighborhood--a big step for this congregation.
- energy, growth, intergenerational relationships
- elderly group involvement.
- ELCA youth gathering return. We hadn't attended several gatherings.
- Doors are still open. Multiple baptisms lately.
- Diversity and unity.
- Debt reduction Community
- Converting and bringing in unchurched members of our community. Educating and training children in confessional Christian faith.
- Completion of a building project.
- Community Outreach
- Christ
- Celebrating recently paying off church mortgage and contributing to the community by providing free monthly meal (open to the public) and participating in the local food pantry.
- Celebrating growth/interest in camping ministry, third consecutive attendance in National Youth Gathering, three college students doing ministry at camp, music ministry at a church, and going overseas. There is an increased number of families with young children.
- both rural congregations celebrate the energy and enthusiasm children, youth and young families are bringing while rural populations are declining, there is an increased number of families who are purchasing acreages and seeking intentional community - an amazing amount of ministry happens in both places considering the small financial resources - the determination of the pioneer ancestors' spills into the future as rural communities strive to maintain healthy congregations and communities
- Being a part of a wonderful community of faith that gathers folks of all ages to hear and share in the good news of Jesus Christ.
- babies!
- Arrival of a new lead Pastor.
- Am retired
- Adequate rainfall.
- Adapting to change.
- Activities and worship services for all ages and exploring and learning about the Psalms.
- A successful welcoming & thriving ministry that meets congregational expectations.
- A successful capital campaigns
- A successful 5-year capital campaign pledge of \$1,084,000 for our church home.
- A renewed spirit of working together for the good of all.
- a renewed interest from our youth.
- a recent "freshening up" for a church gathering
- A period of years that are conflict free.

- A newly tarred parking lot; the return to health of our pastor; the strength gained from regular fellowship.
- A new lead pastor and 99 years of ministry
- a growing millennial congregation
- A growing and successful community children's and youth ministry. Celebrating 60 years of ministry as an incorporated in September 2018. Leaders in the community around Christian education and building ecumenical relationships, partnerships and doing ministry together. Taking 14 youth and 2 adults to the 2018 National Youth Gathering. We have not had a decline in worship attendance in recent years. Welcoming new members into our community of faith.
- A change to Worship format.
- A \$1.5 million building project, restructuring and re-visioning of congregational life and ministry, in 2020 our congregation will be celebrating its centennial of the physical campus.
- 99 years of ministry
- 60 years!
- 5 year of budget success and recent office and children's ministry remodeling projects!
- 150 years of ministry!
- 135 years as a congregation. We have a minister whom we share with another congregation. We have Sunday school for all ages, including high school and an adult class.
- 100years and counting. We NEED a full-time pastor that doesn't cost a fortune to maintain.
- 100 years.
-
- Not much
- A very well attended Sunday school program

6. With what is your congregation struggling?

- youth, young adults, families
- Youth getting involved with things.
- Young/new families' stewardship has a way to grow, to keep up with staffing needs for all these young/new families.
- young people/families are lacking ; people think one a month is regular attendance
- Young members attending on a regular basis. Getting younger members to take on some of the officer positions.
- Worship attendance. Good worship attendance used to be defined as worshipping nearly every Sunday. Now once a month is good. None of our church leaders attend every Sunday. They travel (vacations, seeing distant family, etc.), they have events to attend (concerts, sporting events, etc.), or they go fishing, hunting, biking, etc. Church school decline - a result of the above stated worship attendance pattern is poor attendance by children and the rarity of weekly teachers (more often teams of 2-3 teachers must be recruited for each class - multiplying the recruitment challenge).
- Worship attendance - especially in the summer.
- Wondering why so much money is going to support failing organizations that don't provide solid Lutheran ministry.

- What our future will be as we approach a year without a rostered leader, which follows a couple of years of struggle to be church to one another during difficulties and disagreements.
- Weekly attendance numbers
- We, as implied above, need to get our younger members to be more involved. However, it is understandable that with both parents working or with single parent households, they have been stretched thin with a variety of commitments. We need to develop new ways to do ministry. Finance seem to be precarious at times.
- We struggle with getting members to participate as leaders in our church. The pastor cannot on his/her own meet all the needs of the people. Members want all that church has to offer but seem unwilling to commit to ministry and the work it takes to have a healthy congregation.
- We struggle with diminishing numbers in the population of rural areas, causing schools and churches to close or join with others at great distances. There can be some exciting new forms of ministry which take place in this new "picture" of ministry on the prairie. We have seen some excellent ideas and programs in our synod which directly address these changes in a creative way. It's such a struggle to get busy people, or apathetic people to commit to entering programs and take responsibility, themselves. This new vision includes many more active lay people, not just one pastor as the only committed worker in the church. Adult education could be key to a new grasp of life in rural areas of following Jesus in new, committed ways.
- We need candidates. We are in the call process and not receiving much support from synod resources or the bishop's office.
- We have struggles getting butts in pews. Summer attendance suffers along with being able to pay the bills timely. I know that some of our members attend elsewhere to just have a more upbeat service yet maintain membership at our church. Some choose to watch TV to get their spiritual needs met.
- We have a mortgage we need to retire that does tend to limit some of our dreams for mission. We also share the struggle of maintaining membership and growth in a world where church seems to be having less and less of a role in people's lives.
- We are struggling with the process of 2 congregations becoming a parish and working together. Right now, there seems to be resentment on both sides. We are also struggling financially. A new non-denominational church opened in our area and has attracted some members.
- We are struggling with the transition between pastors and the inability of the former pastor to garner excitement and energy in the congregation.
- We are struggling with the plight of so many of our sister congregations in SD Synod who are left without help finding a pastor, an interim pastor, or even pulpit supply. Synod has not even been in contact with many.
- We are struggling with some components of our financial stewardship. We are struggling with parents and children being actively engaged in worship more than occasionally.
- We are struggling with only having one rostered leader right now after having two previously, and even three at one point. This is not a solo pastor call and the pastor is struggling to meet all the weekly demands, as well as trying to be the vision and mission minded leader. We will be entering a transformational ministry process soon to develop a new vision and mission, and hopefully will be able to call another rostered leader, possibly in conjunction with another local congregation.

- We are struggling with finding ways to include people in the ministry we share at the same time many of our members are busy, exhausted, and distracted by life issues and abundant entertainment.
- We are struggling with an aging congregation in a rural setting.
- We are struggling to stay in the black. Our giving is up from last year, but so are our expenses. Included in these new expenses are a full-time pastor's salary and consistent mission support to the synod and local ministries.
- We are struggling both with declining membership and finances.
- We are struggling because we do not have a full-time pastor at this point. It has been two years now, and we are becoming rather dejected. If only Pastor Will were about 20 years younger! Because it has been so long, I personally know some people who have been attending our church but are unwilling to become members until they see who our next pastor will be.
- We are on the verge of closing...the congregation, for the most part, is very elderly. Very few, young families...maybe 2 to 3. We only have 1 child that attends church, on a regular basis. There are many problems with our church. For instance, we do an offering that the children pick up (coins). There is the one girl that attends regularly, but when there are other children, and there is one other little girl that attends, they are not included in the picking up of this offering. When the one little girl gets up to assist, when she is there, the one girl takes over and rushes around to get in front of her, so she is not able to collect much. She is very sad, and nobody, pastor or parent/grandparent step in to tell this child to let others have a chance. When the children's sermon happens, the pastor invites this one girl up by name and then asks if there are others and this girl takes over the sermon...very disheartening and makes other children feel left out. Our congregation, since it is made up of older, retired people, have no place for the working people of the congregation. No events, quilting, bible classes, happen when a working person can attend.. They are all during the work week, during the day. I currently have no place in the church as a pre-retirement, grown children, out of the house person.
- Trying to keep youth involved and to figure out how to tell our minister she isn't very good with kid's sermons.
- Trivially, retiring debt. However, with the goal of increased flexibility in service.
- Transition to adapt to our neighborhood and broaden our appeal to the wider city
- Transition between pastors.
- Traditional vs lifelong growth Religion vs spirituality
- to grow our congregation
- time (members stretched thin in their daily lives), developing strategy and long-term planning, sustainability of programs (related to members' and staff persons' limited time)
- the way things used to be vs the reality of today. the desire for growth in a community that isn't growing.
- The smallest of our rural congregations is struggling with a building in need of major repairs and the decision to close.
- The Holy Spirit giving us too much work to do! Keeping young couples and families engaged in worship and ministry. Getting close to struggling with financial sustainability.
- The congregation struggles to "let go" of money that lies in CD's, savings accounts, and money market accounts. There is insecurity at times about weekly offering amounts so that our Pastor

and the bills of the congregation can be paid. The congregation would benefit from a strong stewardship and mission support presentation that spells out clearly expectations for mission support as a percentage of weekly offerings. There remains among some few congregation members, a suspicion of the role of the Synod and the church at large, with a "we can do it by ourselves mentality."

- The congregation is without a permanent pastor and is losing church members. The congregation need to be more flexible in the strict criteria for 'hiring' a pastor.
- That congregational life seems to be one more box to check off on people's major TO DO lists. People are not engaging as richly and deeply as they have in the past and relationships aren't as meaningful as they have been.
- Sunday School attendance
- Summer offerings... (stewardship).
- Stewardship Missions reaching beyond ourselves
- Status quo ministry. Finding visitation ministry help.
- Spiritual connectedness centered around a unifying purpose.
- small numbers for youth ministry
- Shrinking size, and finances. Building maintenance.
- Shrinking attendance
- Setting clear boundaries.
- see above
- Rural stagnation.
- Resolving old issues, long time leadership that resists change.
- regular church membership, finding teachers for Sunday school, and leaders for our youth
- Regular attendance by long-time members and decreased or even discontinued involvement by women's groups.
- Redeveloping in a changing neighborhood
- Recruiting of new members.
- Realizing that younger generation may do things differently but growing into all the possibilities for ministry
- reaching out to the world with a word of hope in Christ
- Re-visioning itself in a rural location.
- Preparing new candidates for ministers
- people going to church which in turn leads to low monies
- Pastoral leadership
- Partnership
- Participation in church activities Aging congregation with less and less children One struggles with mission
- Our pews are emptying, giving is in decline, and keeping the doors open will be a tall order in the coming years. Calling clergy? Oh boy. We can continue to cling to robes and vestments, ceremony and liturgy, and SJW'ing, but they're leaving in droves.
- Our congregation struggles with Stewardship conversations.
- on the other hand, for children, youth and young families Sunday morning is no longer sabbath - how does the church adapt to no longer being a priority for families

- Off the top of my head, nothing substantial enough that's worth mentioning.
- Numbers. Getting and keeping new members. Members that resist change.
- NUMBERS --- Numbers of bodies to labor in the Kingdom, and to a much lesser degree, numbers of dollars. The appearance of a full-time pastor may change that priority ---- a lot.
- Numbers
- Not using the gifts of everyone in the congregation. This pastor is a micro-manager, and everything is based on her/her involvement. Not very equipping.
- Not sure.
- Not sure, we've only been members about 4 months.
- No vision of where we would like to be five or ten years from now. An unwillingness to make any changes from the way we have always done it. Very few young families or children or youth of any age. We are still struggling from an ugly split during the sexuality crisis.
- No full-time pastor, declining participation and fewer millennials
- New partnerships.
- N/A See above.
- N/A
- My congregations are rapidly shrinking in population. We struggle with vitality.
- MOSTLY ATTENDANCE.
- More funerals than baptisms, our attendance has gradually declined. There are not many young families who are participating in our congregation. The general trend of less regular worship patterns has been noted at Trinity as well.
- Money and all related results of a declining rural population.
- Membership, youth leadership.
- Membership numbers. Lack of young families
- Membership - participation in church activities, WELCA, Sunday School teachers, Council
- Membership
- membership
- membership
- Meeting individual needs in a large congregation
- Markets for agricultural products, concern for the future, and survival of rural communities/churches.
- Many of us are struggling with the direction our country is moving under the leadership of our President and his administration.
- Managing growth and intentional outreach.
- Maintaining membership numbers in the future is our congregation's struggle, same as other congregations. However, when we moved here in 1978, the talk was what to do with the church building if we'd have to close our doors due to low numbers. However, 40 years later, the Lord has answered our prayers, and our numbers have maintained. Our Sunday School numbers are better now than they were 15-20 years ago, in fact.
- low worship attendance on weekends, support of the general fund
- Low commitment, lack of leadership, poor turnout for adult study

- Low attendance and giving. Financial picture is very dim. Competition from many other non-ELCA Lutheran Churches in the area. Very few youths and much competition for their time. Church does not seem to be priority for families.
- Lots of change happening in our community right now. We struggle to listen to one another and to honor the unique gifts of one another.
- Loss of older congregational members
- loss of members
- Lack of enthusiasm and relationships; aging congregation and dwindling population.
- Knowing they are valued and loved among church leadership.
- Keeping youth of our community interested in being involved in our church and growing spiritually.
- Keeping youth engaged
- Keeping young families in the Church and attracting new ones. Younger families need to feel like they belong and have a flexible schedule. So much other stuff going on, and Church is easy to skip on a Sunday morning.
- Keeping up with the changing landscape of religious attitudes of people.
- keeping mid-life aged individuals active in the church (40-50 yr. old).
- Keeping members coming to church. Members blatantly chasing people away with snide comments, and then denying.
- It is struggling at looking beyond their walls both financially and ministry.
- Increased membership and location
- inadequate facilities
- In my observation, better staff management in a large church.
- I feel our spirit needs to be watered.
- how to handle the growth and what is the next steps going forward; where is God leading us.
- How to do ministry in a changing neighborhood.
- Honestly, in my view, they are not struggling.
- Having to share their pastor with others.
- Have been served by a lay minister for the past 19 months.
- Growth, what ministries to focus on with resources we have.
- Growth in number of members; church debt
- Growth
- growth
- Governance model being used no longer suits our size church Paying off mortgage on recent building campaign Connecting without congregation in terms of all the community outreach we contribute to Connecting with young worshippers Helping all feel a connection with our mission and getting more involvement from many hands Filling head organist position
- Getting people to accept changes.
- Getting a new pastor. I feel our church has lost members because of the larger church's decision to allow gay pastors.
- Funding is always a concern, but not always a struggle. Getting more people involved in the leadership and taking an active role.

- Frustration with continued low worship attendance and participation in valuable program offerings.
- For many years the congregation struggled financially. Now that we are financially stable, people are still are hesitant to respond to needs beyond our small geographical area. Also, members are resistant to ministry and service opportunities formerly seen as the sole domain of the pastor (i.e. visiting people, communion of people not present at worship, sharing their faith in the community.)
- Folks in their 20s, 30s, and 40s have disappeared on a regular basis. Unless their kids are being celebrated in worship somehow, they have disappeared. I would like congregations to be challenged to change that. See question 3.
- Finding members to step up and participate in teaching Sunday School and other church activities.
- finding a new pastor
- Finding a leader
- Financially-Stewardship among 50 and younger
- financially
- financial stewardship as a discipleship issue
- Financial resources available to support ministry
- Financial participation
- Financial matters are always a concern.
- Financial commitments.
- Finances....up and down
- Finances. We need to pay for staffing, right now we have volunteers for office staffing.
- finances, attendance, involvement
- Finances Energy Purpose Outreach to the Community Goals for the Future
- Finances and evangelism
- finances - our congregation is so young
- Finances - offerings are down but needs in ministry are up. Members not wanting to change anything and so may leave. Some in congregation finding it difficult to deal with a change in pastoral leadership after several previous pastors were long term and a change in music leadership.
- Finances
- Filling a pastoral vacancy
- Engaging adults & families beyond Sunday School / Wednesday School. People are drawn so many directions and their participation in church is declining.
- Encouraging consistent family attendance and financial responsibilities. Also encouraging members to become more involved in their church through volunteering.
- drawing members into deeper discipleship
- Diversity.
- Developing leadership confidence.
- Declining worship attendance Interfacing with over-scheduled young families
- Declining membership.
- Declining membership (young people and families). Lack of pastor.

- Declining attendance; no minister, the one we have struggles so people are frustrated and have quit coming
- Deaths. Former leaders becoming former leaders because of the inter-faith issues.
- Deaths of Senior members of the congregation and it's leadership.
- Dealing with a recent pastor who damaged the congregation.
- council leadership.
- Competing with other community activities, sports and other community commitments .
Congregation participation
- Church attendance by young adults.
- Being true to who we are as a congregation, our Lutheran theology and mission but also being relevant. Change for older members of the congregation still extremely difficult. Adult Faith Formation - for 30s,40s,50s,60s - Bible studies and learning opportunities for them other than worship
- Being able to keep families that are members, coming back to church. Our congregation is divided because of the hypocritical ways of some members. Chasing families away because of prejudice.
- Being a supportive parish.
- Because our congregation is made up of people from a wide variety of backgrounds, we may be weak in our understanding of Lutheran doctrine.
- Baby boomers of the church (which make up the majority) are gone a lot of visiting children and grand babies (which is to be expected) but our church is feeling it as far as offering. It's not just the millennials that aren't showing or are busy (or giving).
- Awaiting a new Pastor
- Attendance. Bible study options for the 30-50-year-old women.
- attendance on Sunday mornings, and getting people to volunteer in church functions, getting young adults with small families involved
- Attendance of families
- Attendance numbers, staffing concerns, financials.
- Attendance is very low. From 450 per Sunday 25 years ago to maybe 150-200 per Sunday now. I keep hearing this is a national trend, but I just feel like locally we're losing too many too fast. I taught Sunday School for many years and there's been a dramatic decline in children attendance. Again, this may be a national trend, but my feeling is locally we're doing worse.
- attendance during the summer,
- Attendance because of conflicts with the pastor
- attendance at worship. Financial support.
- Attendance and participation. Financially we are doing well and the missions we have chosen are all being supported. We have poor attendance at church and difficult to find volunteers for things we try to do.
- Attendance and involvement.
- Attendance and giving
- Attendance
- Attendance
- attendance

- as with most congregations financial struggle during summer months as well as worship attendance
- as our congregation has grown slightly in numbers, the average age has become younger (much younger) as young families have become more engaged in worship. That said, giving and attendance is less predictable - if not moving downward. Stewardship and volunteering are most difficult to maintain.
- An aging and tired core of members.
- Always general budget.
- Always behind in general giving.
- Aging congregation
- Adults who were not educated in confessional Christian faith. Lifelong church members who are functionally unchurched, with very shallow faith.
- Adult discipleship
- active members
- Accountability of Senior pastor and decreasing membership and member participation
- A small percentage of negative focused people speaking loudly
- A scarcity mentality that is so prevalent in rural areas; the increasing cost of health insurance; and the challenge of meeting needs/expectations of the synod mission support, pastors' compensation, and community mission.
- A little bit of stagnancy in our practices and activities. It is sometimes hard to get new volunteers for different things because the "older" generation thinks the "younger" generation need to step in. Because generations differ in how they think about volunteering and leadership some of the time, we sometimes run the risk of having things not happen speedily that should. Specifically building projects. I also see a struggle between caring for our "local" missions and caring for those outside our community.
- Lack of attendance....lack of organization due to lack of communication between pastor and congregation Deterioration of physical building
- Discrimination against LGBTQ

7. For what is your congregation hoping?

- Younger members to be more involved.
- Young families moving into the community will find us as a welcoming church home. Continued growth in all areas. We continue to be open to where the Holy Spirit is leading us. To continue to be the hands, feet and face of God.
- We would like to become a more active congregation -
- We would like to be a church that can draw young people back to church. I know this is a problem all over, but how can we solve it?
- We want to continue to attract young adults and young families.
- We need a young, involved, pastor with young kids to get those same age groups involved.
- We lost some members a few years ago, some because of ELCA church wide policy, and others for personal reasons; at any rate we'd truly like to see them return. I think there is hope for more support for the young parents in our parish. We hope to expand our community outreach with frozen meals and other "good neighbor "projects.

- We hope to find new ways to reach out with God's love.
- We hope to be able to live up to our missions' statement: Called by the Spirit of Christ to show God's love, we worship, teach and serve. We hope to bring this mission to our neighbors.
- We hope to "keep going" as congregations for many years to come. We hope for our children to hear and take hold of the Gospel in their own lives. We hope for a great quality of life in our communities where people are free to worship and share their faith, which enhances the lives of others. We hope for things, but we realize that it's up to us to be equipped and to feel comfortable and excited about sharing the Good News. Evangelism is so important in our future.
- We hope that the relationships we've developed in the community will be a catalyst to our renewal.
- We are hoping to welcome all with clear communication and accept visitors and neighbors alike. To support the ministries of home communion, our local food pantry and the rescue mission in Rapid City. We are hoping to gather around the table and refresh with shared meals and activities. We are hoping to be challenged to connect with local churches in Hill City, Hispanic and Lakota communities, and the global table.
- We are hoping to keep finding ways to communicate the grace and love of God in ways that invite people into our community and lead to their being formed in faith in such a way that they also recognize how they are sent to serve as witnesses into the multiple areas of their lives.
- We are hoping to improve even more our connections to one another., to continue to bring in new members, and to maintain being known for our openness, friendliness, and willingness to ask questions and seek new insights.
- We are hoping to continue to share the love of God with each other and our community and beyond. We are hoping to continue to deepen our faith and our connection with God. We are hoping to have the resources and courage to travel where God might be calling us. We are hoping to make a difference.
- We are hoping to be able to continue to maintain and afford our present congregation.
- We are hoping to attract new members for growth to enlarge our ministries into the community. With more numbers it is hoped that our financial situation will improve, and we will be able to do more than we are able to do now.
- We are hoping for stable pastoral leadership and getting our members engaged and excited about being involved in the life of the church.
- We are hoping for growth - not numerical - but spiritual, deeper discipleship. We want to life lives of faith that shine God's light into our community.
- We are hoping for genuine growth in our journey to know God better, not just lip service.
- We are hoping for financial stability, so we will be able to care for our community and country.
- We are hoping for continued vibrant ministry and getting out in to the community more. This is an active congregation with a lot of passion for ministry. We are truly hoping that we all will deepen our faith and commitment to Christ and to the church. Of course, it would be wonderful to add new members, but it's also about connecting with each other and deepening our faith and mission, too.

- We are hoping for a theologically solid, godly worship and education leader in our new pastor. We are also hoping that West River congregations are not isolated or forgotten by the next bishop.
- We are hoping for a bishop who will be a loving pastor to congregations and to pastors.
- We are currently conducting a review of our governance structure with the hope that we'll be able to transition into a model that is right-sized for our congregation. Our vision is to create a structure that is nimble, forward-thinking, and encouraging and enabling ministry without the bureaucratic barriers of the traditional representative model.
- Vigor in service. Unity in diversity.
- to sustain and grow our membership reach out to others in need
- To sustain a large & growing community congregation.
- to start seeing younger couples / singles attend church
- To serve God and all people.
- To raise the next generation of Christians. To help people have a deep faith and understanding of God. To be rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ; that Christ has died and was raised again. That sin and death don't have the last word.
- to keep our present pastor
- To increase ministry to individuals and families in the congregation and to reach out to include more those in the community/ To increase service to those in need in community.
- to increase membership, get our people ages 25-45 to be better at attending worship regularly
- To hold our own and grow in the face of declining membership nationwide.
- To grow. The financial picture is such that savings will be depleted within the next 8 months.
- To grow in faith, and miraculously grow in numbers like the church did in the 1950's. (This doesn't mean they expect it to happen.)
- To grow in faith and ministry.
- To grow in depth of understanding, in God's love.
- To grow and to get more young families involved
- to get the younger members to take on more of the duties and be more involved.
- to find peace in living in the promise of God's grace
- to find new members and bring back the confirmed
- To find a leader
- To continue to serve and bless our community, to continue to bless our neighbors, to continue to connect people to Jesus and love them into the kingdom.
- To continue to see our worship attendance numbers grow.
- To continue to look beyond our walls in supporting various types of ministry
- To continue to be a church of the community.
- To continue reaching out to children in our community (both members and unchurched) and, in doing so, also bring their parents to faith and an active role in the congregation. To reverse the "summer as vacation" attitude. For school and club sports to respect Wednesday night and Sunday as church activity times.
- To come alive in worship and ministry.
- To be the church side by side. To use resources where needed most. To have a Bishop who cares about the urban and the rural, the rich and the poor, the young and the old. Equally.

- to be faithful witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ and a vibrant community of faith - worshipping and serving in this place
- To be faithful to the gospel, to pass on the faith to the next generation, and to serve the needs of people who are struggling locally and around the world.
- To be able to be a vibrant, welcoming congregation that serves the real needs of our membership and the community. This may be my hope, not necessarily the entire congregation.
- to be a vibrant effective congregation again
- To be a church outside the walls that acts as a reminder of our Christian faith and tradition.
- This depends on the age group. It is unclear if there is any collective hope other than in Christ.
- the eschaton
- The congregation is hoping to continue supporting, encouraging the new families with children as we see potential growth for the future.
- The congregation is hoping to be blessed with a permanent pastor who can bring everyone together - all ages in one goal which is to celebrate our faith in Jesus.
- That we are not overtaken by current cultural issues and can focus on the proclamation of Jesus and not a political agenda.
- That we are always moving forward not bogged down by the lack of money, time, or talents.
- THAT THE YOUNGER ADULTS WILL ATTEND CHURCH.
- That the next bishop understands the congregations in this area and does not let politics and political correctness further divide the Synod.
- That our new bishop will help our pastors become better preachers.
- That our mission statement be more than words carved on a granite "tombstone" and embedded in a wall of our narthex.
- That our church will be alive and sharing our gifts in the years to come
- that attendance and volunteers will increase, not drastically but someday
- That all may be reached
- Teach them stuff.
- Sustaining and growing membership. Greeting a new pastor interested in and compatible with our community.
- Survival
- Survival
- Strength in bringing the word of salvation to our community.
- Stability. Support for our pastor.
- Stability in attendance and offerings will be a win in the current environment. There is a clear need for adult education, but the pastor is expected to lead and add this task to his/her already busy schedule.
- Stability and future growth
- Spread the good news to all people.
- Spread gospel to all we meet.
- Some would hope that a few entrenched paid staff might retire.
- Reduced synod fees as we will likely not have an ordained minister in the next few years.

- Really would love to see Jesus come back and fix us all. I'm also hoping that more will see how much less we need to worry about the ELCA national, SD synod, and office of the Bishop, and so much more about the gospel and going it alone. Synod and National are doing their own thing.
- Reaching more people that have moved into the area and sparking an interest in church attendance.
- Raise up leaders from within the congregation for not only lay leadership but also possible clergy leadership
- preach the gospel, care for their people, reach out to the world with a word of hope in Christ
- People of God to live and love all people
- Peace and harmony.
- Our congregation is hoping that we can continue with the great leadership that our Pastor provides.
- One of our hopes is to welcome back members that have not been attending worship. Another is to welcome all to worship.
- Not sure
- Not certain about that. What I hope is that people are helped to identify their gifts and then are given opportunities to use their gifts; not necessarily what the pastor wants them to do. We need ways to interact with other church members, so everyone feels a part of the congregation.
- New members
- New life Possibly a more contemporary style of worship
- N/A see above
- N/A
- Mortgage paid off New governance model accepted and implemented More invitations to serve and more responses for calls to serve Bridget I God shape so we can stop talking about it More youth engagement
- More younger families
- More young families to commit to involvement and attendance...our building will be empty in another generation if we can't adapt and appeal to that generation.
- more young families
- More ways to connect with each other.
- More regulars in attendance.
- more new members
- More money coming in to pay for necessities.
- More Lutherans coming to worship.
- More growth.
- more community involvement.
- More active, involved congregation members.
- Maybe just being able to survive and continue to be a place people come to worship and be a beacon to our community
- Like most, how we can make Worship a priority for families.
- Increased membership, expanding the physical church building
- Increased membership and a better location
- increased excitement of preaching and ministry of the gospel

- Increased attendance, more involvement, more bible study/faith enhancing options.
- Increase in membership and continued ministry presence
- I'd like to see a minister who is a good speaker and outgoing in the community.
- I would like to see a vibrant, energized, motivated person takes the lead who can deal with some of the listed issues that I see happening in our community. Maybe the Synod needs to offer some leadership training for lay leaders to help our churches become more progressive and aware of the needs of people ages 18 - 60. The members that attend now that are older seem to know about the problems but are not willing to make changes to provide for the future of the church and the pastor appears to place their wants ahead of those missing on Sunday.
- I don't know
- I do not know.
- I am hoping for more children...the rest of the congregation, I have no idea.
- Hoping to minister to our entire community
- Hoping to make repairs to our church home and that everyone fulfills their pledge.
- Hoping to find a pastor to help us continue to be a viable part of our community.
- Hoping to extend our mission even further beyond our doors.
- Hoping for ministry outside the walls.
- help in finding a new momoster
- Growth: spiritual, membership, financial
- Growth in mission toward our neighbors and strengthening of faith in daily life
- Growth in membership. Openness diversity of color and nationality.
- growth in membership and people served, financial stability, focus on our community and how we can meet needs in our community, updated vision for ministry
- Growth and increased outreach.
- Growth and engagement in a competitive market for time.
- Growth / maintenance of community
- Growth
- growth
- growing in faith and mission
- Greater spiritual connection.
- Future years of faithful preachers
- Future leaders
- For the ELCA to stop pushing progressive policies at every turn.
- For our world to take some positive steps towards improving race relations and our environment.
- For new life even in hard transitions.
- For future generations to be blessed by God in, with, and through this community of faith that has richly blessed them and their ancestors in the faith now buried outside our walls.
- For even more people to get involved in the various ministries offered by the church.
- For continued increase in youth participation, a little more vibrancy in our worship life, more commitment from leaders to complete projects.
- For a pastor who will give inspiring messages and rebuild our congregation.
- Food security for all in world Community building from the heart

- Finding ways to integrate faith into every part of our members' lives and make relationships deep and life-giving both within the congregation and then spreading out into the community.
- Financial giving to help with our ministry needs an intern Good preaching Attendance in worship welcoming feeling in worship
- family involvement and focus on bringing more youth into the congregation as a large majority of the congregation is older aged people.
- faith formation for our younger members support for parents as they navigate young and middle age
- Evangelism and partnership in the community
- effective ministry
- Don't know!
- Don't believe the "congregation" is hoping for anything! As a lifelong member, I look forward to being able to attend church without being asked to sign the guestbook because I've missed a few Sunday's. There should be unity.
- Diversity
- Deeper engagement & fuller participation in the ministries and mission.
- Deeper connection with one another and with God.
- continuing excitement toward local ministry, especially with youth, as well outreach to community, state and world thorough mission projects
- Continued support of the older members and growth of young families.
- continued successful outreach through youth and children's ministry financial solvency & continued pastoral support completed repairs and upgrades to facility
- Continued small rate of growth of membership.
- Continued sense of mission and purpose.
- Continued growth, sustainability, and further understanding of our purpose in "BEING" church, more than just attending church.
- Continued growth continued positive impact on youth and young families, and in our community.
- Continued growth and a deepening of relationships with God, one another, and others.
- continued growth & vitality, preaching that is honest and hope-filled and relevant for daily life in a time of divisive politics and relationships, a community and leadership that are honest about the divided times in which we live
- Continue growth.
- consistency in youth ministry
- Commitment and excitement within the people of our congregation for ministry and mission. We want to proclaim Christ to the best of our ability and respond to the needs of people within our community and world.
- Being renewed in God's mission
- As a congregation in a small, rural community, the congregation simply hopes to maintain membership and, consequently, viability.
- Any support other than verbal for rural congregations particularly in west river area. Yes, mega churches and congregations are the rage, but rural congregations are the lifeblood of the SD synod in my opinion.

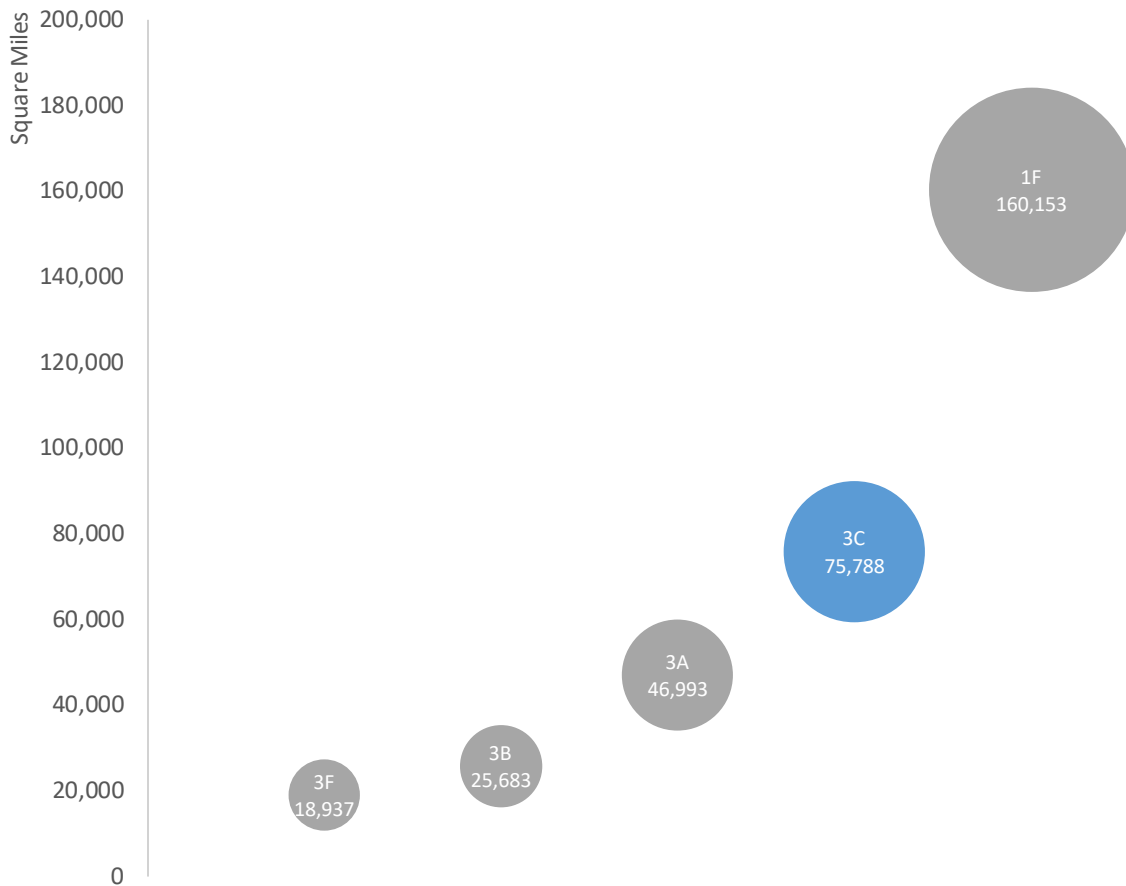
- Additional staff needs.
- Additional membership
- Active bishop
- a stronger, younger congregation
- A stable Pastoral leader. Getting our members engaged and excited.
- A reminder of the purpose which we serve and the mission that we share. We hope to deepen our rootedness in Christ and God's work while also exploring new ways of being God's people together.
- A re-birth. A re-energized faith and hope for the future of the congregation.
- A pastor who has compassion for all age groups.
- A new pastor! And to become a thriving, growing church.
- A new minister or good lay person
- A master site plan study to investigate the future needs of facility that will work for our ministry.
- A good youth leader who can lead them and come up with fun things for them to do.
- A future in which faith expression is valued.
- A clear sense of God's direction for us as a congregation and His ministry through us to those beyond us...
- A called pastor!
- A bishop that will include all congregations
- A bishop and associates who see, listen to, and understand them, while helping them move forward in mission.
- Increased giving to repair building
- Better stewardship among its members
- a permanent pastor

Appendix II

Territory

The South Dakota Synods covers 75,788 square miles; the largest synod, by square miles, is the Alaska Synod which covers 570,951. The smallest synod is the Saint Paul Area Synod which covers 1,535 square miles. The median territory covered by a synod is 22,000 square miles. Twenty-one synods in the ELCA cover 10,000 square miles or less. Figure 1 shows the number of square miles covered by synods cited in this report.¹

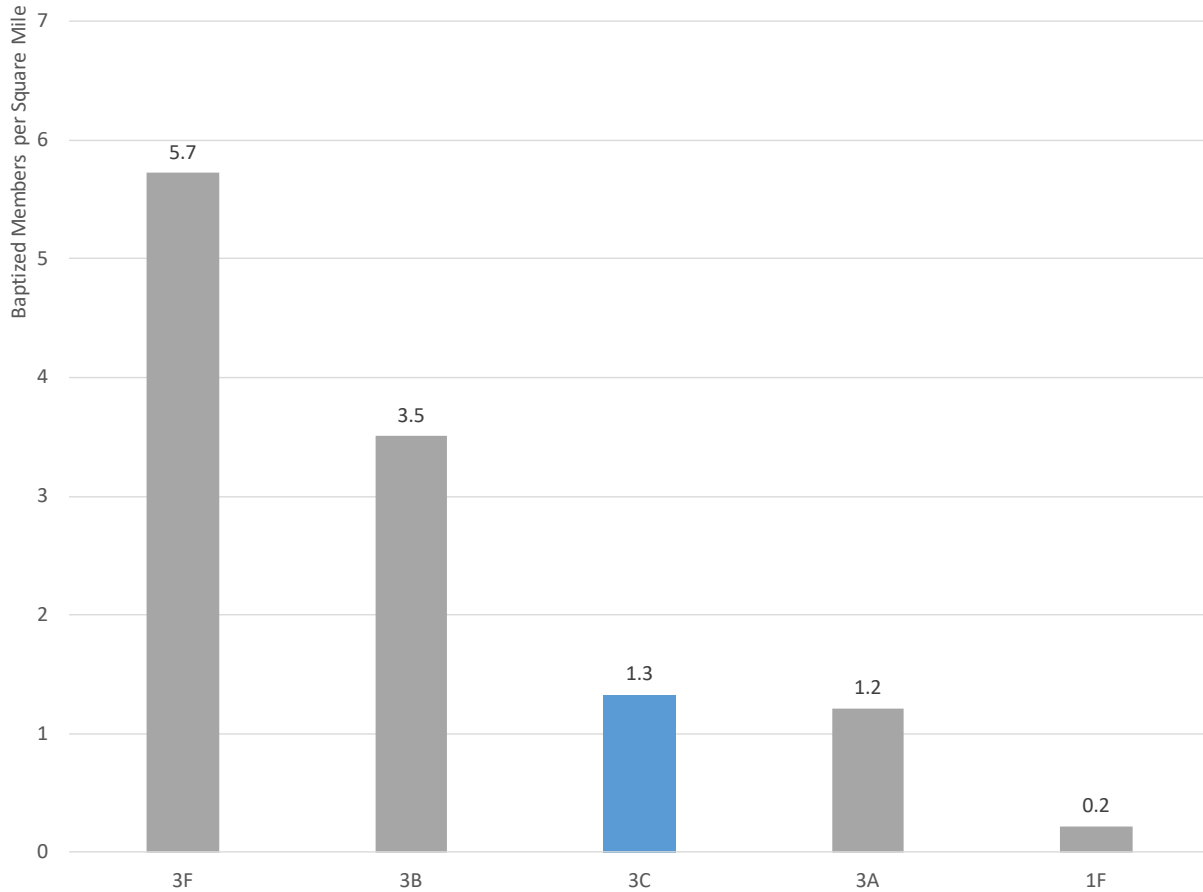
Figure 1: Synods in Square Miles



¹ For a better fit, we condensed synod names: 1F is Montana, 3A is Western North Dakota, 3B is Eastern North Dakota, 3C is South Dakota and 3F is Southwestern Minnesota. See Section 10.01.01 of the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* for synod boundaries.

Figure 2 shows the number of ELCA baptized members per square mile in each synod. Of these five synods, Southwestern Minnesota has the highest number of baptized members per square mile (6) while Montana has the fewest baptized members per square mile (0.2); South Dakota has slightly more than 1 baptized member per square mile. As points of reference, the Saint Paul Area Synod has 78 baptized members per square mile while Alaska has one person per 10 square miles.

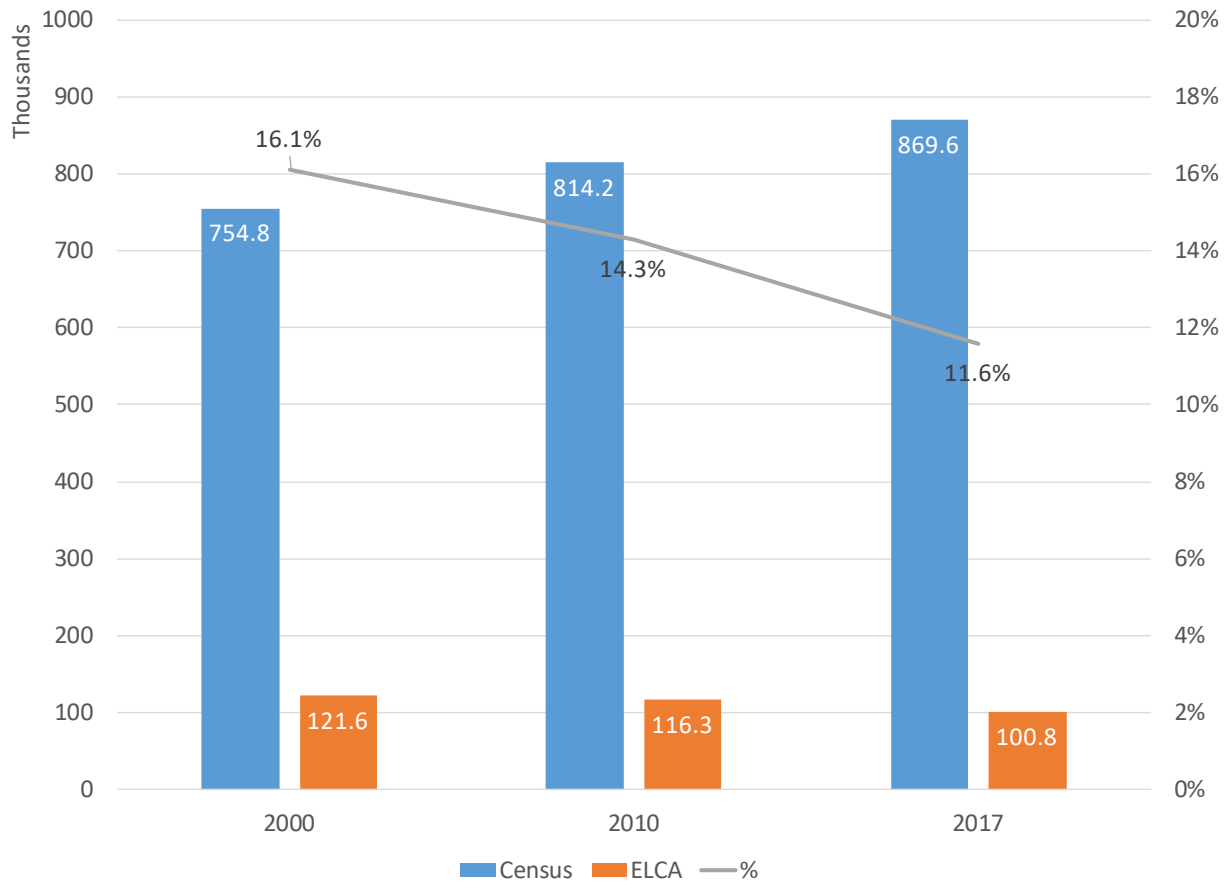
Figure 2: Baptized Members per Square Mile (estimated)



Congregations, Baptized Membership and Worship Attendance

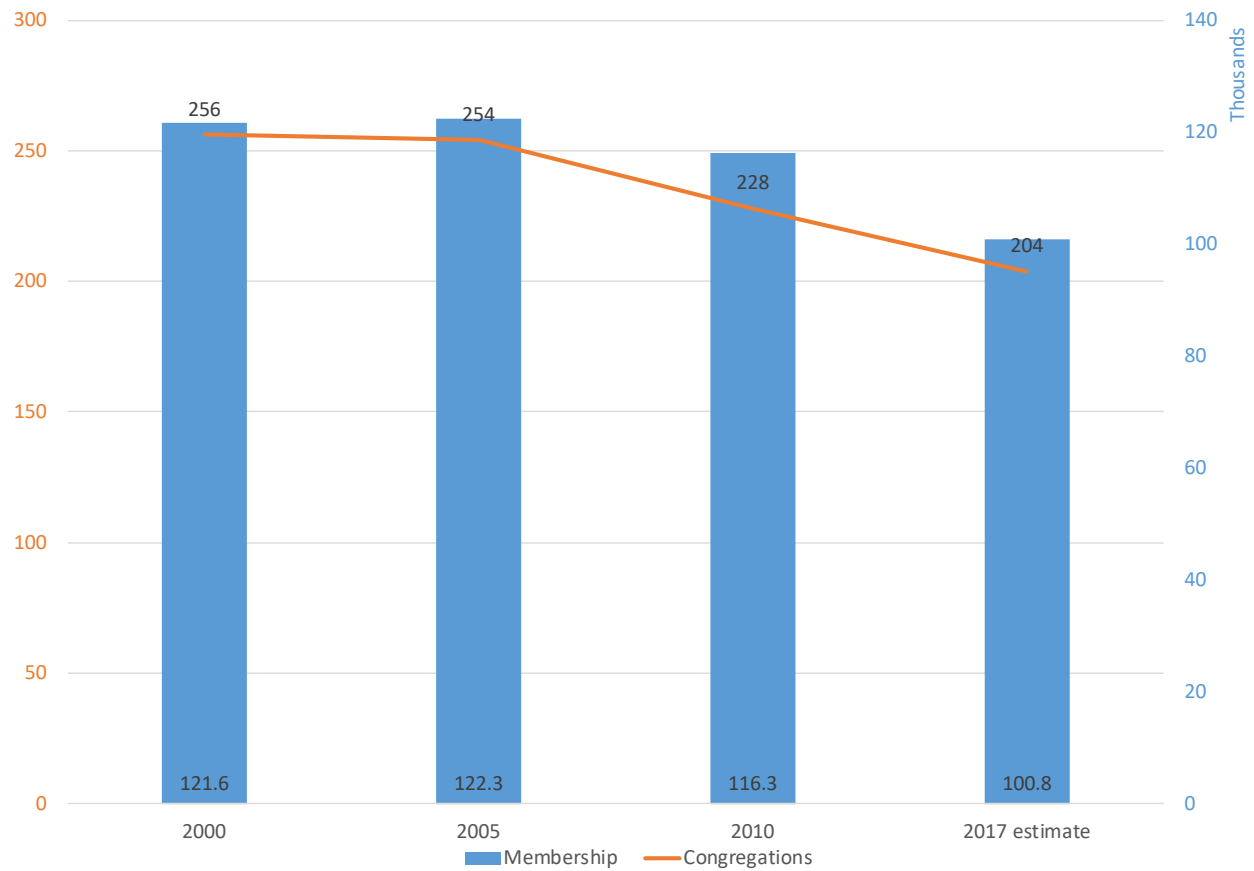
In 2000, the US Census reported the population of the territory of the South Dakota Synod as 754,849; in 2010 the Census reported the territory’s population to be 814,180, an increase of 7.86 percent. The 2017 estimated population is 869,606 and is projected to be 910,909 in 2022. As Figure 3 shows, baptized membership, both as a percentage of the population and in actual numbers is in decline.

Figure 3: Census Population and ELCA Membership, South Dakota Synod

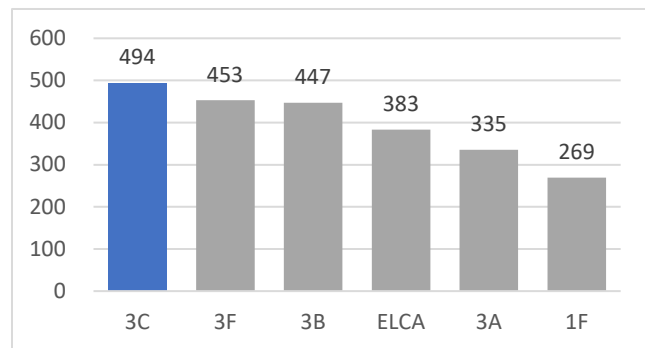


As noted above, the number of baptized Lutherans in the synod has declined by about 17 percent since 2000. The number of organized congregations in the South Dakota Synod has declined as well, by about 20 percent (see Figure 4) during the same period.

Figure 4: The number of congregations has declined 20 percent between 2000 and 2017, while baptized membership has decreased by 17 percent.



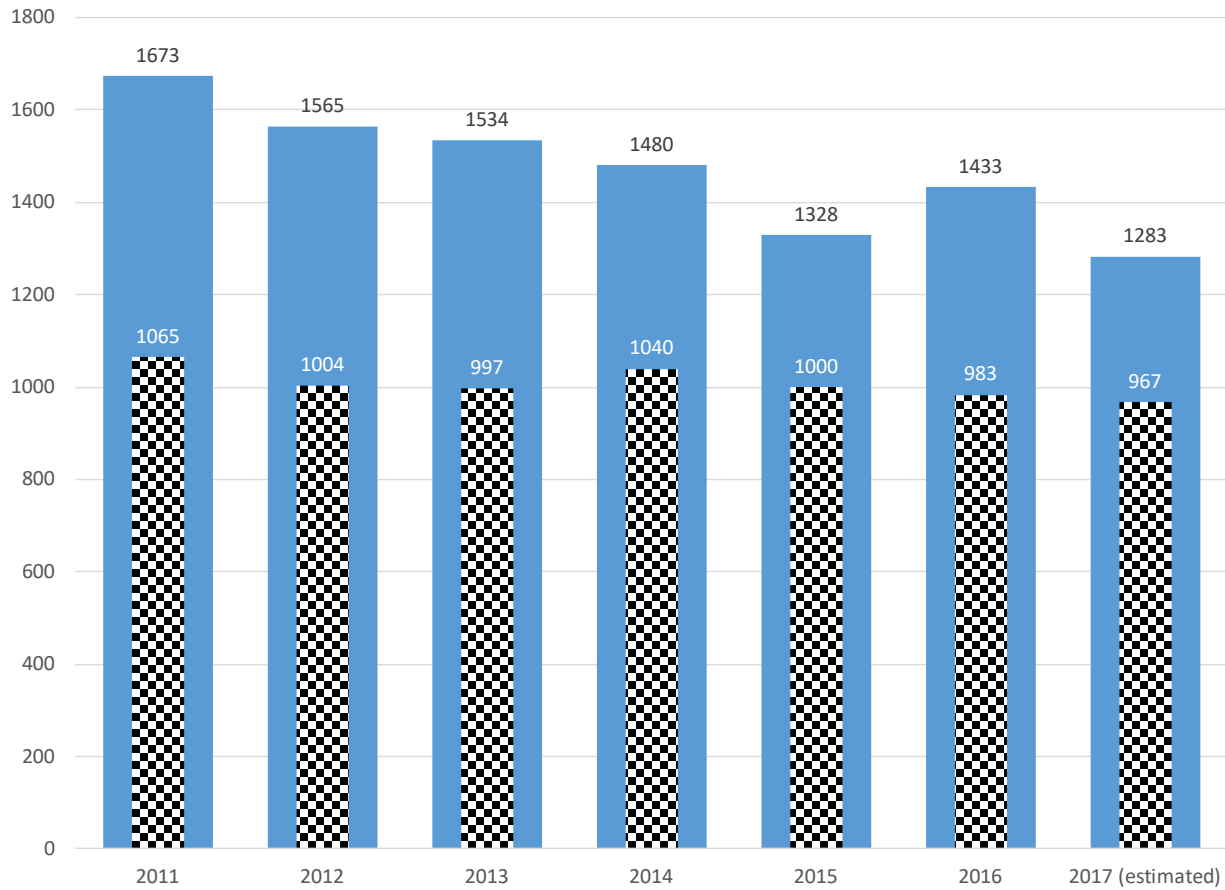
In 2017, the total baptized membership of the synod was estimated to be 100,764 or about 494 baptized members per congregation. In the ELCA, the average number of baptized members per congregation in 2017 was estimated to be 383. (See right for the (estimated) average number of baptized members in 2017 per congregation for the rest of the synods in this report).



We estimate the South Dakota Synod received 1,283 new members through baptism in 2017 while losing a reported 967 members to death; the gap between members received and removed is narrowing in recent years. Figure 5 shows this trend since 2011.²

² For this statistic, we tabulated the number of adults and children received through baptism and subtracted the number of baptized members lost due to death.

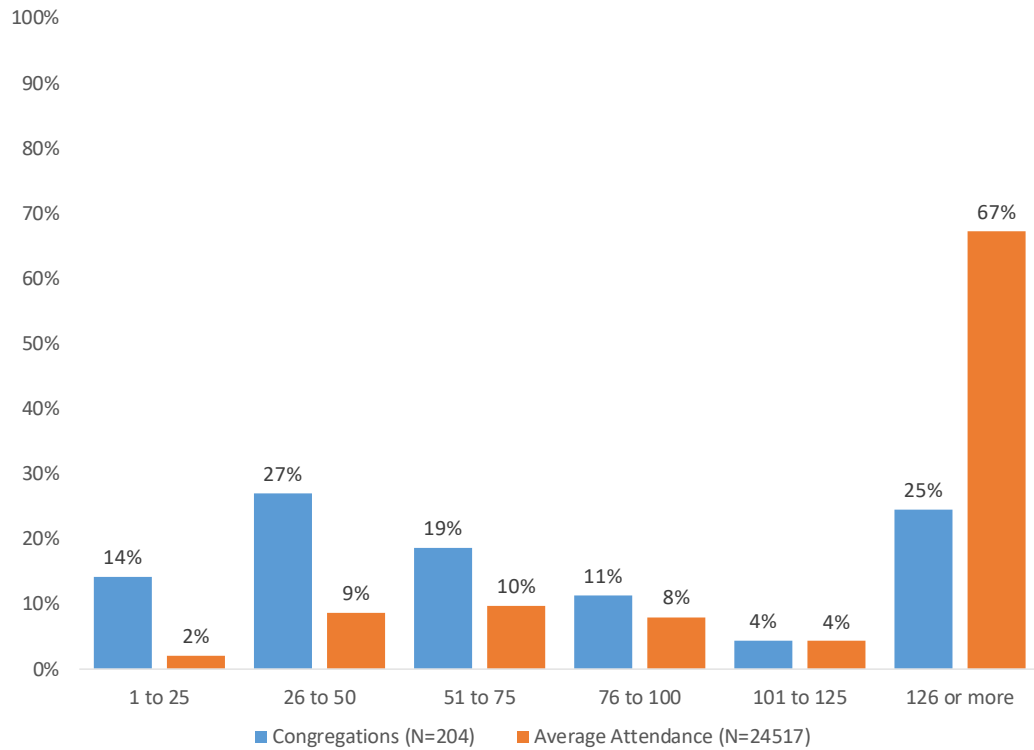
Figure 5: Baptized Members Received and Lost (to death), 2011 to 2017



The total weekly average attendance for the congregations in the South Dakota Synod in 2017 was 24,517 (estimated) or 120 attendees per congregation, whereas the average attendance throughout the ELCA was 99. About 24 percent of the baptized membership in the South Dakota Synod attend worship compared with 26 percent of baptized membership throughout ELCA.

In 2006, 31 percent of congregations had average worship attendance of 126 or more. In 2017, it is estimated 25 percent of congregations had average worship attendance of 126 or more (see Figure 6). Moreover, the average number of attendees per congregation in 2006 was 143; in 2017 it is estimated to be 120, a decline of more than one percent a year.

Figure 6: Distribution of Congregations (Left) and Worship Attendees (2017)



On average, in 2006, a congregation with between 101 and 125 in average worship attendance had an average attendance of 110 people during a service; in 2017 a congregation in this same group (between 101 and 125 in average worship attendance) averaged 117 people in a worship service, an increase of six percent (see right). On the other hand, a congregation with average worship attendance of 126 or more would have, on average, 334 people in attendance during a service in 2006, and 329 people in 2017, a decline of two percent.

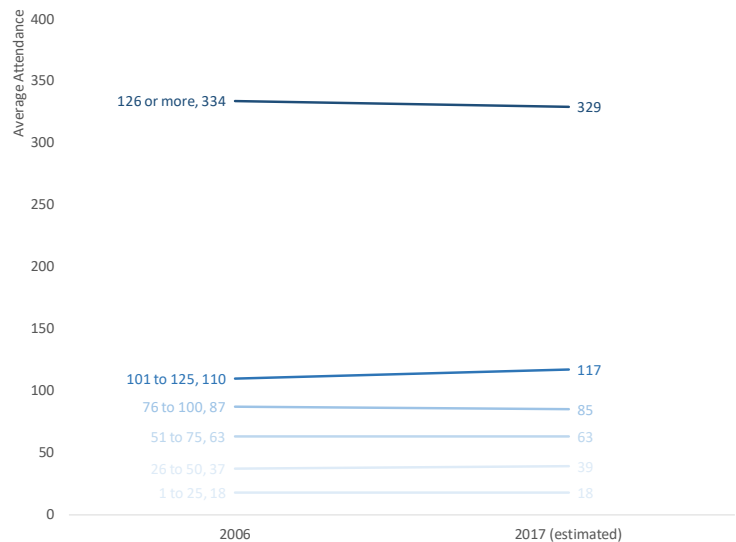
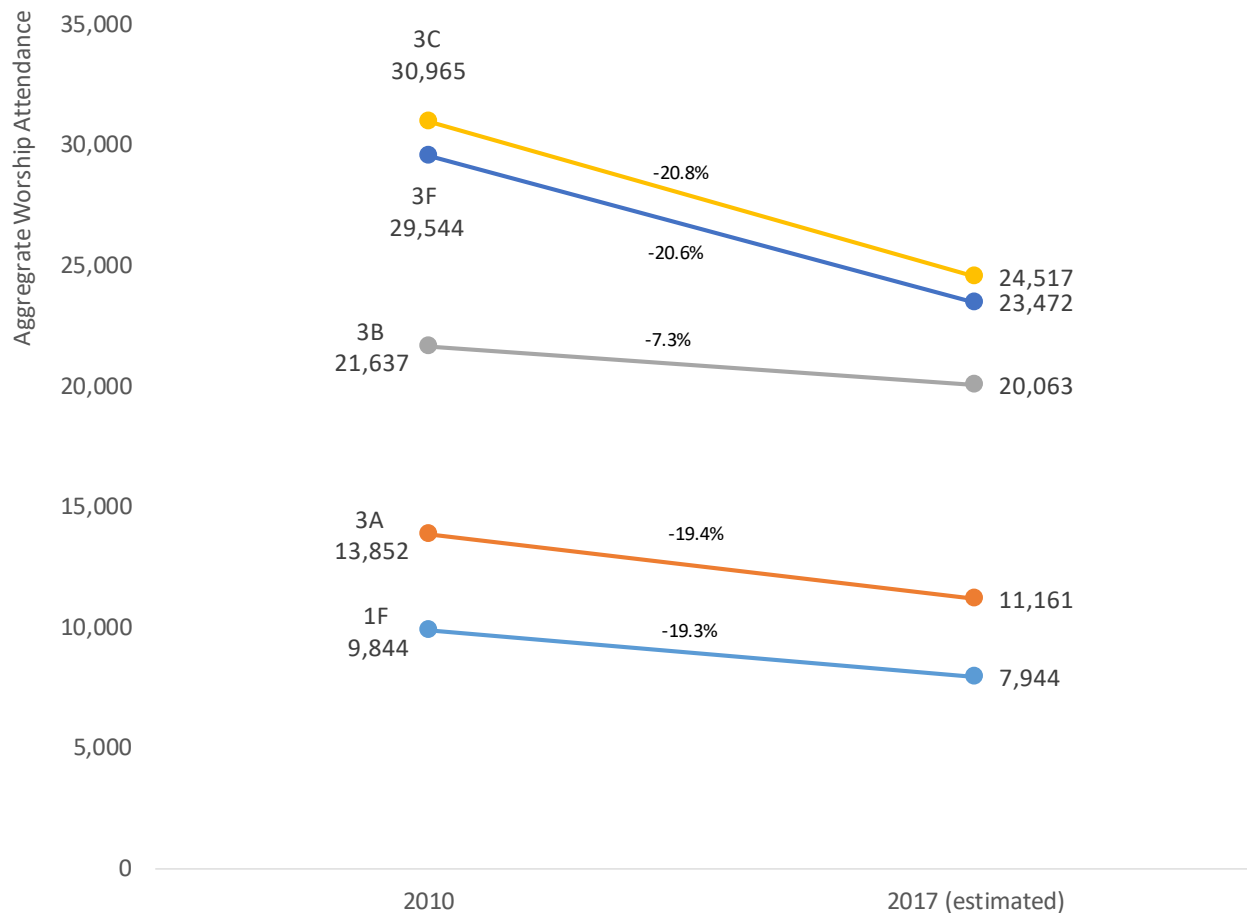


Figure 8, next page, shows the trend in aggregate worship attendance for the South Dakota, Montana, Southwestern Minnesota, Western North Dakota and Eastern North Dakota synods. As the chart shows, aggregate attendance is in decline throughout these synods, with the largest decline, nearly 21 percent, experienced by the South Dakota Synod, and the smallest decline (7 percent) experienced by Eastern North Dakota (3B).

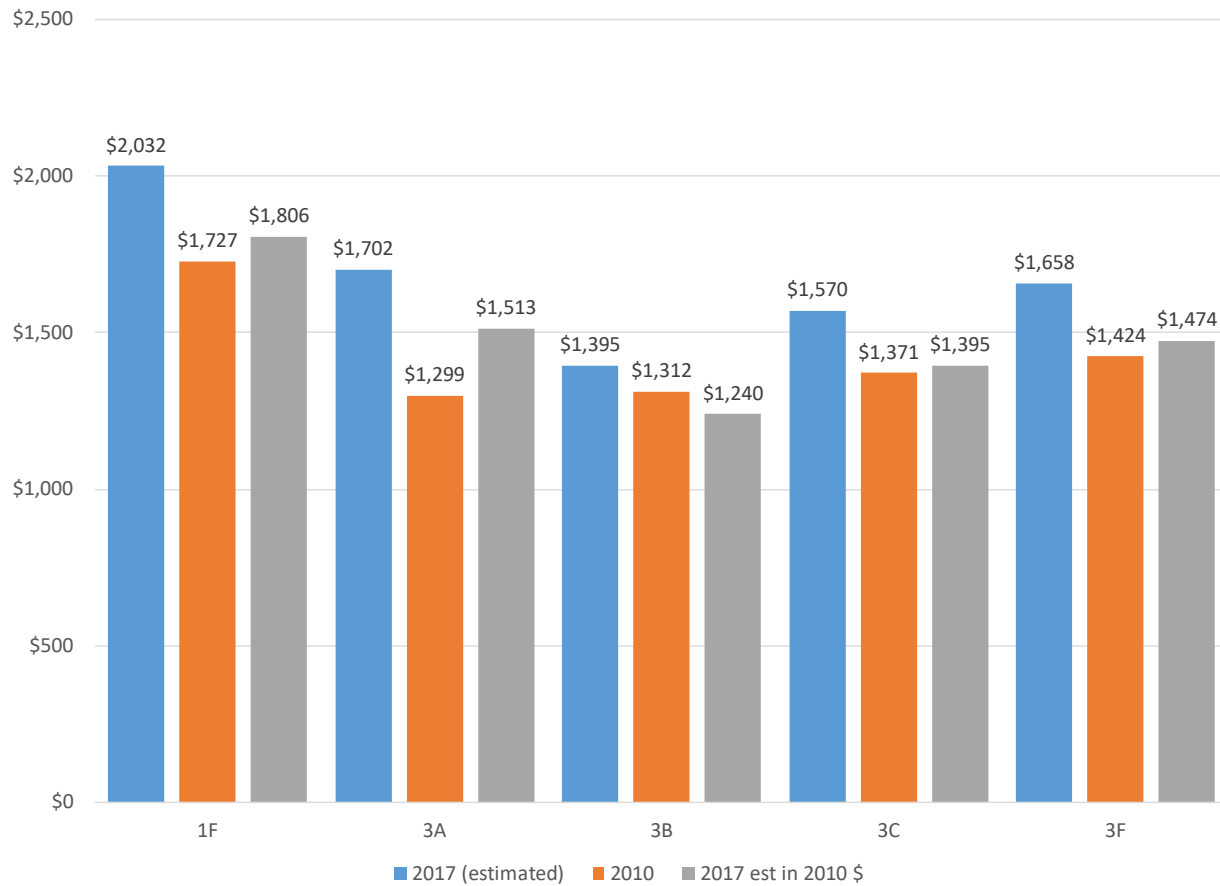
Figure 8: Aggregate Worship Attendance, 2010 and 2017 (estimated)



Giving

Total giving (defined as undesignated giving plus designated giving) in the South Dakota Synod was estimated to total \$38.4 million in 2017 or \$1,570 per attendee. In 2010, the per attendee giving was \$42.6 million or \$1,371 per attendee. While the 2017 per attendee giving rate is higher than it was in 2010, they are nearly 6,000 fewer attendees, and the increase in giving is offset by the decline in attendance. When looking at the giving rates adjusted for inflation, we see the decline in giving is more pronounced (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Giving per Attendee, 2017, 2010 and 2017 estimated in 2010 Dollars



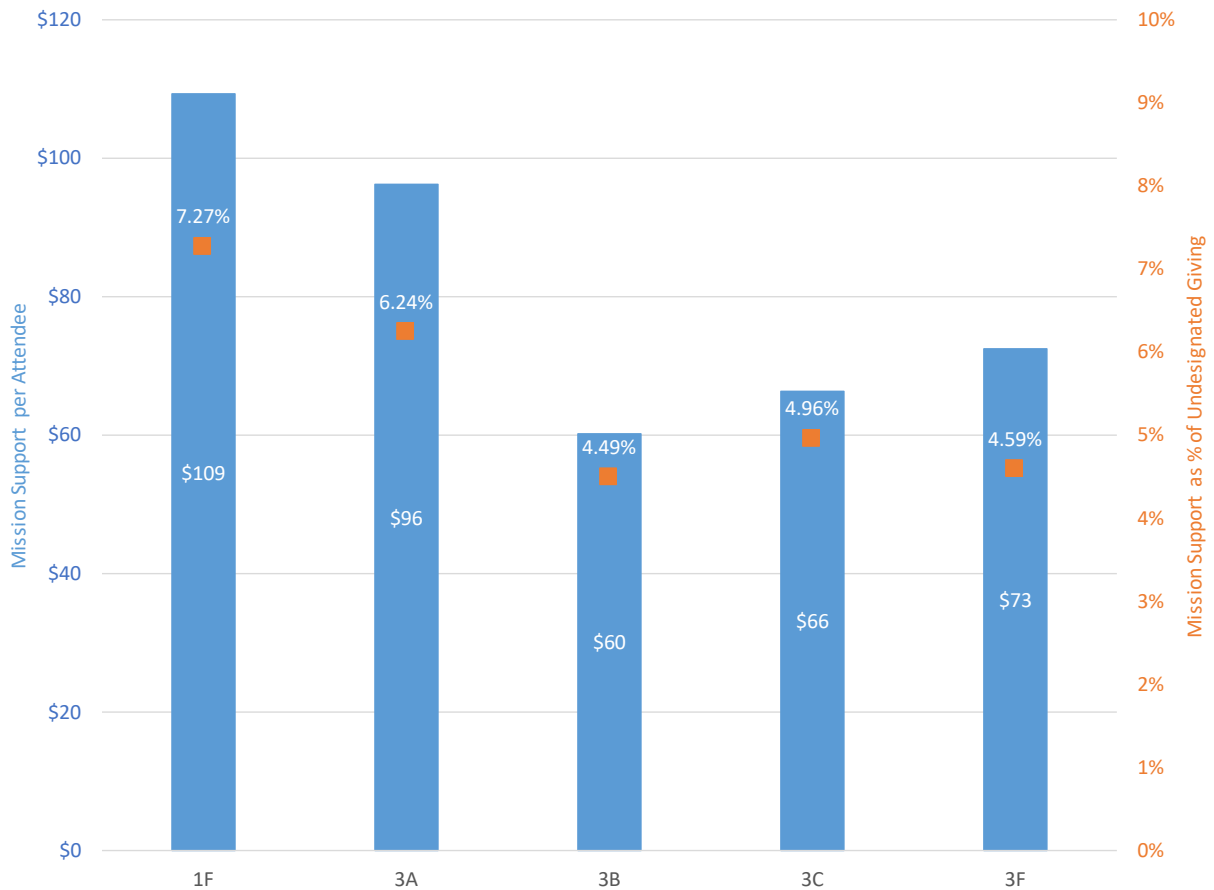
Operating expenses for the congregations in the synod in 2010 were approximately \$34.0 million, while total disbursements were \$56.3 million. In 2017, operating expenses are estimated to be \$36.0 million and total disbursements around \$48.1 million. Operating expenses as a percentage of total disbursements in the South Dakota Synod as well as the other synods are increasing (see Table 1) but each synod seems to have enough margin.

Table 1: Operating Expenses as % of Total Disbursements

	2010			2016		
	Operating Expenses	Disbursements	%	Operating Expenses	Disbursements	%
1F	13,267,030	18,524,269	71.6%	\$13,994,346	\$18,513,443	75.6%
3A	15,875,715	20,208,487	78.6%	\$17,401,486	\$23,135,562	75.2%
3B	23,853,809	31,156,496	76.6%	\$27,112,170	\$35,902,382	75.5%
3C	33,983,912	56,257,814	74.0%	\$36,016,057	\$48,199,311	74.7%
3F	35,157,744	45,879,807	76.6%	\$36,854,487	\$48,780,251	75.6%

Mission support, the amount of money shared through congregations for the ministries of the synod and the ELCA Churchwide expression, from the South Dakota Synod as a percentage of undesignated giving was 4.87 percent in 2017; the per attendee figure was \$66. Figure 10 shows the amount of mission support per attendee as well as mission support as a percentage of undesignated giving for the Montana, Southwestern Minnesota, Western North Dakota and Eastern North Dakota Synods.

Figure 10: 2017 Mission Support per Attendee and as a Percentage of Undesignated Giving



The Synod Office and Its Financial Resources

Section 10.21 of the *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* outlines the primary purpose of the synod offices:

10.21 Each synod, in partnership with the churchwide organization, shall bear primary responsibility for the oversight of the life and mission of this church in its territory. In fulfillment of this role and consistent with policies and procedures of this church the synod shall:

- a) provide for pastoral care of congregations and rostered leaders in the synod;
- b) plan for, facilitate, and nurture the mission of this church through the congregations;
- c) strengthen interdependent relationships among congregations, synods and the churchwide organization, and foster relationships with agencies and institutions affiliated with or related to this church as well as its ecumenical partners;
- d) interpret the work of this church to congregations and to the public territory of the synod.

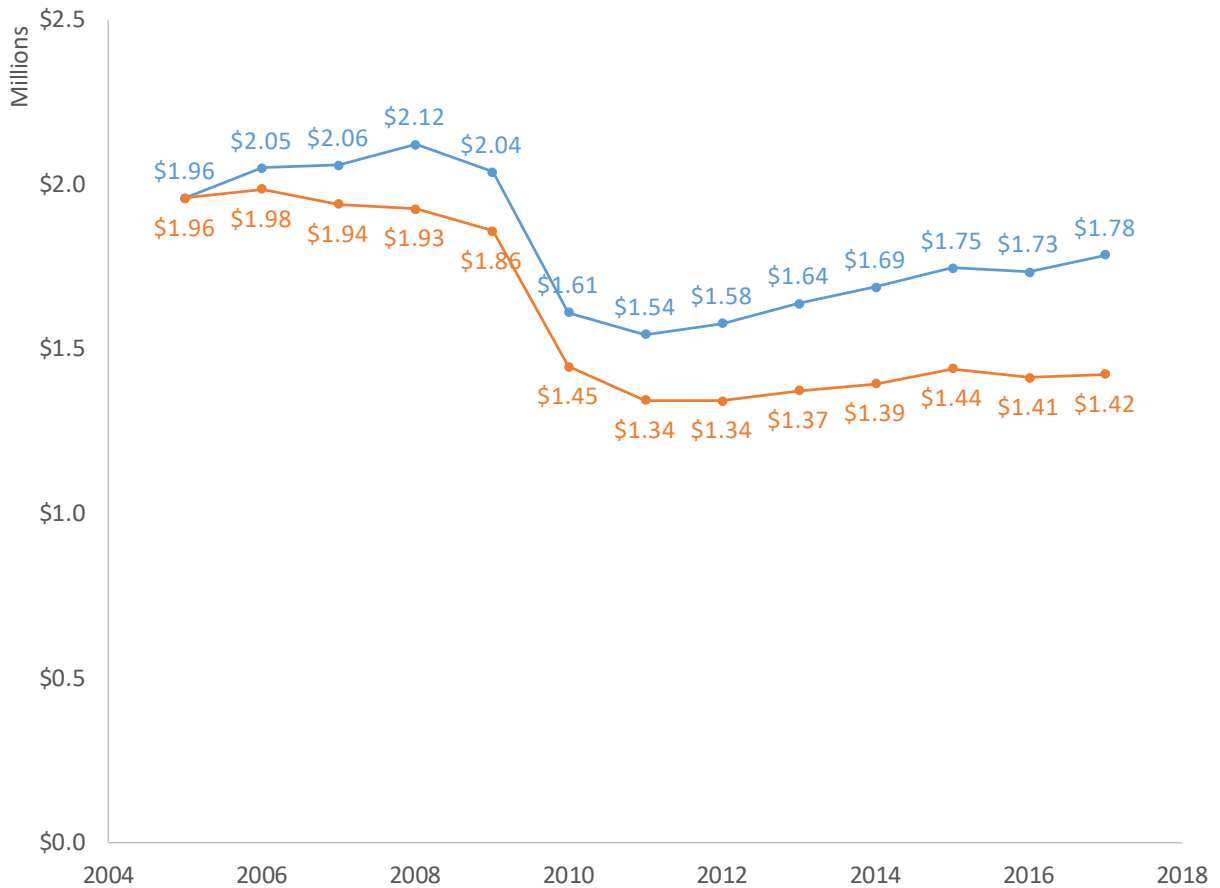
Despite the consistency of responsibilities, the amount of money available to synod offices to carry out these responsibilities varies widely. Table 2 shows all five synods referenced in this report and the amount of mission support shared with them and the churchwide organization (CWO).

	\$ from congregations to Synod	% to CW	\$ to CW	\$ Remaining in Synod
1F	\$1,033,755	40.0%	413,502	\$620,253
3A	\$1,131,768	47.0%	531,931	\$599,837
3B	\$879,491	41.5%	364,989	\$514,502
3C	\$1,784,031	45.0%	802,814	\$981,217
3F	\$1,806,489	51.5%	930,342	\$876,147

As Figure 11 shows, the actual dollar amount of congregational giving in the form of mission support is trending downward and has been since 2008, when it peaked at approximately \$2.12 million. Overall, the percentage change in mission support totals between 2005 and 2017 is -9.2 percent. When looking at the inflation-adjusted figures, the decline appears starker at -27.6 percent.

Figure 11: Mission Support, South Dakota Synod

Actual and Adjusted for 2005 dollars (in millions)



Synod Bishop Election Summary

Between July 1st and August 1st, 2018, the synod made a questionnaire available in order to discover what members and pastors wanted in a new bishop as well as to find out more about what is happening in congregations. A total of 321 responses were received.

Gifts

While no particular strength or gift was identified by 50 percent or more of respondents as most important for the new bishop to be effective, a plurality (47%) think the next bishop will need to work with congregations during crisis and transitions; 42 percent feel she or he will need to develop new pastors and deacons and care for them, while 35 percent feel the new bishop will need to develop leaders. About 27 percent feel the next bishop will need talents around conflict management and 24 percent feel strategy planning will be a most important gift.

Most respondents feel the South Dakota Synod [office and staff] will need to work on developing leaders (54%). Thirty-six percent feel it is important to focus on rural ministry and 26 percent feel the faith formation of children and youth need to be areas of focus in the coming years.

Expectations

The synod bishop can expect support and money from congregations (23%). The next bishop should also expect declining membership and be ready to deal with the struggles and challenges experienced by rural congregations (16%) over the next six years. Congregations should expect leadership from the synod office (27%). Congregations should also expect support, help, understanding and participation (18%) from the synod office. Finally, 13 percent feel the bishop should serve as a pastor to pastors in the area.

Congregational struggles, achievements and hopes

About one in five congregations are celebrating their youth, family, and/or children's ministries, while 13 percent are happy to have a pastor. Congregations are struggling with a lack of members (22%), lack of money (20%) and attendance being down (13%). When asked what respondents' congregations were hoping for, 21 percent of respondents feel congregations hoping for more members (21%). About 15 percent are hoping to reach out to their communities with God's love. Twelve percent of respondents are hoping their congregations are the benefactors of leadership, presumably in the form of a called rostered minister.

Respondents

About half of the respondents said they or their congregation interacted with the current bishop at a synod assembly or have invited the bishop to preach at their congregation. Some respondents (30%) noted they were at a congregational meeting with the bishop. Thirty eight percent had direct contact with the bishop.

More than half of respondents (60%) are members of an ELCA congregation, and nearly 44 percent held or currently have a leadership role in a congregation; 25% are rostered ministers in the ELCA. About two in three respondents were over the age of 50 while 32 percent were between 61 and 70. More than 60 percent have attended worship at a South Dakota synod congregation for more than 25 years. About half (45 percent) are in a rural or small-town settings and 53 percent identified as female.

Appendix III

Rural Round-ups in the South Dakota Synod Executive Summary

Overview: Gatherings were conducted in all 7 of our conferences throughout the summer of 2018. One or two pastors and, where possible, one lay leader was trained on the process for facilitating the Round-ups. The facilitators invited pastors and congregational presidents to the gatherings, and they were encouraged to bring other members. The Round-ups had the following **goals:** generate increased hope for vitality in rural congregations, discover new and creative ideas for strengthening vitality in rural areas, improve collegiality among rostered ministers, lay leaders, and congregations; generate strategies that congregations, rostered ministers and lay leaders can implement, provide input into our synod study process specific to rural/small town ministries. The gatherings included structured discussion and asset mapping. Seven **key questions** were utilized in the discussions: What are you finding that is currently or what do you think could add vitality to your congregation? What asset(s) does your congregation have or need to further develop for improved vitality? What issue does your congregation need to address now? What would help your leaders remain effective? What do you find most helpful about the synod's work/partnership with you in your context? If you could make one big change in how the synod is structured or serves you, what would that change it be? Facilitators then provided reports. This is a summary of those reports. The original reports are available upon request.

Results: Attendance at the events ranged from 4-12 congregations. All the facilitators, even those reporting low attendance, reported that there was good engagement in the process and excellent discussion by the participants. Six of the seven conferences generated ideas for action steps and several committed to undertaking them at their initiative within their conference.

Findings:

A. Ministry Settings:

1. A key strength of rural congregations is relationships – across generations and within the local community. Leveraging this strength may be the pathway for increasing rural vitality.
2. While ministries still tend to measure vitality by attendance figures, there is a growing awareness that deepening individual and household engagement in faith and ministry in daily life may be the signal that the Spirit is pointing us toward.
3. Spiritual renewal, and spiritual practice within faith communities are reported as both a strength and a longing. Is there a way that congregations who long for this might gain strength and understanding from congregations where this is reported as a strength?
4. There is realization that rural ministries have an abundance of gifts and assets and that movement out of scarcity and into abundance is possible.
5. There is a longing for more participation by and more ministry with youth and young adults. (NOTE: Is there a perception gap between this longing and the actual demographics of the people who live in rural communities, or are there changes afoot demographically that we have not fully caught up with yet?)

B. Synodical Relationships

1. There is appreciation for the administrative work of the synod.
2. There is gratefulness for proactive efforts to “keep pulpits full.”
3. There is desire for greater engagement and communication with the synod and several ideas for how that could occur were surfaced.
4. There is openness to and desire for synodical initiative in developing leaders, especially with and among youth and leaders in youth ministry.
5. There is desire for renewed synodical focus on rural ministries utilizing assets such as communications tailored to this context and the new cadre of coaches that have recently been trained.
6. There is some lack of awareness of what the synod does (not understanding role of the synod or the “three expressions” structure of or church)
7. There exists a sense that there may be favoritism on the part of the synod (large and/or vital over small and/or struggling)
8. There is a gap between congregations’ expectations with respect to length of the call process and the realities of how much time it actually takes.
9. Responsiveness (to phone messages, emails, etc) is identified as important and appreciated when it occurs.
10. There is appreciation/acknowledgment of the fact that synodical capacity is limited by the extend/amount of mission support.

C. Leadership

1. There can be strength in partnerships. Congregations who share leadership and consciously do so not only to save money, but also to increase their ability to be faithful in their mission have experienced renewed vitality.
2. Rostered ministers especially in solo calls need more support, and the conference meetings that once functioned for that purpose are no longer doing so. Might cohorts of leaders utilize the synod’s Zoom technology for this purpose?
3. There is a desire for leader-to-leader engagement/dialog led or initiated by the synod.
4. There is a longing for spiritual and pastoral support for and among rostered ministers.
5. See also number 4 under “Synodical Relationships” above.