



# Preliminary Report

May 31 - June 1,  
2024



South Dakota Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

# Table of Contents

## PART I – General Information

Proposed Assembly Agenda .....	1-2
Synod Assembly Committee and Contributors .....	3-4
Synod Directory	
Synod staff .....	5
Synod Council.....	5-6
Committees: Support to Ministries, Candidacy, Consultation, Discipline Evangelical Outreach, and Multicultural .....	6-9
Representatives on Region III & Churchwide Boards .....	9

## Part II – Bishop and Staff Reports

Report of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton.....	10
Report of Bishop Constanze Hagmaier .....	11-12
Anniversaries, Dedications, Roster Changes (Retirements, Necrology, Resignations, Removal, Ordinations, Transfers, Installations) .....	13-14
Report of Associate to the Bishop – Rev. Renee Splichal Larson.....	15
2023 Ministry Celebration Highlights.....	16
Report of Director of Evangelical Mission – Rev. Jonathan Steiner .....	17-18
Report of Companion Synods – Rev. Dr. Aaron Matson .....	19-20
Report of Director of Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center – Rev. Dan Johnson .....	21

## PART III – Regional, Synod Board & Committees

Synod Council – Dennis Thompson, Vice President .....	22-23
Candidacy Committee – Jack Holmquest, Chair .....	24
Support to Ministries Committee – Nancy Moose, Chair .....	25
Evangelical Outreach Committee – Rev. Chris Matson, Chair .....	26
Seminary Debt Reduction Task Force – Kathy McHenry .....	27-28
Region III Archives – Paul A. Daniels .....	29
ELCA Mission Investment Fund – LuAnn Ferguson .....	30

## **PART IV – Sustained and Supported Ministries of the SD Synod**

Lutheran Planned Generosity of South Dakota .....	31
Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota .....	32
Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota .....	33
Augustana University .....	34-35
Buntrock Scholarship Brochure .....	36-37
St. Dysmas .....	38
Good Samaritan Society .....	39
SD Synod WELCA .....	40
University Lutheran Center .....	41-42
Luther Center .....	43-45
Northern LuMin .....	46-47
LuMin the Hills .....	48
Heartland Ephphatha Ministries .....	49
Chapel in the Hills .....	50
South Dakota Synod Coaching Ministry .....	51-52
ELCA Coaching Ministry .....	53-54
Luther Seminary .....	55-57
Wartburg Theological Seminary .....	58-59

## **PART V – Other Reports**

Portico Benefit Services .....	60
ELCA FCU .....	61
Global Refug (formerly LIRS) .....	62
1517 Media .....	63
Seafarers International House .....	64-65

## **PART VI – References**

2025 Proposed Mission Plan .....	66-67
Synod Constitution Chapter 7 Synod Assembly .....	68-72
Rules of Parliamentary Procedures .....	Separate Document*
Summary of Parliamentary Procedure .....	73
Synod Conference Map .....	74
2024 Ballot .....	Separate Document *
Report of 2023 Audit .....	Separate Document *
Proposed 2025 Compensation Guidelines .....	Separate Document *
Resolutions Packet .....	Separate Document *

\* Separate Documents will be available for download in the Assembly Guidebook App and at [sdsynod.org/assembly](https://sdsynod.org/assembly).



## 2024 SOUTH DAKOTA SYNOD ASSEMBLY

Our Savior's Lutheran Church

Sioux Falls, SD

May 30 - June 1, 2024

### Proposed Agenda

#### THURSDAY - MAY 30

2:00 PM – 6:00 PM – Displayers Setup – *The Hub*

5:00 PM – 6:00 PM – Early Check-In

7:00 PM – 9:00 PM – Ministry Celebrations and Recognitions – *The Gathering Space*

(Dessert sponsored by Luther Seminary and Wartburg Theological Seminary)

#### FRIDAY - MAY 31

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM – Displays Open – *The Hub*

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM – Check-In

8:30 AM – New Voting Member Orientation – *Chapel*

8:40 AM – Worship Instructional Meeting  
(worship leaders only)

9:10 AM – 10:20 AM – OPENING WORSHIP WITH HOLY COMMUNION – *Celebrate Center*

Installation of Rev. Kari Webb and Rev. Jonathan Vehar

10:30 AM – 11:50 AM

#### FIRST PLENARY SESSION

Music by Peter Mayer

Welcome and Introductions – *Bishop Constanze Hagmaier*

Credentials Report

Adoption of the Rules & Agenda

Voting Practice

Greeting from Our Savior's Lutheran Church

Panel 1- Theological Education

Rev. Ann Rosendale, Augustana University

Rev. Dr. Robin Steinke, President, Luther Seminary

Rev. Dr. Mark Yackel-Juleen, Wartburg Seminary

Rev. Cassandra Lamb, LuMin Campus Ministries

Rev. Renee Splichal Larson, South Dakota Synod

Music by Peter Mayer

Panel 2 – Neighbors in Solidarity

Rev. Jeff Backer, St. Dysmas

Rev. Chris Matson, Church on the Street

Rev. Maria Cabello, Pueblo de Dios

Rev. Chris Zuraff, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

Rev. Jonathan Vehar, South Dakota Synod

Rural Ministry Liaison Report – *Rev. Alan Blankenfeld*

Announcements

Ecumenical Greeting, Table Prayer – *Rev. Dr. Lauren R. Stanley, Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota, Assembly Chaplain*

11:55 AM – 1:00 PM

Break for Lunch & Conference Caucuses

(Conferences needing to caucus must meet in designated locations before heading to lunch.)

1:00 PM – Resolutions and Nominations Deadline

(Turn-in at the temporary synod office)

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

#### SECOND PLENARY SESSION

Music by Peter Mayer

Introductions and Announcements

Associate to the Bishop Report #1 – *Rev. Renee Splichal Larson*

Associate to the Bishop Report #2 – *Rev. Jonathan Vehar*

Video Greetings from the Good Samaritan Society

Journeying Together in Christ Project Report –

*Rev. Kari Webb*

ELCA World Hunger Video

Holy Cow Award – *Synod Hunger Team*

Music by Peter Mayer

State of the Synod – *Bishop Constanze Hagmaier*

Video Greetings from Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota

Presiding Bishop Video Greeting

State of the ELCA – *Rev. Norma Malfatti*

Bishop Victoria Cortez Tribute Video

Panel 3 – ELCA Partnerships

Rev. Mike Busbey, ELCA Regional Representative for Central America and Mexico

Hellen Rios-Carillo, ELCA Regional Representative for the Caribbean and Gender Justice

Rev. Shadoc Hanson, West Prairie Lutheran Church



Rev. Dr. Lauren R. Stanley, Episcopal  
Diocese of South Dakota

**Presentation of Service Award to Herman and  
Jeanette Fink**

**3:00 PM – 3:30 PM Break**

*Sponsored by the South Dakota Synod Companion  
Synods Committee*

**3:00 PM – Resolutions Committee Meets –**

*Friendship Room*

**3:30 PM – 4:20 PM**

**THIRD PLENARY SESSION**

**Music by Peter Mayer**

**Credentials Report**

**Resolution #14 – Adopt Certain Resolutions En  
Bloc**

**Election of Synod Secretary**

**Synod Council Report – Dennis Thompson, SD  
Synod Vice President**

**Treasurer’s Report – Terry Johnson, SD Synod  
Treasurer**

**Greeting from Lutheran Planned Generosity –  
Kathy McHenry**

**2025 Compensation and Guidelines Conversation  
Announcements**

**Introduction to Connection Hubs**

**Table Prayer – Rev. Dr. Lauren R. Stanley, Episcopal  
Diocese of South Dakota, Assembly Chaplain**

**CONNECTION HUBS**

**4:20 PM – 5:00 PM**

**(choose one to attend)**

Journeying Together in Christ Project Report  
– *Celebrate Center*

Neighbors in Solidarity – *Sanctuary*  
Lutheran Planned Generosity – *Friendship  
Room*

Theological Education – *Gathering Space*  
ELCA Partnerships – *Chapel*

**5:00 PM – 8:00 PM – Evening Meal & Concert –**

*Outdoors at Augustana University by Morrison  
Commons*

**5:00 PM – Food Service Begins at Food  
Trucks**

**5:30 PM – 6:30 PM – Songs with Beer &  
Hymns, Sioux Falls**

**6:30 PM – 6:45 PM Greetings from  
Augustana University and South Dakota  
Synod**

**6:45 PM – 8:00 PM – Peter Mayer Concert**

## **SATURDAY- JUNE 1**

**8:00 AM – 12:00 PM – Displays Open – *The Hub***

**8:00 AM – Worship Instructional Meeting  
(worship leaders only)**

**8:30 AM – 9:45 AM – Morning Worship and Holy  
Communion – *Celebrate Center***

**Installation of Synod Council Members**

**9:45 AM – 10:30 AM – Lutherans Outdoors Annual  
Meeting – *Celebrate Center***

**10:30 AM – 11:00 AM – Break**

*Sponsored by Lutherans Outdoors in SD*

**11:00 AM – 12:00 PM\***

**FOURTH PLENARY SESSION**

**Music by Peter Mayer**

**Opening Prayer – Rev. Dr. Lauren R. Stanley,  
Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota, Assembly  
Chaplain**

**Credentials Report**

**Adoption of the 2025 Mission Plan**

**Nominating Ballot – Committees to be filled**

**Discussion on Remaining Resolutions**

**Video Greeting from the South Dakota Synod**

**Coaching Network**

**Discussion on Remaining Resolutions**

**Music by Peter Mayer**

**Thank Yous, Announcements**

**Closing of the Assembly**

**Synod Council Meets – Friendship Room**

**\*Agenda Subject to Change**

Materials and information can be found online at  
[sdsynod.org/assembly](https://sdsynod.org/assembly) or in the 2024 South  
Dakota Synod Assembly Guidebook App

# SYNOD ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES & CONTRIBUTORS

## **ASSEMBLY PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Rev. Elisa Berndt McMullen, Sioux Falls  
Rev. Lisa Heffernan  
Bob Jenson, Sioux Falls  
Gene LeVasseur, Sioux Falls  
Debbie Theis, Sioux Falls  
Deanna Versteeg, Sioux Falls, Augustana University  
Rev. Dayna Weltzin, Clear Lake  
Rev. Herb Wounded Head III, Colton  
Rev. Alan Blankenfeld, Synod Staff  
Lois Borchardt, Synod Staff  
Rev. Dr. Aaron Matson, Synod Staff  
Crystal McCormick, Synod Staff  
Kathy McHenry, Lutheran Planned Generosity  
Rev. Renee Splichal Larson, Synod Staff  
Rev. Jonathan Vehar, Synod Staff  
Rev. Kari Webb, Synod Staff  
Bishop Constanze Hagmaier

## **ELECTION COMMITTEE**

Rev. Drew Riter, Gayville  
Rev. Matthew Spoden, Aberdeen  
Jessi Woodruff, Bridgewater

## **RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE**

Rev. Ramona Hayes, Flandreau  
Rev. Justin Neugebauer, Milbank  
Rev. Jeff Otterman, Yankton  
Rev. David Piper, Rapid City  
Rev. Lynnae Sorensen, Sioux Falls  
Rev. Brian Wasmoen, Mitchell  
Rev. Craig Wexler, Pierre  
Rev. Jonathan Vehar, Synod Staff

## **PARLIAMENTARIAN**

Nick Moser, Yankton

## **CHAPLAIN**

Rev. Rev. Dr. Lauren R. Stanley, Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota

**MUSIC**

Peter and Brendan Mayer

**PRODUCTION TEAM**

Kevin Stillson, Sioux Falls

Brad Brockmueller, Sioux Falls

Rev. Dr. Aaron Matson, Synod Staff

**SPECIAL THANKS**

Our Savior's Lutheran Church Pastors, Staff, and Volunteers

## SOUTH DAKOTA SYNOD STAFF

Bishop Constanze Hagmaier	605-274-4020	chagmaier@sdsynod.org
Rev. Renee Splichal Larson, Associate to the Bishop	605-274-4022	rsplichallarson@sdsynod.org
Rev. Jonathan Vehar, Director for Evangelical Mission and Associate to the Bishop	605-274-4011	jvehar@sdsynod.org
Lois Borchardt, Business Manager	605-274-4025	lborchardt@sdsynod.org
Crystal McCormick, Executive Administrator/Candidacy & Mobility Office Coordinator	605-274-4024	cmccormick@sdsynod.org
Rev. Dr. Aaron Matson, Companion Synods and Communications	605-274-5035	companion-synod@sdsynod.org amatson@sdsynod.org
Rev. Alan Blankenfeld, Rural Ministry Liaison	605-941-3257	ablankenfeld@sdsynod.org
Rev. Kari Webb, Director for Digital Community and Learning, Program Director, Journeying Together in Christ	605-274-4011	kwebb@sdsynod.org
Kathy McHenry, Lutheran Planned Generosity of SD	605-274-5030	kmchenry@sdsynod.org

### Contact the Synod Office

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Web Site: [www.sdsynod.org](http://www.sdsynod.org)

### 2023-2024 Synod Council

Name	Conference
DeKraai, Reverend Michael	Prairie Coteau
Anderson, Kristi (SAM)	Prairie Coteau
Rasmussen, John	Prairie Coteau
Braun, Reverend Jackie	Medary
Kaufmann, Gary	Medary
Braun, Marlee	Medary
McFarland, Anne Rieck	Crossroads
Meier, Deacon Christie	Crossroads
Poppens, Dave	Crossroads

Mitchell, Reverend Alyssa	Southeastern
Hansen, Rhonda	Southeastern
Hoffner, Jake	Southeastern
Lund, Reverend Dave	Northern Plains
Nilson, Chad	Northern Plains
Nelson, Kelly	Northern Plains
Senner, Reverend Becky	Prairie Rivers
Hansen, Bonny	Prairie Rivers
Clark, Jeff	Prairie Rivers
Holz, Reverend Wilbur	Bear Butte
Johnson, Jody	Bear Butte
Chapman, Malcom	Bear Butte
A., Juan	Youth
S., Mallorie	Youth
Hagmaier, Reverend Constanze	Bishop
Thompson, Dennis	Vice President
Johnson, Terry	Treasurer
Beers, Jill	Secretary

## 2023-2024 Candidacy Committee

Rep.	Title	First Name	Last Name
At-Large	Reverend	Agapito (Augie)	Aviles
At-Large		Heather	Smith
At-Large		Bob	Scott
At-Large	Reverend	Chris	Matson
Deacon	Deacon	Laura	Campbell
Former TEEM	Reverend	LeShea	Avery
Bear Butte		Joe	Hauge
Crossroads	Reverend	Jeff	Backer
Chair, Prairie Coteau		Jack	Holmquest
Northern Plains	Reverend	Craig	Wexler
Medary	Reverend	Cassandra	Lamb
Prairie Rivers		Wanda	Swenson
Southeastern		Heidi	Fowler
Region 3	Deacon	Krista	Anderson
Seminary Rep	Reverend Dr	Mark	Granquist

Synod Staff	Reverend	Renee	Splichal Larson
Synod Staff	Bishop	Constanze	Hagmaier
Chaplain	Reverend	Don	Salberg

## 2023-2024 Support to Ministries Committee

Conference	Title	First Name	Last Name
Bear Butte	Reverend	Deb	Grismer
Bear Butte		Paul	Reynolds
Crossroads	Reverend	Siri	Sorenson
Crossroads		Elizabeth	Koob
Medary	Reverend	Rebecca	Breddin
Medary		Nancy	Moose
Northern Plains	Reverend	Rhonda	Wellsandt-Zell
Northern Plains		Colleen	Winter
Prairie Coteau	Reverend	Janet	Miller
Prairie Coteau		Marti	Knudsen
Prairie Rivers	Reverend	Rick	Senner
Prairie Rivers		Doreen	Gosmire
Southeastern	Reverend	Erik	Olson
Southeastern		Pat	Meyers
Staff	Bishop	Constanze	Hagmaier
Staff	Reverend	Renee	Splichal Larson

## 2023-2024 Evangelical Outreach Committee

Conference	First Name	Last Name
Prairie Coteau		
Prairie Coteau	Rev. Karie	Geyer
Medary	Rev. David	Bacon
Medary	Scott	Parsley
Crossroads	Rev. Aimee	Pakan
Crossroads	Dave	Poppens
Southeastern	Rev. Lisa	Heffernan
Southeastern	Kari	Ostrem
Northern Plains	Rev. Matthew	Spoden
Northern Plains	Waynette	Geigle
Prairie Rivers	Rev. Joanne	Nagele
Prairie Rivers	Sara	Schott
Bear Butte	Rev. Wilbur	Holz

Bear Butte	Randi	Oyen
Appointed	Kylee	Sivertson
Invited	Rev. Chris	Matson

## 2023-2024 Multi-Cultural Committee

Conference	First Name	Last Name
Prairie Coteau	Rev. Cheryl	Rondeau-Bassett
Prairie Coteau	Pat	Schubert
Medary	Rev. Dayna	Weltzin
Medary	Karin	Mathison
Crossroads	Kristi	Hoff
Crossroads	Rev. Aimee	Pakan
Southeastern	Rev. Michael	Jordan
Southeastern	Nick	Oyen
Northern Plains	Rev. Shari	Schwedhelm
Northern Plains	Bobbi	Anderson
Prairie Rivers	Rev. Nancy	Eckels
Prairie Rivers	Yvonne	Strasser
Bear Butte	Rev. David	Piper
Bear Butte	Shana	Hindman
Appointed	Rev. Daniel	Johnson
Appointed	Abraham	Gayetaye
Appointed	Rev. Henrique	Fleming
Invited	Rev. Maria	Cabello-Salomon

## Consultation Committee

**John Rasmussen (2025)**

Sisseton, SD

**Larry McHenry (2026)**

Clark, SD

**Darcie Bien (2027)**

Brookings, SD

**Pastor Laura Overbo (2027)**

Watertown, SD

**Pastor Lori Hope (2027)**

Sioux Falls, SD

2024 Synod Assembly  
Preliminary Report

**Pastor Justin Van Orman (2029)**  
Mobridge, SD

## **Discipline Committee**

**Cindy Hofland (2024)**  
Veblen, SD

**Pastor Elizabeth Pagnotta (2024)**  
Brandon, SD

**Pastor Tim Lemme (2024)**  
Sioux Falls, SD

**Nick Oyen (2024)**  
Beresford, SD

**Bryan Neugebauer (2024)**  
Dimock, SD

**Pastor Jeremy Duprey (2025)**  
Hill City, SD

**Pastor Becky Piper (2025)**  
Rapid City, SD

**Mary Rice O'Donnell (2026)**  
Redfield, SD

**Krisma (Kris) DeWitt (2026)**  
Watertown, SD

**Pastor Kari Webb (2028)**  
Belle Fourche, SD

**Pastor Scott Munger (2028)**  
Mitchell, SD

**Betty Oldenkamp (2028)**  
Sioux Falls, SD

## **Representatives on ELCA Church Council from Region III**

**Bishop Craig Schweitzer**  
Western North Dakota Synod

**Mr. Loren A. Solberg (3E)**  
Bovey, MN

## **Representative on Luther Seminary Board**

*3C South Dakota*  
Marge Hegge, Ph.D.  
Retired Professor of Nursing  
South Dakota State University





Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America

April 8, 2024

*“We have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them” (1 John 4:16).*

Dear friends in Christ,

Thank you for your faithful and continuing partnership as we work together to help people discover the difference God’s grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation.

Because God’s grace and love have made a difference in our daily lives, we want others to experience that same love and acceptance. There are many in our communities who feel alone and are searching for love and connection. Sometimes we feel at a loss to know how to make a difference — what do we say, what can we do, how do we share God’s love?

You share this love every day. When you invite others to join in your faith community, to worship, to participate in service activities, to pray together, to share their story — these are all ways our neighbors experience the love of God in community.

There are examples of God’s love throughout our church as we work for healing, peace and justice to make a difference in the lives of those around us.

The Spirit is calling us to move together as one church to share the grace and love we experience every day. May God bless your time together.

In Christ,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## Report from Bishop Constanze Hagmaier

Dear South Dakota Synod,

Friends in Christ,



Grace and peace to you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! – Your ministry partners of the South Dakota Synod and I are looking forward to connecting with you during this year’s assembly. The partners, planning team, staff, and volunteers of Our Savior’s Lutheran Church are ready to foster connections across the church in fresh and proven ways. In preparation for your attendance and participation in this year’s assembly, I will offer a snapshot of Synod ministry.

### Expanding Our Reach

In the Spring of 2023, we applied for \$1,137,384 from Lilly Endowment Inc. through its Thriving Congregations Initiative. to grow our mission of “Journeying together in Christ” more boldly. In November 2023 the foundation informed us that we were awarded the amount we had applied for.

Since then, Pastor Kari Webb has been called unto Synod staff as the Director for Digital Community and E-Learning to develop a digital space for gathering and education with not only South Dakota but the whole church in mind. The vision for the Learning Management System (LMS) is that this digital gathering space will help us to grow closer together as the South Dakota Synod and the wider church through cohorts, resource sharing, and relationship building.

The grant also offers additional resources to expand our focus on rural emergent ministries, whether it is the rural liaison position or our rural emergent experience for seminarians in collaboration with Wartburg Seminary.

### Expanding God’s Kingdom

With generous support from our partners at the churchwide organization and locally, Pastor Sawyer Vanden Heuvel launched the synod’s newest Synod Authorized Worshipping Community (SAWC) in Sioux Falls, Shepherd’s Table. It is an intentional community for those who feel abandoned and marginalized by traditional worshipping communities. Shepherd’s Table gathers monthly for dinner church at the Prism Center in Sioux Falls. I encourage you to speak with Pastor Vanden Heuvel during the assembly to hear how you can connect with and participate in Shepherd’s Table.

We continue to have robust conversations concerning a mission start in Box Elder. Pastor Carla Nelson finished a successful exploration to investigate the viability and need of planting a faith community there. The results leave no doubt about the need. The next step is to seek and secure financial sustainability through building intentional relationships with donors, community, conference and individual partners. If you are interested in learning more and are committed to developing a worshipping community in Box Elder, please stop and talk to Pastor Jonathan Vehar at the assembly.

## Expanding Our Vision

Traveling to Cameroon in October 2023 for the Centennial of the Sudan Mission was an exhaustingly holy experience. It is a tradition in Cameroon to commission the printing of fabric for special occasions. It will be gifted to visitors and friends and offered for sale. Our group was awarded many yards of fabric, which the quilters of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls are graciously turning into everyday items you can purchase at the assembly. All proceeds will be directed to fund well-established ministries in Cameroon, such as the roof project, the seminary, and the Lutheran Hospital.

Steps are being taken by the synod and the churchwide organization in partnership with the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua to call our missionaries since Soliette's transition to Mexico. Once the missionaries are in place, we will begin sending teaching delegations to Nicaragua. Thank you to all of you who have sent tributes about Bishop Victoria to the synod office. The video tribute will air for the first time publicly at the assembly, be made available for congregational use following the assembly, and be sent to the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua. May God bless her legacy!

I continue to be filled with a deep sense of gratitude as you entrust me to serve as the Bishop of the South Dakota Synod.

Yours in Christ,  
Bishop Constanze Hagmaier

# CONGREGATION ANNIVERSARIES and ROSTER CHANGES

(as of 05/28/24)

## Anniversaries and Dedications

### 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Union Creek Lutheran Church, Akron  
Lutheran Church of Dell Rapids, Dell Rapids  
West Prairie Lutheran Church, Lennox  
Palisade Lutheran Church, Valley Springs

### 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

St. Paul Lutheran Church, Humboldt  
First Lutheran Church, Lake Andes

### 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Calvary Lutheran Church, Rapid City

## Installations

06/04/2023	Rev. Leif Johnson – Bethany, Howard
06/11/2023	Rev. Elisa McMullen – WestSide, Sioux Falls
07/16/2023	Rev. Nate Bendorf – American, De Smet
08/27/2023	Rev. Nancy Eckels – Roseni, Beresford/Union Creek, Akron
09/17/2023	Rev. Joy Proper – Our Savior’s, Redfield
10/01/2023	Rev. Elizabeth Johnson – St. Paul, Humboldt
10/01/2023	Rev. Kyle Svennungsen – St. John, Sioux Falls
10/08/2023	Rev. Jon Splichal Larson – Canton Lutheran, Canton
11/05/2023	Rev. Sawyer Vanden Heuvel – St. Mark’s, Sioux Falls
11/17/2023	Rev. Tami Steffensen – Lyman County Parish, Presho/Kennebec/Vivian
12/01/2023	Rev. Mary Hendricks Wilkens – Nathanael, Alcester
12/03/2023	Rev. Elizabeth Platts – Peace, Sioux Falls
12/10/2023	Rev. Chris Baesler – Community Faith, Edgemont
12/10/2023	Rev. David Piper – Atonement, Rapid City/Piedmont Valley, Piedmont
12/17/2023	Rev. Tom Stadem – First, Sioux Falls
01/21/2024	Rev. Nicole Martin – Zion, Aberdeen
01/21/2024	Rev. Gary Andrew Woodruff – Zion, Bridgewater/Immanuel, Canova
01/21/2024	Rev. Becky Piper – Grand River, Buffalo
02/25/2024	Rev. Kay Reeb – Peever Lutheran, Peever/Wilmot Lutheran, Wilmot
03/10/2024	Rev. Alyssa Mitchell – Trinity, Arlington
05/19/2024	Rev. Dell Sanderson – Colman Lutheran, Colman
05/31/2024	Rev. Jonathan Vehar – South Dakota Synod, ELCA
05/31/2024	Rev. Kari Webb – South Dakota Synod, ELCA
06/09/2024	Rev. John Christopherson – Springdale, Sioux Falls
06/16/2024	Rev. Jason Kramme – Peace, Sioux Falls

## Ordinations

09/30/2023	Rev. Jordan Stone
10/27/2023	Rev. Sawyer Vanden Heuvel
11/17/2023	Rev. Tami Steffensen

12/01/2023 Rev. Mary Hendricks Wilkens

### **Necrology**

08/02/2023 Rev. Willard Olsen  
09/12/2023 Rev. Gene Eidsness  
10/07/2023 Rev. Frederick Rosin  
11/09/2023 Rev. James Reeb  
05/26/2024 Rev. James Christopherson  
05/27/2024 Rev. Roger Noer

### **On Leave**

05/01/2023 Rev. Jacquelyn Braun  
06/01/2023 Rev. Renae Boehmer  
12/01/2023 Rev. Joel Pakan  
03/01/2024 Rev. Justin Kosec  
04/01/2024 Rev. Cheryl Rondeau-Bassett

### **Retired**

08/01/2023 Rev. Erika Lehmann  
08/01/2023 Rev. Shelia Pohl  
09/01/2023 Rev. Daryl Schubert  
11/01/2023 Rev. Randall Gehring  
11/01/2023 Rev. Carlene Rhody  
01/01/2024 Deacon Katherine Eisele

### **Transferred Into South Dakota**

07/05/2023 Rev. Nathaniel Bendorf, 9E Florida-Bahamas  
07/17/2023 Rev. Joy Proper, 1E Oregon  
08/16/2023 Rev. Randal Fett, 5H Northwest Synod of Wisconsin  
09/19/2023 Rev. Paul Svingen, 5H Northwest Synod of Wisconsin  
09/25/2023 Rev. Kyle Svenningsen, 5L La Crosse Area  
10/04/2023 Rev. Renee Tecklenburg, 5E Western Iowa  
10/21/2023 Rev. Paul Erdal, 3E Northeastern Minnesota  
11/01/2023 Rev. Elizabeth Wilder Platts, 3H Saint Paul Area  
01/01/2024 Rev. Nicole Martin, 9E Florida-Bahamas  
01/01/2024 Rev. Kay Reeb, 3A Western North Dakota  
01/01/2024 Rev. Gary Andrew Woodruff, 7A New Jersey  
03/08/2024 Rev. Dell Sanderson, 3F Southwestern Minnesota  
05/01/2024 Rev. Jason Kramme, 3H Saint Paul Area

### **Transferred Out of South Dakota**

06/23/2023 Rev. Ralph Egbert, 3E Northeastern Minnesota  
08/01/2023 Rev. Warren Lahammer, 8H West Virginia-Western Maryland  
09/01/2023 Rev. Mindy Ehrke, 3F Southwestern Minnesota  
11/17/2023 Rev. Jonathan Steiner, 7F Southeastern Pennsylvania

**Report of Rev. Renee Splichal Larson  
Associate to the Bishop  
South Dakota Synod Assembly, 2024**



Dear SD Synod of the ELCA,

“...remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- Jesus in Matthew 28.20b

The promise we can trust, no matter what, is the promise from Jesus to be with us always. Whether we experience a bountiful harvest or barren fields, a death or a birth, joy or sorrow, and anything in between, Christ is with you and with me. This Good News matters. It sustains us in times of uncertainty. We trust that Christ has died and risen from the grave for YOU! Christ has given you and your congregation the Holy Spirit of God, so that you may witness to Christ crucified and raised, so that you may be a dwelling place for God’s love, mercy, forgiveness, and grace.

I have learned a great deal these last 4-5 years serving as an associate to the bishop in the SD Synod, especially when it comes to congregations in a time of transition. Here are 3 things I have learned:

1. God is faithful.
2. God’s Spirit is present and active in the call process.
3. Times of transition are part of the normal life of every congregation.

Naturally, anxiety rises when congregations don’t know who their next pastor (or deacon!) will be, or how long the call process might take, or whether or not they can “afford” their own full-time pastor anymore. As people of faith, when we worry about what may or may not happen, we are called turn back towards God, our source of life; and remember, Christ is with us always, to the end of the age.

I am reminded about these things I have learned when reflecting back on a given year: Ministry Site Studies conducted, letters of call extended, people preparing for ordained ministry entering their first call, formation of parishes or new partnerships in ministry, Synod Authorized and lay ministers being raised up in local contexts to serve in new ways, tens of thousands of dollars given to aid people in seminary and reduce debt, creative ministry endeavors, and conception of new ministries. The SD Synod “2023 Ministry Celebration” sheet is a testament to God’s work in and through all of us together. If you haven’t seen it yet, take a look for the details of all the ministry we can celebrate in 2023!

I am grateful and humbled to serve as one of the associates in the SD Synod, to our dedicated, gifted Bishop, who is a person of prayer and deep faith in Jesus. I look forward to gathering as the body of Christ at the 2024 Synod Assembly, where we will be strengthened through the Gospel, and sent back out to minister and witness wherever we are planted.

Yours in Christ,

Pr. Renee Splichal Larson

# 2023 MINISTRY CELEBRATION



Our Synod's vision of Journeying Together in Christ has continued to focus our work. We invite you to take a few moments to review the list below which celebrates some of the ministry we shared together in 2023. **Journeying together in Christ as the South Dakota Synod, in 2023 we:**

- Applied for and received a grant of **\$1,137,384** from Lilly Endowment Inc. through its Thriving Congregations Initiative for new initiatives that are not included the Synod's Mission Plan. Please reach out to Synod Staff for **more information!**
- Completed explorations for two new potential church plants, with plans to start a worshipping community in **Box Elder** and **Shepherd's Table in Sioux Falls**.
- Walked with the **40** people in various stages of **Candidacy** and have **4** new entrance interviews scheduled in 2024!
- Received **3 new first call candidates**.
- Completed **23 Ministry Site Studies** and extended **28 calls!**
- Ensured that nearly every congregation has a called pastor, interim pastor, Synod Authorized Minister, or lay leader to care for God's people (thank you to all of you who are helping out with area congregations and filling in!).
- Distributed **\$77,137** to date through the Seminary Debt Reduction Program.
- Granted **\$123,000** in scholarship funds to seminary students, **\$11,400** in internship site assistance, and **\$82,990** to Luther and Wartburg Seminaries, for a total of **\$217,390** in support of seminary education.
- Created a **pilot rural J-term** program with Wartburg Theological Seminary, which will begin in January 2024.
- Received **\$113,635** in grants from ELCA Christian Community & Leadership.
- Held a **Synod Assembly**, where we gathered again as a community to conduct the business of the synod.
- Hosted **Spring and Fall Theological Conferences**, where we continued to support the continuing education of our Rostered Ministers either online or in-person.
- Supported the congregations and ministries of the synod through **visits** by synod staff, both **digital** and in-person.
- Hosted a "**Lay Leader Night**" to support congregational lay leaders and supported rostered leaders with regular **in-person and virtual meetings**, such as monthly rostered minister virtual check-ins, Synodically Authorized Minister, Senior Pastor, and Interim Pastor check-ins, and a First Call and Senior Pastor Retreat.
- Pr. Alan Blankenfeld, Synod **Rural Ministry Liaison** continued to journey with our rural ministry sites. In the past year, Pr. Alan has worked directly with **34 communities and congregations in transition**.
- Continued the work of the Rural Ministry Table, which is currently working on **Small Town and Rural (STAR) grants**, grants funded by the generous donations to rural ministry in the Synod.
- Partnered with **Bergen Lutheran** to hold a **Threshing Bee** which resulted in gifts of **\$51,324** to support rural ministry in South Dakota.

**Thank you for all the ways you have supported the ministry of the South Dakota Synod this past year! God has called us to be the body of Christ together, and this is an active and healthy body. We look forward to continuing our journey with you in 2024 and beyond!**

**Report of Rev. Jonathan Vehar  
Director of Evangelical Mission  
Associate to the Bishop  
South Dakota Synod Assembly, 2024**



It's been a little over six months since starting this role as the Director of Evangelical Mission and Associate to the Bishop, and it's a regular occurrence to be asked how things are going. Sometimes, it's small talk, others genuine interest, but often confusion about what it is that I even do. The standard answer goes a little like this, "It's all the things I expected it to be. I drive around a lot. Fill out lots of paperwork. Sometimes people are excited to see me, and other times not so much." The filling out of paperwork normally draws a laugh, as intended, even if true.

There has been little to surprise me in the daily tasks. There is lots of driving with nearly 200 congregations throughout South Dakota. I've been to Edgemont in the Southwest, Vermillion in the South East, Bison in the Northwest, New Effington in the Northeast, and lots of places in between. It's not exactly the four corners of the state, but I've gotten pretty close. One of the aspects I've enjoyed the most is worshiping in so many different places and styles, from dancing up my offering at First Lutheran African Ministry to a stringed orchestra at First Lutheran, Sioux Falls. From worshiping with the three-point Prairie Fellowship Parish of American, Rosebud, and Indian Creek Lutheran churches, each with the same green hymnal and same laminated order of worship, but unique in so many other ways. From what felt like a homecoming at Spirit of Hope in Scotland and the under-housed at Church on the Street to the 20ish other houses of worship I joined in giving thanks to God. These last six months have been holy time.

But holy time isn't just found in worship, I see it also in the times of dreaming, strategic planning, lamenting, and praying for guidance and wisdom in where God is calling us in the future.

Speaking of the future, there are a few things in the works. 1) A stewardship strategy that seeks to assist any and all congregations wanting to dig a little deeper into responding to the abundant provisions of God. 2) A media tool kit for Neighbors in Solitary partners to help tell the story of what we do together. 3) Next steps for a new start congregation in Box Elder, SD. These are a few of the bigger ideas that we are responding to together.

On another note, one of the unique roles of the DEM is the connection to the churchwide organization. This is where a lot of the paperwork comes in, but this isn't a complaint, it is one way of walking together. The support we receive from the



churchwide organization, not only in grant dollars, but in sharing ideas, resources, and expertise, is immeasurable. There is much that happens behind the scenes that allows the ministries in South Dakota, and especially our mission developers, to focus on the task of sharing the good news of Jesus. That is, after all, why we are joined together to proclaim the saving word of Jesus to the world. I couldn't imagine trying to do this alone.

In closing, what is worth remembering the most is that there is much for which we can give thanks. For the 200 congregations across the synod, each worships and proclaims Jesus, even if it looks a little different from place to place. I give particular thanks to the rest of the Synod Staff, who are cherished colleagues in this work. To the pastors and deacons when we dream, lament, and pray together.

- Pastor Jonathan Vehar

## Companion Synod Coordinator Report to the 2024 Synod Assembly

Greetings rostered leaders, synodically authorized ministers, and lay delegates to the 2024 South Dakota Synod Assembly! Below are a few highlights and updates from our companion synods of Nicaragua (ILFE) and Cameroon (EELC).

### **Nicaragua**

As you might have heard, Bishop Victoria of the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua (ILFE) passed away at the end of September. When we received news of her passing, a condolence letter from Bishop Hagmaier on behalf of the Synod was sent, as well as an offer of whatever support we could offer. For now, Pr. Katia Cortez, will serve as President of ILFE, until an election is held in 2025. To honor Bishop Victoria, a scholarship fund has been established started for pastors in Nicaragua by the Companion Synod Committee. Thank you to everyone who submitted video and written remembrances and photos, to share in the tribute video for Bishop Victoria at the 2024 Synod Assembly. A recording of the tribute will be available after the Assembly on the Synod website and social media pages.

Speaking of Synod Assembly, we are thrilled to welcome Pastor Mike Busbey and his wife, Hellen Rios-Carrillo, to our 2024 Synod Assembly. Mike (he/him/his) serves as Regional Representative for Central America and Mexico, and Hellen (she/her/hers) serves as Regional Representative for the Caribbean and Gender Justice. They are based in Costa Rica but relate to companion churches and theological institutions throughout the region. Pastor Mike previously served as a missionary with ILFE and the South Dakota Synod (2011-2015), and is rostered in the South Dakota Synod. Hellen was born and raised in Nicaragua and is a member of the Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope (ILFE); previously served with the Lutheran World Federation relating to churches in Central America and their ministries centered on women.

Another important update to share is Celeste Evora and Anghy Aragón, two young women from Nicaragua, will be sharing the role of missionary for the South Dakota Synod in Nicaragua. They will begin as soon as the ELCA churchwide office completes the appropriate background check and paperwork.

A final update to be aware of is that Cari Eastman, the chair of the Companion Synod Committee, and I traveled to the Houston area from October 31<sup>st</sup> to November 3<sup>rd</sup> for the 2023 Latin America and Caribbean International Companion Synod Consultation. These consultations, held every three years, are a chance for representatives from companion synods in that region, like the South Dakota Synod and ILFE, to meet face to face and have intentional time for fellowship and discernment of future goals for our work together. Cari and I had some wonderful conversations with Pr. Katia about how to strengthen our relationship and some priorities for partnership for the next three years.

If you would like to support our work with ILFE, some priorities identified by Pr. Katia are our Seeds of Hope Program, teacher salaries at their school in Pochocauape, and the Bishop Victoria Memorial Scholarship Fund. We have also recently purchased three motorcycles for ILFE to help

rural pastors travel between congregations, so another great way to support the work of ILFE is to donate funds toward fuel and maintenance of those motorcycles.

### **Cameroon**

The big news here is that Bishop Hagmaier and I led a delegation to Cameroon in the first part of October for the centennial celebration of the Lutheran Church in Cameroon (EELC). It was wonderful to meet so many members of the EELC, especially Bishop Baiguele, share time of worship and fellowship, and discuss more about how we can continue to honor and grow our partnership in the future. There were some literal and figurative bumps in the road along the way, but it was a good trip, and our presence there was appreciated and celebrated. Hopefully this will lead to even better communications between us and future delegations travelling there.

The Companion Synod Committee set a goal to raise enough funds to pay for seven roofs (one for each conference) for congregations in Cameroon by the time the delegation from our Synod travelled there for the Centennial celebrations. We didn't quite meet that goal, but I'm pleased that we were able to meet goal by the end of the 2023. Thank you to all of the conferences, congregations, and individuals who contributed to this project!

Church roofs continue to be the number one priority that Bishop Baiguele identified for support from our Synod. Other priorities include the EELC School System, the Garoua Boulai Hospital Poor Fund, and the Lutheran Seminary in Meiganga.

### **General**

Companion Synod Sunday was held on Oct. 1. I was able to be present at Augustana Lutheran to give a temple talk and presentation at their adult forum time about companion synods. I know several congregations did include companion synods in their prayers of the day, and some did take advantage of the materials prepared by the Committee for that Sunday. We are again going to celebrate Companion Synod Sunday on the first Sunday in October of this year (October 6<sup>th</sup>). Hopefully this will become an annual commemoration and grow to where every congregation in the Synod is celebrating a Companion Synod Sunday in the future. Please let me know if you would like someone from our Companion Synod Committee to come to your congregation.

Finally, thank you for all the ways you support our Companion Synod ministry – in prayer, sharing stories, pictures, and videos of the work being done in Nicaragua and Cameroon, and, of course, financially. Together, we are making a big difference in the lives of many and helping to make sure the good news of Jesus Christ is heard!

As always, if you have any questions about any of these items or our companion synod ministry, I am always happy to visit with you. And I'm always happy to visit congregations and meetings around the synod – just contact me at [companion-synod@sdsynod.org](mailto:companion-synod@sdsynod.org) to work out the details!

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Dr. Aaron Matson,  
Companion Synod Coordinator and Communications Director



## Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center

PO Box 862

Pine Ridge, SD 57770

605-867-5262 Cell: 605-454-6400

e-mail: [pineridge.center@gmail.com](mailto:pineridge.center@gmail.com)

website: <http://www.pineridgereconciliationcenter.org/>

## Fostering mutual trust, respect, and understanding, while addressing the deep poverty that exists on the reservation.

Did you know that a porta-potty can freeze solid? They can, it is one of the many lessons I have learned since I arrived in Pine Ridge. This winter has been much milder than last year. But we had a 14 day stretch below freezing.

Winter is the time when the **Homeless Shelter** is our biggest focus. We are averaging 42 people a night at the overnight shelter and service 70+ people each day at the day shelter. In the period from June to April we served over 13,500 meals to the shelter guests. This number does not include the kid's time meals (80+ per week) nor does it include the food going out the front door during non-shelter days. (During the summer we do not open the day shelter every day.) We average \$4000 a week in food. Recently we opened an account with US Foods. This will relieve some pressure on me to do much of the shopping.

We have been operating the **Homeless Shelter** since November of 2022 and currently, we are using the center as a day shelter. Working with the tribe we were able to reopen the night shelters as a High Barrier shelter only for those that are sober and working to improve their lives. From November thru April, we have operated the low barrier shelter.

The shelter, day and night, is truly making a difference in the lives of the homeless population and has had a ripple effect through the community. We are living out our mission.

**Kid's Time** continues to be busy. The Job Corp staff and our intern Lessanes stepped up to help lead the program through the holidays. The team is still providing food and activities for the kids. The kids appreciate the meals we provide. In some cases, it is the only hot meal they receive outside of school. The snack packs we provide on Fridays are not only wanted but they are also needed.

We are gearing up for the **Immersion season**. Tony Walking, the Director of Immersions has been working with the groups planning for this year. Having Tony on staff is a major relief to me and allows me to focus on the big picture.

**Job Corp** continues to be the heart of the ministry. They are involved in all aspects of the ministry of the center. The work continues to spin the Lutheran Lakota Job Corp off as a separate 501c3. We are trying to raise \$150,000.00 this year to support the many fine JC workers.

The center and more importantly the staff of the center are making a difference. But it is only possible with the support we receive from the synod, the Episcopal Diocese, the ELCA, and the many people and churches that continue to support us.

Blessings on all you do, Pastor Dan Johnson Director, Lutheran/Lakota Shared Ministries

## South Dakota 2023-2024 Synod Council and Vice President Report

The Synod Council continues to meet and conduct the business of the Synod. We always keep in mind that we need to be good stewards of the Synod's assets and that our mission is to spread God's word and accompany individuals and Congregations in their faith journey.

Once again, the congregations of the South Dakota Synod and its individual members have been very faithful in their giving. But, because of a shortfall in the mission plan, an appeal was made to the congregations for a \$1 per confirmed member contribution above their normal giving. Thank you to all who participated. Because of your generosity, the mission plan was met, and the Synod was able to support all their important ministries. Just as with congregations, costs have continued to rise for the Synod and have required the Council to look closely at the mission plan. After much thoughtful deliberation, we hope that we have a plan that will continue the important work of the Synod.

One of the highlights of the year was the Lilly Grant that was awarded to the Synod to support Rural Ministries and develop learning systems. These funds are going to be invaluable in supporting the mission and goals of the Synod.

Several years ago, a seminary debt refinance program was put in place to refinance seminary debt for rostered leaders. A generous donor paid the interest on the loans so that all payments by rostered leaders went to principal. Through the faithful payments of the rostered leaders and through endowment distributions designated for seminary debt relief, all those loans have been repaid.

Highlights of Synod Council activities include:

- Continued support for the Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center and the great work done by Rev. Dan Johnson.
- Contacted congregations to express appreciation for ongoing mission support and listen to input on Synod activities.
- Approved distribution of endowment funds
- Heard reports from staff and mission partners
- Continued to partner with the McLaughlin Community Alliance Group.
- Continue to walk with new start congregations.
- Authorized disbursement of funds for Rostered leader and lay education.

Thank you to the Synod Council members who ended their term in 2024: Rev. Michael DeKraai, Dave Poppens, Rhonda Hansen, Rev. Dave Lund, Jeff Clark, Malcom Chapman, and Malorie Schultz. Also, thank you to Rev. Alyssa Mitchell, who left the council as she changed conferences. Thank you for participating on Synod Council and being flexible to meet on Zoom.

Thank you to the Executive Committee for your willingness to meet monthly and provide leadership: Bishop Hagmaier, Rev. Jonathan Vehar, Terry Johnson, Malcom Chapman, Bonny Hansen, Rev. Jackie Braun and Dave Poppens.

A special thank you to Rev. Jonathan Vehar, who have been the Synod Secretary for almost seven years. His input to the Synod Council has been invaluable. I am very happy that he can continue to advise the council from his new position as Director of Evangelical Mission.

Welcome to Jill Beers, who agreed to step into the position as Synod Secretary.

The Synod staff continues their good work. Thank you to Bishop Constanze Hagmaier , Pastor Renee Splichal Larson, Pastor Jonathan Vehar, Lois Borchardt, Crystal McCormick, Rev. Alan Blankenfeld, Kathy McHenry and Rev Dr. Aaron Matson. The Synod is blessed to have these dedicated, talented individuals working to further the mission of the Synod. Thank you.

Also, thank you to the individuals who have agreed to serve on Synod Council for the coming year. The Council's work is important in providing leadership to the Synod. Bless you. I look forward to working with you during the coming year.

April 18, 2024

Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

The mission of the Synod's Candidacy Committee is to welcome, nurture, and guide deacon and pastor candidates in their discernment to answer God's call and to grow in service to our church.

There is great joy in sharing the rigorous path these candidates traverse.

This year, the SD Synod is walking with 16 candidates who are seeking to discern their roles serving the church as pastors and deacons. Another 20 potential candidates are in discussions discerning God's call.

We held another candidacy retreat in Sioux Falls, April 12 and 13, 2024. Twelve candidates and ten Candidacy Committee members were in attendance. The core theme of the retreat was on the candidate competency theme of "wellness" We concluded the retreat by worshipping with Pastor Chris Matson at The Church on the Street's Saturday worship and meal.

Building on the legacy of the 'Listen, God is Calling' campaign, all of our candidates for ordained ministry in the SD Synod have been supported by SD Synod seminary scholarships, graduating from seminary with no seminary debt. If there are people considering public, ordained ministry, but are worried about how to afford a seminary degree, assure them that there is financial aid from seminaries, the Fund for Leaders in Mission, and the SD Synod to assist them.

I close with this invitation to be part our work.

Virtually every congregation in the South Dakota Synod of ELCA has the opportunity to lift up people to explore their response to God's call. As you feel God's call to nurture faithful believers to consider this service to our synod, I encourage you to enable potential candidates to contact Reverend Renee' Splichal Larson at the SD Synod Office.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve our church, this synod, and our Lord's work in South Dakota.

Jack Holmquest, SD Synod Candidacy Committee member  
jholmquest@wat.midco.net (605) 520-0426

Report from Support to Ministries  
Prepared by Nancy Moose, Chair of Support to Ministries

Our Synod's Support to Ministries Committee is involved in supporting churches and pastors across our state. Because every conference is represented on this committee and because we can learn from each other, we hear about small churches, rural churches, large churches, and more urban churches. All have their own challenges and their own joys.

We primarily work with churches in transition and at each meeting we are updated about those who are in the process. The congregations are supported from the moment they learn that they will be tasked with calling a new pastor, to examining themselves and determining what type of person will best meet their needs, to providing names, to ordaining/blessing their newly called minister, to following up with those new in our conferences. This past year we have had fewer congregations and pastors in transition, a wonderful sign of stability in our synod.

Our committee has been working on "Supplemental Resource Guide for Church Councils, Call Committees & Call Chair", a document to help congregations as they begin the call process, one of the more important tasks a church can undertake. We have also been working with the Compensation and Guidelines Task Force, chaired by Annelies Seffrood. This group has been working to clarify language in several areas and to answer questions regarding compensation for all who work in and for a church/parish/congregation. Some of the new items in the compensation guidelines are related to additional holidays and prior experience along with further clarity regarding the roles of Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMs) and lay leaders. Reviewing the Compensation and Guidelines and recommending them to the Assembly is another important task of the Support to Ministries Committee.

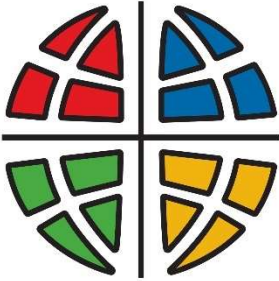
This past year, the committee has worked to better support SAMs and the vital part they play in serving congregations in our Synod. We are also working to do more to support pastors new to South Dakota and to the culture of our rural communities.

The work of this committee is broad and varied. One of our future possibilities includes looking at documents which church leadership can use as an annual conversation/affirmation to look at congregation goals, mission, and vision as they move their congregations forward in the journey of doing God's work.

As Pastor Justion Kosec, the former chair of this committee, stated last year in his report, "We're here for you: to understand your challenges, to celebrate your successes, to help you navigate your changes, and to thank God for the good work you do every single week in service of the gospel." That statement is still true.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy G. Moose, Chair  
Lay Representative of the Medary Conference





## Evangelical Outreach Committee 2023



The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever, Isaiah 40:8.

In some ways, we have all realized the only constant is change. At the same time, we have a steadfast God who sees us through every new beginning, challenge, and celebration. The good news of Jesus calls us to ask where the Spirit is leading and growing partnerships within our synod and our Neighbors in Solidarity.

This year, the newness includes welcoming Shepherd's Table, a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community in Sioux Falls. Shepherd's table is intentionally making space by reaching out to people who have been longing for a place to belong and connect, including the LGBTQIA2S+ community. Shepherd's Table is opening doors and feeding people with the goodness of God's grace and boundless love.

Also, we said farewell to Rev. Jonathan Steiner, the Director of Evangelical Mission, and welcomed Rev. Jonathan Vehar, the new Director of Evangelical Mission. With Rev. Vehar's leadership, varied new ways of sharing the story of what God is up to through Neighbors in Solidarity are coming soon.

In 2023, the SD Synod's Neighbors in Solidarity Account provided each Neighbor with \$2,500, and \$39,557.80 was given for other needs as requested.

### WHO ARE MY NEIGHBORS IN SOLIDARITY?

Church on the Street, Sioux Falls  
Companion Synods in Nicaragua and Cameroon (funded through the SD Synod Companion Synods)  
First Lutheran African Ministry, Sioux Falls  
Lutheran Campus Ministries (LuMin) in Aberdeen, Brookings, Rapid City, Spearfish, and Vermillion.  
McLaughlin Community Alliance Group  
Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center, Pine Ridge  
Pueblo de Dios, Sioux Falls  
St. Dysmas (funded independently)  
Shepherd's Table, Sioux Falls  
Spirit of Hope, Scotland  
Woyatan Lutheran Church, Rapid City

Finally, get to know your Neighbors in Solidarity at <https://sdsynod.org/ministries/neighbors/> or by reaching out to a ministry to see how you can journey together in Christ.

Blessings,  
Rev. Chris Matson  
Chair, Evangelical Outreach Committee



South Dakota Synod, ELCA  
Seminary Debt Reduction Update and  
Seminary Debt Refinancing Final Report  
March 15, 2024

### **History and Process:**

Following a survey demonstrating a dramatic increase in seminary debt carried by pastors, the 1998 South Dakota Synod Assembly passed Resolution 25, directing the Synod Council to appoint a task force to study how the synod could provide financial assistance to ease the burden for pastors with seminary indebtedness.

Following approval of the task force's report and action by the 1999 Synod Assembly, the Synod Council created a restricted fund and an endowment fund for the acceptance of gifts, with an annual distribution from the endowment fund designated to reduce pastors' seminary indebtedness in the form of loans to be forgiven upon their completion of a five-year commitment to serve in the South Dakota Synod (reduced to one year in 2020.)

In 2015, based on debt reduction applications demonstrating a total of nearly \$1.3 Million in seminary debt carried by 28 pastors at an interest rate exceeding 6.5%, a proposal was presented to the Synod Council by Jim Schade, Executive Director of Lutheran Planned Giving of SD and Bishop David Zellmer, to reduce the pay-off length of these loans by 50%. This proposal was approved under the following terms:

- A line of credit was obtained through First Premier Bank, secured by the Engen real estate referred to above, with authorization to access up to \$500,000 to pay off seminary loans of approved applicants.
- Monthly payments made by rostered leaders via ACH, with interest on the loans paid by the synod's annual seminary debt reduction distribution (later amended due to a generous gift of annual interest payments by an anonymous donor), allowing 100% of rostered leaders' payments to reduce principal indebtedness.
- Loans to be secured by a promissory note and assignment of life insurance proceeds.
- Subsidy of interest payments ends if the rostered leader leaves active service in the Synod before the loan is paid.

Final approval of the program was given by the Synod Council on October 21, 2016, and the line of credit agreement was signed on December 16, 2016. The first loan was refinanced in May 2017.

With recognition of a changing landscape regarding seminary debt and interest rates, as well as concern for the Synod's liability exposure with unsecured loans, the Synod Council approved the debt reduction committee's recommendation to pause the acceptance of new refinancing applications in 2020.

**Progress:**

Since 2001, 115 South Dakota pastors have received just over 400 seminary debt reduction grants averaging \$3,000 each, for a total of \$1,212,135.25. This program continues because of annual distributions from the Clarence Engen Memorial Endowment and the generosity of additional designated gifts.

From May 2017 through July 2019, a total of 17 loans were refinanced through the South Dakota Synod, with a cumulative initial balance of \$553,441.76, or an average beginning loan balance of \$32,555.40. Each pastor's monthly payments were determined through the LSS student loan counseling service, with 100% applied toward the principal balance and zero accrued interest because of an annual donation. Additional payments in the form of seminary debt reduction grants reduced the payment schedule on these loans, anywhere from 10-14 years in some instances.

**Celebration:**

We invite you to rejoice with us today in celebrating the final payments of the two remaining refinanced loans in December 2023 with seminary debt reduction grants, giving thanks for the faithful homes that raised children who grew to become examples of Christ in their generosity during life and at death.

This refinancing program solved a problem during a time without many resources or solutions. We are abundantly thankful for the benefits it provided to congregations and to their rostered leaders and families, whose lives and financial futures have been changed. We are also grateful that the financial liabilities of a line of credit and outstanding loans have been eliminated, providing the same peace of mind to the South Dakota Synod. With generous seminary scholarships and eligibility for Public Service Loan Forgiveness programs, there is no longer a need for this method of financial support. Endowed distributions and gifts can now be directed to supporting intern sites and eliminating seminary debt more efficiently.

The South Dakota Synod is served today by pastors and deacons who may not have been able to accept a call to our rural places and lower-paying positions without these gifts. Our reputation of supporting rostered leaders invites and encourages candidates from across the country to seek calls in our state. Thanks be to God.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Kathy McHenry, Executive Director  
 Lutheran Planned Generosity of South Dakota  
 Ex Officio Member, Seminary Debt Reduction  
 & Refinancing Committee

## ELCA Region 3 Archives Report to 2024 Synod Assemblies

### **Introduction**

2024 marks the 36<sup>th</sup> year of the ELCA Region 3 Archives. Paul Daniels continues in the archivist position at 80% time, half-time for the 9 synods of ELCA Region 3 and half-time for Luther Seminary. This shared position works well with Luther providing office and storage space as well as access to a much-needed volunteer pool and IT support. Luther profits from hosting the largest of the 9 ELCA regional collections as the materials are available for use by the entire seminary community.

### **Use of the ELCA Region 3 Archives**

The Archives website, [www.luthersem.edu/archives](http://www.luthersem.edu/archives), continues to work well as our “front door” for promoting archival services to congregations and individuals. Luther Seminary provides IT support for the site and its regular updates. Researchers use the site for information on the collections as well as articles like “Ask the Archivist”, focusing on particular archival topics pertinent to their church settings. Reference uses for the year were:

- +Assisted a total of 808 reference patrons in the past year with a range of research interests. The majority (62%) are congregational committees working on records scanning projects, anniversary celebration planning, church history writing and general records care questions. Other significant user groups include synod leadership, church wide offices and individual researchers.
- +Worked on a regular basis with all 9 synod offices, collecting valuable office records and assisting with retention plans for each office. In an effort to reduce travel costs I now make an average of 2 visits per year to each of the 9 synod offices. In most cases, email, phone calls, and Zoom meetings are sufficient. These virtual visits were coordinated with 17 Zoom congregational visits throughout the 3 states of ELCA Region 3.

### **Collection Growth**

- +Collected 187 linear feet of additional synod office records from the 9 offices. These include legal, financial, personnel and program files. Much of this material is stored off-site in space leased from Iron Mountain Co.
- +Gathered 165 congregational pieces adding to a collection now totaling over 7,300 files.
- +Received 422 biographical pieces on clergy and lay leaders – total is now nearly 9,400 files.
- +Assisted 14 closing congregations in Region 3 with records care (scanning) and critical records collection.

### **Outreach and Education**

- +Distributed 56 copies of “Memory Work: A Guide for Congregational Archives and History” to congregations and individuals. The guide is frequently accessed digitally via the Region 3 Archives website.
- +Managed off-site secure storage program via Iron Mountain Co. for permanent care of sensitive files, including candidacy, camping staff, and synod financial records.
- +Promoted and managed the congregational records scanning program through Mid-America Business Systems.

### **Professional Development**

- +Daniels remains an active member of the Society of American Archivists, the Midwest Archives Conference, the Twin Cities Archives Roundtable and the Lutheran Historical Conference. Daniels renewed and maintained his professional certification in the Academy of Certified Archivists.

**Respectfully submitted 3.15.24 by Paul A. Daniels, ELCA Region 3 Archivist and Luther Seminary Archivist**



## The Mission Investment Fund: Your financial partner

**The Mission Investment Fund**, a financial services ministry of the ELCA, provides a strong, stable, faith-based way for individuals, congregations and ministries to achieve their financial goals. MIF offers a range of investments for individuals, congregations and ministries. We put those investments to work to fund building and renovation loans for congregations and partner ministries, including outdoor camps, senior housing and social service agencies.



**The result? Impact investments**, with a transformative impact on our communities: Expanded worship spaces ... new space for education and youth ministry ... much-needed day care centers for working families ... industrial-grade kitchens and fellowship halls for community meals.

### Why is MIF the right choice?

- **MIF has demonstrated expertise** in church and ministry financing. With longstanding experience in congregation and ministry building projects, we're unique among lending institutions.
- **We consistently offer competitive rates and terms.**
- **We offer a full suite of financial services.** MIF offers congregations, ministries and individuals a host of investment options. We work in deep partnership with the ELCA Federal Credit Union to offer a wide range of financial products and services.
- **The faithful stewardship of Lutheran congregations and their members funds our loans.** The money invested in MIF finances hundreds of capital projects across the church.

**MIF has a longstanding tradition of strength and stability.** At year-end 2023, MIF had 811 loans outstanding, totaling \$578.3 million. Investment obligations totaled \$547.7 million. With total assets of \$774.4 million and net assets of \$208.2 million at year-end 2023, MIF maintains a capital ratio of 26.88 percent—positioning MIF in the top tier of well-capitalized church extension funds.

**Our steadfast support** continues for the members, congregations and ministries of the ELCA and the many ways you minister to a world in need. We are honored to walk alongside you as a trusted partner.

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### MIF at work in the South Dakota Synod (as of December 31, 2023):

- 6 Mission Investment Fund loans, with a balance of \$8,589,823
- \$7,878,509 in Mission Investment Fund investment obligations

**For more information about MIF capabilities, please visit our website, [mif.elca.org](http://mif.elca.org) or contact your Regional Manager LuAnn Ferguson: 651-900-3575 [luann.ferguson@elca.org](mailto:luann.ferguson@elca.org)**



Lutheran Planned Generosity  
of South Dakota

### Our Ministry Partners:

South Dakota Synod of the ELCA

ELCA Foundation

Augustana University

Luther Seminary

Lutheran Social Services of  
South Dakota

Wartburg Theological Seminary

Lutherans Outdoors in  
South Dakota

Bethesda Home of Aberdeen

Heartland Ephphatha Deaf Ministry

Prison Congregations of America

South Dakota Campus Ministries

St. Dymas of South Dakota

Kathy J. McHenry  
Executive Director  
2001 South Summit Avenue  
Sioux Falls, SD 57197  
605.274.5030  
kmchenry@sdsynod.org

Now partnering with

**F R E E W I L L** 

Visit our website at  
**www.lpgsd.org**  
for more information!

## ***Lutheran Planned Generosity of South Dakota is...***

Lutheran Planned Generosity of South Dakota (LPGSD) is a ministry sponsored by the South Dakota Synod and our partners as a gift to individuals and congregations across the state, offering charitable planning and endowment services with no fees, minimums or commissions.

We believe in generosity inspired by the desire to make a difference. The information and tools we share are intended to help you create a legacy, not just an estate plan, celebrating and honoring your family and your faith. Tax-wise strategies increase the impact of your gifts by directing more to ministry and less to income, capital gains and estate taxes wherever possible.

## ***Generosity across the South Dakota Synod makes a difference***

The impact of generosity extended in support of South Dakota ministries and pastors continued in 2023. Planned and current gifts and endowment fund contributions exceeded \$2 million, and we are on track to exceed that number significantly in 2024. Please see the attached supplementary report regarding celebration of the final payment of all outstanding refinanced seminary debt in the synod, and the ongoing grants supporting interns, deacons and pastors across the state.

## ***LPGSD makes extraordinary generosity possible for everyone***

- Gift facilitation beyond your checkbook—stock, grain, livestock, business assets, IRA qualified charitable distributions, and real estate
- Assistance in creating a legacy plan instead of just an estate plan—where to start, things to remember, pitfalls to avoid, making a difference by supporting the ministries you care about
- Be sure to check out our newly updated website at [www.lpgsd.org](http://www.lpgsd.org). As a thank you to all members and supporters of the South Dakota Synod and our LPGSD partners, we're excited to offer you the opportunity to create your own FREE personalized estate plan:
  - No cost to you, whether you choose to include a gift or not
  - Available from the comfort of your own home
  - Quick and easy—just 20-30 minutes to complete
  - Creates a legal will customized to your wishes according to your state of legal residence
  - Accompanying documents available—powers of attorney for healthcare and finances, beneficiary designations and funeral directives
  - Can be paired with your attorney for more complex estates
- Introduction to tools that reduce or eliminate income tax, capital gains tax, social security tax, Medicare surtax, and recaptured depreciation
- Congregational endowment fund and gift policy administration and updates, creating a testament to the belief that your church has a mission and a future, and confidence by donors that extraordinary gifts will be received and managed according to their wishes
- Practical, inspiring and educational workshops, temple talks and worship messages for your congregation or small group

*Are you ready to make a difference?* 31



# LUTHERANS OUTDOORS IN SOUTH DAKOTA



## 2023 REPORT

LOSD.ORG



### PAUL HANSON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lutherans Outdoors of South Dakota extends a loud THANK YOU to you and your ELCA congregation in South Dakota. Thank you for the many prayers lifted up for the ministry, your participation in its programs, and your significant donations and benevolence.

Along with another successful year of camping and retreat ministry, Lutherans Outdoors continued its Reimagining LO project. Eight deep-dive audits into all ministry areas (Philosophy, Finance, Financial Development, Marketing, Governance, Facility, Staffing, and Program) produced nearly 100 recommendations that were accepted by the Board of Directors and will be completed by mid-2025. In addition, a new Strategic Process will be created this summer, directing the ministry for the next two decades.

The Adult Travel Experiences have become another exciting program offered. In 2023, Holden Village and Branson were visited. Four trips are scheduled for 2024, with destinations being Minneapolis, Michigan's Upper Peninsula, the Smoky Mountains, and another visit to Branson during Advent. There is lots of fun and Christian travel. Check these experiences out.

I hope that Lutherans Outdoors can be an essential part of your faith life and the faith life of your fellow congregational members. There are programs for all ages. Lutherans Outdoors continues to explore faith, welcome all, build leaders, and care for ALL creation, throughout all of its programming.

Come visit us. In the Hills, On the Prairie, and At the Water.

Be Good!

### SUMMER CAMPERS



2023	693
2022	569
2021	478

#### OUTLAW RANCH



2023	162
2022	136
2021	108

#### KLEIN RANCH



2023	491
2022	470
2021	486

#### NESODAK

### 2023 INCOME

\$1,915,200

OTHER INCOME  
\$77,400

DEVELOPMENT  
INCOME  
\$779,000



PROGRAM  
INCOME  
\$1,058,800

### 2023 EXPENSE

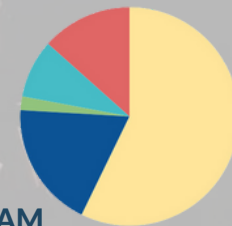
\$2,191,200

FACILITY  
\$293,700

SCHOLARSHIP  
\$189,500

DEVELOPMENT  
\$44,300

PROGRAM  
\$410,000



STAFFING  
\$1,253,700

IN THE HILLS. ON THE PRAIRIE. AT THE WATER.



all healthy  
all safe  
all accepted



# all with

2024 Report to SD Synod of the ELCA

## All With Your Partnership in Healing Outreach

Runaway & Homeless Youth have brighter futures. 93% returned to their family or transitioned to a safe living environment and 100% enrolled in school or a GED program at discharge.

Children & teens are healing from trauma. 89% of youth in Foster Care and 91% of youth in Residential Treatment showed reduced trauma symptoms over the course of their time with LSS.

Mentors are making a difference. 97% of high school mentees are on track to graduate with their class in May and 92% indicate they have improved self-esteem.

Families are safer. 65% of individuals in family violence intervention demonstrate a reduction in criminal thinking. This is a staggering increase of 29% from when the program was transitioned to LSS.

2024 Synod Assembly Preliminary Report

## LSS Strategic Plan In Action

This year marked the first year of our new strategic plan in action. Our board of directors, executive team and leadership developed a four-year strategic plan and line of sight that guides our work toward making the greatest contribution to accomplishing our vision that all people in South Dakota will be healthy, safe and accepted.



Rebecca Kiesow-Knudsen  
President/CEO

We continue to identify areas for positive impact through listening to unmet community needs, collaboration and strategic priorities that are family-centered and ensure equitable access for those we serve.

Our operational strategies prioritize workforce & inclusivity within our organization and communities, financial viability of the agency and our services, and sharing the positive impact our work makes in the community through storytelling.

## 2023 At A Glance

Expanded Mentoring Services to serve youth in more communities throughout the state

Strengthened efforts to prioritize family role in an individual's success by elevating youth & family voice

Implemented Strengthening Families, a curriculum that helps build strong communication between parents and their children and helps families navigate conflict

Resettled 197 refugees through traditional resettlement and 290 Ukrainian refugees through Uniting for Ukraine pathways. We are expecting an additional 400 traditional and 50 U4U.





OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

April 2024

Hello from Augustana University.

I hope this finds you and your families well and enjoying the many blessings of spring.

In the midst of the challenges facing higher education, our nation and world, we give thanks to God for AU's many blessings — first and foremost, our students, dedicated faculty and staff, loyal alumni and generous donors. Together, we've celebrated another historic year in the life of Augustana University. The following highlights the recent progress related to our **Viking Bold: The Journey to 2030** strategic plan.

### **Enduring Commitments — Faith & Spiritual Life**

- Adopted "Office of Faith & Spiritual Life" as the new name for Augustana Campus Ministry to better reflect the broad scope of work already taking place in support of a welcoming, inclusive and religiously diverse campus community
- Hired Augustana's first interfaith chaplain, Jen Dreiske, who supports the religious and spiritual needs of all on campus, paying particular attention to those of non-Christian traditions
- Entered the call process for an associate campus pastor to serve alongside Senior Campus Pastor Rev. Ann Rosendale '04
- Maintained strong and steady worship attendance, enhanced by dynamic preachers (including senior student speakers every Friday) and gifts shared by School of Music ensembles
- Hosted a record number (more than 100) of middle schoolers from 15 congregations at the 20th annual Faith Fest retreat in February
- Launched AU Discernment Partners, a program that pairs students curious about seminary with young alumni serving in ministry. Six pairs are participating in the program, meeting monthly over Zoom for one year to explore faith, vocation and spiritual practices. A generous grant from the Forum for Theological Exploration provided the financial support necessary to create the program.

### **Academics**

- Launched post-graduate certificates in adult-gerontology acute care nurse practitioner (AG-ACNP) and adult-gerontology clinical nurse specialist (AG-CNS)
- Launched the first cohort of the Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program
- Received Higher Learning Commission (HLC) approval for fintech major and established Fintech Advisory Board
- Established partnership with Seeds of Change Research Program in Costa Rica to offer participating high school students credit to attend AU

- Developed and approved the first bioinformatics undergraduate program in South Dakota
- Expanded partnership with Evidence in Motion (EIM), empowering AU to develop additional hybrid-accelerated graduate programs in physical therapy (Colorado), occupational therapy (Minnesota and Colorado) and speech-language pathology (Minnesota)

### **Enrollment & Strategic Scholarships**

- Enrolled 2,158 part- and full-time undergraduate and graduate students in Fall 2023, the largest student body in more than four decades
- Announced a historic \$13.8 million gift to establish the Buntrock Scholars Program, designed to support students who are active and engaged in ELCA congregations throughout the Midwest

### **Athletics**

- Celebrated historic inaugural season of Augustana Men's Hockey

### **Physical Campus & IT**

- Completed renovation of Solberg Hall
- Completed construction of Midco Arena

### **Viking Bold Campaign**

- More than \$168,975,630 raised toward the \$175,000,000 goal for the Viking Bold Campaign

Additional highlights of the past months include hosting the inaugural Critical Inquiry & Citizenship Colloquium with Dr. Michael Sandel, Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Professor of Government at Harvard University, as the featured speaker; hosting the 27th Boe Forum on Public Affairs with bestselling author and *New York Times* opinion columnist David Brooks as the featured speaker; and welcoming our goodwill ambassador, Ace, the Augie Doggie, to the AU family.

Again, Augustana University is blessed. Each day we walk alongside our students as they discover their calling and prepare to meet the world's needs with their unique gifts. We appreciate the South Dakota Synod's ongoing partnership in our mission and faithful support. Please stay connected with Augustana through social media, [augie.edu](http://augie.edu) and attendance at athletics, arts and numerous special events. As always, we invite you to encourage the young people you know to visit campus and consider continuing their education at AU.

Wishing you God's peace,

Stephanie Herseth Sandlin  
President



# BUNTROCK SCHOLARSHIP

Continue your involvement in the ELCA  
and find your home in a community of  
faith by joining the Buntrock Scholars  
Program at Augustana



## Who are Buntrock Scholars?

The Buntrock Scholars Program supports students who are active and engaged in ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) congregations in the Midwest. The program is open to those who are involved in the church before and after graduation from Augustana University.

## What is the Buntrock Scholars Program?

The Buntrock Scholars Program provides financial support for selected students attending Augustana. This competitive scholarship covers half of the net price of attendance at Augustana, up to \$12,000 per year. The award is renewable for three additional years, and it can be received alongside other academic and talent-based scholarships. The program benefits at least 30 first-year students each year.

## Requirements

Eligible students must be engaged in a Midwest ELCA congregation and remain in good academic standing at Augustana. After a student has applied and been offered admission to Augustana University, they must complete a scholarship form that includes a personal statement about the student's involvement in the church before and after college graduation, which will then prompt their senior pastor or youth pastor to submit a letter of recommendation. For congregations with pastoral vacancies, the council president or other elected leader may submit the recommendation. Applications will be reviewed beginning Dec. 1 until all available scholarships have been awarded.

**Learn more and apply at  
[augie.edu/BuntrockScholarship](http://augie.edu/BuntrockScholarship).**



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace to you from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen!

Greeting from your sisters and brothers in Christ at St Dysmas Lutheran Church!

There is an old saying that the only constant is change; and 2023 lived up to that statement. Working inside the walls, especially in 2023, has seen some significant changes to policies, visitation requirements, and schedules. What we see as stumbling blocks, God uses to his glory. Even amidst the many challenges, God has been at work in amazing ways in the lives of people inside and outside the walls.

Firstly, thank you for your support to insure that the ministry of St Dysmas stays vibrant and active. We do not exist without the support and engagement from you. St Dysmas is YOUR ministry to those experiencing incarceration; and we are grateful for your partnership.

Here are a few highlights for this year:

- On any given day, there are approximately 3750 people incarcerated in the South Dakota Department of Corrections system. In 2023, we worked with and saw attendance of approximately 574 individuals to worship, Bible studies, and one-on-one pastoral care visits. Worship and Bible study attendance has steadily increased over the year at each site.
- We had 31 baptisms of adult men including 3 affirmations of baptism.
- We were able to hold special worship on Easter and Christmas Eve inside the facilities.
- Our Reformation Festivals took place at both Sioux Falls and Springfield on Reformation Weekend in October. A special meal was served at Springfield, and inmates were allowed to share the meal with their family that could attend.
- The annual special meal was held in Sioux Falls in August sponsored by Peace Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls.
- Worship switched to Tuesday evenings from 5:00 to 8:00 at Springfield. We have seen great participation by visitors to Springfield since this change occurred.
- Worship in Sioux Falls changed to Wednesday afternoons from 1:30 to 3:30. While this is not ideal, we have still had visitors attend very regularly.
- We have seen increasing engagement and attendance with our reentry work on the inside. Mitch Wilson worked with 244 individuals preparing to be released from incarceration.
- Accompanied 156 individuals once they were released to help them transition back into life on the outside.
- Mitch also worked in the Minnehaha County jail with 541 individuals housed there.
- Worked with the Department of Corrections and St Francis House to accompany 36 treatment women into work release.
- Over 3700 Christmas Treat Sacks were distributed the week before Christmas. Every person in the South Dakota Prison System received a sack, also people in the Minnehaha County and Yankton County jails.
- The Sioux Falls congregation again took up the challenge to support a ministry outside of themselves. All inmate offering goes to this fund, and for 2023, they will give Church on the Street a check for \$2271.
- The Springfield congregation took up the same challenge. They will distribute their funds after the January Inside Council Meeting. They will have approximately \$750 to distribute.
- I was able to visit 46 congregations to tell the story of St Dysmas and worship together.

These are just a few of the ways God has been at work through St Dysmas. I give thanks to God for the many gifts that he has entrusted to us. Through the faithful partnership of many of you, we continue to be able to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to this who need to hear it most; “setting the captives free...”

Grace and peace to you always,




Pastor Jeff Backer



## **The Good Samaritan Society**

The Good Samaritan Society (the Society) is one of the nation's largest non-profit providers of senior care and services, offering home-based services, skilled nursing and rehabilitation therapy, assisted living and independent senior housing. We are proudly affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and in 2022 we celebrated 100 years of mission-centered service to seniors and individuals with disabilities. We are honored to provide compassionate services and care to those in our communities who need us.

The Society came together with Sanford Health in 2019 to create an integrated health care system that provides care services across the lifespan. After more than five years as a combined organization, we are seeing how our partnership is helping communities thrive.

## **Presence in the South Dakota Synod**

Though our services extend far beyond South Dakota, we are especially proud to call Sioux Falls the headquarters of both the Society and Sanford Health. We also offer skilled nursing, assisted living, senior housing and home-based services across the state—including in Canistota; Canton; Clear Lake; Corsica; De Smet; Herreid; Howard; Miller; New Underwood; Rapid City (Echo Ridge and St. Martin Village); Scotland; Sioux Falls (Sioux Falls Center, Prairie Creek and Sioux Falls Village); and Tyndall. In 2024, we announced plans to develop a first-of-its-kind senior living community in Sioux Falls called [Good Samaritan Society – Founder's Crossing](#). The leading-edge campus will offer all health and wellness services under one roof, including a direct connection to a Sanford Health clinic and Lewis Drug.

We are honored to serve many members of the South Dakota Synod and partner with Rostered Ministers to meet the needs of our residents and clients.

## **Public Advocacy**

More than 70 percent of the residents we serve live in rural communities, and we remain resolute in ensuring they have access to care as close to home as possible. The pandemic has put unprecedented stress on the senior care industry. We are working with state and federal policymakers to advocate for our seniors and the caregivers who serve them. We are committed to working with partners in the senior care industry to find permanent and meaningful solutions to support and address our workforce and resident care needs now and in the future.

## **ELCA Endowment for the Elderly**

In 2023 the Society was awarded a \$25,000 grant through the ELCA Endowment for the Elderly. These funds allowed us to pilot a program at our skilled nursing facilities in New Hope, and Robbinsdale, MN, to host artistic performers who commemorated PRIDE Month, Juneteenth, Hispanic Heritage Month and Native American Heritage Month.

In 2024 we were awarded an additional \$75,000 from the same endowment for a three-year pilot Culinary Culture Project. With this new funding we will facilitate multicultural food events at three of our campuses, including two in the South Dakota Synod: Sioux Falls Village and St. Martin Village (Rapid City).



## SD Synodical Women of the ELCA Report to the Synod Assembly

Our 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Synodical Convention was held at Calvary Lutheran Church in Rapid City, which is in our Bear Butte Conference. There were 76 women in attendance. The theme was “All Are Welcome” and our theme verse was I Corinthians 16:14, “Let all that you do, be done in Love.” We had evening vespers at the Chapel in the Hills on Wednesday evening. Thursday’s main speaker was Kelly Patterson, on sex trafficking; she is the author of a book on her true story “From Trafficked to Treasured”. The day was filled with many interesting speakers, and our CW speaker from AZ, was Laura Krueger. After our Business meeting, we closed Friday am with a Holy Communion Service.

On August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023 our first Biennial Leadership Event for Conference Officers was held at Trinity Lutheran Church in Chamberlain. All Conference officers were encouraged to attend to learn, ask questions, and engage in conversations with others, for the purpose of strengthening their leadership skills.

On September 21-24, 19 women from South Dakota went to Phoenix AZ, for the Twelfth Triennial Convention. The 4 voting delegates were Sherry Archer, Kathy Heffernan, Lois Storm, and Darla Tobin. Our Main Theme was “Just Love” through the lens of immigration, migration, and human trafficking. Two of our Key Speakers were Dr. Jacqueline Bussie, who is the author of a book: “Love Without Limits” and Dr. Kelly Sherman-Conroy, a Native American, who shared stories of the atrocities that her ancestors went through. Also, as speakers, were several students from various foreign countries who addressed racism, homesickness, and learning a new language and etc. We had choices on different workshops to choose from and they were very interesting. It was wonderful to be there.

Each of the 7 Conferences in the state have a Fall Workshop and Spring Gathering. At the meetings women can fellowship together, be entertained, conduct their Conference business, and open and close with worship together.

A Zoom meeting on Saturday, April 6<sup>th</sup> was held from 12:00-5:30, with the other Churchwide Synodical Presidents. Our meeting was titled Re-remembering, Rebuilding Leadership and was very interesting for us.

The SD Synodical Officers have been busy planning and preparing for this year’s 37<sup>th</sup> Convention at First Lutheran Church in the Prairie Rivers Conference, which will be held on June 19-21. All women of the ELCA are encouraged to attend.

Women of the SD Synod continue to serve with the making of many quilts which are boxed up for LWR, and also given out to local communities that are in need of them across SD. We also put together personal care kits, school kits, pillow cases, fabric kits, and newborn kits which are shipped to LWR. We do hospice kits, rolled bandages, newborn kits, quilts for missions, baby blankets, and baby hats which are made for Global Health Ministries. We also make mats for the homeless, give gifts to local food pantries, and support projects of LO and LSS. We thank the women of our synod for serving as officers in their church, conference, and on the synodical board, and for being wonderful leaders. We thank the women of our synod for the many ways that they serve in their churches and communities and are really the hands, feet, and heart of all our 7 conferences across SD. We pray that together we can bring hope and joy as we work together into the future.

Shalom! Sherry Archer and Lois Storm



The University Lutheran Center is a place of transformation! Transformation happens in a myriad of ways from the ministry programs we lead to making a difference in the lives of others, and from the building that has been changed to better suit our needs to the students who are personally impacted by the ways God shows up in their lives. Seven semesters ago, I arrived here. In the midst of the pandemic and a pastoral vacancy, much had been neglected and pruned away. Since then this place has been transformed! And while the people here have rolled up their sleeves and done some of that work, we also know deeply that God has showed up to make much of the transformation we have experienced happen.

On that very first Sunday, we gathered ten people. That core of students were the root of our transformation journey these last three and a half years. They showed up when we thought no one would. They took a risk to invest in a small campus ministry and most of them stuck around. We are now connected with more than sixty students, and our average attendance at most gatherings is over double that original ten students. At the close of this academic year, most of that original core will have graduated. In fact, we have eleven graduates this year! That is the nature of the work of campus ministry. We always find ourselves welcoming people and blessing them on the journey ahead. And in the process, we are transformed by the relationships we have with one another in this community.

Transformation happens in big and small ways here. Our programming gathers students for worship and free lunch on Sunday mornings and on Wednesday evenings for Bible study and snacks. On Thursday evenings, our building is open for studying, socializing, caffeinating, and brain breaks. We take the transforming message of God's boundless love across the street to campus on a routine basis offering a variety of swag along with relevant messaging. We also find plenty of time for fun during our time together. This year that included several game nights, a retreat at Shetek Lutheran Ministries, ice skating, a Stampede hockey game, and an end-of-year bowling celebration. During finals, we keep the lights on, the caffeine flowing, and bellies full at almost all hours of the day and night, hoping to cheer students on to successful completion of their courses. Additionally, we saw God transform the lives of two of our students through the Sacrament of Baptism this year.

Our community also has the opportunity to transform the lives of others through service opportunities. This year, we volunteered with the Brookings Backpack Project and Sleep in Heavenly Peace. We also loaded the WELCA semi with items for Lutheran World Relief and



made fleece tie blankets for foster children that are distributed through the local Department of Social Services. A group of ten from our community were also transformed through a service learning trip to Seattle over spring break. We served at a food pantry, cooked at a day shelter, cleaned a community room at a subsidized apartment complex, scrubbed a kitchen that feeds teens experiencing houselessness, learned about advocacy, experienced new worshiping communities, and contemplated how all of this impacts us as fellow sojourners in this world.

Students spend many hours in our building each week, to the point that we found ourselves needing more space so they can spread out and faster internet to keep up with their demand. Last summer we renovated an extra office into a study room which has been much appreciated by our students. This semester, thanks to a generous donation, we have completely renovated the basement into a lounge space with a television, sectional, and a ping pong table. The basement also has two bathrooms with showers and a laundry facility with two washers and two dryers. Next fall, we will launch a laundry program for students. This building transformation will likely bring even more students to our space for even more hours of the week. And it goes so much further than clean laundry. In this place seeds get planted along the way, helping college students recognize that the church cares about them, their laundry, their homework, their caffeine needs, and their belovedness as children of God.

I know that the community that was created this year at the ULC will continue to be transformed. Some of them will take this experience with them into new adventures. However, a majority of our community will return to this place and continue the ministry of invitation next fall, so that other Jackrabbits may find welcome, community, and transformation in this place.

We cannot be a vessel of this transformative work without our partners in ministry! A huge thank you to the synod, congregations, WELCA organizations, and individuals whose generosity does not go unnoticed. We hope you will continue to support us in our transformative work. Beyond financial support, we also want to connect with young adults from your communities as they make their way to SDSU to further their education. Please help us connect with them by sharing their contact information. Additionally, if your community would like to learn more about how they can accompany us, please do not hesitate to reach out and schedule a virtual or in-person visit.

In Christ,



Pastor Cassandra Lamb

[1404 8th St Brookings, SD 57006](https://www.sdsulutheran.org/1404-8th-st-brookings-sd-57006)

[605.692.4880](tel:605.692.4880)

[pastorcassandra@sdsulutheran.org](mailto:pastorcassandra@sdsulutheran.org)



## **Luther Center** **Campus Ministry**

Dear Friends of the Luther Center,

God's grace and peace be with you! As I write this report, I am still living on a bit of a "mountain top moment" for the Luther Center. It was just about ten days ago that we had our first big event fundraiser in my time serving at the Luther Center. We invited friends from around the synod and college to join us for a night of music and scripture. The night was full with students sharing their gifts of music, stories of their experiences of being involved with the campus ministry, and music provided by Jacob Daniel—a local Christian singer and songwriter. It was a great evening of hope and celebrating the Spirit's work in the ministry at the Luther Center and USD.

That event follows a year of bible studies, a newly integrated night of bible study with dinner and evening prayer, and—now that I reflect on it—quite a bit of pastoral care. Probably more than I might have expected just a year ago! Real life happens when you're at college, and I feel privileged to get to journey with the students when they seek support, prayer, or for someone to just listen.

In the fall we had some great evening weather and met up for "S'mores and More!". A time to enjoy some tasty treats while we chatted at our fire pit. Around this time, I had some health issues, and I appreciate all of the ways the board stepped up and filled in while I was

taking a bit of medical leave. Later in the fall we had some student and alumni help at our area Main Street fundraiser dinner—a fundraiser for a local senior center in Vermillion. Throughout the year we tabled in the MUC, with highlights being “Ashes To Go” on Ash Wednesday and sharing kits for making friendship bracelets that students could make for one another.

Every day I am thankful to God for this ministry and the students who are a part of it. We have some great leaders, and I can’t wait to see where God takes us in the next semester. The students are already talking about holding an event during move in days with yard games and bringing Jacob Daniel back to provide music. I am certainly thankful for the energy this old friend of mine from elementary school brought to our students a couple of times this year at our fundraiser, and at our Candles and the Cross night of worship in November. God is doing great work in him and bringing a new bit of life to us when he visits.

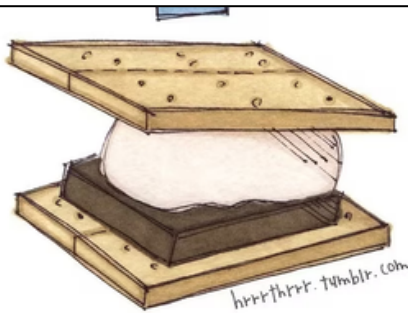
Thank you to all the folks of the SD Synod, and all who help this ministry grow and thrive through your prayers and offerings. Things have been tight financially this school year, but I remain hopeful in our continued partnerships and finding new ways to share the Luther Center’s story—and all of our LuMin sites’ stories—across the synod. Your continued support means the world to everyone who comes to the Luther Center to find a community grounded in Jesus Christ. It was great getting to meet more of you this year as I visited or preached in your settings. I look forward to more of that this summer!

I want to end my report with a thank you to the Luther Center board and to our new and previous office managers. Many of you were new to the board or staff this past school year! Thank you for the new gifts, energy, and ideas you brought with you. Your support this year for the ministry at the Luther Center, the students, and myself has been encouraging and

fills me with both joy and hope for the next semester. You're awesome! And a final word to our friends across the synod: Our campus ministries need you! And serving on our boards is a great way to invest in the present and future of our campus ministries in the SD Synod. Thank you!

In Christ,

Pastor Lisa Heffernan



1. FIRST YOU TAKE THE GRAHAM.

### S'MORE CONVERSATIONS

Talking to new people can be awkward and stressful. LuMin student leaders seized the moment modeling positive communication skills and building community. SMORE is an acronym cuing us to Smile, Monitor body language, use Open ended questions, respond with Respect & Empathy.

### Welcome back!

The beginning of the school year is a rush of meeting new people reconnecting with old friends and figuring out where you feel welcome and like you belong. LuMin at NSU responded to the call offering welcome back care packages, hosting S'MORE conversations and beginning our wellness series being aware of our social wellness.



### WELLNESS ALL YEAR

Life moves pretty fast on a college campus. Students manage class, work, financial responsibilities. Therefore, student leaders decided that the focus would be wellness all year. Each month devotions centered on a different wellness topic. We cycled through social, emotional, physical, financial, vocational, intellectual, and spiritual wellness.







### *Caring for Community*

Living out our call to love our neighbors, students gathered to support each other mid semester by assembling laundry and stress kits. The kits were handed out to students and stocked in the laundry facilities of the 5 dorms on campus.



### *“Eat and be fed”*

Bringing intention to the daily activity of eating, students gathered twice a month for conversations about faith, food & fellowship.

At Dempsey’s Pizzeria we refocused our minds discussing to understand and apply to our daily lives the monthly Dwell Differently memory verse.

Wrapping up each month students choose a meal to prepare and we gathered in a kitchen to cook, eat, and reflect on life, current events, and upcoming plans.



### *Grocery BINGO*

With the generous support of Good Shepherd as well as a gift from Zion Lutheran churches in Aberdeen, we combated food insecurity with BINGO. Students played rounds of BINGO and received prices of groceries, personal care and cleaning products, and gift cards.



### *No Plastics for Lent*

For the third year in a row, we joined the ELCA Young Adults, we participated in the “No Plastics for Lent” challenge. Each week we provided information and examples of simple ways we can reduce our use of single use plastic and reduce waste on campus.

This year we were grateful to receive a generous gift from Norway Lutheran Church. In thanks and intention to bring about awareness, we shared our weekly education and devotion posts. Students appreciated knowing that the congregation cared and supported them.

### *Seniors*

Students are engaged in campus ministry for a very brief time of their lives. As seniors wrap up their final semester they reflect on their time with LuMin.

“LuMin changed the way I interact with people; instead of shying away from God’s creation, I gravitate toward it and God’s people and help out in any way that I can.” – Autumn McDonnell

“LuMin has been a great opportunity for me to engage with community and campus to serve and learn.” – Angelica Winters

We thank the seniors for their leadership, love, involvement, and influence.



### *After Finals are Finished*

With a gift from Bethlehem Lutheran in Aberdeen, after finals are finished (May 11), students will be engaged in service. With supplies packed and prepared to participate in worship, we travel to Sioux Falls to meet and serve with our fellow outreach ministry Church on the Street.



We thank Rachel Nelson, director of LuMin: The Hills, the joint campus ministry at Black Hills State University, Spearfish and South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, Rapid City for nearly a decade of faithful leadership. Rachel resigned the end of May 2023 and Pastor Carla Nelson serves as interim director at both ministries.

After much prayerful deliberation, LuMin: The Hills board voted that the campus ministries would be better served by separate boards. While each campus ministry works to revisit vision and mission and develop their own boards, the ministry at each campus continues to provide a safe, welcoming table for physical and spiritual nourishment for students and recent alumni.

The Lutheran Campus Ministry at Black Hills State University (**LCMBHSU**) is indebted to Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Spearfish for providing The Living Room, a beautiful building just a couple of blocks off campus, where students gather weekly for a shared meal and Bible Study. Nearly all of the program expenses are funded through the generous benevolence of Our Savior's as well as support from congregations, WELCA groups, the South Dakota Synod and ELCA. Many of the shared meals are provided by members of Our Savior's. Thank you, to all who pray for, provide for and are committed to the future of campus ministry at Black Hills State University.

Six students from The South Dakota School of Mines and Technology live at The Luther House, in Rapid City and a dozen more come several times a week for meals, Bible Study, worship, Yarn Engineers (knitting), and to enjoy the friendship and community. Funding for the Lutheran Campus Ministry at The South Dakota School of Mines and Technology (**LCMSDSMT**) comes from the students who live at The Luther House, the support from the South Dakota Synod and ELCA, gifts from congregations and individuals, and grant writing. Special thanks to: CARA, the alumni association of SDSMT which rents LCMSDSMT the Luther House; the Women of Our Savior's, Hermosa and individuals and congregations in and around Rapid City for the donation of meals, food and treats. YKYK. Also thank you, to all who pray for, provide for and are committed to the future of campus ministry at The South Dakota School of Mines and Technology.

Please, if you have questions or feel nudged by God to be involved and support Lutheran Campus Ministry, call, text or email....we'd love to hear from you.

**Please use these addresses/emails to send gifts and correspondence:**

**LCMBHSU**  
**The Living Room**  
**810 N. Yale**  
**Spearfish, SD 57783**

[LCMBHSU@gmail.com](mailto:LCMBHSU@gmail.com)

**LCMSDSMT**  
**The Luther House**  
**324 E. St. Joseph**  
**Rapid City, SD 57701**

[LCMSDSMT@gmail.com](mailto:LCMSDSMT@gmail.com)

With you On The Way,

Pastor Carla, interim director, LuMin: The Hills

(605) 670-8416 or [pastorcarla1990@gmail.com](mailto:pastorcarla1990@gmail.com)

## Heartland Ephphatha Report for the 2024 South Dakota Synod Assembly

Heartland Ephphatha is the ministry for deaf and hard of hearing people in the South Dakota synod, and it operates at Peace Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls! We worship at 9:00 every Sunday with an (ASL) American Sign Language interpreter. We also do Bible studies and service projects and provide fellowship opportunities to our community.

We also offer ASL courses for individuals who want to learn.

This year, our main focus is planning a national conference for ASL ministries around the country. We will be hosting the ELDA conference in June of 2024, with ministries from Florida to California coming to South Dakota.

We want to thank Peace Lutheran and the South Dakota Synod for their commitment and support to our mission.







## 2024 Annual Report to the SD Synod, ELCA

### ***Chapel in the Hills***

3788 Chapel Lane

Rapid City, SD 57702

(605) 342-8281

[www.chapel-in-the-hills.org](http://www.chapel-in-the-hills.org) [info@chapel-in-the-hills.org](mailto:info@chapel-in-the-hills.org)

The Chapel in the Hills is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation formed to maintain and operate the Chapel in the Hills, in Rapid City. We are considered a Special Partnership Ministry of the South Dakota Synod, ELCA. The Chapel and grounds are open to visitors from May 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup> and during special services and events the remainder of the year.

The Chapel offers a quiet, retreat-like setting in the midst of the hustle and bustle of vacation and offers a place for tourists and local residents alike to slow down, relax, and enjoy Christ's presence. The Chapel fills a unique niche in the Synod's evangelism efforts, sharing our Lutheran heritage and traditions. Visitation remains high, with approximately 30,000 visitors annually, coming from every U.S. state and numerous countries.

Evening worship services are held Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 7:30 PM throughout the summer, continuing the tradition that began when the Chapel was the home of the *Lutheran Vespers* radio program. The Chapel continues to host other special services and events throughout the year, along with numerous weddings and renewal of vows ceremonies. In addition, we continue to seek ways to extend our mission to the local community and beyond. We continue to host ELCA clergy from all over the country to serve as our guest pastors. This program has been very popular with all involved, as our guest pastors share their ministry with our visitors and carry back awareness of the Chapel and our ministry to their own congregations and friends. If you happen to know of an ELCA pastor (active or retired) who may be interested in serving as one of our guest pastors, invite them to contact us for more information.

Volunteerism remains the solid backbone of our ministry at the Chapel in the Hills. We have a very dedicated group of volunteers that staff our gift shop and serve as hosts for our visitors. Without their help, along with church youth groups and volunteers assisting with maintenance projects and special events, we would not be able to continue our ministry. If you should ever feel a call to serve as a volunteer in the gift shop, on a maintenance project, or as a visiting pastor, please don't hesitate to contact us.

As we approach closer to retirement, the Chapel Board will soon begin the process of seeking new management for the day-to-day operation of the Chapel. If you know of someone who may be interested in this position, please have them contact us for more information. We welcome the conversation. It is a call that may just be the perfect fit....

Our day-to-day funding comes directly from donations, gift shop sales, and other gifts from our supporters and visitors. There are no direct operating funds provided by the SD Synod. Thanks to some generous recent bequests and donations, we have been able to establish an endowment that now provides a secure source of funding to assist with the maintenance and operation of the Chapel. If you or someone you know feels called to make a donation or gift to add to our endowment fund, please contact us. Your support is greatly appreciated.

As we continue our service to residents of the Black Hills and beyond, we ask for your continued prayers and support of this unique ministry in South Dakota. We encourage your congregations to take advantage of all that the Chapel can provide. Come visit us when you are in the Black Hills. Feel free to hold a special worship service, congregational picnic, or other special event at the Chapel. Get together a group of your family and friends and attend an evening worship service during the summer. Discover the peace you will find, and then share the news of this special place with others!

In Christ's Love,

Brian & Joyce Kringen, Managing Directors

## **SD Synod Coaching Coordinator Team Report – March 2024**

The SD synod coaching team is led by Jamie Duprey, SD coaching coordinator and ELCA Coaching mentor coordinator. Members of the team include Jackie Braun, Wilbur Holz, John Paulson, Jeremy Duprey, Laura Campell, Jess Daum, Renae Boemer, and Cassandra Lamb. We meet quarterly, at minimum, to discuss ideas and opportunities to create and cultivate partnerships and pathways for coaching in our synod.

### **Current State of SD Coaching**

- The SD Synod coaching cohort has seven (7) segment 1 trained coaches.
- We have coaches trained in ELCA Coaching segment 2 specialty coaching including Discipleship, Stewardship, Mission Development/Redevelopment, and Care for Creation certification.
- We have one coach who is International Coaching Federation (ICF) certified at the professional level of certification (PCC) with an emphasis on grief coaching and one coach who has gone through the associate certification grief coaching course as well.

### **Coaching Support and Training**

- The SD Synod coaching team is in consistent correspondence with Jill Beverlin, Jason O’Neill, David Hively, and other coaching coordinators across ELCA churchwide.
- Active Status is defined as:
  - Connecting 3-6 times a year with synodical coaches for support and training
  - Coaching at least two (2) clients for ten or more hours (total) annually
  - Following the ICF Core Competencies and Ethical Guidelines
  - Submit annually a recorded coaching session for review
  - Four (4) hours minimum per year of continuing education/coach specific training; ELCA Coaching is partnering with Dr. Don Eisenhauer at Coaching at End of Life to provide free continuing ed opportunities
- ELCA segment 1 training — enables participants to be certified as segment 1 ELCA coaches. On April 5-6, 2024, a live training will take place at First Lutheran Church in Brookings where six people will engage in the segment 1 training for the first time; two participants will engage as returning learners.
- ELCA Coaching has a website full of resources for anyone interested in exploring coaching: <https://www.elcacoaching.org/>. There is also a link for SD Coaching: <https://sdsynod.org/ministries/coach-network/>.

### **Coaching in the SD Synod**

- Bishop Hagmaier and associates Renee Splichal Larson and Jonathan Vehar have all been through ELCA segment 1 training. We value the partnership we have with the bishop and her

staff. We look forward to continuing our work together to support and empower servant-leaders for Christ in and through the SD Synod—and beyond—as we help those who coach and are coached maximize their God-given gifts and potential.

- The synod staff has been most supportive in helping create venues where coaching can be utilized and help advance the mission of the synod.
- Current venues where coaching is offered include: first-call, ELCA World Hunger, ELCA Growing Younger, Coaching Around Stress and Crises.
- Pastor Jonathan Vehar is in continued conversation with Jamie Duprey regarding ways to continue to support leaders through coaching, and to continue broadening partnerships and pathways for coaching in our synod.
- The challenge remains to continue promoting and advocating for coaching. Coaching is often perceived to be for those who “need help” or are somehow not performing up to expectations. Clients who undergo the most transformation are, in fact, high performing individuals who want to fully develop their potential and grow more fully into the person God has created them to be.
- We look forward to finding new and creative ways to help rostered and lay leaders discover the power of coaching and how it can help them live more fully into God’s dream for their lives and congregations.

# ELCA COACHING

Empowering leaders who power ministries



## COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP

Through weekly online gatherings dating back to 2020, ELCA Coaching provides a platform for leaders to encounter challenging topics, dynamic and creative innovators, and ministry leaders from a wide range of backgrounds. These events are more than just workshops, they are chances to develop concrete, actionable steps towards God's promised future in individual and congregational life. These community care events were the recipient of the 2021 Phoenix Award.

## EMPOWERING LEADERS

Coaching creates a space for leaders to ponder thoughtful questions, explore new ideas, and listen deeply for the calling of the Spirit. For many leaders, the time they spend with a coach is the only space where they can be their authentic selves. Coaches listen deeply, ask thought-provoking questions, and help clients develop concrete next steps in their lives and ministries.

## NEW, YOUNG, AND DIVERSE

### Young Adult Ministries

In partnership with Young Adult Ministries, we've trained 33 young adults in coaching skills, and they are supporting other young adults as they work in ministries across the ELCA

### Spanish Language Coach Training

In partnership with native speakers, we have developed coach training materials in Spanish. Class participants are on the front lines of ministry in Latine communities.

### Land Back Conversations

We partner with Indigenous leaders to help congregations begin a conversation about the Land Back and Truth and Healing Movements.



## AT A GLANCE

3,438 Leaders connecting to coaching through the churchwide office

60% of tuition collected is used to invest in opportunities for leaders of color, leaders from historically vulnerable communities, and young adults.

427 supported New Starts/SAWCs and Strategic Ministries



### REV. PHYLLIS BLAIR MILTON

Bishop and ELCA Trained Coach



Coaching helps individuals and groups to look beyond what may be familiar and comfortable, to ideas and actions that will excite, engage, and challenge their status quo.







ELCA Coaching walked with ELCA Good Neighbor Congregational Teams to help 252 Newly Arrived Refugees resettle in the ECSW

## ETHNIC SPECIFIC MINISTRIES

ELCA Coaching continues to develop a wide range of ethnic specific ministries including:

- African Descent Coaching Team
- Latine Coaching Team
- Arab/Middle-Eastern Coaching Team
- Asian/Pacific Islanders Coaching Team

These teams have 67 coaches who are dedicated to accompanying their peers from similar cultures..

## COACHING IN EVERYDAY LIFE

In 2024 we are offering a new course to equip individuals with the primary skills used by executive and life coaches: intense listening and high-powered question creation. Combining these two skills produces conversations that result in much richer output and more profound understanding between the participants. Once familiar with these coaching skills, they can be applied to any conversation, whether a response to a short text blast, a dinner table conversation, or an office chat. Your conversations with friends, family, co-workers, and team members will take on the characteristic of being supportive, non-aggressive, and non-judgmental, which ultimately builds solid and trusted relationships. Learn more at [elcacoaching.org/events](http://elcacoaching.org/events)

## SUPPORTIVE SPACES

In addition to 1-to-1 coaching, we have launched Supportive Spaces, a cohort-based program designed to support the holistic well-being of leaders across the Church, similar to grief support groups.

## ON THE SYNOD LEVEL:

42 synods have paid or volunteer coach coordinators helping to advance the synod’s mission and ministry.

28 people are a part of this year’s Creating Cultures of Coaching cohort that shares ideas, best practices, and mentor coaching to maximize ministry effectiveness.



### MR. LAZ LOPEZ

Young Adult and ELCA Trained Coach



Coaching has opened my eyes to a different type of stewardship within the Church. I love helping people live their lives so Christ can work through them at their fullest.





# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

*For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we may walk in them.* —Ephesians 2:10

Fiscal 2022–23 was a year of transition and transformation at Luther Seminary.

**Transition:** Across our educational programs, we are working to create sustainable new models so that learners can afford not just theological education, but life in Christian leadership.

**Transformation:** We continue to witness how the Jubilee Scholarship creates a path for students from all walks of life to answer God’s call to ministry. Since implementing this full-tuition scholarship model in 2018, student borrowing has dropped to its lowest level at the seminary in nearly 25 years. A remarkable 67% of our 2023 class graduated with zero student debt.

At the same time, we continue to expand the accessibility of theological education beyond our degree programs through Faith+Lead and digital media like Working Preacher, Enter the Bible, and God Pause. Combined visits to our digital properties and podcast downloads topped 5 million unique visitors in 2022–23, a 20% increase over the previous year.

**Transition:** With the close of the MDivX pilot program this spring, we are pivoting toward a permanent option for an accelerated M.Div. pathway.

**Transformation:** MDivX was a resounding success, demonstrating the effectiveness and appeal of a two-year model with simultaneous contextual learning. Retention in the pilot program was extraordinarily high, with 96% of participants graduating. Out of the 51 graduates from the first two cohorts, 47 are actively serving in ministry contexts at the time of this writing, with one in the process of becoming ordained.

The lessons from MDivX helped shape a larger curriculum refresh that reflects our students’ and the church’s needs. The

faculty applied insights from MDivX, deep listening to the church, and assessment data in redesigning the curriculum last year for a Fall 2023 implementation. This curricular “refresh” strengthens course sequencing to support learning outcomes, creates natural cohorts through three defined pathways (full-time, part-time, and, in the future, accelerated), and reduces requirements without sacrificing depth or rigor.

**Transition:** We are in the midst of two budget years designed to support investments in our strategic plan priorities and key financial goals, including increasing Faith+Lead revenue and restructuring the academic programs for efficiency. Modest operating deficits planned for these two years are supported by the seminary’s strong cash position and robust \$120 million endowment valuation as of June 30, 2023.

**Transformation:** I’m grateful to share with you this snapshot of the “good works” for which God has equipped Luther Seminary. And yet, we know that the true outcomes of the Holy Spirit’s action with and through us ripple out far beyond what can be quantified in any financial report.

Thank you for your prayerful support as we seek to faithfully steward the gifts and mission of this community for the future of Christ’s church.



Peace and blessings,

Robin J. Steinke  
President



# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

## AT A GLANCE

- The seminary awarded 439 scholarships in 2022–23.
- Master of Arts students like Ryan made up 62% of enrolled students.
- As scholarship recipients, Ryan and Laura received part of the \$6.15 million awarded during the 2022–23 academic year. On average, students received \$11,033 in scholarships and grants from Luther Seminary.
- Laura was among the 28% of students who pursued a Master of Divinity degree in 2022–23.
- Financial aid covered 100% of the cost of tuition for qualified incoming M.A. and M.Div. students.

## BY THE NUMBERS

- 412 students enrolled at Luther Seminary during the 2022–23 academic year.
- ELCA members accounted for 71% of the student body. 34 denominations made up the remaining 29% of students.
- Tuition, student fees, books, and on-campus living expenses cost approximately \$43,911 for full-time students.



## MEET RYAN

Having been influenced by philosopher Charles Taylor, **Ryan Popineau '24 M.A.** came to Luther Seminary in order to study with Professor **Andrew Root**, who has written about the implications of Taylor's ideas on ministry. A hospice chaplain and former youth pastor, Ryan is able to apply what he is learning to his work. After graduation, he hopes to write and speak on practical steps pastors and churches can take to minister in the world. "I wanted to attend seminary for nearly 15 years," Ryan said. "The Jubilee Scholarship made attendance an opportunity I could not pass up."

## DURING THE 2022–23 FISCAL YEAR

36 international students enrolled from 23 countries.

138 students graduated May 21.

Donor sources made up 96% of Luther Seminary's operating revenue when combining individual donor support, the endowment, and church and synod appropriations.

67% of students graduated without seminary debt. For the others, median debt was \$35,000.



## AND LAURA

**Laura Otieno '27 M.Div.** enrolled in seminary to deepen her understanding of her faith and become a more confident leader, seeking ways to engage individuals and communities with the gospel. Having pursued an undergraduate degree in social work and a master's in nonprofit management while working, she maintains a full-time job in higher education while she studies at Luther Seminary. "The Jubilee Scholarship made seminary accessible to me," she said. "The financial barrier would have kept me from future studying, but now I have the opportunity to develop as a leader."



# Finances 2022-23

Luther Seminary and Foundation consolidated balance sheets as of June 30, 2023 and June 30, 2022

ASSETS	2023	2022
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$12,999,656	\$14,973,591
Other Current Assets	355,911	635,921
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$13,355,567</b>	<b>\$15,609,512</b>
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>		
Other Assets	\$2,007,730	\$2,439,809
Investments	123,277,429	122,347,512
Student Notes Receivable, Net	2,038,013	2,156,994
Land, Buildings, and Equipment, Net	8,019,197	8,458,045
<b>Total Other Assets</b>	<b>\$135,342,369</b>	<b>\$135,402,360</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$148,697,936</b>	<b>\$151,011,872</b>

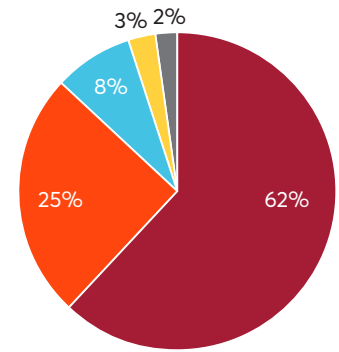
## LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Other Current Liabilities	\$4,598,779	\$5,145,611
Notes Payable, Current Portion	153,473	147,465
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>\$4,752,252</b>	<b>\$5,293,076</b>
<b>Long-Term Liabilities</b>		
Other Long-Term Liabilities	\$7,604,991	\$8,230,078
Notes Payable, Net of Current Portion	4,231,740	4,385,213
<b>Total Long-Term Liabilities</b>	<b>\$11,836,731</b>	<b>\$12,615,291</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$16,588,983</b>	<b>\$17,908,367</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>		
Without Donor Restrictions	\$5,354,872	\$6,937,100
With Donor Restrictions	126,754,081	126,166,405
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$132,108,953</b>	<b>\$133,103,505</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$148,697,936</b>	<b>\$151,011,872</b>

## ENDOWMENT

Total Market Value (as of 6/30/23)	\$120 million
Investment Returns	
1-year	0.8%
3-year	11.4%
5-year	12.1%

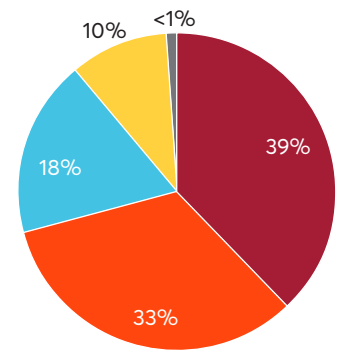
Luther Seminary's annual report numbers are also available at [luthersem.edu/giving/annual-report](https://luthersem.edu/giving/annual-report). Learn more about giving to support future church leaders at [luthersem.edu/giving](https://luthersem.edu/giving).



## Unrestricted Operating Income

Donor Support	\$11,998,446
Endowment Draw	4,897,345
Churchwide and Synod Support	1,504,806
Net Tuition and Fees	437,707
Auxiliary Enterprises and Other Income	415,637

**Total Unrestricted Operating Income** **\$19,253,941**



## Unrestricted Operating Expenses

Student Instruction and Support	\$8,081,592
Institutional Support	6,961,958
Faith+Lead	3,775,597
Physical Plant and Maintenance	2,216,933
Auxiliary Enterprises and Other Expenses	155,814

**Total Expenses\*** **\$21,191,894**

\*Includes depreciation



Dear Partners in the South Dakota Synod,

Greetings from your siblings in Christ at Wartburg Theological Seminary, in Dubuque, Iowa. I am pleased to have the opportunity to share with you some of the ways the Holy Spirit is at work in and through your seminary.

First, we are delighted to announce the successful completion of Lead Boldly!, our comprehensive capital campaign. We exceeded our goal of \$28 million, which included enthusiastic support for student scholarships, one of our highest priorities. As a part of this ambitious campaign, we also are very pleased to announce the completion of an extensive remodel of our primary educational and office building, Fritschel Hall. This project came in under budget and on time, thanks to the excellent work of our staff and our local construction partners. We would love to show you the renovated educational space; please know that you are invited to visit anytime!

Second, I want to share with you a new emphasis that Wartburg is placing on TEEM and Certificate Programs, exemplified by the new director of these programs, Pastor Carrie Greenquist-Petersen. I invited Pastor Carrie to share some thoughts with you about this program:

*Over the past nine months it has been my privilege and pleasure to help Wartburg welcome and serve TEEM candidates for rostered ministry, lay leaders, synods and partners. I have gotten to know the students through admissions, candidacy processes, contextual education, classes/modules and endeavored to nurture an identity of quality and worth in Wartburg's TEEM and Certificate students. Clear and timely communication can make the difference between feeling forgotten and feeling immensely valued. This is why being available to all partners to hear and address any question or concern is my top priority. It is a true joy to accompany each student along their path of discernment for leadership in Christ's church.*

Third, Wartburg Seminary is announcing the launch of a Congregational Accompaniment Project to equip congregations for intercultural competence and to open doors to new mission opportunities with Latine people. This project aims to foster deeper understanding of diversity and to cultivate the development of meaningful relationships that reflect the love of Christ. Upon application, Wartburg staff from the Centro Teológico Luterano Multicultural and the Journey Together program will accompany congregations and their leaders in this process.

Finally, we have a new tagline at Wartburg, which speaks directly to our sense of mission in the current moment in the life of the church: **Listen. Wonder. Lead.** “At Wartburg Theological Seminary the voices of God and our neighbors call us to **listen** deeply. In these limestone halls and your local communities, Jesus’ love invites us to **wonder** that transformative power of the Holy Spirit, who inspires our life together. Our graduates **lead** a changing church with holy curiosity, creativity and joy. In hope, we proclaim God’s grace that carries us through death to resurrection life. **Listen, wonder, and lead at Wartburg.**”

We know the church needs leaders, and we are working with you to form them. Please continue to pray for, identify and raise up candidates for public ministry. At Wartburg, they will be equipped to share the good news of Jesus Christ in a world in need of healing and hope.

We give thanks to God for you and for our partnership, through which we participate in God's mission in the world. To learn more about Wartburg Seminary and our strategic, innovative programs, please visit [www.wartburgseminary.edu](http://www.wartburgseminary.edu).

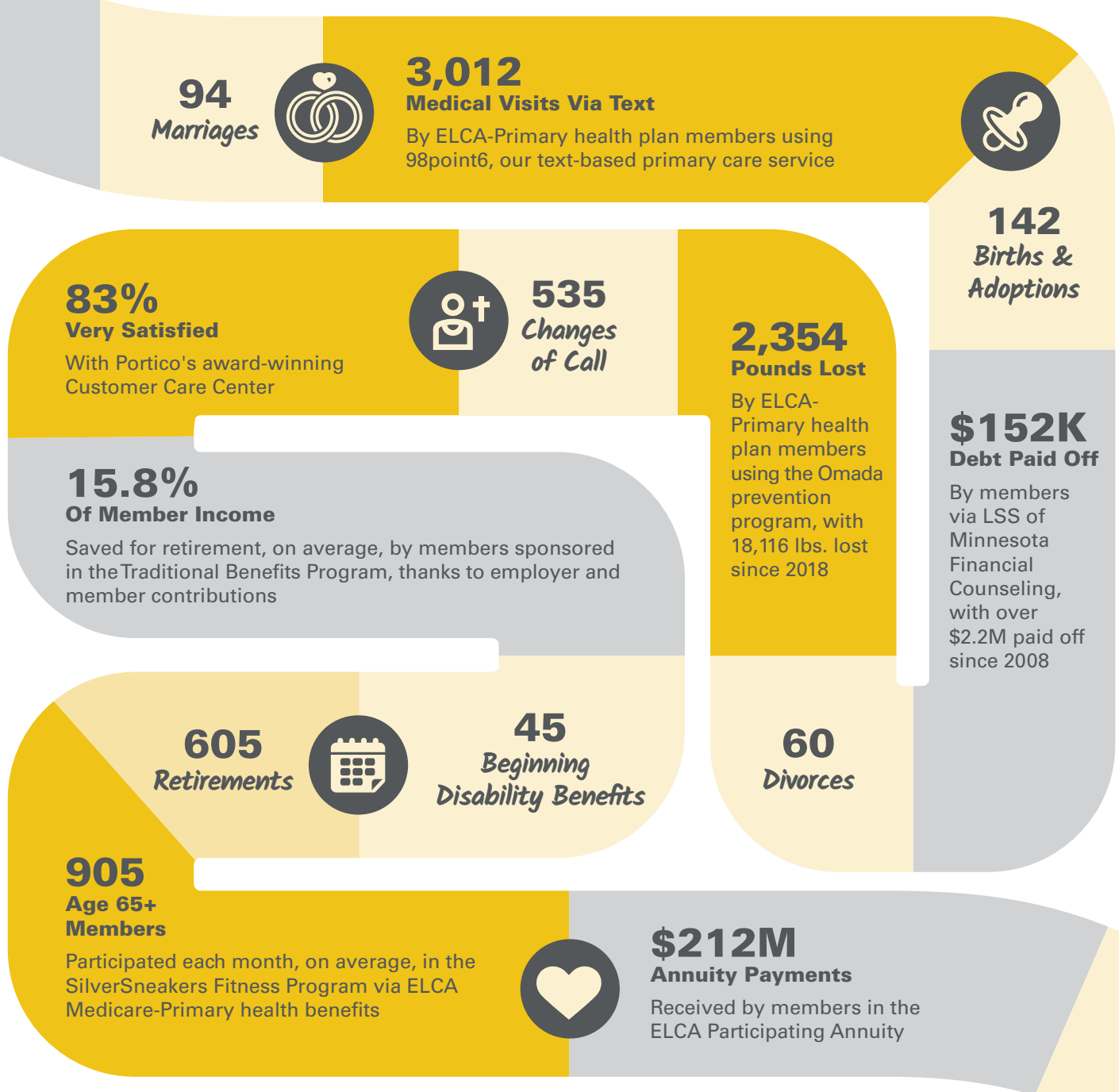
Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristin Johnston Lergen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rev. Kristin Johnston Lergen, Ph.D.  
President

## Benefits Making a Difference

At Portico we strive to offer benefits that make our plan members' lives better, so that they can fulfill their mission of helping others live their best lives. Here is a visual recap of what our community of 45,000+ members experienced in 2023.



Our mission is to serve those who serve — financially, emotionally, and physically. We do this by securing quality, cost-effective, and useful benefits that make a difference for our members and sponsoring organizations. With each new year we continue to grow our pool and affirm the value and importance of church together.

Note: Unless specifically mentioned, these numbers and percentages were drawn from across Portico's benefit programs. **60**



***Providing a full complement of financial services  
to ELCA members, congregations and ministries***



The ELCA Federal Credit Union, chartered in 2015, provides a full suite of financial products and services to members, congregations and ministries of the ELCA. **We are the first of the ELCA’s financial ministries to offer loans to individuals.** The Credit Union offers a rich variety of products—from savings and checking accounts and CDs ... to loans, lines of credit and credit cards. And now, we

provide home mortgage loans for new homes or remodeling, along with home equity lines of credit.

**We serve ministries** with federally insured deposit accounts, a flexible credit card program, auto loans and unsecured ministry loans up to \$100,000 for small projects such as building repair and purchases. Our new CU@Work program presents the opportunity for ministry organizations to offer our Credit Union products and services along with other exclusive perks to their employees.

**In 2023, we ushered in the fifth cohort of participants** in the ELCA’s Resourceful Servants program, designed to improve financial wellness and assist rostered leaders in building emergency savings funds. In this matching program, ELCA rostered leaders make ongoing deposits to their Credit Union emergency savings accounts, and our partner MIF matches those deposits up to an established amount. Together, we have served **722 rostered ministers** who, collectively, have made emergency savings deposits of more than \$1 million.

Our strong online presence allows members to access their funds anytime, anywhere—as consumers expect.

***Why choose the ELCA Federal Credit Union?***

- **The ELCA Federal Credit Union supports the ELCA’s mission of good stewardship.** We provide full services to all ELCA members, congregations and related ministries.
- **Our mission is to offer competitively priced products and services.** As a not-for-profit financial cooperative, we can often offer better rates and lower fees than traditional banks. We have demonstrated success in providing savings to our members.
- **With the church as our sponsor, we operate in ways that are consistent with the church’s values.**

***Membership is open to every ELCA member, synod, congregation and ministry—and their employees.***

**For more information about the products and services of the ELCA Federal Credit Union, please visit our website, [elcafcu.org](http://elcafcu.org) or call us toll free at 877-715-1111.**

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Grace and peace to you this synod assembly season. As you may know, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has embraced a new name: Global Refuge. Grounded in Psalm 46:1, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,” we hope to enter our next 85 years with openness, building a bigger table to meet a growing need. Global Refuge was forged in faith. Our Lutheran heritage has always shaped our work of welcome and will continue to do so in years to come.

With the support of partners and Lutheran communities like yours, in 2023 we were able to...

- Help 17,000+ children reunify with their families or find loving foster homes
- Welcome 11,200+ refugees from countries across the world
- Assist 11,700+ people seeking safety from Central America and beyond

In a political season rife with anti-immigrant rhetoric and messages that villainize newcomers, we have a unique opportunity to change this narrative and refocus on all the gifts newcomers bring to community. We invite you to join us in this work!

- Share about Global Refuge in your church or [invite our team](#) to join you.
- Include Global Refuge [bulletin inserts](#) about our work in your bulletin.
- Start a [Circle of Welcome](#) to support newcomers in your community.
- Pack [Fresh Change](#) bags, a partnership with Border Servant Corps, to welcome our neighbors at the border with care and dignity.
- Sign up for our monthly e-newsletters for faith leaders and explore a [webpage specifically for congregations](#) which has the latest faith community resources.

Thank you for your continued support. The many ways Lutheran communities embody Jesus’ ministry through the work of welcome is truly inspiring.

Go in peace. Welcome the stranger.



*Deacon Sarah Kretschmann | Congregational Engagement Specialist*  
[outreach@globalrefuge.org](mailto:outreach@globalrefuge.org)

# 10 Things to Know about 1517 Media

Spring 2024

1. **All Creation Sings** continues to expand and provide new resources for your congregation to connect with each other, your community, and our world through worship and prayer. With the use of new editions in your church; accompaniment options on piano, organ, and guitar; intergenerational activities and sessions with **Gather Together**; and **Kids Celebrate** booklets for the youngest in your church, you can help support the rhythms of the whole church year and give extra attention to themes of healing and wholeness, creation care, justice and peace, praise and lament. [augsburgfortress.org/allcreationsings](https://augsburgfortress.org/allcreationsings)
2. The Spanish-language **Oye Mi Voz: Un Libro de Oraciones para la Prisión** joins the popular **Hear My Voice: A Prison Prayer Book** in supporting people in the criminal justice system and those who minister to them. This collaborative effort between the ELCA and Augsburg Fortress encourages all in the criminal justice system to spend time in prayer, trusting in God's never-failing love for them and the whole world. [augsburgfortress.org/prison-ministry](https://augsburgfortress.org/prison-ministry)
3. Augsburg Fortress released the first two books in its new Mouth House series. Every synod staff and congregational call committee can benefit from reading **Call to Allyship: Preparing Your Congregation for Leaders of Color** edited by Rev. Angela T. !Khabeb and featuring authors of color from throughout the ELCA. **Ashes to Action: Finding Myself at the Intersection of the Minneapolis Uprising** by Shari Seifert makes an excellent group read. [augsburgfortress.org/mouthhouse](https://augsburgfortress.org/mouthhouse)
4. 1517 Media was awarded \$1.25 million from Lilly Endowment Inc. through its Nurturing Children through Worship and Prayer initiative. Funding will support research and the development of new resources for children, families, church leaders, and congregational education. Look for more news about this new multi-year program, **Unbridled Presence**.
5. Augsburg Fortress continues to publish vibrant music to engage the worshiping assembly. Our new choral music features an exciting anthem by Nathan Zullinger, "**God You Spin the Whirling Planets.**" **Living in Wonder** is the final collection of Susan Palo Cherwien's hymn texts, featuring 21 new assembly songs. Our free **Summer 2024 Music Clinics** feature musicians extraordinaire David Cherwien and Mark Sedio. [augsburgfortress.org/music/summer-music-clinics](https://augsburgfortress.org/music/summer-music-clinics)
6. **Sparkhouse Digital** continues to support early childhood programming, Sunday school, confirmation, and youth ministry. New mini camps, leader supports, and other activities are added quarterly! Subscribers can access **Digital Activity Kits** that help congregations provide resources for use in the home or as a supplement to in-person faith formation activities. [sparkhousedigital.com](https://sparkhousedigital.com)
7. Sparkhouse continues to release books supporting youth and young adults in their faith journeys. **Unscheduled Grace: 40 Reflections and Prayers for College Students** by campus pastors Katie Fick and Matt Marohl accompanies students through the changes, challenges, and joys of college living. **Unearthing Us**, the third collection of poetry by Joe Davis, will release in July along with a facilitator guide by Rev. Jia Starr Brown. [wearesparkhouse.org](https://wearesparkhouse.org)
8. Fortress Press publishes scholarship that matters in the academy, the church, and the community. Recent releases include **Our Trespasses: White Churches and the Taking of American Neighborhoods**, a timely examination of how race, geography, policy, and religion have created haunted landscapes and uncomfortable truths. Also of interest to churches are **Luther for Everyone: Who He Was and Why He Still Matters** and **Bonhoeffer for the Church: An Introduction**. [fortresspress.com](https://fortresspress.com)
9. Our Broadleaf Books imprint expands the mind, nourishes the soul, and cultivates the common good. Recent releases include **Trash: A Poor White Journey**—a personal look at economic divides—**Psalms of My People: A Story of Black Liberation as Told through Hip-Hop**, and **A Faith of Many Rooms: Inhabiting a More Spacious Christianity**. [broadleafbooks.com](https://broadleafbooks.com)
10. Our Beaming Books imprint sparks the imagination and equips kids and families to live full and flourishing lives, together. Recent releases include **What If I Can't Explain God?, I Love You Mucho Mucho**, and **Everyday Brave**. [beamingbooks.com](https://beamingbooks.com)

**Want to learn more?** Follow us on social media, sign up for our free e-newsletters, and connect with us at the Youth Gathering and Music Clinics this summer!

To learn more about the five imprints of 1517 Media, scan here to watch a video that we created for the 2022 Churchwide Assembly.





# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

## HIGHLIGHTS Seafarers International House

### MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Into the Faithful Future

Dear friends of Seafarers International House (SIH):

*"Though your beginning was small, your latter days will be very great." Job 8:7*

In 2023, Seafarers International House celebrated its 150th anniversary of uninterrupted service to well over two million people. Starting humbly with one pastor in 1873, we have been fulfilling our mission of being the *Lutheran response to the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and immigrants*, or more succinct: of welcoming in the stranger.

Reflecting on our past, of the evolution of our services, always adapting, often moving physically from one guest-house building to the next, we have reaffirmed that Seafarers International House is not a place but a service. In 2023, we welcomed fifty asylum seekers and provided them with free lodging and assistance from our new Social Worker, Michael Bradford, who collaborates with me tirelessly to make people who escaped violence and persecution feel at home, enabling many to become contributing members of their new homeland. We also offered 159 seafarers, often young mariners starting their careers or senior seafarers transitioning into retirement, affordable accommodations as they prepared for their next 3-6 months voyage or starting a new chapter of life, respectively.

During 2023, we strengthened our partnership with the Albany Maritime Ministry (AMM) with Pastors Kate Drefke and Lowell Chilton and hired Rev. Jonathan Westerlund to aid in the busy port of New Jersey & New York. In all ports, including Baltimore and New Haven, we visited 1,094 ships with

2024 Synod Assembly  
Preliminary Report

12,522 crew members, bringing on-board essentials and being present and transporting 2,061 of these seafarers to the mall or medical facilities.

Thanks to many individuals, youth and business groups, and congregations, a record 3,216 seafarers regardless of their faith felt some Holiday cheer when they opened their Christmas-at-Sea satchels filled with warm clothing and season's greetings, letting them know that we appreciate their sacrifices while they transport 90% of the things we use. Just look at the faces on the cover of this report and you can see the joy you have spread!

With our partners in the shipping industry, ship owners, and unions we celebrated our 150th anniversary at the Setting the Course Reception breaking an income record of over \$250,000 in crucial support of our Port Mission and subsidized lodging for mariners. We are grateful for the 2023 honorees John Atkins (Global Container Terminals), Mark W. Barker (Interlake Maritime Services), and Adam Vokac (Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association).

Yet, we also used the anniversary year to address future concerns. Through strategic planning involving all board members as well as members of the communities we serve, we determined that the current arrangement of renting our guesthouse to Breaking Ground furthers our mission by providing vital income to help us expand the port mission while continuing excellent lodging to asylum seekers and seafarers at the Markle Residence of the Salvation Army. This formula will allow us to save funds, complemented with donations from a comprehensive campaign, to eventually purchase

#### MISSION

*Seafarers International House (SIH) is the Lutheran response to the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and immigrants.*

**SIH offers hospitality, social assistance, and advocacy to a multi-national and multi-faith community in maritime ports on the Eastern Seaboard, Albany and in New York City.**

a new mission-based home with over eleven guest rooms by 2026, or earlier, if a cost-effective opportunity arises.

Please browse our web site (SIHNYC.org) for more details. I thank all of you who supported our essential services to "the stranger" through 2023, - from small beginnings to a faithful future sharing God's justice, welcome, and love.



*Marsh Luther Drefke*  
Pastor and Executive Director



Members of Jerusalem Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lititz, PA, helped me (kneeling in black) assemble Christmas-at-Sea satchels in November 2023.

# 2023 Program Impact

**18,005** immigrants and seafarers directly benefited from SIH services

**2,297** lodging nights (up from 1,764) provided to 156 seafarers in Manhattan.

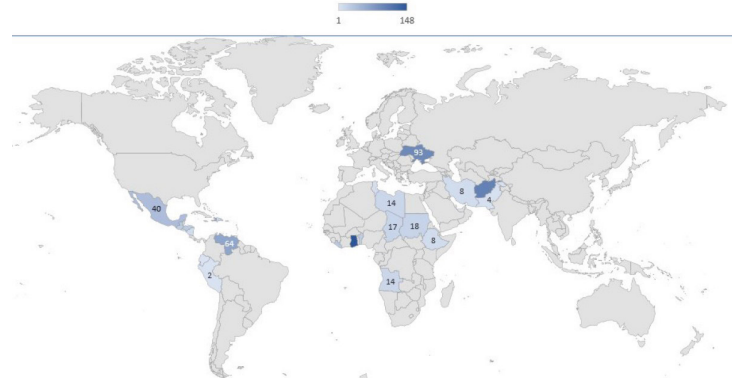
**12,522** seafarers were visited and counseled on 1,094 ships, receiving essentials they requested.

**2,061** seafarers were transported to a mall or medical facilities.

**3,216** seafarers, regardless of faith, received Christmas-at-Sea satchels filled with warm clothing and holiday greetings prepared by volunteers to recognize these essential workers. This exceeds last year's record of 2,915!

**50** asylum seekers received free lodging for a total of 766 nights. They hailed from Afghanistan, Angola, Benin, Chad, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iran, Jamaica, Liberia, Libya, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru, Sudan, Tunisia, Ukraine, and Venezuela. (See highlighted countries with number of lodging nights on the map below).

Asylee Lodging Nights by Country of Origin

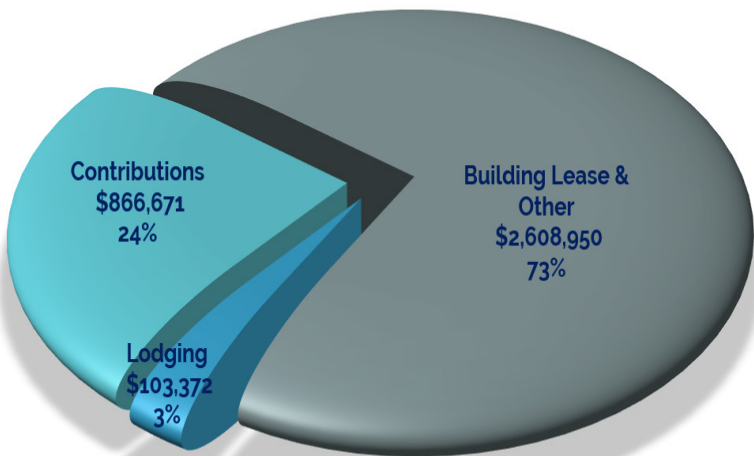


## 2023 FINANCIAL REPORT

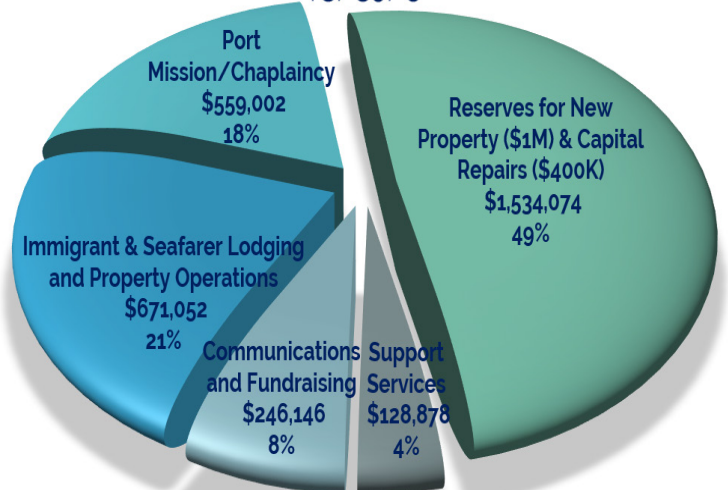
In accordance with our 2024 - 2028 strategic plan, operating gains help to build reserves for a new property (\$1M) with mission-based guest rooms and offices and to allow for capital repairs on the guesthouse (\$400,000), which is leased to Breaking Ground, which offers transitional housing to the community. That lease revenue supports our mission to seafarers and immigrants. Donations remain a vital pillar of income to support our services and future expansion.

Program services and reserves accounted for 88% percent of expenses with only 12% spent on support services and fundraising. Net Assets increased from \$8,258,768 in 2022 to about \$10 million. These figures reflect *unaudited revenue and expenses and are subject to change*. To request the audited 2023 financial statements send an email to [henryk@sihnyc.org](mailto:henryk@sihnyc.org).

### Operating Revenue 2023 (pre-audit) \$3,578,993



### Operating Expenses & Reserves for New Property 2023 (pre-audit) \$3,139,152





**South Dakota Synod, ELCA  
2025 Proposed Mission Plan  
02/01/2025 - 01/31/2026**

	<b>Adopted 2024</b>	<b>Revised 2024</b>	<b>Proposed 2025</b>
<b>Revenue</b>			
<b>Mission Support</b>			
Undesignated Mission Support	1,803,094	1,763,515	1,807,603
SD Synod Mission Support	28,675	23,800	23,800
<b>Total Mission Support-Congregations</b>	1,831,769	1,787,315	1,831,403
<b>Program Ministry Income</b>			
Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center Income	45,000	45,000	45,000
<b>Total Program Ministry Income</b>			
<b>Other Income</b>			
DEM Support Staff Income	10,000	10,000	10,000
Interest Income	10,000	50,000	50,000
SDS Travel LLC Income	5,000	5,000	5,000
Misc Income	1,000	1,000	1,000
<b>Total Other Income</b>	26,000	66,000	66,000
<b>Total Revenue</b>	1,902,769	1,898,315	1,942,403
<b>Expenses</b>			
<b>Churchwide Ministries</b>	41%	42%	42%
Churchwide Support	739,269	740,676	759,193
<b>Region III</b>			
Region III Support	8,004	9,153	8,004
<b>South Dakota Ministries</b>			
<b>South Dakota Partnership Ministries</b>			
SD Ministries Support	11,757	9,996	9,996
Luther Seminary	71,989	70,241	71,974
Church Colleges (ELCA Pool)	6,228	6,077	6,227
Lutheran Social Services	71,989	70,241	71,974
Campus Ministry	126,942	123,861	126,916
Lutheran Outdoors	35,903	35,031	35,895
<b>South Dakota Supported Ministries</b>			
Heartland Ephphatha	6,228	6,077	6,227
Youth Ministry	7,200	7,200	7,200
Campus Ministry Capital	0	0	0
Good Samaritan Society	1	1	1
Chapel in the Hills	1	1	1
Woyatan Lutheran/Wambli Ska	19,000	19,000	19,000
Lutheran Planned Generosity	58,300	58,300	58,300
<b>Total Shared Ministries</b>	415,538	406,026	413,712

**South Dakota Synod, ELCA  
2025 Proposed Mission Plan  
02/01/2025 - 01/31/2026**

	<b>Adopted 2024</b>	<b>Revised 2024</b>	<b>Proposed 2025</b>
<b>Executive Leadership</b>			
Bishop	102,005	104,952	108,101
Assoc/Director of Ev Mission	10,849	12,596	12,974
Assoc-Mobility/Candidacy	84,596	87,333	89,953
Executive Staff Benefits	89,546	71,668	73,818
Exec Travel/Continuing Ed	36,800	40,800	40,800
<b>Program Ministries</b>			
Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center-Director	99,257	90,259	92,967
Youth Gathering Synod Coordinator	0	0	0
Companion Synod Coordinator	18,521	19,322	19,902
<b>Support Staff and Office</b>			
Support Staff Salaries/Benefit	176,980	180,380	185,791
Synod Office Expenses	66,791	76,020	78,000
Augustana University Occupancy Fee	30,108	31,824	32,300
<b>Synod Committees</b>			
Synod Council	5,000	5,000	5,000
Support to Ministries Committee	3,100	3,100	3,100
Candidacy Committee	6,000	9,000	9,000
Multi-Cultural Ministry Committee	1,000	1,000	1,000
Companion Synods Ministry Committee	200	200	200
Evangelical Outreach Committee	1,500	1,500	1,500
<b>Mission &amp; Outreach</b>			
Mission Congregation Start-up	4,000	4,000	4,000
Mission Strategy Table	2,000	2,000	2,000
<b>Contingency</b>	1,705	1,506	1,089
<b>Total South Dakota Ministries</b>	739,958	742,460	761,494
<b>Total Expenses</b>	1,902,769	1,898,315	1,942,403
<b>Net Total</b>	0	0	0

# CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS



South Dakota Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**May 2024**

- d. providing ecumenical guidance and encouragement.

†S6.04. Except as otherwise provided in this constitution and bylaws, the Synod Council shall establish processes that will ensure that at least 60 percent of the members of the synod assemblies, councils, committees, boards, and other organizational units shall be laypersons; and that, as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent of the lay members of assemblies, councils, committees, boards, or other organizational units shall be women and, as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent shall be men; and that, where possible, the representation of rostered ministers shall include both men and women. This synod shall establish processes that will enable it to reach a minimum goal that 10 percent of its assemblies, councils, committees, boards, or other organizational units be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English.

†S6.04.01. It is the goal of this synod that at least 10 percent of the voting members of the Synod Assembly, Synod Council, committees, and organizational units of this synod be youth and young adults. The Synod Council shall establish a plan for implementing this goal. For purposes of the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of this synod, the term “youth” means a voting member of a congregation who has not reached the age of 18 at the time of election or appointment for service. The term “young adult” means a voting member of a congregation between the ages of 18 and 30 at the time of election or appointment for service.

S6.04.03. The Synod Council shall allocate numbers and categories of Churchwide Assembly members and alternates among the conferences of this synod. Each conference shall nominate members and alternates of the Churchwide Assembly according to the Synod Council allocation and according to that conference's nomination procedures. Members and alternates elected shall be ratified by the Bishop.

†S6.05. Each assembly, council, committee, board, commission, task force, or other body of this synod or any synod units shall be conclusively presumed to have been properly constituted, and neither the method of selection nor the composition of any such assembly, council, committee, board, commission, task force, or other body may be challenged in a court of law by any person or be used as the basis of a challenge in a court of law to the validity or effect of any action taken or authorized by any such assembly, council, committee, board, commission, task force, or other body.

†S6.06. References herein to the nature of the relationship between the three expressions of this church – congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization – as being interdependent or as being in a partnership relationship describe the mutual responsibility of these expressions in God’s mission and the fulfillment of the purposes of this church as described in this chapter, and do not imply or describe the creation of partnerships, co-ventures, agencies, or other legal relationships recognized in civil law.

**Chapter 7. SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

†S7.01. This synod shall have a Synod Assembly, which shall be its highest legislative authority. The powers of the Synod Assembly are limited only by the provisions in the Articles of Incorporation, this constitution and bylaws, the assembly’s own resolutions, and the constitutions and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

†S7.11. A regular meeting of the Synod Assembly shall be held at least triennially.

S7.11.01. The time and place of the South Dakota Synod Assembly shall be determined by the Synod Council. The time and place the next regular assembly normally shall be announced 12 months prior to the assembly.

S7.12. Special meetings of the Synod Assembly may be called by the bishop with the consent of the Synod Council, and shall be called by the bishop at the request of one-fifth of the voting members of the Synod Assembly.

- a. The notice of each special meeting shall define the purpose for which it is to be held. The scope of actions to be taken at such a special meeting shall be limited to the subject matter(s) described in the notice.
- b. If the special meeting of the Synod Assembly is required for the purpose of electing a successor bishop because of death, resignation, or inability to serve, the special meeting shall be called by the Synod Council after consultation with the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

S7.13. Notice of the time and place of all meetings of the Synod Assembly shall be given by the secretary of this synod.

S7.13.01. Notice of the date, time and place of the meeting of the Synod Assembly shall be published in official publications established by this Synod or mailed to the rostered ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and of this synod and congregations, not less than 90 days before the meeting of the Assembly.

**S7.14.** One-half of members of the Synod Assembly shall constitute a quorum.

†**S7.21.** The membership of the Synod Assembly, of which at least 60 percent of the voting membership shall be composed of lay persons, shall be constituted as follows:

- a. All rostered ministers under call on the roster of this synod shall be voting members of the Synod Assembly.
- b. A minimum of one lay member elected by each congregation with fewer than 175 baptized members and a minimum of two lay members elected by each congregation with 175 or more baptized members related to this synod, typically one of whom shall be a man and one of whom shall be a woman, shall be voting members. The Synod Council shall establish a formula to provide additional lay representation from congregations on the basis of the number of baptized members in the congregation. The Synod Council shall seek to ensure that, as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent of the lay members of the assembly shall be women and, as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent shall be men.
- c. Voting membership shall include the officers of this synod.

*S7.21.A07 Any congregation of this synod which elects a 16-21 year old as a voting member shall be granted one additional voting member. Any congregation of this synod which elects a person of color and/or a person whose primary language is other than English as a voting member shall also be granted one additional voting member. The number of lay voting members per congregation is determined by the following scale:*

<b>* Baptized Member Increments</b>	<b>** Lay Voting Members</b>	<b>† 16-21 Year Old Member</b>	<b>† Person of Color and/or Non-English Origin</b>	<b>Maximum Total Lay Voting Members</b>
0– 500	2	1	1	4
501 – 1000	3	1	1	5
1001 – 1500	4	1	1	6
1501 – 2000	5	1	1	7
2001 – 2500	6	1	1	8
2501 – 3000	7	1	1	9
3001 – 3500	8	1	1	10
3501 – 4000	9	1	1	11
4001 – 4500	10	1	1	12
4501 – 5000	11	1	1	13

*\*Figures used are the published baptized membership totals from the most recent South Dakota Synod Handbook. \*\*Goal of a balance of female/male voting members.*

*S7.21.B17 Rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be granted the privilege of both voice and vote in the Synod Assembly during the period of called or contracted service in a congregation of this synod, in accord with ELCA churchwide bylaw 8.72.12.*

*S7.21.C17 Rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament serving as interim pastors, under contract to a congregation of this synod, shall be granted the privilege of both voice and vote in the Synod Assembly during the period of contracted service in a congregation of this synod.*

*S7.21.D17 Synodically Authorized Ministers (SAMs) certified by the South Dakota Synod, under contract to a congregation of this synod, shall be granted the privilege of both voice and vote, as an additional lay member, in the Synod Assembly during the period of contracted service in a congregation of this synod.*

*S7.21.E22 Each Synod Authorized Worshiping Community under the purview of the South Dakota Synod shall be afforded voting members, in addition to the Synod Authorized Minister, in accordance with S7.21. and S7.21.A07*

- S7.21.01.** Voting members shall begin serving with the opening of a regular Synod Assembly and shall continue serving until voting members are seated at the next regular Synod Assembly.
- †**S7.21.02.** If a special Synod Assembly is called and voting members at the previous assembly are unable to serve as voting members, where permitted by state law, the congregation through the Congregation Council may elect new members who shall continue to serve until the next regular Synod Assembly.
- S7.22.** This synod may establish processes that permit retired rostered ministers, or those granted disability status, or on leave from call, on the roster of the synod to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with †7.21.c. If the synod does not establish processes to permit the rostered ministers specified above to serve as voting members, they shall have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly.
- †**S7.23.** The presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and such other official representatives of the churchwide organization as may be designated by the presiding bishop, shall have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly. Like privileges shall be accorded to those additional persons whom the Synod Assembly or the Synod Council shall from time to time designate.
- S7.24.** Ministers under call on the rosters of this synod shall remain as members of the Synod Assembly so long as they remain under call and so long as their names appear on the rosters of this synod. Lay members of the Synod Assembly representing congregations shall continue as such until replaced by the election of new members or until they have been disqualified by termination of membership. Normally, congregations will hold elections prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
- †**S7.25.** Except as otherwise provided in this constitution or in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, each voting member of the Synod Assembly shall be a voting member of a congregation of this synod.
- S7.26.** This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit representatives of authorized worshiping communities of this synod, which have been authorized under ELCA bylaw 10.01.04., to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with †S7.21.
- S7.27.** This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council to grant a minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America the privilege of both voice and vote in the Synod Assembly during the period of that minister's service in a congregation of this church.
- S7.28.** Duly elected voting members of the Synod Council who are not otherwise voting members of the Synod Assembly under †S7.21. shall be granted the privilege of both voice and vote as members of the Synod Assembly.
- †**S7.31.** Proxy and absentee voting shall not be permitted in the transaction of any business of the Synod Assembly.
- S7.32.** Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of the Synod Assembly, unless otherwise ordered by the assembly.
- S7.33.** "Ex-officio" as used herein means membership with full rights of voice and vote unless otherwise expressly limited.
- S7.40. Committees of the Synod Assembly**
- S7.40.10. **Credentials Committee**
- S7.40.11. Prior to the Synod Assembly, the Synod Bishop shall appoint three persons to act as a Credentials Committee. This committee shall report when requested on the number of voting members, visitors, advisors, and others in attendance.
- S7.40.20. **Election Committee**
- S7.40.21. Prior to the Synod Assembly, the Synod Bishop shall appoint three ministers of Word and Sacrament and three laypersons to an Election Committee to supervise elections and announce the results to the Synod Assembly.
- S7.40.30. **Resolutions Committee**
- S7.40.31. Each conference shall elect one representative to a Resolutions Committee. The Synod Bishop shall appoint two representatives at large, and shall designate the convener of the committee. In the case of a vacancy, the Synod Bishop will appoint a replacement.
- S7.40.32. The committee shall elect its own leadership.
- S7.40.33. The committee shall receive all resolutions, prepare them, and make recommendations on them in accordance with the Synod Rules of Parliamentary Procedure for transmission to the Synod Assembly.
- S7.40.34. The committee shall draft such resolutions as it is instructed to draft by the Synod Assembly, and may

draft others it deems necessary.

**S7.50.**

**Conference Caucus**

S7.50.10.

The members of the Synod Assembly from each conference shall constitute the conference caucus.

S7.50.11.

The caucus may draft resolutions for submission to the Resolutions Committee.

S7.50.12.

The caucus may discuss resolutions, and transact such other business as the voting members determine.

S7.50.13.

The caucus shall meet at the call of the Bishop, the President of the Conference or the request of 15 percent of the voting members of the conference.

S7.50.14.

The officers of the conference shall serve as the leadership of the caucus.

**Chapter 8.**

**OFFICERS**

†S8.01.

The officers of this synod shall be a bishop, a vice president, a secretary, and a treasurer.

**S8.10.**

**Bishop**

†S8.11.

The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly. The bishop shall be a minister of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

†S8.12.

As this synod's pastor, the bishop shall:

- a. Preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church.
- b. Have primary responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament in this synod and its congregations, providing pastoral care and leadership for this synod, its congregations, its ministers of Word and Sacrament, and its ministers of Word and Service.
- c. Exercise solely this church's power to ordain (or provide for the ordination by another synod bishop of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament (and as provided in the bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).
- d. Ordain (or provide for the ordination of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for service as ministers of Word and Service of this church.
- e. Attest letters of call for persons called to serve congregations in the synod, letters of call for persons called by the Synod Council, and letters of call for persons on the rosters of this synod called by the Church Council.
- f. Install (or provide for the installation of) rostered ministers whose calls the bishop has attested.
- g. Exercise leadership in the mission of this church and in so doing:
  - 1) Interpret and advocate the mission and theology of the whole church;
  - 2) Lead in fostering support for and commitment to the mission of this church within this synod;
  - 3) Coordinate the use of the resources available to this synod as it seeks to promote the health of this church's life and witness in the areas served by this synod;
  - 4) Submit a report to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly concerning the synod's life and work; and
  - 5) Advise and counsel this synod's related institutions and organizations.
- h. Practice leadership in strengthening the unity of the Church and in so doing:
  - 1) Exercise oversight of the preaching, teaching, and administration of the sacraments within this synod in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church;
  - 2) Be responsible for administering the constitutionally established processes for the resolution of controversies and for the discipline of rostered ministers, and congregations of this synod;
  - 3) Be the chief ecumenical officer of this synod;
  - 4) Be a member of the Conference of Bishops and consult regularly with other synod bishops;
  - 5) Foster awareness of other churches throughout the Lutheran world communion and, where appropriate, engage in contact with leaders of those churches;
  - 6) Cultivate communion in faith and mission with appropriate Christian judicatory leaders functioning within the territory of this synod; and
  - 7) Be *ex officio* a member of the Churchwide Assembly.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES  
SUMMARY

TO ACCOMPLISH THIS:	YOU SAY THIS:	Interrupt Speaker	2nd Needed	Debatable	Can It Be Amended	Vote Required	Can It Be Reconsidered
<b>I. RESOLUTIONS INTRODUCED BY THE RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE: RC = Resolutions Committee; VM = Voting Member of the Assembly</b>							
Recommended "Do Pass"	RC: "I move adoption."	No	No	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
"Do Pass as Amended"	RC: "I move adoption as amended."	No	No	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
"No Recommendation"	VM: "I move adoption of # ____."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
"Commit to Committee"	RC: "I move we refer # ____ to ____."	No	No	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
"Do Not Pass"	VM: "I move adoption of # ____."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
To Amend a Resolution/Motion:	VM: "I move to amend the motion by (deleting) (adding)."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
<b>II. PROCEDURAL MOTIONS INTRODUCED BY VOTING MEMBERS FROM THE FLOOR:</b>							
To Adjourn the Meeting:	"I move that we adjourn."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
To Recess the Meeting:	"I move that we recess (for)(until) ____."	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	No
To Return to the Agenda:	"I call for the orders of the day."	Yes	No	No	No	None	No
To Protest a Breach of Rules:	"I rise to make a point of order."	No	No	No	No	Chair rules	No
To Object to Ruling of the Chair:	"I appeal the decision of the Chair."	Yes	Yes	Chair only	No	Majority	Yes
To Verify a Voice Vote:	"I call for a division of the assembly."	Yes	50	No	No	None	No
To Vote on Separating the Parts of the Motion:	"I call for the division of the question."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	Yes
To Close Nominations:	"I move that nominations be closed."	No	Yes	No	No	2/3 Majority	No
To Suspend Rules Temporarily:	"I move that we suspend the rules and ____ so that ____."	No	Yes	No	No	2/3 Majority	No
To Suspend Consideration of a Motion Temporarily:	"I move to lay # ____ on the table."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
To End Debate and Amendments:	"I move the previous question."	No	Yes	No	No	2/3 Majority	No
To Refer a Resolution:	"I move that we refer # ____ to ____."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
To Consider a Tabled Motion:	"I move we take # ____ from the table."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
To Reconsider a Previous Action:	"I move we reconsider (action)."	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	No
To Request Information:	"Point of information."	Yes	No	No	No	None	No



