

South Dakota Synod, ELCA
Synod Council
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls
August 8-9, 2025

Present: Bishop Constanze Hagmaier, Dennis Thompson, Jill Beers, Terry Johnson, Kristie Anderson, Rev. Michael DeKraai, John Rasmussen, Marlee Braun, Rev. Karl Breddin (Sat.), Gary Kaufmann, Deacon Christie Meier, Thad Titze, Cristy Harkness, Jake Hoffner, Rev. Jeff Otterman, Anne Fortin, Chad Nilson, Rev. Justin Van Orman, Crystal Brakke, Jeff Clark, Rev. Becky Senner, Rev. Wilbur Holz, Craig Pfeifle, Wyatt Lesmeister, Emma Witt, Lois Borchardt, Rev. Jonathan Vehar

Call to Order

Dennis called the meeting to order and read the land acknowledgement.

Land Acknowledgment

South Dakota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America recognizes that the Oceti Sakowin (the Seven Council Fires of the Lakota, Dakota, Nakota), the Arikara, the Ponca and the Cheyenne, are the historic inhabitants of South Dakota; and South Dakota is the current home of the Cheyenne River Tribe, Crow Creek Tribe, Flandreau Santee Tribe, Lower Brule Tribe, Oglala Tribe, Rosebud Tribe, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, Standing Rock Tribe, and Yankton Tribe.

We recognize that we are called to be in good relationship with our neighbors, that the tribes are sovereign nations, that there is a history of broken treaties and broken trust, and that there is lots of work to be done. And we also recognize that as Christians, we have faith in new life, in hope for mending what is broken, and in our calling through the Holy Spirit to do this work.

Opening Devotion and Tour

Pastor Sarah Goldammer from Gloria Dei Lutheran gave the opening devotion and led the group on a tour of the church.

Roll Call and Introductions

Forward any corrections to Lois at lborchardt@sdsynod.org

Approve Agenda

The agenda was in Google Drive.

**MSC to approve the agenda in the order as the chair deems most.
SC.2025.08.01**

Approve Minutes

The minutes of the 2025 Synod Assembly were in Google Drive.

**MSC to approve the minutes of the 2025 Synod Assembly.
SC.2025.08.02**

The minutes of the May 31, 2025 synod council meeting were in Google Drive.

**MSC to approve the minutes of the May 31, 2025 Synod Council meeting.
SC.2025.08.03**

**Board Orientation, Development and Education
Synod Council Board Book**

General Orientation - Bishop Constanze and Dennis Thompson

Covenant - members reviewed and signed the covenant form.

Confidentiality - members reviewed and signed the confidentiality form.

Ethics Policy & Disclosure - members reviewed and signed the ethics policy and disclosure form.

2024 Form A – Bishop Constanze reviewed this form. The synod council discussed ways to get congregations to fill out this form.

Constitutions - Rev. Jonathan Vehar

Rev. Jonathan Vehar gave an overview of the ELCA Constitution, Synod Constitution and the Structure of the ELCA.

Council Responsibilities for the Roster - Bishop Constanze gave an overview and highlighted Roster Status and Roster Management Glossary in the synod board book in Google Drive.

Mission Partners

Lutheran Social Services

The council took a trip to the Lutheran Social Services Fishback Campus. The group learned about the Center for New Americans and the programs that are offered through this center. The group also toured the facility.

Lunch

South Dakota Voices for Peace Training

Jen Dreiske, Chief Operations Officer and Alicia Roy from LSS presented to us concerning South Dakota Voices for Peace.

Round Table Discussions

The council was grouped into four groups for the Round Table Discussions. Presenters were Dennis Thompson, Bishop Constanze, Terry Johnson and Rev. Jonathan Vehar.

Dennis Thompson

Dennis shared highlights of the executive committee meeting on Thursday evening. He also discussed his role in the synod.

Bishop Constanze

Bishop Constanze introduced us to Wyatt Lesmeister, our new youth member and Emma Witt, our new representative on the ELCA Church Council. She also discussed the Communication Audit and asked us to pay close attention to our shared cultures.

Terry Johnson

Terry gave us an overview of how to read a financial statement.

Rev. Jonathan Vehar

Jonathan gave his assistant report. It can be found in the Google Drive. He also discussed the term Fresh Expressions and what we will see about that in the future.

Staff Reports

Staff reports were in Google Drive.

1. Companion Synods - Rev. Dr. Aaron Matson
2. Lilly Grant - Rev. Kari Webb
3. Rural Ministry Liaison - Rev. Joel Pakan
4. Holy Playground - Rev. Renae Roehmer

New Business

Executive Committee elections

The Executive Committee consists of the Synod Bishop, the Synod Vice President, the Synod Secretary, the Synod Treasurer, the vice chair of the Synod Council and three members at large, elected by the Synod Council from its own membership for a one-year term.

MSC to elect Jeff Clark to a one-year term as vice-chair of the Synod Council.

SC.2025.08.04

MSC to elect Deacon Christie Meier, John Rasmussen and Rev. Becky Senner to a one-year term as members-at-large on the Executive Committee.

SC.2025.08.05

Trivia Bowl

The council divided into teams to compete in a trivia bowl. All questions and answers could be found in the synod council board book. Bishop Constanze's team was the winner.

Mission Partners

Lutheran Outdoors

Jim Jacobson addressed the group with an update on Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota (LOSD). He stated his challenges are getting congregations to promote camp from the pulpit. He is available to conference meetings. He is planning on having Pulpit talks with the help of Marti Knudsen, Director at NeSoDak and Jamie Duprey, Director at Outlaw Ranch.

Bishop Constanze requested that the synod give \$1,000 each to Lutheran Outdoors in South Dakota, Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota and Voices for Peace.

MSC to give a gift of \$1,000 each to Lutheran Outdoors in South Dakota, Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota and Voices for Peace from undesignated endowment distribution.

SC.2025.08.06

Saturday

Rev. Chris Zuraff, Gloria Dei, greeted the group and thanked us for the work that we do. He also made the group aware of the nonprofit that he and his wife run, www.thespecialtycrop.com

Resurrection Lutheran Church, Pierre

Tom Tveit from Resurrection Lutheran in Pierre joined via Zoom.

Resurrection, Pierre - 2nd Vote to Leave ELCA Passed on 7/28/25.

MSC to allow Resurrection, Pierre to disaffiliate from the ELCA

SC.2025.08.07

Tom Tveit from Resurrection Lutheran, Pierre left the meeting.

Equipping Leaders

Pastor Kari Webb & Pastor Joel Pakan gave an overview of Pasque, rural ministry and how rostered leaders and Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMs) are being equipped by the synod.

Roster Matters

Inform Only

Rev. Daniel Cole - Transferred into SD from Pacifica Synod effective 8/15/25

Rev. Chris Lenning - Transferred into SD from Western ND Synod effective 8/01/25

Rev. Cheryl Rondeau-Bassett - Transferred to Southwestern MN Synod effective 6/22/25

Rev. Craig Wexler - Resigned from ELCA Roster effective 7/17/25

Other roster matters will be discussed in executive session.

MSC to enter into executive session for roster matters.
SC.2025.08.08

Synod Council met in executive session.

MSC to come out of executive session and report all actions taken in the minutes.
SC.2025.08.11

Action items:

Deacon Laura Campbell is requesting Retirement effective 8/01/25.

MSC to grant Deacon Laura Campbell Retirement effective 8/01/25.
SC.2025.08.09

Rev. Michael Jordan is requesting On-Leave-from-Call effective 9/16/25.

MSC to grant Rev. Michael Jordan On-Leave-from-Call effective 9/15/25.
SC.2025.08.10

Congregational Matters

Inform Only

First Lutheran, Artesian - 2nd Vote to Leave ELCA Not Passed on 3/02/25
Trinity Lutheran, Carthage - 2nd Vote to Leave ELCA Passed on 3/02/25
Immanuel Lutheran, Iroquois - 2nd Vote to Leave ELCA Passed on 3/01/25

Action Needed

Trinity, Yankton - Constitution approved by Nick Moser 3/17/25

MSC to approve the constitution of Trinity Lutheran, Yankton approved by Nick Moser on 3/17/25.
SC.2025.08.12

American, DeSmet - Constitution approved by Brett Koenecke on 8/04/25

MSC to approve the constitution of American Lutheran, DeSmet approved by Brett Koenecke on 8/04/25.
SC.2025.08.13

Bethesda, Bristol - Constitution approved by Pr. Jonathan Vehar on 8/07/25

MSC to approve the constitution of Bethesda Lutheran, Bristol approved by Pr. Jonathan Vehar on 8/07/25.

SC.2025.08.14

Synod Assembly

The 2025 synod assembly financial report was in Google drive and was reviewed.

Each year the synod assembly generates revenue that has traditionally been saved to cover the cost of a bishop election and transitions in the Office of the Bishop.

MSC to transfer \$25,000 from the Synod Assembly fund to the Bishop Transition Fund. SC.2025.08.15

Bishop Election Process

Discussion was held on how the bishop election process was handled. It was suggested that there could be training for the Conference Deans before the Bishop Election process starts at the conference level. Specifically, in the lifting up of names.

Churchwide Assembly

Bishop Constanze, Marlee Braun, Wyatt Lesmeister and Emma Witt gave an overview and their impressions from the Churchwide Assembly.

Communications Audit proposal (Mud Mile)

The communications audit and action plan proposal was presented by Bishop Constanze. As we look toward the future, we want to be sure that our story is told effectively and in a way that reaches everyone.

MSC to approve the proposed Communications Audit & Action Plan from Mud Mile Communications. Estimated costs: Audit \$2,500, Action Plan \$6,000; paid from the Bishop Election/Transition Fund.

SC.2025.08.16

Mission Support/Mission Plan

Bishop Constanze, Pastor Renee, Pastor Jonathan, Dennis, Terry and Lois meet every two months looking at mission support and our mission plan. Mission support is currently down 7.3% from last year.

Partner & Supported Ministries

Rev. Jonathan Vehar gave a presentation on the status of our mission partners. He will send a copy of his PowerPoint to the synod council members.

Three questions:

- A. What are you going to share?

- B. How are you going to share?
- C. How do you need to be supported to do this?

Future Meetings

- A. Exec: October 9, 2025, 6:00 pm, Synod office, Sioux Falls
- B. Synod Council: October 10, 2025, 8:30 am, Spirit of Joy, Sioux Falls
- C. Exec: February 12, 2026, 2:00 pm, Synod office, Sioux Falls (close out 2025, revise 2026 mission plan)
- D. Exec: March 12, 2026, 6:00 pm, Synod office, Sioux Falls
- E. Synod Council: March 13, 2026, 8:30 am, TBD
- F. Synod Assembly: May 29-30, 2026, Our Savior's Lutheran, Sioux Falls
- G. Synod Council: May 30, 2026, after close of the assembly
- H. Exec: August 13, 2026, 6:00 pm, Synod office
- I. Synod Council Retreat, August 14-15, 2026, TBD
- J. Exec: October 22, 2026, 6:00 pm, Synod office, Sioux Falls
- K. Synod Council: October 23, 8:30 am, TBD

Holy Communion

We shared Holy Communion as a group to close our retreat.

Adjourn

MSC to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Beers, Secretary