

**South Dakota Synod, ELCA
Synod Council
St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls
March 13, 2026**

Present: Bishop Constanze Hagmaier, Dennis Thompson, Jill Beers, Terry Johnson (zoom), Kristie Anderson, SAM, Rev. Michael DeKraai, John Rasmussen, Rev. Karl Breddin, Marlee Braun, Gary Kaufmann, Deacon Christie Meier, Thad Titze, Cristy Harkness, Jake Hoffner, Rev. Jeff Otterman, Anne Fortin (zoom), Rev. Justin Van Orman (zoom), Crystal Brakke (zoom), Jeff Clark, Rev. Becky Senner, Rev. Wilbur Holz, Jody Johnson (zoom), Wyatt Lesmeister, Lois Borchardt, Rev. Renee Splichal Larson, Rev. Aaron Matson, Kathy McHenry

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 Lori Hope from St. Mark's gave the opening devotion, gave a history of St. Mark's and 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, with the addition of the synod gift policy in the order as the chair deems most appropriate.

SC.2026.03.01

Approve Minutes

The October 10, 2025 minutes were approved electronically.

**MSC to record October 10, 2025 minutes that were approved electronically.
SC.2026.03.02**

St. Dysmas presentation

Rev. Jeff Backer and Rev. Laura Phillips shared about St. Dysmas. St. Dysmas has been in service for 36 years. The first service at the prison was held in 1990.

Reports

Round Table discussions (15 minutes each)

Treasurer's Report - Terry Johnson - February closed out the fiscal year at Executive Council meeting. A few revisions were made and the revised Mission Plan was shared.

Bishop's Report - Bishop Constanze Hagmaier - Explained the Palm Sunday Service. It will be held at the Multicultural Center if there is bad weather. This will be an Ecumenical service from 2-4 pm. There should be no signs, it is to be a religious journey in the life of Christ. She shared that the disaffiliation vote for First Lutheran failed. She also shared the book *The Power of Bridging* by John A. Powell as a good resource.

Associates to the Bishop

Rev. Renee Splichal Larson - shared her PowerPoint *Why is it Taking So Long*, based on materials from Pastor Dan Kuckuck from Iowa. This was shared with the round table and will be made available on Pasque for churches to view.

Rev. Jonathan Vehar - Jonathan shared his information on video. He shared recent highlights and accomplishments. This video is available on the google drive. He also gave an overview of the trip to Florida dealing with Fresh Expressions

Vice President & Executive Committee Report - Dennis Thompson - The Executive Committee met in February to to over the Fiscal Year. The Mission Plan is on track. Line-Item Narrative budget was explained. The Endowment updates were also approved.

Two-minute recap of round table discussions - What questions did you not expect?
Basically, everyone felt comfortable with the reports.

Staff Reports – written reports

The staff reports from the following were in Google Drive:

1. Companion Synods – Rev. Dr. Aaron Matson
2. Thriving Congregations – Rev. Kari Webb
3. Rural Ministry – Rev. Joel Pakan
4. Holy Playground – Rev. Renae Boehmer
5. Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center – Rev. Dan Johnson

Old Business

Communication Audit Update

Mud Mile has the results of the surveys. They will tally and report back to us. We will discuss the results at the August Retreat.

New Business

Mission Partners - Rev. Jeff Backer, St. Dysmas - this report is earlier in the minutes.

Proposed 2027 Mission Plan for synod assembly (2.1.2027-1.31.2928) was presented to synod council. We will maintain our Churchwide giving at 41%.

MSC to present to the 2026 Synod Assembly the proposed 2027 Mission Plan (2.1.2027-1.31.2028) for the South Dakota Synod.
SC.2026.03.03

Synod Vision

Bishop Constanze reviewed the Synod Vision from 6 years ago. The question was asked "How do we welcome and equip a new group of leaders?". Bishop Curry suggested networking by nurturing hope and telling stories. We need to accompany congregations across SD to partner with others.

2026 Synod Assembly registration fees and deadlines were discussed. Registration fees will remain the same as 2025.

Voting Member \$200

Displayer \$160

Displayer/Voting Member \$225

Interns/On Leave from Call \$125

Registration opened 04/13/2026 and a late fee of \$50 added on 05/20/2026

MSC to set a hard deadline of 05/25/2026 for assembly registration.
SC.2026.03.04

Rev. Tom Opoien accepts a position as a Rural Ambassador for the South Dakota Synod. As a synod employee, he can no longer serve on the endowment committee. Rev. Kyle Svenningsen has agreed to fulfill his term.

MSC to appoint Rev. Kyle Svenningsen to complete Rev. Tom Opoien's term ending in 2027 on the Endowment Committee of the South Dakota Synod.
SC.2026.03.05

South Dakota Synod has not had a written reimbursement/expense policy.

MSC to approve the South Dakota Synod Reimbursement/Expense Policy as presented.
SC.2026.03.06

South Dakota Synod Social Media Guidelines - this is setting up a framework as we grow our ministry.

**MSC to approve the South Dakota Synod Social Media Guidelines as presented.
SC.2026.03.07**

Short Message Service (SMS) Privacy Policy and Terms & Conditions

**MSC to approve the South Dakota Synod Short Message Service (SMS) Privacy Policy and Terms & Conditions as presented.
SC.2026.03.08**

Gift Policy - Lutheran Planned Generosity

We need a solid well defined giving policy. This came from the Endowment Committee. They think this should come from the council. We have formed a task force. Terry Johnson and John Rasmussen have volunteered from the Executive Committee. Kathy McHenry will also serve. Rev. Wilbur Holz from the Synod Council will also serve.

Roster Matters

Inform Only

Rev. Stephen Palo - Transferred to Northeastern MN Synod effective 10/30/25
Rev. Michael Jordan - Transferred to Saint Paul Area Synod effective 11/08/25
Rev. Willie Rosin - Transferred into SD from Southeastern IA Synod effective 1/02/26
Rev. Drew Riter - Transferred to Western IA Synod effective 1/06/26
Rev. Elizabeth (Beth) Parks - Transferred into SD from Western ND Synod effective 1/07/26

Other roster matters will be discussed in executive session.

**MSC to enter executive session for roster matters.
SC.2026.03.09**

Synod Council met in executive session.

**MSC to come out of executive session and report all actions in the minutes.
SC.2026.03.16**

Action Needed

Rev. Marcia Brennan is requesting retirement effective 2/14/2026.

**MSC to grant Rev. Marcia Brennan retirement effective 2/14/26.
SC.2026.03.10**

Rev. Denise Broveak is requesting retirement effective 3/1/2026.

**MSC to grant Rev. Denise Broveak retirement effective 3/01/26.
SC.2026.03.11**

Deacon Tom Martin is requesting retirement effective 2/2/2026.

**MSC to grant Deacon Tom Martin retirement effective 2/02/26.
SC.2026.03.12**

Rev. Tom Opoien is requesting on-leave-from-call effective 3/1/2026.

**MSC to grant Rev. Tom Opoien On-Leave-from-Call effective 3/01/26.
SC.2026.03.13**

Rev. Lynnae Sorensen is requesting retirement effective 2/1/2026.

**MSC to grant Rev. Lynnae Sorensen retirement effective 2/01/26.
SC.2026.03.14**

Deacon Kris Wollman is requesting retirement effective 6/1/2026.

**MSC to grant Deacon Kris Wollman retirement effective 6/01/26.
SC.2026.03.15**

Congregational Matters

Inform Only

First Lutheran, Sioux Falls' 2nd Vote to Leave ELCA failed on 1/25/26.

Kathy McHenry shared the endowment report. It can be found in the Google Drive. She reported that it has been a very encouraging year.

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?

13. Future Meetings

- A. Synod Assembly May 29-30, 2026, Our Savior's Lutheran Sioux Falls
- B. Synod Council May 30, 2026, after close of the assembly
- C. Exec: August 13, 2026, 6:00 pm, TBD
- D. Synod Council Retreat August 14-15, 2026, Outlaw Ranch, Custer
- E. Exec: October 22, 2026, 6:00 pm, Synod office, Sioux Falls
- F. Synod Council: October 23, 2026, 8:30 am, TBD
- G. Synod Assembly June 4-5, 2027, Calvary Lutheran, Rapid City

The meeting adjourned with praying the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Jill Beers, Secretary