

# called

Acts 2:42-47

2025 South Dakota Synod Assembly

## Preliminary Report

May 30 - 31, 2025



South Dakota Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Table of Contents

PART I – General Information

Proposed Assembly Agenda ..... 1-2

Synod Assembly Committee and Contributors ..... 3-4

Synod Directory

    Synod staff ..... 5

    Synod Council..... 5-6

    Committees: Support to Ministries, Candidacy, Consultation, Discipline

        Evangelical Outreach, and Multicultural ..... 6-9

    Representatives on Region III & Churchwide Boards ..... 9

Part II – Bishop and Staff Reports

Report of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton..... 10

Report of Bishop Constanze Hagmaier ..... 11-12

    Anniversaries, Dedications, Roster Changes (Retirements, Necrology,

    Resignations, Removal, Ordinations, Transfers, Installations) ..... 13-14

Report of Associate to the Bishop – Rev. Renee Splichal Larson..... 15-16

Report of Director of Evangelical Mission – Rev. Jonathan Vehar ..... 17-18

Journeying Together in Christ Initiative – Rev. Kari Webb & Rev. Joel Pakan ..... 19-20

Holy Playground Initiative – Rev. Renae Boehmer ..... 21

Report of Companion Synods – Rev. Dr. Aaron Matson ..... 22-23

2024 Ministry Celebration Highlights.....24

PART III – Regional, Synod Board & Committees

Synod Council – Dennis Thompson, Vice President ..... 25-26

Candidacy Committee – Jack Holmquest, Chair ..... 27

Support to Ministries Committee – Colleen Winter, Chair ..... 28-29

Evangelical Outreach Committee – Rev. Chris Matson, Chair ..... 30

Region III Archives – Paul A. Daniels ..... 31

ELCA Mission Investment Fund – LuAnn Ferguson ..... 32

PART IV – Sustained and Supported Ministries of the SD Synod

Lutheran Planned Generosity of South Dakota ..... 33

Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota ..... 34

Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota ..... 35-36

Augustana University ..... 37-39

Buntrock Scholarship Brochure ..... 40-41

Report of Director of Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center – Rev. Dan Johnson ..... 42

St. Dysmas ..... 43

SD Synod WELCA ..... 44

Good Samaritan Society ..... 45-46

University Lutheran Center ..... 47

Luther Center ..... 48-49

Northern LuMin ..... 50

LuMin Black Hills State ..... 51

LuMin SD School of Mines ..... 52

LuMin Dakota State ..... 53

Heartland Ephphatha Ministries ..... 54-55

Chapel in the Hills ..... 56

South Dakota Synod Coaching Ministry ..... 57-59

Luther Seminary ..... 60-63

Wartburg Theological Seminary ..... 64

**PART V – Other Reports**

Portico Benefit Services ..... 65

ELCA FCU ..... 66

Global Refuge (formerly LIRS) ..... 67-68

St. Olaf College ..... 69-70

Luther College ..... 71-72

Augsburg Fortress ..... 73-74

Seafarers International House ..... 75-76

**PART VI – References**

2026 Proposed Mission Plan ..... 77-78

Synod Constitution Chapter 7 Synod Assembly ..... 79-83

Rules of Parliamentary Procedures ..... Separate Document\*

Summary of Parliamentary Procedure ..... 84

Synod Conference Map ..... 85

2025 Ballot ..... Separate Document \*

Report of 2024 Audit ..... Separate Document \*

Proposed 2026 Compensation Guidelines ..... Separate Document \*

Resolutions Packet ..... Separate Document \*

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



2025 South Dakota Synod Assembly

## THURSDAY – MAY 29

**2:00 PM – 5:00 PM – Display Setup – The Hub**

**3:00 PM – 5:30 PM – Early Check-In**

**5:30 PM – 6:30 PM – Assembly Workshops**

Conversation with ELCA Presiding Bishop

Elizabeth Eaton – *Celebrate Center*

“Early Brain Development, Faith Formation and Worship” with Dr. Dawn Rundman - *Sanctuary*

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

(Dessert sponsored by Luther Seminary and Wartburg Theological Seminary)

## FRIDAY – MAY 30

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

**8:00 AM – 9:15 AM – Check-In**

**Check-In Closes at 9:15 AM**

**8:00 AM – 9:00 AM – Bishop Election and Elections Committee Meeting – OSL Conference Room**

**8:30 AM – 8:50 AM – New Voting Member Orientation – Chapel**

**8:45 AM – 9:10 AM – Worship Instructional Meeting – Celebrate Center**

**9:15 AM – 10:20 AM – OPENING WORSHIP WITH HOLY COMMUNION – CELEBRATE CENTER**

Installation of Rev. Joel Pakan and Rev. Renae Boehmer

**10:30 AM – 12:00 PM**

### FIRST PLENARY SESSION

**Welcome & Introductions – Bishop Constanze Hagmaier**

**Credentials Report**

**Adoption of the Rules & Agenda**

**Greeting from Our Savior’s Lutheran Church**

**Ecumenical Greeting – Rev. Rebecca Trefz, Dakotas Conference, The United Methodist Church**

**Bishop Election – First Ballot**

Instructions

Prayer – *Deacon Jodi Hanson, Assembly Chaplain*

Voting

**Check-In Opens at 11:05 AM**

**State of the ELCA – Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, ELCA Presiding Bishop**

**Music by Jonathan Rundman**

**Panel 1- Lilly Grants Update**

Rev. Kari Webb, Synod Director for Digital Community and Learning: Program Director, *Journeying Together in Christ*

Rev. Joel Pakan, Synod Director for Rural Ministry

Rev. Renae Boehmer, Director for the Holy Playground Initiative

**Video Greeting from Portico**

**Table Prayer – Deacon Jodi Hanson, Assembly Chaplain**

**12:00 PM – 1:00 PM**

**Lunch & Conference Caucuses**

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

**1:00 PM – Resolutions and Nominations Deadline**

(Turn-in at the temporary synod office)

**1:00 PM – Deadline to Remove Sections from**

**Resolution #1** Resolution to Adopt Amendments to the Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the South Dakota (Form available at temporary synod office)

**1:00 PM – 3:00 PM**

### SECOND PLENARY SESSION

**Music by Jonathan Rundman**

**Introductions and Announcements**

**Credentials Committee Report**

**Report of the First Ballot – Bishop Election Committee**

**Video Greeting from Lutheran Social Services**

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

**Buntrock Scholarship/Greeting from Augustana University – Rev. Ann Rosendale**

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

**Practice Electronic Voting**

**Resolution #1 – Resolution to Adopt Amendments to the Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the SD Synod**

**Resolution #5 – Elect Synod Council Members**

**Nominating Ballot – Committees to be filled**

**Deadline to Withdraw Name for Bishop – 2:00 PM**

**Music by Jonathan Rundman**

**Election of Synod Vice President**

**Video Greeting from Mission Investment Fund**



**Companion Synods Update** – *Anghy Aragon, SD Synod Missionary to the Lutheran Church, Faith and Hope, Nicaragua*

**Check-In Closes at 2:30 PM**

**Holy Cow Award** – *Synod Hunger Team*

**Credentials Committee Report**

**Bishop Election – Second Ballot**

Instructions

Prayer - *Deacon Jodi Hanson*

Voting

**3:00 PM – Check-In Opens**

**3:00 PM – 3:30 PM BREAK**

*Sponsored by Lutherans Outdoors in SD*

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

**3:30 PM – 4:00 PM** – *Lutherans Outdoors Annual Meeting – Celebrate Center*

**4:00 PM – 5:30 PM**

### **THIRD PLENARY SESSION**

**Music by Jonathan Rundman**

**Credentials Report**

**Resolution #3 – Protecting Medicaid Coverage**

**Resolution #2 – Augsburg Fortress Materials**

**Video Greeting from Wartburg Seminary**

**Video Greeting from Luther Seminary**

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

**2026 Compensation and Guidelines Conversation**

**Resolution #4 –2026 Compensation and**

**Guidelines for Rostered Ministers and Lay Staff**

**Video Greeting from the Synod Coaching Network**

**Panel 2 – Associates to the Bishop Reports**

*Rev. Renee Splichal Larson*

*Rev. Jonathan Vehar*

**Bishop Election Report of Second Ballot**

**Announcements**

**Instructions & Table Prayer** - *Deacon Jodi Hanson*

**5:00 PM – Deadline to Submit Questions for**

**Bishop Candidate Q & A Session**

*(Forms at the temporary synod office and on Guidebook App)*

**5:00 PM – 7:00 PM – Food Service at Food Trucks**

## **SATURDAY – MAY 31**

**Check-In Opens – 8:00 AM**

**8:00 AM – 1:00 PM – Displays Open** – *The Hub*

**8:00 AM – Worship Instructional Meeting**

*(worship leaders only) – Celebrate Center*

**8:15 AM – 9:25 AM – Morning Worship and Holy**

**Communion** – *Celebrate Center*

**Installation of Synod Council Members**

**9:30 AM – 10:30 AM**

### **FOURTH PLENARY SESSION**

**Music by Jonathan Rundman**

**Check-In Closes – 10:10 AM**

**Introduce Candidates for Bishop**

**Speeches** (each candidate receives 5 minutes)

**10 Minutes of Prayer and Self-Reflection**

**Credentials Report**

**Prayer** – *Deacon Jodi Hanson, Assembly Chaplain*

**Bishop Election Third Ballot**

**10:30 AM – 11:00 AM – Break**

*Sponsored by the South Dakota Synod Companion Synods Committee*

**Check-In Open 10:30 AM – 11:40 AM**

**11:00 AM – 12:30 PM**

### **FIFTH PLENARY SESSION**

**Music by Jonathan Rundman**

**Q&A with Top 3 Candidates (45 min. max)**

**Prayer and Self Reflection**

**Credentials Committee Report**

**Prayer** – *Deacon Jodi Hanson, Assembly Chaplain*

**Fourth Ballot**

**Check-In Opens at 12:10PM**

**Adoption of the Mission Plan** – *Terry Johnson, SD Synod Treasurer*

**Discussion on Remaining Resolutions**

**Table Prayer** - *Deacon Jodi Hanson*

**12:30 PM – 1:30 PM – Lunch**

**Check-In Closes – 1:25 PM**

**1:30 PM – 2:30 PM**

### **SIXTH PLENARY SESSION**

**Music by Jonathan Rundman**

**Credentials Committee Report**

**Prayer** - *Deacon Jodi Hanson, Assembly Chaplain*

**Fifth Ballot**

**Bishop Election Committee Report**

### **CLOSING OF ASSEMBLY**

**Synod Council Meeting – OSL Friendship Room**

**\*Agenda Subject to Change**

Materials and information can be found online at [sdsynod.org/assembly](https://sdsynod.org/assembly) or in the 2025 South Dakota Synod Assembly Guidebook App

# **SYNOD ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES & CONTRIBUTORS**

## **ASSEMBLY PLANNING COMMITTEE**

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

## **ELECTION COMMITTEE**

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

## **RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE**

Deb Bloom, Madison  
Rev. Josh Knudsen, Sisseton  
Rev. David Bentz, Vermillion  
Rev. David Piper, Rapid City  
Teresa Nygaard, Viborg  
Rev. Brian Wasmoen, Mitchell  
Rev. David Lund, Pollock  
Rev. Jonathan Vehar, Synod Staff

## **PARLIAMENTARIAN**

Nick Moser, Yankton

## **CHAPLAIN**

Deacon Jodi Hanson

**MUSIC**

Jonathan Rundman

**PRODUCTION TEAM**

Kevin Stillson, Sioux Falls

Kyle Boese, Harrisburg

Rev. Dr. Aaron Matson, Synod Staff

**SPECIAL THANKS**

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

## SOUTH DAKOTA SYNOD STAFF

Bishop Constanze Hagmaier	605-274-4020	chagmaier@sdsynod.org
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Crystal McCormick, Executive Administrator/Candidacy & Mobility Office Coordinator	605-274-4024	cmccormick@sdsynod.org
Rev. Dr. Aaron Matson, Companion Synods and Communications	605-274-5035	companion-synod@sdsynod.org amatson@sdsynod.org
Rev. Joel Pakan, Director for Rural Ministry	605-274-5033	jpakan@sdsynod.org
Rev. Kari Webb, Director for Digital Community and Learning, Program Director, Journeying Together in Christ	605-274-4011	kwebb@sdsynod.org
Rev. Renae Boehmer, Director for the Holy Playground Initiative	605-274-4027	rboehmer@sdsynod.org
Kathy McHenry, Lutheran Planned Generosity of SD	605-274-5030	kmchenry@sdsynod.org

### Contact the Synod Office

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### 2024-2025 Synod Council

Name	Conference
DeKraai, Reverend Michael	Prairie Coteau
Anderson, Kristi (SAM)	Prairie Coteau
Rasmussen, John	Prairie Coteau
Breddin, Reverend Karl	Medary
Kaufmann, Gary	Medary
Braun, Marlee	Medary
McFarland, Anne Rieck	Crossroads

Meier, Deacon Christie	Crossroads
Titze, Thad	Crossroads
Otterman, Reverend Jeff	Southeastern
Harkness, Christy	Southeastern
Hoffner, Jake	Southeastern
Van Orman, Reverend Justin	Northern Plains
Nilson, Chad	Northern Plains
Nelson, Kelly	Northern Plains
Senner, Reverend Becky	Prairie Rivers
Hansen, Bonny	Prairie Rivers
Clark, Jeff	Prairie Rivers
Holz, Reverend Wilbur	Bear Butte
Johnson, Jody	Bear Butte
Pfeifle, Craig	Bear Butte
A., Juan	Youth
T., Danielle	Youth
Hagmaier, Reverend Constanze	Bishop
Thompson, Dennis	Vice President
Johnson, Terry	Treasurer
Beers, Jill	Secretary

## 2024-2025 Candidacy Committee

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

Region 3	Deacon	Krista	Anderson
Seminary Rep	Reverend Dr	Mark	Granquist
Synod Staff	Reverend	Renee	Splichal Larson
Synod Staff	Bishop	Constanze	Hagmaier

## 2023-2024 Support to Ministries Committee

Conference	Title	First Name	Last Name
Bear Butte	Reverend	Deb	Grismer
Bear Butte			
Crossroads	Reverend	Siri	Sorenson
Crossroads		Joel	Nevin
Medary	Reverend	Rebecca	Breddin
Medary		Erin	Weinkauf
Northern Plains	Reverend	Rhonda	Wellsandt-Zell
Northern Plains		Colleen	Winter
Prairie Coteau	Reverend	Janet	Miller
Prairie Coteau		Marti	Knudsen
Prairie Rivers	Reverend	Rick	Senner
Prairie Rivers		Doreen	Gosmire
Southeastern	Reverend	Elan	Ashby
Southeastern		Pat	Meyers
Staff	Bishop	Constanze	Hagmaier
Staff	Reverend	Renee	Splichal Larson

## 2024-2025 Evangelical Outreach Committee

Conference	First Name	Last Name
Prairie Coteau	Rev. Joshua	Knudsen
Prairie Coteau	Kristi	Anderson
Medary	Rev. Jess	Daum
Medary	Scott	Parsley
Crossroads	Rev. Aimee	Pakan
Crossroads	Dave	Poppens
Southeastern	Rev. Lisa	Heffernan
Southeastern	Kari	Ostrem
Northern Plains	Rev. Matthew	Spoden
Northern Plains	Mary	O'Donnell
Prairie Rivers	Rev. Joanne	Nagele
Prairie Rivers	Sara	Schott

Bear Butte	Rev. Chris	Baesler
Bear Butte	Joni	Sexton
Appointed	Jason	Lemke
Invited	Rev. Chris	Matson

## 2024-2025 Multi-Cultural Committee

Conference	First Name	Last Name
Prairie Coteau	Rev. Cheryl	Rondeau-Bassett
Prairie Coteau	Pat	Schubert
Medary	Rev. Dayna	Weltzin
Medary		
Crossroads	Kristi	Hoff
Crossroads	Rev. Kyle	Svennungsen
Southeastern	Rev. Michael	Jordan
Southeastern	Lorena	Peterson
Northern Plains	Rev. Shari	Schwedhelm
Northern Plains	Bobbi	Anderson
Prairie Rivers	Rev. Agapito (Augie)	Aviles
Prairie Rivers	Yvonne	Strasser
Bear Butte	Rev. David	Piper
Bear Butte	Shana	Hindman
Appointed	Rev. Daniel	Johnson
Appointed	Abraham	Gayetaye
Appointed	Rev. Henrique	Fleming
Invited	Rev. Maria	Cabello-Salomon

## Consultation Committee

**John Rasmussen (2025)**

Sisseton, SD

**Larry McHenry (2026)**

Clark, SD

**Darcie Bien (2027)**

Brookings, SD

**Pastor Laura Overbo (2027)**

Watertown, SD

2025 Synod Assembly

**Pastor Lori Hope (2027)**

Sioux Falls, SD

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

## **Discipline Committee**

**Pastor Jeremy Duprey (2025)**  
Brandon, SD

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

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

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

**Pastor Carla Nelson (2028)**  
Sturgis, SD

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

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

**Carole Thomas (2030)**  
Waubay, SD

**Pastor Trisha Boese (2030)**  
Harrisburg, SD

**Pastor Kyle Svenningsen (2030)**  
Sioux Falls, SD

**Brendan Parks (2030)**  
Sioux Falls, SD

**Eric Larson (2030)**  
Mitchell, SD

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

**Bishop Craig Schweitzer**  
Western North Dakota Synod

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

## **Representative on Luther Seminary Board**

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





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

April 2025

Dear friends in Christ,

Thank you for your dedication and faithfulness, as together we continue to share God's love throughout the world.

During the past year and a half, I had the privilege to gather with many of you at our God's Love Made Real regional conversations. Connecting with you during these events was extremely inspiring as we heard about the many ways God's love is being made real in communities across this church.

Among the stories that were shared, we heard about a congregation's "bold" decision to reconstruct a food pantry to help increase the capacity to serve more people, a Christmas in July celebration for a single mom and her five children experiencing homelessness, a Queer youth poetry open mic event described by one pastor as a tangible experience of God's Love Made Real, a partially gutted parsonage that was renovated to provide long-term housing for survivors of human trafficking, and an ecumenical ministry group that developed a community center that feeds people with meals and spiritual connections.

Our vision of a world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation is being made manifest in these ministries, but these are only a few examples of what's happening throughout our church. I know this is work your congregations do every day, and I thank you for helping people know the way of Jesus to discover community, justice and love.

The world around us is changing, and our church will also experience change with the election of a new presiding bishop and a new secretary at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly this summer. Many of you will be electing a new synod bishop and other leaders.

Amid these changes, our call remains the same: to love and serve others as Jesus taught. Our church will continue our work to proclaim the gospel and to serve all of God's people.

It has been a privilege to serve as your presiding bishop. May God continue to hold us and guide us into the future.

In Christ,

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

## Report from Bishop Constanze Hagmaier

Dear Friends in Ministry,

As we approach our upcoming assembly, I am humbled and inspired to share a report on our ministry's accomplishments over the past year and an outlook for the coming year. Our work has been marked by collaborative spirit, courageous innovation, and a steadfast commitment to serving our communities. I am deeply grateful for your prayerful support and generous partnership.



## Reflections on 2024 Ministry Achievements

This past year has been a season of growth and transformation across our synod. Together, we have pursued new opportunities and embraced innovative programs that nurture our congregations and communities. Key accomplishments include:

1. **Securing a Second Lilly Grant:** We obtained a second Lilly Grant totaling \$1.3 million. This significant investment is dedicated to designing, growing, and fostering children's ministries across the synod, ensuring our youngest members experience the love and hope of the Gospel.
2. **Launching the Director for Rural Ministry Position:** We created this leadership role to support and accompany rural ministry and SAMs.
3. **Three Rural Ambassadors:** The ambassadors whose role is to connect with local contexts and serve as bridge builders, reinforcing the bonds between our urban and rural congregations.
4. **Expanding the J-Term Experience:** We continue to partner with our ELCA seminaries to enrich students' J-term experiences in rural ministry through immersion, providing opportunities for emerging leaders to deepen their theological education and ministry skills.
5. **Receiving a \$25,000 Grant for Science and Theology Curriculum:** In cooperation with the Sanford Underground Laboratory, this grant supports the development of a curriculum that integrates scientific inquiry and theological reflection.
6. **Collaborating on the CASTLE Project:** In partnership with Wartburg Seminary, we have advanced the CASTLE project, which explores rural ecclesiology and seeks to reimagine our church's role in rural settings.
7. **Launching and Growing "Pasque":** Our new online community, Pasque, has become a vibrant space for learning and gathering, strengthening our connections across the synod.
8. **Empowering Lay Leadership:** In collaboration with Luther Seminary, Region 3's largest cohort of lay leaders earned a lay leadership certificate, equipping them to lead effectively within their local contexts.
9. **Farm to Table Dinner:** We hosted a memorable Farm to Table Dinner at Grand Valley Lutheran Church in Canton. This event not only raised funds but also fostered community and conversation.
10. **STAR Grants for Rural Ministry:** Through distributed STAR grants, we have supported and encouraged rural ministry initiatives across the state, reinforcing our commitment to every community we serve.

Each milestone reflects our collective dedication and the tangible impact of ministry when we work together.

## Looking Ahead to 2025

Preparing for the coming year, we stand at the threshold of new opportunities and challenges. In 2025, we anticipate the CW Assembly in Phoenix, AZ, themed "**For the Life of the World.**" This assembly will be a pivotal moment for the ELCA as we celebrate our denomination's ministry, make key decisions, and plan for our future. The following essential items will be on the agenda:

1. **Leadership Elections:** Electing a presiding bishop and a secretary of the ELCA.
2. **Budget Considerations:** Presenting the 2026–2028 budget.
3. **Constitutional Amendments:** Proposing amendments to the ELCA constitution.
4. **Commission Report:** Reviewing the report and recommendations from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church.
5. **Social Statement Revisions:** We are presenting editorial edits to the Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gifts and Trust and considering a new Social Statement on Civic Life and Faith.
6. **Other Assembly Business:** Addressing memorials and non-germane resolutions.

Review materials will be available at [www.elca.org/cwa](http://www.elca.org/cwa), and you are invited to follow the assembly's plenary sessions and worship at [www.youtube.com/@ELCA](http://www.youtube.com/@ELCA). Your prayers for our SD Synod voting members are especially appreciated; they will be blessed during the Saturday morning SD Synod assembly worship service.

In these times of financial challenges—with insurance costs rising and budgets under pressure—know that our leadership team remains committed to congregational ministry. We are dedicated to preserving programs, ministry, and partner support while carefully monitoring our spending. We thank you for your ongoing benevolent support, as every dollar you contribute plays a vital role in sustaining our ministry. Although we understand that resources are tight, we kindly ask you to remain as generous as you can so we can continue to extend that generosity in service to our communities and the world.

## In Gratitude

I am profoundly grateful for each member's support of our synod. Your prayers, financial gifts, and commitment to ministry enable us to journey together in Christ. As we look to 2025 with hope and trust, may we continue to grow, innovate, and serve "for the Life of the World."

With heartfelt thanks and prayers for our shared mission,

Rev. Constanze Hagmaier

Bishop, SD Synod ELCA

## CONGREGATION ANNIVERSARIES and ROSTER CHANGES

(as of 05/15/25)

### Anniversaries and Dedications

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

Pleasant Valley Lutheran Church, Vermillion

Willow Creek Lutheran Church, Dell Rapids

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

St. John's Lutheran Church, Bancroft

St. Paul Lutheran Church, Java

#### 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Trinity Lutheran Church, Miller

### Installations

06/09/2024	Rev. John Christopherson – Springdale, Sioux Falls (solo)
06/16/2024	Rev. Jason Kramme – Peace, Sioux Falls (associate)
06/16/2024	Rev. Katherine Olson – Dow Rummel Village, Sioux Falls (Director of Spiritual Care)
06/16/2024	Rev. Renae Boehmer – Dow Rummel Village, Sioux Falls (Associate Director of Spiritual Care)
07/14/2024	Rev. Alan Blankenfeld – Messiah, Flandreau (part-time)
09/09/2024	Rev. Shawna Day – Augustana University, Sioux Falls (Associate Campus Pastor)
10/20/2024	Rev. Paula Canby – Trinity, Chamberlain (solo)
10/20/2024	Rev. David Steele (First Call/Seminarian) – Faith, Rapid City (solo)
11/24/2024	Rev. Paul Erdal – First, Volga (senior)
12/22/2024	Rev. Deb Grismer – South Canyon, Rapid City (senior)
04/27/2025	Rev. Jason Kramme – Peace, Sioux Falls (senior)
05/18/2025	Rev. Janna Bader – St. John, Dimock (solo)
05/30/2025	Rev. Joel Pakan – South Dakota Synod ELCA, Sioux Falls (Director for Rural Ministry)
05/30/2025	Rev. Renae Boehmer – South Dakota Synod ELCA, Sioux Falls (Director for the Holy Playground Initiative)
06/08/2025	Rev. Josh Schunk – Beaver Valley, Brandon (solo)
06/15/2025	Rev. Paul Stjernholm – Peace, Sioux Falls (associate)
06/21/2025	Deacon Mara Stillson (First Call/Seminarian) – Church on the Street, Sioux Falls (deacon)
06/29/2025	Rev. David Strommen – Ascension, Brookings (senior)

### Ordinations

07/13/2024	Rev. Rhonda Hansen
10/20/2024	Rev. David Steele
05/17/2025	Deacon Mara Stillson

### Necrology

05/26/2024	Rev. James (Jim) Christopherson
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05/27/2024	Rev. Roger Noer
06/30/2024	Rev. Steven (Steve) Martens
10/05/2024	Rev. Conrad (Connie) Krahling
10/30/2024	Rev. Leroy (Lee) Stadem
12/26/2024	Rev. William Olsen
03/30/2025	Rev. Ralph Johnshoy

### **On Leave**

07/07/2024	Rev. Stephen (Steve) Palo
11/01/2024	Rev. Kari Foss
02/01/2025	Deacon Hannah Fleming

### **Retired**

05/31/2024	Rev. Dr. Ann Pederson
06/01/2024	Rev. Dr. Richard Swanson
07/01/2024	Rev. Greg Johnson
09/01/2024	Rev. Dr. Jim Fowler
11/01/2024	Deacon Randy Youngquist-Thurrow
01/01/2025	Rev. Dr. Jeff Sorenson
03/01/2025	Rev. Randy Fett
04/01/2025	Rev. Steve Brandsrud
04/01/2025	Rev. Nancy Eckels
06/01/2025	Rev. Nancy Rieke

### **Resigned from Roster**

01/28/2025	Rev. Justin Kosec
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### **Transferred Into South Dakota**

05/01/2024	Rev. Jason Kramme, 3H Saint Paul Area
08/01/2024	Rev. Shawna Day, 3G Minneapolis Area
08/28/2024	Rev. Tedd Rieke, 3B Eastern North Dakota
10/01/2024	Rev. Paula Canby, 8F Delaware-Maryland
05/16/2025	Rev. David Strommen, 4B Central States
05/18/2025	Rev. Janna Bader, 3F Southwestern Minnesota
05/28/2025	Rev. Anita Strommen, 4B Central States
06/01/2025	Rev. Josh Schunk, 5F Northeastern Iowa
06/01/2025	Rev. Ronald Strobel, 6A Southeast Michigan

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

04/01/2024	Rev. Young Chung, 5A Metropolitan Chicago
05/29/2024	Rev. David Bacon, 9A Virginia
06/10/2024	Rev. Tim Thies, 2E Rocky Mountain
08/01/2024	Rev. Heidi Youngquist, 4A Nebraska
10/04/2024	Rev. Steve Moberg, 3G Minneapolis Area
11/12/2024	Rev. Dr. Mary Sacco, 1D Northwest Intermountain
12/01/2024	Rev. Paul Svingen, 3E Northeastern Minnesota
01/03/2025	Deacon Amanda Randall, 3F Southwestern Minnesota
03/17/2025	Rev. Leland Armbricht, 3H Saint Paul Area
03/17/2025	Rev. Keith Garness, 1D Northwest Intermountain
05/19/2025	Rev. Heidi Binstock, 4A Nebraska

**Report of Rev. Renee Splichal Larson  
Associate to the Bishop  
South Dakota Synod Assembly, 2025**



Dear SD Synod of the ELCA,

At a recent retreat, I was asked the question: “What gives you joy in your work?” I had no trouble coming up with multiple answers. In fact, it was difficult to choose just one to share. What came to mind immediately was the incredible synod staff, the people for whom I have the privilege of serving with in the SD Synod. The talent, the genuine care, the creativity and innovation, brings joy to our shared mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and serving and supporting our congregations, clergy, synod authorized ministers, neighbors in solidarity, and many others.

It is a good exercise to reflect back 5-6 years to the start of my call. In my call to serve as part of the SD Synod staff, I get to accompany congregations (especially during times of transition), rostered ministers, and candidates for ministry. In my reflection, there are many joys in my work, even in the midst of challenges. Here is some of what I have witnessed and heard throughout the last 6 years as I have journeyed with you in Christ:

- Conferences faithfully gathering to meet, pray, and worship together, and to support one another in ministry.
- Rostered ministers truly seeking and wondering about God’s call on their lives in current calls and future ones. In 2024, the SD Synod distributed **\$48,220** through the Seminary Debt Reduction Program, to care for our clergy and also incentivize calls in South Dakota.
- Congregations living in the tender balance of emotions when a minister leaves, even as they look forward to whomever God calls to minister among them next. In 2024, **22 Ministry Site Studies** were conducted and **19 calls extended**.
- I have witnessed congregations go their own ways after being in parish and contractual relationships, only to wonder how God may be leading them to partner with others in new and different ways.
- Elected leadership, rostered ministers, and Synod Authorized Ministers, wrestle with the kinds of unprecedented decisions having to be made in a global pandemic.
- There have been painful ends, and exciting beginnings.
- Several congregations have celebrated anniversaries and building projects, even as some have worshipped together for the last time.
- We have celebrated with seminary graduates and looked forward with them to first call and ordination after a long journey of formation for public ministry in the ELCA. Currently, there are **20 candidates** for ordained ministry in the SD Synod, with at least **20 others** in discernment. Educational scholarship money of **\$119,990** was granted to seminary students, as well as **\$28,500** in internship assistance, and **\$38,232** to

Luther and Wartburg Seminaries, for a total of **\$186,722** in support of seminary education.

- I have observed the SD Synod being a leader in the ELCA in the ways leaders and congregations are supported and connected, especially through Pasque, our on-line learning space (In 2024, received nearly **300 enrollments** from **over 100 SD churches** to **Pasque Learning Community**).
- Support of the wider ELCA and global church, especially with disaster relief. The SD Synod helped members and congregations recover from severe weather events, including awarding **\$20,000** in Storm Micro Grants and working with congregations to secure **\$140,000** in grants from Lutheran Disaster Response.
- We are blessed to have **25 people** serving as **Synod Authorized Ministers** in our synod, ensuring every congregation is cared for through Word and Sacrament ministry.

This year's synod assembly theme is "called." The truth is, we are all called in our baptism to follow Jesus, to proclaim the Gospel, forgive sins, and work for justice and peace in all the earth. We are called to hear the Word of God, be fed at the Lord's table, and live among God's faithful people. For 6 years now, I have had the privilege of living among the people of the SD Synod. For this, I am profoundly grateful to the Holy Spirit, who has called me to do this work in partnership with all the baptized.

Yours in Christ,

Pr. Renee Splichal Larson



# Report of the DEM

Pr. Jonathan Vehar - Associate to the Bishop, Director of Evangelical Mission

## Sharing our Hope

I was recently shown a magical cabinet in the synod office, where the minutes from previous assemblies are held. In case you're wondering, with no exaggeration, it was the most exciting part of my week. I quickly started thumbing through volumes starting with the early years of the American Lutheran Church, which was formed in 1960s, so about 65 years ago. History is fascinating in all of the ways that it can be told. The reports and resolutions have their own way of revealing what was important, what was worth celebrating, or the struggles that they sought to address together.

But mostly, I find it interesting that the same troubles have always been. Take this little note from the 1970 assembly report from the chair of the Evangelism Committee, *The real danger, of course, is that we end up merely talking about evangelism and never actually doing it. Evangelism is never finally a program or an emphasis, but rather it is a person sharing with another person what has happened and can happen through Jesus. D.T. Niles says, "Evangelism is witness. It is one beggar telling another beggar where to get food."*

## What we do together

In my ministry, I daily witness the Gospel lived out through the ministries that we do together in the South Dakota Synod. I've witnessed the generosity and welcome of **St.**

**Dysmas** as they gather for worship behind prison walls.

Or received a reminder of what it means to worship with an open heart at **First Lutheran African Ministry** when their spiritual leader, Abraham, shared, "We have a start time for worship, but no ending time. Because once we are here, it is God's time." A lesson



experienced in powerful ways, as three hours later, our worship continued out into the world, having prayed, praised, preached, and shared in a meal.

**Shepherd's Table** completed its first full year of ministry with a calling to reach out to those who have been hurt by the church and people of faith in the past. Yes, it happens. And the reconciliation that Jesus leads us into calls us to be honest with the past and seek forgiveness.

**LuMin** at NSU, DSU, USD, SDSU, SDSM&T, and BHSU reach out to students growing in their sense of vocation and God's calling. Many of these campus ministries have existed for over 50 years and continue the legacy that Lutherans place in education.

Or, try some Bison Jerky, produced by Sacred Storm, a job training program that processes buffalo meat in traditional Lakota ways, in partnership with **Woyatan Lutheran** and Wambi Ska. Giving job skills and hope to young adults. In the first 9 months of operation, Sacred Storm donated close to 90,000 lbs of buffalo meat to food pantries and food distributions.

The stories of what God is doing are endless. I invite you to consider praying for these ministries, or even better, joining them in ministry. **Church on the Street**, **Pueblo de Dios**, **Spirit of Hope**, Scotland, and soon, Box Elder, all have opportunities to join in worship and in ministry. Others like the **McLaughlin Community Alliance** and the **Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center** help to make connections between people across cultural lines. In the community, we come to understand and love each other more deeply.

Find out more at [sdsynod.org/ministries/neighbors/](https://sdsynod.org/ministries/neighbors/)

## Celebrating God's Generosity

Another major part of my work is in stewardship. In the last year, over a dozen ministry leaders in the Certificate in Non-profit Fundraising, and a number of congregations in Cultivating Generous Congregations, Stewardship in a Box, or found other ways to engage their communities in deepening the conversation of generosity, such as the course on Pasque for developing a Narrative Budget to tell the story of your congregation. Generosity is a spiritual practice, and requires, well, practice with intentionality to grow deeper.

*The world is great about helping others find “spiritual food”, but what is offered isn’t often that which satisfies. Which makes our calling as the church ever-so-important. Rooted in the calling of God, the church, as in the people of God, distinct from the buildings and institutions, is uniquely positioned to lead and share in the Bread of Life.*

## Journeying Together in Christ Initiative Synod Assembly Report | Spring 2025

“Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road...?”  
— Luke 24:32

Nearly 18 months ago, we began a journey together—a shared hope that congregations across South Dakota could connect more deeply, learn alongside one another, and imagine new possibilities for ministry. Thanks to a grant from the Lilly Endowment and the shared creativity, trust, and faithfulness of every congregation in our Synod, that hope is now growing into something beautiful.

### ***Pasque—A Place to Learn and Grow, Together***

In June 2024, we opened the doors to **Pasque**, our online learning community named after our resilient state flower—known for blooming early, even through the snow. Since then, **nearly 350 people from more than 100 congregations** have created accounts at [www.sdsynodlearns.org](http://www.sdsynodlearns.org). Together, we’ve explored scripture, deepened our faith, swapped ideas, and prayed for one another.

Pasque isn’t just a website—it’s a community. Courses like *Called to Lead* and *Foundations of Lutheran Worship* are helping us to grow in confidence and skill. Digital circles like our Confirmation Coaches and Office Administrator cohorts have helped folks say, “Oh good, it’s not just me!” From Zoom screens to fellowship halls, gathering via Pasque reminds us that shared learning is better than going it alone.

### **Rural Accompaniment That Begins with Listening**

In July 2024, **Rev. Joel Pakan** joined the Synod staff as Director for Rural Ministry—and hit the road. He’s visited more than **20 congregations** and traveled **over 7,000 miles** back and forth across the state, from the Black Hills to the prairie. Along the way, he’s led worship, attended council meetings, sat at kitchen tables, and reminded communities that they are not alone.

In early 2025, three **Rural Ambassadors** stepped into this work, too:

- **Rev. Becky Piper** (Western): Pastor Becky currently serves at Grand River Lutheran Church in Buffalo. She brings over 25 years of experience across congregations large and small—urban, rural, and multi-point—and is passionate about building relationships and making space for stories to be heard and shared.
- **Jill Munger** (Central): A lifelong Lutheran and retired nurse living in Mitchell, Jill has worn nearly every congregational hat—from Sunday School teacher and youth leader to choir member, altar guild volunteer, and council president. She brings warmth, wisdom, and a gift for connecting across generations.
- **Reid Christopherson** (Eastern): A military veteran and former executive director of the South Dakota Wheat Commission, Reid has decades of experience in both agriculture and ministry. A member of Zion Lutheran in Garretson, he regularly provides pulpit supply across southeastern South Dakota and brings deep insight into rural life and leadership.

Our Director and Ambassadors may be reached with one simple email: [ambassadors@sdsynod.org](mailto:ambassadors@sdsynod.org). Each brings deep local knowledge and a heart for walking gently with congregations and congregational leaders in transition. Our Ambassadors meet the unique challenges of a congregation’s timely context with the timeless covenant that God walks with God’s people at all times and is especially close to those

who seek. They also walk with our rural ministers, pastors, deacons and leaders to provide opportunities for rest and renewal. Sometimes they lead worship. Sometimes they sit quietly and listen. Always, they show up with respect and a commitment to walk alongside—not ahead.

Together, these visits are planting seeds: of renewed trust, of creative ideas, and of lay leaders stepping forward, ready to serve in new ways. Many of those leaders are now connecting with others through Pasque.

### **What's Next**

We are recruiting seminary students to join rural congregations for multi-week immersion experiences and contextual learning. A generous subaward from the AAS-DoSER (American Association for the Advancement of Science-Dialogue on Science, Ethics and Religion) will allow us to collaborate with the Sanford Underground Research Facility (SURF) in Lead, SD to wonder theologically together about the mysteries of God and science. New resources for congregational use will be shared on Pasque in the months ahead.

But most of all, we'll keep showing up! Listening, learning, and giving thanks for all the ways we are *Journeying Together in Christ*—right where you are.

We believe Jesus still walks the dusty backroads—just like he did on the way to Emmaus. And we are so grateful to be walking them with you, too.

Rev. Kari Webb  
Director for Digital Community and Learning,  
Program Director, *Journeying Together in Christ*

Rev. Joel Pakan  
Director for Rural Ministry

Friends in Christ,

Welcome to a beautiful place where worship and children joyfully connect,  
where prayer practices are filled with movement and motion,  
where generations collide in ways that are life-giving to all!

## **Welcome to the Holy Playground!**

As the Director for this brand-new ministry within the South Dakota Synod ELCA, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to dive into this project, funded by a grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc., that will nurture the spiritual lives of children and also has the potential to change how we all experience God's love in our gatherings.

The Holy Playground Initiative is born from a desire to cultivate vibrant, engaging, and developmentally appropriate worship and prayer experiences that bridge generations. We envision spaces where children and adults alike can encounter the living God through creativity, play, and meaningful connection.

The first steps to creating such a reality include learning from some of our Neighbors in Solidarity congregations (many of which are bustling with children!), establishing a task force of child development and education professionals who possess both passion and proven competency in working with children ages 0-10, and implementing a strong coaching presence to support the congregations who decide to engage in the ministries we dream up together.

In years two and three, we will invite additional congregational cohorts from the synod to come into the playground as well, where they will receive training in child development, activity and engagement ideas and the opportunity to apply for a subaward to make these visions a reality across the state.

Starting NOW, we embark on a journey of discovery, exploration, and collaboration. We will delve into innovative ideas, share best practices, and dream together about how to create holy spaces where the laughter of children mingles with the prayers of the faithful.

Let us remember the words of Jesus, who welcomed the little children and said, "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." (Matthew 19:14)

May our time together be blessed, and may the Holy Spirit guide us as we build a playground of faith for all God's children. Please reach out if you're interested in hearing more and/or enticed by the invitation to get involved. I can't wait to hear from you!

With hope and excitement,

*Pastor Renae Boehmer*

Director for the Holy Playground Initiative  
South Dakota Synod ELCA  
[rboehmer@sdsynod.org](mailto:rboehmer@sdsynod.org)  
605-274-4027

## Companion Synod Coordinator Report 2025 South Dakota Synod Assembly

Greetings rostered leaders, synod authorized ministers, lay delegates, and visitors to the 2025 South Dakota Synod Assembly! It is my pleasure to share a few updates on what has happened over the past year in our companion synod ministry relationships with the Lutheran Churches in Nicaragua (ILFE) and Cameroon (EELC).

Most of my time has focused on working with Anghy Aragon, the young woman from Nicaragua who is with us this year, to strengthen our relationship with ILFE, including working with her to schedule visits to congregations, worshipping communities, and organizations around the Synod. Thank you for the many invitations and warm welcomes she has received in communities across our Synod. Anghy is posting about her visits on the Synod's new blog, "Bread for the Journey," which you can read at <https://foodforthejourney.substack.com/>. You will be able to hear more from Anghy about her experiences and what is happening in Nicaragua when she addresses the Assembly.

This past October, I worked with Anghy, Pr. Katia Cortez of ILFE and Pr. Mike Busbey at the ELCA, on logistics for Synod Rural Ministry Director Pr. Joel Pakan to travel to Nicaragua for ILFE's Reformation festival. Pr. Joel preached on Reformation Sunday at the Central Church in Managua, led educational sessions for pastors in Nicaragua, and traveled to rural communities to help build stronger relationships between rural communities there and in South Dakota.

Throughout the year, I have been able to hold conversations with Bishop Baigule in Cameroon and Willie Landji, the ELCA missionary for that area of Africa. Church roofs continue to be the number one priority that Bishop Baigule identified for support from our Synod. And, through the year, we have been able to support the building of roofs for communities across Cameroon. Other priorities include the EELC School System, the Garoua Boulai Hospital Poor Fund, and the Lutheran Seminary in Meiganga.

Because of the generosity of the members of the South Dakota Synod, we have been able to support the above programs in Cameroon and many great programs in Nicaragua, such as the Seeds of Hope program, the school run by ILFE in



Pochocuape, their annual youth retreat, and in the fall of 2024 we were able to purchase three motorcycles and commit to paying for fuel and maintenance to help pastors travel to some of the remote communities that they serve. Before, these pastors often had to either pay for rides (which didn't always take them the entire way), travel on foot, or sometimes even borrow horses to ride. These motorcycles have been a great blessing in helping pastors travel to the communities they serve.

Thank you for all the ways you support our companion synod ministries – in prayer, in sharing the stories, in your giving, and more! As always, if you have any questions about any of these items or our companion synod ministry, I am always happy to visit with you. I invite you to continue to pray for the people of ILFE and the EELC and to consider traveling to visit our siblings in Nicaragua or Cameroon in 2025 if you are able. I am grateful for the many opportunities I have had to preach and speak about Companion Synods in congregations around the Synod, and I'm always happy to visit more congregations and meetings – just contact me at [companion-synod@sdsynod.org](mailto:companion-synod@sdsynod.org) to work out the details!

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

# 2024 Ministry Celebrations



Our Synod's vision of Journeying Together in Christ has continued to be the focus of our work. We invite you to take a few moments to review the list below which celebrates some of the ministry we shared together in 2024. **Journeying together in Christ as the South Dakota Synod, in 2024 we have:**

- Applied and received a grant of **\$1,224,172** from Lilly Endowment, Inc. for the Synod's Holy Playground Initiative, which will provide strategic support for children's ministries in congregations and worshipping communities.
- Completed explorations for a potential church plant, with plans to start a worshipping community in Box Elder.
- Received **2 new first call** candidates.
- Completed **22 Ministry Site Studies** and extended **19 calls**.
- Ensured that nearly every congregation has a called pastor, interim pastor, Synod Authorized Minister, or lay leader to care for God's people (thank you to all of you who are helping out with area congregations and filling in!).
- Walked with **25 people** in various stages of **candidacy** in the SD Synod in 2024, with 18 others inquiring and in discernment.
- Granted **\$119,990** in scholarship funds to seminary students, **\$28,500** in internship assistance, and **\$38,232** to Luther and Wartburg Seminaries, for a total of **\$186,722** in support for seminary education.
- Distributed **\$48,220** to date through the Seminary Debt Reduction Program.
- Helped members and congregations recover from severe weather events, including awarding **\$20,000** in Storm Micro Grants and working with congregations to secure **\$140,000** in grants from Lutheran Disaster Response.
- Held a **Synod Assembly**, where we gathered as a community to conduct the business of the Synod.
- Hosted **Spring** and **Fall Theological Conferences**, where we continued to support the continuing education of our Rostered Ministers either online or in-person.
- Supported the congregations and ministries of the Synod through **visits by Synod staff**, both **digital** and **in-person**.
- Hosted **"Coffee with the Bishop"** for Retired Rostered Ministers, Spouses, Widows/Widowers.
- Received nearly **300 enrollments** from **over 100 SD churches** to **Pasque Learning Community**, our community effort to promote Spirit-led growth and faith formation. At Pasque, you can find 10 online courses with relevant instructional videos and digital discussion, as well as live weekly Zoom sessions, 4 active communities, and 2 digital downloads.
- Hosted **"I've Been Elected to Council, Now What?"** to support congregational lay leaders and supported rostered lay leaders with regular **in-person and virtual meetings**, such as monthly rostered minister virtual check-ins, Synod Authorized Minister, Senior Pastor, and Interim Pastor check-ins, and a First Call and Senior Pastor Retreat.
- Welcomed Rev. Joel Pakan as the new **Director for Rural Ministry**, where he has journeyed with our rural ministry sites. Rev. Pakan has continued to work with 14 communities and congregations in transition.
- Continued the work of the Rural Ministry Table, which is currently working on **Small Town and Rural (STAR)** grants, we awarded **\$84,139**.
- Partnered with Grand Valley Lutheran to hold a **Farm to Table Dinner**, which resulted in gifts of **\$44,710** to support rural ministry in South Dakota.
- Received **\$103,700** in Churchwide grants for our Neighbors in Solidarity ministries.

**Thank you for all the ways you have supported the ministry of the South Dakota Synod. Together we continue to serve as the hands and feet of Christ, sharing Jesus' love and grace. As we step into 2025, we trust in God's guidance and look forward to walking this journey of faith together.**



## South Dakota 2024-2025 Synod Council and Vice President Report

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

The Synod was able to continue supporting all their important ministries. Just as with congregations, costs have continued to rise for the Synod and have required the Council to look closely at the mission plan. After much thoughtful deliberation, we hope that we have a plan that will continue the important work of the Synod.

Last year, the Synod received a Lilly Grant to support Rural Ministries and develop learning systems. The work funded by this grant continues to move forward. These funds are invaluable in supporting the mission and goals of the Synod.

In this year, the Synod was awarded another Lilly Grant, the Holy Playground Initiative, for working together with Congregations as they develop ministry programs for youth.

Highlights of Synod Council activities include:

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

Thank you to the Synod Council members whose terms are ending in 2025: Anne Reick McFarland, Kelly Nelson, Bonny Hansen, and Juan Angel. Also, thank you to Rev. Jackie Braun, who left the council as she changed conferences, and to Rev. Karl Breddin, who has agreed to complete Jackie's term. Thank you for participating on Synod Council and being flexible to meet on Zoom.

Thank you to the Executive Committee for your willingness to meet monthly and provide leadership: Bishop Hagmaier, Jill Beers, Terry Johnson, Jeff Clark, Bonny Hansen, Rev. Jackie Braun, and John Rasmussen.

The Synod staff continues their good work. Thank you to Bishop Constanze Hagmaier, Pastor Renee Splichal Larson, Pastor Jonathan Vehar, Lois Borchardt, Crystal McCormick, Rev. Kari Webb, Rev. Joel Pakan, Kathy McHenry and Rev Dr. Aaron Matson. And welcome to Rev Renae Boehmer who has joined the staff as Director of the Holy Playground Initiative. The Synod is



blessed to have these dedicated, talented individuals working to further the mission of the Synod. Thank you.

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

April 10, 2025

Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

We are all “called”!

Some create and serve food; some visit those who need companionship and prayer; some bring the joy of music to our churches; some teach, bringing others to witness God’s love; some are called to lead worship; some are called to outreach for the missions of their church.

Deacons are called to serve the church in Word and Service; Ordained pastors are called to lives of Word and Sacrament.

The mission of the South Dakota Synod’s Candidacy Committee is to welcome, nurture, and guide deacon and pastor candidates in their discernment to answer God’s call and to grow in service to our church. There is great joy in sharing the rigorous path these candidates traverse.

This year, the SD Synod is walking with 19 candidates who are seeking to discern their roles serving the church as pastors and deacons. Another 21 potential candidates are in discussions discerning God’s call.

Funding? All of our candidates for ministry in the SD Synod have been supported by SD Synod seminary scholarships, graduating from seminary with low seminary debt. If there are people considering public, ordained ministry, but are worried about how to afford a seminary degree, assure them that there is financial aid from seminaries, the Fund for Leaders in Mission, and the SD Synod to assist them.

I close with this invitation to be part our work.

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

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

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

Report from Support to Ministries  
Prepared by Colleen Winter, Chair of Support to Ministries

The South Dakota Support to Ministries (STM) Committee shares the responsibilities of the bishop's office in the calling and sending of pastors. However, the work of the STM committee is larger than a Synod Call Committee. As outlined in the committee guidelines, "It is the congregation's ministry, the pastor's ministry, the conference, synod or national church's ministry. Its work is listening, evaluating, advising, offering options, etc." The STM committee consists of the Bishop, assistants to the Bishop, and 2 persons, one lay person and one minister of word and sacrament, elected by each conference (total of 14 conference representatives). The 14 conference representatives are elected at synod assembly.

The committee members meet with the Bishop and synod staff approximately 4 times per year. The agenda centers on updates relative to congregations in transition, searches for rostered leaders to fill vacancies, and opportunities for rostered leaders seeking a call. Discussion includes topics such as but not limited to the following: vacancies, pulpit supply, rural ministry needs, creative opportunities to support congregations and communities in their ministry, continuing education needs, support for SAM (Synod Authorized Minister) ministry, compensation guidelines, etc. In addition to the scheduled STM meetings, the rostered leaders on the STM meet monthly and visit congregations throughout the conference as needed.

Bishop Constanze Hagmaier and Pastor Renee Splichal Larson are the primary points of contact for congregations in call processes. The Synod office communicates directly with both the STM rostered leader and the lay leader from the specific conference as congregations receive candidates' names for consideration. STM members may be asked to participate in a parish study process, attend meetings and participate in discussions regarding their call process, assist and direct them to available resources to facilitate the process, but most important, to continue to hold congregations in prayer.

Over the last couple of years, a STM workgroup worked under the leadership of Pastor Renee to review and refine materials for congregations entering a transition and call process, as well as materials for candidates on what to expect in the call process. These materials are available on the Synod website and provide useful resources to guide congregations and clergy through the process. The tools can be found under the "Congregations" tab and clicking on the CALL A ROSTERED MINISTER link.

The STM committee serves as the review committee for the Compensation Review Task Force. The Taskforce was established to assure diverse expertise relative to compensation of Ministers of Word & Sacrament, Ministers of Word and Service, Lay Leaders, etc. Historically, the responsibility for review of compensation and guidelines for rostered leaders and lay ministry was rotated through each of the 7 conferences. To streamline and facilitate the process, STM recommended the committee consist of core members in finance, human resources, etc. as well as rostered and lay leaders. The process assures critical expertise as well as consistency and continuity on a very complex task. The Taskforce presented their updated 2025 guidelines to STM at their January meeting for review and recommendation to move them forward for presentation at the 2025 Synod Assembly.

The Taskforce lead by Annelies Seffrood is committed to providing congregations tools to offer fair and competitive compensation as they are developing their budgets, reviewing

compensation for their church staff, or in the call process. The tool is a strategy to assure the South Dakota Synod is competitive with neighboring like synods to aid in retention and recruitment for the South Dakota synod.

The taskforce has continued to add, refine and update the guidelines based on identified needs. Topics identified for future review and development include:

- expectations and compensation for Lay Staff assisting with special overnight or multi-day events, such as youth overnights, camps, lock-ins, etc.
- compensation/paid sabbath compensation for paid staff who assist with overnight events such as Bible Camp, National Youth Gathering, mission trips, etc.

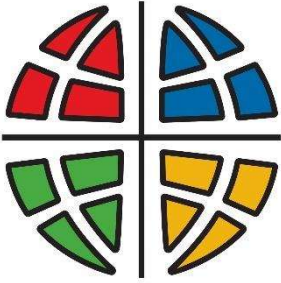
When Annelies and her team began their very comprehensive review and work, the South Dakota Synod was ranked 8th of the 9 synods relative to compensation. The work of the taskforce has moved the South Dakota Synod to 4th out of the 9 synods, making the South Dakota Synod more competitive as potential candidates consider calls in South Dakota. The STM Committee extends a sincere thank you to Annelies and the committee for their dedicated work to support congregations and ministry in South Dakota.

The South Dakota Synod currently has 25 Synod Authorized Ministers (SAM)s serving in congregations across the state. There is not a specific program/training to qualify an individual as a SAM, but is based on education/training and experience of the individual in each specific congregation/ministry. Pastor Kari Webb and Pastor Joel Pakan have assumed the administrative and pastoral care duties connected with the SAM ministry. In addition, STM has a team of members who may assist with interviewing SAMs, providing blessings for SAMs, etc.

During our January meeting, Pastor Joel Pakan provided a brief update on the Rural Ministry work he is facilitating. (Reminder: Pastor Joel's salary is funded by the Lily Foundation Grant, allowing any funds raised by fundraising efforts to be used for grants for rural ministry). The STaR team has met and grants have been awarded for proposals for infrastructure as well as ministry. The Lily Foundation Grant has also allowed the Synod to hire Rural Ambassadors in different areas of the state. Pastor Joel shared that he will be working on strategies with other seminaries to expand the rural J-Term experience, and looking for rural congregations willing to host rural immersion seminarians for three weeks.

May this report serve as a reminder to each of you of the work of the STM committee. The committee members are always open to conversation regarding the challenges and opportunities in your ministry. We thank God for the wonderful work you are doing, and we continue to hold you in our thoughts and prayers. We pray for grace, wisdom, courage and faith as we "Journey Together in Christ",

Respectfully submitted,  
Colleen Winter, STM Chair  
Lay Representative, Northern Plains Conference



## Evangelical Outreach Committee 2024



I thank my God for every remembrance of you, always in every one of my prayers for all of you, praying with joy for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, Philippians 1:3-5.

Partnership in the gospel continues through the work of the Evangelical Outreach Committee of the South Dakota Synod. We continue to walk and work with our Neighbors in Solidarity following the call of the Spirit in unique ministry settings.

This year, the Evangelical Outreach Committee passed a request to the South Dakota Synod to begin a new Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community in Box Edler. We give thanks for this new ministry!

In 2024, the Neighbors in Solidarity Account provided each Neighbor with \$2,500 plus \$684.75 from the Synod Assembly offering, and \$18,373.89 was given for other needs as requested.

### WHO ARE MY NEIGHBORS IN SOLIDARITY?

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

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

Blessings,  
Rev. Chris Matson  
Chair, Evangelical Outreach Committee

## ELCA Region 3 Archives Report to 2025 Synod Assemblies

### **Introduction**

2025 marks the 37<sup>th</sup> year of the ELCA Region 3 Archives. Paul Daniels continues in the archivist position at 80% time, half-time for the 9 synods of ELCA Region 3 and half-time for Luther Seminary. This shared position works well with Luther providing office and storage space as well as access to a much-needed volunteer pool and IT support. Luther profits from hosting the largest of the 9 ELCA regional collections as the materials are available for use by the entire seminary community.

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

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

- +Assisted a total of 512 reference patrons in the past year with a range of research interests. The majority (66%) are congregational committees working on records scanning projects, anniversary celebration planning, church history writing and general records care questions. Other significant user groups include synod leadership, church wide offices and individual researchers.
- +Worked on a regular basis with all 9 synod offices, collecting valuable office records and assisting with retention plans for each office. In an effort to reduce travel costs I now make an average of 2 visits per year to each of the 9 synod offices. In most cases, email, phone calls, and Zoom meetings are sufficient. These virtual visits were coordinated with 15 Zoom congregational visits throughout the 3 states of ELCA Region 3.

### **Collection Growth**

- +Collected 22 linear feet of additional synod office records from the 9 offices. These include legal, financial, personnel and program files. Much of this material is stored off-site in space leased from Iron Mountain Co.
- +Gathered 98 congregational pieces adding to a collection now totaling over 5,300 files.
- +Received 115 biographical pieces on clergy and lay leaders – total is now nearly 9,400 files.
- +Assisted 14 closing congregations in Region 3 with records care (scanning) and critical records collection.

### **Outreach and Education**

- +Daniels’ “Ask the Archivist” series (15 separate units) was accessed over 250 times via the Digital Commons platform. The main users were congregation members, (especially archives and heritage committee members), synod office staff and individuals.
- +Managed off-site secure storage program via Iron Mountain Co. for permanent care of sensitive files, including candidacy, camping staff, and synod financial records.
- +Promoted and managed the congregational records scanning program through Mid-America Business Systems.

### **Professional Development**

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

**Respectfully submitted 3.13.25 by Paul A. Daniels, ELCA Region 3 Archivist and Luther Seminary Archivist**  
**[pdaniels@luthersem.edu](mailto:pdaniels@luthersem.edu)**



## Mission Investment Fund

### The Mission Investment Fund: Empowering communities with financial services



For more than 150 years, the Mission Investment Fund (MIF), a *financial services ministry of the ELCA*, has been a **steady and reliable financial partner** for congregations, ministries and individuals. Through times of growth and uncertainty alike, MIF has remained committed to strengthening ministries and communities through customer-centric support and flexible financial resources.

In 2024, MIF continued to support ministry growth across the ELCA. Your investments helped expand worship spaces, create new education and youth ministry areas, fund schools and programming for the next generation, start green projects and support accessibility remodeling for community spaces. These projects ensure that ELCA ministries remain welcoming, inclusive and equipped to serve their communities.

#### By the Numbers:

- **Total Loans Outstanding:** \$610,534,000
- **Total Investment Obligations:** \$547,491,000
- **Total Assets:** \$774,550,000
- **Net Assets & Capital Ratio:** 27.5%

#### Why Is MIF the Right Choice?

- **Proven Stability:** With over a century and a half of experience, MIF has weathered changing economic and political landscapes, maintaining financial strength for ELCA ministries.
- **Deep Expertise in Church and Ministry Financing:** We understand the unique needs of faith communities and have longstanding experience in congregation and ministry-building projects.
- **Competitive Rates and Terms:** Our financial offerings are structured to support ministries of all sizes.
- **A Full Suite of Financial Services:** In partnership with the ELCA Federal Credit Union, we provide a range of financial solutions for congregations, ministries, and individuals.
- **Faithful Stewardship:** Investments in MIF directly support loans that fund hundreds of capital projects across the church.

With 2025, MIF has entered a new era of modernization—enhancing our tools and financial services to better support ELCA ministries. While embracing innovation, we remain rooted in the trust and stability that have defined us for generations. Through every season, we stand with ELCA members, congregations, and ministries, walking together in faith and financial stewardship.

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#### *MIF at work in the South Dakota Synod (as of December 31, 2024):*

- 6 Mission Investment Fund loans, with a balance of \$8,430,329
- \$9,179,783 in Mission Investment Fund investment obligations

For more information about MIF capabilities, please visit our website, [mif.elca.org](https://mif.elca.org)  
or contact your Regional Manager, LuAnn Ferguson: 773-380-1708 [luann.ferguson@elca.org](mailto:luann.ferguson@elca.org)



**Lutheran Planned Generosity**  
of South Dakota

### **Our Ministry Partners:**

South Dakota Synod of the ELCA

ELCA Foundation

Augustana University

Luther Seminary

Lutheran Social Services of  
South Dakota

Wartburg Theological Seminary

Lutherans Outdoors in  
South Dakota

Heartland Ephphatha Deaf Ministry

Prison Congregations of America

South Dakota Campus Ministries

St. Dymas of South Dakota

Now partnering with

**FREEWILL** 

Visit our website at  
**[www.lpgsd.org](http://www.lpgsd.org)**



for more information, contact:  
**Kathy J. McHenry**  
**Executive Director**  
**2001 South Summit Avenue**  
**Sioux Falls, SD 57197**  
**605.274.5030**  
**[kmchenry@sdsynod.org](mailto:kmchenry@sdsynod.org)**

2025 Synod Assembly  
Preliminary Report

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

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

We believe in generosity inspired by the desire to make a difference. The information and tools we share are intended to help you create something more than an estate plan—a legacy celebrating your life and honoring your family and your faith. Tax-wise strategies increase the impact of your gifts by directing more to ministry and less to taxes wherever possible.

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

The impact of generosity extended in support of seminary students, congregations, and ministries throughout the state and around the world continued in 2024. Planned and current gifts and endowment fund deposits exceeded \$2.6 million. Despite current economic uncertainty, we are on track for year-over-year growth again in 2025. The Synod's endowment fund value exceeded \$11.6 million at the fiscal year end, and will distribute more than half a million dollars this year because of designated gifts made by those who recognized the importance of perpetual support of God's work and chose to make a difference.

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

- Assistance in creating a personalized legacy plan—where to start, things to remember, pitfalls to avoid
- Smart giving beyond your checkbook—stock, grain, livestock, business assets, IRA qualified charitable distributions, and real estate
- Create your own FREE will or trust in a private, password-protected account at our website, **[www.lpgsd.org](http://www.lpgsd.org)**
  - No cost to you, whether you choose to include a gift or not
  - Available from the comfort of your own home
  - Create a legal will or revocable living trust customized to your wishes according to your state of legal residence
  - Accompanying documents available—powers of attorney, beneficiary designations and funeral directives
  - Share access with your attorney for more complex estate plans
- Introduction to generosity tools that can create tax-advantaged income for you and/or your loved ones; and reduce or eliminate income tax, capital gains tax, social security tax, Medicare surtax, and recaptured depreciation
- Congregational endowment fund and gift policy administration and updates, creating a testament to the belief that your church has a mission and a future, and confidence by donors that extraordinary gifts will be received and managed according to their wishes
- Practical, inspiring and educational workshops, temple talks and worship messages for your congregation or small group

*Are you ready to make a difference?*



# LUTHERANS OUTDOORS IN SOUTH DAKOTA



## 2024 REPORT

LOSD.ORG



### ANNELIES SEFFROOD LOSD BOARD PRESIDENT

Lutherans Outdoors of South Dakota THANKS YOU and your congregation!

We extend our heartfelt gratitude for your support and participation over the past year. Through your generosity and dedication, we've been able to gather together in the beauty of God's creation, where we welcome all to explore and experience Christ's love in community and creation. From our outdoor worship services to youth retreats, nature walks, and volunteer efforts, each moment has been a testament to the strength of our shared commitment.

We promise to explore faith, welcome all, build leaders, and care for all creation, and over the past year we've built lasting connections, shared in the joy of nature's wonders, and, most importantly, deepened our relationship with God.

We are profoundly thankful for every person who has been part of this journey. We are thankful for Pastor David Zellmer's leadership during our Interim period, as well as all of the staff, and we look forward to continuing our work together in the coming year, trusting that God's grace will guide us every step of the way.

Lutherans Outdoors are YOUR camps. Join us!

We'll see you In the Hills, On the Prairie, and At the Water.

### SUMMER CAMPERS



2024	615
2023	693
2022	569
2021	478

#### OUTLAW RANCH



2024	122
2023	162
2022	136
2021	108

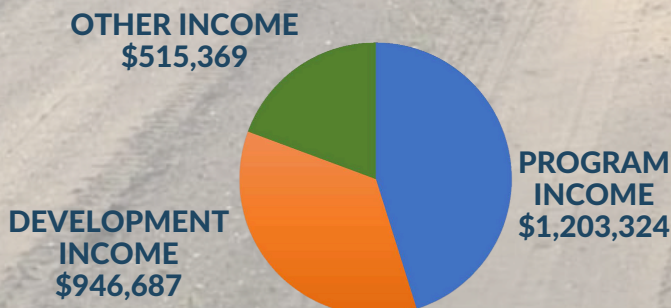
#### KLEIN RANCH



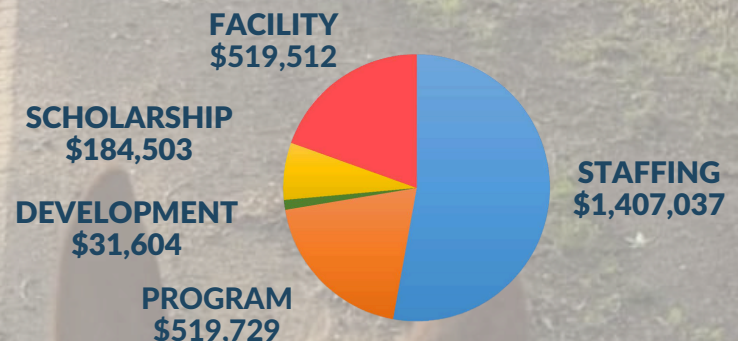
2024	484
2023	491
2022	470
2021	486

#### NESODAK

### 2024 INCOME \$2,665,380



### 2024 EXPENSE \$2,662,385



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

2025 Synod Assembly  
Preliminary Report

34



# DEAR FRIENDS

In October 1920, the members of First Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls saw a need—and they responded with bold compassion. They opened The Lutheran Children's Home Finding Society of South Dakota to care for young women facing unplanned pregnancies, women who had been largely turned away by their families and communities. But with Bertha Bragstad, her staff, and countless volunteers, they found acceptance, shelter, and hope.

Perhaps this mission was born from one woman's sleepless nights—worrying about a niece, a friend, or a young woman in her neighborhood. Imagine stepping into the shoes of any of the women in the photo to the right. In 1920, women facing pregnancy outside of marriage were often unwelcome. But the faithful leaders of First Lutheran Church opened their doors, held fundraisers, and created a solution. They were active, accepting, and ahead of their time.

More than 100 years later, their legacy lives on. Today, that same spirit of compassion drives us to welcome New Americans despite challenges, provide accessible support for mental and financial well-being, and ensure children and families have the resources they need to thrive.



**Rebecca Kiesow-Knudsen**  
LSS President/CEO

Thank you for the role you've played in continuing this legacy of compassion. Our work continues.

Your support—through prayer, volunteering, or donations—helps create safe homes, stable families, and welcoming communities across South Dakota.

## Refugee Resettlement in South Dakota

### RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

*"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in." Matthew 25:35*

For refugees, the journey to safety is long and uncertain. Fleeing war and political persecution, they often spend an average of 14 years in refugee camps before legally arriving in the United States, hoping to rebuild their lives. Upon arrival, they are strangers in a new land, longing for welcome and stability.

On Inauguration Day, the presidential administration indefinitely suspended the refugee resettlement program in the U.S.

As a result, funding for newly arrived refugees' first 90 days in the U.S. was eliminated, leaving nearly 100 individuals in South Dakota without critical support.

Committed to supporting our new neighbors despite the lack of funding, LSS dedicated \$57,000 in donated funds to cover rent, utilities, and food for these vulnerable individuals, children, and families.

With changes in funding and the halt in welcoming new arrivals, we made the difficult decision to reduce staffing at our Center for New Americans in March. The compassion and dedication of this team through this time of uncertainty, many of whom are former refugees themselves, has been breathtaking.

While our work serving refugees will look different for the foreseeable future, we remain dedicated to advocating for the continuation of refugee resettlement and ensuring that those already in the United States receive the services they need. This includes helping them build stability, find employment, and move toward self-sufficiency for up to five years post-arrival.

We are an organization that has been committed to welcoming the stranger since 1948 in the years following World War II. Thanks to the generosity of congregations, individuals, and grant funders we will continue doing all we can to serve our neighbors.





## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

### IN ACTION

Strengthening families & keeping children and youth in their homes and communities.



## SERVING WITH PURPOSE

Families are thriving through our short-term, evidence-based therapy programs with **97%** of both youth and parents reporting stronger family bonds and improved home life.

Children & teens are empowered to succeed. **100%** of runaway and homeless youth in our Arise Youth Centers have either returned to school or enrolled in a GED program, and **92%** have either returned to their families or found safe, stable housing.

Students receiving in-school counseling are showing remarkable resilience. **93%** are maintaining their academic performance, **87%** have avoided behavioral incidents, and **96%** are consistently attending school.

2025 Synod Assembly  
Preliminary Report



## 2024 AT A GLANCE

**Launched the Strengthening Families Curriculum:**  
Set for expansion, this curriculum is designed to strengthen communications between parents and children, helping families navigate everyday life and resolve conflicts.

**Expanded Kinship Services:**

With 10,000 children in our state cared for by relatives, our new Kinship Navigator helps connect caregivers with essential support, helping prevent disruptions for youth.

**Enhanced Post-Adoption Services:**

We now offer expanded services that support families long after the initial adoption process is complete, ensuring lasting success and stability for adoptive families.

**Strengthened Medical Interpreting Services:**

In response to a growing need, we've expanded "Bridging the Gap," a professional training for medical interpreting, helping improve communication in healthcare settings for non-English speakers.

To learn more about your impact in the community, contact us:

Jessica Lillebo  
Western South Dakota  
605-791-6769  
Jessica.Lillebo@LssSD.org

Jason Lemke  
Eastern South Dakota  
605-444-7516  
Jason.Lemke@LssSD.org

[DONATE.LssSD.org](https://DONATE.LssSD.org)

## SERVING SOUTH DAKOTA

### FAMILY SUPPORT

Adoption & Post-Adoption Services  
After School & Summer Childcare  
Family Stabilization Services  
Foster Care Services  
Kinship Services  
Pregnancy Counseling

### MENTAL & FINANCIAL WELLNESS

Behavioral Health Services  
Center for Financial Resources

### YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Independent Living Services  
Juvenile Justice Services: Arise Youth Centers  
Mentoring Services  
Residential Services for Children & Youth

### COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Center for New Americans  
Multi-Cultural Center  
Older Adult Services: Better Together & OARN



April 2025

Greetings from Augustana University!

I pray this finds you and your families in a season of good health, joy and peace.

Amidst the complexities of our time — in higher education, our nation and across the globe — we give thanks for the unwavering spirit of Augustana. This past year has been filled with meaningful progress — a testament to the faith, generosity and dedication of our community. With students at the center, and through the steadfast commitment of our faculty, staff, alumni and friends, we have marked another remarkable chapter in the life of the university.

What follows are recent highlights of our Viking Bold journey.

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

- Called Rev. Shawna Day to serve as associate campus pastor. Pastor Shawna has jumped into the work with gratitude and enthusiasm for the students, faculty and staff she serves.
- Welcomed the inaugural cohort of Buntrock Scholars, a group of 34 students active and engaged in ELCA congregations and eager to grow in faith at Augustana.
- Increased daily worship attendance, year-over-year, for the last four years while maintaining important traditions such as senior student preachers every Friday. Thirteen area faith communities sponsored treats after worship.
- Welcomed more than 250 members of area congregations to Midco Arena, where they cheered on our Vikings during “Faith Night” at AU Hockey.
- Hosted the first ever Chapel on Ice in Midco Arena, a unique worship experience led by pastors on skates.
- Explored faith with remote learners in Doctor of Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy programs through online Bible studies led by our campus pastors.
- Partnered with Interfaith Photovoice, an organization equipping universities to deepen interreligious understanding through sharing photography.
- Established a team chaplains’ program with student-athletes and coaches to integrate faith with learning and service.

### **Academics**

- Launched majors in criminal justice, statistics, neuroscience and strength & conditioning, as well as a minor in sports broadcasting (Fall 2024)
- Established a new hybrid 5-year dual-degree engineering program, set to launch with the University of North Dakota (Fall 2025)

- Expanded graduate programs, with:
  - Master of Social Work (MSW) (Fall 2025)
  - Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) — Minnesota (Summer 2026)
  - Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) — Colorado (Fall 2026)
- Implemented Canvas Catalog and Canvas Credentials as the foundation to launch and award several types of certificates and badges (academic, co-curricular and continuing education)
  - Graduate certificates (Fall 2025):
    - Addictions
    - Play Therapy
    - Integrated Behavioral Health
  - Lifelong Learning Program in partnership with Active Generations (April 2025)

### **Enrollment & Strategic Scholarships**

- Continued incremental growth toward enrolling 2,200 undergraduate and 800 graduate students by achieving 85.5% retention of first- to second-year students and record numbers for overall headcount (2,390), full-time undergraduates (1,944) and graduate students (387) in Fall 2024

### **Athletics**

- AU Hockey earned opportunity to compete in the CCHA tournament one year ahead of schedule
- Implemented the NCAA Holistic Athlete Model that guarantees degree completion funds as well as increased programming in areas such as mental health; community and belonging; career preparation; and strength and conditioning

### **Physical Campus & IT**

- Completed Phase II of the Morrison Commons renovation to include first floor market space, grand staircase, remodeled Starbucks/lounge area and modernized dining hall/serving stations
- Scheduled groundbreaking ceremony for new apartment building at 28th Street & Grange Avenue for Monday, April 28, at 4:30 p.m.
- Finalized design and cost estimate for the Chapel of Reconciliation expansion project, inclusive of technology improvements, in April 2025

### **Viking Bold Campaign**

With an initial goal of \$175,000,000, Augustana has raised more than \$190,109,951 for the Viking Bold campaign, established to fuel the university's *Viking Bold: The Journey to 2030* strategic plan. The plan is divided into three phases, with Phase II ending on July 31, 2026. A new goal of \$225,000,000 has now been established for Phase II of the campaign.

Among the many other highlights of the past months — hosting the second annual Critical Inquiry & Citizenship Colloquium with Dr. Danielle Allen, the James Bryant Conant University Professor at Harvard University and director of the Allen Lab for Democracy Renovation at Harvard Kennedy School's Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, as the featured speaker; the 28th Boe Forum on Public Affairs with presidential historian and Pulitzer

Prize-winning author, Jon Meacham, as the featured speaker; and CCHA Mason Cup Playoffs at Midco Arena.

Blessed to witness lives transformed each day through the power of learning, discovery and community, we give thanks for the ways God continues to work through Augustana. With faith, hope and optimism, we continue on our journey with courage and confidence.

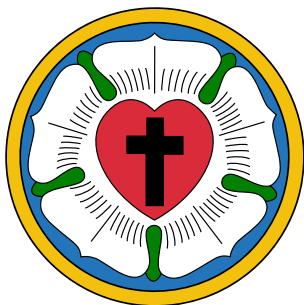
The South Dakota Synod's faithful support and ongoing partnership are deeply appreciated. We welcome you to stay connected with Augustana through [augie.edu](http://augie.edu), social media and by attending campus events. And, as always, we invite you to encourage the young people you know to explore all that Augustana has to offer. Together, we are shaping lives of faith, leadership and service.

With gratitude,

Stephanie Herseth Sandlin  
President



*Inaugural Buntrock Scholars with Dean & Rosemarie Buntrock, AU President Stephanie Herseth Sandlin and campus pastors.*



# BUNTROCK SCHOLARSHIP

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

**AU** AUGUSTANA  
UNIVERSITY



## Who are Buntrock Scholars?

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

## What is the Buntrock Scholars Program?

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

## Requirements

Eligible students must be engaged in a Midwest ELCA congregation and remain in good academic standing at Augustana. After a student has applied and been offered admission to Augustana University, they must complete a scholarship form that includes a personal statement about the student's involvement in the church before and after college graduation, which will then prompt their senior pastor to submit a letter of recommendation. The donor's vision for this generous scholarship program is to partner with the student's congregation and synod to make college more financially accessible for the student. Buntrock Scholarships will begin to be awarded to students in late November.

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







## Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center

PO Box 862

Pine Ridge, SD 57770

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

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

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

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

We strive to offer help and hope to Pine Ridge residents daily. The Pine Ridge Reservation is the nation's poorest area, with lasting impacts from the boarding school era. The suicide rate is three times higher than the national average, male life expectancy is 48 years, and over 80% live in poverty. We work every day to improve lives here.

Winter is the period when the **Homeless Shelter** receives significant attention. The overnight shelter accommodates an average of 48 individuals per night, while the day shelter provides services to over 80 individuals daily. Collaborating with the tribe, we are exploring options for maintaining the shelter. There have been instances of people moving to improved situations after using the shelter. In some cases, individuals have reconnected with their families. Recently, a couple regained custody of their children.

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

**Kid's Time** remains busy. Job Corp staff continue to provide food and activities, which the kids appreciate. For some children, these are their only hot meals outside of school. The Friday snack packs are both desired and necessary. The kids also enjoy being "seen" and come for comfort and a safe place to play.

We are gearing up for the **Immersion season**. **Have you been here?** This fall we are offering an open immersion. No group required.

**Job Corp** continues to be the heart of the ministry. They are involved in all aspects of the ministry of the center.

The center is now its own 501c3 organization. If you are interested in learning more about the center and how you can become part of our story, contact Pastor Dan

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

Blessings on all you do,

Pastor Dan Johnson  
Director, Lutheran Lakota Ministry

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

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

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

In the words of the Apostle, Paul; “we give thanks for you always!” 2024 has been a wonderful year; lots of opportunities and new things. After a summer of challenges, especially on the Hill and at MDSP, working inside the walls has seen significant changes to policies, visitation requirements, and schedules. What we see as stumbling blocks, God uses to his glory. Even amidst these many challenges, God has been at work in amazing ways in the lives of people inside and outside the walls.

Thank you for your support to insure that the ministry of St Dysmas stays vibrant and active. We do not exist without the partnership and support from you.

St Dysmas is YOUR ministry to those experiencing incarceration; and we are grateful for your partnership.

Here are a few highlights for this year:

- In 2024, we worked with and saw attendance of approximately 568 unique individuals to worship, Bible studies, and one-on-one pastoral care visits.
- We had 11 baptisms, and 2 affirmations of baptism of adult men in the prisons.
- Our Reformation Festivals took place at both Sioux Falls and Springfield on weekends in October. A special meal was served at Springfield, and inmates were allowed to share the meal with their families; we fed 172 people.
- The annual special meal was held in Sioux Falls in September sponsored by Peace Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls.
- We have seen increasing engagement and attendance with our reentry work on the inside. Mitch Wilson taught several Reentry classes in Sioux Falls and MDSP, and worked with approximately 480 individuals preparing to be released from incarceration. We are a partner in the START-SD program, and will be teaching reentry classes in Springfield, Yankton, and Pierre, in addition to Sioux Falls.
- We accompanied 208 individuals once they were released to help them transition back into life on the outside. We still maintain a very low recidivism rate with those we work with.
- Mitch also worked in the Minnehaha County jail with 370 individuals housed there.
- We added a Social Work internship position in partnership with Augustana University.
- Worked with the Department of Corrections and St Francis House to accompany 48 treatment women into work release.
- Over 4,400 Christmas Treat Sacks were distributed the week before Christmas. Every person in the South Dakota Prison System received a sack, also people in the Minnehaha County and Yankton County jails.
- The Sioux Falls congregation again took up the challenge to support a ministry outside of themselves. All inmate offering goes to this fund, and for 2024, they will give Church on the Street a check for \$500. They also took up a benefit to support a family whose 10 yr old daughter was battling cancer; they gave \$6,159 to that family.
- The Springfield congregation took up the same challenge. They will distribute their funds to ELCA World Hunger and the Wambli Ska Teen Center in Rapid City, SD.
- I was able to visit 52 congregations to tell the story of St Dysmas and to worship together.

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

Grace and peace to you always,



Pastor Jeff Backer  
Senior Pastor/Development Director  
2025 Synod Assembly  
Preliminary Report



## **SD Synodical Women of the ELCA 2025 Report to the SD Synod Assembly**

**Co-Presidents** Lois Storm and Sherry Archer

The 37th Annual Synodical Convention of the SD Women of the ELCA was held June 19-21 at First Lutheran Church in Mitchell, SD. The theme was “Just Peace” with Psalm 29:11 as the Bible verse: “The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace”. We extend our sincere thanks to Joan Anderson, president of WELCA, and her committee at First Lutheran. We also thank the women from Prairie Rivers Conference for their work towards making this a wonderful convention experience for the 99 attendees.

The 2025 Convention will be held at Trinity Lutheran Church in Yankton, June 18-20. Wednesday night kicks off with a meal and Vespers Service. Our theme will be “Let Your Light Shine”, found in Matthew 5:16. We have some speakers, our business meeting, and three awareness sessions lined up for Thursday, ending with a banquet meal and a Women of the Bible Play. Friday morning we have more speakers and close with a Communion worship service. All women of the ELCA are encouraged to attend. Think of Faith, Fellowship and Food!

SD Women of the ELCA continue to serve by making quilts and putting together various kits which are provided to those in need. They support LWR and Global Health Ministries, as well as many local ministries in their communities. Also monetary donations are given to Lutheran projects and many other worthwhile causes.

During the fall of 2024, our conferences held their Fall Gatherings. These usually include one or more speakers, a Bible study, food and fellowship. Those in attendance leave renewed and energized to go back to their busy lives with family, church and community events.

As Presidents, we have several Zoom meetings throughout the year with our National Board and/or other Synodical Presidents. We also hold several of our SD Synodical Board meetings via Zoom, to save on traveling expenses.

It isn't too early to begin planning on attending the 12th Triennial Gathering in Des Moines July 16-19, 2026. If you haven't gone in the past because of the distance involved, this would be a good one to go to. You will not regret the experience of the faith and fellowship with thousands of other Lutheran women from across the US.

We continue to pray for all women of every age to become an active part of the Women of the ELCA and we are open to suggestions and ideas to bring new joy and awareness as we do God's work together.

## **Good Samaritan**

Good Samaritan is one of America's largest non-profit senior care providers. We offer a complete range of services including home care, skilled nursing, rehabilitation therapy, assisted living, and independent senior housing. As an organization affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), we celebrated our 100th anniversary in 2022, marking a century of mission-driven care for seniors and people with disabilities.

In 2019, we joined forces with Sanford Health to create an integrated health care system serving people at all stages of life. After six years together, this partnership has strengthened our ability to provide exceptional rural healthcare.

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

While our extend beyond South Dakota, we take special pride in Sioux Falls being the headquarters for both Good Samaritan and Sanford Health. Across South Dakota, we provide skilled nursing, assisted living, senior housing, and home-based services in multiple communities including Canistota, Canton, Clear Lake, Corsica, De Smet, Dell Rapids, Herreid, Howard, Miller, New Underwood, Rapid City (Echo Ridge and St. Martin Village), Scotland, Sioux Falls (Sioux Falls Center, Prairie Creek and Sioux Falls Village), Tyndall, and Vermillion.

In 2024, we announced plans for a new development called Founder's Crossing, an innovative senior living community in Sioux Falls. This campus will integrate all health and wellness services in one location, with direct connections to a Sanford Health clinic and Lewis Drug. We will welcome our first residents in 2026.

Additionally, this spring, we look forward to opening a new assisted living and memory care assisted living location called Unity Place at St. Martin Village in Rapid City. In the fall, we will reopen our skilled nursing facility in Wagner with updated resident rooms and fellowship areas.

We're proud to serve many South Dakota Synod members and partner with Rostered Ministers to address the needs of our residents and clients.

## **Public Advocacy**

More than 70 percent of our residents live in rural communities, and we remain committed to providing care as close to home as possible. The pandemic and industry changes have created challenges for the senior care industry, but we actively work with state and federal policymakers to advocate for both our seniors and their caregivers. We're dedicated to collaborating with partners across the senior care sector to develop lasting, meaningful solutions that address workforce challenges and resident care needs, both for today and tomorrow.

## **ELCA Endowment for the Elderly**

In 2023, the Society received a \$25,000 grant from the ELCA Endowment for the Elderly. This funding launched a pilot program at our skilled nursing facilities in New Hope and Robbinsdale, Minnesota, bringing in artistic performers to celebrate PRIDE Month, Juneteenth, Hispanic Heritage Month, and Native American Heritage Month.



Building on this success, we were awarded a \$75,000 grant from the same endowment in 2024 for a three-year Culinary Culture Project. This new initiative hosts multicultural food events at three campuses, including two in the South Dakota Synod: Sioux Falls Village and St. Martin Village (Rapid City). The project has already created immersive cultural experiences by combining food, art, music, and educational activities. Successful events have included St. Martin Village's 10-Year Party featuring international cuisines like sushi and Filipino BBQ, and Sioux Falls Village's Native American Day celebration with a hoop dance performance and Indian tacos.

### **Spiritual Care**

As a faith-based organization, Good Samaritan continues to prioritize care for the whole person, including their spiritual wellbeing. We provide spiritual care through chapel services, devotions, and prayer with residents. Four of our facilities in South Dakota offer dedicated chaplaincy services, while our other locations intentionally foster connections with local clergy to ensure residents' spiritual needs are met.

We seek to honor and support people of all backgrounds, by actively seeking ways to accommodate residents with religious leaders from their own traditions and respecting everyone's spiritual journey. Our commitment extends to ensuring all residents have opportunities to nurture their faith in ways meaningful to them.

At Good Samaritan we seek to live out our mission "to care, comfort, and cure" by loving all people through the sacred work of offering compassionate, devoted care. We recognize that spiritual health is essential to overall wellbeing, and we strive to create environments where residents can nurture their faith and find hope and joy each day.

### **Looking Ahead**

As we move forward, Good Samaritan remains dedicated to adapting to the evolving needs of our industry by exploring innovative ways to enhance quality of life for our residents, developing our workforce, and strengthening our partnerships, including with the South Dakota Synod.

We are grateful for the ongoing support and prayers from the ELCA community, which empowers us to fulfill our vision of creating communities where people feel loved and valued. We look forward to expanding our impact and serving with the same spirit of compassion that has guided our organization for over a century.

We invite members of the South Dakota Synod to visit our communities, volunteer their time and talents, and join us in caring for those we serve. Together, we can ensure that the residents and clients of Good Samaritan in South Dakota receive the care, respect, and dignity they deserve.



The University Lutheran Center is a home away from home for college students! When students are asked to describe the community here the number one word used is “home.” It is the kind of home where you can let yourself in, help yourself to the things in the fridge, and move the furniture around. It is a place where all are invited to have a seat on the sofa, all have access to the freely flowing caffeine, and all are fed around the table of God’s grace. The entry code on our back door is well known and our new security camera allows us to track just how often students are in the building and how late into the night they stay, often gathered in groups and not alone. That makes this place home!

In this home we gather for worship, Bible study, homework, community building, and fellowship. We care about our neighbors and partner with them for service opportunities. This year, we volunteered with the Brookings Backpack Project, loaded the WELCA semi with items for Lutheran World Relief, made fleece tie blankets for foster children that are distributed through the local Department of Social Services, and assisted with the Easter worship gathering at Church on the Street in Sioux Falls. We also prioritized time for fun with game nights, pumpkin painting, a Stampede hockey game, a lock in, and an end of the year bowling outing.

This year our home has welcomed a surge of first year students, which has added many new faces to our home. Our Sunday morning attendance has now become larger than our Wednesday evening attendance, a change from the last nine semesters. We have 28 padded chairs in our worship space and we are regularly filling almost all of them. Some of this increase is from meaningful referrals, because we are finally getting more useful contact information from church leaders. This year we even offered free coffee shop drinks to those referred students! If you want some tips on how to make better referrals of your high school graduates, please let us know.

This spring we are celebrating the graduation of ten students and sending them on to their next homes. Some of these students have been involved at the ULC for the entirety of their college experience. We will also be sending three students to work at summer Bible camps affiliated with the ELCA. They will all receive scholarships to add to their summer income. Next fall we will welcome our community back home and inspire them to invite other Jackrabbits to discover the home away from home that exists in our community at the ULC.

We cannot be this home away from home for college students without our partners in ministry! A huge thank you to the synod, congregations, WELCA organizations, and individuals whose generosity does not go unnoticed. Beyond financial support, we also want to connect with young adults from your communities as they make their way to SDSU to further their education. Additionally, if your community would like to learn more about how they can partner with us, please do not hesitate to reach out and schedule a virtual or in-person visit.

In Christ,

Pastor Cassandra Lamb

1404 8th St Brookings, SD 57006

605.692.4880

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



Dear Friends of the Luther Center,

As I sit to write this report, I'm excitedly finishing up details for our upcoming spring fundraiser: "We Love to Tell the Story" at Trinity Lutheran in Vermillion. Thinking about the students who will share their musical gifts and stories of how God has journeyed with them in this place and ministry fills my heart with gratitude and hope. We have had a great and growing year together, and I look forward to what God has in store for these young people at USD.

We kicked off the year with weekly gatherings on Sunday nights at our fire pit for s'mores and community building time. It was also at this time that I was briefly hospitalized, and am so grateful for the ways the Luther Center board and returning students stepped up to facilitate these gatherings. It was a huge relief to be back, and to see a new and RE-newed energy amongst our students.

That energy extended to our weekly bible studies, Thursday night rotation of games, movies, bible study, and dinner worship. It was and continues to be a joy to gather with them, exploring their questions of faith, and seeing them grow as leaders in the campus ministry and at different congregations in the area. They serve in youth ministry settings, participate in church choirs, and on our Luther Center board and with so many other student organizations. They "get" what it means to journey with Christ in their daily lives and know that the Luther

Center is a safe place where they can bring their questions, concerns, and whole selves and find a loving faith community. We are slowly growing, and I love that I get to serve such a range of students coming from many backgrounds.

As second semester began we shifted gears and moved to weekly dinner worship (with a free meal), with our rotational activities moving to Sunday nights. Students have taken much ownership with meals, helping me prepare things or cooking for their friends. We also have had the blessing of meals being provided by a few area colleagues. It is a time to catch up, reflect on God's Word and share in sacrament. Many of our students have had a rough go of things this year, so the community time has been good for them. And I pray that the moments of pastoral care have been of help to their hearts and well-beings too.

As we look ahead to next semester, we know funds might yet be tight, but we trust in God's work in and amongst us and give thanks for so many of you who love our little community on Plum and Cherry in Vermillion. We also look forward to exploring partnering with area congregations for a day camp in the fall and creating an open space for students to come who simply need the ear of a peer to listen and be present in tough moments. It's been a good year, and I so look forward to the next with these young disciples of Christ.

I want to express thanks to the SD synod and all who help this ministry along the way. Your prayers, support, and offerings mean so much to us. I also want to thank our Luther Center board and our office manager for taking leaps of faith this year; in their students and in this pastor 😊. Their dedication to this ministry is evident, and I'm thankful for their commitment to continue to grow together. Go Yotes!

In Christ,  
Pastor Lisa Heffernan



Peace be with you all, Northern LuMin thanks you for supporting the outreach ministries in our synod.

In tune with our mission of deepening faith, expanding minds, inspiring service, and building community, Student Leaders responded to needs on campus by establishing programs to engage students weekly with a topic and devotion, provide opportunities for Bible Study, monthly programs, as well as caring for our community by handing out care kits such as laundry, stress less, and cold and flu kits. Each semester we hosted Grocery Bingo providing meal kits as prizes to students. In our spring semester we engaged in and encouraged Random Acts of Kindness across campus and through the season of Lent we focused on earthly stewardship reducing single use plastic on campus with our No Plastics for Lent campaign.

Engaging community is never done in a silo, therefore it's important to share that in our different programs, activities, and opportunities we have collaborated and partnered with the NSU counseling center, Student Advisors on campus, the Campus Activities Board, as well as individual churches within the Northern Plains Conference. New this year have a new partnership with a local United Methodist church from Aberdeen, North Highland.

Overall this outreach ministry is active and engaged with the young adults on campus. Lumin at NSU is one of 6 campus ministries across the state. We appreciate your support want you to know that through your generosity, young adults are engaging in ministry, asking for support, and thankful for your presence in their lives.

Report to 2025 South Dakota Synod Assembly

**Lutheran Campus Ministry at Black Hills State University**

**810 N. Yale, Spearfish, SD 57783**

LCMBHSU meets weekly on Mondays during the school year at “The Living Room” which is a wonderful facility with kitchen, new comfortable tables and chairs for 20+ students to share a meal, and a living room space for Bible Study with plenty of sofas and chairs. We begin with a meal provided by volunteers at 5:30 pm. Spring semester ‘24 we studied the prophets. Fall Semester ‘24 we studied the Nicene Creed. We had several opportunities to be visible on campus to serve and invite other students to participate. We decorated Valentine’s Day cookies, provided ashes for Ash Wednesday, had an Earth Day project. We also attended a joint fall weekend retreat to Outlaw Ranch with students from LCMSDSMT.

Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, Spearfish provides maintenance and upkeep for the building and utilizes space for their youth programs and smaller Bible Studies. Beautiful gray siding with red trim provided by Our Savior’s replaced the wood siding and brought new visibility this year.

The board worked diligently to update and simplify the constitution. The board also hosted Pastor Renee from the synod office and has drafted and posted job descriptions for the next campus ministry director. **If you have someone in mind to serve the position of campus ministry director, please contact Brady Harr at [boardlcm1@gmail.com](mailto:boardlcm1@gmail.com).** Special thanks to the LCMBHSU board: Brady Harr (chair), Sommerlyn Mortensen (treasurer), Marissa Hight (secretary), Tacy Bressler, Jayna Frederickson, Kelly Kirk, Arica Overby, Sentel Schreier, Jennessa Scholl and student representatives: Makayla Friederich and Tessa Verhulst.

Also we would like to thank the Bear Butte Conference and Bear Butte Churches which directly support the campus ministry at Black Hills State: Our Savior’s, Spearfish; Our Savior’s WELCA, Spearfish; St. James, Belle Fourche, Grace WELCA, Sturgis; Custer Lutheran Fellowship; Community Lutheran, Hill City. AND THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE SO GRACIOUSLY DONATED HOMECOOKED MEALS! Delicious!

With you On The Way,

Pastor Carla Nelson, interim director, LCMBHSU  
(605) 670-8416

Report to 2025 South Dakota Synod

**Lutheran Campus Ministry at South Dakota School of Mines**

**324 E. St. Joseph, Rapid City, SD 57701**

LCMSDMT meets weekly on Sundays and Tuesdays during the school year at “The Luther House” which also houses six students from the School of Mines. On Sunday evenings around 5:30 pm, there is a very, very informal worship time. Meals are often prepared by students on Sunday evenings, and we eat at 6 pm. Tuesdays, we met at 5:30 pm for check in and a brief Bible Study. Spring semester ‘24 we studied the prophets. Fall Semester ‘24 we explored world religions. y. We share a meal provided by amazing volunteers at 6 pm. Special thanks to the Hermosa women who bring a meal the 3rd Tuesday EVERY MONTH. On Fridays, yarn engineers meet for knitting and crocheting. Special thanks to yarn engineer student Elena Lieb for guiding this group. We also attended a joint fall weekend retreat to Outlaw Ranch with students from LCMSDSMT.

The board has worked diligently. The board hosted Pastor Renee from the synod office and has drafted and posted job descriptions for the next campus ministry director. **If you have someone in mind to serve the position of campus ministry director, please contact Pastor Jeremy Duprey at [jeremyhillcityclc@gmail.com](mailto:jeremyhillcityclc@gmail.com).** Special thanks to the LCMSDSMT board: Pastor Jeremy Duprey, (chair), Skylar Schwab, Dr. Erica Haugtvedt, Christen Gauker (student/alumni), Linda Morrison, Per Lundquist. Student representative Elena Lieb joined the board fall semester and several of the students often attend. We sadly accepted resignations from Linda Morrison and Per Lundquist. Both have served faithfully for several years. Mike Baschnagel agreed to be treasurer, which is a huge help!!! Thanks! Still looking for a couple more to serve on the board. Love to have you!

Also we would like to thank the Bear Butte Conference and Bear Butte Churches which directly support the campus ministry at South Dakota School of Mines and Technology: Trinity, Rapid City; Our Savior’s, Hermosa; Community, Hill City; Custer Lutheran Fellowship; Our Savior’s WELCA, Spearfish; St. John’s. Hot Springs; Faith, Rapid City; and South Canyon, Rapid City; Also thank you to Thrivent for Choice Dollars and for a \$250 grant for kitchen items; and Special thanks to congregations throughout the South Dakota Synod including Lutheran Church of Dell Rapids and St. John’s (Dimmock) WELCA, and THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE SO GRACIOUSLY DONATED HOMECOOKED MEALS! Delicious! We still have days available this semester. Wanna help? Contact me, Pastor Carla (605) 670-8416.

With you On The Way,

Pastor Carla Nelson, interim director, LCMSDSMT  
(605) 670-8416



April 24, 2025

Greetings from DSU Lutheran Ministry in Madison, SD.

Dakota State Lutheran Ministry is a ministry hosted by the congregations of St. John Lutheran and Trinity Lutheran of Madison, South Dakota. Our partnership for campus ministry began the summer of 2024.

As a new campus ministry, we are in the beginning stages of establishing campus ministry on the Dakota State University campus. We hope to build relationships with students and faculty by being present on campus, through listening and sharing the gospel in Word and service. We pray our time on campus provides a sense of belonging, curiosity and serenity for the students we serve.

As part of the Lutheran Campus Ministry Network (LuMin), we were able to apply for and receive a \$1,800 grant. These funds along with congregational support will help us as we get established on campus. This past year we have tabled at the Dakota State University's Activity Fair and on campus twice a month. It has been a joy to get to know students and say hello to faculty and staff that are part of our worshipping communities.

Our presence on campus has been welcomed by students as we connect through conversation, engaging activities and snacks. While our time on campus is short, we try to be intentional as we work towards building community, deepening faith and expanding minds. We are looking forward to the start of the 2025-2026 academic year and looking at ways to engage students while keeping our eyes open for new opportunities to unfold. We have learned quite a bit in the past year and look forward to maximizing our impact on campus. Thank you for your support of DSU Lutheran Ministry. Please keep us in your prayers.

Deacon Koren Lindley

*Dea Koren Lindley*

Pastor Rebecca Breddin

*Rebecca Breddin*

## Heartland Ephphatha 2025 Synod Assembly Report

We are grateful to be the ministry for the deaf and hard of hearing for the South Dakota Synod and have a wonderful partnership with Peace Lutheran Church.

Our ministry was able to host the national ELDA conference this summer in Rapid City, South Dakota. The impact made was hard to measure. We were able to send several people from our group to the conference for the first time. Fred Wegehaupt, William Anderson and David Hammes were among those who experienced the impact for the first time.

We also celebrated Deaf Awareness Sunday at Peace and our event showcased the “Jesus” movie in American Sign Language. 55 individuals from the community participated and most of them have never set foot in our church before.

With thanks, we forge ahead into 2025 with momentum. We plan to continue to reach those inside our walls and outside to grow the mission of our ministry.







## 2025 Annual Report to the SD Synod, ELCA



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

3788 Chapel Lane

Rapid City, SD 57702

(605) 342-8281

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

The Chapel in the Hills is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation formed to maintain and operate the Chapel in the Hills, in Rapid City. We are considered a Special Partnership Ministry of the South Dakota Synod, ELCA. The Chapel and grounds are open to visitors from May 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup> and during special services and events the remainder of the year. The Chapel offers a quiet, retreat-like setting in the midst of the hustle and bustle of vacation and offers a place for tourists and local residents alike to slow down, relax, and enjoy Christ's presence. The Chapel fills a unique niche in the Synod's evangelism efforts, sharing our Lutheran heritage and traditions. Visitation remains high, with approximately 30,000 visitors annually, coming from every U.S. state and numerous countries.

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

We are pleased to announce a new Chapel [scholarship opportunity](#) for our local high school seniors entering college in the fall. We want to give back to the community in this way as we help support our students realize their post-high school dreams. Please watch for specific details coming soon.

We have a very dedicated group of volunteers that staff our gift shop and serve as hosts for our visitors. Without their help, along with various youth groups, congregations, and other individuals assisting with special projects and routine maintenance, we would not be able to continue our ministry. If you should ever feel a call to serve as a volunteer in the gift shop, on a maintenance project, or in some other capacity, please don't hesitate to contact us.

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

As we near retirement age, the Chapel Board has begun the process of seeking new management for the day-to-day operation of the Chapel. If you know of someone who may be interested in this position, please have them contact us for more information. We welcome the conversation. It is a call that may just be the perfect fit.... We ask for your continued prayers and support of this unique ministry in South Dakota. Come visit us when you are in the Black Hills. Discover the peace you will find, and then share the news of this special place with others!

In Christ's Love,

Brian & Joyce Kringen, Managing Directors

## **SD Synod Coaching Coordinator Team Report – April 2025**

The SD synod coaching team is led by Jamie Duprey, SD coaching coordinator and ELCA Coaching mentor coordinator. Members of the team include:

- Pr. Jackie Braun
- Pr. Wilbur Holz
- Pr. John Paulson
- Deacon Laura Campbell
- Pr. Jeremy Duprey
- Pr. John Paulson
- Pr. Jess Daum
- Pr. Trey Daum
- Pr. Katie Pauly
- Pr. Dayna Weltzin
- Kelly Deckert
- Mary Moeller
- Pr. Kris Garlick
- Pr. Renae Boehmer
- Margie Neugebauer
- Cassandra Lamb

The SD coaching cohort meets quarterly, at minimum, to discuss ideas and opportunities to create and cultivate partnerships and pathways for coaching in our synod.

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

- ELCA segment one training — enables participants to be certified as segment 1 ELCA coaches. On April 5-6, 2024, a live training kicked off a nine-week course of segment one basic skills coaching. The in-person training took place at First Lutheran Church in Brookings, and then participants engaged in six more sessions weekly, by Zoom after that. Six people were trained in the segment one training for the first time, and two participants engaged as returning learners. Pastors Jess & Trey Daum had two lay leaders participate in the training, and we are excited to see how First Lutheran Church prayerfully uses coaching in the future.
- The SD Synod coaching cohort has fifteen (15) segment one trained coaches who are actively coaching in some way, shape, or form. There are a handful of other pastors and lay leaders who have done segment one coach training at some point and say they use coaching informally but do not have the capacity to currently be “active status” coaches.
- We have coaches trained in ELCA Coaching segment one specialty coaching including Discipleship, Stewardship, Mission Development/Redevelopment, and Care for Creation certification.



- We have one coach who is International Coaching Federation (ICF) certified at the professional level of certification (PCC) with an emphasis on grief coaching and one coach who has gone through the associate certification grief coaching course as well.

### **Coaching Support and Training**

- The SD Synod coaching team is in consistent correspondence with Jill Beverlin, Jason O’Neill, David Hively, and other coaching coordinators across ELCA churchwide [info@elcacoaching.org](mailto:info@elcacoaching.org).
- Active Status is defined as:
  - Connecting 3-6 times a year with synodical coaches for support and training
  - Coaching at least two (2) clients for ten or more hours (total) annually
  - Following the ICF Core Competencies and Ethical Guidelines
  - Submit annually a recorded coaching session for review
  - Four (4) hours minimum per year of continuing education/coach specific training; ELCA Coaching is partnering with Dr. Don Eisenhauer at Coaching at End of Life to provide free continuing ed opportunities
- ELCA Coaching has a website full of resources for anyone interested in exploring coaching: <https://www.elcacoaching.org/>. There is also a link for SD Coaching: <https://sdsynod.org/ministries/coach-network/>.

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

- Bishop Hagmaier and associates Renee Splichal Larson and Jonathan Vehar are all segment one trained coaches. SD Coaching values the partnership with the bishop and her staff. We look forward to continuing our work together to support and empower servant-leaders for Christ in and through the SD Synod—and beyond—as we help those who coach and are coached maximize their God-given gifts and potential.
- The synod staff has been most supportive in helping create venues where coaching can be utilized and help advance the mission of the synod.
- Current venues where coaching is offered across ELCA churchwide include: first-call, ELCA World Hunger, ELCA Growing Younger, pastors in transition, coaching councils, coaching council presidents and other church lay leaders, etc.
- Pastor Jonathan Vehar is in continued conversation with Jamie Duprey regarding ways to continue to support leaders through coaching, and to continue broadening partnerships and pathways for coaching in our synod.
- The challenge remains to continue promoting and advocating for coaching. Coaching is often perceived to be for those who “need help” or are somehow not performing up to expectations. Clients who undergo the most transformation are, in fact, high performing individuals who want to fully develop their potential and grow more fully into the person God has created them to be.

- We look forward to finding new and creative ways to help rostered and lay leaders discover the power of coaching and how it can help them live more fully into God's dream for their lives and congregations.



# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

—Romans 15:13

We abound in hope here at Luther Seminary because we see around us the goodness of God's redeeming love at work in and through our students.

**In a changing world, Luther Seminary is relentless in following the Spirit's prompting to listen closely, trust deeply, and innovate boldly for the sake of our mission.** While the breadth and depth of this work in fiscal year 2023–24 cannot be fully captured in a few pages, we hope these stories and data inspire your own curiosity about where God is leading.

**In a changing world, Luther Seminary continues to remove financial barriers to theological education.** With 100% of student tuition and fees covered by the Jubilee Scholarship, student borrowing continues to decline. Total loan volumes reached their lowest point in 25 years in 2023–24, with 62% of our students graduating free of student loan debt. As the profile of students pursuing graduate theological education shifts from predominantly full-time, in-person study toward a greater percentage of part-time, distance-based learning, the Board of Directors voted to move from a per-credit to a flat-rate tuition structure in February. This change will allow the seminary to fully utilize endowed scholarships and cover even more actual student costs going forward, supported by a strong endowment valuation.

**In a changing world, Luther Seminary meets Christian leaders where they are—and accompanies them where they are going.** The seminary is adapting the academic program to deliver a rigorous theological education in modalities that serve today's students and tomorrow's leaders. In Fall 2023, we implemented a refreshed curriculum with defined full-time and part-time pathways that lower the cost to develop Christian leaders without sacrificing academic rigor, theological depth, or leadership formation—the hallmarks of a Luther Seminary

education. In partnership with Region 3 bishops, we began offering eight-course graduate certificate programs for lay leaders—all fully covered by the Jubilee Scholarship. And our digital offerings for disciples and pastors continue to grow, with more than 300 individuals exploring the Faith+Lead membership and 700 learners taking advantage of a growing library of on-demand Faith+Lead Academy courses.

**In a changing world, Luther Seminary is a global leader.** From our home base in St. Paul, the seminary maintains vital connections to our siblings in Christ throughout the global communion. Our digital offerings—including God Pause, Enter the Bible, Working Preacher, and Faith+Lead—reached 7.8 million users worldwide in the past year, an increase of 37% from the previous year. From the Festival of Homiletics to on-campus lectures with renowned scholars Amy-Jill Levine and Tripp Fuller, Luther Seminary leads faithful conversation on the most pressing theological issues of our time.

**In a changing world, your support matters.** As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with gratitude for your generous, faithful support of our students, our mission, and the future of the church. Thanks be to God for the great blessing of your prayers and partnership!



Peace and blessings,

Robin J. Steinke  
President



# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

## AT A GLANCE

- The seminary awarded 388 scholarships in 2023–24.
- Master of Arts students like Michelle made up 55% of enrolled students.
- As scholarship recipients, Michelle and Erik received part of the \$4.71 million awarded during the 2023–24 academic year. On average, students received \$11,617 in scholarships and grants from Luther Seminary.
- Erik was among the 32% of students who pursued a Master of Divinity degree in 2023–24.
- Financial aid covered 100% of the cost of tuition for qualified incoming M.A. and M.Div. students.

Originally a licensed mental health therapist, **Michelle S. Spencer '26 M.A.** experienced God's call to pursue ministry as a pastor or missionary. Wanting to deepen her understanding of the historical background of her Christian faith and equip herself with the education she needed to pursue her call, she began exploring seminaries. She landed on Luther Seminary because of its reputation as a scholarly, gospel-centered community, and the Jubilee Scholarship made her education affordable. "Words cannot fully express my gratitude for an answered prayer to be awarded financial support to pursue an M.A. in Christian ministry," she said.



## DURING THE 2023–24 FISCAL YEAR

36 international students enrolled from 18 countries.

74 students graduated May 26.

Donor sources made up 95% of Luther Seminary's operating revenue, including individual donor support, the endowment, and church and synod appropriations.

62% of students graduated without seminary debt. For the others, median debt was \$2,774.

### BY THE NUMBERS

- 348 students enrolled at Luther Seminary during the 2023–24 academic year.
- ELCA members accounted for 68% of the student body. 36 denominations made up the remaining 32% of students.
- Tuition, student fees, books, and on-campus living expenses cost approximately \$40,538 for full-time students.

As a pastor's kid, **Erik Nelson '26 M.Div.** witnessed the privilege of serving God's people from childhood onward. His love for the ELCA and its people led him to decide that he, too, wanted to serve as a pastor. He chose Luther Seminary for its location, its reputation, and the Jubilee Scholarship. "Money has never been something I've had an abundance of," he said. "It's important that cost is not a barrier to people's call to ministry. The church is better off when we can hear the voice of working-class and middle-class people doing theology and preaching."



# Finances 2023–24

## ANNUAL REPORT

Luther Seminary and Foundation consolidated balance sheets  
as of June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2023.

### ASSETS

	2024	2023
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$11,951,995	\$12,999,656
Other Current Assets	648,317	355,911
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$12,600,312</b>	<b>\$13,355,567</b>
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>		
Other Assets	\$1,996,675	\$2,007,730
Investments	135,495,744	123,277,429
Student Notes Receivable, Net	1,887,948	2,038,013
Land, Buildings, and Equipment, Net	7,751,070	8,019,197
<b>Total Other Assets</b>	<b>\$147,131,437</b>	<b>\$135,342,369</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$159,731,749</b>	<b>\$148,697,936</b>

### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

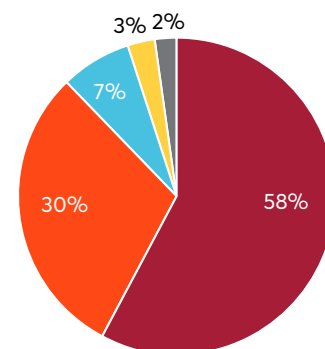
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Other Current Liabilities	\$3,774,453	\$4,598,779
Notes Payable, Current Portion	159,726	153,473
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>\$3,934,179</b>	<b>\$4,752,252</b>
<b>Long-Term Liabilities</b>		
Other Long-Term Liabilities	\$6,453,499	\$7,604,991
Notes Payable, Net of Current Portion	4,072,014	4,231,740
<b>Total Long-Term Liabilities</b>	<b>\$10,525,513</b>	<b>\$11,836,731</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$14,459,692</b>	<b>\$16,588,983</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>		
Without Donor Restrictions	\$4,626,230	\$5,354,872
With Donor Restrictions	140,645,827	126,754,081
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$145,272,057</b>	<b>\$132,108,953</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$159,731,749</b>	<b>\$148,697,936</b>

### ENDOWMENT

Total Market Value (as of June 30, 2024)	\$133 million
Investment Returns	
1-year	11.5%
3-year	2.0%
5-year	20.7%

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

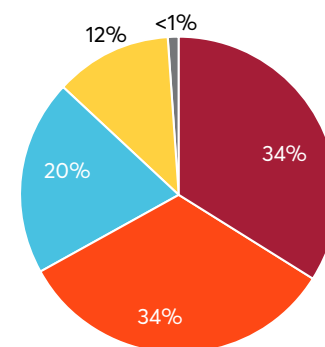
**On the cover:** Last summer, 93 pastors spent five days together in the first-ever Working Preacher retreat at Ghost Ranch. More than 12,000 people tune into the weekly sermon preparation podcast hosted by Luther Seminary professors **Joy Moore**, **Matt Skinner**, and **Karoline Lewis**. "We have a widespread virtual community of working preachers. We wanted to try to create an actual community this week at Ghost Ranch," Skinner said. "We thought maybe 30 or 40 people would register. We more than doubled that number!" Participants came from Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopalian, and United Church of Christ congregations across the United States. An Anglican rector from New Zealand also participated.



### Unrestricted Operating Income

Donor Support	\$10,432,790
Endowment Draw	5,500,017
Churchwide and Synod Support	1,343,289
Net Tuition and Fees	528,461
Auxiliary Enterprises and Other Income	307,711

**Total Unrestricted Operating Income** **\$18,112,268**



### Unrestricted Operating Expenses

Institutional Support	\$6,734,837
Student Instruction and Support	6,684,376
Faith+Lead	3,891,516
Physical Plant and Maintenance	2,370,209
Auxiliary Enterprises and Other Expenses	120,606

**Total Expenses\*** **\$19,801,544**

\*Includes depreciation





Dear Partners in the South Dakota Synod,

Greetings from your siblings in Christ at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, where the Holy Spirit continues to stir things up.

First, we are very excited to announce that Wartburg received a 7.4-million-dollar grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. to fund The CaSTLE Project, the “Country and Small Town Lived Ecclesiology” Project. Its purpose is to instantiate a new *baptismal ecclesiology*, focused not on “pastors and programming,” but rather on the formation of Christian discipleship in daily life. In this ecclesiology, the vibrancy of a congregation and the strength of its ministry is not measured by the number of members and the presence of an ordained pastor, but by the transformation of individuals (through participation in the worship and spiritual life of their congregation) prepared to witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in all the roles and relationships in their personal and occupational lives. *Leadership formation* for rural and small-town congregations is a key piece of this ecclesiology. Learn more here: <https://www.wartburgseminary.edu/the-castle-project/>

Second, we are thrilled about the continued growth of our innovative, competency-based TEEM program, *Journey Together/Caminemos Juntos* CB-TEEM, which is offered entirely in Spanish or English. This flexible program allows students to engage in an action-reflection model of educational formation while working closely with a mentor, academic advisor, supervisor, and peer cohort. Students progress at their own pace through nine competency modules, including an internship, as they serve in a church or other ministry setting. The program typically takes three to five years to complete. While students are always welcome to visit campus, all courses are conducted fully online, eliminating the need for travel. Scholarships are available for eligible students through Wartburg and the ELCA. Additionally, this competency-based model is available to cohorts of lay leaders, offering a distinct pathway separate from the candidacy track. This option is specifically designed for those called to lay ministry rather than ordination.

Finally, Wartburg Theological Seminary is committed to the holistic support and care of our students as they prepare for rostered and lay leadership. One aspect of this fulsome commitment comes to life thanks to a six-figure grant from the Immanuel Foundation, which will provide fully funded counseling with licensed mental health providers for all students, faculty, and staff [through UWill]. Beginning July 1, 2025, and continuing for three academic years, this grant will provide access for up to 10 counseling sessions per individual per academic year.

The church needs faithful and visionary leaders, and we are committed to partnering with you in their formation. We invite you to pray for, identify, and encourage those whom God may be calling into public ministry. At Wartburg, they will receive the theological, spiritual, and practical preparation needed to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ in a world longing for healing and hope.

We give thanks to God for you and for our partnership. To learn more about Wartburg Seminary and our strategic, innovative programs, please visit us at [www.wartburgseminary.edu](http://www.wartburgseminary.edu).

Yours in Christ,

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

# The Impact of Our Benefits

## Portico Benefit Services' Report to 2025 Synod Assemblies

As the ELCA's benefit ministry, Portico is dedicated to helping our rostered ministers and church professionals live holistically healthy lives, so they can serve others with confidence and grace. Here is a visual recap of what our community of over 52,000 plan members experienced in 2024.

**52,067**  
*Members served by Portico*



**2,998**

**Text/Virtual Health Care Visits**

To 98point6®, and 699 of these were ELCA-Primary plan members new to our text-based primary care service.



**198**

*Births & Adoptions*

**10th**

**Consecutive Year**

Of our Customer Care Center being named a Center of Excellence by Benchmark Portal.



**518**

*Changes of Call\**

**1,199**

**Sword Health Enrollments**

And nearly 26K total sessions in their Thrive, Move, and Bloom digital physical therapy and mobility programs.

**\$199K**

**Debt Paid Off**

By members via LSS of Minnesota Financial Counseling, with over \$2.4M paid off since 2008.

**15.17%**

**of Member Income**

Saved for retirement, on average, by members sponsored in the Traditional Benefits Program, thanks to employer and member contributions.\*



**39**

*Beginning Disability Benefits\*\**

**\$209M**

**Made in Annuity Payments**

And 515 retirements.

**16K**

**Members and Employers Invited to Participate**

In our Benefits reExamined surveys, with more than 4,100 responses.\*



**Nearly 10% of Our 10K ELCA Medicare-Primary Plan Members**

Participated in the SilverSneakers fitness program with an average of 8 visits to a fitness center per month.\*

We design our benefits to align with the needs of the church and seek to provide accessible support that enhances and improves everyday living and brings value to those who serve.

\*Source: Traditional Benefits Program. All other numbers and percentages are drawn from across Portico's benefit programs.

\*\*Total as of 2023; 2024 disability claims numbers have not been finalized.





## **ELCA Federal Credit Union: Faithfully delivering financial services to ELCA members, congregations and ministries**



The ELCA Federal Credit Union provides a wide range of financial products and services to members, congregations and ministries of the ELCA across the country. **In addition to being the first of the ELCA's financial ministries to offer loans to individuals**, the Credit Union offers a rich variety of products including savings and checking accounts, CDs, loans, lines of credit and credit cards.

And now, we provide home mortgage loans for purchasing or refinancing and home equity loans and lines of credit.

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

In 2025, a new cohort will join the ELCA's Resourceful Servants program, **designed to improve financial wellness and assist rostered leaders in building emergency savings funds**. In this matching program, ELCA rostered leaders make ongoing deposits to their Credit Union emergency savings accounts, and our partner MIF matches those deposits up to an established amount. Together, we have served **more than 700 rostered ministers** who, collectively, have made emergency savings deposits of more than \$1 million.

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

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

- **The ELCA Federal Credit Union supports the ELCA's mission of good stewardship.** We provide full services to all ELCA members, congregations and related ministries.
- **As a not-for-profit financial cooperative chartered to serve our church, we offer socially responsible banking solutions often priced more competitively** than traditional banks. We have demonstrated success in providing savings to our members.
- **With the church as our sponsor, we operate in ways that are consistent with the church's values.**

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

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

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Grace and peace to you this synod assembly season. **At Global Refugee we remain committed to the work of welcome, no matter the challenges.** For 85 years, Global Refugee (formerly known as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) has championed the work of welcome by providing support to immigrants and refugees as they rebuild their lives in the United States. Founded by heartbroken Lutherans in the United States who felt called to provide a home for those fleeing violence of the World Wars, Global Refugee has continued this good work welcoming more than 800,000 newcomers since 1939.

Our mission states, “As a witness to God’s love for all people, we stand with and advocate for migrants and refugees, transforming communities through ministries of service and justice.” With help from Global Refugee, families are welcomed into their new homes with a hot meal, adults are enrolled in English language classes, children are enrolled in school, and Global Refugee partners guide newly-arrived refugee(s) in using public transportation and accessing community resources.

Unfortunately, on January 24, 2025, Global Refugee and the 9 other national resettlement agencies received a **stop-work order** from the U.S. Department of State as it relates to our funding for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, effectively cutting off vital support to families who have already lawfully resettled in the United States. The stop-work order directly affects thousands of refugees who rely on resettlement services for essential support such as housing, food, English classes, and job placement. While we were anticipating a pause of the refugee resettlement program and work with future clients, this stop-work order for clients in our care came as an unexpected blow. However, we are committed to carrying out our mission, through our hope in the promise of the resurrection, and remain steadfast in our holy work of welcome.

Despite the challenges, we are heartened by continued and growing support faith communities are providing for our work. **More people of faith are getting involved in our work each year to meet the ever-growing need.** In fact, 85 new faith communities became supporters of Global Refugee in 2024.

With the support of these new partners and Lutheran communities like yours, in 2024 we were able to...

- Welcome **18,622+ refugees** from countries across the world.

- Empower and support **116 clients** and **67 Businesses** through personal and business loans.
- Open **a new office in Mexico** to expand our Camino A Casa programming and serve **1017 clients** start again at home.
- Write and distribute **10,000 Hope for the Holidays cards** that provided messages of welcome and hope to newcomers.
- Attend the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans where we engaged **20,000+** youth on the work of welcome and packed more than a **1000** welcome kits.

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

- **Support Refugees with a gift** – If you or communities you’re connected with are willing to support financially, please use/share this link: [www.globalrefugee.org/give](http://www.globalrefugee.org/give)
- **Learn more and Advocate** – Explore resources with more information about executive orders and accompanying actions: [www.globalrefugee.org/advocate](http://www.globalrefugee.org/advocate)
- **Know Your Rights** – Our partners at AMMPARO have a great resource for communities to read about their rights and those of immigrants in their care. [www.blogs.elca.org/ammparo/the-latest-kyr/](http://www.blogs.elca.org/ammparo/the-latest-kyr/)
- **Explore Resources** – Visit our Congregational Resources page to explore all the resources available to you: [www.globalrefugee.org/congregations](http://www.globalrefugee.org/congregations)
- **Sign up for our Monthly E-newsletters** – Get the latest updates for faith leaders by emailing [outreach@globalrefugee.org](mailto:outreach@globalrefugee.org).
- **Volunteer with us** – Support refugees in your community and beyond: [www.globalrefugee.org/volunteer](http://www.globalrefugee.org/volunteer)

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

Go in peace. Welcome the stranger.



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



## Report to the ELCA Synod Assemblies - March 2025

Founded in 1874, the mission of St. Olaf College is to challenge students to excel in the liberal arts, examine faith and values, and explore meaningful vocation in an inclusive, globally engaged community nourished by Lutheran tradition. St. Olaf's current student population of approximately 3050 degree-seeking undergraduates represents 49 states and 102 countries. 20% are first-generation college students, 23% identify as domestic students of color, 10% are international students, and 24% are income-eligible for Pell grants. St. Olaf continues to be one of only a handful of higher education institutions nation-wide that meets the full demonstrated need of all admitted students through a variety of financial assistance programs, including a new [Indigenous Affordability Commitment](#) to be launched in Fall 2025. Approximately half of our students indicate that they are affiliated with a Christian denomination, with 16% self-identifying as Lutheran and another 5% as members of a denomination in full communion with the ELCA.

St. Olaf's core curriculum engages students with the full array of liberal arts disciplines, including one required course examining Religion, Faith, and Values, one on Christian Theology in Dialogue, and one on Ethical Reasoning in Context. Among our Class of 2024 graduates, 94% had participated in a "high-impact educational practice," such as a mentored research experience, a learning community, study abroad/away, or an academic civic engagement course. Over the past three years, an average of 95% of our recent graduates were working, pursuing further education, or engaged in full-time military or other service program within seven months of graduation.

In Summer 2023, St. Olaf welcomed [Dr. Susan Rundell Singer](#) as its twelfth president, succeeding President David R. Anderson '74. A national leader in the improvement of undergraduate teaching and learning, Dr. Singer previously served as vice president for academic affairs and provost at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida; as the director of the Division of Undergraduate Education at the National Science Foundation (NSF); and as the Laurence McKinley Gould Professor of Biology at Carleton College. Under her leadership, the college is now implementing a new [six-year strategic plan](#), focused on elevating vocation, expanding innovation, and sustaining community. The plan includes a commitment to developing and implementing a strategy for college-wide inclusion, belonging, cultural competence, and engagement across differences, supported by a new Division of Community and Belonging. [Vice President Eduardo Pazos](#) joined President Singer's executive team on August 1 to lead this vital work, having previously served as assistant dean of student affairs for identity and culture, director of the Center for Multicultural Life, and director of the Rachel Lord Center for Religious and Spiritual Life. This year also marks the [commemoration of the college's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary](#) with a wide variety of exhibits and events, including a [two-day St. Olaf Music Festival](#) at Orchestra Hall that will feature the St. Olaf Band and the St. Olaf Jazz Band on Friday, April 18 and the St. Olaf Orchestra and St. Olaf Choir on Saturday, April 19.

St. Olaf continues to offer [daily Chapel services and Sunday worship](#) throughout the academic year, led by its two ELCA pastors and featuring members and friends of the St. Olaf community as speakers and musicians. Consistent with St. Olaf's identity as a "rooted and open" ELCA institution, the College Ministry team also includes an Associate Chaplain for Jewish Life and an Associate Chaplain for Muslim Life (currently an open position, with a search underway). The college continues its weekly streamed [Sing For Joy®](#) radio program, built around the Revised Common Lectionary for the church year, and integrating the best in sacred choral music with thoughtful commentary by the program host Rev. Alexandra Jacob '16. The biannual [St. Olaf](#)

[Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts](#) returned in July 2024, providing professional development, spiritual nourishment and networking opportunities for more than 225 pastors, church musicians, and lay leaders serving congregations from across the country. Featured speakers included Jason DeRose '97, Religion Correspondent for National Public Radio.

The [Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community](#) continues to advance a compelling vision for Lutheranism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, foster interreligious engagement, nurture vocational discernment, and provide national and global thought leadership. A key part of the Lutheran Center's work is to help all the college's constituencies [understand the role of Lutheran tradition](#) in supporting the things they value most about St. Olaf. The Center offers professional development for faculty and staff, fellowships and internships for students, and programming and events for all members and friends of the St. Olaf community on a wide range of topics, such as Lutheran values in pedagogical practice, interreligious engagement in the workplace, the intersection of Native American spirituality and Christian faith, and vocational discernment post-retirement. The Lutheran Center is also home to a new St. Olaf [Sacred Texts Initiative](#), launched in Spring 2024 with the gift of a [Saint John's Bible Heritage Edition](#), one of only 299 state-of-the-art reproductions of the original hand-written, hand-illuminated seven-volume Saint John's Bible. Through partnerships with College Ministry and other offices and academic departments across the campus, the gift will also support the acquisition of a Torah Scroll and an illuminated Qur'an to support teaching and learning, spiritual practice, and artistic enrichment in both the curriculum and co-curriculum.

Supported by two significant grants from Lilly Endowment Inc., the Lutheran Center also provides programming and resources for education, worship, and leadership development to congregations of the ELCA and other denominations. The [Nourishing Vocation Project](#) helps individuals and faith communities thrive through life-giving accompaniment and spiritual renewal that supports them in aligning their values and actions with God's call. The [Nourishing Vocation with Children Project](#) supports congregations and their leaders in integrating music, theater, movement, poetry, and visual arts into congregational worship in ways that engage children and adults alike. Both projects provide individual and congregational coaching; resources for study and reflection, prayer and meditation, and arts-enriched worship; and connection with other congregations and congregational leaders through learning communities, webinars, and other gatherings. The projects also engage St. Olaf students as interns, project Fellows, and researchers. A number of the Nourishing Vocation resources are available at no cost on the project websites linked above, such as [Sing Vocare](#), a playlist of musical selections to accompany the [Vocare Spiritual Practice](#); a [Resource Corner](#) with devotional resources, sample liturgies, and teaching materials; and the [Near and Now](#) series of biblical reflections and guided meditation for vocational discernment. To date, more than 800 congregations and 5000 rostered and lay leaders have engaged with the programming or resources of one or both of these projects.

We encourage you to take advantage of the many opportunities and resources St. Olaf provides for education, artistic engagement, and spiritual enrichment. We look forward to welcoming you to campus, and to welcoming the prospective students you introduce to St. Olaf.

# LUTHER COLLEGE®

Greetings from Luther College and our hometown of Decorah, Iowa. In these times of challenge and change, I am honored and excited to have stepped into my role as the 12<sup>th</sup> president of Luther this February. I am proud to share with you some of the ways that our Luther community continues to live into our commitment to prepare students for lives of meaning and purpose in service to the neighbor.

Luther College is known for drawing excellence out of all its students, and we are proud to report that our alumni testimonies earned Luther the No. 1 spot for learning opportunities and community and social life among our peers in Iowa and in the Associated Colleges of the Midwest in a recent Wall Street Journal survey. Luther also scored well in areas of character development, career preparation, learning facilities and campus facilities.

Examples of significant learning opportunities from this past year abound. Faculty member Todd Pedlar earned his seventh consecutive NSF-funded physics research grant, enabling students to contribute to an international research collaboration on elementary particle physics. Our nursing program approaches its 50th year of collaboration with the Mayo Clinic. Education majors continue to fulfill their student teaching placements in locations as varied as our nationally-ranked local Decorah Community Schools; metropolitan systems like Des Moines, Chicago, or Minneapolis area schools; or recently expanding internationally in Norway. Study away entered the second year of offering J-term courses specifically for first-year students. It is all part of a larger initiative to ensure that all Luther students have access to participation in documented high impact practices, such as internships, study away opportunities, and capstone projects. As a result, 99% of our 2024 graduates reported participating in two or more of these high impact practices.

In the past year, Luther has also continued to be recognized for our commitment to sustainability. For the fifth year in a row, Luther has been named a “hidden gem” institution in Iowa and the larger Plains region. We are also proud to have been ranked among the Princeton Review’s Top 50 Green Colleges in the nation, demonstrating our deep dedication to sustainability. Luther ranked seventh in America in 2024 among baccalaureate institutions for sustainable campus practices. This past year, we earned a Bicycle Friendly University silver award by the League of American Bicyclists. Last summer, students conducted significant summer research projects in prairie ecosystem restoration and conservation, using as their laboratory our 800 camps acres of natural lands.

We recognize the cost of higher education is a concern. We continue to increase avenues and opportunities for need-based, scholarship, and merit assistance, and these efforts have resulted in an overall reduction in the average net cost of attendance at Luther for the past three years. We have expanded our Luther College Impact Award, which offers four years of free tuition for qualified students in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. We have also joined with 18 other four-year institutions to form the Iowa Private Transfer Collaborative, a grant-funded initiative to



improve transfer pathways for students. We have been selected as one of 80 new members of the FirstGenForward Network to support first-generation students.

Our students continue to demonstrate passion for and excellence in the arts. The theme of this year's annual Christmas at Luther performance was "Seeking Refuge for a Weary World," and involved more than 400 student performers, and marked another year of exciting growth in on-campus, regional television, and livestream audiences. During the 2024-2025 academic year, three of our choirs were chosen to perform at regional and national professional conferences: Cathedral Choir at the November 2024 Minnesota American Choral Directors Association conference, Norskkor at the February 2025 Minnesota Music Educators Association midwinter conference, and Nordic Choir at the national American Choral Directors Association conference in Dallas, Texas. The Nordic Choir and Jazz Orchestra toured internationally in summer 2024 summer—to Norway and Brazil, respectively—and in summer 2025 summer our Concert Band revives a longstanding tradition of touring in Japan.

While our athletic teams continue to win championships ranging from men's soccer, women's tennis, and both men's and women's swimming and diving in the past year, our greatest pride is reserved for our impressive number of 42 all-time NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship recipients, and the 73 Norse to earn Academic All-American, one of the most recent being softball catcher Abby Spore who was also Luther's 2024 NCAA Woman of the Year nominee. Currently at 22 varsity teams, Luther is set to add women's wrestling in the fall of 2025. The ongoing renovation of the 200,000-plus square foot Gerdin Fieldhouse for Athletics and Wellness will create new opportunities for all students and the greater Decorah community.

It has been a year of celebration, growth, and transition. We want to recognize our retiring President Jenifer K. Ward, who during this year stepped into the role of president emerita and senior advisor for strategic initiatives. We are grateful for her service, wisdom, and leadership, and we wish her the best in her retirement after the close of this academic year.

We do not take for granted the wide network of support that makes all of our work possible. Thank you to all of our local and regional partners, our alumni, and our supporting congregations and Synods. In the rapidly changing landscapes both of the church and of higher education, we continue to lean into the gifts of our Lutheran identity to offer us vision and encouragement in a complicated world.

Soli Deo Gloria!

President Brad Chamberlain

# 10 Things to Know about Augsburg Fortress PUBLISHERS

1. Announcing **For the Sake of the World: ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching**, a new book series by Augsburg Fortress. This collection invites individuals and small groups to consider how ELCA social statements and social messages can guide our faith and deepen our moral discernment regarding complex ethical issues of today. Current titles include **ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on The Church in Society** and **ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Abortion**. Look for new releases in 2025!
2. The latest **Worship Matters** book by Augsburg Fortress has arrived! **Preparing the Assembly's Worship** supports pastors, musicians, lay people, planning committees, and anyone else involved in the understanding, preparing, enacting, and reviewing of worship. This new title joins 26 other books in this series to draw you deeper into the hows and whys of worship in your community.
3. Fortress Press continues to publish relevant titles to support ministry professionals in their challenging and rewarding work. Recent releases include **Refilling the Reservoirs: Spiritual Care for the Exhausted Caregiver** by Bishop Brenda Bos, a much-needed exploration of the deep needs of caregivers. Also available is **Spiritual Care First Aid: An All-Hands Approach for Church and Community** by Cody J. Sanders, a resource to help everyone develop basic skills for hearing, helping, and healing.
4. Coming soon! Read and explore scripture with **Lutheran Study Bible, Second Edition** (NRSV Updated Edition). More than 70 Lutheran theologians and biblical scholars guide this exploration and provide new and updated study notes, articles, and charts. It also includes a section on Martin Luther and the Bible, a 52-week Bible reading plan, and 15 full-color maps. Hardcover and paperback editions will be available this summer from Augsburg Fortress.
5. A new Bible study is on its way from Augsburg Fortress called **Together by Grace: Bible Conversations**. Participants gather, dwell, and engage together through roundtable discussion that can be led and attended by anyone. This series invites all to the table together to dig deep and make connections. The first two studies cover the Gospel of Matthew and the book of Romans and will be available in Summer 2025.
6. Augsburg Fortress publishes music that inspires both musicians and congregations. Our **Let It Rip!** series continues our tradition of enhancing worship and uniting the assembly in song. The newly released third volume offers introductions and piano accompaniments to 94 hymns from several sources, including *All Creation Sings*. Brenda Portman has written a gorgeous setting of the hymn **"My Shepherd, You Supply My Need"** for SATB choir with cello and piano accompaniment. The instrumental collection **A Garland of Graces: Music for Organ and C Instrument** features a range of original solo pieces from a variety of composers. And don't forget our Summer Music Clinics!

7. Introducing a new book from **Mouth House**, a series from Augsburg Fortress that amplifies voices for change. **See Me, Believe Me: A Guide to Deepen Allyship with Congregational Leaders of Color** by Rev. Dr. Yolanda Denson-Byers offers an honest and unflinching look at the challenges faced by leaders of color in the predominantly white ELCA. Denson-Byers's insights and concrete suggestions for action illustrate how seeing and believing leaders of color are essential steps in the journey of allyship.
8. In our current social and political climate, the strength and fervor of Christian Nationalism is changing the way our citizens view themselves and their neighbors. Broadleaf Books offers a collection of titles on **Christian Nationalism** that can help you understand how we got here, and what to do next. Check out **How to End Christian Nationalism; Disciples of White Jesus: The Radicalization of American Boyhood; The Violent Take It by Force: The Christian Movement That Is Threatening Our Democracy;** and **Preparing for War: The Extremist History of White Christian Nationalism—and What Comes Next.**
9. Beaming Books has just released two new books for the Easter season. The vibrant illustrations in **Look-and-Find Easter Stories for Young Children** beckon little ones into the stories of Easter morning, the road to Emmaus, Jesus' ascension, and more. In **Mary and the Gardener**, kids will see and hear the story of Easter morning in a new way.
10. We continue to offer vibrant resources for worship and faith formation through our online subscription platforms. **SundaysandSeasons.com** remains a vital worship planning tool, with new content added quarterly. **Sparkhouse Digital** offers lesson content for Early Childhood, Children, and Youth, plus hundreds of extras.

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

<https://go.augsburgfortress.org/synod-assembly-10-things>

**\$25 off a purchase of \$100 or more from the Augsburg Fortress webstore.**

Use promo code **SUMMER2025** at checkout.

Exclusions apply. May not be applied to web or print subscriptions or core worship resources. Expires August 31, 2025.

2025 Synod Assembly  
Preliminary Report



# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

## HIGHLIGHTS Seafarers International House

### MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: We cannot wait till the world is sane

Dear friends of Seafarers International House (SIH):

Thanks to your support, we assisted 19,066 people, over 1,000 more than last year! We had many reasons to rejoice as we journeyed together with seafarers and immigrants legally seeking asylum, even though the year itself can be described as "unsteady".

In January, Houthis fired upon two US-flagged container ships, putting seafarers in danger. From November 2023 until their release on January 22, 2025, 17 Filipinos, 3 Ukrainians, 2 Bulgarians, 2 Mexicans, and 1 Romanian of the MV Galaxy Leader, a vehicle carrier, were held hostage. Since November 2023, over 90 vessels have been attacked, sinking at least two ships, and killing four mariners. Add the "normal" isolation of contracts lasting for 6-9 months and you understand that seafarers continue to make great sacrifices.

Thanks to your support, our Port Chaplains can bring a ministry of presence, essentials, and transportation to seafarers. Last February, we celebrated the official start of our Ukrainian-born Port Chaplain Pastor Vitalii Guz, who serves with our partners at the Baltimore International Seafarers Center (BISC). We also welcomed our ship visitor, Tim Marzik, who has big shoes to fill with the retirement of our beloved Ruth Setaro after 27 years of service.

We reignited our partnership with the Deutsche Seemannsmission e.V., which traces its roots to 1907, when the son of the director of the German Emigrant House (a predecessor of SIH), helped found the German Seamen's Mission in the Port of New York, a service we continue to this day.

Tragically, on March 26, the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore was struck by a container ship. The accident killed six construction workers, all of whom were immigrants. In the aftermath, 7 ships operated by 120 seafarers were temporarily trapped, and to this day many of the crew members on the accident-causing ship continue to be held in the US as litigation progresses. With Baltimore International Seafarers Center (BISC), and Chaplain Vitalii and – returning from retirement – Chaplain Rev. K. Robert "Bob" Schmitt, SIH was able to provide relief to those affected.

In April, it was party time! Thanks to our honorees Katie Higginbottom, Randi Ciszewski, and Tim Nolan and the support of their friends, the Setting the Course Reception was a success! 180 attendees ensured through their contributions that we would be able to serve 13,556 seafarers in the Ports of Albany, Baltimore, Duluth, New Haven, and New York & New Jersey, and with accommodations in NYC.

Then in August, we bid fair seas and following winds to two SIH icons: Arthur William Clark (1944), a long-time SIH board member and treasurer for over 20 years; and Port Chaplain Rev. William C. Fensterer (1930), who for over 50 years provided unparalleled service to mariners.

We exulted, when, in September, the Ghanaian family, who we supported at the Lighthouse, found their own home. All four miraculously survived the dangerous journey through the Darian Gap and almost drowned before legally applying for asylum and working hard to become self-sufficient. Throughout 2024, we assisted 33 asylees and provided them with a safe place for a

#### MISSION

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

*SIH offers hospitality, social assistance, and advocacy to a multi-national and multi-faith community in the Ports of Albany, Baltimore, Duluth, New Haven, and New York & New Jersey, and in New York City.*


combined 1,508 lodging nights.

After the November elections, we pray that legal immigration will remain possible and vow to stand with people who are persecuted or experience violence elsewhere.

At Christmastime we rejoiced! With the help of all those listed on page 5, we delivered a record setting 3,507 satchels to seafarers out at sea spreading love around the globe.

With this bittersweet year in mind, I would like to close this report with excerpts from Madeleine L'Engle's poem *First Coming*:

*He did not wait till the world was ready,  
till men and nations were at peace  
He came when the Heavens were  
unsteady  
and prisoners cried out for release. ...*

*... We cannot wait till the world is sane  
to raise our songs with joyful voice,  
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,  
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Peace,* 

*Marsha Luther Drage*  
Pastor and Executive Director

# 2024 Program Impact

**19,066** immigrants and seafarers directly benefited from SIH services (up from 18,004).

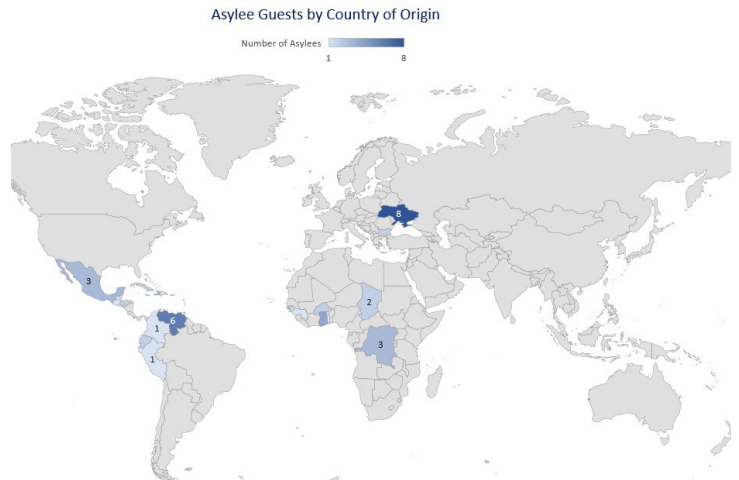
**2,225** lodging nights provided to 140 seafarers in Manhattan.

**13,556** seafarers were visited and counseled on 1,232 ships, receiving essentials they requested.


**1,830** seafarers were transported to a mall or medical facilities.

**3,507** seafarers, regardless of faith, received Christmas-at-Sea satchels filled with warm clothing and holiday greetings prepared by volunteers to recognize their sacrifices. Up from 3,216 last year!

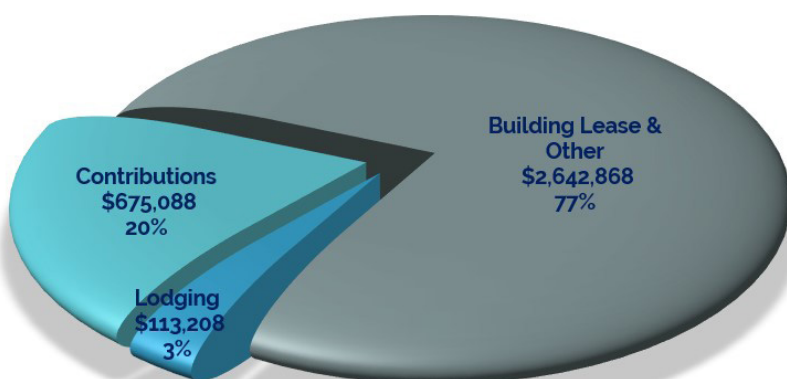
**33** asylum seekers received lodging for a total of 1,508 nights. They hailed from Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Colombia, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, El Salvador, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Ukraine, and Venezuela.



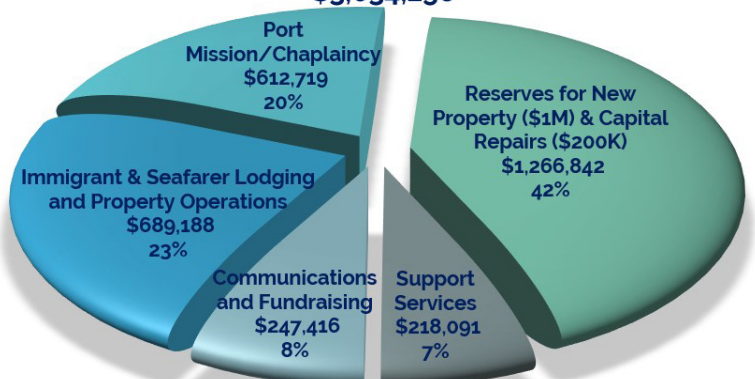
## 2024 FINANCIAL REPORT

In accordance with our 2024 - 2028 strategic plan, operating gains continue to help to build reserves for a new property (\$1M) with mission-based guest rooms and offices. These gains also allow for capital repairs on the guesthouse (\$200,000), which is leased to Breaking Ground, a NYC-based non-profit which provides transitional housing to the community. Lease revenue provides only a portion of necessary means to support our mission to seafarers and immigrants. Donations remain a vital pillar of income to support our services and future expansion. Program services and reserves accounted for 85% of expenses with only 15% spent on support services and fundraising. These figures reflect *unaudited revenue and expenses and are subject to change*. To request the audited 2024 financial statements please send an email to [henryk@sihnyc.org](mailto:henryk@sihnyc.org). 

Operating Revenue 2024 (pre-audit)  
\$3,431,164



Operating Expenses & Reserves for New Property 2024 (pre-audit)  
\$3,034,256



**South Dakota Synod, ELCA  
2026 Proposed Mission Plan  
02/01/2026 - 01/31/2027**

	<b>Adopted 2025</b>	<b>Revised 2025</b>	<b>Proposed 2026</b>
<b>Revenue</b>			
<b>Mission Support</b>			
Undesignated Mission Support	1,807,603	1,694,857	1,741,590
SD Synod Mission Support	23,800	24,711	25,000
<b>Total Mission Support-Congregations</b>	1,831,403	1,719,568	1,766,590
<b>Program Ministry Income</b>			
Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center Income	45,000	45,000	45,000
<b>Total Program Ministry Income</b>			
<b>Other Income</b>			
DEM Support Staff Income	10,000	10,000	10,000
Interest Income	50,000	65,000	65,000
SDS Travel LLC Income	5,000	5,000	5,000
Misc Income	1,000	1,000	1,000
<b>Total Other Income</b>	66,000	81,000	81,000
<b>Total Revenue</b>	1,942,403	1,845,568	1,892,590
<b>Expenses</b>			
<b>Churchwide Ministries</b>	42%	41%	41%
Churchwide Support	759,193	694,891	714,052
<b>Region III</b>			
Region III Support	8,004	8,614	8,614
<b>South Dakota Ministries</b>			
<b>South Dakota Partnership Ministries</b>			
SD Ministries Support	9,996	10,132	10,250
Luther Seminary	71,974	50,383	51,761
Church Colleges (ELCA Pool)	6,227	5,847	6,006
Lutheran Social Services	71,974	67,579	69,427
Campus Ministry	126,916	119,166	122,425
Lutheran Outdoors	35,895	33,704	34,625
<b>South Dakota Supported Ministries</b>			
Heartland Ephphatha	6,227	5,847	6,006
Youth Ministry	7,200	2,400	2,400
Campus Ministry Capital	0	0	0
Good Samaritan Society	1	1	1
Chapel in the Hills	1	1	1
Woyatan Lutheran/Wambli Ska	19,000	19,000	19,000
Lutheran Planned Generosity	58,300	58,300	58,300
<b>Total Shared Ministries</b>	413,712	372,360	380,203



**South Dakota Synod, ELCA**  
**2026 Proposed Mission Plan**  
**02/01/2026 - 01/31/2027**

	<b>Adopted 2025</b>	<b>Revised 2025</b>	<b>Proposed 2026</b>
<b>Executive Leadership</b>			
Bishop	108,101	108,100	110,612
Assoc/Director of Ev Mission	12,974	13,799	14,075
Assoc-Mobility/Candidacy	89,953	89,953	91,952
Executive Staff Benefits	73,818	73,736	75,211
Exec Travel/Continuing Ed	40,800	52,800	52,800
<b>Program Ministries</b>			
Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center-Director	92,967	96,857	98,488
Youth Gathering Synod Coordinator	0	0	0
Companion Synod Coordinator	19,902	21,139	21,542
<b>Support Staff and Office</b>			
Support Staff Salaries/Benefit	185,791	165,824	164,091
Synod Office Expenses	78,000	102,850	102,850
Augustana University Occupancy Fee	32,300	32,300	32,300
<b>Synod Committees</b>			
Synod Council	5,000	5,000	5,000
Support to Ministries Committee	3,100	3,100	3,100
Candidacy Committee	9,000	9,000	9,000
Multi-Cultural Ministry Committee	1,000	1,000	1,000
Companion Synods Ministry Committee	200	200	200
Evangelical Outreach Committee	1,500	1,500	1,500
<b>Mission &amp; Outreach</b>			
Mission Congregation Start-up	4,000	4,000	4,000
Mission Strategy Table	2,000	2,000	2,000
<b>Contingency</b>	1,088	0	0
<b>Total South Dakota Ministries</b>	761,494	783,158	789,721
<b>Total Expenses</b>	1,942,403	1,859,023	1,892,590
<b>Net Total</b>	0	-13,455	0

# CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS



South Dakota Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**August 2024**

- d. of social study issues;
  - d. providing ecumenical guidance and encouragement.
  - †S6.04. Except as otherwise provided in this constitution and bylaws, the Synod Council shall establish processes that will ensure that at least 60 percent of the members of the synod assemblies, councils, committees, boards, and other organizational units shall be laypersons; and that, as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent of the lay members of assemblies, councils, committees, boards, or other organizational units shall be women and, as nearly as possible, at least 45 percent shall be men; and that, where possible, the representation of rostered ministers shall include both men and women. This synod shall establish processes that will enable it to reach a minimum goal that 10 percent of its assemblies, councils, committees, boards, or other organizational units be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English.
  - †S6.04.01. It is the goal of this synod that at least 10 percent of the voting members of the Synod Assembly, Synod Council, committees, and organizational units of this synod be youth and young adults. The Synod Council shall establish a plan for implementing this goal. For purposes of the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of this synod, the term “youth” means a voting member of a congregation who has not reached the age of 18 at the time of election or appointment for service. The term “young adult” means a voting member of a congregation between the ages of 18 and 30 at the time of election or appointment for service.
  - S6.04.03. The Synod Council shall allocate numbers and categories of Churchwide Assembly members and alternates among the conferences of this synod. Each conference shall nominate members and alternates of the Churchwide Assembly according to the Synod Council allocation and according to that conference's nomination procedures. Members and alternates elected shall be ratified by the Bishop.
  - †S6.05. Each assembly, council, committee, board, commission, task force, or other body of this synod or any synod units shall be conclusively presumed to have been properly constituted, and neither the method of selection nor the composition of any such assembly, council, committee, board, commission, task force, or other body may be challenged in a court of law by any person or be used as the basis of a challenge in a court of law to the validity or effect of any action taken or authorized by any such assembly, council, committee, board, commission, task force, or other body.
  - †S6.06. References herein to the nature of the relationship between the three expressions of this church – congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization – as being interdependent or as being in a partnership relationship describe the mutual responsibility of these expressions in God’s mission and the fulfillment of the purposes of this church as described in this chapter, and do not imply or describe the creation of partnerships, co-ventures, agencies, or other legal relationships recognized in civil law.
- Chapter 7. SYNOD ASSEMBLY**
- †S7.01. This synod shall have a Synod Assembly, which shall be its highest legislative authority. The powers of the Synod Assembly are limited only by the provisions in the Articles of Incorporation, this constitution and bylaws, the assembly’s own resolutions, and the constitutions and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
  - †S7.11. A regular meeting of the Synod Assembly shall be held at least triennially.
  - S7.11.01. The time and place of the South Dakota Synod Assembly shall be determined by the Synod Council. The time and place the next regular assembly normally shall be announced 12 months prior to the assembly.
  - S7.12. Special meetings of the Synod Assembly may be called by the bishop with the consent of the Synod Council, and shall be called by the bishop at the request of one-fifth of the voting members of the Synod Assembly.
    - a. The notice of each special meeting shall define the purpose for which it is to be held. The scope of actions to be taken at such a special meeting shall be limited to the subject matter(s) described in the notice.
    - b. If the special meeting of the Synod Assembly is required for the purpose of electing a successor bishop because of death, resignation, or inability to serve, the special meeting shall be called by the Synod Council after consultation with the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
  - S7.13. Notice of the time and place of all meetings of the Synod Assembly shall be given by the secretary of this synod.

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

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

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

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

*S7.21.A07 Any congregation of this synod which elects as a voting member a youth or young adult as defined in the Principals of Organization shall be granted one additional voting member. The term “youth” means a voting member of a congregation who has not reached the age of 18 at the time of election or appointment for service. The term “young adult” means a voting member of a congregation between the ages of 18 and 30 at the time of election or appointment for service. Any congregation of this synod which elects a person of color and/or a person whose primary language is other than English as a voting member shall also be granted one additional voting member. The number of lay voting members per congregation is determined by the following scale:*

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

*\*Figures used are the baptized membership totals most recently reported by congregations through the annual Parochial Reports.*

*\*\*Goal of a balance of female/male voting members.*

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

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

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

- congregation of this synod.*
- S7.21.E22 *Each Synod Authorized Worshiping Community under the purview of the South Dakota Synod shall be afforded voting members, in addition to the Synod Authorized Minister, in accordance with S7.21. and S7.21.A07*
- S7.21.01.** Voting members shall begin serving with the opening of a regular Synod Assembly and shall continue serving until voting members are seated at the next regular Synod Assembly.
- †**S7.21.02.** If a special Synod Assembly is called and voting members at the previous assembly are unable to serve as voting members, where permitted by state law, the congregation through the Congregation Council may elect new members who shall continue to serve until the next regular Synod Assembly.
- S7.22.** This synod may establish processes that permit retired rostered ministers, or those granted disability status, or on leave from call, on the roster of the synod to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with †7.21.c. If the synod does not establish processes to permit the rostered ministers specified above to serve as voting members, they shall have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly.
- †**S7.23.** The presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and such other official representatives of the churchwide organization as may be designated by the presiding bishop, shall have voice but not vote in the meetings of the Synod Assembly. Like privileges shall be accorded to those additional persons whom the Synod Assembly or the Synod Council shall from time to time designate.
- S7.24.** Ministers under call on the rosters of this synod shall remain as members of the Synod Assembly so long as they remain under call and so long as their names appear on the rosters of this synod. Lay members of the Synod Assembly representing congregations shall continue as such until replaced by the election of new members or until they have been disqualified by termination of membership. Normally, congregations will hold elections prior to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
- †**S7.25.** Except as otherwise provided in this constitution or in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, each voting member of the Synod Assembly shall be a voting member of a congregation of this synod.
- S7.26.** This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit representatives of authorized worshiping communities of this synod, which have been authorized under ELCA bylaw 10.01.04., to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with †S7.21.
- S7.27.** This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council to grant a minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America the privilege of both voice and vote in the Synod Assembly during the period of that minister's service in a congregation of this church.
- S7.28.** Duly elected voting members of the Synod Council who are not otherwise voting members of the Synod Assembly under †S7.21. shall be granted the privilege of both voice and vote as members of the Synod Assembly.
- †**S7.31.** Proxy and absentee voting shall not be permitted in the transaction of any business of the Synod Assembly.
- S7.32.** Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of the Synod Assembly, unless otherwise ordered by the assembly.
- S7.33.** *"Ex-officio"* as used herein means membership with full rights of voice and vote unless otherwise expressly limited.
- S7.40.** **Committees of the Synod Assembly**
- S7.40.10. **Credentials Committee**
- S7.40.11. Prior to the Synod Assembly, the Synod Bishop shall appoint three persons to act as a Credentials Committee. This committee shall report when requested on the number of voting members, visitors, advisors, and others in attendance.
- S7.40.20. **Election Committee**
- S7.40.21. Prior to the Synod Assembly, the Synod Bishop shall appoint three ministers of Word and Sacrament and three laypersons to an Election Committee to supervise elections and announce the results to the Synod Assembly.
- S7.40.30. **Resolutions Committee**
- S7.40.31. Each conference shall elect one representative to a Resolutions Committee. The Synod Bishop shall appoint two representatives at large, and shall designate the convener of the committee. In the case of a vacancy, the Synod Bishop will appoint a replacement.

- S7.40.32. The committee shall elect its own leadership.
- S7.40.33. The committee shall receive all resolutions, prepare them, and make recommendations on them in accordance with the Synod Rules of Parliamentary Procedure for transmission to the Synod Assembly.
- S7.40.34. The committee shall draft such resolutions as it is instructed to draft by the Synod Assembly, and may draft others it deems necessary.
- S7.50. Conference Caucus**
- S7.50.10. The members of the Synod Assembly from each conference shall constitute the conference caucus.
- S7.50.11. The caucus may draft resolutions for submission to the Resolutions Committee.
- S7.50.12. The caucus may discuss resolutions, and transact such other business as the voting members determine.
- S7.50.13. The caucus shall meet at the call of the Bishop, the President of the Conference or the request of 15 percent of the voting members of the conference.
- S7.50.14. The officers of the conference shall serve as the leadership of the caucus.

## **Chapter 8.**

### **OFFICERS**

- †**S8.01.** The officers of this synod shall be a bishop, a vice president, a secretary, and a treasurer.
- S8.10. Bishop**
- †**S8.11.** The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly. The bishop shall be a minister of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- †**S8.12.** As this synod's pastor, the bishop shall:
- a. Preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church.
  - b. Have primary responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament in this synod and its congregations, providing pastoral care and leadership for this synod, its congregations, its ministers of Word and Sacrament, and its ministers of Word and Service.
  - c. Exercise solely this church's power to ordain (or provide for the ordination by another synod bishop of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament (and as provided in the bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).
  - d. Ordain (or provide for the ordination of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for service as ministers of Word and Service of this church.
  - e. Attest letters of call for persons called to serve congregations in the synod, letters of call for persons called by the Synod Council, and letters of call for persons on the rosters of this synod called by the Church Council.
  - f. Install (or provide for the installation of) rostered ministers whose calls the bishop has attested.
  - g. Exercise leadership in the mission of this church and in so doing:
    - 1) Interpret and advocate the mission and theology of the whole church;
    - 2) Lead in fostering support for and commitment to the mission of this church within this synod;
    - 3) Coordinate the use of the resources available to this synod as it seeks to promote the health of this church's life and witness in the areas served by this synod;
    - 4) Submit a report to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly concerning the synod's life and work; and
    - 5) Advise and counsel this synod's related institutions and organizations.
  - h. Practice leadership in strengthening the unity of the Church and in so doing:
    - 1) Exercise oversight of the preaching, teaching, and administration of the sacraments within this synod in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church;
    - 2) Be responsible for administering the constitutionally established processes for the resolution of controversies and for the discipline of rostered ministers, and congregations of this synod;
    - 3) Be the chief ecumenical officer of this synod;
    - 4) Be a member of the Conference of Bishops and consult regularly with other synod bishops;
    - 5) Foster awareness of other churches throughout the Lutheran world communion and,



# PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES SUMMARY

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

