

2025 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 2025. **Journeying together in Christ as the South Dakota Synod, in 2025 we have:**

- Received **3 new first call** candidates, completed **18 Ministry Site Studies**, and extended **24 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 **28 people** in various stages of **candidacy** in the SD Synod in 2025, with **18** others inquiring and in discernment.
- Completed Year 2 of the **\$1.13 million** "Journeying Together in Christ" grant and Year 1 of the **\$1.25 million** "Holy Playground Initiative" grant; both grants were awarded by Lilly Endowment, Inc.
- Welcomed Pr. Renae Boehmer as Director for the Holy Playground Initiative. Gave out subawards to **3 Neighbors in Solidarity communities** and have recruited a cohort of over **20 congregations** who will journey together in 2026 to create intergenerational opportunities for young children to fully engage in worship and prayer.
- Continued to support rural congregations through the work of Pr. Joel Pakan, **Director for Rural Ministry**, and 4 part-time **Rural Ambassadors**. In 2025, our Rural Ministry Ambassadors led or participated in over **100** worship services in over **50** South Dakota ELCA congregations. They also led, helped facilitate, or attended over **100** meetings in congregations, conferences, and the synod.
- Continued to promote Spirit-led growth and faith formation through our Pasque Learning Community (sdsynodlearns.org). In 2025, Pasque received over **6,500** unique site visits, with over **400** site accounts created and nearly **500** active enrollments in resources.
- Received a **\$50,000** CaSTLE Grant from Wartburg Seminary for 2025 and was awarded another **\$50,000** CaSTLE Grant for 2026 to support Rural Ambassadors, the Synod Authorized Minister retreat, and resource creation.
- Granted **\$129,231** in South Dakota Synod Educational Scholarship Awards, including the Fund for Leaders program.
- Distributed **\$96,263** through the Seminary Debt Reduction Program, including paying off the loan balances of 5 rostered leaders.
- Awarding **\$21,447** in Storm Micro Grants to help members and congregations recover from severe weather events and **\$10,500** in Micro Grants to the feeding ministries of our congregations and worshipping communities.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Supported the work of congregational office administrators with a **Synod Office Administrators Monthly Check-In**. **32** administrators have signed up to participate in these check-ins and to share resources in a dedicated Pasque course.
- Continued the work of the Rural Ministry Table, including awarding **\$80,127** in **Small Town and Rural (STAR)** grants.
- Received **\$108,033** in Churchwide grants for our Neighbors in Solidarity ministries.
- Awarded **\$53,038** from Endowment and Listen! Endowment funds to congregations, rostered, and lay leaders

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 2026, we trust in God's guidance and look forward to walking this journey of faith together.