

South Dakota Synod, ELCA
Synod Council
Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls
October 10, 2025

Present: Dennis Thompson, Jill Beers, Terry Johnson, Rev. Michael DeKraai, John Rasmussen, Rev. Karl Breddin, Marlee Braun (zoom), Gary Kaufmann, Deacon Christie Meier, Kristen Peterson, Cristy Harkness, Jake Hoffner, Chad Nilson, Rev. Justin Van Orman (zoom), Crystal Brakke (zoom), Jeff Clark, Rev. Becky Senner, Craig Pfeifle, Wyatt Lesmeister, Emma Witt, Lois Borchardt, Rev. Renee Splichal Larson, Rev. Jonathan Vehar.

Call to Order

Dennis Thompson called the meeting to order and read the land acknowledgment.

Land Acknowledgement

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 Spirit to do this work.

Opening Devotion & Tour - Pastor Eric Ohrtman, Spirit of Joy

Pastor Eric Ohrtman from Spirit of Joy led the opening devotion and then gave 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 appropriate.
SC.2025.10.01**

Approve Minutes

The minutes of the August 8-9, 2025 synod council retreat were in Google Drive.

**MSC to approve the minutes of the August 8-9, 2025 Synod Council retreat.
SC.2025.10.02**

Reports

Round Table discussions

1. Report - Terry Johnson (monthly financial statements uploaded to Google Drive around the 8th of the month)
 - a. SD Synod 09.30.2025
We are behind on giving. The staff is doing their job. About 100,000 down from last year. Expenses are percent driven. On insurance, we will save about \$35,000 this year. People and congregations are being cautious. Reports can be found on the Google Drive
 - b. Endowment 08.31.2025
Endowment is almost all restricted. They are performing as expected.
2. Bishop's Report
The bishop is not in attendance. The report can be found on the Google Drive.
3. Rev. Renee Splichal Larson Report
Trends - We do have candidates. There have been 18 site studies in 2025 with maybe 4 more happening. We have extended 20 calls. Of the 20, 10 are coming into South Dakota. She says she follows the rules when making an attempt at new contacts.
4. Rev. Jonathan Vehar
He has done two site visits for Neighbors in Solidarity, Woyatan and Spirit of Hope. It is fun to meet with the locals. The budget adopted at Churchwide was 10 million less than 3 years ago. Will drive around Pine Ridge videoing for courses for SAM's. Gabe Wounded Head will lead a group. Pasque course and pairing with Wartburg Seminary. He gave a short description on Fresh Expressions. A Fresh Expressions leader will be at the pastor's retreat. Challenge is constant misinformation from Lutheran Social Network.
5. Dennis Thompson - Vice President and Executive Council Report
Thanks to Lois for all of her work on the insurance. Portico choice is fairly close to the previous plan. There were many requests for funds this time including Father Kim from McLaughlin, Fresh Expressions training for Spirit of Hope and Shepherds Table and van repairs for Pueblo de Dios.

Staff Reports - written reports

The staff reports from the following people can be found on the 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 Boehmer
We are encouraged to share the Holy Playground with our home congregations. There is a FAQ sheet available in the Google Drive to share with your congregations.

Old Business

Mission Support/Mission Plan update - Terry Johnson

We are light, but are managing it. Any support is appreciated.

New Business

Insurance renewal

We are contracting with Brotherhood Mutual at an approximate cost of \$25,339 versus \$99,837.93 with Marsh McLennan.

Mission Partners

Kim Olson from McLaughlin Community Alliance Group (CAG)

This is a Neighbors in Solidarity member. Redeemer Lutheran Church plays a large part in this group. There are many activities and projects going on including: a Wellness Center, Resource Center and Youth and Family center. They have organized a food pantry and soup kitchen. They have applied with Feeding SD. There is the Rise Recovery Program with many classes being held. Many organizations are making use of the facility including AA treatment programs, 3 Rivers Mental Health, US Probation office and a full fitness center. The goal is to do something every month for youth and family. They are always looking for grants that meet the goals of the group.

Spirit of Hope, Scotland

Rev. Becky Senner is the pastor of this church. She was called from the Bishop's office three years ago to head this mission start up. She has been there for 3 years. The congregation continues to grow. They are becoming confident in their sustainability. There is a transient population. They started with 27 members at their start and now have 57 members on the books with a possibility of 10 more members. They have recently dedicated a prayer garden. The focal point of the congregation is mission. Some of their projects include sending quilts to Woyatan and making toys for the Castle. They held a princess tea in the spring and a tea for older members in the fall. Church is at 9:30 and Adult/Confirmation/Sunday school is held at 11:00.

2027 Synod Assembly Location

Synod Council policy has been that assembly will be the first weekend after Memorial Day. It has been a few years since assembly was held in Rapid City.

MSC to have the 2027 Synod Assembly June 4-5, 2027 at Calvary Lutheran, Rapid City. Subject to Calvary's approval.

SC.2025.10.03

South Dakota Pastor Call Charts

Pastor Renee shared that she has created three maps that make it easier to identify where clergy are located and the needs that we have. The three maps are: Full time openings, part time calls and calls extended.

Lunch Break

Old Business, continued

Communication Audit Update - Jonathan Vehar

We have contracted with Mud Mile. There will be a meeting with the staff next week.

New Business, continued

Vision Statement “Sharing Leadership”

Pastor Vehar lead training on Synod Council members role as a conference office. Every conference has their own constitution. The Conference Dean should be one of the three elected people. Vacancies in conferences tend to be filled or assigned by the pastors. Conferences are encouraged to make the conference meetings more meaningful.

Congregational Visits

In the past, synod council members have visited congregation council meetings to express gratitude for our shared ministry. All members have access to the list of congregations by conference in the Google Drive. There is also a sample of the meeting process. Synod council members are asked to divide the congregations in their conference and complete the online form after their visit.

2026 Synod Assembly

The list of offering history for the Synod Assembly is in the Google Drive. The synod council, with the guidance of the synod staff and assembly planning committee sets the designation for the assembly offering. There are a few things that are still being discussed regarding where the offering should be designated.

MSC the 2026 South Dakota Synod Assembly offering to be designated by the Synod Assembly planning committee.
SC.2025.10.04

Re-authorize Strategic-Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities for 2026

Strategic-Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities need to be re-authorized annual. Current Strategic-Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities needing re-authorization are: Shepherd's Table, Pueblo de Dios, First Lutheran African Ministry and Church on the Street.

MSC to re-authorize Strategic-Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities for 2026: Shepherd's Table, Pueblo de Dios, First Lutheran African Ministry and Church on the Street.
SC.2025.10.05

Re-authorize Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities for 2026

Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities need to be re-authorized annually. Current Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities needing re-authorization are: Spirit of Hope, Scotland and Box Elder (no mission director in place at Box Elder).

MSC to re-authorize Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities for 2026: Spirit of Hope, Scotland and Box Elder.

SC.2025.10.06

Affirm Woyatan Lutheran Church as a strategic congregation of the South Dakota Synod
Woyatan Lutheran Church does not meet the churchwide definition of a Synod Authorized Worshipping Community. The South Dakota Synod would like to affirm that they are a strategic congregation and partner in the South Dakota Synod.

MSC to affirm Woyatan Lutheran Church as a strategic congregation of the South Dakota Synod.

SC.2025.10.07

Synod Constitution - non-required changes to the model constitution

After the August 2025 Churchwide Assembly, there are non-required changes to the Synod Constitution.

MSC to recommend to the 2026 South Dakota Synod Assembly the following amendments to the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the South Dakota Synod.

SC.2025.10.08

Section 4: Amendments to Non-Required Provisions

Chapter 7. Synod Assembly

- S7.26. This synod may establish processes through the Synod Council that permit ~~persons currently serving as synod-~~
~~authorized ministers and/or~~ lay representatives of authorized worshiping communities of the synod, which
have been authorized under ELCA bylaw 10.01.04., to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly,
consistent with †S7.21.

Chapter 9. Nominations and Elections

- S9.04. The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly by ecclesiastical ballot. Three-fourths of the legal
votes cast shall be necessary for election on the first ballot. If no one is elected, the first ballot shall be
considered the nominating ballot. Three-fourths of the legal votes cast on the second ballot shall be
necessary for election. The third ballot shall be limited to the seven persons ~~(plus ties)~~ who receive the
greatest number of legal votes ~~(including ties in the final qualifying position)~~ on the second ballot, and two-
thirds of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. The fourth ballot shall be limited to the three
persons ~~(plus ties)~~ who receive the greatest number of legal votes ~~(including ties in the final qualifying~~
~~position)~~ on the third ballot, and 60 percent of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. On
subsequent ballots a majority of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. These ballots shall
be limited to the two persons ~~(plus ties)~~ who receive the greatest number of legal votes ~~(including ties in~~
~~the final qualifying position)~~ on the previous ballot.

Chapter 10. Synod Council

- S10.05. ~~No e~~lected members of the Synod Council shall ~~not~~ receive compensation ~~solely~~ for ~~such their~~ service
as council members.
- S10.0607. If a member of the Synod Council ceases to meet
- S10.0708. The composition of the Synod Council
- S10.0809. *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest edition, shall govern

Chapter 13. Congregations

- S13.40. **Synod-authorized Worshiping Communities and Outreach Ministries**
- S13.41. ~~Authorized worshiping~~ **Worshiping** communities ~~and outreach ministries,~~ authorized by the synod and
acknowledged under criteria, policies, and procedures approved by the Church Council of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, shall accept and adhere to the Confession of Faith and
Statement of Purpose of this church, shall be served by leadership under the criteria of this church, and
shall be subject to the discipline of this church.

Roster Matters

Inform Only

- Rev. Mary Sacco - Transferred into SD from Northwest Intermountain Synod effective 8/19/25
- Rev. Timothy O'Shields - Transferred into SD from Northwestern MN Synod effective 10/15/25
- Rev. Colin Neuharth - Transferred into SD from Western ND Synod effective 11/24/25
- Rev. Michael Stadtmueller - Transferred into SD from Rocky Mountain Synod effective 12/01/25

Other roster matters will be discussed in executive session.

MSC to enter executive session for roster matters.

SC.2025.10.09

Synod Council met in executive session.

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

SC.2025.10.13

Action Needed

Rev. Pam Power is requesting Renewal of On-Leave-from-Call effective 11/01/22.

MSC to grant Rev. Pam Power renewal of On-Leave-from-Call effective 11/01/22.

SC.2025.10.10

Rev. Stephan Sandness is requesting Retirement effective 11/01/25.

MSC to grant Rev. Stephan Sandness Retirement effective 11/01/25.

SC.2025.10.11

Synod Council Calls Annual Review October 2025

- Rev. Chris Anderson - Chaplain for Avera St. Luke's Hospital, Aberdeen
- Rev. Maria Cabello - Pastor Developer for Pueblo de Dios, Sioux Falls
- Rev. Shawna Day - Associate Campus Pastor for Augustana University, Sioux Falls
- Rev. Kris Garlick - Chaplain for Monument Health Hospital, Rapid City
- Rev. Christy Hallenbeck Ask - Health Equity and Experience Advisor & Associate Chaplain for Sanford Health, Sioux Falls
- Rev. Ramona Hayes - Rector for St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Brookings
- Rev. Lisa Heffernan - Campus Pastor for USD Luther Center, Vermillion
- Rev. Dan Johnson - Director of Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center, Pine Ridge
- Rev. Cassandra Lamb - Campus Pastor for the University Lutheran Center, Brookings
- Rev. Bailey Landa-Shufelt - Spiritual Care Director for Legends on Lake Lorraine, Sioux Falls
- Rev. Jo Ann Lemme - Chaplain for Bethany Lutheran Home for the Aged, Inc., Sioux Falls/Brandon

Rev. Chris Matson - Pastor for Church on the Street, Sioux Falls
Rev. Katherine Olson - Director of Spiritual Care for Dow Rummel Village, Sioux Falls
Rev. Ann Rosendale - Administrative Campus Pastor for Augustana University, Sioux Falls
Rev. Kari Sansgaard - Chaplain for Avera, Sioux Falls
Rev. Becky Senner - Pastor/Mission Developer for Spirit of Hope, Scotland
Deacon Mara Stillson - Deacon for Church on the Street, Sioux Falls

**MSC to accept the reviews of these Synod Council calls en bloc.
SC.2025.10.12**

Congregational Matters
Inform Only

First, Sioux Falls - 1st Vote to Leave ELCA Passed on 9/28/25

Action Items

There are no action items

Jonathan asked for three people to look at the bylaws for Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center.
Craig Pfeifle and Kristin Peterson volunteered to help.

Three questions:

1. What are you going to share?
2. How are you going to share?
3. How do you need to be supported to do this?

Future Meetings

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

The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer and adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Beers, Secretary