

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America South Dakota Synod Assembly

Our Savior's Lutheran Church

Sioux Falls, SD

May 30-31, 2025

The thirty-seventh annual Assembly of the South Dakota Synod, ELCA, was held at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD on May 30-31, 2025, with the theme Called Acts 2:42-47. Archived video of all reports are available on the synod's YouTube Channel.

On Friday, May 30, 2024 at 9:15 am Central Daylight Time (CDT), the opening service was held in the Celebrate Center of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, SD. Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton delivered the sermon. Installation of Rev. Joel Pakan and Rev. Renae Boehmer, and Jim Jacobsen, LOSD Executive Director was also celebrated.

First Plenary Session

Friday, May 30, 2025

10:30-12:00

Welcome and Order for opening of the Synod Assembly

Bishop Hagmaier called the assembly to order at the close of worship.

Greetings and Introductions

Bishop Hagmaier made the following introductions: Churchwide Representative: ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton; Musician, Rev. Jonathan Rundman; Assembly Chaplain, Deacon Jodi Hanson; Dennis Thompson, Vice President; Jill Beers, Secretary Terry Johnson, Treasurer; and Nick Moser, Parliamentarian

Voting Practice

The assembly practiced with the voting platform, VPOLL, that will be in use throughout the assembly.

Credentials Report

The report of the Credentials Committee. As of 10:40 am, there were 121 rostered ministers, 176 lay female voting members, 110 lay male voting members, 3 lay decline to state voting member, and 1 Lay Gender Not Listed, for a total of 411 voting members. Of that number, 14 are youth and 7 are BIPOC. Total Advisory, Visitors & Displayers are 44. Total Attendance is 455.

Adoption of the Rules & Agenda

Bishop Hagmaier seeks a motion to adopt the standing rules of the South Dakota Synod Assembly.

MSC to adopt the standing rules of the South Dakota Synod Assembly.

SA.2025.05.01

Bishop Hagmaier asked for any additions or changes to the proposed agenda as outlined in the Assembly Guidebook.

MSC to adopt the agenda as outlined or amended in the Assembly Guidebook.

SA.2025.05.02

It was pointed out that many proposed changes to our Synod bylaws and continuing resolutions will be adopted en bloc in Resolution 1. If a voting member wishes to individually discuss or vote on one of the proposed amendments in Resolution 1, please fill out the form available at the assembly office. The deadline for removal is 1 PM on Friday (today).

Also, the nominating committee has put forth the name of Dennis Thompson, our current Synod Vice President, to serve another term in this role. If you would like to nominate another person for the position of Synod Vice President, you can do so by 1:00 PM at the temporary Synod office.

Greetings from Our Savior's

Bishop Hagmaier introduced Rev. Tim Lemme of Our Savior's Lutheran Church to give a brief greeting. Rev. Lemme welcomed the assembly to the church and gave a general lay of the church. Bishop Hagmaier thanked Our Savior's for being a great host.

Ecumenical Greeting

Bishop Hagmaier introduced Rev. Rebecca Trefz from the Dakotas Conference of the United Methodist Church and thanked her for being our ecumenical partner in ministry.

Bishop Election: Ballot 1 - Nominating Ballot

Bishop Hagmaier turned the chair over to Bishop Eaton to begin the election process. Bishop Eaton gave instructions for voting. Carla Borchardt gave specific voting instructions. Deacon Jodi led us in a prayer before the first vote. The assembly voted and Bishop Eaton turned the chair back to Bishop Hagmaier.

State of the ELCA Report with Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton

Bishop Eaton gave an update on the state of the ELCA.

Announcements

Several conferences need to caucus and they should do so before eating lunch. Resolutions and nominations deadline is 1:00 pm. The deadline to remove a resolution from en bloc is considered. 1:00 is also the deadline for Synod Vice President nominations. Seating for meals is available in both the upstairs and downstairs fellowship hall.

Table prayer was led by Deacon Jodi Hanson.
Lunch break and conference Caucuses.

PLENARY SESSION TWO

Friday, May 30, 2025
1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

Rev. Jonathan Rundman played the assembly back in from lunch. Bishop Hagmaier welcomed us back from lunch. She reminded the assembly that there would be voting later in the afternoon and to please have their devices handy.

Credentials Report

There are 419 voting members checked in as of 1:00 PM on May 30, 2025.

Report of the first ballot of the Bishop Election

Bishop Eaton introduced Carla Borchardt who gave the results of the bishop election ballot 1.

Number of ballots cast	377
Number of illegal ballots cast	1
Number of legal ballots cast	376
Number of ballots required for election (75%)	282

The breakdown of votes is as follows:

1 vote: Heidi Binstock, Rebecca Breddin, Jessica Daum, Kevin Jensen, Greg Johnson, Janet Miller, Carla Nelson, Aimee Pakan, Steve Paulson, Randall Questad, Jared Rakness, Timothy Selbo, Jon Splichal Larson, Renee Splichal Larson, Matthew Spoden, Dwight Stensgaard, Bill Tesch, Rhonda Wellsandt-Zell, Craig Wexler, Jeff Willock, Herb Wounded Head and David Zellmer

2 votes: Brian Wasmoen

3 votes: Jaime Odde, Eric Paulson, Thomas Lahoyan, Jonathan Vehar, Gary Woodruff

7 votes: Allen Blankenfeld

18 votes: Jeff Backer

312 votes: Constanze Hagmaier

Bishop Eaton declared that based on the election results, Bishop Constanze Hagmaier is reelected bishop of the South Dakota Synod.

Bishop Hagmaier thanked the assembly for the vote of confidence and recognized the synod staff for the work that they do on a daily basis.

Bishop Eaton returned the chair to Bishop Hagmaier.

Video Greetings from Lutheran Social Services

The assembly viewed a video from Lutheran Social Services.

Lutheran Planned Generosity

Bishop Hagmaier introduced Kathy McHenry from Lutheran Planned Generosity. Kathy gave an update on Lutheran Planned Generosity. She shared that someone shared with her that the SD Synod is different. The WanLiz Endowment for Indigenous Ministry was introduced and anyone at the assembly who has worked with indigenous ministry were recognized.

Buntrock Scholarship Update/Augustana University Greetings

A video was shared on the Buntrock Scholarship and Pastor Ann Rosendale, Campus pastor at Augustana University, brought greetings and updates on the ministry at Augustana University.

Treasurer's Report

Synod Treasurer Terry Johnson gave an overview of the annual treasurer's report. He shared that the assembly will have a chance to vote on the 2026 Mission Plan. He reported that the Endowment funds are meeting their performance benchmarks. The synod is maintaining a strong balance sheet with no debt. With two Lilly grants we've added rural ministry director and liaisons, digital community and learning and holy playground.

Mission Plan Ratios

Out of every dollar spent by the Synod:

- 65 cents went to national, state, and local ministries

- 27 cents went to staff wages and benefits

- 7 cents went to pay insurance, utilities, supplies and office expenses

- 1 cent went to pay for council/committee meetings

You will be asked to approve the 2026 plan on Saturday.

Voting Practice

Bishop Hagmaier led the assembly in a practice vote to get everyone comfortable using VPOLL. She walked the group through the steps for using the program.

Portico

A video was shared from Portico. The video gave an overview of what Portico is. Bishop Hagmaier introduced Tim Schroeder, the Region 3 representative for Portico.

Resolution #1

Bishop Hagmaier introduced Pastor David Lund from the Resolutions Committee.

Resolution #1 - Adopt Amendments to the Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the South Dakota Synod.

Be it resolved, except for those bylaws and continuing resolutions that may be requested for separation consideration, to amend en bloc the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the South Dakota Synod. There were no requests to remove any of the resolutions for separate consideration. The recommendation from the Resolutions committee is a due pass. With no one moving to the microphones for discussion, we are ready to vote. The question was asked what we are voting on in this resolution. Rev. Jonathan Vehar explained the resolutions that are being voted on.

Motion: to adopt Resolution #1 to adopt amendments to the Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of the Synod.

Due to slow responses to the voting app, a voice vote was taken. The motion passed with all members voting Aye.

Motion to pass the resolutions en bloc. (voice vote passed)
SA.2025.05.03

Resolution #5

Resolved, that the South Dakota Synod, ELCA elect the following conference nominees to the South Dakota Synod Council for a term of four years:

Medary Conference (Rostered)	Reverend Kari Breddin, Madison
Crossroads Conference (Lay Female)	Kristen Peterson, Sioux Falls
Prairie Rivers Conference (Lay Female)	Crystal Brakke, Presho
Northern Plains Conference (Lay Female)	Ann Fortin, Mansfield

The recommendation from the Resolutions Committee is due pass.

Motion to elect the conference nominees to the South Dakota Synod Council for a term of four years. (voice vote passed)
SA.2025.05.04

Music Break

Rev. Jonathan Rundman shared a new song from his new album.

Nominating Ballot - Committees to be filled

Motion: to elect the following people to these committees.

Consultation Committee:

1 Lay Vacancy Janel Ellingson, Prairie Coteau

Discipline Committee:

2 Rostered Ministers Rev. Randy Fett, Bear Butte
Rev. Shannon Witt, Bear Butte

Multicultural Committee

2 Lay Vacancy Kent Alberty
Michael Gayton

Support to Ministries

1 Lay Vacancy Cheryl Chapman

Augustana Association

1 Lay or Rostered Minister Vacancy Rev. Josh and Marti Knutson

Chapel in the Hills

Barry Elder, Trinity, Rapid City (2nd term)
Barb Nelson, South Canyon, Rapid City (1st term)

Synod Council Youth

Wyatt Lesmeister

MSC to elect these people to the various committees.

SA.2025.05.05

Election of Synod Vice-President

As there was no one else nominated, Bishop Hagmaier entertained a motion for a unanimous ballot for Dennis Thompson to be re-elected Synod Vice-President

MSC to cast a unanimous ballot for Dennis Thompson to be re-elected Synod Vice-President.

SA.2025.05.06

Video Greeting from Mission Investment Fund

Bishop Hagmaier introduced the video from the Mission Investment Fund.

Companion Synods

Bishop Hagmaier introduced Anghy Aragon from the church in Nicaragua. Anghy has spent the last year in the SD Synod. She gave an update on the church in Nicaragua. She also brought greetings from Bishop Katia Cortez. A video was also shared from Bishop Katia.

A video from our companion synod in Cameroon was also shared. It gave an overview of how the church is at work in Cameroon.

Panel 1: Lilly Grant Update

Members of the panel include

Rev. Kari Webb, Director for Digital Community and Learning, Program Director,
Journeying Together in Christ
Rev. Joel Pakan, Director for Rural Ministry
Rev. Renae Boehmer, Director for the Holy Playground Initiative

The panel gave an overview of what a Lilly Grant is. It is set up to fund Christian initiatives throughout the United States.

Holy Cow Award

Pastor Erika Lehmann from the Synod Hunger Team presented the Holy Cow Award. Two extraordinary congregations were recognized this year.

Union Creek Lutheran Church from Akron Iowa received the first cow. The youth of the congregation raised up hunger relief on a monthly basis.

St. Dysmas Congregation at the South Dakota Penitentiary. A letter from Rev. Jeff Backer was read sharing the background of the gift from the men of the congregation.

Break from 3:00-3:30 PM hosted by Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota.

Lutheran Outdoors Annual Meeting

The assembly recessed for the Lutheran Outdoors in South Dakota Annual Meeting.

PLENARY SESSION THREE

Friday, May 30, 2025
4:00-5:30 PM

Rev. Jonathan Rundman played music to bring the assembly back from the break.

Bishop Hagmaier welcomed the members of the assembly back from the afternoon break.

Credentials Report

There are 419 voting members checked in as of 4:00 PM.

Voting Practice

Voting practice was again tried in preparation for the upcoming votes.

Vote on Resolution #3

Bishop Hagmaier introduced Pastor David Lund from the resolutions committee.

Resolution #3 - Resolution on Protecting Medicaid Coverage for our Lowest-Income Neighbors

Therefore be it resolved, the SD Synod here assembled support the preservation of Medicaid expansion and oppose the proposal that allows the state to take away this critical healthcare from our low-income neighbors if the federal/state match for Medicaid expansion drops below 90%, and urge the South Dakota voters to stand with us; and Be It Further Resolved, that rostered leaders and members of the SD Synod be encouraged to share this resolution in their communities and advocate publicly to preserve the blessing of Medicaid for the lowest-income South Dakotans.

Discussion

Motion: to change HJR5001 to read Amendment I in the resolution.

Question was called with a 2nd. Motion to close the discussion.

MSC to close the discussion.

SA.2025.05.06

Motion: to amend the resolution changing HJR5001 to read Amendment I in the resolution.

MSC to amend the resolution changing HJR5001 to read Amendment I in the resolution.

SA.2025.05.07

Discussion on the amended resolution was held.

Motion to pass the amended Resolution #3

SA.2025.05.08

Yes - 319

No - 32

Resolution #2

Rev. Jonathan Vehar discussed what a Memorial is and how it relates to the Churchwide Assembly

Resolution #2- Request that Augsburg Fortress Publishers produce study Bibles and other materials at the appropriate reading level for students and English language learners.

Therefore Be It Resolved that the congregations of the South Dakota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America engage in a letter-writing campaign to Augsburg Fortress Publishers, requesting that they take the necessary steps to write and publish study Bibles, and

other materials, using a translation of the Bible that is at the reading level of upper elementary and middle school students, English language learners, and adults who struggle to read.

And Therefore Be It Further Resolved that the South Dakota Synod memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly to encourage the publishing house of the ELCA to use age and reading level appropriate material when developing material for use by congregations.

Recommendation is Do Pass

Discussion was held

Call the question with a 2nd.

Motion: to pass Resolution #2

The motion did not pass

Yes - 100

No - 248

Video Greeting from Wartburg Seminary

Kristin Largen, president of Wartburg Seminary greeted the assembly. She gave an overview of the CaSTLE Project, the competency based TEEN Program and the commitment to the flourishing of their students as they prepare to be rostered and lay leaders of congregations.

Video Greetings from Luther Seminary

Students gave examples of life at Luther Seminary. President Rev. Dr. Robin Steinke gave an idea of the mission of Luther Seminary.

Synod Council Report

Dennis Thompson, Synod Vice President reminded the assembly that his written report is in the guide. He thanked the assembly for giving him the opportunity to serve as Vice President.

Compensation and Guidelines Task Force

Annelies Seffrood discussed the 2026 proposed compensation and guidelines. She recognized the members of the Task Force. Goals for the Task Force are 2026 Compensation tables; Additional Considerations; and Part-time Ministry. 2025 changes include SAM Guidelines and info; Prior Experience Credit; and Official Holiday List. Additional Considerations were separating large congregations and senior ministers with staff. Suggestions include Over 600 baptized members, add \$1,500 for All ministers serving the congregation and Senior Pastors with over 900 baptized members AND supervision, add \$1,500 for a total of \$3,000 total. Continuing Education to increase from \$600 to \$1,000 and accumulate up to 6 weeks & Sundays and \$3,000 over 3-year period. There are no changes to our use of Portico. Part-time Ministry was a large part of the discussion of the committee. 2026 Salary recommendations are a 5% increase.

2026 Compensation and Guidelines for Rostered Ministers and Lay Staff

Resolved, that the “2026 Compensation and Guidelines for Rostered Ministers and Lay Staff,” prepared by a task force for the Committee for Support to Ministries and recommended by the committee for adoption, be adopted as the policy of the South Dakota Synod by the 2025 South Dakota Synod Assembly
Recommendation is Do Pass

Motion: to pass Resolution #4 2026 Compensation and Guidelines for Rostered Ministers and Lay Staff

Motion passed (voice vote)
SA.2025.05.09

Announcements**Table Prayer**

Deacon Jodi Hanson gave the table prayer.

Assembly in recess until Saturday morning
Saturday, May 31, 2025

Morning Worship

Jill Munger, Rural Ministry Ambassador welcomed us to worship. Deacon Jodi Hanson gave the sermon. The Synod Council was installed. Bishop Eaton reaffirmed the call of Bishop Constanze Hagmaier as Bishop of the South Dakota Synod. The offering will help support a new mission start in Box Elder.

PLENARY SESSION FOUR

Saturday, May 31, 2025
9:30-10:30 AM

Bishops Report on the State of the Synod

Bishop Constanze discussed how a threshing bee has helped with her vision for the SD Synod. She discussed the place Woyatan plays in our ministry. The receiving of two Lilly Grants has helped our church be connected. We have connected with Sanford and now we are going under the Earth. We have partnered with Wartburg Seminary to build new leaders. The Holy Playground will bring a scrap pile of ingenuities. We are collaborating with the community of Box Elder. We will gather as a churchwide assembly soon. She thanked the staff and rostered leaders that she has the opportunity to work alongside.

Conversation Between Rev. Jonathan Vehar and Rev. Renee Splichal Larson

They began by describing each other. They followed by each telling about the role they play in the SD Synod. They each shared their joys that are forward facing and also the steep mountain climbs. They finished by sharing their hopes for the future.

Caring Conversations lead by Rev. Jonathan Vehar

The following questions were discussed between the members of the assembly:

In your congregational life...

What keeps you up at night?

What gives you joy?

Break sponsored by the Companion Synod Committee

PLENARY SESSION FIVE

Saturday, May 31, 2025

11:00-12:30 PM

Bishop Hagmaier brought the assembly back together. She discussed Crimping for Christ. Rev. Jonathan Rundman taught us a song from Finland to start this session.

Greetings from Lutheran Campus Ministry (LuMin)

Rev. Cassandra Lamb showed the potential impact of campus ministry to the assembly. She gave an overview of LuMin. She introduced her colleagues at the South Dakota schools. Thanks were given to the congregations for the support they give to LuMin.

South Dakota Coaching Network video

Jamie Dupree is the SD Coaching Network leader. There is a cadre of coaches in South Dakota. She wants us to know that coaching is available in our state. We also saw a video from the national coaching network.

Presentation by Dr. Dawn Rundman

Dr. Rundman presented a workshop on children's ministry. She is a publisher at Augsburg Fortress. She showed us how Augsburg Fortress functions as our denominational publisher. She shared the variety of materials and the widespread reach that they have. The second part of her presentation focused on what Jesus said to his disciples in regards to children. She stated that "Worship is a rich developmental context for young brains". Some of the challenges congregations are facing include weekend activities for families; kids feelings disconnected from worship; unwelcoming actions from fellow worshipers; and the call is coming from inside the house. Some of the successes include playgrounds; worship bags with activities that connect to worship; teaching about worship at other times; and children in worship leadership roles.

Break for lunch.

PLENARY SESSION SIX

Saturday, May 31, 2025
1:00-2:30 PM

Bishop Hagmaier brought the assembly back together.
Rev. Jonathan Rundman brought us together with a song.

ELCA Family Systems Academy, SD Chapter

Pastor Shadoe Hanson and Pastor Paul Johnston informed us what this academy offers our Synod.

Credentials Report

There are 429 voting members checked in as of 1:00 PM

Adoption of the 2026 Mission Plan

Terry Johnson reminded the assembly of the proposed 2026 Mission Plan

Motion: to accept the Mission Plan for 2026

MSC to accept the Mission Plan for 2026
SA.2025.05.10

Consideration of Resolutions #6 and #7

These resolutions come with no recommendations, so they need to be moved from the floor.

Resolution #6 was moved from the floor.

Resolution #6 - Formation of committees related to South Dakota Synod wide elections and/or governance

Therefore Be It Resolved that any committee appointed to deal with Synod wide election and/or governance consist of a minimum of seven members with at least one member from each conference,

Be It Further Resolved that if such a committee has between seven and fourteen members that no more than two members be from a single conference,

Be It Further Resolved that if such a committee has between fourteen and twenty-one members that no more than three members be from a single conference,

Be It Further Resolved that any such committee consisting of more than twenty-one members shall consist of members from all conferences in like proportion.

Discussion was held.

Motion: to close discussion

MSC to close discussion (voice vote)

SA.2025.05.11

Motion: to approve Resolution #6

MS to approve Resolution #6

The Resolution did not pass

Resolution #7 - Development, presentation and promotion of training and support opportunities for rostered and lay leaders of the South Dakota Synod.

With a lack of someone moving Resolution #7 from the floor, the motion was not considered.

Announcements

The 2026 Synod Assembly will be held May 29-30, 2026 at Our Savior's in Sioux Falls. We are aiming to have the 2027 Assembly held in Rapid City.

Thank you to Presiding Bishop Eaton for her thankful presence here among us. The gift is homemade by Rev. Jonathan Vehar. The gift is a pen that is made from corn cobs.

Applause was given to the planning team that put this Assembly together.

Thank you to Rev. Jonathan Rundman and Dawn for being here. They were each given a corn cob pen.

Thank you to the staff and members of Our Savior's for being such gracious hosts.

A special thanks to Bishop Emerita Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl for taking a chance and bringing the Hagmaiers to South Dakota.

Thank you to SD Synod for sharing God's Love.

Thank you also to our tech crew.

Closing of the Assembly

Bishop Hagmaier led the Closing Dialogue.

Bishop Hagmaier declared the Assembly closed.

Rev. Jonathan Rundman lead the assembly in the closing hymn, Built on a Rock.

Respectfully submitted

Jill Beers, Secretary