



“*one body* in Christ”



Southwestern Minnesota Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## Pre-Assembly Report

2024 Southwestern Minnesota Synod Assembly  
Gustavus Adolphus College, Saint Peter, MN  
June 7-8, 2024



Southwestern Minnesota Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## 2024 Synod Assembly

The Assembly will begin with registration on Friday, June 7, at 4:00 p.m. upstairs of Jackson Campus center, on the campus of Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter. Saturday, June 8 begins with worship at 9:00 am in Christ Chapel. Plenary sessions will be held immediately following worship in the Alumni Hall. The Assembly is scheduled to adjourn around 5:00 pm Saturday afternoon.

“*one body in Christ*”

Welcome to the 2024 Synod Assembly, gathering around the focus, “*One Body in Christ.*” “*So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*” – Romans 12:5.

We live in a time when relationships in our families, congregations, and communities are being stretched and even strained. This reality is not new to God’s people, and that means there are rich resources that strengthen our faith, propel our ministries, and unite us amid the gifts of our diversity. That unity is given in Jesus Christ. It will be experienced as we gather both in person and online where God has planted us.

Because our life of faith begins with the word and sacraments, worship is vital to our gathering as a synod. Friday evening’s celebration ends with prayer and praise. The full day of plenary on Saturday begins with worship in Christ Chapel.

Providing inspiration for the Assembly will be:

- Rev. Dr. Philip Hirsch, Executive Director of Christian Community and Leadership, ELCA.
- Bishop NkosiNathi Myaka, Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa – Southeastern Diocese.
- Rev. Dr. Aaron Suomala Folkerds, Synod Minister for Mental Health & Wellness in Northwestern Minnesota.

The Synod Assembly is the primary decision-making body of our synod and is a gathering of people in communal spiritual discernment. We do not go as lobbyists for our congregations, nor are we “delegates.” The Assembly is composed of “Voting Members” who have been given the responsibilities of listening, speaking, and deciding important matters that will affect and lead this synod into the future. Voting members will prepare for this work by attending hearings on key areas in mid-late May. Then we will come ready to listen to the Holy Spirit, receive reports, elect leaders, deliberate, and adopt a budget. We will undergird this work with prayer and undertake it on behalf of the whole synod.

As God’s people, we are called together by the unchanging power of the holy Trinity and sent to serve God’s great mission where God has planted us: in cities, farmlands, and towns together under one prairie sky. Join me in praying and preparing for this Synod Assembly as we live out *One Body in Christ*.

*Bishop Dee Pederson*



Welcome to the 2024 Synod Assembly! We are excited to gather this year, both **online** and **onsite**! Please read on for important information that will make your voting member experience, and this Assembly, a success. Voting members attending onsite will have the opportunity to experience the Assembly in a new location! For the first time the Assembly plenary sessions will be held in Cec Eckhoff Alumni Hall. Except for opening worship, all synod events will be held in the same building.

### Assembly Offerings.

There will be two (2) offerings at the Assembly; the Synod Assembly offering that will occur during the opening worship service, and the World Hunger Offering, which occurs Saturday afternoon. Thank you for the gifts you will share during this Synod Assembly. Synod Assembly offering is an important component of our budgeted support and, received with other gifts, allows us to support a number of ministry partners. In this time especially, we are grateful for the way these partners train, prepare, support, and renew current and future lay and rostered ministers.

Congregations are encouraged to send a gift of \$1 per baptized member. Individuals may also share personal gifts. Please make checks payable to: Southwestern Minnesota Synod. OR you may also give your offering online. The link is open now, so you don't have to wait until the Assembly: <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-Z456/home>

Thank you for your prayers and your generosity that allow us as a synod to support ministry partners like these.

### Guidebook App.

Our mission is to continually strive to be better stewards of God's creation. Downloading the **Guidebook App** will not only provide all Assembly information in one organized location, but it also significantly reduces the number of printed materials. In **Guidebook** you will find the agenda, workshops, worship information, election ballot, 2026 Proposed Budget, 2025 Proposed Compensation Guidelines, and much more. Information on how to download the app and all Assembly information, along with the PreAssembly book, can be found on the Synod website. (<https://swmnelca.org/synod-assembly/>)

### Assembly Hearings.

There will be four (4) Zoom Meetings prior to the actual Assembly. This is an opportunity to learn and ask questions regarding the 2026 Proposed Budget, 2025 Proposed Compensation Guidelines and proposed resolutions. Additionally, attending the Assembly Orientation will provide an opportunity to practice voting, checking into the Assembly, Guidebook app instructions, answer questions, and provide extra information pertaining to the Assembly.

- Monday, May 13 at 7:00 pm – Compensation Guidelines Hearing.
- Tuesday, May 14 at 7:00 pm – Resolution Hearing.
- Monday, May 20 at 7:00 pm – 2026 Proposed Budget Hearing.
- Tuesday, May 21 at 7:00 pm – Assembly Orientation.

Zoom links were emailed to all voting members.

### Registration Step 2 - Zoom Webinar.

It is important for all voting members to understand there are two steps in registering for the Assembly. First, all voting members registered in ACS for the Assembly itself. Second, both onLINE and onSITE voting members will soon be receiving an email invitation to register in Zoom Webinar for the voting portion of the Assembly. Please watch your email for this invitation, unique only to you, during the first full week in May. Do not share your invitation link. It will only work with your email address.

# GUSTAVUS CAMPUS MAP.

## Synod Assembly Room Map

Friday On-Site Registration = Jackson Campus Center (Upstairs)

Campus Housing Check-In = Jackson Campus Center (Downstairs)

Friday Recognition Banquet = Jackson Campus Center St. Peter Room (Upstairs)

Displays = Hallway between Student Union Eckhoff Alumni Hall and Jackson Campus Center (Upstairs)

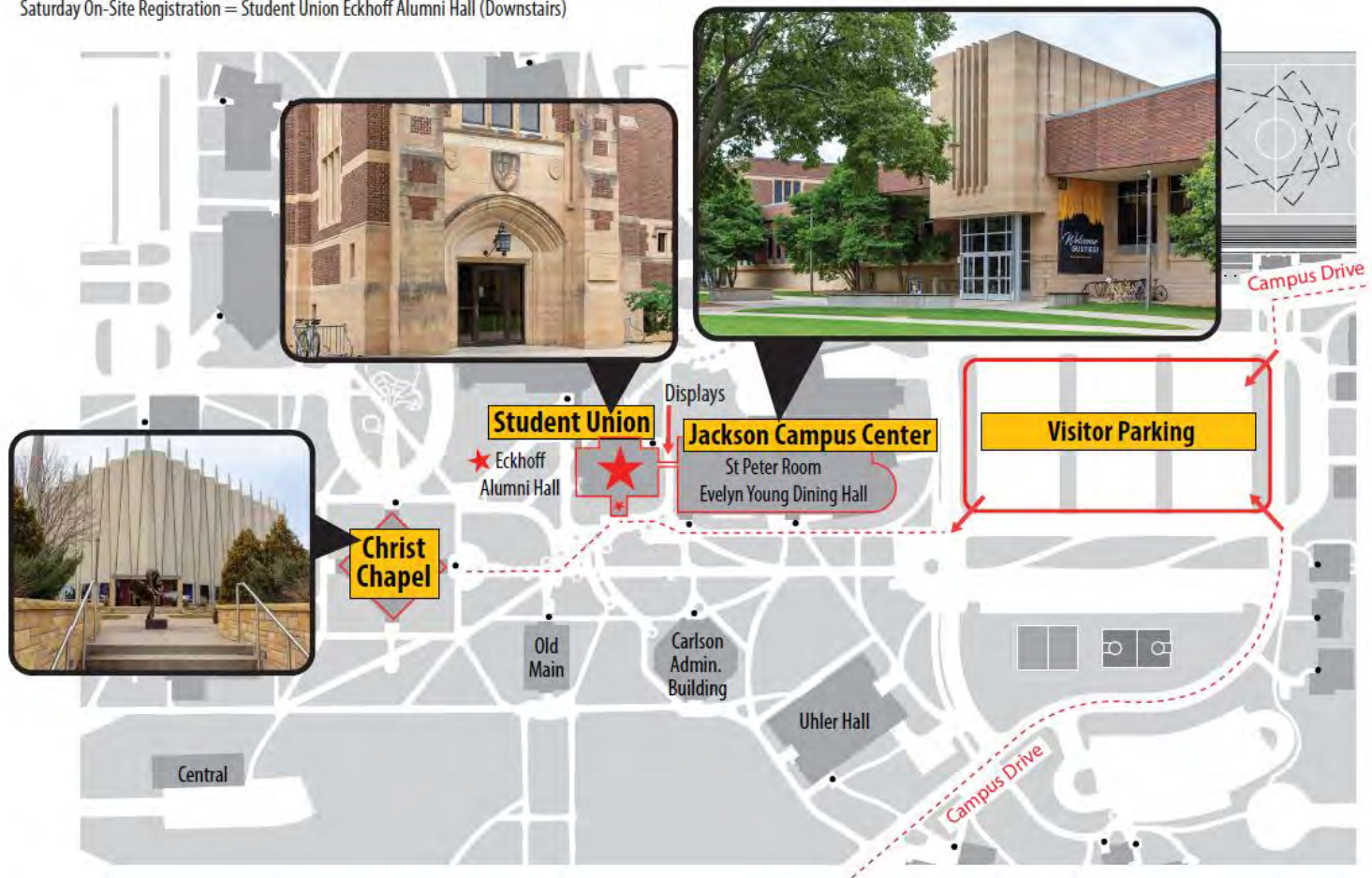
Saturday On-Site Registration = Student Union Eckhoff Alumni Hall (Downstairs)

Opening Worship = Christ Chapel

Plenary = Student Union Eckhoff Alumni Hall (Upstairs)

Lunch = Jackson Campus Center St. Peter Room (Upstairs Outside Hallway)

Workshops = Jackson Campus Center Rooms: 203A, 203B, 207, 215 (Upstairs)



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## Abbreviated Agenda.

*\*Times are subject to change\**

Friday, June 7.

4 pm. – 7 pm. Jackson Campus Center	<b>onSITE Registration Open.</b> Voting members who registered to attend onSITE must check-in upon arriving on campus.
6 pm. St Peter Room.	<b>WELCOME RECEPTION &amp; RECOGNITIONS.</b> Hors d' oeuvres, networking, recognitions, Bp. NkosiNathi Myaka, LSS Servant of Christ award, praise & prayer, etc.

Saturday, June 8.

7 am. – 8:30 am. Marketplace.	<b>BREAKFAST.</b> If you paid for campus housing, breakfast is included <b>with the presentation of your name tag.</b> Breakfast is also available, for a fee, for voting members arriving Saturday morning.
7:30 am. - 10:15 am.	<b>onSITE Registration.</b> Voting members arriving onSITE must check-in prior to the first plenary session. It is <b>STRONGLY</b> recommended that you allow enough time to check-in prior to opening Worship. Registration will close promptly at 10:15 am.
7:30 am. – 10:30 am.	<b>onLINE Registration open.</b> Voting members attending onLINE must log into Zoom prior to the first plenary session. Registration will close promptly at 10:30 am.
9:00 am.	<b>DISPLAYS OPEN.</b>
9:00 am. Christ Chapel.	<b>OPENING WORSHIP.</b> Worship will be available for viewing on Zoom for those attending onLINE.
10:10 am.	<b>BREAK.</b> Transition to Alumni Hall.
10:30 am.	<b>PLENARY SESSION 1.</b>
Johnson Student Union.	Proposed Budget, Proposed Compensation Guidelines, Nominating Report, Keynote Rev. Dr. Aaron Suomala Folkerds, Resolutions & other business, etc.
11:50 am.	<i>Let's do LUNCH.</i> (workshops)
Outside the Marketplace	Pick up a box lunch and bring it to your workshop of choice. <b>Your name tag is your meal ticket.</b> Zoom links provided for onLINE voting members.
12:10 pm. – 12:40 pm. 203A, 203B, 207, 215	<i>Let's do LUNCH: 30-min.</i> (workshops)
12:50 pm.	<b>PLENARY SESSION 2.</b>
Johnson Student Union.	Elections, Bp Dee Peterson, Proposed Budget, Compensation Guidelines, Rev Dr Philip Hirsch, Rev Dr Aaron Suomala Folkerds, resolutions & other business, World Hunger Offering and Breadbasket award, etc.
4:30 pm.	<b>Adjournment.</b>

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Parking.

Visitor parking is in the lot next to Jackson Campus Center. Type, “Norelius Hall Parking Lot” in your map for specific directions from your location.

### Key Map Locations.

**Registration:** Jackson Campus Center – 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

**Welcome & Recognitions:** Banquet Room – 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Jackson Campus Center.

**Opening Worship:** Christ Chapel.

**Plenary Sessions:** Alumni Hall – upstairs in Johnson Student Union.

**Saturday Breakfast** Marketplace – 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Jackson Campus Center.

**Let’s do Lunch (workshops)** – 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Jackson Campus

\*Campus maps are available in the Guidebook App and on the synod’s website: [www.swmnelca.org/assembly](http://www.swmnelca.org/assembly)

### Campus Housing.

Voting members who registered for campus housing will either stay in International Center or Prairie View dorms.

### What to Bring.

Whether you are attending onLINE or onSITE you will need these items:

- Smart phone/tablet/laptop.
- PreAssembly book – available in the Guidebook app or on the synod’s website: [www.swmnelca.org](http://www.swmnelca.org).
- Offerings – Synod Assembly offering/World Hunger offering.
- Water bottle/coffee mug.
- **If staying onSITE – sleeping bag, pillow, personal items.**

### Accessibility.

Our goal is to work with Gustavus to plan an Assembly that creates a sense of belonging, is accessible to all, and optimizes the opportunity for inclusion. If you have questions about accessibility prior to the Assembly, please call Tammy Schacher at 507.627.9041.

### Arriving onLINE – Friday, June 7.

Voting members attending onLINE will be emailed a link to attend the “Welcome Reception & Recognition” Friday evening. The reception will begin at 7:00 pm.

### Meals and more.

Meals provided onsite for voting members include Friday evening Hors d’ Oeuvres, Saturday lunch, coffee, water, and snacks throughout the Assembly. For voting members paying for campus housing, breakfast on Saturday is included **with the presentation of your name tag**. Breakfast is also available **for purchase** for voting members arriving Saturday morning.

### Name Tag.

Voting members who register to attend the Assembly onSITE will receive a nametag to be worn at all times. Your nametag confirms you are a credentialed voting member: **It is also your meal ticket**. Wearing your name tag will ensure you are not asked to pay for your meal.

### Seating,

In the Plenary Hall, credentialed voting members are seated amongst others in their conference. The tables are clearly labeled. Only credentialed voting members are allowed on the voting member floor. Visitors must sit in the chairs off to the side or in the watch party (overflow) room if one is designated.

## Voting at Synod Assembly.

The handheld devices previously used for voting have become an expensive option. Therefore, voting for Synod elections will take place using Zoom Polling. Remember, both onSITE and onLINE voting members need to log into Zoom for the purpose of voting. \*If you need further assistance regarding voting, contact Tammy Schacher or Kristin Bakeberg in the Synod Office. Here is the list of items that require a vote:

- FYE 2026 Recommended Budget
- 2025 Proposed Compensation Guidelines
- Constitution updates
- Resolutions
- Synod Elections

## Let's do Lunch/workshops.

Workshops will be held on the second floor of Jackson Campus Center. Voting members will pick up a box lunch and bring it to one of the four (4) workshops onsite. Zoom links will be provided for online voting members. See the "workshops" tab for more information.

## Displays.

Displays will be held on the second floor of Jackson Campus Center in the banquet room foyer. Please set aside time to visit each display table, ask questions and learn about the ministry they are representing.

## Care of Creation.

Our Synod is continuing to grow in its commitment to a greener future. Here is how you can help at Synod Assembly:

- Download the Guidebook App instead of printing the entire PreAssembly Book.
- onSITE voting members; bring your own travel mug for coffee/water.
- onSITE voting members; Recycle. Bins will be available at the Assembly.

## Photo Release.

Photographs, video, and electronic images will be used by the Southwestern Minnesota Synod for synod communications. If you would like to opt out, please send an email to Tammy Schacher with your request.

## Post Assembly Feedback.

After the close of the assembly, please watch your email for a brief survey requesting your feedback.

## CHECKING IN AT THE ASSEMBLY.

### onSITE Registration & Friday and Saturday.

Registration will open at 4:00 pm. on the second floor of Jackson Campus Center. It's important that all voting members register onsite prior to attending the 6:00 pm. event. Saturday morning begins with worship in Christ Chapel. Plan to arrive early enough to register onsite before attending the worship service. The first Plenary Session begins immediately following worship. Thus, signaling the close of registration. Voting members not registered and credentialed prior to the opening of the plenary session will be unable to vote in that session.

#### Registration open:

Friday: 4 pm – 7 pm.

Saturday: 7:30 am – 10:15 am.

Saturday: 12 pm – 1 pm.

\*At least 20 minutes prior to voting, onSITE voting members will be prompted to log into their Zoom account for the voting portion of the Assembly. If voting members remain logged in, they should only have to do this once per plenary session.

### Campus Housing.

If you registered and paid for campus housing, you may pick up your dorm key at the main desk in Jackson Campus Center. The Gustavus staff will be ready to assist you on Friday until 8:00 pm. Keep in mind you will be staying in a college dorm. Most restrooms/showers are communal. Even though bedding is supplied, it is **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** that you bring your own pillow and sleeping bag (or blanket), along with your personal items. Arrive early, register onSITE, check into campus housing, prior to attending the Friday evening event.

### OnLINE Registration – Friday & Saturday.

Online voting members will only need to register in Zoom one time if you remain logged in the whole day. If you log off, you will need to check in again for the second plenary session. Voting will take place in Zoom Polling.

#### Registration open:

Saturday: 7:30 am – 10:30 am.

Saturday: 12 pm – 1 pm.

### Logging into the Assembly.

The waiting room will open 90 minutes prior to the start of the first plenary session and 60 minutes prior to the second plenary session. Once the sessions have been called to order, no additional participants will be admitted to that session.

- + Check in early so you have plenty of time to get settled. Once you are admitted, grab your favorite beverage, take a walk, read through the PreAssembly book, pray. **Do not wait until the last minute and risk losing your chance to participate and vote in that session's business.**
- + Upon admission, you will be placed into a waiting room where it will be silent until 10:15 am. This is expected.
- + Once you are admitted into the Zoom platform, there is no need to exit. Voting members will be muted and your camera will be turned off. This will eliminate the need to sign in and be placed in the waiting room again.

### Watch Party.

We encourage “watch parties” for voting members attending onLINE. Congregations may gather as a group with their rostered leaders to participate, discern, celebrate, and enjoy the Assembly on one big screen and use their individual devices for voting sessions.



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## REV. DR. PHILIP HIRSCH – ELCA Churchwide Representative.

The Rev. Dr. Philip C. Hirsch is working to bring about the revitalization of ELCA congregations in the United States by recruiting, training, and supporting leaders. He has a passion for the Gospel of Jesus Christ and for helping new people find faith and Christian community. He believes the church can and will grow younger and more diverse and that there is nothing more powerful than God’s love because it can transform first the human heart and then the world.

Pastor Hirsch is the Executive Director of Christian Community and Leadership (USA) for the ELCA (since February 2019). His responsibilities include starting new churches, developing congregational vitality, leadership and candidacy, seminaries and colleges, youth and young adult ministries including the national youth gathering, multicultural ministries, disability ministries, and the directors for evangelical mission who work in synods for congregations.

Pastor Hirsch graduated from Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove PA in Sociology and Psychology and received a Master of Divinity degree from the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. He earned a Doctor of Ministry from United Theological Seminary in Dayton Ohio in preaching with a focus on alleviating violence in the inner city. He was awarded a Leadership Grant from the Lily Foundation to continue his work and study in South Africa.

Pastor Hirsch was assistant to the bishop and Director of Evangelical Mission for the Metropolitan Washington DC Synod where they launched an effort to grow the synod by 10% and started new churches to make that happen 2009-2019. He was pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Fairfax, VA 2000-2009 and of Christus, Epiphany, Grace, La Trinidad and New Life Lutheran Churches in Camden, NJ 1990-2000.

He was Vice President of the Camden Lutheran Housing and President of Dooley House, a series of homes for sick children and their families. He was a leader in Camden Churches Organized for People, a church-based community organizing effort that brought millions of dollars to the city for housing, safety and job creating businesses. He worked on the burned churches project with the National Council of Churches.

He is married to Dana M. T. Hirsch, and they have three adult sons. He is a cabinet maker and enjoys bicycling, hiking, skiing, and photography. He and Dana live in Chicago, IL.



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## REV. DR. AARON SUOMALA FOLKERDS – *Keynote Speaker.*

Rev. Dr. Aaron Suomala Folkerds is an Assistant Professor in the graduate counseling program at Minnesota State University-Moorhead. He also serves as the part-time wellness coordinator at the Moorhead Police Department and is the Minister of Mental Health for the Northwest MN Synod (ELCA). He holds a B.A. in psychology from University of Minnesota-Morris, an M.Div. from Lutheran School Theology at Chicago, an MS in mental health counseling from Minnesota State University-Mankato, an Ed.D. in counselor education and supervision from the same institution and is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT-MN).

Aaron has had an eclectic career including work as a plumber, painter, roofer, insurance customer service, parish pastor (serving for 5 years in SWMN Synod), emergency medical technician, mental health counselor, and hospital/police chaplain.

In addition to his professional work Aaron enjoys flying airplanes (private pilot), reading, hunting, fishing, traveling, doing house projects, and spending time with his family.

Aaron is happily married to Rev. Mary Suomala Folkerds. They have a son Paul (12) and two exchange students, Esther (17 from Rwanda) and Timea (20 from Slovakia). Aaron and Mary lost their first child, Helena, in 2008 after complications from a heart surgery.



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## BISHOP NIKOSINATHI MYAKA – *Southeastern Diocese of South Africa*

Born and raised in the Maphumulo and Ntunjambili areas.

After matric (1985) joined the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Umphumulo (1987) and later proceeded to University of Natal (now University of KwaZuluNatal) to further studies (1989).

Bishop Myaka worked as a teacher 1993 to 1997.

He was ordained into full-time ministry in 1998 and served Umhlangana (Ondini Circuit), Christianenburg (Durban Circuit) and Greytown (Umvoti Circuit) Parishes until 2006. He also served as Dean of Umngeni Circuit from 2007 – 2020.



He was elected and consecrated Bishop of ELCSA-SED in 2020. In 2022 elected Presiding Bishop of ELCSA. His main areas of focus in ministry include recovery programs, especially the recovery of the ELCAS Theological Seminary. He serves as a member of ELCSA Church Council (ex officio) and as Chairperson of KwaZulu Natal Council of Churches and a member of the National Committee of the South African Council of Churches.

Bishop Myaka was married to Nontokozo (teacher) and blessed with three sons Phiwayinkosi (community development worker), Ndabezinhle (teacher/student), and Masomusa (still at school); and grandson Sibanisezwe (toddler).

Bible verse: “By grace you have been saved.” Ephesians 2:5

Motto: “Never wait for perfect conditions - do what you are able to do and keep improving.” (Ecclesiastes 11:4)



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## Rules of Procedure.

- I. **Agenda.** The agenda and rules of procedure shall be presented and adopted at the beginning of the first plenary session of the Synod Assembly. Once adopted, neither document may be amended except by a two-thirds majority vote of the Assembly. Any additions to the agenda, after adoption by the Assembly, shall require a two-thirds vote to add the new item of business to the agenda.

## II. Rules of the Assembly.

### Right to Speak.

- A. Lay voting members elected by congregations and authorized worshiping communities of the synod and accredited to the Assembly by their proper registration with the Credentials Committee.
- B. All Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ministers of Word and Service under call on the roster of this synod.
- C. Persons on the roster of this synod who are retired or on leave from call (who are not otherwise a voting member of the Assembly).
- D. Executives of ministry institutions or agencies that serve in partnership with the Southwestern Minnesota Synod.
- E. Lay members of the Synod Council and Conference Chairpersons.
- F. Officers of the ELCA, executives of the various units, offices, and commissions of the ELCA, synod members serving on Churchwide boards, and synod members serving boards of institutions that serve in partnership with the synod.
- G. Youth representatives who are accredited to the Assembly by proper registration with the Credentials Committee.
- H. Pastors of other denominations who are serving congregations of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod.

### Right to Vote.

- A. Voting members elected by congregations and authorized worshiping communities of the synod, who have been accredited to the Assembly by proper registration with the Credentials Committee.
- B. All rostered ministers under call on the roster of this synod.
- C. Retired pastors on the roster of the synod serving in interim ministries in congregations of the synod during the time of the Synod Assembly.
- D. Retired and on leave from call rostered ministers who have been accredited to the Assembly by proper registration with the Credentials Committee.
- E. A rostered minister from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA serving in a congregation during the time of the Synod Assembly.
- F. Lay members of the Synod Council, including officers and Conference Chairpersons, are properly registered with the Credentials Committee.

**Point of Order:** Any member may submit a “point of order” to the chair and may, if necessary, interrupt a speaker for that purpose. OnLINE voting members will do this via the “chat” feature in Zoom.

**Making a Motion:** Once recognized by the chair to make a motion, the speaker will state their name and congregation membership and then state the motion using: “I move that...” Once the motion is made, if there is a second, the voting member will have two (2) minutes to speak in support of the motion. OnLINE voting members submit the motion via the “chat” feature in Zoom. The maker of the motion must provide their name, congregation, and city – followed by the motion. The Zoom moderator will forward the motion to the chair of the Assembly. When recognized by the chair, the maker of the motion should identify themselves and state the motion using: “I move that...”. The chair shall then announce whether the motion requires a second. After it is moved (and seconded) the chair shall restate the motion and, if appropriate, ask for discussion.

**Speaking During Discussion:** If an onSITE voting member wishes to speak to a pending matter, they will approach a microphone, with the appropriate color card, on the plenary floor. Once they are recognized by the chair, the speaker will state their name, home congregation and whether they favor (green card), oppose (red card), or are asking a clarifying question (white card). Originator of resolution shall have three (3) minutes to speak to the resolution. All other speeches shall be limited to no more than two (2) minutes; and a voting member may address a topic no more than two times. Speeches will alternate between those speaking for (green card) and against (red card) the pending matter. Those who have spoken once to a resolution shall not speak again to the same resolution until all others have had the opportunity to speak once, except when invited by the chair to respond to questions of clarification. Second speeches shall be limited to one ( 1 ) minute. OnLINE voting members must submit their request via the “chat” function in Zoom.

**Amendments to the Motion:** When a motion brought before the Assembly does not receive ready acceptance by all voting members, a proposal to modify the wording of the motion can be made by the following: “I move to amend the motion on the floor.” This will require a second. Then, a majority vote is necessary to pass the amended motion.

**Withdrawal of a Motion:** Any motion or amendment may be withdrawn by permission of the Assembly or the person who originally made the motion.

**Previous Question:** To move (call) the previous question is to bring the Assembly to an immediate decision as to whether debate on a motion should cease. It is not debatable. If adopted, the Assembly proceeds, without further debate, to vote at once on the pending question(s). A two-thirds vote is required to close debate.

**Resolutions.** The following regulations will be observed with regard to resolutions: Only resolutions received by the Synod Assembly Resolutions Committee and at the Synod office at least 60 days prior to the Synod Assembly will be considered at the Synod Assembly. Authority is granted to the Synod Assembly Resolutions Committee to determine whether a given resolution qualifies for assembly consideration, and a two-thirds majority vote shall override the decision of the Synod Assembly Resolutions Committee.

A background statement, not to exceed one page, and outlining both pro and con arguments relative to the resolution should be provided by every individual or group that presents a resolution for Assembly action. This background statement should be separate from the resolution itself.

The Synod Assembly Resolutions Committee will receive all submitted resolutions and prepare them for consideration by the Assembly. In this preparation, the committee’s goal shall be to assist the assembly in focusing on significant matters, having helpful and efficient discussion, and taking appropriate action. In pursuit of these goals, the committee will strive to respect the intent of those who submitted the resolution to the assembly.

Committee work on resolutions may include but is not limited to the following: editing for accuracy, clarity, brevity, and internal consistency and for appropriate form and process; editing for fidelity to the synod’s governing documents, including its Statement of Faith; abbreviation; editing and supplementing of background information including reference to prior assembly actions. The committee may choose to consult the author and/or submitters of a resolution concerning an edit, but the committee itself has final authority to alter a resolution or to determine whether a given resolution qualifies for assembly consideration according to the provisions listed below:

- A. Was the proposed memorial or resolution timely? (i.e. was it submitted before the deadline?)
- B. Is the proposed memorial or resolution consistent with the governing documents of this church?
- C. Is the proposed memorial or resolution germane to issues on the agenda?
- D. Does the proposed memorial or resolution address a priority, ministry, or concern of this synod and this church?
- E. Is this proposed memorial or resolution clearly drafted?
- F. Do the “resolved” clauses clearly define the proposed course of action?
- G. Do the “whereas” clauses explain the proposed action and are they accurate and non-argumentative?
- H. Does the proposed memorial or resolution have budgetary or human resource implications, and, if so, how will they be addressed?
- I. Are the proposed actions feasible and appropriate for the Synod Assembly, Church Council, Churchwide Assembly, or the churchwide unit or office that will be addressed?
- J. Are there other memorials or resolutions that address the same or similar issues?

In addition, the Resolutions Committee may also ask authors and/or submitters to combine two or more resolutions with similar foci in order to enhance clarity of the authors’ voice and/or the submitters’ intent and preserve helpful and efficient discussion on the assembly floor while reducing redundancy.

For resolutions submitted with background information, such history must be concise and support a clear solution to a concern or problem. Background information should not be only a repetition of a given problem. Authors and submitters of

resolutions should ensure that roughly 40 percent of their resolution (including background information) should deal with the details of the particular problem, while about 60 percent should address a solution.

The Resolutions Committee shall report its recommendations on memorials, resolutions, and main motions to the Synod Assembly. Such recommendations do not require a second. When the Resolutions Committee recommends approval, the committee's recommendation shall be the main motion before the assembly. When the Resolutions Committee recommends the adoption of a substitute or alternative motion, the committee's recommendation shall be the main motion before the assembly. When the Resolutions Committee recommends referral, the committee's recommendation shall become the main motion before the assembly. When the Resolutions Committee recommends that the assembly decline a proposed memorial, resolution, or main motion, the recommendation shall be reported to the assembly. If the author or another voting member wishes to bring the declined proposed memorial, resolution, or main motion to the floor, he or she may move the matter, and it shall become the main motion before the assembly, and the committee's recommendation shall be received for information.

No resolutions will be accepted at the assembly except those growing out of assembly business or of such an urgent nature that they obviously cannot be postponed until the next Assembly. Such resolutions will be allowed until 12:00 noon on the first day of the assembly.

As Assembly resolutions are introduced for consideration and debate, the Synod Secretary will eliminate the reading of the "whereas" clauses and read only the "be it resolved" clause of the resolution.

The order that resolutions will be brought to the floor will be determined by the presiding officer based on the urgency of the resolution and the time available for debate.

### III. Nominations and Elections.

**Elections.** In all elections by the Synod Assembly, other than for the bishop, a majority of legal votes cast shall be necessary for election.

- A. Approval of the Nominating Committee report shall constitute nomination of the persons named in the report for the respective offices and positions.
- B. Additional nominations by voting members of the Assembly shall be made at the time of the Nominating Committee Report. Complete candidate information for each nominee shall be presented in writing to the Secretary on forms provided by the Nominating Committee. The nomination must specify the exact position for which the nomination is being made. The person making the nomination must certify that the nominee meets the requirements of the position and consents to being nominated.
- C. No additional nominations shall be accepted after approval of the Nominating Committee report and the close of additional nominations.
- D. Unless otherwise required by the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod or the ELCA, a majority shall be required for election. If no candidate receives a majority of votes for a particular position on the first ballot, the two candidates (plus ties) with the highest number of votes shall be on the second ballot. In those instances where more than two candidates continue to the second ballot, a majority is required for election on the second or any subsequent ballot. Balloting will continue with the two candidates (plus ties) receiving the highest number of votes continuing to the next ballot until one candidate receives a majority.
- E. The Synod Secretary will cast a unanimous ballot for all synod positions where there is only one name on the ballot.
- F. The result of each ballot in every election shall be announced in detail to the Assembly.

### IV. Miscellaneous.

- A. No printed materials of any kind may be distributed or posted within the assembly hall except by the Synod Assembly Planning Team, and only following authorization granted by the assembly manager.
- B. Cell phones, laptops, and other wireless devices must be on silent mode in the Assembly hall. Calls are not allowed in the Assembly hall.
- C. A motion to adjourn is debatable.
- D. The chair, at any time, may declare a recess of the assembly for purposes of addressing technical issues.
- E. Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of the Synod Assembly.

## Table of Parliamentary Terms.

To accomplish this:	You say this:	Interrupt the speaker?	Is a second necessary?	Is it debatable?	Can it be amended?	Necessary vote
Item of business	"I move that..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a motion	"I move to amend the motion by..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Give further study	"I move to refer the matter to committee..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Postpone discussion for stated period of time	"I move to postpone the discussion until..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
End debate on amendments	"I move the previous question."	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Suspend consideration of an issue temporarily	"I move to table the motion."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Other motions to:	You say:					
Request Information	"Point of information"	Yes	No	No	No	No vote
Reconsider an action	"I move to reconsider the vote on..."	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Verify a voice vote	"I call for a division."	Yes	No	No	No	No vote
Limit or extend time in debate	"I move to..."	No	Yes	No	No	2/3



*"one body in Christ"*

## Brief Overview: Reconsideration of Social Statement

The Social Statement, Human Sexuality: Gift & Trust was adopted by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly. <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Human-Sexuality>.

For the ELCA, Social Statements are teaching and study documents, not decrees. All the Social Statements of this church can be seen here: <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements>

The Human Sexuality Social Statement covers a broad range of topics, including marriage, sexuality and family, children, divorce, the self, friendship, and sex outside of marriage. Same-gender relationships are discussed in one section out of 23. The Statement considers human sexuality as a gift & trust through the lens of a distinctly Lutheran approach, and considers social structures that enhance social trust, and trust in relationships. It addresses sexuality and social responsibility, including the global sex trade, the commercialization of sex, internet sex, sexual abuse, clergy misconduct, sexually transmitted diseases, and much more. The Social Statement considers the way social structures shelter, sustain, and protect personal, family, and social relationships of love and trustworthiness.

The Social Statement recognizes that this church does not have consensus on the matter of same-gender relationships, and that:

- On the basis of conscience-bound belief, some are convinced that same-gender sexual behavior is sinful, contrary to biblical teaching and their understanding of natural law. They believe same-gender sexual behavior carries the grave danger of unrepentant sin. They therefore conclude that the neighbor and the community are best served by calling people in same-gender sexual relationships to repentance for that behavior and to a celibate lifestyle. Such decisions are intended to be accompanied by pastoral response and community support.
- On the basis of conscience-bound belief, some are convinced that homosexuality and even lifelong, monogamous, homosexual relationships reflect a broken world in which some relationships do not pattern themselves after the creation God intended. While they acknowledge that such relationships may be lived out with mutuality and care, they do not believe that the neighbor or community are best served by publicly recognizing such relationships as traditional marriage.
- On the basis of conscience-bound belief, some are convinced that the scriptural witness does not address the context of sexual orientation and lifelong loving and committed relationships that we experience today. They believe that the neighbor and community are best served when same-gender relationships are honored and held to high standards and public accountability, but they do not equate these relationships with marriage. They do, however, affirm the need for community support and the role of pastoral care and may wish to surround lifelong, monogamous relationships or covenant unions with prayer.
- On the basis of conscience-bound belief, some are convinced that the scriptural witness does not address the context of sexual orientation and committed relationships that we experience today. They believe that the neighbor and community are best served when same-gender relationships are lived out with lifelong and monogamous commitments that are held to the same rigorous standards, sexual ethics, and status as heterosexual marriage. They surround such couples and their lifelong commitments with prayer to live in ways that glorify God, find strength for the challenges that will be faced, and serve others. They believe same-gender couples should avail themselves of social and legal support for themselves, their children, and other dependents and seek the highest legal accountability available for their relationships.

The Social Statement calls for mutual respect in relationships and for guidance that seeks the good of each individual and of the community, accompanying one another in study, prayer, discernment, pastoral care, and mutual respect.



Thirteen years later, the 2022 Churchwide Assembly authorized 2 reconsiderations of the Social Statement:

- 1) Reconsideration #1 - Editorial. Looks at clarifying word changes only, based on the civil law changes governing same-sex marriages that have been adopted since 2009.
- 2) Reconsideration #2 – Substantive. Look at the four convictions Lutherans can faithfully hold about same-gender relationships, that is, that people are “conscience-bound” in their beliefs.

“Reconsideration” is the technical term for the process by which we as a church can think again about specific elements in a social statement. It does not mean totally rejecting the Social Statement. It allows the church to thoughtfully, prayerfully, and communally re-examine particular parts of a social teaching document.

**This process is JUST beginning.** A Task Force has just been appointed by the ELCA Church Council. It is composed of ELCA members who hold a diversity of viewpoints, gender, sex, race/ethnicity, geography, age, and other factors. It is responsible specifically to the Office of the Presiding Bishop and to the ELCA Church Council. Learn more at: [https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/FAQ\\_Human\\_Sexuality\\_Reconsiderations\\_2023.pdf](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/FAQ_Human_Sexuality_Reconsiderations_2023.pdf)

The Task Force will provide drafts for public comment and include a survey to collect public feedback. They will review all input and then send a proposal to the ELCA Church Council.

If adopted, the Resolutions before the 2024 SW MN Synod Assembly are directed to the Synod Council, which is the body that then communicates with the ELCA Church Council.

The ELCA Church Council will forward recommendations on **Reconsideration #1 to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly**, and **Reconsideration #2 to the 2028 Churchwide Assembly**.

## RESOLUTION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION for RESOLUTION 24:01.

The Resolution Committee reports Resolution 24.01 with the recommendation to NOT ADOPT.

**RATIONALE:** We find that the proposed Resolution 24.01 is in conflict with our confession of faith (Synod Constitution S4.05 & S4.06, ELCA Constitution 2.05 & 2.06). Specifically, we find that the Resolution assumes an understanding of sin that is alien to the theology of the Lutheran Confessions. Our understanding of sin is found in several places, perhaps most clearly in Article 7 of the Smalcald Articles – Concerning the Keys:

*“The keys are an office and authority given to the church by Christ to bind and loose sins – not only the crude and notorious sins but also the subtle, secret ones that only God knows... For it is not in our power but in God’s alone to judge which, how great, and how many sins there are.”* Book of Concord, ed Robert Kolb & Timothy Wengert, Augsburg Press, 2000, p. 321

### RESOLUTION 24.01

#### CLARIFYING QUESTION REGARDING HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

**Whereas** the ELCA does not currently have a clear stance on whether homosexual relationships are considered sinful or not, and

**Whereas** Christians of some denominations tell our LGBTQ+ parishioners that their LGBTQ+ relationships are sinful and that they will “burn in hell for being unrepentant” and

**Whereas** many ELCA congregations are divided on what they believe on this issue making it very difficult for a pastor to publicly affirm that God blesses LGBTQ+ relationships without negative repercussions from their congregations and

**Whereas** those negative repercussions may very negatively affect a pastor’s call, even to an extent that it may end that call, and

**Whereas** LGBTQ couples have sometimes assumed that ELCA congregations are universally supportive of their relationships and have been devastated to find out later that a sizeable percentage of their congregation is against their relationships, especially when a congregation refuses to support their marriage, and

**Whereas** this then becomes spiritually dangerous in that a person may not only leave the ELCA but leave Christianity as altogether, and

**Whereas** the 2022 Churchwide Assembly authorized the reconsideration of several points in the social statement “Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust” (HSGT) which work is underway, therefore

**Resolved** that the 2024 Southwestern Minnesota Synod Assembly, direct this resolution be forwarded to the Southwestern Minnesota Synod Council, to forward this resolution to the Church Council, with a request that it be transmitted to the Office of Presiding Bishop and the Task Force working on revisions to HS:GT, to make a clear statement on that homosexual relationships are not sinful.

*Submitted by 2024 Shetek Conference Assembly  
Originally Submitted by Pastor Adam Roberts  
The American Lutheran Church  
Windom, MN*

**As received from the Shetek Conference, Pr. Adam Roberts.**

Whereas the ELCA does not have a clear stance on whether homosexual relationships are considered a sin or not,  
Be it resolved that Churchwide makes a clear decision on whether homosexual relationships are a sin or not at their  
next churchwide assembly and be it further resolved that they change all documents to support their decision as quickly  
as possible.

Submitted by Pr Adam Roberts and  
Approved by Shetek Conference.

## RESOLUTION 24.02

### REGARDING REVISIONS TO *HUMAN SEXUALITY: GIFT AND TRUST*

The Resolutions Committee reports resolution 24.02 for action, without recommendation

**WHEREAS**, the controversial Social Statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (hereafter HS:GT) was adopted by the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly by the slimmest possible margin,<sup>1</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, several congregations of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA terminated their affiliation with the ELCA following the adoption of HS:GT based on their belief that this Church had committed itself to false doctrine through this social statement, and

**WHEREAS**, in the Shetek Conference many congregations were reassured that “[this church recognizes that, with conviction and integrity, on the basis of conscience-bound belief,”<sup>2</sup> those who hold the traditional Christian positions on same-gender sexual behavior would be treated “with profound respect for the conscience-bound belief of the neighbor,”<sup>3</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly authorized “a possible revision of the social statement on HSGT which reconsiders the church’s current concept of the four positions of bound conscience. This revision would focus on pages 19-21 (“lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships”) and any other references to the four positions of bound conscience,”<sup>4</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, any revision that reduces or restricts the options of respect of the conscience-bound beliefs would create scandal, undermine trust, and potentially rupture the relationship of congregations in the Shetek Conference to the Southwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Shetek Conference memorialize the 2024 Synod Assembly of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA to officially oppose and urge the rejection of any changes to *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* which diminish its “profound respect for the conscience-bound belief,”<sup>5</sup> of those who hold traditional Christian positions on same-gender sexual behavior, and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Shetek Conference urges the 2024 Synod Assembly of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA to recommit itself to mutual respect for the conscience-bound beliefs of all congregations, clergy, and laypersons in all of its public expressions, and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the 2024 Synod Assembly of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod, direct this resolution be forwarded to the Southwestern Minnesota Synod Council, to forward this resolution to the Church Council with a request that it be transmitted to the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the task force working on revisions to HS:GT.

*Submitted by 2024 Shetek Conference Assembly.  
Originally submitted by Pastor Ted Carnahan,  
Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, Jackson, MN*

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<sup>1</sup> The vote was 676-338, which is exactly the two-thirds majority which was required for passage.

<sup>2</sup> *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (HSGT). p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> 2022 Churchwide Assembly Action CA22.03.23.

<sup>5</sup> *HSGT*, p. 21.

## Revisions to Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust

Submitted by Pastor Ted Carnahan, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Jackson, MN to the Shetek Conference of the Southwest Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**WHEREAS**, the controversial Social Statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (hereafter HSGT) was adopted by the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly by the slimmest possible margin,<sup>6</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, several congregations of the Southwest Minnesota Synod, ELCA terminated their affiliation with the ELCA following the adoption of HSGT based on their belief that this Church had committed itself to false doctrine through this social statement, and

**WHEREAS**, in the Shetek Conference many congregations were reassured that “[t]his church recognizes that, with conviction and integrity, on the basis of conscience-bound belief,”<sup>7</sup> those who hold the traditional Christian positions on same-gender sexual behavior would be treated “with profound respect for the conscience-bound belief of the neighbor,”<sup>8</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly authorized “a possible revision of the social statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust which reconsiders the church’s current concept of the four positions of bound conscience. This revision would focus on pages 19-21 (“lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships”) and any other references to the four positions of bound conscience,”<sup>9</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, any revision to the ‘four positions’ would create scandal, undermine trust, and potentially rupture the relationship of congregations in the Shetek Conference to the Southwest Minnesota Synod, ELCA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Shetek Conference memorialize the 2024 Synod Assembly of the Southwest Minnesota Synod, ELCA to officially oppose and urge the rejection of any changes to *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* which diminish its “profound respect for the conscience-bound belief,”<sup>10</sup> of those who hold traditional Christian positions on same-gender sexual behavior, and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Shetek Conference memorialize the 2024 Synod Assembly of the Southwest Minnesota Synod, ELCA to recommit itself to mutual respect for the conscience-bound beliefs of all congregations, clergy, and laypersons in all of its public expressions.

As received from the Shetek Conference, Pastor Ted Carnahan, Our Savior's, Jackson, MN.

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<sup>6</sup> The vote was 676-338, which is exactly the two-thirds majority which was required for passage.

<sup>7</sup> *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (HSGT). p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> 2022 Churchwide Assembly Action CA22.03.23.

<sup>10</sup> *HSGT*, p. 21.

RESOLUTION 24.03  
Regarding Bylaw Changes to the Synod Constitution

*Recommendation from the Synod Council of the SWMN Synod to remove the Engaging Leaders Board, the Equipping Congregations Board, and the Serving God's Word Board from the Bylaws of the SWMN Synod.*

**Whereas**, the Engaging Leaders Board, the Equipping Congregations Board, and the Serving God's Word Board no longer function in the capacity outlined in the Bylaws; and

**Whereas**, electing members to these Boards by the Synod Assembly is no longer deemed to be an effective practice for finding members willing and able to accomplish the goals of the Boards; and

**Whereas**, the work of these Boards continues to be completed by committees and teams led by Synod staff; and

**Whereas**, S11.30., S11.40., and S11.50. function as Paragraph titles rather than as part of the Constitution; and

**Be it Resolved**, to recommend to the Synod Assembly of the SWMN Synod to remove S11.30., S11.40., S11.50. and S11.30.01, S11.40.01. and S11.50.01 from the Constitution and Bylaws of the SWMN Synod at the 2024 Synod Assembly.

~~S11.30. Engaging Leaders Board~~

~~S11.30.01. There shall be a twelve member board for oversight, evaluating, and planning the synod's work of engaging leaders. It will focus on identifying, developing, and supporting lay and clergy leaders and their gifts.~~

~~S11.40. Equipping Congregations Board~~

~~S11.40.01. There shall be a twelve member board for oversight, evaluating, and planning the synod's work of equipping congregations for their ministry and mission in Christ's name.~~

~~S11.50. Serving in God's World Board~~

~~S11.50.01. There shall be a twelve member board for oversight, evaluating, and planning the synod's work of serving Christ's mission.~~

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Recommendation from Policies & Procedures Committee  
to the Synod Council of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod  
to recommend to the 2024 Synod Assembly  
to establish the Management and Mission Support Committee, the Policies and Procedures Committee, and the Servant leadership Committee  
as standing committees in the Bylaws of the SWMN Synod.

**Whereas**, the Policies and Procedures Committee has reviewed the actions of Synod Council resolution SC2000.9.68. and recommends the following resolution to codify the work of the current Management and Mission Support Committee, the Policies and Procedures Committee, and the Servant Leadership Committee; and

**Be it Resolved**, to recommend to the 2024 Southwestern Minnesota Synod Assembly to add to the Bylaws of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod Constitution S11.20., S11.21.01., S11.22.01., and S11.23.01. as outlined below:

S11.20. OTHER COMMITTEES OF THE SYOND

- S11.21.01 There shall be a Management and Mission Support Committee consisting of at least 5 persons, who shall be appointed by the Executive Committee of the Synod Council for a term of three years, with the opportunity to serve consecutive terms with re-appointment. This committee shall include members of the synod and elected members of the Synod Council. The Synod Treasurer shall serve as an *ex officio* member.
- S11.22.01. There shall be a Policies and Procedures Committee consisting of at least 9 persons, who shall be appointed by the Executive Committee of the Synod Council for a term of three years, with the opportunity to serve consecutive terms with re-appointment. This committee shall include members of the synod and elected members of the Synod Council. The Synod Secretary shall serve as an *ex officio* member.
- S11.23.01. There shall be a Servant Leadership Committee consisting of at least 5 persons, who shall be appointed by the Executive Committee of the Synod Council for a term of three years, with the opportunity to serve consecutive terms with re-appointment. This committee shall include members of the synod and elected members of the Synod Council.

**Recommendation from the Policies and Procedures Committee  
to the Synod Council of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod  
to recommend to the 2024 Synod Assembly the following approach  
to provide for Synod Council Members to be eligible for election to a second term  
And to change the formation of the Synod Council**

#### Chapter 10. SYNOD COUNCIL.

- \*S10.01.** The Synod Council, consisting of the four officers of the synod, 10 to 24 other members, and at least one youth and at least one young adult, shall be elected by the Synod Assembly.
- a. Each person elected to the Synod Council shall be a voting member of a congregation of this synod, with the exception of ministers on a roster of this synod who reside outside the territory of this synod. The process for election and the term of office when not otherwise provided shall be specified in the bylaws. A member of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, unless otherwise elected as a voting member of the Synod Council, may serve as an advisory member of the Synod Council with voice but not vote.
  - b. The term of office of members of the Synod Council, with the exception of the officers and the youth member, shall be three years.
- S10.01.01. The Synod Council shall include the officers of the synod, one person from each conference, one lay member from each conference, one rostered minister from each conference, one youth member of the synod, one young adult member of the synod, and four ~~seven~~ members elected at-large ~~, and two youth representatives.~~
- S10.01.02. Each conference's shall nominate their lay and rostered representatives members to the Synod Council at their ~~shall be nominated by the~~ Conference Assembly, striving to meet the requirements of \*S6.04. and \*S6.04.01. Each conference is encouraged to recommend to the Nominating Committee names for the youth member, the young adult members, and at-large members to stand for election at the Synod Assembly during election years for those positions. ~~to a three year term, with no consecutive re-election, and subsequently stand for election at the Synod Assembly.~~
- S10.01.03. ~~At all times five of the conferences shall be represented by laypersons and five of the conferences shall be represented by persons who are either ministers of Word and Sacrament or ministers of Word~~

~~and Service. This representation shall rotate with the completion of each term. Unless otherwise stated in this Constitution and Bylaws, Synod Council Members shall be elected to a 3 year term and shall be eligible for 2 consecutive election to a second terms when nominated by their conference assemblies and elected by the Synod Assembly as the incumbent.~~

- S10.01.04. ~~The seven Synod Council members elected at large shall include five laypersons and two persons who are either ministers of Word and Sacrament or ministers of Word and Service. These persons shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Synod Assembly to three year terms. They shall not be eligible for consecutive re-election.~~
- S10.01.05. ~~The terms of the members at large shall be rotated in such a way that normally no more than two lay members and one member who is either a minister of Word and Sacrament or minister of Word and Service shall be elected by the same Synod Assembly.~~
- S10.01.064. ~~Should a member of the Synod Council die, resign, or be unable to serve, or a seat declared vacant due to a lack of nominations or elected candidates at the Synod Assembly, the Synod Council shall appoint a replacement to serve until the next Synod Assembly. The appointed replacement does not need to meet the requirements as outlined in S10.01.01., but shall be a voting member of a congregation of this synod. The appointed replacement shall serve on Synod Council until the next Synod Assembly at which time a person shall be elected to complete the unexpired portion of the term.~~ and The appointed replacement may be nominated by the Synod Council to fill an open position for which they qualify. Individuals nominated to stand for open member-at-large, youth, and young adult positions within the last three years shall be considered when choosing an appointment to a vacant seat on Synod Council.
- S10.01.075. The term of each member of the Synod Council begins immediately after the adjournment of the Synod Assembly in the year of election, or on June 30 in years when there shall be no Synod Assembly.
- S10.01.086. Advisory members to the Synod Council shall be seated with voice, but not vote. Those members shall include:
- ~~a) synod representative(s) on the Region 3 Steering Committee;~~
  - a) presidents of the synod's Women of the ELCA, Lutheran Men in Mission, and Lutheran Youth Organization;
  - b) representatives of the Conference Deans and Conference Chairpersons;
  - c) synod ministers and other synod staff;
  - d) persons who reside in this synod and who are serving on the ELCA Church Council or ELCA churchwide boards of divisions, commissions, departments and offices;
  - e) others whom the Synod Council may invite, such as representatives of LSS of Minnesota and shared ministries funded through the budget.
- S10.01.097. The Synod Council shall meet at least three times annually. Special meetings may be called by any three voting members of the Synod Council, or by the bishop of the synod. In the case of the bishop's death, incapacity to serve, or removal, a special meeting may be called by the vice president. A majority of the voting members of the Synod Council shall constitute a quorum.
- S10.01.11. ~~There shall be two youth representatives on the Synod Council. Youth representatives shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Synod Assembly to a two year term. They shall not be eligible for consecutive re-election.~~
- \*S10.02. The Synod Council shall be the board of directors of this synod and shall serve as its interim legislative authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly. It may make decisions that are not in conflict with actions taken by the Synod Assembly or that are not precluded by provisions of this constitution or the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.



**Background:**

In the spring of 2023, the Synod Council discussed the possibility of Synod Council members being able to serve 2 consecutive terms, which is not allowed currently in the Synod Constitution. Members felt that conducting the governance of the synod requires time to gain understanding and knowledge, and that those who are eager and energized to do this work ought to be given an opportunity to do so for another term. They requested the Policies and Procedures Committee to consider a process that would allow serving 2 consecutive terms, without overly complicating the election process.

The recommendation strives to create broader Conference representation and voice through one lay member and one rostered minister member per Conference, while seeking representation of male/female balance and persons of color or whose primary language is other than English (per †S6.04.01). Conferences have the responsibility to identify and elect these members; if a member enjoys serving and wants to continue, there may not be an election for that position for 6 years. One youth member (under age 18), one young adult member (age 18-30), and four at-large members stand for election at the Synod Assembly. Both the current and the proposed maximum number of Synod Council members is 30 persons.

**Recommendation from the Policies and Procedures Committee to the Synod Council of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod to recommend to the 2024 Synod Assembly the following approach to provide for Synod Council Members to be eligible for election to a second term**

**Chapter 10. SYNOD COUNCIL.**

- †S10.01. The Synod Council, consisting of the four officers of the synod, 10 to 24 other members, and at least one youth and at least one young adult, shall be elected by the Synod Assembly.
  - a. Each person elected to the Synod Council shall be a voting member of a congregation of this synod, with the exception of ministers on a roster of this synod who reside outside the territory of this synod. The process for election and the term of office when not otherwise provided shall be specified in the bylaws. A member of the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, unless otherwise elected as a voting member of the Synod Council, may serve as an advisory member of the Synod Council with voice but not vote.
  - b. The term of office of members of the Synod Council, with the exception of the officers and the youth member, shall be three years.
  
- S10.01.01. The Synod Council shall include the officers of the synod, one lay member from each conference, one rostered minister from each conference, one youth member of the synod, one young adult member of the synod, and four members elected at-large.
  
- S10.01.02. Each conference shall nominate their lay and rostered-members to the Synod Council at their Conference Assembly, striving to meet the requirements of \*S6.04. and \*S6.04.01. Each conference is encouraged to recommend to the Nominating Committee names for the youth member, the young adult member, and at-large members to stand for election at the Synod Assembly during election years for those positions.
  
- S10.01.03. Unless otherwise stated in this Constitution and Bylaws, Synod Council Members shall be elected to a 3 year term and shall be eligible for election to a second term when nominated by their conference assemblies and elected by the Synod Assembly as the incumbent.
  
- S10.01.04. Should a member of the Synod Council die, resign, be unable to serve, or a seat declared vacant due to a lack of nominations or elected candidates at the Synod Assembly, the Synod Council shall appoint a replacement to serve until the next Synod Assembly. The appointed replacement does not need to meet the requirements as outlined in S10.01.01., but shall be a voting member of a congregation of this

synod. The appointed replacement shall serve on Synod Council until the next Synod Assembly at which time a person shall be elected to complete the unexpired portion of the term. The appointed replacement may be nominated by the Synod Council to fill an open seat for which they qualify. Individuals nominated to stand for open member-at-large, youth, and young adult seats within the last three years shall be considered when choosing an appointment to a vacant seat on Synod Council.

- S10.01.05. The term of each member of the Synod Council begins immediately after the adjournment of the Synod Assembly in the year of election, or on June 30 in years when there shall be no Synod Assembly.
- S10.01.06. Advisory members to the Synod Council shall be seated with voice, but not vote. Those members shall include:
- a. presidents of the synod's Women of the ELCA, Lutheran Men in Mission, and Lutheran Youth Organization;
  - b. representatives of the Conference Deans and Conference Chairpersons;
  - c. synod ministers and other synod staff;
  - d. persons who reside in this synod and who are serving on the ELCA Church Council or ELCA churchwide boards of divisions, commissions, departments and offices;
  - e. others whom the Synod Council may invite, such as representatives of LSS of Minnesota and shared ministries funded through the budget.
- S10.01.07. The Synod Council shall meet at least three times annually. Special meetings may be called by any three voting members of the Synod Council, or by the bishop of the synod. In the case of the bishop's death, incapacity to serve, or removal, a special meeting may be called by the vice president. A majority of the voting members of the Synod Council shall constitute a quorum.
- †S10.02. The Synod Council shall be the board of directors of this synod and shall serve as its interim legislative authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly. It may make decisions that are not in conflict with actions taken by the Synod Assembly or that are not precluded by provisions of this constitution or the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.



*“one body in Christ”*

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES.

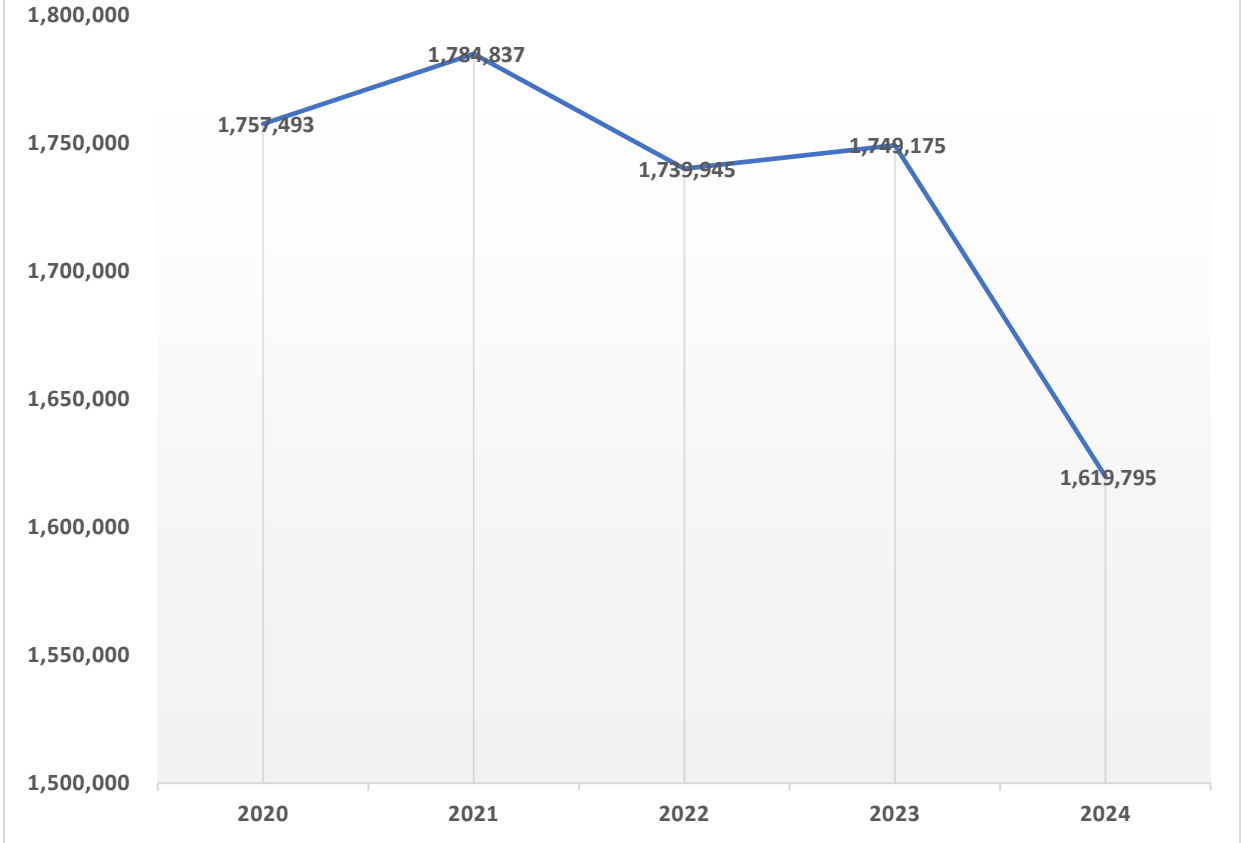
Southwestern Minnesota Synod - Budget Planning Operating Fund  
Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 2026.

- Address only Operating Fund activities.
- Aim for a balanced budget, representing the reality of the current operating climate and acknowledging recent trends in the Synod’s key operating revenue source – Mission Support from Congregations.
- Review options for slightly adjusting down the Synod’s church-wide support level from our current level of 51.5%, reflecting the reality of the current operating climate.
- Support new efforts underway to increase our Mission Support from Congregations and Contributions Revenue.
- Consider revenue from regular recurring offering and contributions sources (Advent Appeal, Synod Assembly workshop offering, etc.) as supporting routine operational expense categories.
- Conservatively budget support, gifts, and bequests from individuals, institutions, and endowment fund.
- Strive to balance expenses that have related revenues (such as Synod Assembly expenses and related registration fees).
- Base budget amounts for significant expenses (personnel, programs, and shared ministries) using best available information; reflecting known or anticipated plans.
- Utilize input from, and dialogue with, Synod leadership and committees (Personnel Committee, Synod Council, Management & Mission Support Committee, Synod Staff, etc.)
- Continue to budget for anticipated asset upgrades or replacements (vehicles, office equipment, etc.). The current expectation is to replace one Synod vehicle annually.



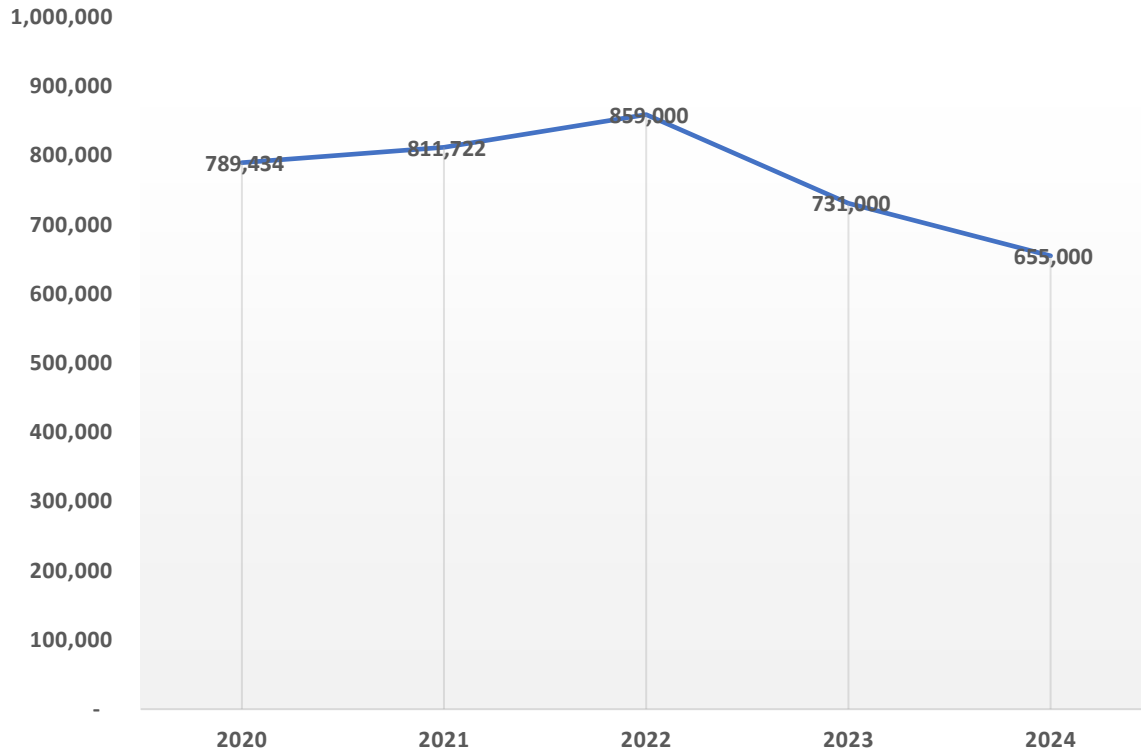
“one *body* in Christ”

**SWMN SYNOD**  
**Mission Support from Congregations**  
**at Year-End**



		Change	
		%	\$
2020	1,757,493	-3.6%	(65,959)
2021	1,784,837	1.6%	27,344
2022	1,739,945	-2.5%	(44,892)
2023	1,749,175	0.5%	9,230
2024	1,619,795	-7.4%	(129,380)

**SWMN SYNOD**  
**Operating Fund Net Assets**  
**at Year-End**



Jan 31		Change	
		%	\$
2020	789,434		
2021	811,722	2.8%	22,288
2022	859,000	5.8%	47,278
2023	731,000	-14.9%	(128,000)
2024	655,000	-10.4%	(76,000)

**SWMN SYNOD**  
**Budget Comparison Summary & Change**  
**FY's ending 2024, 2025 & 2026**

	Budget	Actual	Change		Budget	Budget	Change	
	1/31/2024	1/31/2024	\$	-	1/31/2025	1/31/2026	\$	-
<b>RECEIPTS</b>								
Mission Support from Congregations	1,740,000	1,619,795	(120,205)	-6.9%	1,825,000	1,675,000	(150,000)	-8.2%
Contributions	57,000	49,411	(7,589)	-13.3%	72,000	72,500	500	0.7%
Investments	25,000	55,491	30,491	122.0%	40,000	40,000	-	0.0%
Registration Fees	197,500	166,896	(30,604)	-15.5%	190,000	179,500	(10,500)	-5.5%
Other Income	-	736			-	-		
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>2,019,500</b>	<b>1,892,328</b>	<b>(127,172)</b>	<b>-6.3%</b>	<b>2,127,000</b>	<b>1,967,000</b>	<b>(160,000)</b>	<b>-7.5%</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>								
Mission Support to ELCA	896,100	834,194	(61,906)	-6.9%	939,900	837,500	(102,400)	-10.9%
Shared Ministries	181,000	181,000	-	0.0%	190,000	150,000	(40,000)	-21.1%
General Administration	179,500	114,927	(64,573)	-36.0%	167,000	167,000	-	0.0%
Programs	193,000	212,258	19,258	10.0%	203,500	190,250	(13,250)	-6.5%
Leadership/Governance	49,500	44,675	(4,825)	-9.7%	49,500	50,000	500	1.0%
Personnel	665,700	581,168	(84,532)	-12.7%	671,500	632,332	(39,168)	-5.8%
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>2,164,800</b>	<b>1,968,222</b>	<b>(196,578)</b>	<b>-9.1%</b>	<b>2,221,400</b>	<b>2,026,082</b>	<b>(195,318)</b>	<b>-8.8%</b>
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>2,019,500</b>	<b>1,892,328</b>	<b>(127,172)</b>	<b>-6.3%</b>	<b>2,127,000</b>	<b>1,967,000</b>	<b>(160,000)</b>	<b>-7.5%</b>
<b>SURPLUS (DEFICIT)</b>	<b>(145,300)</b>	<b>(75,894)</b>			<b>(94,400)</b>	<b>(59,082)</b>		

	FYE January 31, 2024							FYE January 31, 2025			FYE January 31, 2026					
	FYE 2024 Approved Budget			YTD THROUGH 1/31/24 (Preliminary)							FYE Approved Budget			M&M Support Comm. Working Draft Budget		
		As a % of Mission Support	As a % of Unrest. Receipts	Actual	As a % of Budgeted Mission Support	Actual	As a % of Budgeted Mission Support	As a % of Budgeted Unrest. Receipts	Actual	As a % of Budgeted Mission Support	As a % of Budgeted Unrest. Receipts		As a % of Mission Support	As a % of Unrest. Receipts		
<b>RECEIPTS</b>																
Mission Support	\$ 1,740,000			\$ 1,619,794.77				\$ (120,205)	\$ 1,825,000			\$ 1,675,000				
<b>Mission Support</b>	\$ 1,740,000	100.0%	86.2%	\$ 1,619,794.77	93.1%	100.0%	80.2%	85.6%	\$ (120,205)	\$ 1,825,000	100.0%	85.8%	\$ 1,675,000	100.0%	85.2%	
<b>Contributions</b>																
Synod Partnership Appeal	\$ 10,000			\$ 7,504.89				\$ (2,495)	\$ 15,000			\$ 15,000				
SW MN General Fund	\$ 10,000			\$ 8,100.00				\$ (1,900)	\$ 10,000			\$ 10,000				
DEM Support	\$ 12,000			\$ 10,309.10				\$ (1,691)	\$ 12,000			\$ 10,000				
Synod Assembly Offering	\$ 10,000			\$ 13,742.76				\$ 3,743	\$ 20,000			\$ 17,500				
Other (incl. gifts & bequests)	\$ 15,000			\$ 9,753.82				\$ (5,246)	\$ 15,000			\$ 20,000				
<b>Contributions</b>	\$ 57,000	3.3%	2.8%	\$ 49,410.57	2.8%	3.1%	2.4%	2.6%	\$ (7,589)	\$ 72,000	3.9%	3.4%	\$ 72,500	4.3%	3.7%	
<b>Investments</b>																
Interest & Other Investment Income	\$ 10,000			\$ 36,979.74	2.1%	2.3%		\$ 26,980	\$ 25,000			\$ 25,000				
Unr. Gain/Loss on Investments	\$ 15,000			\$ 18,511.49	1.1%	1.1%		\$ 3,511	\$ 15,000			\$ 15,000				
<b>Investments</b>	\$ 25,000	1.4%	1.2%	\$ 55,491.23	3.2%	3.4%	2.7%	2.9%	\$ 30,491	\$ 40,000	2.2%	1.9%	\$ 40,000	2.4%	2.0%	
<b>Registration Fees</b>																
Workshops	\$ 20,000			\$ 13,234.46				\$ (6,766)	\$ 17,500			\$ 16,000				
Continuous Growth Pathway/Predecessor	\$ -			\$ -				\$ -	\$ -			\$ -				
Youth Events	\$ 50,000			\$ 45,309.88				\$ (4,690)	\$ 50,000			\$ 55,000				
Candidacy Process	\$ 3,500			\$ 3,000.00				\$ (500)	\$ 3,500			\$ 3,500				
Theological Conference	\$ 24,000			\$ 19,462.35				\$ (4,538)	\$ 24,000			\$ 20,000				
Synod Assemb	\$ 100,000			\$ 85,889.00				\$ (14,111)	\$ 95,000			\$ 85,000				
<b>Registration Fees</b>	\$ 197,500	11.4%	9.8%	\$ 166,895.69	9.6%	10.3%	8.3%	8.8%	\$ (30,604)	\$ 190,000	10.4%	8.9%	\$ 179,500	10.7%	9.1%	
<b>Other Income</b>																
Other Income	\$ -			\$ 735.94				\$ 736	\$ -			\$ -				
Transfer from Restricted Accounts	\$ -			\$ -				\$ -	\$ -			\$ -				
SW MN Endowment Fund Grants	\$ -			\$ -				\$ -	\$ -			\$ -				
<b>Other Income</b>	\$ -	0.0%	0.0%	\$ 735.94	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	\$ 736	\$ -	0.0%	0.0%	\$ -	0.0%	0.0%	
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS - UNRESTRICTED</b>	\$ 2,019,500	116.1%	100.0%	\$ 1,892,328.20	108.8%	116.8%	93.7%	100.0%	\$ (127,172)	\$ 2,127,000	116.5%	100.0%	\$ 1,967,000	117.4%	100.0%	
<b>EXPENSES</b>																
<b>Mission Support to ELCA</b>																
Mission Support to ELCA	\$ 896,100			\$ 834,194.31				\$ 61,906	\$ 939,900			\$ 837,500				
<b>Mission Support to ELCA</b>	\$ 896,100	51.5%	44.4%	\$ 834,194.31	47.9%	51.5%	41.3%	44.1%	\$ 61,906	\$ 939,900	51.5%	44.2%	\$ 837,500	50.0%	42.6%	
<b>Shared Ministries</b>																
Lutheran Campus Ministry	\$ 85,000			\$ 85,000				\$ -	\$ 90,000			\$ 67,500				
Shalom Hill Farm	\$ 500			\$ 500				\$ -	\$ 2,000			\$ 4,000				
Minnesota Council of Churches	\$ 12,500			\$ 12,500				\$ -	\$ 11,000			\$ 8,250				
Luther Seminary	\$ 78,000			\$ 78,000				\$ -	\$ 78,000			\$ 58,500				
Lutheran Advocacy - Minnesota	\$ 5,000			\$ 5,000				\$ -	\$ 5,000			\$ 3,750				
To be determined	\$ -			\$ -				\$ -	\$ -			\$ -				
Mission Developments	\$ -			\$ -				\$ -	\$ 4,000			\$ 8,000				
<b>Shared Ministries</b>	\$ 181,000	10.4%	9.0%	\$ 181,000.00	10.4%	11.2%	9.0%	9.6%	\$ -	\$ 190,000	10.4%	8.9%	\$ 150,000	9.0%	7.6%	
<b>General Administration</b>																
Postage	\$ 5,000			\$ 3,688.17				\$ 1,312	\$ 5,000			\$ 4,000				
Miscellaneous Expense	\$ 4,500			\$ 5,818.99				\$ (1,319)	\$ 4,500			\$ 4,500				
Insurance Expense (property/auto/liability)	\$ 15,000			\$ 15,184.71				\$ (185)	\$ 15,000			\$ 15,500				

	FYE January 31, 2024										FYE January 31, 2025			FYE January 31, 2026		
	FYE 2024 Approved Budget			YTD THROUGH 1/31/24 (Preliminary)							FYE Approved Budget			M&M Support Comm. Working Draft Budget		
		As a % of Mission Support	As a % of Unrest. Receipts	Actual	As a % of Budgeted Mission Support	As a % of Actual Mission Support	As a % of Budgeted Unrest. Receipts	As a % of Actual Unrest. Receipts	Favorable (Unfavorable) Variance		As a % of Mission Support	As a % of Unrest. Receipts		As a % of Mission Support	As a % of Unrest. Receipts	
Staff Conferences/Training	\$ 4,000			\$ 3,351.88				\$ 648	\$ 6,500			\$ 4,000				
Staff Travel	\$ 10,000			\$ 5,413.30				\$ 4,587	\$ 9,000			\$ 7,500				
Equipment Maintenance/Repair	\$ 3,000			\$ 257.00				\$ 2,743	\$ 3,000			\$ 3,000				
Building Maintenance/Repair	\$ 30,000			\$ 4,375.27				\$ 25,625	\$ 10,000			\$ 10,000				
Technology Support	\$ 5,000			\$ 2,262.01				\$ 2,738	\$ 5,000			\$ 4,500				
Telephone/Internet	\$ 7,500			\$ 7,684.29				\$ (184)	\$ 9,000			\$ 8,000				
Vehicle Maintenance/Repair	\$ 3,000			\$ 2,173.19				\$ 827	\$ 4,000			\$ 3,000				
Office Equipment < \$1,500	\$ 2,500			\$ 101.66				\$ 2,398	\$ 2,500			\$ 2,500				
Accounting & Auditing Fees	\$ 46,000			\$ 44,350.00				\$ 1,650	\$ 46,000			\$ 48,000				
Legal Fees	\$ 3,500			\$ -				\$ 3,500	\$ 2,500			\$ 2,500				
Utilities	\$ 8,500			\$ 7,608.84				\$ 891	\$ 9,500			\$ 9,000				
Supplies	\$ 5,500			\$ 3,420.99				\$ 2,079	\$ 5,000			\$ 5,000				
Equipment Leases	\$ 11,500			\$ 9,236.47				\$ 2,264	\$ 10,000			\$ 10,000				
Future Equipment Purchases	\$ 15,000			\$ -				\$ 15,000	\$ 20,500			\$ 25,000				
<b>General Administration</b>	<b>\$ 179,500</b>	<b>10.3%</b>	<b>8.9%</b>	<b>\$ 114,926.77</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>7.1%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>\$ 64,573</b>	<b>\$ 167,000</b>	<b>9.2%</b>	<b>7.9%</b>	<b>\$ 166,000</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	
<b>Programs</b>																
Workshop Expenses	\$ 16,000			\$ 25,011.35				\$ (9,011)	\$ 15,000			\$ 15,000				
Synod Assembly Expense	\$ 85,000			\$ 77,654.70				\$ 7,345	\$ 90,000			\$ 65,000				
DEM Support Expense	\$ 4,000			\$ 4,612.48				\$ (612)	\$ 4,000			\$ 4,250				
Region 3 Archives	\$ 8,500			\$ 8,725.30				\$ (225)	\$ 8,500			\$ 10,000				
Senior High Youth Gathering	\$ 15,000			\$ 15,678.27				\$ (678)	\$ 15,000			\$ 15,000				
Junior High Youth Gathering	\$ 25,000			\$ 41,159.57				\$ (16,160)	\$ 30,000			\$ 35,000				
LYO Board (WAS:Youth Ministries - Other)	\$ 5,500			\$ 6,632.63				\$ (1,133)	\$ 5,000			\$ 5,000				
Shared Risk Fund	\$ 2,000			\$ -				\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000			\$ 2,000				
Planned Giving Ministry	\$ 20,000			\$ 13,500.00				\$ 6,500	\$ 14,000			\$ 19,000				
Theological Conference Expense	\$ 12,000			\$ 19,284.00				\$ (7,284)	\$ 20,000			\$ 20,000				
Other	\$ -			\$ -				\$ -	\$ -			\$ -				
<b>Programs</b>	<b>\$ 193,000</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>9.6%</b>	<b>\$ 212,258.30</b>	<b>12.2%</b>	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>\$ (19,258)</b>	<b>\$ 203,500</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>9.6%</b>	<b>\$ 190,250</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>9.7%</b>	
<b>Leadership/Governance</b>																
Meetings/Programs - Synod Leaders (Council, Boards, Committees, Deans, etc.)	\$ 5,000			\$ 2,397.46				\$ 2,603	\$ 5,000			\$ 5,000				
Candidacy Process	\$ 8,000			\$ 10,367.77				\$ (2,368)	\$ 8,000			\$ 8,500				
Seminary Grad/Assignee Expense	\$ -			\$ -				\$ -	\$ -			\$ -				
Crisis Intervention	\$ 1,500			\$ -				\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500			\$ 1,500				
Support to Ministry	\$ 2,000			\$ 1,297.84				\$ 702	\$ 2,000			\$ 2,000				
Companion Synod Visitor Exchange	\$ 1,500			\$ 64.49				\$ 1,436	\$ 1,500			\$ 1,500				
Continuous Growth Pathway/Predecessor	\$ 15,000			\$ 15,000.00				\$ -	\$ 15,000			\$ 15,000				
Publications/Communications	\$ 11,000			\$ 12,821.07				\$ (1,821)	\$ 11,000			\$ 11,000				
Counseling	\$ 3,500			\$ -				\$ 3,500	\$ 3,500			\$ 3,500				
Program Development	\$ 2,000			\$ 2,726.35				\$ (726)	\$ 2,000			\$ 2,000				
Multicultural Ministry	\$ -			\$ -				\$ -	\$ -			\$ -				
To be determined	\$ -			\$ -				\$ -	\$ -			\$ -				
<b>Leadership/Governance</b>	<b>\$ 49,500</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>\$ 44,674.98</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>\$ 4,825</b>	<b>\$ 49,500</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>\$ 50,000</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	
<b>Personnel</b>																
Pastoral Staff Salaries, Housing, SS Allow	\$ 291,500			\$ 262,652.20				\$ 28,848	\$ 319,700			\$ 304,490				
Part-time Program Staff	\$ 19,400			\$ 11,465.00				\$ 7,935	\$ 5,000			\$ -				
Support Staff	\$ 145,500			\$ 139,088.56				\$ 6,411	\$ 138,000			\$ 146,663				
Custodian	\$ 2,400			\$ 1,559.52				\$ 840	\$ 2,500			\$ 2,500				
Medical and Retirement Benefits	\$ 169,200			\$ 158,946.73				\$ 10,253	\$ 182,300			\$ 154,778				
FICA Tax	\$ 11,200			\$ 11,295.15				\$ (95)	\$ 11,900			\$ 11,200				
Workers' Compensation	\$ 3,600			\$ 2,707.39				\$ 893	\$ 2,800			\$ 3,000				



	FYE January 31, 2024							FYE January 31, 2025			FYE January 31, 2026									
	FYE 2024 Approved Budget			YTD THROUGH 1/31/24 (Preliminary)							FYE Approved Budget			M&M Support Comm. Working Draft Budget						
		As a % of Mission Support	As a % of Unrest. Receipts	Actual	As a % of Budgeted Mission Support	As a % of Actual Mission Support	As a % of Budgeted Unrest. Receipts	As a % of Actual Unrest. Receipts	Favorable (Unfavorable) Variance		As a % of Mission Support	As a % of Unrest. Receipts		As a % of Mission Support	As a % of Unrest. Receipts					
Continuing Education	\$	6,400		2,432.92				\$	3,967	\$	6,800		\$	7,200						
Other & To be determined	\$	16,500		-8,979.47				\$	25,479	\$	2,500		\$	2,500						
Personnel	\$	665,700	38.3%	33.0%	\$	581,168	33.4%	35.9%	28.8%	30.7%	\$	84,532	\$	671,500	36.8%	31.6%	\$	632,332	37.8%	32.1%
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	\$	2,164,800	124.4%	107.2%	\$	1,968,222	113.1%	121.5%	97.5%	104.0%	\$	196,578	\$	2,221,400	121.7%	104.4%	\$	2,026,082	121.0%	103.0%
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	\$	2,019,500	116.1%	100.0%	\$	1,892,328	108.8%	116.8%	93.7%	100.0%	\$	(127,172)	\$	2,127,000	116.5%	100.0%	\$	1,967,000	117.4%	100.0%
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	\$	(145,300)	-8.4%	-7.2%	\$	(75,894.16)	-4.4%	-4.7%	-3.8%	-4.0%	\$	69,406	\$	(94,400)	-5.2%	-4.4%	\$	(59,082)	-3.5%	-3.0%
									\$	69,406										

## Celebrations & Recognitions.

We thank the following ministers for their years of faithful and committed service. They are a gift to God's church.

### Celebrating 10 Years of Ordination.

Rev. Amy Karlson  
Rev. Ann Zastrow  
Rev. David Tonn  
Rev. Erika Buller  
Rev. Michael Buller  
Rev. Katherine Rohloff  
Rev. Kayla Monson  
Rev. Kristine Isder  
Rev. Lowell Krogstad  
Rev. Russell Britton

### Celebrating 25 Years of Ordination.

Rev. Eileen Mehl  
Rev. Grady St Dennis  
Rev. Rebecca Krogstad

### Celebrating 50 Years of Ordination.

Rev. Douglas Dobson  
Rev. Rodney Anderson  
Rev. Paul Bierlein

### Celebrating 55 Years of Ordination.

Rev. Donald Berheim

### Celebrating 60 Years of Ordination.

Rev. Daniel Buendorf  
Rev. Lloyd Berger  
Rev. Paul Berge  
Rev. Robert Amundson

### Celebrating 60+ Years of Ordination.

Rev. J. David Nelson – 65 years.  
Rev. Paul Idstrom – 65 years.  
Rev. Charles Anderson – 64 years  
Rev. Alan Schmidt – 64 years.  
Rev. Arlan Stensland – 64 years.  
Rev. Eugene Anderson – 62 years.  
Rev. Marlan Johnson – 62 years.  
Rev. Robert Moritz – 61 years.

### Celebrating 70 Years of Ordination.

Rev. Paul Dumke  
Rev. Earl Peterson – 71 years.

### Celebrating Retirement.

Rev. Janet Warnes  
Rev. Robert Stover  
Rev. Denise Fossen  
Rev. James Rothschiller  
Rev. Paul Johnson

## Congregations Celebrating a Milestone Anniversary.

### Celebrating 75 Years.

Trinity Lutheran, Truman

### Celebrating 125 Years.

Augustana Lutheran, Gibbon  
St John Lutheran, Marietta  
Our Savior's Lutheran, Milroy  
Bethany Lutheran, Morgan  
Waverly Lutheran, Welcome

### Celebrating 150 Years.

Trinity Lutheran, Benson  
Swedlanda Lutheran, Hector  
Bethesda Lutheran, Murdock  
St Paul Lutheran, Lowry  
Sundown Lutheran, Springfield  
Chippewa Falls Lutheran, Glenwood  
Trinity Lutheran, Welcome



“one body in Christ”

## Roster Report.

### Transfers to SW MN SYNOD. WELCOME!

Rev. Paul Bierlein - retired  
Rev Russell Britton – Celebration, Sartell  
Rev Susan Debner – Rejoice, Clearwater  
Rev Mindy Ehrke – First English, Tyler  
Rev Megan Eide – Danebod, Tyler  
Rev Andrew Evenson – On Leave from Call  
Rev Roger Fears – Peace, Cold Spring  
Rev Elizabeth Hoium – Gustavus Adolphus College  
Rev Sarah Kretschmann – LIRS  
Rev Michelle Rowell – Our Savior’s, Montevideo  
Rev Dwaine Sutherland – Calvary, Willmar  
Rev Chimezie Ukanonu – VA Medical Center, St Cloud  
Rev Linda Wimmer – Appleton & Madison  
Rev Donna Putney – Trinity, Grove City  
Rev Michael Zaske – Fields of Grace Parish  
Rev Roy Noel – Faith, Madison

### Transfers out. THANK YOU for your ministry!

Rev Jennelle Cunning – Southeastern MN Synod  
Rev Deborah Dawson – North Carolina Synod  
Rev Yolanda Denson-Byers – MPLS Area Synod  
Rev Paul Drees – LaCrosse Area Synod  
Rev Maggie Falenschek – NE Iowa Synod  
Rev Tim Mason – Pacifica Synod  
Rev Gary Mikkelson – Saint Paul Area Synod  
Rev Megan Preston – Northwestern MN Synod  
Rev David Severtson – Northeastern Iowa Synod  
Rev Kathleen Tigerman- NE Pennsylvania Synod  
Rev Bonnie Lomen – Saint Paul Area Synod  
Rev Michele Olson – Southeastern MN Synod  
Rev Dell Sanderson – South Dakota Synod

### Ordinations.

Rev Stefan Swanson – CentraCare Hospital  
Rev Robert Ossefoort – Hadley Lutheran, Hadley  
Rev Sarah Zender – Grace, Luverne  
Rev Molly Wills – Bethel, Lester Prairie  
Rev Sara Shingledecker – Grace & Trinity, Westbrook



*“one body in Christ”*

## LET'S DO LUNCH - 12:10 pm – 12:40 pm.

*Voting members will pick up a box lunch and beverage and head to one of four Let's do Lunch sessions.*

### **Making Connections in a Lonely, and Disconnected World.**

**Rev. Dr. Aaron Suomala Folkerds**

In May 2023 Dr. Vivek Murthy, the US Surgeon General, issued a General Advisory about the devastating impact of loneliness and disconnection. This societal disconnection has created a wide array of devastating impacts including increasing rates of depression, anxiety, and deep divisions within the United States. This workshop will explore best practices for creating connections, and better mental health, through exploring scripture and psychological literature.

### **Leadership Trends in The ELCA, and What it May Mean for Your Congregation.**

**Rev. Dr. Philip Hirsch.**

Congregations are having an increasingly hard time finding pastors to serve in them when they have a vacancy. This may be especially true in rural and inner-city areas. Some bishops have reported one or two congregations served by Synod Authorized Ministers just a few years ago and now there are dozens. Find out what is happening and what the Holy Spirit and the church leaders are doing to try and meet this urgent need.

### **More giving. More Ministry. Rethinking your Generosity Ministry.**

**Rev. Pete Reuss, GSB.**

What would your congregation do with an additional 5%-15% in giving? It's not a pipe dream. Congregations with clarity of purpose and effective means of inviting gifts grow in giving, allowing them to expand ministry in exciting ways. Pete Reuss (ELCA pastor, Certified Fund-Raising Executive, and Partner at GSB Fundraising) will present practical steps toward making this a reality.

### **Companion Synod: Southeastern Diocese of South Africa.**

**Bp. Nkosinathi Myaka, Mr J: Joseph Falithenjwa Mkhize**

Bishop Myaka and Mr Mkhize will be visiting from South Africa! Together they will bring updates on their priority ministries, talk about our companion synod relationship, and answer any questions you bring!



*“one body in Christ”*



April 8, 2024

*“We have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them” (1 John 4:16).*

Dear friends in Christ,

Thank you for your faithful and continuing partnership as we work together to help people discover the difference God’s grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation.

Because God’s grace and love have made a difference in our daily lives, we want others to experience that same love and acceptance. There are many in our communities who feel alone and are searching for love and connection. Sometimes we feel at a loss to know how to make a difference — what do we say, what can we do, how do we share God’s love?

You share this love every day. When you invite others to join in your faith community, to worship, to participate in service activities, to pray together, to share their story — these are all ways our neighbors experience the love of God in community.

There are examples of God’s love throughout our church as we work for healing, peace and justice to make a difference in the lives of those around us.

The Spirit is calling us to move together as one church to share the grace and love we experience every day. May God bless your time together.

In Christ,



The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



8 de abril de 2024

*“Y nosotros hemos llegado a saber y creer que Dios nos ama. Dios es amor. El que permanece en amor, en Dios permanece y Dios en él” (1 Juan 4:16).*

Estimados(as) amigos(as) en Cristo:

Gracias por su fiel y continua colaboración en tanto que trabajamos juntos para ayudar a la gente a descubrir la diferencia que la gracia y el amor de Dios en Cristo hacen en todas las personas y la creación.

Debido a que la gracia y el amor de Dios han marcado la diferencia en nuestra vida diaria, queremos que otros experimenten ese mismo amor y aceptación. Hay muchos que se sienten solos en nuestras comunidades y andan buscando amor y conexión. A veces nos es difícil saber cómo marcar la diferencia: ¿qué decimos, ¿qué podemos hacer?, ¿cómo compartimos el amor de Dios?

Ustedes comparten este amor todos los días. Cuando invitan a otros a unirse a su comunidad de fe, a adorar, a participar en actividades de servicio, a orar juntos, a compartir la historia de ellos —todas estas son maneras en que nuestro prójimo experimenta el amor de Dios en comunidad.

Hay ejemplos del amor de Dios en toda nuestra iglesia cuando luchamos por sanidad, paz y justicia para marcar la diferencia en las vidas de quienes nos rodean.

El Espíritu nos está llamando a movernos juntos como una sola iglesia para compartir la gracia y el amor que experimentamos todos los días. Que Dios bendiga el tiempo que pasarán juntos.

En Cristo,

La Rvda. Elizabeth A. Eaton Obispa  
Presidente  
Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en América



## Bishop's Synod Assembly Report

2024 | Rev. Dee Pederson, D.Min.

# One *body* in Christ.

*So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

– Romans 12:5

Thank you for living out being one body in Christ in your daily callings, wherever God has planted you – in the cities, farmland, and towns of this beautiful synod. I am grateful for the privilege of serving in the Office of the Bishop, and getting to know you through worship, meetings, and visits. “Synod” literally means “walking together on the way.” Wherever I go, I have the joy of seeing the abundance of gifts God has showered upon you. As our previous Synod Minister Rev. Barbara Knutson used to say so beautifully, you are “**gifts of God in human wrapping.**”

*I am grateful for you!*



Thank you to members of the Synod Council and staff. During the past year, we have tried to lead and work with this commitment: ***As followers of Jesus in a time in which the role of the Church is being re-formed, we of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA are committed to empowering Christian communities to join in God's mission of reconciliation: listening intentionally, loving unconditionally, serving others authentically, and faithfully healing creation.***

This common commitment provides grounding and direction for moving our leadership forward.

There is no doubt that this is a time when the role of the Church is being re-formed. No longer is the church the center of community culture and life. No longer do people of any age feel an obligation to “join” a church or maintain the practices with which they were raised. No longer are people loyal to institutions, no matter how prominent those institutions used to be. Times have changed. We have changed. These changes began decades ago, but back then, it was just that just enough of us were doing just well enough that we did not need to notice. Enter the 21st century. Add a pandemic. Factor in the boomer retirement curve that we knew was coming but pretended not to see. Layer on declining birth rates. And then - divisions among other denominations, political pressure, and global instability. What a convergence!

We cannot imagine where these changes will lead us, nor see the future shape of Christ's church. But what an amazing time to participate in what God is doing to re-form us right here, right now! This is what God is about: "In Christ God was reconciling the world to God's very self, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:19, NRSV). This year's Assembly theme is descriptive, aspirational, and declarative for who we are as one body in Christ.



**One body in Christ: *This describes the way we experience life in the church.***

This oneness as a body means that we share our mutual burdens. This year, we have shared communal grief over the unexpected death of Pastor Naomi Mahler as Synod Minister. Thank you for the many condolences you have shared for her family – Todd, Grace, and Sophia, and with us as staff. Grief remains.

As a nation, across all sectors, we are all impacted by the demographic cliff of the high number of retirements and the lower birth rate. There is a reason they call it "boomer." The "boom" in births of the 1940s, 50s, and 60s is not coming back. And across the U.S., 2024-2027 will mark a period some have called "peak 65" — years we will see the largest number of Americans hitting that age in history. Of course, this figure affects the number of elders in our communities and our care of them. It affects the number of young people entering our colleges and universities, serving as camp counselors, possibly heading to seminary, and serving congregations.

- In 2019 the number of candidates approved for entrance for rostered ministry was 368. In 2023 it was 154.
- In this synod, approximately 40 of our 226 congregations are at some point on the spectrum of transition, from the recent departure of a pastor to ready to call.

Our synod body is changing. In response to these changes, the Holy Spirit is also raising up lay leaders who are responding to new opportunities for training and growth and new roles in their congregations.

The economic challenges facing congregations have had an impact on the financial situation of congregations and therefore, on congregational Mission Support. The proposed Synod FY2026 budget includes recommendations that are appropriate, authentic, and realistic for this changing time. We are grateful for the thousands of lives touched by your generosity in our congregations and through our partners. Thank you for all those gifts that we, in turn, get to pass on to others. Thank you!

We are grateful to Lilly Endowment, Inc., and to individual donors for the Gifts of Grace initiative that has allowed us to share so many gifts for rostered ministers and congregations since 2016.

- Rostered Ministers know synod support through the gifts we are able to share:
  - Debt reduction = 221 grants, totaling \$649,851.51
  - Medical Expenses – 118 grants, totaling \$147,015.95
  - Retirement Challenge (Matching) – 112 grants, totaling \$68,933.50
  - Retirement Equity – 38 grants, totaling \$42,516

What a tremendous impact this generosity has had on so many individuals and families!

- Congregations also have benefited through training in stewardship/generosity and financial literacy through the synod's contract with GSB Consultants, Rev. Pete Reuss and Paul Marsh, funded by our Gifts of Grace ministry.

Rostered Ministers also know support and renewal through our partnership with The Continuous Growth Pathway – another gift!





Our synod Endowment Funds are providing generous scholarships and ministry grants for new opportunities in congregations.

Being one body in Christ means we have so much to celebrate.

- We are thrilled to welcome Pr. Seyward Ask as our new Synod Minister for Equipping Congregation Leaders, Rostered Ministers, Youth, and Families.
- Global partnership is flourishing. Last fall, five travelers journeyed to South Africa to visit our friends in the Southeastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa. (SED – ELCSA). I am thrilled to be able to welcome Presiding Bishop Nkosinathi Myaka and Mr. Joseph Mkhize to our Synod Assembly this year!

**One body in Christ: *This is what we pray and aspire to be.***

What does it mean to live as one body when we do not always agree with each other and live in a polarized culture? This has been a reality for the Christian church from its beginning, and the biblical faith practices that are part of Christian discipleship provide guidance. They are called faith “practices” because they require practice. They give us a vision for what life as one body in Christ can look like as we:

- Work at having healthy, respectful conversation with one another and speaking well of our neighbors. My mother used to say that if you can’t say anything nice about someone, don’t say anything at all. I think she aced the 8th Commandment!
- Practice hospitality and outreach. Every congregation claims to be “welcoming.” Who we welcome, and how we practice hospitality in our building and beyond, becomes clear to others. What might it look like if we say, “All are welcome,” so that “all” really does mean “all” – with no exceptions?
- Accept the reality that unity does not mean uniformity. Families, friendship circles, congregations, and synods include people who hold many views. We are not identical. But in the church, we hold in common our Lutheran confessions and the biblical mandate to love God and neighbor.
- Live out the power Christ gave to his church. You as a congregation have received all the gifts you need to live together as one and live out life-transforming ministries. Those ministries vary according to where God has placed you: in a city, in open country, or in a small town. Wherever you are, I believe that local congregations in Jesus Christ are hope for the world. I imagine what it looks like when each of our 226 congregations is making a life-changing impact on the community where God planted you 150 or 75 or 25 years ago!
- Tear down the walls that keep us apart. Across the synod, God is doing the new thing of bringing together congregations to work in partnership with others. Twenty years ago, I never would have imagined that one congregation could step into a neighboring church’s sanctuary for worship. But you are doing just that, and in our time, we also get to witness how new ministry partnerships are developing with neighbors in Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian congregations. God is re-forming us as “one body” through the blessing of new relationships.

**One body in Christ: *This is what God has declared us to be.***

In Holy Baptism, the Triune God made you part of the one body in Christ. You were joined together with all the other precious children of God who are part of this body, each with their own individual gifts. The “one body” of this synod is strong because we believe we cannot go it alone; we need each other. And God makes us stronger because of the relationships that stretch across this corner of creation and around the globe. Thanks be to God!

+ grace and peace,  
Bishop Dee Pederson



Southwestern Minnesota Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

You are somebody's front porch to God.  
You are someone's doorway to mercy.  
You are the world's threshold to kindness.  
You are my entrance to letting go of regret.  
No pressure, but...  
Your life is a gateway to peace  
for both strangers and friends alike.  
Whether you realize it or not...  
Empathy has chosen you to turn your  
heart into a welcome mat for the rest of us.  
This is purpose of your life...  
To let your existence become a candlelit  
veranda of hope for the rest of us to  
gather on during the long night.  
~ John Roedel



*“one body in Christ”*

This poem by John Roedel helps me frame many of the moments that we have as Christians and that I have in this role as a synod minister. There are many moments and ministries, conversations and emails, council meetings and ZOOMs that become front porch moments as people and congregations encounter where God is leading them.

My main focus as your synod minister is equipping leaders. Equipping Leaders happens through the work of the candidacy process and Candidacy Committee as we journey with those considering a call to ministry and taking the official steps through seminary to prepare for ministry. The candidacy process involves 3 official steps that a candidate takes through seminary; entrance, endorsement, and approval that all involve levels of preparation and conversation with our synod leaders. We have approximately 20 individuals actively in our candidacy process.

Equipping our Leaders happens through supporting the interim collaborative, the group of pastors who meet monthly, who are serving in interim ministries throughout our synod. These leaders come together to focus on topics that impact their role as interim pastors, church vitality, church membership, how to heal after misconduct, and the holy closure of congregations. Together these leaders seek to strengthen their skills for the sake of the people they serve.

Equipping Leaders happens through the call process as I work with congregations through saying goodbye to a pastor through all the paperwork and interviews until a new pastor is called. Working with councils and transition teams and call committees, as well as pastors considering a new call, is both an immense honor and at times a challenge. (The church is seeing a need for pastors and a shortage of pastors that we have not known in a long time.)

We continue to equip our leaders, lay and rostered, through boundaries training workshops, Zoom trainings, and our Fall Theological Conference, among other events. We equip our leaders through the work of several committees such as the Compensation Guidelines Committee and our scholarship committee.

Each of these ministries has an invitational aspect, inviting others to take a step up onto God's front porch, to learn more, to grow in faith, to consider what God is calling us to do and be in our daily lives. The reality is that the world is changing, and the church is changing. We are called to be those who can be someone's front porch to God, someone's doorway to mercy, someone's threshold to kindness, someone's gateway to peace.

*Pastor Heather Culuris*

Synod Minister, Southwestern MN Synod, ELCA

## REV. TROY PFLIBSEN – Director for Evangelical Mission.

We are one body in Christ through unity of purpose and mission. Together we proclaim God's love and together we live this love through our work as Christ's hands and feet in this world.

Unity does not, however, mean uniformity. God has blessed us with great diversity as people and as communities of faith. This diversity in who we are means that there is a diversity in our expressed needs and how those needs might best be addressed.

It is this unity of purpose and mission, lived out in great diversity, that is at the core of my call as the Director for Evangelical Mission. My work is to support you in your mission. And this support is lived out through offering a variety of services, tools, and connections. Below is a partial list of the possibilities. Many, if not most, are led by others in our synod or the larger church. Please let me know if any of these possibilities might help you move forward in mission. If you don't see something that might fit your situation, still call. There is likely someone in the wider church who is doing similar work, and I can help you connect with them.

### Congregational Vitality:

- Faithful Innovation: This grounds the community in listening to God and to each other. It moves the community forward with thoughtful experiments. In turn it helps the community to reflect on what it has learned.
- Strategic Planning and Generosity for Small to Mid-Sized Congregations: This is a partnership with GSB. The pilot was in our synod in 2023. It helps congregations with the "why" of their ministry. This "why" then informs a fall appeal for generosity.
- Congregation Vitality Survey: This is a tool that helps congregations to assess how the active participants in a faith community view the vitality of their congregation's work. It can be a great start to a process of discernment in a time of transition or growth.
- Coaching: This is an intentional, relational process that invites individuals and communities to focus their direction, strengthen their responses and thrive through ongoing change and challenge. Coaching is available for individuals and congregational teams.
- Generosity/Stewardship:
- Strategic Planning and Generosity for Small to Mid-Sized Congregations: Please see above.
- Building a Culture of Generosity: This is a program led through GSB, our partners in encouraging, teaching, and supporting generosity. It walks participants through the basics of generosity as it equips them for an effective fall stewardship campaign.
- Stewardship for All Seasons: This is a deeper dive into generosity and stewardship that moves the congregation from an annual appeal into a year-round conversation about the gifts we have received and the gifts that we in turn share.
- Area Partnerships: These flow from your contexts as you work with your neighbors in mission. We can bring a variety of tools to further the conversation and deepen the connections.
- SAWCs and Strategic Ministry:
- These are faith communities with a very specific focus. Two in our synod proclaim and work in the midst of particular ethnic communities. The third is both a social ministry and a worshipping community.
- Ministry Teams with a specific focus: Anti-Racism, Indigenous, Hunger, Creation Care, Generosity, Words, Words, Words (reading books and listening to podcasts together).

We are one body in Christ, gathered through our common proclamation and our common mission. In the midst of this, we are also blessed with great diversity in our ministries. The work of the Director for Evangelical Mission is to both support our common mission and the diversity in our many ministries. Thank you for this year of service together!

Shalom,

*Pastor Troy Pflibsen*

Director for Evangelical Mission  
Southwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA.

## REV. ANDREW HERMODSON OLSEN – Director, Gifts of Grace.

Financial matters can weigh on us and drain us. Such burdens make us less effective in our work. It is true for pastors and deacons too. Yet financial struggles are hard to talk about. Gifts of Grace aims to break the silence surrounding financial challenges and provide support to rostered ministers.

The program has been around since 2016 and has received comments like these in the past year:

*“The Gifts of Grace grants have helped us immensely over the past years...with the help of these grants, my educational debt is now gone!”*

*“I cannot express what a weight was lifted off my shoulders when I realized I would no longer have to pay off student loans. It was a true gift and frees me up to be more generous!”*

*“Gifts of Grace encouraged me to focus more on saving for retirement.”*

*“The support from Gifts of Grace has helped us stay above water and be encouraged in a major way.”*

*“In the last two years I have had significant medical debt, which has caused financial stress and instability.”*

*“These grants are a significant connection point for rostered leaders and the synod.”*

Learn more about the grants offered to rostered ministers at the synod’s webpage <https://swmnelca.org/grants/>

In addition to financial assistance, guidance is vitally important. Did you know that Lutheran Social Services Financial Counseling provides up to six free sessions annually to rostered leaders? Let them help you by giving a financial wellness checkup or guidance with a particular issue. LSS Financial Counseling will also help encourage and guide those who are seeking Public Service Loan Forgiveness, which has become more obtainable for pastors. See their webpage at <https://www.lssmn.org/financialcounseling/>

Support the work of Gifts of Grace by making a gift on the synod’s website. Look for the Gifts of Grace tile on the giving page. Gifts from individuals, congregations, and endowments are welcome!

In Christ’s service,

*Pastor Andrew Hermodson-Olsen*

Gifts of Grace Director



## *One body in Christ.*

As I reflect on the theme for this year's Synod Assembly, I am thankful for the members of the Synod Council and Executive Committee. It is a group of people with different backgrounds, diverse strengths, and an appreciation for each other's gifts and talents. We are faithful in our decision making, reflective when needed, and focused on the work of our Synod.

Over the past year the Synod Council has been working closely with the Office the Bishop staff as they carried out the ministry of loving and serving our neighbors in remarkable ways. We all celebrated the life of Pastor Naomi Mahler, whose energy and joyfulness are missed. God's strength was ever-present through the hard journey.

We were pleased to bring back the Equipping Congregations Day, coming together in Willmar to listen to Rolf Jacobson's keynote address focusing on "The Spirit of God is Loose in the World." I encourage you to watch for details on the next event coming this winter.

The Policies and Procedures Committee continues to review church constitutions and is working on updating the Synod Constitution. Management and Mission Support has been dealing with declining offerings and diminishing returns. Servant Leadership helps to manage roster requests for pastors in our synod. Many opportunities are being handled by the many hands of synod members and staff. It is appreciated!

A Facility Task Force has been created to survey the existing office building and look toward the future in terms of maintenance, sustainability, and cost. The Council has also acknowledged growing concerns regarding insurance options for churches in rural settings.

As you can see, it has been a busy year, and the Council will continue to focus on the challenges and joys of our Synod.

Thank you for being an essential part of the One Body in Christ.

*Maria Lokensgard*

Vice President, Southwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA.



*“one body in Christ”*

1930 - 2024



Rev. Norman Fonss, age 93, passed away March 27, 2024, at Hennepin County Health Care Center in Minneapolis, MN.

Rev. Norman Fonss was born on August 12, 1930 in New York, NY to Victor and Thora (Hall Jenson) Fonss. He was baptized on October 15, 1930, by Rev. J. Earl Endres and he was confirmed on January 22, 1956, by Rev. Clifford J. Swanson.

Rev Norman served in the U.S. Army Medical Corp. during WW II and the Korean War, after enlisting at age 16 by exaggerating his age. He served from 1946-1955 with a brief break in 1949 before reenlisting.

Upon completing his enlistment, Norm attended St. Olaf College, earning a BA in History in 1960. He then entered Luther Theological Seminary graduating with a Master of Theology in December of 1969. He was ordained on January 25, 1970, by Rev. E. Roald Carlson at Bethany Lutheran, Brooklyn, NY.

On August 17, 1969, he was united in marriage to Ardelle Hendrickson at Our Saviour's Lutheran, Minneapolis, MN. They had three daughters, Rachel, Rebecca, and Joan.

Norman's first call was to St. Matthew Lutheran, Benwood, W.VA. He then served Atonement Lutheran, Jamestown, ND - 1971-1972; St. Paul Lutheran, Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation, Belcourt, ND 1972-1973. After this he served as Chaplain at Veterans Affairs Medical Centers in Dayton, OH, 1973; Syracuse, NY, 1976; and St. Cloud, MN, until Sept 1, 1995. He received a commendation from the VA and Governor Rudy Perpich for his 25 years of service with the government.

Pastor Norm later served as Chaplain at United Hospital, East Grand Forks, ND - 1996-1997. He filled in as a vacancy pastor and worked as a substitute teacher around St. Cloud, MN until 2000, when they moved to Ardelle's family farm in Lamberton, MN. He then served as Interim at St. John and Sundown, Springfield, MN from June until his retirement in September 2000.

While in St. Cloud, he worked for Lutheran Social Service in grief group and counseling from 1991-1994. In 2020 he was honored for 50 years of Ordained Ministry at the Southwestern MN Synod Assembly.

When he wasn't busy with work, Norman enjoyed playing ping-pong, guitar, piano, singing, woodworking and spending time with his family.

Norm is survived by his wife of 54 years, Ardelle; daughters Rachel; Rebecca; and Joan (Scott) Lehmkuhl. Grandchildren, Zach (Napi) Lehmkuhl; Andrew (Becky) Lehmkuhl; and Hunter (Abagael) Lehmkuhl. Great-grandchildren Layla, Hunter, Genevieve, Landon, Amelia and another great-grandchild is expected in June. A sister Jane Fonss; niece, Susan (Torjus) Fonss-Refsnes and her son Stephen and cousins Bobby and Kevin Cruse.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Victor (Kari); infant twin brothers; sisters Peggy, Gloria and Joan and infant niece.

Memorial services celebrating Norman's were on Friday, April 19, 2024, at Benson Funeral Home Chapel, St. Cloud, MN with retired Pastor Victor Dorn, Pequot Lakes, MN officiating. Bishop Dee Pedersen brought greetings from the Southwestern MN Synod, Redwood Falls, MN. There was also a Memorial Gathering on Monday, April 22, 2024, at the Knollwood Apartments, St. Louis Park, MN.

A Memorial Service was also held on Saturday, April 27, 2024, at Highwater Lutheran, Lamberton, MN with Pastor Michael Stangland officiating. Tributes were given by Gary Berg, Kevin Cruse, Peggy Klages and Kelly Cruse and "Remembering Dad" - Rachel Fonss. A special thanks to Joleen Erickson, the Brent Imker family, Ed Erickson, Jr, and in heaven now Duane Erickson and Scott Osland for their help over the years. A private family burial with military honors is at Highwater Cemetery, Lamberton, MN.

1951 - 2024



Rev. Rob Kemppainen, age 72, of New Prague, MN died peacefully with his family by his side on April 27, 2024, at Mayo Clinic Health System Hospital, Rochester, MN.

Pastor Rob was born on November 28, 1951, in Minneapolis, MN to Arthur O. and Marion A. (Newton) Kemppainen. He grew up in Brooklyn Center, MN where he graduated high school. He went on to attain his B.A. in Music and Teaching from the U of MN, in 1973. He entered Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, MN, receiving his M. Div in 1977.

Pastor Rob was ordained into the LCA on June 7, 1977 and received his first call to Hay Lakes Lutheran, Alberta Canada - 1977-1982. He was also on the faculty of Camrose Lutheran Bible Institute, Camrose, Alberta Canada - 1982.

It was during his first call that he met the woman who captured his heart. He and Marilyn E. Schoenknecht were married on August 10, 1979 at Our Saviour Lutheran, Hay Lakes, Albert Canada. They had three children - Nathan, Jason and Justin.

Other parishes he served were, St. Luke, Franklin, MN 1990-1996; First and East Norway Lake, New London, MN 1996-2002; the following as Interim pastor - Grace, Belgrade, MN - 2002-2003; St. Lucas and Israel, Cottonwood, MN - 2003; Healing Waters Parish, Hanley Falls, MN - 2003; Peace, Cosmos, MN - 2004-2005; Nordland, Paynesville, MN - 2006; Bethel, Lester Prairie, MN - 2007; Svea, Svea, MN - 2007-2008; Kviteseid, Milan, MN - 2009-2010; Saron and Our Saviour's of Baxter, Montevideo, MN - 2010; and Nordland, Paynesville, MN 2010-2011.

Rob retired from ordained ministry July 1, 2016. He and Marilyn retired to New Prague in 2019 to be closer to their grandchildren. He became very involved at FaithPoint Lutheran, serving as supply pastor and was on the worship team.

Service to others was the cornerstone of Rob's life. He was known as a joyful, witty, character, and God's faithful servant. His life passion was music, both composing and singing. His musical gift encompassed compositions that were worship-oriented, humor-oriented, and a blend of the two. Just last year he published a Christmas cantata, "Old Wind in New Wineskins - 10 Christmas Carols Set to New Tunes." His many whimsical songs could be heard on Sundays and funeral liturgies. His gift delighted people wherever he served.

He loved watching football, especially the MN Vikings, sailing with Marilyn and spending time with grandchildren. A catastrophic stroke took him suddenly, and that loss will be felt by his family and all who knew him. He was a bright light, always ready with a joke, and a joy to all who knew him.

Pastor Rob is survived by his wife, Marilyn, New Prague, MN; Nathan (Aya), Tsukuba, Japan; Jason, Barnaby, British Columbia; and Justin (Kate), Eagan, MN; grandchildren, Lillian and Marcus; and sister Gayle (Tom) Herman, Wheaton, IL. He was preceded in death by his parents and sister, Karen Everett.

A Celebration of Life was May 11, 2024, at FaithPoint Lutheran, New Prague, MN. Rev. Steve Trewartha officiated. Andy Monson gave the readings; Songs by Trisha Horkey "Blessed Assurance"; "How Great Thou Art"; "When the Trumpet of the Lord Shall Sound" and "Chocolate in Heaven." Piano by Bethany Olsen.

### **Tribute to Rob Kemppainen**

*As I held and kissed your beautiful hand, I thought of all the lives  
you have touched.*

#### **Your Hand...**

*Warmly touched and greeted so many each Sunday  
Fed us with the spiritual food of communion  
Baptized and anointed many little ones  
Held your bible and spoke of God's love with awe and wonder  
Shaped sourdough into countless loaves for others  
Blessed a new union in Christ  
Held the mourning of your touch  
Caressed and plucked your guitar string  
Tossed swirling pizza dough into the air  
Lovingly held your own new babies  
Embraced your family, especially grandchildren, in warm, hugs and  
affection  
Wrote clever and funny songs that made us all laugh  
Gave the last gift of letting go and took Jesus' hand home  
You were like John, a disciple that Jesus loved.*

*We will miss you so,  
Lovingly your Family*

1934 - 2024



Rev. Al Lewis passed peacefully at United Hospital, St. Paul, MN on January 24, 2024.

Pastor Lewis was born on September 7, 1934, to Rev. Alvin Lewis, Sr. and Beatrice (Rasmussen)Lewis in Tacoma, WA. They moved to St. Paul, MN where his father became pastor at St. Anthony Park Lutheran Church. He was baptized into the Christian faith by his father on November 29, 1934, at Our Savior's Lutheran, Tacoma, WA. He was confirmed by his father at St. Anthony Park Lutheran, St. Paul, MN on June 5, 1949.

He attended Willard Elementary School and graduated from Murray High School, St. Paul, MN on June 13, 1952. He attended Augustana College in South Dakota. He ended up at St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN and graduated with a BA in History. Alvin entered Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, MN, graduating on May 29, 1960, with a Bachelor of Divinity degree. A year of internship from the seminary was spent at Our Saviour's Lutheran, Bremerton, WA. In the summer of 1960, he took Clinical Pastoral Training at the Lutheran Medical Center, Brooklyn, NY. He was ordained by his father, Rev. Alvin Lewis, Sr. at St. Anthony Park Lutheran, St. Paul, MN on August 28, 1960.

His first call was to Big Grove and Crow River Lutheran, Belgrade, MN, serving from 1960-1970. He served at First Lutheran, Renville, MN from 1970-1986. His last call was to Trinity Lutheran, Montevideo, MN from 1986-1999. In a newsletter he wrote while serving at Trinity Lutheran, he said "the sense of mission is to bring the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to our people, the people of this community and beyond. Brick and stone may come and go, but the Gospel endures. It must and it will, but only if that mission lives in the hearts of all our people."

Pastor Al was united in marriage to Judy (Berger Beals) on June 7, 1981, at First Lutheran, Renville, MN with Bishop Darold Beekmann presiding. Judy had 3 daughters, Sydney, Stacey, and Shelley. Al and Judy retired on October 15, 1998, to Marine on St. Croix, MN, where they remained until Judy's death in 2008. He then moved to Stillwater, MN, where he remained until moving into assisted living and the nursing home in Oak Park Heights, MN until his death.

Pastor Lewis was honored at the 2023 Synod Assembly for his 63 years of ordained ministry.

He was a traveler, a collector of beautiful things and an adventurer until the end.

He was preceded in death by his parents Rev. Alvin Lewis, Sr. and Beatrice, and his wife Judy.

He is survived by his stepdaughters, Sydney Kelley, Stacey (Michael) Danculovich, and Shelley (Kris) Budke; 8 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Services were held on Saturday February 3, 2024, at St. Paul Lutheran, Stillwater, MN with Pastors Laurel Halvorson Bernard, Glen Bickford, and Joel Martin officiating. Readings were done by Dasha Danculovich and Henry Budke. A Eulogy was given by Lillian Heredia. A musical solo, "There Is a River in Judea", was by Karen Hillmann. Pallbearers were William Budke, Henry Budke, Lillian Heredia, Amos Kelley, Margaret Mills and Dasha Danculovich.

Interment is at Fairview Cemetery, Renville, MN.



1967 – 2023



Rev. Naomi Lynum Mahler died in faith in God and Christ Jesus on October 21, 2023. Her daughters, Sofia and Grace, and her husband, Todd, with the steadfast support of Hospice, were able to care for her at home until the end of her life.

Naomi was born on February 24, 1967, in Westwood, NJ to Henry James “Jim” and LaNell (Kappler) Mahler. She was baptized at Zion Lutheran, Westwood, NJ, by Pastor Norman Brinkmann on March 5, 1967. Her family moved to Maywood, IL in 1969. In 1979, the family moved to Thousand Oaks, CA. She was confirmed at Ascension Lutheran on May 31, 1981. She graduated from Thousand Oaks High School in 1985. During her high school years, she held several leadership positions in Ascension’s Luther League. In addition to president of the local group, she was vice-president of the district league and candidate for national president at the Denver gathering in 1985. Sonburst Choir and its tours were favorite activities at Ascension.

Naomi attended Luther College, Decorah, IA, graduating in May 1989, summa cum laude with a BA in English. She was also a member of Luther’s Nordic Choir and was part of their June 1988 tour to Russia, Poland, and Hungary. Music was one of Naomi’s passions. Those who heard her sing were delighted by her captivating spirit-filled voice.

From 1989-1994, Naomi served as the Youth Director at Como Park Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN. It was during that time she felt called to become an ELCA pastor and enrolled at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, MN. She graduated with a MDiv degree in May 1998 and was ordained August 9, 1998, at Ascension Lutheran, Thousand Oaks, CA, by The Rev. Dr. Paul Egertson. The commissioning minister was The Rev. Rafael Malpica-Padilla. Her seminary internship year occurred at Iglesia Luterana Nueva Creacion, Philadelphia,

While at Luther Seminary, Naomi met her husband, Todd Lynum. They were married by Rev Larry Wagner in St. Paul, MN, on December 27, 1997. After seminary, Naomi and Todd served the ELCA Global Mission in Costa Rica (1998-2001). In 2001, Naomi was called to serve Paz y Esperanza, Willmar, MN (2001-2010). On May 18, 2004, Naomi gave birth to her beautiful twin daughters, Grace and Sofia.

Pastor Naomi served as Director of The Link (*Ecumenical Advocacy and Resource Network*) in Spicer, MN (2010-2012). She was interim Executive Director of Green Lake Lutheran Ministries (2012-2015). In 2015 she accepted a call as Associate-Pastor to Calvary Lutheran, Willmar, MN. In November of 2022, she was called as a Synod Minister of the Southwestern MN Synod, ELCA. Pastor Naomi was honored at the 2023 Synod Assembly for her 25 years of ordained ministry.

Naomi was loved, respected, and treasured for her deep faith, warm friendship, abounding compassion, generous hospitality, ethical integrity, uncommon wisdom, hearty laughter, and playful sense of humor.

All her life Naomi felt, lived, and shared God’s love, mercy, and grace for all. She worked passionately for cross-cultural and interracial understanding, as well as collaboration with other Christian denominations and religious faiths.

Naomi is survived by her husband, Todd, daughters Sofia and Grace; her loving dogs, Chester and Lola; her mother LaNell Mahler Koenig; sister Rachel (Brett) Kraemer; brother Matthew (Loren) Mahler; nephew Andrew Kraemer; and nieces, Julia Kraemer and Hannah Mahler; mother-in-law Rita Lynum; brother-in-law Perry (Susan) Lynum; sisters-in-law Kathy (Michael) Harris and Lisa (Scott) Shaver; nieces Abby (Alex) Katkov, Paige Harris, Megan (Jake) Batusich and Mariah Lynum; nephews, Matthew (Chichi) Shaver, David Lynum and Philip Harris; great nephew, Lucas Shaver and great niece, Eloise Katkov.

She was preceded in death by her father Jim Mahler; father-in-law Wayne Lynum; LaNell’s second husband Jerry Koenig; grandparents Henry and Meta Mahler; Alfred and Gertrude Kappler and Uncle Harvey Kappler.

A Celebration of Life was held on November 3, 2024, at Vinje Lutheran, Willmar, MN with Bishop Dee Pederson, preaching, Revs. Justin Ask, Andres Albertsen and Heather Culuris, presiding. Words of Remembrance were given by Grace, Sofia and Todd Lynum. Pianist/Organist was Naomi Powers-Baker, and Musicians, the West Central Singers, and friends of Naomi.

1937 – 2024

Rev. Lloyd Torrey Tobiassen died April 16, 2024, at Country Manor, Sartell, MN.

Pastor Tobiassen was born on May 19, 1937, to immigrant parents, Tobias, and Lilly Tobiassen from Farsund, Norway, in Brooklyn, NY. He was baptized on September 24, 1937, by Rev. Sven Olsen Sigmond at Trinity Lutheran, Brooklyn, NY and was later confirmed on May 18, 1952, at Trinity Lutheran, West Hempstead, NY by Rev. Ralph L. Tellefsen. After graduating from high school on Long Island, NY, he served in the U.S. Air Force from 1956-1960. After his discharge, he attended Waldorf College, Forest City, IA and Texas Lutheran College, Seguin, TX, graduating in 1964 with a degree in history and philosophy. He enrolled at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, MN, graduating on June 1, 1969, with a Master of Theology degree. Lloyd's internship was at Bethlehem Lutheran, Kalispell, MT.

He was united in marriage to Carolyn J. Lindquist on August 5, 1967, in Merrill, WI. They enjoyed 57 years together and in 2017 celebrated their 50th anniversary in Merrill, WI with family and friends.

Pastor Lloyd was ordained on August 3, 1969, by Rev. M. Harold Quail. He served his first call to Norway Lutheran, Wind Lake, WI, 1969-1977. Other parishes he served are Lutheran Church of Peace, St. Paul, MN, 1977-1979; Our Savior's Lutheran, Albany, MN, 1979-1993. Lloyd also served as interim pastor at the following parishes - Trinity & West Lake Johanna Lutheran, Brooten, MN; Mamrelund & St. John's Lutheran, Pennock, MN; Old Westbrook & Highwater Lutheran, Westbrook, MN; and Lake Lillian Lutheran, Lake Lillian, MN. He retired from ordained ministry on September 1, 1999.

Lloyd also served in the Army Reserves as Chaplain for 22 years with one deployment. He retired from the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel on May 31, 1997. He was a member of Salem Lutheran, St. Cloud; Sons of Norway St. Cloud Chapter; Rice American Legion Post #473, Rice, MN, and Military Retired Officers Association.

Pastor Tobiasen was honored for 50 years of ordained ministry at the Southwestern MN Synod Assembly in 2019.

He enjoyed reading, traveling, cruises, road trips, winters in Tucson, AZ, classical music, concerts and feeding the birds. He was kind, generous, caring, considerate, helpful, and comforting to the elderly.

He is survived by his wife, Carolyn, Sartell, MN; sons Matthew (Jami), Vancouver, WA and Michael, Minneapolis, MN; grandchildren, Shyla and Chase; three nieces, one nephew and many first cousins in Norway. He is preceded in death by his parents; stepmother, Synnove Tobiassen, sister, Kirsten Riemann, and stepbrothers Harold and Einar Jolie.

Celebration of Life for Pastor Tobiassen was on May 15, 2024, at Salem Lutheran, St. Cloud with Rev. Kirsten Nelson Roenfeldt officiating and Chaplain Lynette Emerson, Reader. Thanksgiving for Life given by Mark Kruger and Matt Tobiassen. Special music "Abide with me" and "Peace Like a River" by Karen and Warner Broughton. There were several congregational hymns and the service postlude "Stars and Stripes Forever."

The burial will be in the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery, Little Falls, MN.





## SYNOD STAFF.

Rev Dee Pederson, Bishop.  
Rev Troy Pflibsen, DEM.  
Rev Heather Culuris, Synod Minister.  
Rev Seyward Ask, Synod Minister.  
Tammy Schacher, Assembly Coordinator.  
Kristin Bakeberg, Assembly Registrar.  
Maggie Berggren, Support Staff.

## ASSEMBLY PLANNING TEAM.

Rev Janine Olson, Chair - Gethsemane, Dassel.  
Deacon Erin Kuehl – First, St James.  
Mr Shane Hagstrom – Immanuel, Atwater.  
Rev Emmy Swedlund – Faith, Morris.  
Rev Austin Krohnke – St Stephen, Marshall.  
Rev Paul Bravinder – Mount Herman, Annandale.  
Rev Scott Richards – Trinity & St Paul's, Gaylord.

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Rev Janel Kuester, Christ, Cottonwood.

Staff Liaisons:  
Bishop Dee Pederson.  
Ms Tammy Schacher.

## COMPENSATION GUIDELINES.

Rev Heather Culuris, Synod Minister.  
Rev Janel Kuester, Chair, Christ, Cottonwood.  
Rev Stephanie Christoffels, Bethlehem, St Cloud  
Mr Tim Ostby, Vinje, Willmar.  
Rev Jeff Sackett, Celebration, Sartell.



“one body in Christ”