

SOUTH DAKOTA SYNOD STUDY 2025 BISHOP ELECTION

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The election of the South Dakota Synod Bishop will be held at the 2025 Synod Assembly. Bishop Constanze Hagmaier has served one term and is eligible for a second term. The South Dakota Synod Constitution (S9.04.A18) states "the Synod Council shall arrange for a synod study to be completed by the Synod Council meeting the fall prior to the beginning of the election process. The synod study shall be distributed to rostered ministers and congregations of the synod six months prior to the election, providing guidance throughout this synod as potential nominees for bishop are identified."

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

Rev. Cassandra Lamb, chair	Deacon Christie Meier	Rev. Dell Sanderson
Jack Holmquest	Malcom Chapman	Rev. Michael Jordan

The survey questions were adapted by the committee from a list of suggested questions from the ELCA Churchwide Office. The survey was offered online and was open from July 31 to September 4. Responses were collected from synod leaders, rostered ministers, and lay members of congregations. Two hundred and eight responses were received. The committee met virtually to analyze the results. Note that previously the ELCA Department for Research and Evaluation assisted with further data analysis.

WHO WE ARE - SOUTH DAKOTA SYNOD

Vision of the South Dakota Synod

Journeying Together in Christ

Core Values

- relating with intentionality
- networking across the church
- equipping leaders for ministry
- sharing leadership
- with confidence in Christ's love for all

Synod Population

The South Dakota Synod covers the entire state of South Dakota. South Dakota has an estimated population of 909,824 as of 2022. That is a growth of 11.5% since the 2010 census, ahead of the national growth of 7.7%. The largest concentrations of the population are Sioux Falls and Rapid City. According to the 2020 census, Minnehaha County and Lincoln County, which include Sioux Falls, have a combined population of 262,374. Pennington County, which is home to Rapid City, has a population of 109,222. Between 2018 (the last survey) and 2022, the largest growth happened in Minnehaha County, with 12,721 more residents and Lake County, (county seat: Madison) had the largest decline with 2,073 fewer¹

There are 186 congregations in the synod, which are subdivided into seven conferences. The estimated baptized membership is 92,239 as of the 2022 annual congregational reports. In addition, the Synod includes other ELCA ministries: Augustana University; Lutheran Campus Ministries in Aberdeen, Brookings, Madison, Rapid City, Spearfish, and Vermillion; three outdoor ministry sites that are part of Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota; Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota; St. Dymas; Church on the Street; and multicultural ministries including First Lutheran African, Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center, Pueblo de Dios, and Woyatan Lutheran. Several mission start congregations have sprouted in our synod including, Shepherd's Table, Spirit of Hope, McLaughlin Community Alliance, and the Box Elder exploration. We also accompany two companion synods internationally, Nicaragua and Cameroon.

SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESPONSES

Characteristics of the next bishop:

- Casting a Vision (63.5%)
- Being a Friendly & Approachable Person (47.1%)
- Understanding the Church's Culture & the Secular Culture (46.6%)
- Theology (42.8%)
- Preaching (33.7%)

Important areas the next bishop should focus on:

- Leadership development of both lay leaders and rostered ministers (53.8%)
- Caring for Rural Ministry (48.1%)
- Pastoral Care of Rostered Ministers (43.3%)
- Building Community (41.3%)
- Evangelism/Outreach/Welcome (33.2%)
- Faith Formation/Children, Youth & Family Ministry (32.7%)

¹ www.USAFacts.org
2025 SD Synod Survey

Narrative Answers

Several questions asked respondents for narrative answers. One response to each question was required, but additional responses were optional. These areas include much diversity of thought. We have sought to uplift the most common themes. The full responses can be found in the appendix.

What are the top two ways your congregation is making an impact?

Outreach & Service: “Reaching beyond the walls of the church, into community and state,” was the most frequent theme in these responses. The respondents most frequently (129) mentioned their church’s involvement in community highlighting food & feeding (44) and clothing (3).

Youth: “In our youth. We go on mission trips, engage in camp activities with confirmation groups, we help with feeding America and other youth projects to help the community. The youth are very active in fundraising for various projects that they choose. “ An impact of ministering to youth & families (89) is a priority in many congregations.

In addition, many respondents viewed their church as *welcoming* (19). Another impact mentioned somewhat frequently was education (14) and Bible study (19).

Based on your knowledge of the synod office, what are the top two ways the synod office is making an impact?

Many of the responses indicate that the synod office’s impact lies in incarnational ministry - showing up and having a listening ear to congregations. Respondents classify that way of ministry into two categories.

Support: 71 responses addressed support from the synod office. Giving direct support to clergy and rostered leaders (27); congregations and congregational leaders – particularly in rural ministry (21); and synod ministries, neighbors in solidarity, campus ministry, St. Dymas (14).

Provide: 82 responses cited provision from the synod office. Leadership to clergy and congregations, especially in the area of the call process, developing new leaders/ clergy, and developing new ministries (38); resources to clergy, congregations, and for disaster/physical needs (19); communication regarding ministry in the synod and the ELCA (12).

What are three of the biggest challenges facing the South Dakota Synod in the next six years?

Leadership/Clergy: This was the answer most often shared by the respondents (87). Issues surrounding the shortage of clergy, pay, education preparedness, vetting, and

an overall decline in seminarian students highlighted the responses. One respondent went as far as to say, “There is a widespread clergy and staffing crisis. There are not enough [clergy] entering ministry/seeking positions, and churches can’t afford the few available.”

Declining membership/church participation: About 52 responses focused on this decline for several reasons, including some of the other top challenges: social issues, divisiveness, changing societal norms/ values, and politics. Other areas highlighted were the overall aging population of churchgoers, lack of youth participation, lingering results from COVID-19, and the need for more outreach for greater engagement.

Financial matters: With a decline in church membership and participation, there is a growing concern about congregations' financial stability (35). This could lead to reduced generosity toward the synod's ministries, an urgent issue that the synod will face sooner rather than later.

Rural Ministries: While rural ministry was not among the top three challenges, it was mentioned frequently enough to warrant attention. There is a need to raise awareness about the challenges faced by this ministry, emphasize its importance, and garner support for it in the future.

What are three of the biggest opportunities for the South Dakota Synod in the next six years?

Rural Ministry: References to rural ministry was the biggest opportunity expressed in the survey in terms of raising up rural leaders, supporting rural ministry, and using grants to fund rural ministry (43).

Youth: The second most mentioned category was the need to lift up our youth. Comments centered around: create more opportunities for youth within the congregation and beyond; supporting youth programs, camps, youth gatherings; and discovering ways for the church to be relevant for them (37).

Technology: The use of technology is viewed as a valuable tool moving into the future. Respondents cited the newly created synod website, Pasque, as a great resource; encouraging electronic ways to learn and network with each other online; having a strong social media presence (33).

Other areas that were mentioned often were in the category of leadership (25), such as “encouraging/supporting more lay leadership;” supporting our Neighbors in Solidarity (18) like Church on the Street and Shepherd’s Table; the proclamation of the Good News (17); and inclusivity (20), especially with our relationship with BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and immigrants.

What are two of the biggest challenges facing those outside of our congregations and throughout our state that the next bishop of the South Dakota Synod should be aware of?

Politics: Respondents mentioned the challenges of our current political climate (78) – both from a state and national level and how that has led to large divides among us. Several comments specifically mentioned that this is a national election year.

Basic Needs: 71 comments focused on meeting the needs of others and how that is becoming increasingly difficult due to costs and the increase of people who need support. Specific needs mentioned were homelessness/affordable housing (25), hunger/food insecurity (18), mental health (14), isolation/loneliness (6), addiction (4), and childcare (4).

Marginalized Communities: 37 comments shared a struggle of how to work for justice, peace, and wellbeing with people in marginalized communities while also facing racism and hostility in our society. Specific groups mentioned were BIPOC (16), LGBTQ+ (11), and immigrants (4).

Economy: Comments mentioned the hardships folks are facing due to our current economic landscape – with rising costs, poverty has increased (31).

Rural Communities: 21 comments discussed the challenges specifically faced in rural communities. They are working hard to keep a sense of vitality amid uncertainties, divisions, and as population trends towards more urban areas.

What are two of the biggest opportunities facing those outside of our congregations and throughout our state that the next bishop of the South Dakota Synod should be aware of?

Outreach: Over 50 responses used words like “help,” “need,” “care,” and “support” which indicates that our biggest opportunity is outreach, to serve the neighbors in our communities by caring for their well-being and providing basic necessities. There were references to assisting with financial need, housing, food, and necessities. “The opportunity to join together as a community to meet the needs of the people in new and creative ways.” Several responses called on the synod to lead us toward solutions by helping to create cohorts for idea sharing, presenting models for rural community development, and education on relating with diversity across people. “Mobilizing congregations and the synod to be a collaborator at the table in communities facing big challenges (mental health, homelessness, poverty, access to affordable healthcare, human rights, equality, etc.)” There was also mention of how technology (10) could assist us in this collaborative work across our large geographical area.

Community: Respondents cited community (30) in primarily two different ways. The church has the ability to create and promote community, which some indicated was

intrinsic to South Dakota values. “People are lonely, and the church is good at community.” Citing the economic and population growth (19) in our state, responses indicate that there are indeed new people in our communities to reach. Respondents indicated an approach of welcome and love (16), represented by our Lutheran lens of humanity being created in the image of God and our call to care for all. A variety of populations were named (unhoused, hungry, youth, elderly, immigrants, indigenous, LGBTQ+, and other faith traditions). “You are a child of God, and you are welcome here.”

Advice for the Next Bishop

Listen & Connect: There were two main pieces of advice, both with 18 comments each - to listen to and to connect with people, which included rostered leaders and congregations as well as an attitude of teamwork.

Authenticity: Being true to oneself, one’s faith, and being authentic came up 17 times. There was an emphasis on being scriptural/confessional based (9), staying Christ focused (6) and maintaining an active prayer life (7).

Incarnational: It was important for the new bishop to show up (5), be approachable (5) and be a good communicator (5). An emphasis also included intentionally remembering rural and small congregations (15).

RESPONDENTS

There were 208 respondents to the survey. Over 68% of respondents are very well-acquainted with or have a relatively good understanding of the synod office’s functions and responsibilities. More than half of the respondents (56.7%) are members and/or active participants of a congregation in the South Dakota Synod while 40.9% of respondents are rostered ministers in the South Dakota Synod. Just over half of respondents (53.4%) have attended an ELCA congregation in this synod for 31 years or more.

The largest reporting came from those ages 61-70 (26.9%). The age categories of 51-60 (19.2%), 41-50 (17.8%), and 71-80 (17.3%) were similar sized response groups. 26.9% of respondents are from a large city (greater than 50,000 people). Another 26% are from a small city (10,001 - 50,000 people). 32.2% of respondents are from a small town (less than 2,000 people) or rural area. 12% of respondents are from a medium town (2,001 - 10,000 people). Just over half of respondents (53.8%) identified as female. 91.8% of respondents identified as white.

APPENDIX I

Graphs

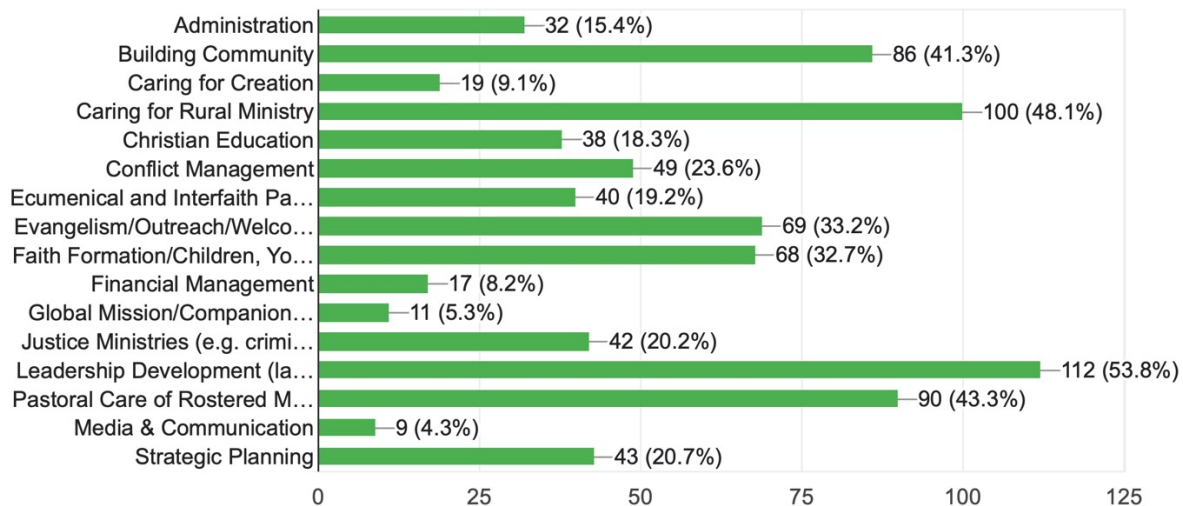
How well do you feel you understand the function and activities of the South Dakota Synod office?

208 responses



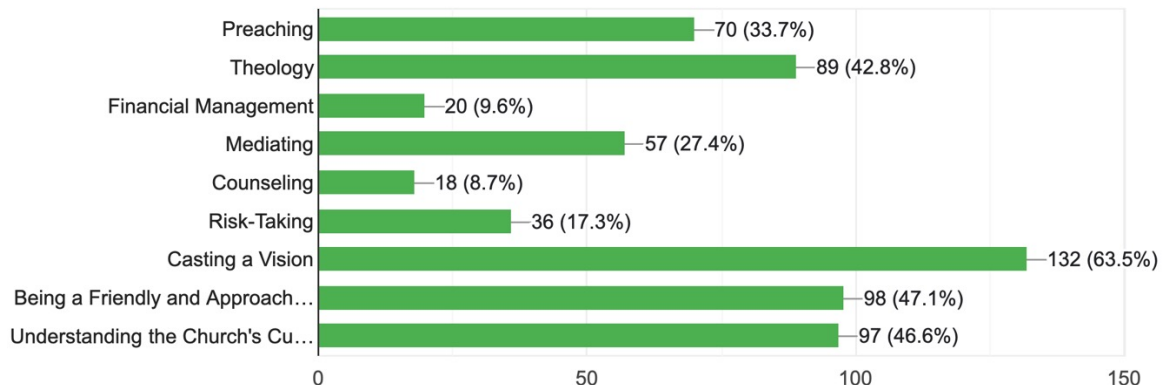
The list below contains 16 areas related to the work of a synodical bishop. Please choose the 4 most important areas on which the next bishop of the South Dakota Synod should focus.

208 responses

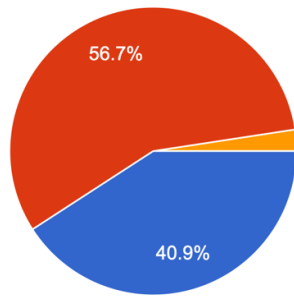


The list below contains 9 characteristics/traits often associated with a synodical bishop. Please choose the top 3 characteristics you would like to ...kota Synod. The next bishop should be effective in:

208 responses

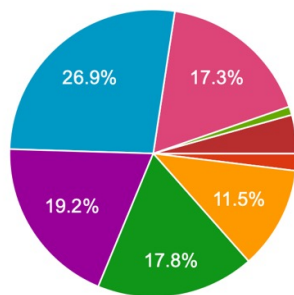


Are You:
208 responses



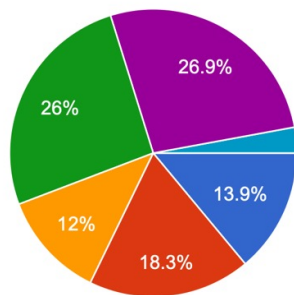
- A rostered minister in the South Dakota Synod
- A member and/or active participant of a congregation in the South Dakota Synod
- Other

What is your age?
208 responses



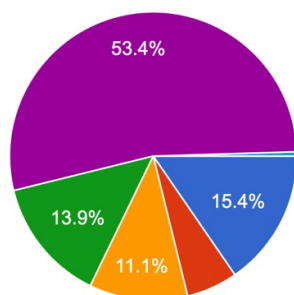
- Under 18
- 18-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61-70
- 71-80
- 81 or older
- Decline to State

What size of community is your congregation located in?
208 responses



- Rural
- Small Town (less than 2,000 people)
- Medium Town (2,001 - 10,000 people)
- Small City (10,001 - 50,000 people)
- Large City (greater than 50,000 people)
- Other

How long have you attended an ELCA congregation in the South Dakota Synod?
208 responses



- 5 years or less
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 21-30 years
- 31 years or more
- I do not attend an ELCA Congregation

APPENDIX II

Narrative Responses

Your Congregation

What are the top two ways your congregation is making an impact? (This could be an impact on congregation members, community members, or even people outside your community.)

- Creating a welcoming presence for all
- Feeding the hungry.
- Supporting our youth ministry to lay the foundation of faith in our youth so they are empowered to spread that throughout the world for generations to come
- Getting fired up again
- Naming sin and forgiving it in the name of Christ
- Pastoral Care
- Distributing quilts and knitted goods to people in need in our community
- More people are hearing the Good News of Jesus Christ and entering into our space. It is awesome. God's Word does not return empty.
- Congregation members
- Engaging people where they are.
- I'm not serving a congregation
- Being the good news on the streets
- We are resisting caving to the cultural pressures of the Social Justice Warrior agenda pushed by ELCA
- We provide a community in which our members and others can be grounded in the cross of Christ and in their relationships with one another.
- Children and Youth faith formation.
- Social justice
- Food Pantry
- Trinity's Pre-school
- We give to many different needy entities in our area
- By giving their entire offering to organizations beyond their walls.
- The gospel of Jesus Christ is known by more and more people inside the walls of the prisons.
- Peace serves as the fiscal agent and financial support for a number of local ministries. Peace is also actively convening congregations in SF to plan future shared ministry.
- Provide a faith-based context for intergenerational relationships.
- They are great on service .
- Involvement with many mission partners
- Youth ministry
- On young families
- Centering prayer opportunities
- Youth work
- Mission
- At First Lutheran in Sioux Falls (where I am a member) we enjoy the beauty of orthodox liturgy thereby rightly proclaiming God's Word and faithfully executing the sacraments. No pride flags or blessings for same gender unions keep fidelity to God.
- Welcome all people including being an RIC congregation
- We have an outsize impact on our community. Have had for years.
- Spiritual formation, worship, fellowship
- Biblical Teaching

- Members involved in the community
- I feel that Calvary is doing a good job of "feeding our flock". I sense that people are getting scriptural fed, as well as a wonderful sense of Godly community.
- Support of children, youth and young families.
- Service to the larger community.
- Supporting the LGBTQ+ community
- Relationships within and beyond our community.
- Growth as a small rural congregation
- Nurturing young adults in their vocations
- Focus on the youth in our community
- Regular opportunities to study God's word.
- Creation & support of Church on the Street
- Our congregation's biggest impact is #1 spiritual growth of our people
- Generosity with finances and in-kind giving
- The congregation has taken the lead in the community by offering inclusion and acceptance of young people.
- We are welcoming new, young families to church.
- I feel that the synod office acknowledges us and leads in a prayerful way.
- Biker Breakfasts at the Sturgis Rally
- Our financial support.
- Food Pantry / Community Outreach
- Serving local community through a variety of service opportunities
- Calling an associate pastor who works also with the LGBTQ+ community.
- Delivering the freeing Word of God to those who need to hear it.
- Proving a safe and happy place for child care.
- Nurturing faith for all ages
- Through our community clothing room.
- Providing support to Neighbors in Solidarity
- Teaching Biblical truth while not inserting ourselves into the divisive politics of churchwide.
- I'm retired and do pulpit supply
- Continuing to offer a place where God's word of forgiveness is heard and given.
- Our involvement with Miracle Treat Day impacts the community
- Providing a site for Food to You distributions for the community.
- Preaching the Gospel
- In a sea of conservatism my congregations are a beacon of moderation and having a resurrection.
- Outreach to the local community
- Participation in the food pantry
- Reaching out to entire community and welcoming new and existing members
- We have developed a strong youth program for Sunday school ages through confirmation. We have a full time youth and family director.
- Providing community for people
- Our congregation provides many donations to the community and actively supports military and veterans.
- We operate the only Homeless Shelter on the reservation.
- Our community service.

- Since Vicar Amber has taken over leadership in our church, we are engaging many more young families. It is energizing have the children in attendance regularly.
- Spiritual growth of our faith community. Our weekly worship services in person and online feed the faith of our community. Bible studies, Circles, Sunday School, VBS, youth programs.
- There is not impact in our community; our church is declining; Numbers are less every day
- Our Community Garden has been a wonderful way to care for our congregation and a welcome spot for folks in our community to get to know Brandon Lutheran.
- Supporting Susan B Anthony
- Our pastor preaches the Gospel, the Truth.
- The ways we are getting our members involved in worship.
- Offering safe meaningful worship weekly and administering the sacraments
- Outreach to our local community as well as to the larger ELCA communities
- Proclaiming the Gospel to free people.
- Whenever we get a chance, we hold events that bring people together. This is so important in a rural community. This is where our ministry starts.
- Providing support for volunteer programs such as Feeding South Dakota and Pierre Area Referral.
- Wednesday church service
- Adult Bible study
- We are being encouraged to read the bible DAILY
- Preaching the Gospel to children: Active Sunday and Wednesday schools for kids
- The sermon is put on social media.
- Sharing the Truth, the traditional Gospel. Not creating new truths based on secular views.
- Youth ministry
- Young families
- Friendship!
- Preaching the Word of God.
- Church congregation is a vital cog in community. We are providing that cog.
- Youth (LO camps & NYG & youth programs)
- My congregation has a feeding ministry where 50-60 people are fed very simple meals each day
- Congregation Members
- St. Marks has many activities that are community oriented. St. Dysmas, the Banquet, work at churches west river, trips to Cameroon and Nicaragua, church on the street, etc. I often think of our congregation as the small church with the big heart.
- Care for people in congregation and communities -- Spiritual Care through worship, baptisms, funerals, visitations, etc.; and practical care -- providing food and needed items for those in need in the community.
- We are experiencing an influx of people in the community. The new members are young families with children. I our Sunday School has attracted new families.
- I believe my congregation has a positive impact with families and being multigenerational with our activities/services.
- Becoming Open and Affirming
- Growing with active engagement from young families
- Community outreach
- Acceptance and welcoming of all people regardless of race, color, or sexual orientation.
- Involvement and support in the community re: Homeless, hungry, school mentoring,

- The leadership and congregation are learning to be an evangelical/outreach church.
- St Marks believes and acts as a community of Christ and excels as being inclusive recently voting to become a Reconciling In Christ church
- Community outreach & service
- They truly welcome visitors at worship and get to know them.
- We have a monthly mission outreach that helps with hunger often.
- Leadership within our congregation and community
- Wednesday night youth classes. (Sunday school)
- Our congregation work with the local food pantry. Try to give food away to the community.
- Offering community Christian Education for children and youth
- Through ministries like Food 2 You, Feeding South Dakota, and Necessities for Neighbors.
- We make it easy for young families to teach their children about Christ. We also support strongly our teenagers, who recently returned from the Youth Gathering in New Orleans.
- Congregation very welcoming
- Food insecurity in our neighbors and larger neighborhood
- Engagement with various statewide nonprofits involving homelessness, food insecurity, etc.
- Supporting out local nursing homes
- Being Christ's presence in this place
- Living out our baptismal promise as a congregation by providing the full cost of bible camp for any member of our congregation to attend an LO Bible camp to learn and live in Christian community.
- Sharing Gospel through Word and music
- Faith formation through worship, preaching, teaching at all age levels.
- We need more people in church.
- Creating a place for families to come and grow together in faith
- Growing our congregation and our continued service with feeding SD
- Teaching the children of the congregation
- Feeding Brookings distribution weekly
- Reaching out to younger families in our community.
- VBS for whole community
- Sunday worship
- A stable, welcoming, friendly worship community
- We are the only congregation in the community of Summit so we carry that place in all events like Baccalaureate, funerals, etc.
- Feeding the hungry.
- We serve food to the homeless.
- Feeding of Native Americans and others who are "down and out."
- Teaching Gods word for better understanding on how even though we fall short we have hope
- Revived active youth group (after years)
- Working with young people again in Sunday School and Young adult league
- We provide a free clothing room to our community. Many people take advantage of this ministry.
- Good Shepherd Clinic
- Vibrant worship life
- Children's ministry
- Our Wednesday School Program reaches out into the community

- Being there to talk and share in bible study
- Outreach to the community
- No visible impact
- Addressing food insecurity
- Welcoming place for children and youth, while engaging them in relationship building and faith formation.
- Traditional worship—liturgy, music, etc.
- Fellowship for families with children ages 0-18
- The gift of Hospitality.
- Food for needy
- We provide a sense of community within our neighborhood.
- Worship
- Community outreach
- Meal for the community once a month
- Bible studies for congregational/community members
- Youth Education -- Rostered Leader & Lay led from Preschool to HS. Post-secondary scholarships awarded each college semester.
- Bring various people from an eclectic background in belief and faith.
- Connecting people with God through worship & education/discipleship ministries
- Congregation members
- Fostering community relationships
- The congregation I was a part of was always trying to include all
- Our congregation is making an impact as we minister to young families with small children.
- Our pastor is incredibly active in the community. He works with all kinds of groups and people and not just the 'Lutheran component'. His contributions to the community are immeasurable.
- We are maintaining our rural roots and history as we continue to move forward in Christ.
- They respond to requests for financial and physical needs, ie food pantry with our congregational representative.
- Serving young families
- Serving community needs
- Inviting families to Wednesday worship
- We are providing quality Bible study and worship options for all ages.
- Forgiving sins
- Equipping people for ministry
- Nurturing our congregation
- Youth
- Connection to community through feeding ministry & other
- Our congregation is very active with mission projects through our women's group.
- Hosting an LSS recovery group for people on probation.
- We serve in our community by supporting ministries like Charis Ministries and our Neighbors in Solidarity. We do this through awareness, serving alongside these organizations, and raising funds occasionally.
- We are a welcoming, caring place for all.
- Community involvement
- Faith -- proclaiming the Gospel and implementing programming for the sake of faith.
- Monthly community food give away

- St John Lutheran in Warner is making an impact through providing a place of worship for those in and around the Warner area.
- intentionally improving communication with pastor/leadership
- Community outreach via numerous programs.
- Outreach to surrounding community like food pantry
- Classes such as SAIL and A Matter of Balance free of charge to the community
- In our youth. We go on mission trips, engaged in camp activities with confirmation groups we help with feeding America and other youth projects to help the community. The us are very active in fundraising for various projects that they choose.
- Provide a free safe playground for the neighborhood
- We run a area food pantry out of our church
- Providing spiritual guidance and religious education.
- People from outside our congregation are bringing their children to Sunday School.
- Support to local youth programs
- Keeping engaged in community outreach and assistance.
- Impacting the spiritual needs of all ages of members within the congregation.
- Feeding Ministry
- Our facility is used for public events outside of just church
- Accompanying young adults
- Inviting others to worship.
- We continue to preach, teach, and live out the gospel through our worship and service in the community.
- Building a church community
- Administering the sacraments
- Feeding the hungry
- Providing Wednesday evening meals to congregants and community members
- We impact the surrounding community by helping with the food pantries, ministerial tasks, etc. we contribute to LSS, St. Dysmas, LuMin, among other things.
- Youth
- Finding ways to share faith across generations
- Creating connections between congregations, individuals, and the unhoused/underhoused community for prayer, support, and accompaniment.
- We are reinforcing the Lutheran ethos that the Bible is normative for what we teach and confess.
- We provide a place out of which Pueblo de Dios can extend their ministry to the Latine community in Sioux Falls area.
- Feeding both church members and people in the community.
- Community involvement
- Faithful worship
- Community Food Distribution
- Give to international needs
- Connecting congregations to the mission and congregation of St Dysmas in new and meaningful ways.
- Peace has designed and is implementing a member engagement process called Discover Peace that creates personalized discipleship plans for individuals and groups.
- Provide a Lutheran witness in underserved, small communities.
- They help feed the hungry.

- Support of youth and families in our community including allowing our space to be used by a private pre-school
- Community outreach
- Children
- Community garden
- Community outreach through meals
- Living the faith
- Outreach to those who are infirm is a priority.
- Involved with mutual service with local ministries, Native American relations, work at the border and international work.
- We continue to reach non members in amazing ways
- Both churches are a gathering place for funerals, weddings, anniversaries, and town celebrations
- Christian education of all ages
- Youth group
- For the past year we have been building community through strong attributes such as, predictability, awareness of their needs, and reaching out to them through scripture and service.
- Connecting people with mission/ service.
- Financial generosity outside the congregation.
- proclaiming the Gospel
- Caring for and equipping adults and families to live out their faith.
- Innovation as a small rural congregation
- Finding innovative intersections between faith, learning, and life
- Our annual Lutefisk Supper allows some support for various projects
- Several opportunities to serve. Feeding South Dakota, Community Banquet, Pierre Area Referral Services, Missouri Shores Domestic Violence Shelter, Women's Prison Ministry, Backpack program for school supplies many more.
- Welcoming & inclusive... having an LGBTQ+ pastor
- As we open our facility to the community, we open God's house to them.
- Faith formation of children
- We are introducing new ideas to our church family to expand ideas of how to welcome all.
- I feel like we are a part of something real and important.
- Money raised (net of \$10k) goes to missions
- Engagement with the Synod and Bishop Constanta.
- Children's Ministry
- Fostering deeper relationships through small groups and planned lunches with intentional invitations
- Increase in membership especially children and families.
- Helping people to live out a calling to be the church in everyday life.
- Meeting the pastoral needs of our members and immediate neighborhood.
- Feeding and outreach ministries
- Through authentic messages of hope and challenge.
- Feeding the hungry in our area through support of a food pantry
- Biblical based book studies.
- By the end of July, Leganger ladies have sewn and distributed 170 quilts.
- The book studies impact the congregation

- Providing space for the Pueblo de Dios congregation as well as meeting space for other community groups.
- Providing a clothing room
- We have a day care which is desperately needed and offer community education
- Support of youth ministries and camps
- Kits and quilts to LWR
- Providing youth with positive Christian experiences and education
- We are attempting to make worship meaningful to all ages and generations. We do that with in person service enhancements and also with on line live worship services.
- Our congregation does not promote woke ideology that is not consistent with scripture.
- Additionally we operate 4 other ministries at the same time.
- Offering a friendly environment for worship
- Our congregation continues to invest time and money in our grounds. We've become a neighborhood playground, which is wonderful!
- Community impact- service projects supposing the new childcare center opening in our community soon. Delivering meals on wheels. Leading worship services and playing bingo at the care center. Community ecumenical youth group.
- Our Children's Ministry and Youth ministry is serving 400+ children and youth from our church and community every week. Many children and youth invite their friends to join them for confirmation, Sunday and Wednesday School, VBS and youth ministry.
- Finishing paying off our mortgage so we can dedicate money to other projects
- We are learning what it means to be Lutheran and to use discernment
- The new members we are receiving.
- Join in where we see God at work in our communities, the SD Synod and the wider church and being curious how we, in our rural space with limited resources can join in.
- Faith formation offerings in house
- Intentionally and actively providing welcome, hospitality, and inclusion to the stranger, the refugee, the poor, and the marginalized.
- We often hold drives to collect items for those less fortunate.
- Youth Christian education
- Legislation. Being a church home for legislators
- Making our church ADA compatible
- Adult Education focused on Biblical understanding
- Facilitating volunteering for Feeding South Dakota
- The church helps with our community
- Our congregation is one that draws in community members. There are new community outreaches, events, and ministry opportunities every month.
- Bible study groups
- Pastor Craig's community actions
- Raising youth with a firm Biblical foundation.
- Outlet for congregation to live their faith rather than just attending church.
- Worship (Our regular Sunday & Wed worships)
- My congregation has received grant money which has been used to help people get into housing
- Community members
- Community
- Christian Education for people of all ages in the community -- Sunday School, VBS, Confirmation, Adult Bible Study, etc.

- Our mission's receipts has increased by 40% over the past 2 years.
- We have many volunteers for various service/mission groups in the community.
- Community Outreach/Service projects
- Broad service in the community, including support of Shepherd's Table, Church on the Street, St. Dysmas, others
- Open & clear acceptance of ALL people
- Community outreach
- Welcoming ALL to the church
- Placing a broader base of congregants in service and leadership positions.
- St Marks takes its mission outreach seriously. Nite Out yesterday had probably 300 neighbors attend for pie and conversation, 10 Star quilts were made and presented to native graduates whose families didn't have the means to provide them.
- Meaningful Christian education & worship
- The quilting group is a blend of all ages and give the quilts they make to local needs.
- We are a congregation that welcomes everyone no matter who they are!
- Missions for our community, region, country and world
- Feeding Brookings (drive up free Thursday food)
- Our congregation provides grants to local charities
- Continuing with in person and online worship
- Through neighborhood block parties.
- We are accessible. It's easy to join the congregations, easy to participate. Our little Goodhue congregation has gained 3 members in the last few years, so we now have 23 members!
- Our pastor is a community leader
- Welcoming hundreds of children and youth into our building and telling them about Jesus
- Community outreach to those without a church
- Supporting our local food bank
- Being a welcoming community where young families feel comfortable
- Being present for members of our congregation and community in prayer and acts of kindness for those in need facing uncertainty and loss in their lives.
- Helping others through time, talent, treasure
- Impact in the community through regular financial and volunteer support to Charis Ministries and to our local fire department.
- To Learn about God.
- Providing a Christian Preschool for the Community
- Pastor Craig does an amazing job in the community bringing those in need into the fold
- Sharing the joy of Easter with the community
- Wednesday night youth program
- Helping new comers find a place in their church even if they do not choose to become members.
- Trying to be community church
- VBS
- Support of synod ministries with special offerings
- We serve as a communication hub in the community especially for the needs of people in trouble, etc. Our members and our communication make a difference.
- Mission outreach.
- We are a very friendly and welcoming community.
- Assisting folks with monetary needs. Driver's licenses, bus fares, birth certificates, etc.

- New members have joined from other denominations
- We strive to provide a meaningful worship experience each week.
- Friendship Ministry & Children's Ministry
- Outreach and service
- Support of those in need
- Mission work
- Working to connect with the many cultures in the Huron community
- Christian education
- Houses the local food pantry
- community outreach, support
- solid Christian education for youth
- Nursing home/homebound outreach ministries
- Youth activities
- We serve as a connection to our history.
- Worship
- New programming starting to encourage young family involvement
- Holding annual bazaar
- Supporting the work of the larger church (world hunger, missions, quilting, etc.)
- Community Members -- Rostered leader and lay volunteer visitations at member & non-member homes. Monthly church services with communion at each assisted living & retirement home in the city.
- Bring peace and harmony into peoples' lives in a shared understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Serving community through meal ministry etc.
- Community
- Providing space for regular worship
- The congregation finds ways to get involved in the community about once a month
- We make an impact as we maintain a strong outreach to members as well as people in the community who need encouragement
- We are turning outwards to help in the community that we reside.
- Our quilters who also do school kits and layettes.
- Raising Funds for Mission, local and global
- Mission outreach in the local community
- We support a variety of feeding ministries within our church and the community.
- Proclaiming the Good News Of Jesus Christ
- Reaching out to the community around us to help
- Offering faith-filled education
- Hosting the local Boy Scout group.
- We strive to create a community that reminds each other of God's love for everyone.
- Community. Connecting people to God and each other.
- I don't feel our congregation does much to make an impact.
- St John Lutheran in Warner is making an impact through our various stewardship projects that help local and global ministries
- Benevolent giving
- Collaboration with area churches on a variety of projects.
- Our local community with task like coats for kids through the local school
- The Elmen Grant will expand community access to our library

- There are three different services at our church over the weekend and wondering the week. There are many services and we have a Wednesday night meal that is well attended by families. We also have a Facebook outreach program for online
- Online service
- Every Sunday we live stream church for all to watch
- Offering connections and a place of community.
- Our church hosts a number of community events each year.
- Mission Support to the Synod
- Starting a high school bible study
- Serving the needs of our neighbors locally and abroad.
- Good Livestream
- We provide some funds to local charities

The South Dakota Synod

Based on your knowledge of the synod office, what are the top two ways the synod office is making an impact?

- accompanying congregations
- In a Christ like manner, they "show up" as He did. Whether in rural or urban areas of need, they respond personally, with a brave heart.
- They provide resources to congregations and leaders on furthering their knowledge and ministry
- I like the Bishop we have now
- Helping illustrate what the ELCA is all about - social justice/community organizing
- Caring for and supporting rostered leaders
- Mini grants to rural congregations had been a good start.
- Being visible and getting out into the congregations
- Reaching beyond the walls of the church into the community and beyond.
- Being available to answer questions when needed
- Supporting pastors and individual congregations
- They show up and listen
- They are hastening the decline of the ELCA in South Dakota by pushing agendas that are political
- By equipping leaders for public ministry in the ELCA.
- Calling and nurturing rostered leaders.
- SD synod connections between rural urban, west east, rostered /lay
- Reinforcing congregational relationships
- Rural & global outreach
- Giving 42% of our benevolence to churchwide
- Their appearance at special events for the men. It takes a lot of effort to get into the state prison.
- Being present for congregations in new and meaningful ways.
- I believe that the synod provides accountability for clergy and congregations that is beyond the scope of clergy and congregations.
- Support through relationships of pastors and congregations.
- Being innovative with rural ministry
- Supporting pastors and their call

- Educational support for lay and rostered
- Strengthened rural ministry
- Listening
- Work in rural areas
- calling people into ministry
- The synod office negatively impacts our church by its drum-beating for all the social justice efforts du juor.
- Affirming and supporting the work of congregations and ministries
- having a tough time here. I don't see a lot of impact
- Keeping us connected with each other and the wider church
- Mobility
- seeking input from rostered leaders and congregation members
- They are attached to our church. They show up when asked and they are constantly available to us.
- Support of congregations in call process.
- Call processes.
- Assisting churches in transition
- Supporting clergy and congregations.
- Providing consistent pastoral support for rostered leaders in the synod.
- Lifting up rural ministries
- I love the new Pasque platform and the SD synods launch of it.
- Pastor placement, support and some direction.
- Ensuring that congregations & pastors have support
- Helping us see we are a larger part of God's family
- Resources for congregations especially rural
- The individual support for rostered leaders is exceptional.
- I get to be a student and vicar! This synod office has not only prayerfully, but powerfully, encouraged me in that role. I am forever thankful!
- Keeps in touch with rural congregations.
- Lutheran Planned Generosity
- Helping congregations to seek ministerial positions.
- Pastoral / Congregational Connections
- Value of rural ministry
- Offering some new programs although I know most through the e-news and not direct experience.
- Helping congregations walk through the process of finding a new pastor
- The Synod provides resources for ministry.
- Support to pastors- be a pastor to the pastor
- As a resource for the needs of congregations and their leaders.
- Making a place at the table for everyone
- It has become so progressive that it is alienating our traditional congregations.
- They are accessible and actually care about their pastors, etc. They listen and they hear.
- Helping to place leaders (pastors and more) into their calls.
- Working with churches to find pastors
- Helps place new pastors in congregations throughout SD
- Strengthening Christ's perspective on social issues
- Finding good candidates for ministry and not just waiting to get names.
- Supporting congregations in searches for clergy

- Support to congregations in transition.
- Screening pastoral candidates coming out of seminary.
- Making a consistent state wide function of the Lutheran church in South Dakota.
- Supporting the false woke ideology
- The synod continues to fail traditional congregations by not speaking up and pushing back against woke ideology.
- They provide guidance for our ministry
- offering a variety of ministries ie: St. Dymas
- Supporting existing pastors
- Leadership of South Dakota ELCA's Lilly Grant, the Rural Ministry staff, and technology initiatives.
- No impact, just told this comes from the synod office, but is the best for the small church, I feel we should leave the synod and go out on our own for what little the synod does for our congregation
- Caring for congregations and pastors throughout the state.
- Holding senate meetings annually
- They're good at sending out the propaganda that comes from churchwide
- Providing support to ministers.
- Support for rostered leaders and congregations through guidance and leadership
- Rural Ministry
- Accompaniment: being a conversation partner
- Supporting congregations.
- Providing oversight and direction to the South Dakota ministry members.
- I'm not really seeing a great impact; more like some disappointments.
- They are stifling the opinions of those who disagreed
- Coordinating congregations find pastors
- There is currently a nationwide initiative to spread fake truths and smear the gospel message to fit secular worldviews. The statewide office is dangerously in jeopardy of being in line with the national movement.
- Support of rostered leaders especially in times of stress and crisis
- Promoting non-Lutheran issues
- Allowing individual congregations to do church in how they see it best to do church (good and bad)
- Support for synod churches especially during internal challenges
- Walking with congregations in the call process
- Their work to make sure congregations of South Dakota have appropriate leadership.
- Centralized resource for pastors and congregations
- Guidance for pastors
- Providing the leadership for ELCA churches in the state and trying to staff churches with pastors.
- Helping congregations in transition and working to provide them ministers through the call process.
- I feel that the South Dakota Synod has become more transparent over the past six years. I really appreciate the work being done by the rural ministry liaison. It has made a huge difference in Day County.
- Communication
- Ongoing Education
- Developing new ministries

- Monthly communication via congregational newsletters
- I am not convinced they are making an impact.
- I really know very little about what the synod office does
- Listening and serving the people where they are at.
- Working to staff churches with pastors
- Showing Up & Listening
- Rural Ministry
- They reach out to rural ministries.
- Leadership
- support campus ministries
- The synod office supports congregations with their call process.
- Showing up at conference gatherings and in churches
- Helping congregations find rostered leaders.
- It has helped churches who are without pastors.
- Statewide leadership
- Support to congregations
- Recruiting and supporting pastors
- Helping with disasters
- They stand in solidarity and accompaniment of the congregations of the ELCA
- Walking with congregations in their journey in the call process and during their time of transition.
- Finding pastors for pulpits
- Support to congregations and to pastors especially going through the call process.
- Supporting Rostered Leaders and Congregations
- Providing a source for replacing pastors.
- Assisting with pastoral call process
- They are showing up all over the synod not only in the most populated areas.
- There when you need them
- Pairing congregations with ministers (various forms)
- Support of rostered leaders and congregations in transition
- Bringing us opportunities to help our partners in solidarity.
- Providing direction and assistance to the churches and communities.
- Providing a West River presence
- Providing support, tools and education opportunities for our pastor and members
- Inclusive, servant leadership style to wide Synod population
- Helping congregations find pastors in rural areas
- They continue to walk alongside congregations in transition and in difficult situations, especially with weather related emergencies.
- Pastoral calls - Assoc. Bishop
- Pastoral call process
- Support of rural congregations
- Rural ministry
- Finding ways to show up in various communities
- Finding pastors
- showing up, listening, and responding
- Supporting Congregations in Transition
- Accompanying congregations in times of challenge and transition.
- Supporting an inclusive faith

- We have a thoughtful, empathetic Bishop. It is great having a Bishop who is more than “Talk”; she’s not afraid to get down into the trenches when we are there and in need of a helper.
- Assistance if finding clergy
- Connecting the National ELCA with the local level.
- Candidacy and Mobility
- Pulpit supply
- Providing guidance to the churches
- Leadership on statewide issues; political and other issues
- Neighbors in Solidarity -- The support here is so impressive to me.
- Creating an agreeable environment for pastors and adjudication of responsibilities, creating and impact on those that follow Jesus Christ.
- Supporting congregations in rostered leadership transitions
- Facilitating opportunities
- The synod is making an impact as they strive for diversity (Shepherds Table) Church on the Street
- I think your impact is a negative influence now. Becoming way too liberal. The emphasis on social justice and diversity and inclusion has led you away from the bible. This is an impact that is harmful to biblical truth.
- it does not take weeks and months for the synod to respond to questions and or concerns.
- Reaching out to all congregations and responding to their needs.
- Responding to congregational needs
- Distributing resources to congregations/communities in need
- Mission ministry throughout S.D.
- Supporting congregations in the call process and raising up future ministers.
- Digital Innovative ministry to support and connect people
- Recruiting and maintaining good clergy for SD
- Relationships with rostered leaders and congregations
- Providing timely resources to congregations, members and rostered leaders
- Synod provides many resources or access to resources for congregations to do ministry.
- Overseeing congregations looking for new pastors.
- Walking alongside and supporting congregations in their highs and lows, and during their leadership transition times, in particular.
- They seem to limit our congregation by expressing a “herr pastor” attitude
- Call process -- supporting, guiding, facilitating congregations in calling leaders.
- I'm not aware of what the Synod functions are. I do know they give recommendations pertaining to raises, but don't offer HR help/advice
- The SD Synod office is making an impact by providing resources for the congregations within the SD Synod to thrive in their ministry settings
- walking alongside congregations/people to help point others to Christ
- Campus ministry and homeless ministry.
- Helping to find a minister
- When a pastor leaves, they walk with you thru the process
- Helping the Lutheran churches have a broader impact in the community and in South Dakota
- Trying to help get pastors in all the churches
- Considering global partnerships.

- The synod office offers opportunities for pastors and lay leaders to gain skills that will help their congregations and communities.
- Outreach to rural communities
- Providing support to congregations in transition
- Filling open pulpits so that the proclamation of the gospel and sacraments are rightly administered.
- Support to ministry with congregations seeking a pastor
- Monetary grants for flooding
- Developing leaders
- Innovation: (e.g. Pasque, internet solutions and connections, etc.)
- They provide opportunities for our leaders to continue to grow, develop, and network with colleagues.
- Helping find pastors
- Making clear the hypocrisy inherent to people who think their righteousness is in one's political stance
- Caring and support synod ministries
- Resourceful
- Working to fill rural ministry positions
- Supporting ministries that cannot support themselves
- They are present in the hard and the celebrations
- They are demonstrating what happens when you bring "inclusivity" and other false gospels as ministry of "the church"
- By building and supporting new and otherwise crucial but unsustainable ministries across the synod.
- Providing collaborative resources that both support and help connect congregations to each other as well as to the synod office.
- Realization of what can and cannot happen in the unique setting of the SD Synod
- Partners in Solidarity
- Support for current & future rostered leaders
- Neighbors in solidarity
- Providing support for congregations in transition.
- The synod provides coordination at a scale that local congregations cannot provide or communicate.
- Centering the synod in the Lutheran witness and bridging distance and difference.
- Showing up
- encouraging and inspiring outside the box approaches to ministry
- Rural Ministry
- Providing vision and resources to congregations
- Providing fiscal opportunities (e.g. grants) and support to congregations and ministries.
- Rural ministry
- Being consistent and faithful
- Maybe candidacy
- Providing guidance and help to find a pastor
- Taking imaginative steps to address concerns and challenges of rostered leaders & congregation members
- The Synod office supports us and communicates with us on a regular basis.
- Support of pastors.
- Candidacy.

- putting out fires
- Listening for and discerning their call as leaders throughout our synod.
- Innovation and vision toward the future.
- Supporting congregations and church leaders
- We've been a niggling bur in the synods side but lovingly guides our path to non-niggliness.
- Helping to train and then send leaders to congregations
- Mobility
- This synod office gives much effort into communication and encouragement.
- It has been positive interactions with the Bishop and staff.
- ELCA Youth Gathering
- Support for conflict, financial, and building relationships with others.
- Rural Ministry Development
- Ongoing education through Pasque
- Rural initiative.
- Working collectively to do things no single congregation could do.
- The Synod serves as a vital link between congregations and churchwide.
- Support for congregations- during good and hard days
- Addressing rural ministry shortages
- It is only concerned with the goals and mission of churchwide that it no longer meets the needs of its local congregations.
- The concern and care they've shown about rural ministry and all that entails.
- Offering resources and guidance when needed for different scenarios.
- Working with minorities and underserved populations
- Supports Native American congregations as well as others like Church on the Street, PdD, Lutherans Outdoors, new LGBTQ+ start-up
- matching clergy to congregations
- Thinking outside of the box, being digitally connected and being present to rural congregation who feel forgotten
- Communicating with congregations about the overall work of the churches in the synod
- Resources for congregational needs and resources for individual needs
- They provide support for me personally
- helping with call processes
- Working to expand the supply of leaders for SD congregations.
- Connection and communication between ELCA Churchwide and our congregations regarding all aspects of leadership- from Portico to God's Work Our Hands to Cameroon and Argentina
- Developing and supporting new ministries in the state.
- Helping us to find a new pastor, and getting us interim pastors
- They're good at skirting controversial topics which should be discussed at Synod assemblies.
- Providing support to all churches that belong to the ELCA.
- Online Offerings & Communication
- Equipping Rostered Ministers and Lay Members
- They have list their biblical responsibilities
- Synodwide networking of congregation assistance to the poor, the hungry and in prison.
- Support of congregations while in search of new Pastors or changes within the individual congregations and providing guidance during those times

- Getting away from basics of being a Lutheran and Christian
- Being a mouthpiece for church wide.
- Spreading outreach beyond our borders for global impact
- Their regular communications
- The work done to lift up and support our Neighbors in Solidarity
- coordination of events/camps/conferences
- Policies/Procedures of Lutheran Bylaws
- Supporting area congregations and ministries by providing learning materials, continuing education for lay and rostered ministers. They are also available to help when needed with any questions or concerns that congregations and/or ministers have.
- I also really appreciate the positive approach toward dealing with the decline in clergy available for call.
- Faith Formation
- Supporting clergy, especially First Call and Rural Congregations
- Need to know more information about what the synod's purpose is
- Providing resources and information that guides congregations to live out the Gospel.
- Helping to set the tone for dialog
- Timely, effective communication
- Showing up
- They can help fill vacancies when there is a pastoral vacancy.
- Communication
- International partnership with ??????
- The synod office offers grants to congregations to meet the needs of their communities.
- Working hard to ensure congregations have leaders
- Helping clusters of congregations through shared ministry events.
- It respects the desire of small congregations to stay open, even when times are tough.
- Sharing God's love with those on the margins on behalf of our congregations
- Statewide outreach which includes everything from starting to congregations to supporting a number of ministries throughout the state
- Helping more with rural churches
- Reaching out showing the face of Christ to rural congregations, people on the street, individuals of different sexual orientation and emigrant population loving our neighbors where they are at.
- Encouraging and educating congregations & public
- Support to Neighbors in Solidarity, companion synods and ELCA organizations by way of sharing news and events about these partners and through financial gifts.
- Connecting congregations to ministries that are serving those most in need in our Synod
- Unifying area churches
- Helping rural congregations problem solve
- They are making an effort to fully live out the “Journey Together” and the theme of our last assembly “Connected.”
- If they don't know will find your answer
- Guidelines for congregations & pastors - HR support
- Connecting people and congregations across the state with one another and to needed resources
- Bringing communication of classes, stewardship opportunities, conferences, etc. throughout the synod.
- Timely communications to the flock

- missions
- They are reaching across the river and thinking of innovative ways to connect synod members and rostered leaders.
- Rural Ministry funding
- Sense of the wider church
- Outreach to those in need
- Being available to the congregations
- developing new programs to help clergy and lay to work together
- Maintaining a clerical competence
- Available to provide needed assistance
- Exploring alternative church models for rural ministries
- Visioning for future ministry endeavors, while remaining rooted in specific needs of local congregations.
- Excellent communication.
- Rural ministry
- Helping our individual voices be heard on the church at large.
- Really, it is candidacy and mobility
- Giving leadership
- Assistance in looking for a new pastor when necessary
- Pasque -- creating this on-line learning system from scratch for the entire synod to use is amazing.
- Benefits from skilled organization such as upholding fundamental principles - "security" in operations.
- Spiritual leadership
- Through the Candidacy Committee, the Synod Office strives to support candidates for ministry.
- Care: the synod cares and shows that care to its congregations and clergy.
- I live too far away to be able to go to the coffees that Bishop Constanze has implemented and other opportunities for one on one conversations.
- Creating/Sustaining Mission Partnerships
- Raising up new leaders and support of current clergy/lay leaders
- Creating new worshipping communities and models.
- Providing new opportunities for learning within Pasque.
- Creative ministry in rural areas
- Helping and supporting congregations in need
- Addressing needs and concerns
- Providing timely communication & outreach when needed
- Staying in touch with the conference pastors.
- Serving as a resource to rostered leaders and lay staff to better lead within their contexts.
- Strength in numbers: facilitating collaboration for the sake of good ministry
- The SD Synod office is making an impact through their stewardship project that assist local and global ministries
- Strengthening relationships / building trust/ looking for innovative ways to meet the needs of the Synod
- Revitalization of rural ministries.
- Educating our members
- We had a severe staffing problem and our congregation was very upset. The synod office helped tremendously with the process of healing.

- They also help distribute finances and apply for grant monies. They also figure out who they want to work in the churches that regarding pastors.
- Trying to get more young people involved
- Offering scholarships and support for pastors
- The synod offices support various missions across the state.
- Assistance with the Call Process
- Helping congregations understand and know the needs of our neighbors and giving congregations the opportunity to help.
- Rural ministry emphasis
- Assist churches with things like constitution updates

What are three of the biggest challenges facing the South Dakota Synod (whole synod, congregations, leaders) in the next six years?

- less financial stability in congregations will result in less generosity to ministries of the synod
- Old people in old pews, thinking something will change; not reaching out.
- Increasing giving through other avenues (such as LPG - but people need to be aware of this AND use it).
- declining membership
- Putting well-educated pastors in pulpits
- Filling rostered vacancies in congregations
- Lack of support for rural congregations and a concentration of wealth and support for the largest population areas.
- The progressive politics of the ELCA will be the greatest challenge facing our Synod. The next Bishop will have a major task in keeping the peace within the Synod if there is any hope in keeping us united despite our differences of opinion.
- Politics in the government
- The stance on sexuality/ gender identity and how it affects small and rural congregations
- Shrinking congregations...and making decisions to close them
- clergy shortage
- Being transparent about the clergy shortage and not saying "there are no empty pulpits" when we can get solid Lutheran preachers for our congregations.
- The decline in the value society places on organized religion.
- Political and social divisions.
- Post COVID disconnect of all parishioners
- Changing demographics
- Unchurched people, especially children
- Keeping ELCA-affiliated churches from leaving the ELCA because of their special way of interpreting the scriptures.
- Pastors for our more rural congregations.
- Raising up and filling rostered leader positions.
- There is a widespread clergy and staffing crisis. Not enough people are entering ministry or seeking positions, and churches can't afford the few that are available.
- Challenging Christian nationalism and other prominent antichrists at large in our cultural context.
- Supporting smaller churches in both rural and city
- helping leaders avoid burnout
- reduced mission support

- Adapting to a culture that is less committed to the church
- Lack of leadership, ordained and otherwise
- Raising money to sustain operations
- declining congregation numbers and sizes
- Demanding clergy office candidates that actually have read and understand Luther
- Declining congregations
- a churchwide that hates us in this state
- Shrinking towns and families, higher costs
- Disconnect between congregations and Churchwide and a failure to discuss openly and freely at assembly gatherings
- apathy of membership; lack of engagement
- Staffing
- Continued decline in rural areas, resulting in decline of those congregations.
- Finances.
- Pastors/leaders losing sight of the Gospel, following their own agenda
- Building relationships with congregations and lay leaders.
- Necessary financial support.
- Relevancy in an increasingly religious world
- Rural ministry coverage
- Intervention by churchwide in local congregations.
- Keeping members
- so many small churches cannot afford a pastor and won't close
- Having pastoral leadership
- Maintaining liability of rural congregations.
- Declining congregations
- Financial concerns in the rural churches.
- Pastors with M-Divs to serve congregations
- Keeping people engaged in God's work.
- Welcoming Congregations for all people
- Navigating the political leanings of the area and congregations
- Losing rural congregations that provided mission support way above numbers.
- Clinging to the gospel above political affiliation in an increasingly divisive time.
- Balancing the needs of rural congregations without disenfranchising the urban congregations.
- high expectations for leaders to be everything to everyone. each generation has a new idea of what that means
- Divisions over culture, politics, and biblical interpretation.
- Being inclusive of all without losing members
- Staying true to Biblical truth in the presence of secular views imposed.
- Getting enough pastors/aims/etc. to fill the openings.
- How do we participate in discussions of the law without forgetting the gospel?
- Divisive congregations regarding LGBTQ+ causing churches to leave the ELCA
- Adequate staffing, especially in the very rural communities
- acceptance of support for people on the margins socially and economically
- Stop the discussion of we are a declining denomination. Yes, I know it is a reality, but there is growth and resurrection.
- Funding
- Church membership

- Keeping rural churches within the synod.
- Providing information to Synod members of the activities of the synod.
- Go woke go broke
- Dwindling membership due to ELCA affiliation as ELCA becomes more radical each day
- Shrinking support
- declining church size
- Keeping a leader in each congregation of our synod (retirements, moving, leaving the ministry, etc)
- We are still in a desperate clergy shortage even if my congregation doesn't feel it. And because I am here they have already forgotten about how big of an issue it was when they were in the call process.
- building back the individual church family, bringing back to church the families that has been the pillar of our church family
- Opening doors for a more diverse population of pastors to serve in SD.
- Declining membership numbers
- Potential changes coming from the 2025 Churchwide assembly will create major division in our synod
- How do we make sure all congregations have someone that can serve them.
- The number of rostered leaders available to fill pulpits
- Supporting Youth
- Calling, welcoming, and affirming LGBTQ+ candidates for ministry, pastors, and deacons.
- Finding pastors to fill open positions.
- Adverse views on religion
- Transgenderism
- Gender. Pick a sized and stick to it
- Staying Biblical
- Staying true to the Gospel.
- Gay pride
- Maintaining the commitment to being the light in a world full of darkness today.
- Not enough Pastors to fill the needs of all the Congregations in the Synod
- Staying away from the hot topic - border crisis, LGBTQ+, etc
- ELCA's fall from confessional Lutheran foundations will cause many congregations and rostered leaders to leave the denomination.
- Certainly, maintaining membership and their support
- Faithfully navigating issues surrounding human sexuality & gender
- How do we minister in a culture which is no longer Christian? It is no longer expected that people will be a part of a worshiping body.
- connecting youth
- Outside Influences: Politics, Technology, Business
- Having enough pastors for our churches.
- Supporting rural ministries that are struggling.
- Decrease in clergy prepared for call.
- technology (in congregations and someone who knows how to use it)
- Negative Political Climate
- Rural Congregations/Population
- LGBTQ+ issues in South Dakota
- LGBTQ issues.
- Diminishing membership

- A divide between the people in the pew and the national church in particular.
- Dwindling membership
- Less congregation members at churches
- Declining members in rural churches.
- Getting the younger people to attend and be involved in church life.
- Change in Society
- how is my life better because I belong to a church
- Recruiting seminarians to serve in South Dakota.
- Maintaining our ELCA Lutheran identity
- Declining rural population and the challenge of fewer members doing the important work of ministry.
- Retaining members, especially the young people who think they have graduated from church as well as high school.
- uniting people and fighting division and hatred
- divisiveness in our country and community
- Acquire talent. Identifying qualified individuals willing to serve as pastors throughout South Dakota
- getting our young people involved in church
- Congregations that continue to become financially and members wise unsustainable
- Continuing to be with people where they are at in life, in location and in their faith by showing up and continuing to walk with them in strengthening their faith.
- Finding enough pastors to fill vacancies
- Rural ministry challenges -- dwindling populations in rural areas which translates to smaller church attendance, which may make it impossible to support a pastor or even keep the doors open.
- We need more people.
- Political tension in our world that filters into our congregation as well as our relationships with other churches in our communities
- Members involvement
- Shortage of pastors to fill vacancies.
- apathy
- The lack of Seminary-educated leaders.
- Getting people to church
- declining population & declining number of ministers
- Dropping attendance and church involvement
- The apathy of people toward synod work and missions.
- Finding younger leadership.
- Church participation.
- Dealing with the LGBQ issues
- Providing the tools, people and products that help teach Gods word in a society that in some cases provides push back
- lament that it's "necessary" to give a pre-speech at Conferences to rostered leaders re LGBTQIA+ collective ministries
- keeping adults and our young people going to church
- Like everywhere, decline in church membership numbers and the congregation's response to this decline. I believe the synod is responding to this with their addition of the rural ministry presence in the synod office and with our new online platform.
- Declining membership

- Rural, small town parish needs
- Lack of Pastors
- membership
- drawing younger people and families to see the work of God in their lives.
- Filling the pulpits
- communicating God's relevance in daily life
- Declining membership and budget concerns
- Declining involvement in certain areas.
- changes and stances at churchwide
- Pastoral supply
- The bleeding of ELCA congregations.
- loss of worshippers
- Finances. Getting enough funding to run all the needed programs.
- Fallout from 2025 Church-Wide and updating the statement on human sexuality
- Decline in pastoral candidates to serve churches
- Shortage
- Spreading the gospel message of Jesus Christ and thereby retaining/increasing church membership
- Divisiveness in the world, in our communities, in the congregation
- Secularization
- Declining participation and giving
- Paying leaders what they deserve while keeping small churches afloat
- Not all Lutheran churches stand the same (lgbtq for example)
- One challenge is to strive for healing in a society that is divided and at odds with the Gospel.
- declining membership
- Maintenance of the rural congregations .
- Everyone is concerned about the future of the church proper as no one is in the pews. All of us who are older are concerned for the younger generation that follows.
- Finding/training enough pastors/lay leaders
- a persistent and ignorant distrust of neighbors
- Connecting congregations and sharing resources.
- The lack of pastors and many open calls.
- Clergy shortage
- Ordained clergy available for calls and willing to move
- Declining congregation size
- false teachings by LHOS
- Finding/maintaining rostered leadership for congregations
- Church attendance
- The shortage of pastors
- Fostering communities that are committed inclusion, engaging in antiracism work, welcoming LGBTQIA2S+ folks, and more--especially in a state as conservative as South Dakota.
- Pastor supply
- Survival of rural churches
- Confusing social positions/stances with the Gospel
- Keeping/increasing membership

- Empowering and engaging a generation that the culture around them has heavily influenced
- Polarized Communities
- Congregational growth
- Keeping members engaged
- Church attendance
- Less attendance from younger youth
- Attract younger members
- Keeping members
- Changing socioeconomic landscape
- There are not enough pastors in many of the rural areas.
- Declining membership
- Not enough pastors for the number of vacancies
- Filling vacant pulpits.
- Evangelism (membership faith and numbers growth)
- Declining church membership and attendance
- congregations that will be unwelcoming to the next generation of young adults
- Rural ministries: churches less than 15 miles apart are married to their buildings and customs rather than joining together and surviving.
- Vitalizing and supporting rural ministry while also having clear conversations about financially supporting ministry leaders in those areas.
- losing touch with the basics of Martin Luther's teachings
- Claiming the ELCA agenda will not impact SD while promoting that same agenda
- Engaging more boldly in social justice issues
- Focusing so much on raising up marginalized populations that the steadfast people of the church are being forgotten and left behind.
- Funding: the economy is not doing well, and people are not giving, especially young people.
- Keeping up with social media
- How do we proclaim the Gospel in the social dynamics of today?
- Financial needs for all ministries
- partisan divides
- Try to stop marginalizing the mainstream by promoting fringe agendas like LGBTQ...and DEI
- A shortage of well-prepared public leaders.
- Climate change.
- Trust
- Declining attendance and resources
- Polarization of our schools, state, country & world
- Finding confessional pastors
- Aging congregations and how to honor their service to their churches.
- Congregational sustainability, especially in rural settings.
- As independent congregations, churches are not well-positioned with resources (human and capital) to deal with these environmental pressures.
- Steward physical, financial, and personal resources throughout the synod.
- Paying pastors guidelines
- staying calm in and guiding with love during divisive times in our world
- Membership

- Redefining how to be the church in a post pandemic time
- Finances
- Sustaining membership in this volatile time
- equipping leaders
- More aggressive vetting of clergy office candidates
- Finding clergy to fill vacancies
- how we extricate ourselves from the ELCA
- Controversy
- Lack of Lutheran theology being taught
- members tendency to focus inward and on local things, not the broader context of the state
- Open pulpits that need to be filled.
- Shortage of rostered leaders.
- Availability of rostered leaders.
- Feeding into the political divide (right) of the state.
- Leading faithfully while in a volatile political environment in SD.
- Adequate staff hours to do all that is necessary.
- Financial sustainability
- Spreading the news of Jesus Christ in this more and more secular world.
- Staying true to God's word and not bending to word pressures.
- Reaching & serving the communities around us
- untrained and unvetted leadership in those many small churches
- Addressing perceived "lack" in congregations rather than focusing on "blessings" and creativity in how to draw out the creative ministry God May be calling congregations into
- Dealing with an ever-increasing cultural divide.
- Declining interest in church family
- Attendance seems to be falling off.
- Congregations meeting salary guidelines
- Studying the Bible.
- Rural Leadership
- Competitive wages for church leaders
- Finding new ways to minister to all the population of SD
- Finding pastors to fill pulpits as this next generation of pastors moves on.
- Supporting the needs of Mission Congregations.
- church is changing and we don't know what that will look like. it's both an opportunity for fear and excitement
- Finances.
- Keeping the rural churches staffed
- The removal of bound conscience.
- Helping farmers/ranchers cope with the challenge of continuing their ministries without losing them to despair...
- How do we fight the fear of change? (less attendance, worships look different)
- Dwindling attendance and membership in churches.
- Developing lay leaders
- political divisions
- Being able to try to have congregation think outside the box and pastors to think outside the box.
- Shortage of pastors in rural areas

- Pastoral coverage
- Balancing DEI movement with traditional Christian principles based on the Gospel
- The synod has lost programming direction by becoming too focused on DEI aspects of programming.
- To many openings
- funding issues
- Dealing with the contraction of congregations (fewer members, lower revenue, etc)
- Rural ministry and all its joys and sorrows.
- Innovating and creating care for rural ministries.
- Declining enrollment in seminary
- People are craving biblical truth and the ELCA has strayed from it. Will they return to it?
- How can we use more lay people to serve congregations in need.
- Financial/Budget
- Identity of what it means to be Lutheran in our current context.
- Reaching people in a fast pace, noisy world.
- Finding a way to bring worship to everyone in all communities.
- Not falling into what is the new "social norm"
- Getting Pastors out in the rural communities.
- Recruiting members who desire an honest approach to the bible
- Recruiting and calling pastors, deacons and lay leaders
- Abortions
- Maintaining the ELCA message of Grace during times when Christian Nationalism is gaining a foothold
- Promoting Lutheran denomination
- Lack of Biblically-based rostered leaders coming out of seminaries
- More challenges to congregations struggling with differences within their congregation and community and how to resolve/accept
- Filling open pulpits in the synod
- How do we deal with Christian Nationalism? Christians are rulers rather than servants, which seems to predominate our society.
- connecting new members
- Member Involvement
- Meeting budgetary needs.
- Continuing to find creative ways to fill open ministry positions, especially when there is a shortage of incoming pastors.
- Decline in rural churches.
- people willing to be on the church council and be active on the church council
- Changes to Freedom of Religion and Separation of Church/State
- Divisive Political Landscape and effect on clergy and congregations
- political leadership
- Divisive politics.
- Relevancy
- Development and support of lay and ordained leaders.
- Finding ways for the church to be relevant
- Less money in congregations
- Engaging the younger generation.
- As we seem to be losing some of our old traditions, we need to create new ones. (i.e. quilting by church members).

- Society wanting to erase the historical importance of our everyday lives
- small church identity: merge
- The issues of social statements from Churchwide.
- Re-forming to be a relevant church in today's world
- Connectedness... not just digitally, but relationally with other congregations.
- Providing a place of civility, where opinions can be shared (or not), but people's views are respected. We love each person, and each is different.
- apathy
- Resource development. Helping congregations to establish effective stewardship practices
- Call settings that are not open to the gifts of our ministers
- Shrinking the space between people so no one feels left out of our church or synod by intentional conversation or electronic gathering to reduce the distance and bring us together in faith-building conversations.
- Supporting leaders, new and established
- Willing and wonderful pastors, but congregations who will not accept them -- for example, congregations who say no to women or our siblings in the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Listen to your sermon talk.
- Financial troubles of the congregation that then lead to financial troubles for Rostered Leaders
- Reluctance of new pastors to work and live in rural areas
- Society's attitude about God/faith
- The lack of interest in the church from the younger generation.
- How to fill pastor's places when they retire
- youth & families are very distracted by other commitments – the church has gone to the bottom of the priority list for many families
- Controversy and conflict enhanced by the political climate
- The political climate sees everything as a reason to be angry and have grievances.
- Getting the youth involved
- Church relevancy.
- Increasing membership.
- Possible consolidation of churches
- rural ministry challenges (in general... no need to name) :)
- getting pastors for rural communities
- We continue to have congregations with aging members. At some point, giving will be completely different in terms of amount and reasons.
- All are welcome
- Communicating the value of being part of the bigger picture
- Shrinking congregations
- rural ministry
- Helping each other realize no matter political stance, we can live and work together
- Keeping parishes in the ELCA
- continuing to rebuild trust among Christians
- Attracting and developing young/middle-aged leadership
- Pressures of being faithful and established while open to new ways the Spirit is moving.
- Finances
- Pastoral shortages
- Funding

- Finding enough pastors for all the openings.
- Increasing polarization and politicization of congregations and pulpits
- New social issues such as race and sexuality
- Decline attendance
- Declining population trends in rural areas/loss of rural churches
- Poverty & hunger
- Political assertion into the function of the church
- Politically divisive realities
- Welcoming in younger generation
- People are still watching church virtually and not attending in person
- A challenge is learning to have helpful, not acrimonious, conversations with those with whom we disagree
- congregational disaffiliation
- Decline in agriculture and populations in rural areas
- Getting lost in a sea of technology.
- Encouraging small and rural congregations
- white Christian nationalism
- Equipping congregations or making a match with pastoral leadership.
- Overall shift away from regular church attendance
- Financial challenges
- Political divide influencing churches and ministry
- Reaching out to young adults and children
- Getting congregations to understand proper protocol with Holy Communion when no pastor is in residence
- Financial challenges for congregations
- Christian education for youth
- Continuing to foster openness to people "on the fringes."
- The anxiety is present in many congregations who are in times of transition.
- Synod seems to have become a very secular entity, out of touch with its base in SD
- Declining societal value of church
- Having enough ordained Pastors
- Supporting and encouraging the older generations in their life transitions
- Unhealthy communication towards leadership
- Addressing the needs of an aging congregation
- Keeping young families as members
- Church membership
- More people online and less people giving money to the churches to help them keep going
- The expiration of the mature members
- Growing the church community
- Political ideologies and the consequences thereof
- Church membership was declining across the country prior to Covid, but that decline has become much worse since Covid.
- Reviewing the candidacy process to determine if the present process still fits our needs.
- Lack of support for campus ministries and for Lutherans Outdoors
- Dilution of Christian habits--slowly start neglecting prayer, caring for orphans and widows, reduced tithing of time and treasure
- failure to be creative and adaptable
- The arch-conservative political nature of South Dakota.

- Stress, burnout, and our political climate. People are on edge more than ever before, and we go until we break... rather than taking rest to renew ourselves.
- youth
- Helping rostered leaders avoid burnout
- Trying so hard not to be inadvertently offensive to anyone that it is now more complicated than ever to exist as an ELCA congregation
- Being a neighbor to foreign countries
- Filling open pulpits across the synod
- Developing strong leaders
- Creates a trust between the Synod office and local congregations in use of congregation's benevolence
- The climate of hate and fear in our nation.
- Cultivating discipleship within congregations.
- Enough staff to cover most of churches
- New technology and ways of being community
- Hunger & poverty
- Forcing ELCA churches to sign the new constitutions
- Mitigating the continued decline of what it means to be the church and engagement in the church.
- Youth that grow up in our congregations are not coming back at the rate needed to replace people dying in our congregations. We can see this in the decline of the baptism rate across almost every congregation over the last ten years.
- Maximize on projects such as the Pasque, which allow interconnection and dialogue across differences.
- Having enough pastors
- supporting churches struggling financially
- attracting rostered leaders
- Providing spiritual leaders for rural congregations
- Support for leaders (e.g. understanding of resources in their areas/context)
- Doing the right work without showing favoritism
- ministry in daily life for lay members
- Aggressive lay catechetical education that has atrophied.
- Misunderstandings and misinformation that people have about the ELCA, Christianity, and organizations
- how our congregations function post-ELCA
- Mental health
- Aligning with secular beliefs too often in hopes that cultural relevance will save the congregations
- attitudes influenced by political leaders and popular Christianity
- Shrinking congregations...building back those that we lost during COVID.
- Perception of the ELCA as a liberal church and our willingness to feed that perception.
- Relevance to the daily mission of congregations.
- Drawing lines as to who belongs and who doesn't.
- Equipping congregations in all parts of SD.
- 21st-century ministry in facilities designed for the 20th century
- Inspiring creativity
- Apathy from member congregations
- Metropolitan areas of the country are making decisions for the Midwest.

- Ensuring that everyone in the congregation is welcome & served
- for leaders: isolation
- Cultural polarization
- Securing clergy in rural communities.
- Supporting pastors in conflicted congregations
- Keeping younger members engaged in the community of church members.
- Lutherans Outdoors of South Dakota, their affiliation with the ELCA, and their poor leadership (camp is so important but is being run into the ground)
- Handling a decline in number of congregations and members across the board.
- Balancing the ELCA's progressive culture with the predominately conservative state of SD.
- congregations need leadership- pastoral presence for them
- Having enough leaders.
- Declining numbers in church attendance
- The mandatory implementation of radical theology that is contrary to core Lutheran values.
- Continuing to experiment and find alternate solutions for education for lay people that don't compromise Lutheran theology.
- How can we instill a trust that God is raising the needed leaders?
- A perceived lack of relevance.
- Financial concerns
- attraction of non-denominational churches to members
- Diminishing resources.
- Political divisions
- Outreach
- The synod should promote the use of faith in daily life for all South Dakotans.
- small churches surviving
- The changing dynamics of the institutional church. Sunday morning worship is not the gold standard practice it was 50 years ago.
- Balancing the guidance of Healthy closings for congregations as they become too small to sustain the ministry and guiding bigger congregations as they grow.
- Being a beacon of hope in this world
- Who can lead us at the Synod level to return to our Lutheran heritage?
- How can small rural churches stay sustainable?
- Keeping good quality leaders
- Governing structure of the ELCA
- Financial challenges.
- Not giving land to people because we feel bad for what happened to them 100s of years ago.
- Allowing those who desire to have conversations about concerns to be heard. In the past few years, those that have dissented have been blocked
- Outreach to South Dakota's native population.
- Politics
- Getting people to come back to Church with a purpose (Fellowship, personal growth, Family, Grace)
- Programming for churches based on the bible
- Leading youth astray in their faith due to false teachings.
- Finances

- Building a sense of unity in our synod and the ELCA.
- How do we meet the basic needs of the people in our communities? The need to be cared for and blessed and to have relationships that reflect the kingdom of God.
- Financial Support
- Facilitating mediation in an increasingly socially divided membership.
- Walking alongside congregations and communities in a politically polarized society.
- Change in the way that churches are served. This is both a blessing and a challenge. While change is constant, there is great stress involved in those changes.
- people willing to assist with Sunday school and adult education/Bible study.
- Supreme Court Changes and Legal Battles
- Aging Demographic
- refugee resettlement
- Failing to take a theological stand on political, social, and economic issues.
- Address and take positions on social and community needs
- Tangible ways that connect the church locally and globally.
- Decreasing divisiveness
- Exhaustion & burnout of pastors
- Our population is changing in demographics and moving to a city so the challenge is where do we put most of our energy.
- Trying to appease everyone is not possible
- support/ continuous awareness of the LGBTQ community needs
- Financial stability
- Engaging God's people today in the Gospel and living a transformation life
- Finding common ground to be a collective voice in our society and culture.
- Seeing the impact of good will, of giving directed at problems that challenge our core vision of ourselves.
- Establishing new congregations. Identifying areas in our state where we can establish new/sustainable congregations
- Intentional work of raising faith leaders for the church in creative, innovative ways.
- Encouraging new pastors/leaders
- Giving within congregations that do not support a full-time pastor.
- Continued growth of activities that pull families away from churches on Sundays and Wednesdays
- Lack of church attendance after Covid
- Finances
- The lack of stewardship of the younger generation.
- Spreading the good news
- decreased giving
- Shrinking pool of rostered leaders to serve congregations
- Money- offerings come and go in amounts and accountability for the synod, making planning hard.
- Too few pastors are available.
- Filling vacancies in West River parishes.
- genuine, educated fear of what "culture" could come if Bp Constanze chooses not to run another term
- mission work

- Continuing to be a forward thinking in a region that is insistent in being stuck in the past. We have congregations that refuse to develop their biblical literacy, fluency, and imaginations. In turn, they are stuck in old ways of thinking and acting
- Mission support to LuMin, Startups, etc...
- Reaching the young adults and youth
- Pastoral ministry reaching all congregations
- Controlling the social left
- training pastors and leaders in their role
- Reconciling traditional practices with evolving attitudes towards religion, church, and spirituality
- People trying to take congregations out of the ELCA.
- becoming too political with DEI/LGBTQ+
- Poorly educated/trained Vicars/laypersons who “fill” the office of pastor.
- Shortage in clergy
- Helping the rural churches as the population declines and ages.
- Rural church decline
- Declining congregational involvement
- Keeping churches open
- Having enough pastors/SAMs, etc. to serve congregations
- Financial giving
- Truly following the teachings of scripture
- What does the church community look like when so many things pull for time
- quality of pastors (no longer theologically based)
- Shortage of clergy
- Reaching out to the unchurched.
- Reaching younger people in a meaningful way
- fear and greed
- Recruiting and maintaining quality, healthy clergy.
- Smaller and rural congregations struggling to pay pastors the Synod guidelines.
- Overly political Synod and Churchwide Orgs
- Financial strain on congregations and committed givers age
- Continuing to be relevant in challenging and polarizing times
- Impressing upon lay folks and rostered leaders the value of Holy Spirit and third Article of Apostle's Creed
- Adapting to ministry changes within the confines of national church requirements
- Lack of a servant mentality among congregation members.
- Growing numbers of retired pastors.
- Proactively caring for rostered leaders, lay staff, and volunteers to ensure wellbeing and avoid burnout.
- The synod needs to demonstrate that we are founded on love of God first and then our neighbors as ourselves
- Declining Resources: financial and people
- Providing a safe place for conversation regarding our diverse faith journeys and coming to a place of unity along this journey
- fear, scarcity thinking
- Growing our membership
- Finances

- Because of the more complicated society, a higher level burn out our clergy. They must have more support and work on being balanced and not and decreasing their level of burn out.
- Getting people to lead
- Keeping camps staffed
- Decline in biblical literacy.
- Younger people in our congregations are not stepping up to serve in the life of the church
- Providing resources to financially struggling congregations.
- Dedicated ministry support from people under the age of 55
- Recruiting, training, and mentoring future church leaders, especially clergy

What are three of the biggest opportunities for the South Dakota Synod (whole synod, congregations, leaders) in the next six years?

- own our progressive theology and welcome a group of God's people who have been hurt by other churches
- Relationships with Native communities.
- The Lilly Grant for expanding our rural ministry and education
- having representation in the west
- Be gracious in allowing congregations to leave the ELCA
- Filling rostered vacancies in congregations
- Focusing back on our roots in America, specifically the faithful farmers will to bring their families and beliefs to this country
- New churches ie. Box Elder
- Get involved in human justice
- Get back to the proclamation of the Good News
- There are lots of people who stand in need of what we offer if we could make it feel more relevant for them
- Collective funding of Neighbors in Solidarity
- Reinvigorate relationships with organizations like Luther House of Study
- The continuing influx of immigrants.
- Preach the Gospel through word and deed in ways that are accessible to people of all experiences and backgrounds.
- The grants and mini grants written in all areas have helped with funding.
- Technology and ways of being in community
- Encourage congregational partnerships with refugee or displaced families
- Learning to connect by listening .
- Young pastors coming into the Synod and the gifts they bring into their congregations.
- To continue to raise up leaders in and for the church in new and creative ways.
- The pandemic taught congregations how to use the kinds of technology they will need to use in order to solve some of the resource/ministry provider problem.
- Maximize online tools such as Pasque for community and teaching.
- Being more inclusive
- providing quality opportunities for continuing education
- finding and educating lay leaders
- Continue the good work that the synod staff is doing
- Growing leaders
- Listen to your congregational members even when they disagree with you
- telling the story

- We've dug a hug hole for ourselves by aligning this church with secular initiatives that must stop.
- New ways to like about being church
- To leave the ELCA as a whole group
- To be a light and beacon of hope and care
- Reclaim our confessional roots
- connecting with those who are looking to deepen or strengthen faith
- Developing Rural Ministries.
- Crisis can be fodder for creativity and change.
- Neighbors in Solidarity- storytelling and investment.
- Embracing diversity and educating others about acceptance.
- Serve as leaders in our communities and state as we are freed by the gospel to care for our neighbors.
- To be leaders in rural ministry churchwide
- Partnering with non-religious organizations
- Outreach to our migrant population.
- Stay true to Scriptural teaching.
- Reaching underserved neighbors
- Let small churches know it's ok to close; their mission, as it was, is done.
- Creative younger, new pastors
- Using the rural ministry emphasis to encourage synod authorized ministers and TEEM members to lead small and underserved congregations.
- Increasing church participation
- They are appreciated.
- Supporting campus ministries
- New ways to engage the next generation.
- Outreach
- Attracting new clergy through education opportunities, available calls, and both emotional and financial support
- Keep engaging with the population.
- The Holy Spirit does not return empty-handed. Even when things are junk, God does something with it.
- Cultural revitalization with the help of our Neighbors in Solidarity/Mission Partners.
- using technology to connect congregations- esp the churches in transition
- Being a "bigger tent" of unity and hope.
- Keeping a place for everyone at the table
- To stand for truth, if they have the courage to do so.
- Continuing to restore the trust in the synod office of all of the pastors, etc. and their congregations.
- The world is weary and the economy is straining. Let us share of the one in whom we no longer hunger or thirst.
- Making a strong stand of support to minorities and underserved communities
- More opportunities for youth
- preach the gospel
- Congregation no longer being able to operate in the silos
- Greater outreach and communication regarding what the church is and what it stands for
- To make changes to attract more members
- Unite churches within synod by staying true to the Gospel.

- Promote daily faith practices as a good life style practice and method of living.
- Ditch the woke ideology
- We all have the opportunity to do what is right and go back to scripture.
- More diversity in leadership
- continue outreach
- Our society is crying out for spiritual leadership and support. The need for church has never been greater.
- We possess within our congregations the very essence of all God created us to be. Whatever that looks like in our rural communities, we can live into it with joy!
- restoring life in the rural communities
- Becoming LGBTQIA and BIPOC affirming places where all are truly welcome and safe.
- Congregationally lead leadership
- Wake up to the worldview that Churchwide is promoting and return to biblical truth
- Growing our congregations.
- The grant we were awarded-making space available for students to have ministry experiences in rural spaces.
- Increased online presence
- Recognizing and affirming the gifts for leadership and proclamation that LGBTQ+ people bring to the Church.
- Grow in rural areas.
- Media platforms and electronic delivery of information
- Focusing on God's word
- Get back to the Bible and requiring the churches to preach from the Bible and not changing the words.
- Have honest conversations with those that dissent
- Assisting congregations whose churches and facilities who have been destroyed by storms, floods, fires and other problems
- Put God First
- To take a stance against theological inaccuracies attempting to be passed as truth.
- Continue to spread the message of God's Grace in our daily lives
- Staying away from hot topics - border crisis, LGBTQ+,
- God is gracious and merciful and will bless the ELCA again if they repent and wholeheartedly follow Him.
- Energy of youth in their faith and channeling that into a congregation
- Rebuilding enthusiasm (in all areas)
- Hunger and food insecurity continues to be an issue
- collaboration between congregations
- Community Service
- Continuing to welcome everyone to the ELCA.
- Proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ in the midst of a culture / society that struggles to do that
- We have a fantastic synod staff that cares about individual congregations, pastors, and the future of ministry of the South Dakota Synod.
- Mission/Service work (outside the congregation)
- Native American Reach Out
- That the gospel is true and it is for everyone (Shepherd's Table, Church on the Street)
- lgbtq+ acceptance

- Having the opportunity to take a theological stand on the political, social, and economic issues of our time.
- Less structure
- Continuing to discover ways to develop lay leadership in congregations.
- Reaching all age groups
- continued Christ-centered worship and education
- Rural ministry
- Reaching out to diverse populations.
- Stop catering to the larger cities and understand what the needs of the rural congregations really are.
- leaders open to allowing regular folks to express their doubts of what or who God is.
- Reaching people of diverse racial backgrounds.
- Sharing what God's love looks like to a hurting world
- Redefining ourselves in a way that makes sense in the current culture.
- The youth love to go to the big Gatherings. It is a spiritual boost for them. Keep them engaged and challenged. The Synod could have its own Challenge, based on the Gathering's teachings. Those young people are our future.
- fighting the toxic political climate
- Creativity in sharing Good News
- Development (identify and prepare) of new lay leaders
- Continuing to be a more open and affirming place
- Continue to reach out to members of congregations that have felt a calling to serve in ministry telling them of how they can serve their church where they are at by providing electronic ways to gather, learn and serve.,
- REALLY showing up at Youth Gathering in Mpls in 2027!
- Innovative ministry -- looking at how church may not look the same as it once did and imagining joining with God in doing something new.
- People are hungry for community, for meaning, and for purpose
- Helping with mental health
- There are many unchurched people in the area
- involving those who have wandered away from church
- Find different ways of being church outside of the norm of a church building.
- Raising up rural leaders
- leverage technology - not just worship
- reinvention of "what is a church"
- Opening ourselves to the ideas and work of young people. They are willing to be there if we are willing to open up and let new ideas in.
- Use of technology
- To share the gospel in a variety of ways/means.
- Provide a welcoming house of worship without becoming an social club
- keep feeling the Spirit Prairie Winds moving & loving all our neighbors!
- pastor shortage
- Continue to support our neighbors in solidarity. We are seeing a flux of folks from Central America. Depending on what takes place in Nov, this could continue.
- Collaborating outside the church/synod
- Visiting and being a familiar presence with congregations
- To bring members back that aren't coming anymore
- partnerships with other organizations

- reaching out to multicultural communities
- Bringing people into the church
- continuing Bishop Constanze's leadership
- Reimagining church organization/leadership structures beginning with rural ministry
- Creating space for people who have felt excluded to feel and be welcomed.
- There seems to be a huge divide even among ELCA churches in the area regarding their views on sexuality and inclusion. While this will be a difficult thing to work through, it can also be a big opportunity for the synod in a primarily close-minded
- More presence in all churches - more often
- Additional staff trained as Listeners going into the life situations people are in. South Dakota, at least the southeastern quadrant, is more than a Red State.
- rural ministry
- Get young people more involved.
- Innovation in filling pulpits- SAM, TEEM, Digital sharing of pulpit, solutions we haven't found yet!
- Community outreach
- Providing more lay pastors
- Leadership on societal/political issues for congregations and the general public
- Pasque Learning System
- Increase of church participation and inclusion through discipleship
- Cultivate Jesus centered communities of diverse disciples
- How to work in partnership with ecumenical partners in small communities
- Partner with other churches - Catholics, Lutherans, Baptist, etc. Could there be a speaker or event where any Christian could come together and denomination wouldn't need to separate us.
- An opportunity to love and support the Shepherd's Table and Church on the Street
- development of youth programs
- Rural ministry, South Dakota is predominantly rural and the maintenance of those communities would not only keep the congregations stable but allow more opportunities to minister to those that the urban world rejects.
- Keep Bishop Constanze, so she can continue in the path she is on.
- Opportunities are the same as the challenges
- we are more connected than ever, may these new pathways of connectedness strengthen both our congregations and our shared identity as the South Dakota Synod of the ELCA
- New models and resources for rural ministry.
- Opportunities to expand lay ministry to help cover pastor shortages.
- Realignment of congregations
- Innovative and creative ways to sustain ministry through partnerships and lay ministers
- We have a great opportunity with young people
- Continuing to focus on needs you younger adults but also addressing needs of elders
- Opportunity for rostered leaders to lead in new/different ways
- expanding rural ministry
- Our connections with the Native American communities.
- Inclusion work (like the work of the Open Door Team, for example)
- Showing our young people that we are relative as a loving entity
- Investment in South Dakota
- Calling the church back to its primary mission of proclaiming the Gospel
- Offering more HR/employee support to the congregations

- The opportunity to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people who are longing for a sense of grounding in their faith journey
- Being the body of Christ
- Synod sponsored grant opportunities promoting rural ministries.
- Start new congregations
- Together more youth and younger people in their churches
- Attract the many people moving to SD
- Getting kids involved
- Our challenges are opportunities
- More and more, people are searching for meaning in their lives and we have the opportunity to show them that they can find meaning in a relationship with God.
- Cultivate our youth to be more involved
- Providing resources to people discerning calls in to ministry
- Spread the good news that only we can do.
- Wider use of technology
- The number of people without a church family is growing rapidly
- the rural ministry grant
- Welcoming the un-churched.
- To continue uplifting the importance of caring for creation from a farming/agricultural perspective.
- Finding pastors
- Be transparent about what is happening in the ELCA
- Engaging more boldly in social justice issues
- Loving ALL God's children equally and not focusing only on raising up marginalized populations
- Creating an environment in which people with different politic opinions and values can still be united at the foot of the cross. This is possible. It was possible in the past, and we see it happening successfully in rural areas across the state.
- Lay ministry leadership
- Walk with people through the difficulties of life
- Upcoming Youth gathering in Minneapolis
- Missional leadership from laity
- Elect leaders that care about the local culture and not push agendas that are not organic to South Dakota
- The start of Shepherd's Table
- To be an inclusive and safe space in a state that doesn't often provide such spaces.
- New young leaders who understand the width and depth of the synod
- Rural liaisons
- Explore "satellite" congregations via technology in rural settings.
- Opportunities for Synod wide Lenten or Advent series and services.
- To bring emphasis back to keeping the main thing the main thing.
- Sioux Falls Metro area is a densely packed network of churches that could potentially share staff, process, ministry in cost-effective ways if coordinated.
- Use the Civic Life social statement conversation to witness in a time of division.
- working ecumenically to offer creative worship experiences
- Visibility in promoting social justice
- The Lilly grant that was secured by the current administration is a great opportunity to bring that Visio to fruition

- Listening to younger generations
- Put South Dakota first.
- bringing a presence of peace within faith
- Strong new ministries
- Get the pride week out of LO
- To lead in providing needed services for spiritual and emotional well-being
- Worry less about rural congregational attendance and focus on biblical evangelism
- providing community for those not accepted by the dominant culture
- Technology advances in our churches.
- The next generation will be hungry for communities of faith that are indeed faithful.
- Outdoor Ministry, especially expansion of adult opportunities.
- Ways to reach out to families with young children.
- Continued emphasis on Neighbors in Solidarity and Lutherans Outdoors in SD.
- To be leaders in new and innovative ways to do ministry in a changing culture.
- Engaging God's people through new media
- Expand American Indian education to our congregations.
- Growing beyond being the whitest denomination
- Let people know what freedom really is!
- Finding blessings and uniqueness's of each congregation and making use of them
- Increasing breadth and depth of church family
- I like when we are told thanks for showing up.
- Offering stewardship and evangelism training
- Continued creativity in rural ministry and specialized ministry interactions
- Sioux Falls is one of the fastest economic growing regions in the country and therefore the world. This presents challenges of course but also a lot of opportunity.
- Partnering with childcare ministries.
- social justice work
- Partnering church, civic and other non-profit resources to meet the needs of our communities and state.
- Lifting up lay leaders willing to answer a call to their community through Christ
- Return to Biblical teachings.
- Continuing to grow the rural ministry contact and support for farmers/ranchers.
- Offering new spaces for God's word to be heard in new plants and through the neighbors in solidarity.
- Creating a larger presence on social media
- encourage discipleship
- Churches having to think outside the box.
- Global mission
- To support potential seminary students
- Increase participation in Synod business by all congregations.
- Help members through faith to meet daily life challenges, i.e. addiction challenges, grief challenges, divorce challenges.
- Help churches work together
- Ellsworth Air Force Base expansion provides an opportunity in the Rapid City - Box Elder area.
- We can strengthen our relationships with Argentina and Cameroon. We can plan synod wide mission/vision trips to strengthen the partnership. How many new pastors have not yet visited either country?

- Uniting as Lutherans to create a greater voice in SD which cares for neighbors.
- Maintaining the membership necessary to pay for the ministers and other staff
- Using lay members that are willing to help out.
- Continuing to support rural ministry
- Further collaboration with Ecumenical Partners
- Reach out specifically to children and their families.
- Focusing on the youth in our communities
- Get kids involved in worship. Get the camps going again, talk to the churches about camp.
- Return to true Lutheran (Luther) declarations
- Establishing new congregations in areas of population growth.
- Wake up
- Continue to nourish Congregations struggling to survive during times of Pastor and financial challenges/shortages
- Maintaining core principles of being Christian and Lutheran
- Leaders need to be strong and courageous and call sin a sin out of love for their neighbors.
- Worship centered on music
- Creating new innovative models for rural ministry
- Engaging those who use the Bible instead of being used by God
- collaboration between outside orgs
- Educating our Youth and Families
- Providing opportunities for Christian education at all levels
- We have the opportunity to create a new vision of the future. I feel that there is great hope for the future.
- Addiction/Recovery Assistance
- That the gospel is true and we are loved whether or not we agree with each other (speaking and listening across divides)
- refugee resettlement
- Taking a theological stand on political and social issues.
- Relevancy re: social inequities
- Finding ways through technology that enhance ministry while not detracting from its incarnational necessity. necessity
- Becoming financially stable
- sustained service and outreach to congregations
- Pasque!!
- Teaching folks what an impact Lutherans have locally and globally.
- Rural Ministry Liaison, Rev Blankenfield made a huge impact, hopefully that continues.
- connecting Bible stories to life today
- Developing intentional fellowships with congregation and neighborhood in solidarity.
- Re-engaging those who have been hurt by the "church" or who have drifted away
- Evangelism... people are hungry for Christ but can't name their hunger.
- People are generous when they see a need. They will help. Target that heartfelt desire to help. You have done that already, in many ways. I think the Rural Ministry effort could draw a lot of contributions,. " Those people" are our neighbors.
- trying new things in these post covid years
- Using technology more effectively in outreach and fulfilling the church's mission

- seeking ways to serve all of God's people. Finding ways to care for the vulnerable, right here in SD and those at a distance.
- Continuing the work of intentional outreach to small town and rural congregations ministering to their needs, letting them know they are not alone as we walk with them in faith.
- REALLY showing up at WELCA in Des Moines in 2026
- Shared ministry among congregations -- for example, I am rural and sharing the teaching of confirmation with my colleagues who also have a very small number of students.
- Digital Ministry - Pasque is the beginning of this, and not sure what that might look like beyond that
- Large number of people only attending church for Easter and Christmas
- immigrants
- Connecting with other synods and the other expressions of the church.
- partnerships between congregations in underserved areas
- Opening churches in new places like this ones in the Air Force communities in the western part of the state.
- Worship style
- Help bring healing to our state and nation
- take advantage of Pasque and see we can do together!
- Use of our digital community, Pasque
- Growth in SD/communities (Box Elder)
- To love our neighbors by helping those in need
- sharing God's love of the world
- Creating a welcoming environment
- spiritually feeding people in the pews
- To be places and people of faithful reflection in a fast-paced, wild world.
- design incentive program for people questioning entering seminary
- We are forced to drink the Chicago Kool-Aid = reason for the bleeding of so many congregations.
- reaching those no longer attending/involved
- Expanding the reach of the ELCA within our communities and state.
- Getting young families involved in the church
- Encouraging membership
- Continued emphasis on special synod ministries
- Congregational facilities
- Expound the message of the gospel
- Better connection with college students through campus ministry
- community outreach
- Indigenous cultural restoration, we need to start to rebuild trust with a culture and community that our ancestors almost destroyed in Gods name.
- Use technology to reach out to the community.
- We have the resources we need, will we raise them up for our neighbors in need?
- Bi-vocational pastoral leaders.
- Opportunity for better communication between congregations and Synod through the Lily grant rural ministry programs.
- Shrink synod staff to right size office based on data
- Development of Pasque (on-line learning hub) ... being a leader nationally in this area
- We have a great opportunity to help and serve those in our state

- Using technology to its fullest to support congregations and ministries
- Our openness to alternative paths to ordination
- Being a church at the forefront of creation care
- The synod seems to ignore the members east of Mitchell! Find out what is important to the “West River” members
- Being church in the middle
- Moving the ordained Pastors around instead of letting them serve in a congregation until they wish to move
- The opportunity to partner with other ministries to meet the needs of the people in the various communities
- Our God is an Awesome God - Abundant life through Christ
- Youth ministries leadership development and support.
- Do more with Church on the Street and underserved people
- Become more dynamic with her attraction with music and other activities to engage people in wanting to attend church
- Providing a spiritual haven
- Spreading the word of God to the community
- Ability to offer a different perspective
- The lack of pastors and younger people becoming more involved in church life gives us the opportunity to become more innovative in our approaches.
- Recognizing people who may have a calling to ministry
- Collaboratively working with our partners in ministry.
- rejuvenation of outdoor ministries
- Older South Dakotans are wealthier than any time in history
- specialized ministries (Shepherd's Table, Church on the Street, campus ministry)
- Growing lay leadership, with participation in worship and sacrament.
- To build connections across the entire state using online resources so that we can feel more networked with all our synodical congregations.
- Doing more lay education would be nice
- Helping rostered leaders avoid burnout
- Enhance financial support of rural congregations
- Consistency with finding pastors called to rural churches
- Train people to be pastors and not change agents
- Potentially a more neighbor-friendly administration nationally
- To provide spaces for healing conversations that help mend divisions.
- Centrality of synod office at Augustana
- Tangible presence across the state
- Cultivating a unified presence for being ELCA Lutherans in this time and place.
- Pasque is a platform, if paired with the right member engagement strategy across the synod, that could connect people with ministry that fits their unique journey of faith.
- Share resources help congregations discern and envision their own futures.
- reaching youth in creative new ways
- increasing membership
- Shrinking pool of resources may open new opportunities how to be the church (establishing of house churches or developing more tent church models where leaders have different vocations!
- Collaborating w/ other congregations, communities, synods
- People are hungry for community and spirituality

- Build a church that suits us as South Dakotans
- To help rural people who often feel forgotten and cut off from the world, make a difference in helping others near and far.
- More teaching opportunities on pastoral care to the growing mental health crisis
- fostering relationships between people who disagree
- New church builds in growing communities.
- When we figure out worship and preaching that are authentic and engaging, we will become thriving homes of faith again.
- Ensure that the Gospel is what is preached and lived out.
- Seek out and equip new leaders in rural areas and congregations with opportunities for renewal.
- Figuring out ways to work together
- Serving concrete needs (hunger, homelessness, poverty, etc.)
- Ways to invigorate or reinvigorate member congregations.
- Keeping young people teens & beyond engaged in the church
- Gathering our youth together to continue the excitement of New Orleans
- Energy to keep moving forward
- Lay leaders.
- Media Ministry in congregations
- There's an increasing ability to use technology among the younger clergy, there is a greater reach and ability to share this gospel message. Supporting that however the synod can would only assist this.
- Finding ways to invite/serve/include 20-40 year olds.
- connecting with gen x and younger to make church look new
- Sharing/consolidating building and human resources.
- Bringing equity to women and minorities
- Remove progressive socialist theology from its teachings.
- Being strong witnesses to what God has done for us all through Christ Jesus in an extremely fractured country.
- Building on the churches connection through Pasque.
- Finding opportunities to serve in local communities.
- identify with Christ as the defenders and welcomers of those on the margins
- I believe we are going to experience the resurrection as long as we look at the opportunities
- Outreach to and support of college-age students
- Balance rural church interests with urban influences at national level
- Help with rural ministerial staffing and the needs of congregations.
- We can strengthen our multicultural ministries across the synod. This committee has become inactive. In a synod with nine Native American tribes in our borders, that is too important to ignore. It screams indifference and privilege.
- Strengthen and solidify the ministry of Lutherans Outdoors.
- To be a force for good in the community
- Using the gifts of our small rural communities.
- Supporting Region 10
- Collaboration across synod and regional lines.
- Provide a helping hand to those struggling in South Dakota.
- Focusing on love thy neighbor
- Encourage congregations to instill a challenge to its parishioners to read the bible daily

- Assisting congregations consolidate if they can't find or pay a pastor.
- Keep the light shining
- Continuing getting out and meeting the individual congregations throughout the Synod. Too often easy to focus on the thriving Congregations that are providing strong financial support to Synod. Important to get out and be among ALL the Synod.
- Engross congregations in the Bible
- Read and study the Bible as it is written as God's authoritative Word.
- Loving one another as Jesus loves us
- Improving financial positions of synod and congregations
- Building relationships with those who are not us
- Missions
- Supporting those who work in ministry in order to prevent burnout
- We have an opportunity to feel our way through a changing perception of what church is in the 21st century. We (the South Dakota Synod) is constantly open to the Holy Spirit's work in and through the church. God is with us.
- Children and Youth Religious Education
- That the gospel is true our whole life long (lifelong faith formation, new outreach to young people/families and intergenerational community)
- If you can achieve the above two issues I would be pleased and satisfied.
- Involvement in communities
- Finding avenues of expressing joy/gratitude.
- Missions esp. With tribal communities
- listen and attend to culture gap between younger and older members
- Outreach to rural churches so they can exist financially - can we utilize Deacons more, etc.?
- Communicate more with the rural congregations
- Building relationships in our community
- Collaboration. Collectively we can be an incredibly vibrant force in South Dakota.
- I believe the upcoming election is pivotal. We could have an opportunity to define issues, to lead work in those issues, and to provide an anchor to discussions about these issues.
- Stepping up our support for our neighbors in solidarity
- Continue to tell students that they should consider the ministry and tell them of the financial grants available for post high school education and graduate study in becoming a minister in the church.
- Engaging those who come once a month.
- Many people moving into area
- youth
- Opportunities to collaborate with congregations who are full communion partners.
- creating spaces that provide real connection for young families seeking genuine relationships in a pandemic of loneliness
- Being there physically when SD weather, roads and staff health can be issues. Staying healthy in all the traveling.
- Sharing building
- Help heal the division of our native and Caucasian communities.
- join ministries (e.g. quilting groups), traveling pastors to share Christ's love, grow up lay leaders to lead
- Continue to strengthen our Synodical Authorized Ministry members and those serving in a capacity outside of ordained rostered leadership, while inviting folks into rostered ministry.

- Rural Ministry grant
- realizing the good in others
- Provide rural ministries
- reaching out to others in need
- That God can and will show up.
- develop/bolster any mentoring programs for associate pastors and pay for it
- caring for lonely and elderly
- Spreading the good news of Christ to the world.
- Finding how to increase pastoral candidates
- Providing and guiding youth
- Training for local congregational lay leaders
- Young people
- Acknowledge the problems associated with societies shortcomings and lead communities.
- Encouraging youth involvement in the local church
- History, South Dakota is rich in history and by using that history as a building block we could not only maintain our church history but the states. We could work with local museums and cultural events.
- Creative collaboration of resources.
- Finding creative ways to support our smallest congregations
- Move away from politics (law) and back to the Gospel
- Continuing to be the church together for the sake of the Gospel and people in need locally and globally
- We have an opportunity to help all of the people coming into the US
- Focusing on the most important parts of vision and mission and letting go of other things
- the growing number of small, rural churches, and supporting creative relations.
- Supporting, highlighting, and serving alongside our Neighbors in Solidarity.
- Creatively finding ways for churches to diversify their income streams
- The opportunity to walk with people in our local communities as they navigate their faith journey
- continuing to learn and fail forward faithfully
- Increase community wide service projects
- To offer support services for clergy to also help them feel supported and their lives be balanced as they give so much to others
- Partnering with other churches to help people in need
- We can hopefully gather some pieces of other denominational fallout
- Revitalizing camp ministry and youth ministry.
- Churches need ministers--many positions to be filled

The State of South Dakota

We are called to love our neighbors. With that in mind, what are two of the biggest challenges facing those outside of our congregations and throughout our state that the next bishop of the South Dakota Synod should be aware of?

- loud conservative voices
- Reaching out to un-churched people in our "neighborhoods".
- The political climate and differences between some of the larger cities to the very rural areas.

- The worst governor ever
- The assumption that to be part of the ELCA is to be liberal politically. We lose a lot of potential new members as a result.
- Hunger
- Elderly being forgotten in nursing homes
- Homelessness
- Political unrest - hopefully that will change
- Not isolating congregations/communities that may be struggling with the church's stance on sexuality
- Mental Health concerns
- The needs and opportunities on SD reservations
- Care for the local congregation and not push "perceived" victims and claim no space was made for them in congregations
- Poverty, homelessness, and the challenges of public transportation
- Struggling foster care system.
- Young families struggling with childcare and food costs
- Political divisions
- Polarization, fear, hopelessness
- To show what the Love of Jesus really means
- Isolation by lack of acceptance due to mental health issues, gender bias and ageism.
- Cultural, political, and economic pressures that continue to divide us in our societal existence.
- The Sioux Falls area, as it continues to transition to a large metro area, will have to deal with social services in a more comprehensive way than it is at present.
- Poverty and a lack of larger structures places many in precarious life situations.
- How to support families living in poverty
- the divisive politics in our nation
- Political division
- Serving the least privileged people among us
- National partisan politics views of many residents
- Native communities
- helping traditional membership to connect with their neighbors
- Evangelization is very important by not through syncretism with secular initiatives.
- Political divide
- Dumping the ELCA Churchwide
- Loss of population due to farming challenges in rural areas
- Growth in secularism
- the tension between supporting the LGBTQIA+2S community, indigenous communities, and other minorities while connecting with the dominant culture in ways that keep them engaged as well as challenged
- Sadly, it is the acceptance of our Social Statement. I still see push-back from some of our congregational members.
- There are thousands of (mostly young) people that are legitimately put off both by our ultra-conservative neighbors and by their perceptions of mainline churches that over-focus on identity issues. They feel homeless in their faith, because they are.
- Rural poverty.
- Not feeling welcome because of hypocrisy - saying people are welcome but not EVERYONE.

- Difficult political climate
- Financial stress and pressure
- Justice for our native neighbors
- How do we get the word out that political conservatism doesn't equal Christianity. How can we be the light for love of our fellow man? Not hate toward our perceived enemy?
- Pressure from outside to accept changes not true to God's word.
- How much like white country club we sometimes seem
- To navigate the political climate.
- Economic fragility
- The biggest challenge may be to recognize that a definition of neighbor is shrinking.
- We still don't have a firm grasp on how to welcome all. Are we a RIC Synod?
- Decline in rural areas.
- Christian Nationalism
- Hunger
- Community / Congregational Relations with Native Americans
- inflation and affording basic needs
- Keep hope alive for those struggling with poverty, addictions, illnesses
- We have a men's mental health crisis, and just a mental health crisis in general on the rise. And the classic stoic farmers are especially at risk.
- Christian Nationalism.
- We need to learn how to love ourselves before we can love our neighbors.
- Affordable housing.
- The need to meet people in their place
- Our society is broken. Our country has turned from the vision of the founding fathers toward a new religion of social justice embraced by the ELCA. THE CHALLENGE IS TO BRING CONGREGATIONS BACK TO BIBLICAL THEOLOGY WHICH WILL ATTRACT OTHERS TO THE CHURCH.
- The prejudice - and even outright hatred - that there is for immigrants as they try to settle in this land.
- The best way to love our neighbor is to name their sin (or how they are being killed in the law) and speak their forgiveness. This is true freedom. We can love them by offering support and awareness, but that doesn't get to the heart of the matter.
- Working with immigrants, regardless of their status
- Reaching out to individuals living in poverty
- The call to Christian nationalism
- Increasing political polarity
- Feeling of isolation Among those in rural areas and smaller communities
- To identify the needs and wants of the unchurched
- Serving our Native American population
- Having ministerial influence on a statewide basis to all citizens of South Dakota.
- Behavioral crisis from people damaged by woke ideology
- This question is framed in a completely biased way.
- Lack of quality healthcare
- food insecurity
- Affordable housing is a crisis.
- Many rural communities are facing declining population and struggling to maintain businesses. Young people are leaving their family farms and ranches. Our small towns are getting older.

- do we know who our neighbors are
- LGBTQIA+2S rights in the state of SD.
- The needs of our native American population
- Loving your neighbor does not mean affirming their sin. There is a difference and it is widely ignored.
- Showing others how ELCA supports members and churches.
- Divisive language and nuance around social issues.
- There are young kids looking for faith!
- The support and well-being of LGBTQ+ people, their families, and workplaces.
- Recent legislation has been detrimental to property owners in South Dakota.
- Not everybody shares the same values.
- Unknown.
- Shelters and food banks. In all communities. Not just SF and RC.
- DEI hurts EVERYONE. Love your neighbor means love ALL your neighbors not just those that fit into the correct boxes
- Dialogue and interaction with our Native American population
- Woke
- South Dakotans stand for hard work, strong morals, and traditional Christian values. We need a Bishop who can stand up to the evil forces among us.
- Christian Nationalism vs ELCA message of God's Grace
- Share who we are with all people - we are Christians and Lutheran
- The need to be more giving to those in need.
- There is no absolute truth in our culture anymore.
- All too common for individuals to feel they are on the outside looking in. Congregations struggle with accepting outsiders.
- The needs of our Native American neighbors
- Hunger issues. Many do very well in our state, many others do not.
- connecting to those in need
- Financial Struggles: Housing/Groceries
- Overcoming the fractured fabric of our society by continuing to preach the gospel of love.
- Divisive politics and political rhetoric
- The changing attitudes of people and their commitment to church. We are constantly adjusting methods of communication and adjusting how to gain people's attention. South Dakota is experiencing cultural change at a rate slower than other states around them. (My opinion)
- Working/being with other denominations and remembering we are ALL God's children sharing in a same purpose.
- Supreme Court and Legal Challenges
- ongoing effects of racism/colonialism
- LGBTQ+ issues
- Outreach to the Native Americans residing in our state.
- Inequity in pay
- Finding ways to connect people without shame. I mean that not only for those who feel outside but for those within the church who are learning. Connection will never be made if there isn't an openness for everyone to learn in a nonjudgemental atmosphere.
- Negative history of poor treatment by the church
- high costs for housing, food, gas, etc. make it hard for young people to afford anything, including giving to churches

- To be the bishop for all people
- Poverty and homelessness is a huge issue in our state as folks move to Sioux Falls and other places for assistance.
- Pastors retiring and not enough younger generations are filling the gaps
- Keep the needs of the reservation life on our minds all year long, not just one Sunday
- The Culture of Individuality
- There are times when we can agree to disagree and still love each other.
- Political extremism.
- People have moved to SD from other countries. There is no way for ordinary citizens to meet them, to learn about their cultures, and learn what they need. Several churches could link to help people find housing, language classes, employment, day care, churches, welcoming potlucks, and so much more.
- the lies and conspiracy theories present a constant battle
- divisiveness and hate speech
- Although parts of our state are experiencing steady population growth, many more are experiencing a decline in population
- welcoming all people
- food insecurity
- Knowing that all are created in the image of God - knowing how to engage in conversation with folks of differing opinions in a way that allows for - I never thought of it that way!
- Engaging us all to find solutions for the poor & hungry
- Polarizing political environment, especially with the election in November and the unknown of what lies ahead.
- This huge change it could help us.
- Christian nationalism
- our neighborhoods are changing
- People unwilling to help poor and immigrants
- dealing with loneliness and elder care issues
- The large group of Christian nationalists whose theology has infiltrated what it means to be Christian and love all no matter who they are or where they come from.
- Learning the language
- financial struggles of families in rural SD
- Racism and Bigotry
- Worry about the politics and election. What will happen if the "wrong" person is elected, etc.
- Donald Trump
- Financial needs / cost of living
- The unchurched
- Understanding the difference between rural and urban church settings
- for as much as most of our ELCA leaders love ALL our neighbors, it's a lost cause for many (if not majority) of the SD population
- Helping homeless people
- There continues to be racism and hostility towards our Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota neighbors.
- Political climate in/outside the church
- People need to hear a voice that is clear, compassionate and theologically grounded
- Hunger
- hunger

- not all people seem to want to be loved
- Rising conservatism
- need for food, shelter, and employment
- Increasing isolation, loneliness, and related mental health concerns
- Xenophobia of the outsider/other
- same as I've already said - inclusion and acceptance of all
- mental health
- unchurched
- Connecting to our Native American population.
- Inflation-cost of living
- Presidential election
- All people are created equal
- Tribal relations (political and social)
- SD is Republican state -- right now political far-right leanings aren't always conducive to loving thy neighbors
- Alcohol/Drug Addiction/Mental Health/Illegal Drugs
- Attitudes of judgement / exclusion for those different from the white republican majority
- Polarization dur to social media and politics. Keeping to Jesus and the love of the gospel not a political agenda
- losing youth participation in the church
- How does diversity fit into the church? How does a congregation welcome all but still be true to biblical standings
- The Synod must be mindful of the many different cultures represented in SD. I have become aware of the many countries from which people are coming to South Dakota (Sioux Falls) to build a life for their families. Many are employed by "Lyft."
- Our bishop needs remember that 75% of our congregations are rural. Resist the lure of becoming political because you are in Sioux Falls
- Fear, the ELCA is progressive and that can cause fear which makes people move away instead if being drawn in.
- Food insecurity and education.
- The poor we have among us
- white Christian nationalism
- Declining rural communities.
- The economy is creating hardships for the average working folks, leaving less money to support congregations and serving/giving to our neighbors.
- Financial challenges
- Accessible and affordable health care
- How we view our neighbors
- The meaning of neighbors - everyone not just your next door house neighbor or the farm down the road
- Affordable housing challenges
- food security
- What seems to be the growing numbers of homeless people.
- The open vitriol and hatred that is directed toward marginalized communities throughout South Dakota--particularly the LGBTQIA2S+ community.
- You need to address the needs of the farm/ranch members.
- Individual identity
- Life is hard and stretched.

- Being more present in the smaller/rural communities
- Rural communities that are working hard to keep a sense of vitality present more people move to larger areas
- Those in the queer community being called an abomination for their ungodly choices.
- Address the concerns of how the synod can support both urban and rural ministries.
- Treating others fairly
- Continue to improve our connections with the Native American communities.
- There is prejudice everywhere, not only due to skin color but also due to sexual orientations, transsexual, homosexual issues and also prejudice against other religions.
- The illegal immigrants walking the streets
- That different denominations do not work together very often
- Communication breakdown
- Most of the older members of our congregations are rather conservative while the synods and younger pastors tend to be quite liberal. That creates a gap in understanding.
- The ability to collaborate with entities outside the ELCA
- The political climate depending on the results of the election
- Care for our elderly
- Wider gap between liberal stances of main line denominations and general conservative mentality of state
- Unaffordable housing, especially in western South Dakota
- aging members
- Homelessness and poverty.
- Affordable housing.
- calming down the radicals
- Politics at every turn, and so they seek respite in their congregation
- Affordable housing
- Poor being supported only outside the walls of the congregation and not invited in
- Mental health
- Lack of safe travel & ministry around the world
- Politics...just being in such a conservative state
- Housing, childcare, and food crisis
- Stop marginalizing people who disagree with the Bishop's political agenda
- As always, the uncertain rural economy
- Low teacher pay and insufficient funding for public education in South Dakota.
- A need for church all day everyday however that looks
- East - West River divisions
- Love is love is love is not Jesus Love. Repent and change your way is what he taught . Not universalism
- Artificial Intimacy; we continue to figure out ways to not engage, support, or live with each other. Lack of community.
- In the (hopefully) post-trump era, the next bishop will have the challenge of uniting congregations that were divided by politics.
- A pervasive anti-gospel which courses through the state opposes the Lutheran witness to God's gift of faith in Christ.
- Support families whose children have behavior issues
- standing in solidarity with marginalized people
- Support for those in need
- In a political climate a challenge will be to unite God's people

- Resistance to change
- Youth
- better materials to help small congregations with Bible study materials, Confirmation direction, etc.
- Focus on congregations to equip them for outreach within their orbits of influence.
- Class divide
- Getting us on track to have candidates who meet our needs
- Political/social controversy
- Navigating Churchwide politics that are completely disconnected from most SD communities
- fallout after the 2024 election; fighting fascism, Christian nationalism, and authoritarianism
- Distance will always be an issue in our spread out state. We still have a hard time even knowing who our neighbors are.
- Wide and deep alienation and division politically, that divides our people, communities, churches.
- Political division.
- Assuming that all churches are the same. All law.
- Growing homelessness and poverty
- Advancing technology and availability in rural SD
- Division (political, urban/rural, socioeconomic, generational)
- It's no mystery that social media is a dangerous predator. How can we effectively address this for our most vulnerable?
- Appealing to the underprivileged
- To clear and to claim the name of Christ
- Cultural polarization
- Financial.
- Apathy toward faith
- Those dealing with social interaction and depression.
- The growing far-right conservative presence in the state legislature will be increasingly at-odds with ELCA churchwide messaging and statements.
- Accidental Racism.
- political/racial/LGBTQ tension
- Affordable health care.
- Understanding the Native American way of life
- Staying true to God's word in the secular community.
- The growing gap between the "haves" and the "have nots". How do we fulfill the mission with which we have been entrusted with what is perceived as dwindling resources and rising costs?
- How can leaders be equipped to proclaim a foreign word in the world today?
- Closing the divide between those who want to keep certain groups of people out of church and those who want to stay in the ELCA
- Political views that contradict the spirit/teachings of Christ
- Other Lutheran denomination using the ELCA as their growth plan
- Political divisions in congregations
- To advertise our relevancy.
- Social services for dysfunctional families
- Providing services and programming for life's challenges; addiction services, grief services, divorce support services.

- racism
- feelings of being accepted however we are
- Homelessness is growing, with no easy solutions on the horizon.
- The political divide in South Dakota is strong. The 2024 election is divisive and creating strain that will likely last beyond November.
- Care for / racism against Indigenous people in SD.
- Making sure everyone feels included.
- Increasing justice issues, especially depending on the election this year
- Division amongst our communities.
- Explaining that our mission is going to start helping SD and the US instead of other countries
- Invite ALL to the table. Even those you feel don't belong. We are ALL Saints and Sinners
- Increase our awareness and involvement in global mission relationships
- Don't be influenced by politics
- Financial resources to meet the challenges of providing Pastors or Deacons to Congregations without
- Support mental health programs for those dealing with every new crisis thru the Bible and Lutheran principles
- People no longer think they need God.
- Working and bonding with other faiths
- The "tense" political landscape
- Christian Nationalism
- Transportation
- While we are making strides forward in Native American ministry we still struggle. Bridging the gap between understand and ministry is I believe one of our missions.
- Negative Political Climate
- poverty
- refugee resettlement from all parts of the world
- Inclusion of people not white heterosexuals.
- Childcare accessibility
- Finding avenues for people to share their story.
- The increasing unchurched population is growing and do not feel welcome in traditional congregations
- diminishing commitment and participation in the church
- Need to think outside the box
- Hunger is also a major issue in many pockets of the state.
- Money, most of the funds go to larger congregations so the small rural churches end up closing
- Keep reminding us that our life may be very comfortable, but that is not the norm.
- The culture of rural and urban congregations.
- We can honor and respect and learn from each other and out different cultures.
- No great answers for those at the economic bottom of the system.
- The issue of reproductive rights is on the ballot, but it has been a concern for some time. This is where love for each person, and an understanding of that person's reproductive needs, could help them maintain faith but not despair.
- negative experiences from people claiming to be Christian
- For much of our state agriculture is the dominant industry and drives the local economy. As an industry its performance is cyclical in nature.

- rights for all
- Communicating with grace to folks outside of our congregations in a way that reflects the face of Christ to others continuing to enunciate the views of the ELCA SD Synod in addressing present and future challenges.
- Engaging us all to stand up for and support LGBT+ and BIPOC
- Fear of decline within some small towns -- perhaps coupled with loss of work, or loss of land.
- To get us know your Bishop.
- Population migration of rural communities to larger communities
- People unwilling or unable to financially support church
- inclusion of the stranger/newcomer
- The size of the synod and the need to show up.
- Learning how to vote
- political divide - hard for people to have conversations with people who have different beliefs
- Financial challenges (mostly people outside congregations)
- The price of basic needs like food, gas, housing, etc.
- Vacancies of pastors
- the Synod has a big job to gently steer any of their rostered leaders who are "selective" in how they serve the body of Christ to role model differently
- Again, folks migrating in and being welcomed.
- Cost of living - people can't make ends meet/living in poverty
- Housing
- homelessness
- Christianity is not one size fits all
- Challenges to bible interpretation
- providing safety from those who would do harm
- Rapid population growth and changing culture in metropolitan areas
- Trust level of institutions and people
- child care
- Hunger and Poverty in South Dakota. The 2 go together as One. [The death throes of small town America]
- The death throes of small town America; this challenge is tied to No. 1. [Hunger and Poverty in South Dakota]
- Helping heal divisions created by political differences in our population.
- Radicalization on both ends of the political spectrum
- Treating others with kindness
- Church membership/bringing the message to the non-churched population
- Pine Ridge and other poor/underserved areas are a long ways away
- Poverty/Homelessness
- Cost of living and to run church
- I think our population is challenged by the utter lack of accountability of the ELCA rostered leaders. There is right and wrong in the Lutheran religion - our synod seems to have forgotten that. The removal of "Visions and Expectations" was a grave mistake.
- Rural population decline
- The anger/anxiety present in our communities
- Talent and resources leaving the state.

- More folks are becoming food insecure, but hesitate to use available programs that are already stretched.
- Fewer places to hear the promise of the Gospel
- Accessible and affordable housing, and laws that discriminate against marginal populations
- Helping people understand what community and a spiritual support can mean for them
- Stop folks from thinking they/we have the answers for everyone else
- Political differences/tensions that draw people apart
- mental health issues
- Encouraging ministry relations with other denomination churches.
- The synod should find ways to cooperate with various congregation to supply pastoral leadership! Find the commonness among our congregation!
- The heaviness of cultural/societal influence through technology and social media that is adding to mental illness concerns
- I fear the rising costs of insurance, medical costs, lack of services in a rural state will continue to escalate - forcing life changing choices to be made
- The Synod should provide a unified voice and support the message that Wednesdays and Sundays are for church related activities
- Be open to ALL
- Acting with other denominations in our communities
- I think that South Dakota also has a real substance-abuse problem, especially with alcohol. Often times this is looked over and never addressed. I also believe that the methamphetamine and drug culture as well thriving in the state of South Dakota. How can the church help with this? Some churches have substance-abuse support groups, this should also be something that they encourage. Also, parenting classes should be encouraged.
- The increase of families needing Feeding SD
- How to get people to come back to church
- Increased anxiety
- The economy is creating greater financial need for many families which can also have a negative impact of giving.
- Care for widows and widowers and single parents.
- Increasingly wider gap in desired compensation for ordained ministry and ability of congregation to meet salary guidelines
- The loss of community churches (of any denomination)--it will be a sad America without churches in our communities

What are two of the biggest opportunities facing those outside of our congregations and throughout our state that the next bishop of the South Dakota Synod should be aware of?

- creating a welcome for a less amplified voice of progressive people (especially young progressive voices)
- People are moving into South Dakota (some areas). This is an opportunity to reach more people with the Good News!
- Non-profit partnerships
- If you are not a marginalized class you are being trashed as an after thought. All people are special and should be treated that way.

- Organizations like Church on the Street and LSS
- I'm not sure. I think after the November elections for president, we will have a more clear answer.
- Let's meet people where there are.
- People know and care about each other
- Be a state leader in support of marginalized communities - LGBTQ, unhoused/underhoused, economic justice
- Enlist faithful teachers who teach the Bible as true and not scandalize the text
- Sioux Falls growth
- Creative revitalization of downtown areas.
- The imbalance of how and where development is taking place across the whole star
- Love for all people
- Access to harmful social experiences, particularly to the vulnerable.
- To replace DEI with MEI (Merit, Discipline, Intelligence)
- Employment that is moving our citizens to other cities in SD and those who are coming here for employment.
- Cultural, political, and economic shifts that open up possibilities for community to exist.
- Sioux Falls is a destination city in the Midwest because of a robust job-environment.
- An opportunity to model rural/urban relationships which cross common cultural divides.
- Supporting families facing difficulties such as above.
- there is strength in numbers, and unifying our churches around Lutheran theology is a huge opportunity
- strengthening the existing churches
- Challenges provide great mission opportunities for Gods people
- More diverse voices are not only speaking out but being heard
- Youth
- justice issues
- Return to orthodoxy
- Good leaders in communities
- Returning to our conservative roots
- It is a stretch to see this as an opportunity, but fear of the future
- Growth in liberal politics even in SD and how the Bishop can be a voice of spiritual wisdom within these necessary conversations
- tapping into the community values and desire to help South Dakotans claim to have
- Develop technology that is easy to use, place it in some of our rural churches that are shrinking, and bring in outside powerful messages from another ELCA church.
- So very many people hungry for a faith home that feeds them, where they can be challenged to serve, where its faith that matters.
- Statewide economic growth.
- The easy access to "spirituality instead of religion." "I can get what i need in nature, yoga, social media."
- Areas of steady/significant population growth.
- Desirable standard of living in the State
- This synod is a model for others in raising up leaders and nurturing community
- Schools are following each other in banning cell phones and other devices. How can we springboard off this movement and use this unique opportunity to lift up our youth with confidence and love for each other?
- God's truth shared in love for our neighbors.

- Extend service/ serving neighbors (broadly defined)
- To speak the Gospel into the climate
- Possibilities for networking and sharing ideas and energy to build up communities
- The biggest opportunity for the SD Synod might be reaching out to portions of the population that are not traditionally Lutheran.
- We are unique; our state covers two time zones and two different ways of thinking. It is impressive, really, the divide between West and East River.
- Lead in new directions.
- End Listening posts--they don't work--violate Matthew 18 and wreak havoc for pastors
- Access to many forms of communication.
- Normalizing face to face relationships with non-white people.
- Awareness of help that might be available.
- If it can be approached with grace and humility, there are congregations who left the ELCA that discovered the grass wasn't necessarily greener. If pride could be put aside, wouldn't it be beautiful to welcome a congregation back into the ELCA?
- Partnering with Sanford and Avera to meet Mental Health Issues.
- lean into grace and love for ALL that the ELCA stands for
- An abundance of meaningful employment opportunities.
- Continued growth in being the hands and feet of Jesus to all of our brother and sisters in Christ.
- The opportunity to see a synod lead by example and teach Biblical truth over progressive social justice statements.
- To love (agape) those who are different than we are. To be the body of Christ.
- Every day someone faces hardship in some way, the church can answer that.
- The opportunity to find a church home that is filled with love and opportunities to serve
- Newcomers to the state responding to economic opportunity that might bring new thinking to the state?
- The ability to work with other denominations
- Chances to work together for a greater good, supporting our neighbors
- To investigate who we are.
- Utilizing technology including social media to share the good news of the gospel.
- Discover ways to provide ministerial services on a less expensive basis. It is difficult to keep asking for more money for the church each year to provide those ministerial services.
- Those who don't preach woke ideology will continue to pull people away from the ones who do
- Stop perpetuating woke ideology
- Better awareness of what ministries the synod supports
- hands on work ie, soup kitchen
- South Dakota is a wonderful place to live and raise a family. We have a quality of life here.
- This land offers all it ever has for those who love it.
- Tapping into growth around the major cities in SD. How do we better love and care for neighbors?
- The needs of our native American population
- Our communities need to know that our SD Synod truly cares for them. When congregational conflicts arise, don't sugar coat the problem and tell congregational leaders how you'll handle it and then sweep it under the rug.
- Incorporating all the tourists that come to our state each year.

- We have an opportunity to create safe, non-divisive, non-judgmental spaces for young people, young adults.
- We have lots of young families looking for worship communities
- Mobilizing and supporting young people in leadership roles including Generation Z.
- There are many South Dakotans fighting for property rights and they rely heavily on their faith to guide them.
- Worship is not put as a primary activity in the time budget of families.
- Helping South Dakota first
- Our state is conservative and that has put us in a much more favorable financial position than surrounding states
- In small towns merging ELCA and other protestant congregations where neither is viable, but both together would survive.
- Politics
- SD needs better opportunities for our brothers and sisters struggling in the current economy. We are reaching concerning numbers of households who cannot afford to keep up with the extreme inflation.
- Developing the talent and devotion that lives within each Congregation throughout the Synod
- Staying away from every social crisis
- Care more for those in need.
- They are born knowing there is a God and spend their entire lives searching for Him. They are hungry for Truth.
- Church attendance and attending our faith outside the church setting
- A desire for political moderation in policy and rhetoric
- Relationships of value are not easy to find
- working with technology
- We have the opportunity to bring people together
- Tackling the problem of decreasing church membership.
- That we can find ways to engage in dialogue over issues that have seemed to become divisive. Can we disagree and still love our neighbor?
- That we continue to look toward the future and what ministry will look like 5, 10, 15 years from now. I do see that happening in ways in the South Dakota synod more than other synods in which I have worked
- Helping those in financial need.
- More Community Outreach is Needed
- urban growth
- acceptance of ALL people in all ELCA congregations
- Outreach to the native Americans in our state.
- Inequity of pay
- Poverty
- assistance for those in need
- SD is a state full of diversity
- An opportunity to reach out to diverse people.
- The history and sentimental meaning behind all the rural churches
- relationships between different faiths, all striving for the same world
- The increased population in the State is an opportunity to expand church growth.
- Living into our ELCA identity that we are all created in God's image, all are saints and sinners and all are loved by God equally

- A reformed corrections system.
- Climate change will continue to affect our lives, in ever-increasing ways. One response is denial and refusal to change. Another response is to understand how the individual can help. Voting for people who are aware and educated is important.
- bring people together
- We have the best message to share! God loves all!
- We are experiencing both population and economic growth in several areas of our state including MSA's in Rapid City and Sioux Falls.
- inclusion
- The opportunity of time passing - allowing Christ to work among us and show us a way to come together as people of God for the common good of all.
- To show Jesus' love to all
- To invite folks to hear about the love of God in Christ Jesus, and how that matters more than anything else.
- This huge change it could help us.
- South Dakota is growing and becoming more diverse
- Mental health
- Large number of immigrants in the area
- immigrants
- That there is a place for them in the church and ways to reach them.
- As these new people learn, hopefully they remember who taught them
- almost 0 unemployment in SD - jobs are available
- Ellsworth AFB expansion
- We have super nice people who really want to help. If you can harness that positive energy, it would go far.
- Housing
- Poverty situations - housing & food
- Continued placement of good pastoral people and supporting them
- the SD culture is grounded in family, traditions & working hard
- getting God's word out to people
- We are a place where jobs are available. We are a relatively safe place for folks to land.
- Build relationships -new people, new opportunity
- People are eager to experience congregations that are welcoming, theologically substantive and compassionate
- Find a faith home
- lay leaders
- an openness to other cultures
- Providing a caring place for people
- rebuilding trust in leadership and each other
- Growth opportunities from increasing population
- The opportunity to grow through learning about new people and new places.
- Engage in more community efforts to represent faith community- NOT politically
- Feed the hungry. Home the homeless.
- unchurched
- Getting our young people more involved in church.
- Digital communication
- Community outreach
- Teaching people the right way to treat people

- Hearing the gospel message/rejoining a Lutheran church
- Center the church back on the promises in baptism
- Technology. How do we use to our advantage to involve more people
- Ministering to minority communities
- The Bishop must be aware of the many cultures all around us--be they Muslim, Hindu, Christian or "other."
- We are a state of solid, core values. Don't be afraid to listen to the common folk. We had a lot of great things to say and lots of strong values to share
- Reviving the rural communities through economic growth and church growth.
- I'm not aware of what that would be.
- we have an opportunity to combat the lies of white Christian nationalism with the imago dei theology and neighbors in solidarity
- New models for rural community development.
- We have many opportunities to show our love for our neighbors in various ways that involve showing up for them and building relationships so they know we care.
- New non-traditional non-Lutheran congregations
- People are thinking about God and asking spiritual questions
- People will be searching for help when they feel lost
- Inclusivity
- Population growth within our state
- rural ministry
- Creative use of technology
- The opportunity for reconciliation between groups of people.
- We need to keep our state attractive to young people and young families
- They live in South Dakota
- The Good News of the Gospel is uniquely different than anything else the world has to offer and when we say it -- people hear it.
- Getting younger people involved in the church
- The opportunity to collaborate on how best to engage with ministries with the changing demographics
- You are a child of God and you are welcome here.
- Synod supported youth and family ministries including educational material, social media posts, and video for social media.
- Loss of Jobs
- Learn about other faiths. Such as learning about Jewish faith.
- There's also much opportunity to help the homeless or the unhoused. How can we Christians help people that I have less than us? Rapid City Hope Center close quite a while ago now and has caused all kinds of community problems but mostly people that used to get help in Rapid City have been unable to get the help they need. How can we use this as an opportunity to help those less fortunate and our church communities continue to help.
- The huge decline in agricultural income combined with a large increase in expenses
- Social media and getting Gods word out
- Increased population
- The synod could work to bridge the gaps and understanding of each end of the political spectrum uniting congregants who often feel betrayed by the church politically.
- Not really aware of the status of opportunities!
- Create unity within and between our churches

- Living so close to the largest city in our state and make the synod known that we are here. Mayor's Good Friday breakfast is a great place to be invited to.
- Evangelism
- Strong economic growth and business opportunities, especially in South Dakota
- reaching our neighbors with necessities and love (but no agenda)
- Those in our communities that are disconnected from community. The church can serve as a place of connection, meaning, and value.
- Sharing space with partners
- Tone down divisiveness and bring all God's people to the forefront
- Reach out to African communities and not try to colonize them with LGBTQ agenda
- Cooperation with rural development organizations
- Using online technology to connect with others across great distances.
- Is digital the answer or the problem with communication
- Potential for radical hospitality
- Realizing
- We can be more connected than ever before.
- As South Dakota wrestles with how to handle the increasing population of people facing social pressures, it would be my guess that they will first seek to grant non-profits money to do the work before establishing state-run services. That could mean openings for ministry at-scale.
- An opportunity to embrace care of creation beyond profit-driven determinations.
- being one of few denominations that is truly welcoming to all
- visibility in supporting those in need
- By being faithful to the gospel our church can be a light in a dark age
- We are living in an historic time of potential [positive] change for the larger Church
- presence of the ELCA
- Reigniting a sense of the sacred within congregations.
- Room to grow
- Preaching the gospel
- So many are unattached to church--making them feel welcome?
- Intentionally be in conversation about how Churchwide resolutions in our denomination are understood clearly to those outside our denomination
- connecting people
- Create cohort opportunities that will link leadership from different communities together.
- The belief that they don't need organized religion.
- Wealth present in older generations.
- Educational opportunities
- Our elderly are lonely. Programs and support to strengthen our intergenerational contact.
- Impact of divisive politics & opportunity to teach people how to debate respectfully
- To show Christ's forgiving love.
- Appreciate everyone.
- Offer family systems training for pastors and congregations
- Despite differences, there is a willingness to work alongside neighbors regardless. I see that in my own small town with ministerial association and community efforts and I think that's the trend across the state.
- I believe that there will be a large number of pastors entering retirement in the next few years. This will be a challenge/opportunity in many different ways. Not only will you need to attract new pastors, but you need to figure out what to do with all those retirees.

- ELCA is good at social justice
- Working together for the good of the whole
- The opportunity to get to know they are not the center of faith, Christ is.
- The ability to reach people wherever they are
- Many youth are being drawn to nondenominational churches who offer programming tailored to them. We need to be aware of this and address the need for specific ministries for young adults.
- Volunteering to meet the needs of the needy
- There is a genuine concern for your neighbor across our state. This sense of community is special.
- Technology is allowing our people to connect in ways they couldn't do 5 years ago. It's not a replacement for in person gatherings, but it's an opportunity for people in remote areas to live and work differently than ever before.
- Becoming a source of encouragement and hope for rural communities.
- Are sparse population in long distances make connectivity more difficult
- All the people that don't have a church home could find one in an ELCA church.
- College kids are wanting more
- Mobilizing congregations and the synod to be a collaborator at the table in communities facing big challenges (mental health, homelessness, poverty, access to affordable healthcare, human rights equality, etc.)
- Helping the US
- Conservatives are NOT racist
- More challenging Lutheran opportunities for our youth.
- What would Jesus Do
- Continuing to spread the message of ELCA and God's Grace
- Promoting basic Lutheran principles and the word left us in the Bible
- The ELCA can be the true Church, preaching the Word of God and inviting everyone to know the one, true God.
- Sharp division in religious/political beliefs
- Cost of housing
- More Consistent Open and Affirming Statements Across Synod
- shifting political landscape (I hope).
- Outreach to native and LGBTQ people in our state.
- affordable housing
- social and fellowship connections for those who are lonely
- Showing up in people's lives is huge
- An opportunity to encourage others to go into ministry in some form.
- The Youth-most JH, HS, College age kids are "exploring" their beliefs and we'll losing them to the technology and social media conspiracies
- Our governor invites people to move here as an escape from...but The Church is more open to all learning from one another.
- Showing people, through words and actions, that organized religion is not a bad thing
- A better understanding of how to help people out of poverty.
- Creeping fascism. Ego-driven ambitions. Abuse of power. Lack of humility.
- growing communities and people hungry to hear good news
- Seeing the work of the ELCA in South Dakota in action - showing up and reaching out in ministry to small towns and rural congregations, emigrant populations, LGBTQ folks and

the homeless. Leading by doing what Christ did among us and telling folks to - come and see.

- Caring for creation as our indigenous siblings teach
- To get us know your Bishop.
- elderly
- Building cross-cultural relationships as immigrant populations increase in communities not prepared or inclined to be welcoming
- Online worship and education - this is really the way of the future for our remote state.
- Race situations in Western SD
- given the SD culture won't change, what's next for the Church... how to harness this like the controversial wind energy
- Utilize the church buildings for more than Sunday worship
- realizing that when our white folks came to U.S. it took a number of decades to talk one language
- Listening
- finding housing / safety / 'daily bread' for immigrants
- Resources.
- Create a large church leadership program to help pastors learn how to be administrators, and good HR practices
- Addressing the latent bigotry within each of us.
- Expand the use of digital media to reach the public.
- Gen Z and Alpha looking for authentic faith
- Showing strength and leadership
- Expand the churches access footprint; don't stay inside their own walls. (Hospitals/ Schools/Retirement Homes/Nursing Homes/Elderly Care
- Welcoming our new neighbors who moved here during covid
- Small towns need as much charitable help as big cities. I think that if we could be a part of that process if we could offer more help. Two local struggling communities we could be doing a lot of good.
- Creating a narrative and culture around quality of living for families in South Dakota.
- The opportunities to partner with seminaries is vital to our future, especially Luther and Wartburg. Make the path to ordained ministry more accessible (increase communication about options/partner with fully online programs, etc.) for those called to ministry.
- Continued growth in youth sports
- Opportunity to converse with and learn more from First Nation people
- Economically many will struggle and will be open to help and support
- Diversity of backgrounds
- Supporting our youth
- We need to be the voice of reason when our leaders in government become extreme in their actions
- People are lonely and the church is good at community.
- The opportunity to join together as a community to meet the needs of the people in new and creative ways
- Reduced income on farms
- Learn about other cultures, races.
- How can we create another culture for youth that brings them to church and away from all the computers, electronic addiction, social media and music that is negative? What kind of environment can we create for the youth to help them learn a good moral compass.

- Helping people feed their families
- Technological advances
- Rich rural heritage.
- Creating a church that is welcoming to all
- Good virtual and actual infrastructure in the state

The Bishop of the South Dakota Synod

What is one piece of advice you would give to the next bishop of the South Dakota Synod?

- Be authentic.
- I am thankful for Bishop Constanze, and pray for her continued blessing of service to us. Advice? Delegate more to empower those who can assist in Christ's mission.
- No matter what you do (or don't do) as the bishop, your worth is not determined by any of us. You are beloved child of God. God values you, and in the end, that's all that matters. Thank you for taking on this huge authority and responsibility.
- I hope you get elected again your a smart woman
- Be honest about the ELCA's political agenda and about his/her own agenda
- Soli Deo Gloria
- Please raise up ALL populations and remember that our rural roots are what made the ELCA in America even possible.
- Take a breath. Pray. God's got this. It isn't up to you to make the world a so-called better place. Keep Christ the focus. If Christ is at the center of all that you do, the rest will fall into place. Social justice, politics, etc. only divides.
- Be approachable to all people - Bishop Constanze is awesome at that!
- Listen and dream big
- Edit what you put in print. Stop saying things like "the sun and the moon compete for light." Quit pretending that you have political power in the secular realm by sending letters on behalf of the Synod when most of the people disagree with you.
- Continue to show up.
- Looking at the church and our culture, my sense is that the hostility, division, lack of commitment, and anxiety around us comes from fear and exhaustion. I believe Jesus' words, "Do not be afraid" will be crucial to listen to in the coming years.
- Faith formation starts at birth and we need to help families chose and learn how to be faith-filled day by day even when the world is scary
- Pray daily
- Keep good communication with rostered leaders AND congregational leadership.
- Politics do not need to be in the church. Using the pulpit to influence the way people vote is wrong. The Bible should not be a reflection of the current culture but the Light for current culture to follow .
- Having a listening ear. So many times when a pastor or congregant comes to the Bishop, they need to know they have been heard. They aren't always looking for answers, they just want to know someone has heard and acknowledged them.
- Actually give Jesus Christ to people, or at least strive to keep that as the central focus of what we do as leaders in our churches in this synod.
- Get creative , have fun!

- "Prayerfully consider the consequences of your actions while still acting in accordance with Christian narrative ethics (even if it yields negative material results) because efficiency is not a theological category." - I think Hauerwas maybe?
- Be present for clergy/deacons and their families.
- Quoting Brene Brown: Strong back, soft front, wild heart
- Listen to the congregations and individuals in the synod
- I don't have any advice because I think that our current bishop and her administration is great! Keep up the good work!
- Trust your call and LISTEN
- LISTEN TO YOUR CONGREGATIONS. There are some poor leaders-and they are destroying our congregations.
- Remember your responsibility to your family
- The office of Bishop has lost its way. The Bishop must return to an orthodox interpretation of God's Word and abandon its "critical theory" efforts in gender and race.
- Love and trust the people (until they prove otherwise)
- Be not afraid of Churchwide
- Stay sane, if possible. It is rough out there.
- Defend our Lutheran Confessions and Scripture
- continue to find ways to connect with ELCA members. South Dakota is a giant small town. Relationships are huge.
- Don't deviate from the current administration. We have strong leadership at the top. Continue seeking open communication.
- Expect the call to be more demanding, and more fulfilling, than you could ever have imagined.
- Please make the church more accessible to everyone and when they come, please help ensure what they are hearing is the Gospel.
- You are equipped to respond as God has called you. We will support you and surround you in prayer as you step forward in faith.
- Be true to yourself and trust the gifts you bring.
- This state/synod is vast (so are the needs) and it is a tall task to lead. Form as many relationships as you can across the state and make connections between others.
- Love all as best you can. We will feel it and send it back and out.
- Scriptural truth over cultural bias.
- Listen
- Build staff to do what you cannot
- Maintain support and encouragement for rostered leaders.
- Please be a pastor to your pastors, vicars and other lay leaders!
- Keep smiling because we are here for each other.
- Be authentic--learn from shadow side and lead as one who values being a Christ-like servant
- Keeping up the good work already in place.
- Don't lose sight of the 'quiet' congregations and leaders
- Clear expectations, strong boundaries, and self-assuredness are gifts that are then modeled to rostered leaders. A sense of self goes a long way in supporting others.
- Know the requirements and be yourself in the fulfillment of them.
- Remember who it is that called you--the congregations of South Dakota, not Churchwide. The things Churchwide cares deeply about is not always where SD on a whole is at. God Bless, you're gonna do great.

- Remember, you are being prayed for.
- Don't play favorites with pastors/lay people. Don't create the "good old boys club" that has existed in the past. Continue to be honest, approachable and clear.
- Sort out the distinction between SAMs and pastors and the apparent double standards.
- Continue being a presence and showing up as the current Synod staff does. It matters!
- Stop embracing the sin of the world and justifying it through the Gospel. Humble yourself before God and allow HIM to guide you, not the false prophets of churchwide.
- Remember to care for all your people...and know that when you do we/they will care for you.
- Your work is of course more administrative than pastoral, but help the leaders underneath you to remember their Full Call - not just the one part of speaking "for justice on behalf of the poor and oppressed."
- Continue to uplift the ELCA through our mission statement.
- Delegate where possible
- Be one with Christ as close as you can get
- Listen to the people.
- Please do not forget or neglect congregations in rural areas, particularly those who have been awaiting a pastor for years. This ministry is critical!
- Be a good listener and act upon concerns.
- Remember the people you serve are South Dakotans who believe in the traditional Christian values found in the gospel
- Talk to more members on a synod wide basis.
- Leave the ELCA
- Listen
- communicate with all the churches directly if there are problems
- Continue to support and develop leaders.
- I've served under three Bishops. My advice is to really get to know your pastors, especially the ones in crisis. Call and talk to them between assemblies. Knowing that you care on a personal level makes a significant impact on their emotional health.
- let rural churches decide if they want to adopt rules rather than be told this is how it is
- Know the Pastors that you will be Shepherding. Be courageous. Guide wisely with vision and passion.
- Stay focused, and do not concern yourself with petty things
- Be BOLD. Take a stand for biblical truth. Enter into controversial conversations.
- Be open and willing to listen.
- Just be yourself!
- Look at the leaders within your synod and use their gifts!
- You can't do it all. You can't save the church. What are some things you are willing to let "die" in order for there to be new life? How are we, the church, sometimes a hindrance to the work of the Holy Spirit?
- To get a true picture of our Synod, please visit every ELCA church in SD.
- Leadership involves being a good listener and empowering those beneath you to perform to their highest potential.
- Know your bible and teach the TRUE word
- Spend less time in Sioux Falls and more time in rural areas
- Don't be so Woke

- Be especially vigilant in continuing to spread the message of the ELCA and God's Grace in the face of growing Christian Nationalism and "Conservative" messaging especially by some Rostered Leaders
- Keep it simple; Lutherans have a great story to tell and it's not about clinging to every new social crisis/political crisis in the world - we offer hope, a safe place and we can show all who we follow and the words to live by
- Stand firm in your faith in Jesus Christ and do not compromise to the whims of the world.
- Listen
- Work toward building community & unity - despite our differences
- Remember to spend time with those who support and care for you.
- Listen, offer support and guidance to the Pastors
- Follow through.
- Listen to everyone. Even those that you may not want to. Everyone has a voice and there is probably a little bit of wisdom in everything that is presented.
- Keep Jesus' teachings front and center - peace & justice issues
- Being willing to take a theological stand on political, social, racial, and economic issues.
- Be accessible
- Be genuine and share the joy of the gospel. People intuitively know God's love when they see it.
- Be bold in carrying God's mission forward
- Learn everything you can from Bishop Constanze, she is a great blessing to our synod
- To show up in our rural churches
- Be open to meeting diverse people all the time.
- In all my years involved in ELCA churches (and other denominations) I have personally never been able to approach the bishop (or even knew who they were) as I am with Bishop Hagmeier. No matter the concern she listens.
- Admit when you need help, or didn't know something, or screwed up.
- BE THYSELF
- You do not have to go it alone. Surround yourself with people you trust and allow them to do their jobs. Reach out to people around the Synod to walk with you on this journey.
- Get congregations to tell their stories to each other. We learn best through storytelling.
- You are the leader of good people. You don't have to carry the whole load yourself. Identify good people who can lead and turn them loose.
- God be with you and be a strong voice for Christianity
- Be strong and courageous and faithful and who God calls you to be.
- As our synod's leader always stay focused on your constituent's and their needs/goals, keep your ego in check as it's not about "you".
- I would love let the next bishop know that I see how truly challenging their role can be, and for them to remember to take time for self care.
- Be among the people, walk with us, inspire us, teach us and pray with us.
- When you're overwhelmed, take a moment to breathe and remember you are supported in our prayers and God's love.
- There is an excellent SD Synod staff in place -- keep them!
- If we get to know your new bishop.
- Be yourself and continue to show up in our congregations and with Rostered Leaders
- Be patient and steady
- pay attention to rural/small congregations - they often feel like the big churches get all the attention and nobody cares about the little guys.

- Show up!
- Pray a lot
- uffda - surround yourself with talented, outgoing, caring people to share the workload
- Listen well to the Holy Spirit's call and invite support from others--this is an office of sacrifice and service, not glory and power.
- Don't underestimate the little congregations of the synod. They are amazing places where God's work is happening.
- Make an impact that express your agenda.
- Practice silent prayer
- Be a praying individual!
- Give help and support to pastors. At times I'm sure they feel isolated and sad.
- "Be the Bishop that, when someone from outside the Synod hears where you're from (as a rostered leader), they say: "You're so blessed. What an awesome, caring Bishop you have!"
- Rely on the great foundation of our history, culture, and Lutheran tradition but don't be afraid to try new things.
- Lead with transparency, good communication, compassion and faith in God's lead.
- Preach the gospel; love the people.
- Listen to the people and what they need
- the people are the church, not the building
- Find time to take care of yourself and your family, keep an alive prayer life to give the foundation needed to reach out to all who are faced.
- Be who you are, true to yourself
- Follow the example that is set by our current bishop!
- God is with you. Thank you for your willingness to serve!
- Recognize ALL of SD is in the synod
- Advice given to me when I went into the mission field: "You can be deaf, dumb and blind, but, if you love the people, you will be one of the most successful and loved missionary-pastors who ever lived."
- show the small churches they matter
- Be approachable to the members of the synod.
- We need to stand on our confessions. They are our strength, not an obstacle.
- Care for each congregation equally. Small churches are just as important as the large ones
- Show strength with kindness
- Be true to your calling
- Pray for guidance; Endeavor to do his will.
- Be fervent in prayer as you hone your conflict management skills.
- Return to the theological, biblical based core of Lutheranism. "Woke"ism is not for the church. You must have accountability for your leader's actions as they corrupt and broaden the scope of social statements, etc. of the ELCA
- Seek Justice, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly With the Lord
- Keep reaching out to all Synod members and responding to their needs.
- Be one of us; lead us all beyond who we are.
- Be an authentic visionary leader.
- Support all Synod members, including those with conservative political backgrounds. There's no reason to push away folks with differing political views when churches are declining. Eliminate political statements for Synod. Not all hold same views.

- Remember you are called to be the bishop of South Dakota, focus on your synod and not churchwide. And when churchwide is doing something that does not align with your called synod, defend and lead for the sake of your called synod.
- Relationships are key
- Just be yourself and work with love
- to Bishop Hagmaier---keep doing what you are doing
- Be a non-anxious presence
- Build a strong team to support you and help you with the many responsibilities of the position of the bishop of South Dakota.
- Stay in touch with a spiritual director.
- Encourage our faith communities to dream new dreams of an expansive, open, inviting church for all people.
- Keep love of all people in the forefront. You must keep our congregations supported even if they are not large or wealthy
- Don't pander to the national ELCA agenda
- To forget one's self. The title of bishop is big, but the role is to serve the local congregation, which is where ministry happens. Ministry is not really the job of the synod; the job of the synod is to support congregations.
- Visit the churches within your Synod so the congregants have a chance to meet the Bishop & the Bishop can see for themselves what is happening in the congregations
- The concerns present with the larger communities in SD may not be as relevant to the other open prairie and small town/rural communities. The ability to empower these (2) unique ministry settings in a relatable manner will allow for greater ministry.
- Keep leading by example, asking great questions, and giving the "work" back to the people. And continue to take care of you and those in your inner circle. Ministry will always be waiting.
- Not everything happens in Sioux Falls, should rotate through the synod.
- Be open and inviting
- Listen
- Be who u are! Be balanced in all areas of your life. Learn how to preach, pray, let God do the work and guide you as well as take time for yourself and your family.
- Visit the rural areas
- Be visible to your congregations
- Fail early on in the gig.
- Work with church leaders to help them "Read the Room" when it comes to political leanings.
- Continue to have outstanding open communications with your congregations.
- Get to know the people
- Always be open to new opportunities that create great pastors.
- The national church is willing to be more inclusive than the local church. Rifts are widening, and the pace of change is actually faster than people are willing to embrace. The national church needs to slow down.
- Establish a vision and create a focused Christian culture in the synod