



Southwestern Texas Synod

**2026 THIRTY-FOURTH
SYNOD ASSEMBLY
BULLETIN OF REPORTS**



BECOMING...
EN PROCESO...

May 1-2, 2026

Triumphant Love, Austin

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2026 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

(Action Items for Assembly Consider marked with * asterisk.)

Note: denotes new/changed

INFORMATION

Tips on Parliamentary Procedure.....	Exhibit A-1
* Proposed Agenda.....	Exhibit A-2
* Proposed Standing Rules of the Assembly.....	Exhibit A-3

REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Office of the Bishop Report	Exhibit B-1
Office of the Presiding Bishop	Exhibit B-2

REPORT OF THE SYNOD COUNCIL

Vice President, Carol Semper.....	Exhibit C-1
Minutes of the 33 rd Assembly, 2025.....	Exhibit C-2
Official Roster Report 2025-2026.....	Exhibit C-3
* Proposed Constitution and Bylaw Changes.....	Exhibit C-4
Treasurer’s Report, Leslie Blalock.....	Exhibit C-5
Mission Support Comparison	Exhibit C-6
Revenue & Expenses Summary.....	Exhibit C-7
Revenue & Expenses Summary Mission & Ministry.....	Exhibit C-8
Statement of Financial Position.....	Exhibit C-9
Explanation of Proposed Mission Plan 2026-2028.....	Exhibit C-10
* Proposed Mission Plan 2026-2028.....	Exhibit C-11
Proposed Budget 2026-2028 Line Item.....	Exhibit C-12
* Proposed Mission & Ministry Mission Plan 2026-2028.....	Exhibit C-13
2026 Compensation Guidelines	Exhibit C-14
2026 Part-time Ministry Guidelines.....	Exhibit C-15
Audit Letter for 2024-2025	Exhibit C-16
Audit Report for 2024-2025.....	Exhibit C-17

RESOLUTIONS

Stand and Act for Human Rights, Justice and Peace for Palestine and Israel	Exhibit D-1
The World Council of Churches Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action	Exhibit D-2

NOMINATIONS

* 2026 Nominations.....	Exhibit E-1
Nominee Bios	Exhibit E-2

PARTNERS IN MINISTRY.....

Exhibit F

AMMPARO	Chicago	St. Olaf
ELCA Federal Credit Union	Mission Investment Fund	Texas Lutheran University
Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest	Region 4 South Archives	Upbring
Lutheran School of Theology at	Seafarers	Wartburg
	St. Luke’s Health Ministries	

TIPS ON PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

To do this:	You say this:	May you Interrupt?	Is your motion debatable?	Is your motion amendable?	Vote required to pass:
Make a motion	"I move that..." (not, "I would like to move that...")	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a motion	"I move to amend by..." (adding, inserting, striking)	No	Yes	Yes	Majority, un-less otherwise
Postpone further debate	"I move that this matter be tabled."	No	No	No	Majority
End debate & bring to a vote	"I move the previous question."	No	No	No	2/3
Refer a matter to another person or group	"I move that this matter be referred to..."	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Reconsider a previous action at this convention	"I move to reconsider the vote on..." (only if you voted on the winning side)	No	Yes, if original motion was debatable	No	Majority
Object to procedures	"Point of Order"	Yes	No	No	Chair decides
Challenge ruling of the chair	"I appeal the chair's decision."	No	Yes	No	Majority
Find out when a motion you wish to make can be made	"When would it be in order for me to move that..."	No	---	---	---
Request Information	"I wish to request (information, clarification, etc.)"	No	---	---	---
Get an exact count after a close voice vote	"I call for a division."	Yes	No	No	---

<p style="text-align: center;">PROPOSED AGENDA Southwestern Texas Synod – May 1-2 2026</p>
--

NOTE: NO ONSITE REGISTRATION

FRIDAY, MAY 1

12:45 -1:45 pm	Assembly check in
2:00 pm	Plenary 1
3:15 pm	Workshops 1
4:15 pm	Plenary 2
5:30 pm	Reception at Embassy (“Brew Church”)

SATURDAY, MAY 2

8:00 – 8:45 am	Assembly Check-in (light refreshments)
9:00 am	Opening
9:30 am	Workshops 2
10:15 am	BREAK
10:30 am	Plenary 3
11:30 am	Lunch
12:45 pm	Worship
2:15 pm	Cross Trails
2:45 pm	Plenary 4
5:00 pm	Deadline for Closing of Assembly

PROPOSED STANDING RULES

2026 Synod Assembly

1. Authority of the Synod Assembly (†S7.01).

The Synod Assembly is the highest legislative authority of the Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The powers of the Synod Assembly are limited only by the provisions of the synod's Articles of Incorporation, constitution, and bylaws, the assembly's own resolutions, and the constitution and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

2. Voting Members of the Assembly (†S7.21).

The membership of the Synod Assembly, of which at least 60 percent of the voting members shall be composed of lay persons, shall be constituted as follows:

- a. All ministers of Word and Sacrament under call on the roster of this synod in attendance at the Synod Assembly shall be voting members.
- b. All ministers of Word and Service, under call, on the roster of this synod shall be voting members.
- c. A minimum of one lay member elected by each congregation with fewer than 175 baptized members and a minimum of two lay members elected by each congregation with 175 or more baptized members related to this synod, typically one of whom shall be a man and one of whom shall be a woman, shall be voting members. congregations with more than 400 baptized members (as determined by the congregation's Parochial Report the prior year) shall send two voting members, one female and one male, and may send one additional lay voting member. The Synod Council shall seek to ensure that at least 45 percent of the lay members of the assembly shall be women and at least 45 percent shall be men.
- d. The goal of this synod is for at least 10 percent of the voting members of the Synod Assembly to be youth and young adults. To accomplish this goal one extra voting member, above and beyond what is already constitutionally provided, is allowed for a congregation as long as that voting member fits the definition of "youth" or "young adult." Therefore, congregations with fewer than 400 baptized members would be allowed three (3) lay voting members and congregations over 400 baptized members would be allowed four (4) lay voting members.
- e. Voting membership shall include the officers of the synod.
- f. With the exception of ordained ministers on the roster of this synod who reside outside the territory of this synod, each member of the Synod Assembly shall be a voting member of a congregation of this synod. (†S7.25)
- g. Duly elected voting members of the Synod Council who are not otherwise voting members of the Synod Assembly under †S7.21 shall be granted the privilege of both voice and vote as members of the Synod Assembly. (S7.27)
- h. (S7.22; SC15.05) Up to 5 percent of the total number of Rostered Ministers Not Under Call on the rosters of the synod will be selected to serve as voting members of the Synod Assembly, with voice and vote. (For ease of reference, rostered persons in

the synod (Retired, On Leave from Call, on Disability) are referred to below as a “Rostered Ministers Not Under Call” or “RMNUC” and collectively as “Rostered Leaders Not Under Call” or “RMNUCs.” The persons to serve in that capacity will be selected as follows:

1. All RMNUCs will be contacted by mail on or about February 1 of that assembly year to determine their willingness to serve as voting members, and advising them of the process of selection, including the deadline for responses.

2. Any RMNUC who is a Minister of Word and Sacrament serving under at least a one-year contract with a congregation, agency or institution recognized by this synod and desires to serve, or who is serving as a Dean or Ministry Team Chair within this synod, will automatically be included in the total number of RMNUCs serving as voting members. If the total number of such persons exceeds the 5 percent limit, the persons selected to serve will be chosen from among those persons desiring to serve by random drawing conducted by the Executive Committee or at its direction.

3. If the number of persons selected under the paragraph above is less than the total number of RMNUCs authorized to serve as voting members for the assembly, the remaining positions will be filled from among those who indicated their desire to serve by random drawing conducted by the Executive Committee or at its direction.

4. The RMNUCs chosen to serve as voting members will be notified of their selection as soon as practicable before the assembly.

5. In the event a voting member selected under this process is unable to attend the assembly, or no longer qualifies as a RMNUC, the Executive Committee may appoint a substitute to serve in his or her place from among those who previously indicated their desire to serve but were not selected.

6. Registration fees for the assembly will be waived for RMNUCs serving as voting members under this process. Any travel, housing, meal or other expenses incurred are the responsibility of the RMNUC.

Full Communion Partners

Persons who are not on the roster of the ELCA, but who are serving Southwestern Texas Synod congregations/worshiping communities/Campus Ministries by special appointment and are ordained ministers of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA shall be given voice and vote during the Assembly.

Synod Authorized Ministers

- a. A Synod Authorized Minister in attendance at the Synod Assembly who is serving within a congregation under an authorization of at least one year in duration shall be a voting member of the Synod Assembly, with voice and vote.
- b. Synod Authorized Ministers serving as voting members under this process will be counted as lay persons for purposes of satisfying the requirements of S7.21.

- c. Synod Authorized Ministers serving as voting members under this process will not be counted as a lay voting member from the congregation they serve for purposes of determining the number of lay voting members to be elected by the congregation.
- d. Registration fees, travel, housing, meal and other expenses incurred in attending the Synod Assembly are the responsibility of the congregation served by the Synod Authorized Minister.

General

If the selection of voting members of the Synod Assembly under the processes above results in additional lay voting members being needed to meet the requirement that at least 60% of voting members of the assembly be lay persons, additional lay voting members from congregations will be selected in accordance with the process adopted by the Synod Council under S7.21.c.

3. Advisory Members of the Assembly (S7.23).

The following, if not otherwise voting members of the Synod Assembly, have the privilege of voice, but not vote:

- a. All ministers of Word and Sacrament and ministers of Word and Service who are on leave from call or retired and seminary interns not elected as members, all of whose names appear on the rosters of this synod.
- b. The bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and such other official representatives of this church as may be designated from time to time by the Church Council.
- c. Chairpersons of the Ministry Teams and Committees of this synod.
- d. Members of Synod Assembly committees.
- e. Invited ecumenical representatives.
- f. Such other persons as may be designated by the Synod Assembly or Synod Council from time to time.

4. Quorum (S7.14).

One-third of the members of the Synod Assembly shall constitute a quorum.

5. Proxy Voting (†S7.31).

Proxy and absentee voting shall not be permitted in the transaction of any business of this synod.

6. Parliamentary Procedure (S7.32).

Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition, shall govern parliamentary procedure of the Synod Assembly.

7. Agenda.

Before its adoption, the agenda for the Synod Assembly may be amended by a majority vote of the Assembly. After the adoption of the agenda, a 2/3 vote of the Assembly shall be required to amend the agenda. With the consent of the Assembly, the chair shall have the authority to call items of business in whatever order the chair considers most expedient for the conduct of the Assembly's business.

8. Committee on Reference and Counsel (S7.11.03).

The bishop shall appoint a Committee on Reference and Counsel to provide such assistance to the bishop as may be desired during the course of the Assembly. Resolutions of a general character that are not germane to the pending question or report shall be given by the proposer to the committee which shall report thereon to the Synod Assembly with its recommendations. Other duties of the committee shall be (a) to recommend special orders for the hearing of a representative, (b) to grant or deny permission to distribute printed matter not issuing from the office of the secretary.

9. Elections (*S 9.02)

Nominees from the floor must have a Nomination Form ready to submit immediately upon nomination by the nominee. Nomination Forms will be available in the pre-Assembly electronic mailing to voting members, on the Assembly Page on the Southwestern Texas Synod's website. (www.swtsynod.org) and from the Synod Secretary.

10. Motions and Resolutions.

- a. All motions for Assembly consideration shall be submitted on the forms available on the synod website. and from the Synod Secretary. All resolutions for consideration by the Assembly shall be submitted on the forms included on the synod website.
- b. Motions related directly to matters being debated by the Assembly may be made from the floor, after recognition from the presiding officer, with a legible copy submitted in writing to the secretary.
- c. (Bylaw S7.11.04) Resolutions shall be addressed by the Synod Assembly according to the following procedure:
 - 1) Any resolution, memorial or other main motion not germane to the matter before a regular meeting of the Synod Assembly or on the assembly agenda shall be submitted in writing, supported by the signatures of at least two voting members, to the secretary of this synod no later than **60 days (March 2, 2026)** before the beginning of the meeting of the Synod Assembly. Such matter shall be referred as required by the chapter to the Committee on Reference and Counsel or Synod Council, which shall report such matters and their recommendations thereon to the voting members of the Synod Assembly in writing at least 10 days before the beginning of the meeting of the Synod Assembly.

- 2) Any matter not submitted in advance as required by subsection (1) of this bylaw shall not be considered or acted on by that meeting of the Synod Assembly except with
 - (a) the recommendation of the Synod Council;
 - (b) the recommendation of the Committee on Reference and Counsel; or
 - (c) a majority vote of the Synod Assembly.
- 3) Any matter required by this bylaw to be submitted in advance that is not submitted at least 7 days prior to the beginning of the meeting of the Synod Assembly shall only be considered and acted upon by that meeting of the Synod Assembly where there is a substantial need to act on the matter without the opportunity for deliberation as contemplated by this bylaw, as determined by a 2/3 vote of the Synod Assembly.
- d. Any matter required to be submitted in advance that was not submitted on or before **April 17, 2026** shall only be considered and acted upon by the Synod Assembly where there is a substantial need to act on the matter, as determined by a 2/3 vote of the Synod Assembly.
- e. In considering motions and resolutions that are not germane to a pending question or report, the Committee on Reference and Counsel may recommend approval, recommend rejection, recommend referral to a unit of this synod or of this church, or recommend a substitute motion to the Assembly.
- f. The Committee on Reference and Counsel will report to the Assembly at the times indicated on the agenda. The committee's report, which shall include those motions and resolutions submitted timely and the committee's recommendations, will be distributed to members of the Assembly. When the committee has recommended either the approval or rejection of a motion or resolution, such motion or resolution shall be the main motion before the Assembly and the committee's recommendation shall be received as information. When the committee has made a recommendation (other than merely recommending approval or rejection) concerning a motion or resolution, the recommendation of the committee shall be the main motion before the Assembly.
- g. Authors of resolutions or representatives of groups that submit resolutions are strongly encouraged to attend any hearings scheduled prior to the assembly for discussion of their resolution.
- h. A non-germane motion or resolution submitted by a voting member will not be considered to be before the Synod Assembly until it has been reported to the Synod Assembly by the Committee on Reference and Counsel or the Synod Council, as the case may be. Until reported during a business session of the Synod Assembly, a motion or resolution may be withdrawn by the person who submitted it, with the consent of the Committee on Reference and Counsel and/or the Synod Council to which it was referred. If a motion or resolution is withdrawn before being reported to the Synod Assembly, the withdrawal will be reported to the Synod Assembly, and the motion or resolution will not come before the Synod Assembly for consideration unless otherwise properly brought before the Synod Assembly.

- i. *En Bloc* Consideration of Resolutions. Action on Proposed resolutions, as recommended by the Committee on Reference and Counsel in a report distributed to assembly members prior to, or at, the first business session of the assembly, may be approved by en bloc resolution when so proposed by the Committee on Reference and Counsel.
 - 1) If a voting member desires the assembly to discuss a resolution or the Committee of Reference and Counsel's recommendation on a resolution that is proposed for *en bloc* consideration, she or he may request that it be removed from the proposed *en bloc* resolution, provided the member's request is supported by ten other voting members. Such request shall be made in accordance with the following paragraph. The assembly then will consider and vote separately on the proposed resolution or the recommendation of the Committee on Reference and Counsel, as provided for above. After removals, the *en bloc* resolution shall be voted upon without amendments or debate.
 - 2) To call for such separate consideration, a voting member must submit written notification on the form available at the facilitators' table to the Secretary of the synod or to the chair of the Committee on Reference and Counsel no later than before **5 pm. on Friday, May 1, 2026.**

11. Proposed Budget.

The proposed budget along with the rationale shall be presented to the Assembly during the afternoon plenary session **Friday May 1, 2026.** Debate and adoption of the budget shall take place during the afternoon plenary session on **Saturday, May 2, 2026. A budget hearing will be held on electronically prior to the Assembly on Tuesday, April 28, 2026 at 7 pm for any voting members who are interested in discussing the budget details.** Any voting member desiring to attend the hearing shall notify the Assembly Manager, Deanna Zitelman (dzitelman@swtsynod.org) to request access to the electronic meeting.

- a. Any motion for expenditure of funds or proposed amendment to the budget as presented by the Synod Council shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary or the Vice-President **before 5 pm. on Friday, May 1, 2026** for review and recommendation by the Synod Council. Any such motion or proposed amendment shall contain a statement setting out the probable fiscal impact of the proposal, and the suggested source of any required additional funds.
- b. Any proposal to appropriate funds, whether by amendment to the budget or otherwise, which is presented to a meeting of the Synod Assembly without the approval of the Synod Council, shall require a two-thirds vote for adoption. (S10.04)

12. Constitution and Bylaw Amendments.

- a. Any proposal for amendment of the Synod Constitution at the next Synod Assembly shall include the signatures of at least 30 voting members of the Assembly. The proposed amendment shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary or the Vice-

President before **5 pm. on Friday, May 1, 2026**, for review and recommendation by the Synod Council. (†S18.13.a)

- b. The bylaws of this synod may be amended by a two-thirds vote of voting members of the Assembly present and voting. (†S18.21.) Any proposal for amendment of the Synod bylaws shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary or the Vice-President before before **5 pm. on Friday, May 1, 2026**, for review and recommendation by the Synod Council. (S18.21.01)
- c. The constitution and bylaws may be amended by en bloc resolutions (adoption of several motions by a single resolution) unless a voting member objects to the inclusion of any particular provision. Any objection of a voting member to the inclusion of a particular provision in the en bloc resolution shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary or the Vice-President before before **5 pm. on Friday, May 1, 2026**, Particular provisions to which objection is so noted shall be considered separately and all other provisions not objected to will be considered as part of the en bloc resolution.

13. Debate.

- a. All speeches in general debate and discussion shall be limited to three minutes unless otherwise determined by a majority vote of the Assembly.
- b. No person may speak more than twice to the same issue without the consent of the Assembly and only after all others wishing to speak have had the opportunity to do so.
- c. In so far as is possible during discussion, a speaker on one side of the question shall be followed by a speaker on the other side.
- d. A motion to close debate (moving the previous question) is not in order until at least three persons favoring and three persons opposing the matter under discussion have been heard, as long as there are voting members still wishing to speak to the issue.
 - e. In the give and take of debate on issues before the Assembly, members and visitors should refrain from applause or other expressions of support or dissent.
 - f. A member who has just spoken on the pending question may not move the previous question, if there are other members who wish to speak to the issue.

14. Distribution of Material.

Any request to distribute printed material or other items at the Assembly shall require the approval of the Committee of Reference and Counsel (S7.11.03).

15. Unfinished business.

When the orders of the day are called for adjournment of the Synod Assembly, all remaining unfinished items of business shall be referred to the Synod Council for disposition.

16. Bounds of the Assembly

A person will be admitted to restricted seating areas only upon display of proper credentials.

REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP TO THE 2026 SWT SYNOD ASSEMBLY



God is not finished with us yet — we are still becoming.

Dios aún no ha terminado con nosotros — todavía estamos en proceso.

“This life therefore is not godliness, but growth in godliness... we are not yet what we shall be, but we are on the way.”

— Martin Luther

“Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.”

— 1 John 3:2

Introduction

We are living in a time of profound change — in our communities, in our nation, and in the church itself. We see deepening division in public life, growing uncertainty about the future, and increasing challenges to the dignity and well-being of many of our neighbors. Many experience fear and instability as rhetoric divides rather than heals.

Yet the people of God have lived through seasons of change before. And again and again, the Spirit has led the church forward.

In our travels across this synod — from rural congregations in the Hill Country to growing communities in our cities and ministries along the border — we often hear both concern and hope about the future of the church. Congregations are asking faithful questions about how they can continue serving their communities in a changing world.

Our congregations are also navigating significant shifts in their own contexts. Across the synod, rural communities are experiencing demographic change — aging populations, fewer young families, and economic transitions that reshape community life. At the same time, other areas of our synod are experiencing rapid growth and cultural change. These

realities invite us to listen carefully, adapt faithfully, and imagine new ways of being church together.

For this reason, our synod has embraced the theme **Becoming... / En Proceso...** In the life of faith we are always being formed by God's grace. Through Word and Sacrament, community, challenge, and hope, God continues shaping us into the people we are called to be. Rooted in baptism, we are becoming a people growing in faith and sent into the world to bear Christ's reconciling love. As we listen for the Spirit in this time, we are also beginning to name this calling more clearly—**forming disciples, developing leaders, embracing differences, and transforming communities.**

The work of the Office of the Bishop reflects this shared journey. Across our synod, signs of this becoming are already visible. Together we are becoming:

- a people formed for faithful leadership, caring for and developing leaders;
- a synod that walks alongside congregations, accompanying and resourcing communities in changing contexts;
- a church open to new forms of ministry, exploring and establishing ministries for emerging needs;
- a church committed to justice and public witness, living out our baptismal call to seek justice and care for our neighbors; and
- a synod strengthened for shared mission, sustaining the structures that support our common life.

Across all of this, we are beginning to see a shared pattern emerge—one that will guide us more intentionally in the season ahead.

What follows is an account of how, together, we are living into this calling — trusting that God continues to shape us as a synod always becoming.

Becoming a People Formed for Faithful Leadership

As congregations across our synod navigate changing realities — from demographic shifts in rural communities to rapid growth and cultural change in other areas — the need for faithful, adaptable leadership has never been greater. Forming and sustaining leaders who can serve in these diverse contexts is central to our shared ministry.

For this reason, the work of raising up, accompanying, and supporting leaders remains a core commitment of the Office of the Bishop and our synod.

We continue accompanying those discerning calls to rostered ministry, with **nineteen candidates currently in the candidacy process and seventeen additional individuals in early discernment**. Our synod is participating in a pilot of the newly reimagined candidacy process, emphasizing ministry competencies and flexibility in preparing leaders for changing ministry contexts.

First Call Accompaniment remains a vital ministry of formation and support for newly called leaders. **Nine rostered leaders** participated this year, with several completing their three-year accompaniment experience.

Leadership development also includes equipping lay and rostered leaders for the evolving realities of congregational life. Our synod is exploring the creation of a lay formation program to prepare leaders for a variety of ministry settings. Ongoing formation is supported through **Faith+Lead courses, Equipping the Saints gatherings, and clergy retreats**. This year we also updated compensation and part-time ministry guidelines to strengthen healthy ministry practices and support sustainable leadership.

Intentional accompaniment of Latiné rostered and lay leaders continues through monthly gatherings, pastoral support, and community building. These spaces offer encouragement, resource sharing, and spiritual care during a season of heightened challenges for many communities.

Through these efforts, we are **becoming a church that equips and sustains leaders for the sake of the gospel** — leaders prepared to serve faithfully, guide congregations through change, and join in the work God continues to do among us.

Becoming a Synod that Walks Together with Congregations

As God continues shaping us as a community rooted in baptism and sustained by Word and Sacrament, we accompany congregations through seasons of change, discernment, and renewal.

Our **2026 Synod Assembly**, under the theme *Becoming... / En Proceso...*, invites voting members to reflect on how God is shaping our shared life and ministry. Workshops will offer opportunities to explore how the church is evolving and how leaders and congregations can participate in that work. This year's **Assembly Offering** will support the **Tiemann Leadership Endowment**, strengthening leadership formation across the synod.

Throughout the year, we accompanied **twenty congregations through pastoral transitions and seasons of discernment, with seven congregations completing call**

processes. These transitions often become opportunities for congregations to reconnect with the wider church and imagine new possibilities for ministry.

A growing number of congregations are also discerning how best to steward their property and resources, including relocation or right-sizing facilities. The synod continues to provide guidance and support as congregations seek to align their resources with their mission and ministry.

Through these relationships, we are **becoming a synod that walks alongside congregations**, supporting one another in faithful ministry and shared mission.

Becoming a Church Open to New Forms of Ministry

Even amid uncertainty in church and society, the Spirit continues to call us toward innovation, creative experimentation, and new expressions of ministry. Across our synod, leaders and congregations are exploring new ways to share the gospel and engage their communities.

The **San Antonio Mission Lab** has been formally established and continues developing its leadership, structure, and ministry initiatives. Through the Mission Lab:

- **One Table Collaborative** supports congregations without called pastors through a shared ministry model;
- **Wildvine Collective** nurtures Fresh Expressions of church and supports leaders experimenting with new forms of community and worship;
- **Re:Root** helps congregations reimagine how property and physical spaces can serve God's mission.

More than **120 leaders participated this year in learning communities focused on Fresh Expressions**, with ongoing coaching and support for those launching new ministry experiments.

The synod also continues to support a range of strategic and emerging ministries serving diverse communities — both in person and online — with particular outreach to those who have historically been excluded or dismissed by our society:

Synod Authorized Worshiping Communities (SAWCs):

- Palabra de Vida- Austin
- Platicas de Santa Sofia- San Antonio

- 956 River of Faith Network (formerly Valley Metanoia Network)- Rio Grande Valley
- New Hope- Blanco
- People of Hope- Victoria

Synod Authorized Outreach Ministries (SAOMs):

- Eagle Pass Frontera Ministries- Eagle Pass
- Embodied Grace Yoga Church- San Antonio
- San Antonio Mission Lab- San Antonio
- Technicolor Ministries- Synod-wide

Strategic Ministries and Redevelopments:

- Holy Cross- Austin
- Iglesia Luterana San Lucas- Eagle Pass
- Iglesia Luterana San Pablo- San Antonio
- St. John/San Juan- Austin

These emerging ministries are not separate from the church we know, but part of a wider ecology of ministry taking shape among us—one church expressed in many ways.

The synod's Mission Circle (formerly the Holy Experiments Team), partners with Brother Chris is developing, implementing, and assessing our synod's strategic mission plan.

Through experimentation, partnership, and faithful risk-taking, we are **becoming a church open to the Spirit's leading**, willing to imagine new ways the gospel can take root in our communities.

Becoming a Church Committed to Justice and Public Witness

Our baptismal calling compels us toward faithful public witness grounded in the gospel and expressed through compassion, courage, and humility. In a time when many experience fear, displacement, and marginalization, our synod continues cultivating ministries of justice, accompaniment, and advocacy.

Eagle Pass Frontera Ministries provides humanitarian assistance, education on constitutional rights, and spiritual care in partnership with local ministries. Immersion experiences and collaborative partnerships deepen learning and solidarity across the synod.

The **Sembrando en los Márgenes** initiative has strengthened relationships among leaders across the country serving migrant communities, emphasizing trust, sustained presence, and long-term partnership. Immigration court observation continues as a regular practice of public witness.

Work also continues toward becoming a more diverse and beloved community. Staff and synod leaders have engaged in ongoing formation focused on **racial justice, equity, and belonging**.

Through grant-supported leadership, the synod is **strengthening disaster preparedness**, expanding partnerships, and developing infrastructure to support congregations before, during, and after disasters.

Through advocacy, accompaniment, and compassionate presence, we are **becoming a church that bears witness to God's justice**, standing with our neighbors and working for dignity and peace for all people.

Becoming a Synod Strengthened for Shared Mission

To sustain our shared ministry, we continue strengthening the structures and relationships that support our common life as a synod.

Following the successful **"More than Enough"** campaign, stewardship efforts are being refocused to equip congregations and strengthen mission support across the synod. Through this campaign, **more than \$40,000 was raised for synod hunger ministries**, and every dollar was distributed to support ministries addressing food insecurity across our communities. This generosity reflects the deep commitment of our congregations to caring for neighbors in need and participating in God's work of abundance.

The **Voices of Faith / Voces de Fe** initiative continues gathering and sharing stories of faith and transformation across our synod. These stories highlight the many ways God is at work among us and help strengthen connections among congregations and communities. By sharing these experiences of ministry, we are reminded that our synod's story is still unfolding — and that together we are a people always becoming.

Through faithful stewardship, shared leadership, and strengthened connections, we are **becoming a synod better equipped to sustain and support our shared mission in the years ahead**.

Conclusion: Always Becoming

God continues to shape us — not as a finished people, but as a people becoming. Across this synod we see signs of that work: leaders being formed, congregations discerning new possibilities, ministries taking root in new places, and communities bearing witness to God's justice and love.

As we look ahead, we sense that God is calling us to greater clarity and shared focus in this becoming—so that together we might more intentionally form disciples, raise up leaders, embrace one another across difference, and join in God's work of transformation in our communities.

Together we trust that the Spirit is leading us forward — growing us in faith and deepening our witness.

For God is not finished with us yet. We are still becoming.

Porque Dios aún no ha terminado con nosotros. Todavía estamos en proceso.

In Christ's love,

Bishop Sue Briner

Bishop Associate Deacon Darcy Mittelstaedt

Bishop Associate Pastor Ricardo Jimenez Reyes

Bishop Associate & DEM Brother Chris Markert

Hilda Santiago

Deanna Zitelman

Bryce Kennedy

Michelle Johnson



"I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

March 23, 2026

Dear siblings in Christ,

As you gather for your synod assembly, I want to express my gratitude for what you are doing — and have been doing — for this church, *our* church.

In the months since I was installed as presiding bishop, I have been focused on connection. Some of you have heard me talk about what it means to be a connected church. This vision of connectedness grows directly out of one of the three priorities we, as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, have named for this season of our life together.

When we lifted up these priorities, we committed ourselves to them not as abstract ideas but as guiding commitments for how we live and serve as church. As I reflected on them, the third priority stood out with particular clarity: to be a connected, sustainable church, raising the bar together.

That priority has been shaping my thinking and my leadership. It asks not just what we do but how we do it — together, across congregations, synods and the churchwide organization. Connectedness is not a program or a slogan; it is a way of being church that recognizes our shared calling and our shared responsibility. This is not my church. It is yours. It is ours, together. The ministries you carry out in your congregations and synods are not just yours — they are ours together.

Over the next several years, you will hear this priority expressed with greater focus and clarity. In 2026, our emphasis is on connection — strengthening relationships, listening deeply and recognizing how much we depend on one another.

In 2027, you will begin to hear me speak more intentionally about sustainability — how we steward our people, our resources and our structures so that our witness remains strong for generations to come. By 2028, connection and sustainability will come together in a shared language of togetherness, as we more fully live into who God is calling us to be as church.

So, when you hear language about being together, it is about living out the ELCA's vision of a world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation. It matters deeply to me that we know who we are, moving forward as one body, trusting God and one another.

I believe this is how connection is built — not by standing alone but by being church together.

With gratitude and hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yehiel Curry', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

The Rev. Yehiel Curry
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

REPORT OF THE SYNOD VICE PRESIDENT

“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone” (1 Timothy 2:1)

Corrie ten Boom wrote about an important power – that all of us possess – and that is prayer. She said, “Prayer is such an important power. In the concentration camp, seven hundred of us lived in a room built for two hundred people. We were all dirty, nervous and tense. One day a horrible fight broke out amongst the prisoners. Betsie began to pray aloud. It was as if a storm laid down, until at last all was quiet. Then Betsie said, ‘Thank you, Father.’ A tired old woman was used by the Lord to save the situation for seven hundred fellow prisoners through her prayers.”

During this past year, since being elected as your vice-president, there have been many, many occasions where prayer has been such an important part of my daily life. Whether I am praying for sick friends or family members, praying for rain (been doing that a LOT), praying for those affected by natural disasters, praying for those affected by wars, praying for churches that are continuing to decline or close, the need for continued praying is ever present. While I may not see the direct result of all those prayers, I feel confident that my Lord is listening. We are in constant communication. And while I may not understand why some prayers are answered and some are not, I do believe the Lord has a plan that I just do not fully understand.

As your synod vice-president, I have been given the opportunity to meet with all the other synod vice-presidents throughout the United States. We meet once a month via ZOOM, and the meetings are always informative. I am happy to report that our synods are all very similar – especially when it comes to working with congregations to find “new ways” to be the church.

While I am often disheartened by all that is happening both here in the United States and in the world, I am excited to continue learning and to being a part of your synod council as we move forward as the church of Christ. I hope that you, as members of this Synod and of this church, will join me in praying daily for all those in need. As Corrie ten Boom pointed out, praying is sometimes all it takes to change a particular situation. And, as the Lord told Joshua, “Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

— Carol Semper

MINUTES OF THE THIRTY-THIRD ASSEMBLY SOUTHWESTERN TEXAS SYNOD OF THE ELCA

May 3, 2025

**Abiding Presence Lutheran Church – San Antonio, TX
and via Zoom Digital Media**

The Thirty-third Assembly of the Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America was held at the Abiding Presence Lutheran Church, San Antonio, Texas, on May 3, 2025. The Theme of the Assembly was *More than Enough/Mas que Suficiente*.

SESSION 1

Saturday, May 3, 2025

**Abiding Presence Lutheran Church, San Antonio, TX
Zoom Digital Media**

Bishop Sue Briner convened the Assembly at 9:00 a.m. and in both English and Spanish languages, imparted a welcome and the Assembly theme of *More than Enough/Mas que Suficiente*.

Hilda Santiago was invited forward to share our land acknowledgement and specifically acknowledged and honored the Lipan Apache, Coahuiltecan, Tonkawa, and Jumano peoples upon whose ancestral homelands we were gathered physically, and encouraged virtual attendees to lookup the Indigenous peoples or tribal nations who were first to love, pray, grow, celebrate, cry, drum and sing upon the land and in the places where they were located.

Deacon Darcy Mittelstaedt and Pastor Ricardo Jimenez-Reyes led the invocation and call to worship, and also reminded members that we were not simply beginning with worship, but instead entering into a day of worship. Prayer stations were located throughout the meeting space and on-site attendees were invited to connect with God by spending time at each one or simply settling into one space for a while. At the conclusion of the Invocation and Call to Worship, everyone was asked to join in singing *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing* and then dwell in the story of the feeding of the 5000 via a video presentation

At 9:15 a.m. Bishop Briner declared the assembly to be in session and expressed appreciation to Abiding Presence hosts, and Pastors Steve Cox and Heather Hansen. Pastor Cox was invited forward to share greetings.

Bishop Briner conveyed restroom locations, encouraged on-site participants to use the mandalas and colored pencils at each table for creative expression, noted the family friendly space available for children and their caregivers, and explained refreshments would be available throughout the assembly. Staff members were acknowledged, and Bishop Briner noted they were wearing blue shirts and were available to assist with questions and any other needs. Assistance with voting

could be received by raising a hand either physically for those on-site, or via the Zoom screen for those online. It was noted that Pastor Ryan Dockery of Shepherd of the Hills in Austin would be providing technical support along with staff members.

Bishop Briner introduced Leigh Ingram, Vice President of the Synod, who welcomed assembly participants to the first one day, hybrid Assembly and conveyed intentions of the Assembly including worship together; learning about the joys and challenges of life in our synod; consideration of a budget and the election synod leaders; hearing stories of how God has been providing us with more than enough; celebrating the 75th anniversary of Cross Trails ministry; raising money for a new dining hall at Camp Chrysalis; and finally to be sent out by God energized, inspired and equipped to engage in God's mission in the world.

Bishop Briner discussed Parliamentary Procedures and noted tips for Parliamentary Procedure could be found in Exhibit A-1 in the Bulletin of Reports. She conveyed information on how the assembly could be addressed for both in-person and virtual attendees and introduced Assembly Parliamentarian Dawn Young, a member of Christ Lutheran, Elm Creek, and Reference and Council Chair Pastor Caleb Jeffers, transitional pastor at Shepherd King and Hope Lutheran churches in San Antonio.

The web-based process for voting, Vpoll, was explained by Bishop Briner and a test vote was taken. Once the test vote was successfully completed an official check in vote was performed for the assembly credentials.

While awaiting results of the credentials check in vote, Bishop Briner expressed thanks to the candidacy committee and videos highlighting new calls and those new to the synod, and Reconciling in Christ Congregations were shown. Bishop Briner encouraged attendees consider individuals, including themselves, who might consider becoming a candidate for ministry and to reach out to Deacons Darcy Mittelstaedt or John Dellis for inquiries on the process. A video about candidates and the candidacy committee was then shared.

REPORT OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

Bishop Briner introduced the Chair of the Credentials Committee Pastor Fred Klinker of Galilean Lutheran Church in Corpus Christi and invited him to forward to give the credentials report. Pastor Klinker reported there were 53 lay male voting, 74 lay female voting, no lay other gender voting, 37 rostered male voting, 38 rostered female voting, and no rostered other gender voting for a total of 202 registered voting members. The percent of lay voting was 63% and rostered voting was 37%. The Credentials Committee certified that all constitutional requirements regarding composition of the voting membership were met. Bishop Briner announced at 9:55 a.m. the Assembly was now in order.

ADOPTION OF STANDING RULES

Vice President Ingram presented the Proposed Standing Rules (SR), (Exhibit A-3 in the Bulletin of Reports, hereinafter BOR), for adoption pursuant to the recommendation of the Synod Council. Bishop Briner called for discussion on the Standing Rules. Deacon John Dellis came forward and asked whether there were enough standing rules and Bishop Briner confirmed there were more

than enough. There being no further discussion Bishop Briner called for Vpoll vote to adopt the Standing Rules as presented.

It was observed that 203 votes were cast and given the credentials report documented 202 registered voting members another check-in vote was required. Thus, Bishop Briner called for assembly members to complete another official check-in vote via Vpoll. While results were being tabulated videos about Global Refuge and Portico were shared.

VOTED

SA25.05.01

To adopt the Standing Rules of the Assembly

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Vice President Ingram presented the proposed agenda (Exhibit A-2) and noted that the synod assembly can amend the agenda with a majority vote. However, once the agenda is adopted a two-thirds vote would be required to amend the agenda. Vice President Ingram also noted that the Standing Rules allow the chair to call items in whatever order is most expedient for the conduct of the assembly's business with the assembly's consent.

VOTED

SA25.05.02

To adopt the Agenda.

Vice President Ingram reported no resolutions had been received to this point and explained that any resolutions brought to the assembly now would require a two-thirds vote for consideration. Furthermore, she explained anyone wishing to submit a resolution would need to utilize the appropriate form on the synod assembly website. Ms. Ingram also communicated the budget would be presented to the assembly in the second morning session, and would be voted on during session three in the afternoon. Ms. Ingram advised that per our Standing Rules, any motion for expenditure of funds or proposed amendment to the budget would need to be submitted to the secretary or the vice-president via a form found on the voting member page of the synod website before 10:15 a.m. for review and recommendation by the synod council. Furthermore, any such motion or proposed amendment shall contain a statement setting out the probable fiscal impact of the proposal, and the suggested source of any required additional funds. Finally, any such proposal would require a two-thirds vote for adoption.

STATE OF THE SYNOD REPORT

Bishop Briner and Vice President Ingram, along with synod staff members Deacon Darcy Mittelstaedt, Pastor Ricardo Jimenez-Reyes, Brother Chris Markert, and Hilda Santiago joined together to present the State of the Synod Report where they spoke of ways we as a synod and church are sharing and living out God's promises by growing new leaders, exploring new ways to be church, planting new ministries, and speaking up for the most vulnerable among us.

Following the State of the Synod Report, a video was shared introducing SUMUD, an ELCA supported initiative for justice in Palestine and Israel. SUMUD means steadfastness in Arabic and reflects the resilience of our partners in the Holy Land. Following the video, Pastor Sharon Wiggins

was invited forward to speak to the assembly about this newly formed self-organizing ministry team.

At 10:30 a.m., Bishop Briner called for a 30-minute break and announced the assembly would resume at 11:00 a.m.

SESSION 2
Saturday, May 3, 2025
Abiding Presence Lutheran Church, San Antonio, TX

After the break, a video was shown about one of our synod's amazing feeding ministries providing more than enough at First Lutheran, Edinburg.

ELECTIONS FOR OFFICERS AND MINISTRY TEAM CHAIRS

Bishop Briner introduced Pastor Gary Conklin, Our Saviors Lutheran, McAllen, and chair of the Nominations Committee. Pastor Conklin acknowledged members of the committee: Pastor Jessica Cain, Carol Semper, Pastor Tim Bauerkemper, and Pastor Eileen Spehr, and presented each position, the current nominees, and provided direction for nominations from the floor.

The following nominations were presented with nominations open from the floor.

Synod Council Members – Exhibit D

Synod Vice President, 4-year term, Lay

Carol Semper
Mike Stallaings

Bishop Briner asked for nominations from the floor. Seeing none, the position was closed.

Synod Secretary, 4-year term, Lay or Rostered

Monica Buie

Bishop Briner asked for nominations from the floor. Seeing none, the position was closed.

Ministry Team Chairs, 3-year term, Lay or Rostered

Holy Experiments Team Chair:

Pastor Tim Bauerkemper
Pastor Kris Franke Hill
Pastor Cecilia Sukniac

Bishop Briner asked for nominations from the floor. Seeing none, the position was closed.

Leadership Development Team Chair:

Rebecca Guengerich

Bishop Briner asked for nominations from the floor. Seeing none, the position was closed.

Synod Council Members, 3-year term

Lay Male – Elect Two

Ronny Dentler
Darren Dunn
Jason Miranda
Mike Stallings

Bishop Briner asked for nominations from the floor. Seeing none, the position was closed.

Lay Female – Elect two

Michelle Schlinke
Ann Schwartz
(Rebecca Vann was nominated but withdrew her name.)

Bishop Briner asked for nominations from the floor. Seeing none, the position was closed.

Lay Female, Person of Color

Graciela Conklin

Bishop Briner asked for nominations from the floor. Seeing none, the position was closed.

Rostered Ministers – Elect three

Pastor Gabriella Conklin
Pastor Ryan Dockery
Pastor Adam Varner

Bishop Briner asked for nominations from the floor. Seeing none, the position was closed.

Youth Member, 2-year term

Cody Jones
Rhyker Love
Nate Thomas

Bishop Briner asked for nominations from the floor. Rhyker Love and Nate Thomas were nominated and accepted the nomination. Seeing no further nominations, the position was closed.

For positions to be elected where only one person had been nominated for the position, Bishop Briner proposed those persons be declared elected by acclamation and called for any objection. There was none.

VOTED

SA25.05.03

positions.

Approved by acclamation to elect all persons in uncontested

Synod Secretary, 4-year term

Monica Buie

Leadership Development Team Chair, 3-year term

Rebecca Guengerich

Synod Council Lay Female, 3-year term

Michelle Schlinke

Ann Schwartz

Synod Council Lay Female, Person of Color, 3-year term

Graciela Conklin

Synod Council, Rostered Ministers, 3-year term

Pastor Gabriella Conklin

Pastor Ryan Dockery

Pastor Adam Varner

Bishop Briner asked Pastor Jessica Cain, Living Word, Buda, and a member of the nominating committee to pray as the assembly prepared to vote on contested positions.

VOTED
SA25.05.04

Voted to elect persons in contested positions:
Carol Semper, Synod Vice President, 4-year term

Bishop Briner announced that runoff elections would take place in the afternoon during Session three.

PRESENTATION OF THE 2026-2027 BUDGET

Vice President Ingram welcomed to the podium synod council member and chair of the Administration and Finance Committee, Johnnie Jordan, who presented a year-end budget summary and the 2026-2027 budget (Exhibits B2-B8 of the BOR). Mr. Jordan also discussed the 2026-2027 Mission and Ministry proposed budget. At the conclusion of his presentation, Mr. Jordan reminded the assembly that per assembly standing rules, any motion for expenditure of funds or proposed amendment to the budget had to be submitted via the appropriate form on the assembly web page to the secretary and vice president before 10:15 a.m. today for review and recommendation by the Synod Council. He also informed that the budget would be voted on later in the afternoon.

ELCA REPORT

Daniel Kirschbaum, Senior Director of Young Adult Communities at the churchwide expression of the ELCA was invited to the podium by Vice President Ingram to present the ELCA Report which touched on the topics of God's Love Made Real, our synod's presence, mission support, Gather communities, youth and young adult gathering, candidacy, ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response, proposed social statement, Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, churchwide

assembly, Living Lutheran magazine, and resources for advocacy and engagement. Mr. Kirschbaum closed their presentation by sharing Bishop Eaton's video, *Our journey of faith together*.

Vice President Ingram introduced a video about another amazing feeding ministry in our synod entitled Tres Hilos that began in partnership with the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church.

PARTNERSHIP WITH AME CHURCH

At the conclusion of the Tres Hilos video, Bishop Briner thanked Mr. Kirschbaum for their presentation and expressed gratitude for our partnership with ELCA churchwide. She then introduced the Reverend Doctor Raymond Bryant, Presiding Elder of the San Antonio district of the AME church who shared remarks about the Southwestern Texas Synod's partnership with the AME church and their focus on healthy food with their community garden efforts.

As attendees prepared for Holy Communion, Bishop Briner asked for a few moments of silence as a video played remembering roster leaders and spouses who had died the previous year.

HOLY COMMUNION

Pastor Cecie Sukniac from Spirit in the Hills, Spicewood, was welcomed forward to lead the assembly in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND LUNCH

Bishop Briner shared announcements in preparation for the lunch break and reminded individuals nominated for a position that they should have filled out a biography that would be posted on the assembly webpage by 1:00 p.m. Bishop Briner also announced that since the Cross Trails Corporation meeting would take place beginning at 1:15 p.m. the assembly was in recess until 1:45 p.m. Rebecca Guengerich, Leadership Team Chair, was invited by Bishop Briner to pray for the lunch.

SESSION 3

Saturday, May 3, 2025

Abiding Presence Lutheran Church, San Antonio, TX

At 1:50 p.m. Bishop Briner reconvened the assembly and called for an official check in vote via Vpoll to verify the afternoon's assembly credentials. While the results were being verified, worship continued with a prayer by Pastor Heather Hansen and the story of the feeding of the 5,000 from Mark 6:30-44 read in Spanish by Gilma Aguire, a Word and Sacrament candidate from St. John Lutheran Church in San Juan.

Daniel Kirschbaum shared the message and worship concluded with assembly attendees singing *Bless the Lord*.

Vice President Ingram introduced the Rev. Leyla King, Canon to the Ordinary in the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas who shared remarks regarding small churches and our partnership with them.

Bishop Briner spoke about our synod's longstanding relationship with Iglesia Luterana de Costa Rica, the Lutheran Church of Costa Rica also referred to as ILCO, and shared two videos. The first a brief greeting from ILCO and the second, a thank you from the ILCO women's commission for funding they received to support and educate women experiencing domestic violence.

Pastor Ricardo Jimenez-Reyes introduced a video about two related ministries on the border who reach out to and care for the vulnerable in Eagle Pass, both those who are residents and those who are passing through.

CREDENTIALS REPORT

Pastor Fred Klinker reported that as of 2:40 there were 53 lay male voting, 76 lay female voting, zero lay other gender voting, 37 rostered male voting, 38 rostered female voting, and no rostered other gender voting for a total of 204 registered voting members. The percent of lay voting was 63% and rostered voting was 37%. The Credentials Committee certified that all constitutional requirements regarding composition of the voting membership were met.

Following the report and in advance of the runoff elections, Carol Semper, member of the nominating committee Team, was invited to pray for the assembly.

While awaiting voting results, Signe Frederickson was called on to share information about the Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest.

VOTED

SA25.05.05

Voted to elect persons in contested positions:

Rev. Cecilia Sukniac, Holy Experiments Team Chair, 3-year term

Mike Stallings, Synod Council Lay Male, 4-year term

Cody Jones, Synod Council Youth Member, 2-year term

Angie Weiss, member of Grace Lutheran, Rock, made a motion to expand the synod council to add an additional youth member, Rhyker Love, for a 2-year term. The motion was seconded by assembly members.

VOTED

SA25.05.06

Voted by acclamation to elect Rhyker Love as a second Synod Council Youth Member, 2-year term.

Campus Pastors Brad Fuerst and Jamie Bouzard shared information and a video about their campus ministry programs at The University of Texas at Austin and Texas State University, San Marcos, respectively

Bishop Briner brought the 2026-2027 budget to the floor for discussion and reminded the assembly that a simple majority vote was needed for passage. Seeing no discussion, she called for a vote on the proposed budget.

While awaiting results of the budget adoption vote, Vice President Ingram introduced the More than Enough Fund video.

VOTED

SA25.05.07

To adopt the 2026-2027 Budget as presented in Exhibit B-7 of the Bulletin of Reports.

VOTED

SA25.05.08

**Voted to elect persons in contested positions:
Jason Miranda, Synod Council Lay Male, 4-year term**

Bishop Briner thanked Leigh Ingram for her service as Synod Council Vice President, and Brother Chris Markert thanked Pastor Jake Fain for his service as Holy Experiments Team Chair.

Bishop Briner recognized and expressed thanks to outgoing council and committee members, officers, ministry team chairs, Jorge Lopez and Pastor Ricardo Jimenez-Reyes for translation, Abiding Presence hosts, sponsors, volunteers, worship team, nominating committee, and other assembly leaders.

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bishop Briner announced the 2026 assembly would take place at Triumphant Love Lutheran Church, Austin, on May 1-2, 2026, from 1:00 p.m. on Friday through the end of day on Saturday. Bishop Briner further announced the assembly offering totaled \$20,000.

INSTALLATION OF NEWLY ELECTED LEADERS

Bishop Briner invited the Synod Council members, committee members, and ministry team chairs, forward to be installed.

AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM

Deacon Darcy Mittelstaedt and Pastor Ricardo Jimenez-Reyes led assembly attendees in the Affirmation of Baptism which concluded with the singing of *This Little Light of Mine*.

CLOSING ASSEMBLY

Following the Order for Closing of the Assembly, the Assembly was adjourned at 3:39pm.

SOUTHWESTERN TEXAS SYNOD ROSTER REPORT

2026 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

ORDINATIONS

The Rev. Rudy Salazar

INSTALLATIONS

The Rev. Sergio Rodriguez	Abiding Love, Austin
The Rev. Rudy Salazar	Emanuel's Seguin, St. John, Denhawken
The Rev. Christine Kirchner	St. Paul, Nordheim
The Rev. Katie Rode	First English, Austin

SPECIALIZED CALLS & APPOINTMENTS

The Rev. Dr. Tim Anderson	Director of Austin City Lutherans, Austin
Bishop Susan Briner	Southwestern Texas Synod, ELCA
The Rev. Jessica Cain	Director of Neighborhood Engagement, Southside Comm. Center
The Rev. Johnene Cunningham	Transitional Pastor
Deacon John Dellis	Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest
The Rev. Charles Fredrickson	Supply Ministry
The Rev. Brad Fuerst	Campus Pastor, LCM at UT, Austin
The Rev. Bethany Hull Somers	Co-Field Director, San Antonio Mission Lab (effective 06/01/2026)
The Rev. Caleb Jeffers	Transitional Pastor
The Rev. Dr. Ricardo Jimenez-Reyes	Bishop's Associate, SWT Synod, ELCA
The Rev. Travis Johnson-Esparza	Chaplain, University Hospital
The Rev. Robert Lim	Regional Dir, Spiritual Services, Harbor Hospice
The Rev. Chris Markert	DEM & Bishop's Associate, SWT Synod, ELCA
The Rev. Keats Miles-Wallace	Developer, Technicolor Ministries
Deacon Darcy Mittelstaedt	Bishop's Associate, SWT Synod, ELCA
The Rev. Jennifer Obermueller	Supply Ministry
The Rev. Kristina Palacios	Transitional Pastor
The Rev. Robert S. Pfennig	Chaplain, University Hospital, San Antonio
The Rev. Sarah Roemer	Transitional Pastor
The Rev. Julie Rowe	Chaplain, University Health System, SA
The Rev. Cecilia Suknaic	Associate Director for Congregational Innovation
The Rev. Kelsie Theiss	Supply Ministry
The Rev. Paul Theiss	Supply Ministry
The Rev. Dave Thomas	Transitional Pastor
The Rev. Harold Vanicek	Transitional Pastor
The Rev. Adam Varner	Chaplain, Trinity Episcopal School
The Rev. Lea Walker Clark	Developer, Palabra de Vida

The Rev. Katie Wegner	Program Director, Cross Trails Ministry
Deacon Nick Wilkens	Licensed Therapist

APPOINTMENTS

The Rev. Dr. Wes Cain	Campus Pastor, TLU (Invitation to Extended Svc)
Emma Espino	Developer, Eagle Pass Frontera Ministries
Jackie Galvan Vasquez	Developer, Pláticas de Santa Sofia

SYNOD AUTHORIZED MINISTER APPOINTMENTS

Gilma Aguirre	St. John, San Juan
Dina Buettner	Grace, Bandera
Ronny Dentler	Christ in the Country
Carolyn Edwards	Grace, Bandera
Steve Gengenbacher	Christ in the Country
Cindy Hunt	Faith, Taft
Mike Most	St. Mark, Adkins
Margaret Jackson	St. James, Ganado
The Rev. David Sugeno	St. Peter, Marble Falls (Episcopal)
Gina Zavesky	Christ in the Country

TRANSFERS INTO THE SYNOD

The Rev. David Thomas	Northwest Washington Synod
The Rev. Sergio Rodriguez	Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
The Rev. Christine Kirchner	Upper Susquehanna Synod
The Rev. Craig Borchardt	Texas Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
The Rev. Don Wright	Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod
The Rev. Donna Wright	Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod

TRANSFERS OUT OF THE SYNOD

The Rev. Michael Coffey	Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
The Rev. Steven Herzberg	Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
The Rev. Dan Heim	Metro Chicago Synod
The Rev. Chris Heinold	Southeastern Synod
The Rev. Stephen Schur	Northern Texas Northern Louisiana Synod
The Rev. Ellen Williams	Oregon Synod

ON LEAVE

The Rev. Ann Helmke	10/01/2025 – 09/30/2031
The Rev. Brad Highum	09/01/2024 – 08/31/2030
The Rev. Dr. Kathi Inglis	02/09/2026 – 02/08/2032
The Rev. Hephzibah Penumaka	05/01/2026 – 04/30/2032
The Rev. Allyson Pryor	06/02/2025 – 06/01/2031 (study leave)
Deacon Harley Windle	10/29/2025 – 10/28/2031

RESIGNED FROM THE ROSTER

Mr. Esperidion Elizondo	09/19/2025
Ms. Shelley Simmont	03/01/2026

REMOVED FROM THE ROSTER

Mr. Rick Hartmann	06/10/2025
Mr. Toby Burk	09/28/2025
Mr. Travis Fitzgold	02/21/2026

RETIREMENT

The Rev. Anne Kolmeier	07/01/2025
The Rev. Rosemarie Doucette	01/01/2026
The Rev. Scott Hofmann	01/01/2026
The Rev. James Bouzard	01/01/2026
The Rev. Casey Zesch	02/01/2026
The Rev. Dr. Lucinda Zesch	01/01/2026

NECROLOGY

The Rev. Marlo Peterson	04/17/2025
The Rev. Dr. John Schwartz, Jr.	06/05/2025
The Rev. Harold (Bud) Pearson	08/17/2025 (from NTNLS synod)
The Rev. Dr. E. David Henry	01/04/2026
The Rev. Peggy Adams	2/27/2026 (from NW Lower Michigan Synod)

CONGREGATIONS LEFT SYNOD & ELCA

St. John's San Antonio	09/28/2025	NALC
Trinity, Mission	11/02/2025	LCMC
Gethsemane, Austin	11/09/2025	LCMC
Bethlehem, Lund	01/18/2026	LCMC

CONGREGATIONS CLOSED

SYNOD AUTHORIZED WORSHIPPING COMMUNITIES

956 River of Faith, Valley
New Hope, Blanco
People of Hope, Victoria
Platicas de Santa Sofia, San Antonio
Palabra de Vida, Austin

SYNOD AUTHORIZED OUTREACH MINISTRIES

Eagle Pass Frontera Ministries, Eagle Pass
Technicolor Ministries

PROPOSED CONSTITUTION AND BYLAW AMENDMENTS

At last year’s 2025 Churchwide Assembly, several changes were made to the required provisions in the ELCA’s constitution for synods. According to †S18.11, amendments to required provisions are automatically incorporated into the constitutions of individual synods.

Among other amendments passed by the Churchwide Assembly are additional recommended changes. At the November 2025 Synod Council meeting, these recommended changes were reviewed and discussed. The Synod Council voted to endorse all recommended changes and forward them to the 2026 Synod Assembly for approval.

In accordance with the synod’s constitution:

- Recommended constitutional provision changes identical to the ELCA’s Constitution for Synods may be adopted by a majority vote at the Synod Assembly. This applies to changes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 listed below.
- Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote at a Synod Assembly. This applies to change 17 listed below. The synod council proposes the following amendments, which will be presented for adoption at the 2026 Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly:

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

Change #1– Synod Seal

S1.21– Remove dagger (make non-required)

RATIONALE:

The change provides flexibility without altering practice.

Change #2– Voting Membership for Synod-Authorized Ministers and Lay Representatives

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

RATIONALE:

This provision reflects evolving models of ministry within the ELCA and provides a mechanism for synod-authorized worshiping communities and outreach ministries to participate in Synod Assembly. It aligns synod practice with ELCA bylaw 10.01.04 and strengthens representation across ministry contexts.

Change #3– Elections by Majority Vote

S9.02– Remove dagger (make non-required)

RATIONALE:

The change provides flexibility without altering practice.

Change #4 - Bishop Election Process

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

RATIONALE:

This amendment clarifies ballot progression and voting thresholds in the election of a bishop. It maintains a strong consensus requirement in early ballots while ensuring the process can move toward majority election if necessary. The revision promotes both discernment and procedural clarity.

Change #5– Compensation of Synod Council Members

S10.05 ~~No e~~Elected members~~s~~ of the Synod Council shall ~~not~~ receive compensation ~~solely~~ for ~~such their~~ service ~~as council members~~.

RATIONALE:

Corrects grammatical inconsistencies while preserving the long-standing governance principle that elected Synod Council members are not compensated for their service.

Change #6– Eligibility for Synod Council

S10.06 No person related to a synod staff member shall be eligible for nomination to or membership on the Synod Council. For this purpose, a related individual is one who, with respect to the synod employee, is a spouse, parent, son, daughter, sibling, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, grandparent, grandchild, including corresponding members of blended families and in-laws (parent, son, daughter, or sibling of a spouse, spouse of a sibling, or the parent or sibling of the spouse of a sibling).

RATIONALE:

Adds a comprehensive definition of “related individual” to strengthen conflict-of-interest safeguards and promote transparency and trust in synod governance.

Change #7, 8, 9 – Renumbering Subsequent Provisions

S10.0607

S10.0708

S10.0809

RATIONALE:

Renumbering subsequent provisions for consistency

Change #10 – Synod-Authorized Worshiping Communities

S13.40 Synod Authorized Worshiping Communities **and Outreach Ministries**

RATIONALE:

Added for consistency with other provisions

Change #11 – Synod-Authorized Worshiping Communities and Outreach Ministries

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

RATIONALE:

Clarifies that such ministries operate under ELCA-approved criteria and are accountable to

synod and churchwide standards. This ensures theological consistency and appropriate ecclesial oversight.

OTHER CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

Change #12– Mutual Ministry Committee

S11.04 ~~The synod shall have a Mutual Ministry Committee...~~

RATIONALE:

This is a non-required provision. Deleting it allows the bishop and synod staff to structure advisory and accountability relationships in ways that best serve current leadership models. Flexibility is increased while oversight remains available through other governance mechanisms.

BYLAW AMENDMENTS

Change #13– Place of Meeting

S1.02.02 ~~Meetings of the Synod Council, all Ministry Teams, Committees, Subcommittees, and Working Groups shall be at the principal office of the Synod unless a different location is specified in the notice of the meeting.~~

(Deleted in its entirety.)

RATIONALE:

This provision is unnecessarily restrictive and does not reflect current practice, including virtual meetings and meetings held in various locations across the synod. Deletion increases flexibility.

Change #14 – SAWC Voting members for Assembly

S7.26.01 ~~The membership of synod-authorized worshipping communities may elect voting members of the Synod Assembly, consistent with the requirements for congregations expressed in S7.21.~~

RATIONALE:

This matter is addressed in the Standing Rules of the Synod Assembly. Deletion avoids redundancy and clarifies governance structure.

Change #15 and #16 – Churchwide Assembly Voting Members

~~S9.01.01 Churchwide Assembly voting members makeup...~~

~~S9.01.02 CWA substitutes...~~

RATIONALE:

These provisions are superseded by ELCA Constitution 12.41.11 and 12.41.12. Removing duplicative language ensures consistency with churchwide governing documents.

Change #17 – Consultation Committee

S11.02.01 CONSULTATION COMMITTEE: There shall be a Consultation Committee consisting of 8 persons, of whom half shall be ~~Rostered Ministers ministers of Word and Sacrament.~~

RATIONALE:

Recognizes both rosters of the ELCA—Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ministers of Word and Service—allowing full participation of deacons in synod governance processes.

Change #18- Mutual Ministry Committee

~~S11.04.01 Mutual Ministry Committee elected, for staff...~~

RATIONALE:

This deletion aligns with the removal of S11.04 and ensures consistency between constitution and bylaws.

Change #19– Ministry Teams

~~S11.11.02 To provide oversight, coordination and impetus for the work of this synod as God’s People, there shall be Ministry Teams formed...~~

RATIONALE:

Embedding specific structural requirements in the bylaws limits adaptability. Deletion allows ministry teams to be created, restructured, or dissolved as mission needs evolve.

Change #20 – Holy Experiments Team

~~S11.11.04 The HOLY EXPERIMENTS TEAM...~~

RATIONALE:

Specific ministry initiatives are better established through continuing resolutions or council action rather than permanent bylaw language, allowing greater flexibility.

Change #21– Leadership Team

~~S11.11.05 The LEADERSHIP TEAM...~~

RATIONALE:

As above, governance flexibility is strengthened by not codifying specific teams in the bylaws.

Change #22 - Notices

~~S11.11.08 – Notices of all regular and special meetings of ministry teams and working groups shall be sent to the bishop.~~

RATIONALE:

No longer necessary given current administrative and communication practices.

Change #23– Self-Organizing Ministry Teams

S11.11.06.02 b. After a group has been recognized by Synod Council, A Self-Organizing Team has the following privileges:

1. Use synod communications...
- ~~2.–Request money through a granting process or a budget line request if funds are available.~~
3. Host events...
4. Partner with other Self-Organizing Teams.
5. Dissolve the group when they decide to do so.

c. A Self-Organizing Team will not automatically be entitled to receive staff support or money allocated in the budget.

RATIONALE:

Affirms grassroots, volunteer-led ministry while clarifying that recognition does not guarantee budget allocation. This promotes fiscal responsibility and appropriate oversight.

2026 TREASURER'S REPORT

Leslie Blalock, CPA, Treasurer

All observations for this fiscal year are based on financial statements available prior to completion of the **FY2025–2026 audit**, which will begin in June 2026. The figures reported here are **preliminary and unaudited**.

A YEAR OF FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP

As we continue in this season of *Becoming*, this year's financials reflect a synod that is both **stable and responsive** stewarding what has been entrusted to us while remaining open to what God is calling forth next.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As of **January 31, 2026**, total assets were **\$6,260,709**.

A significant portion of these resources is **restricted for specific purposes**, reminding us that much of what we hold is already directed toward particular ministries and commitments.

- **\$4,748,231** is donor-restricted, including:
 - Mission and Ministry Fund: \$1,647,710
 - Archives Endowment: \$206,214
 - Other restricted funds: \$2,641,264
- **\$661,143** is permanently restricted in the LFSW Evangelical Endowment

Liabilities remain minimal (**\$14,770**), reflecting a strong financial position.

While total net assets decreased by **\$623,353**, this change is largely tied to **restricted funds, distributions, and market-related fluctuations**, rather than operating performance.

OPERATING FUND

The Operating Fund tells the story of our shared ministry in motion.

- **Mission Support** totaled **\$1,302,455**, an increase of **8.5%** over the prior year and above budget.

This growth reflects the continued **generosity and commitment of our congregations**.

- **Total revenue** reached **\$1,557,703**, exceeding both budget and prior year totals, due in part to:
 - Increased interest income
 - Gifts from closing congregations
- **Net operating revenue** was **\$223,538**, a significant improvement over the budgeted deficit.

Even after accounting for depreciation, the synod experienced a **positive financial outcome** for the year.

At the same time, approximately **half of our operating budget** continues to be shared outward in benevolence—an expression of our commitment to the wider church and God’s mission beyond ourselves.

MISSION AND MINISTRY FUND

The Mission and Ministry Fund reflects our commitment to **investing in what is emerging**.

Through a disciplined distribution formula (approximately 4% of a five-year rolling average), the fund provided:

- **\$40,000** for campus ministry
- **\$17,000** in Transformational Ministry Grants

These investments support new ideas, local innovation, and ministries taking shape across the synod.

ENDOWMENTS AND RESTRICTED FUNDS

Our endowments and restricted funds remind us that we are **stewards across generations**.

- The **Evangelical Mission Endowment Fund** (market value: \$509,396) continues to support ministries in vulnerable and emerging contexts.

- **Temporary restricted funds** totaling **\$2,641,264** provide flexibility to respond to opportunities beyond the operating budget.

Together, these resources allow us not only to sustain current ministry, but to **respond faithfully to new possibilities**.

AUDIT

The synod received a **clean audit for FY2024–2025**.

The FY2025–2026 audit will begin in June, and all figures reported here remain **preliminary and subject to adjustment**. The final report will be shared upon completion.

CONCLUSION

Taken together, these financials reflect a synod that is **grounded, generous, and forward-looking** stewarding today's resources while making space for what God is bringing to life among us.

We are not a finished people. We are a people becoming.

Southwestern Texas Synod Mission Support Comparison								
	<u>2018</u>		<u>2019</u>		<u>2020</u>		<u>2021</u>	
February	\$ 71,549	4.85%	\$ 111,007	7.93%	\$ 90,066	6.43%	\$ 92,050	6.69%
March	\$ 113,829	7.72%	\$ 94,250	6.73%	\$ 77,950	5.57%	\$ 98,204	7.14%
April	\$ 146,235	9.91%	\$ 121,003	8.64%	\$ 123,210	8.80%	\$ 110,989	8.07%
May	\$ 115,644	7.84%	\$ 121,443	8.67%	\$ 77,943	5.57%	\$ 110,732	8.05%
June	\$ 68,260	4.63%	\$ 113,602	8.11%	\$ 90,548	6.47%	\$ 89,662	6.52%
July	\$ 130,024	8.82%	\$ 93,642	6.69%	\$ 142,777	10.20%	\$ 113,575	8.26%
August	\$ 92,753	6.29%	\$ 116,680	8.33%	\$ 83,492	5.96%	\$ 103,049	7.49%
September	\$ 95,424	6.47%	\$ 98,119	7.01%	\$ 106,258	7.59%	\$ 95,636	6.96%
October	\$ 126,311	8.56%	\$ 99,311	7.09%	\$ 137,962	9.85%	\$ 97,237	7.07%
November	\$ 107,259	7.27%	\$ 108,266	7.73%	\$ 93,931	6.71%	\$ 104,981	7.63%
December	\$ 192,384	13.04%	\$ 134,142	9.58%	\$ 162,050	11.57%	\$ 147,310	10.71%
January	\$ 102,029	6.92%	\$ 179,593	12.83%	\$ 116,949	8.35%	\$ 129,355	9.41%
Total	\$ 1,361,701	92.32%	\$ 1,391,058	99.36%	\$ 1,303,136	93.08%	\$ 1,292,780	94.02%
Annual Budget	<u>\$1,475,000</u>		<u>\$1,400,000</u>		<u>\$1,400,000</u>		<u>\$1,375,000</u>	
% of Annual Budget	<u>92.32%</u>		<u>99.36%</u>		<u>93.08%</u>		<u>94.02%</u>	
	<u>2022</u>		<u>2023</u>		<u>2024</u>		<u>2025</u>	
February	\$ 78,826	6.06%	\$ 104,015	9.04%	\$ 100,666	8.75%	\$ 87,862	7.64%
March	\$ 106,439	8.19%	\$ 87,181	7.58%	\$ 87,117	7.58%	\$ 107,068	9.31%
April	\$ 100,291	7.71%	\$ 98,263	8.54%	\$ 128,750	11.20%	\$ 128,670	11.19%
May	\$ 91,858	7.07%	\$ 96,030	8.35%	\$ 98,561	8.57%	\$ 72,984	6.35%
June	\$ 96,838	7.45%	\$ 85,097	7.40%	\$ 64,151	5.58%	\$ 83,248	7.24%
July	\$ 98,028	7.54%	\$ 86,820	7.55%	\$ 112,125	9.75%	\$ 76,659	6.67%
August	\$ 68,618	5.28%	\$ 96,255	8.37%	\$ 86,396	7.51%	\$ 114,868	9.99%
September	\$ 95,282	7.33%	\$ 74,676	6.49%	\$ 94,141	8.19%	\$ 90,789	7.89%
October	\$ 92,208	7.09%	\$ 71,353.76	6.20%	\$ 109,055.97	9.48%	\$ 84,580.40	7.35%
November	\$ 88,072	6.77%	\$ 94,836.88	8.25%	\$ 71,328.16	6.20%	\$ 85,811.58	7.46%
December	\$ 151,393	11.65%	\$ 146,110.35	12.71%	\$ 154,152.44	13.40%	\$ 249,302.69	21.68%
January	\$ 99,033	7.62%	\$ 136,581.48	11.88%	\$ 100,710.18	8.76%	\$ 120,614.03	10.49%
Total	\$ 1,166,886	89.76%	\$ 1,177,220	102.37%	\$ 1,207,154	104.97%	\$ 1,302,455	113.26%
Annual Budget	<u>\$1,300,000</u>		<u>\$1,150,000</u>		<u>\$1,150,000</u>		<u>\$1,150,000</u>	
% of Annual Budget	<u>89.76%</u>		<u>102.37%</u>		<u>104.97%</u>		<u>113.26%</u>	

Southwestern Texas Synod

Budget vs. Actuals: Budget_FY26_P&L - FY26 P&L

February 2025 - January 2026

		TOTAL	
	ACTUAL	BUDGET	% OF BUDGET
Revenue			
I001 Mission Support Income	1,302,455.45	1,150,000.00	113.26 %
I002 Interest & Dividends	50,768.72		
I003 Other Revenue Income	187,188.81	60,775.00	308.00 %
I005 Synod Assembly Income	17,290.00	30,000.00	57.63 %
Uncategorized Income	0.00		
Total Revenue	\$1,557,702.98	\$1,240,775.00	125.54 %
GROSS PROFIT	\$1,557,702.98	\$1,240,775.00	125.54 %
Expenditures			
E001 Mission Support Expenses	589,973.74	529,000.00	111.53 %
E002 Agencies, Institutions & Missions	49,833.06	44,000.00	113.26 %
E003 Lutheran Campus Ministry	30,000.00	30,000.00	100.00 %
E005 Candidacy	14,625.93	20,000.00	73.13 %
E006 Synod Council Committees	4,742.09	7,000.00	67.74 %
E007 Office Supply/Postage/Bank Chg	5,424.72	5,500.00	98.63 %
E008 Building Maintenance & Utility	30,829.82	29,500.00	104.51 %
E009 Insurance & Legal	35,039.54	31,000.00	113.03 %
E010 Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment	43,061.71	23,000.00	187.22 %
E011 Professional Staff	335,938.09	341,142.00	98.47 %
E012 Support Staff	110,732.71	111,240.00	99.54 %
E013 Payroll Taxes & Professional Expenses	18,245.21	18,000.00	101.36 %
E014 Contract	34,227.40	33,900.00	100.97 %
E015 Staff Travel	18,473.79	23,000.00	80.32 %
E016 Congregational Relations/Hospitality	556.16	1,000.00	55.62 %
E017 Inkind & Other Expenses	69.00		
E018 Contingencies Expenses		1,000.00	
E019 Synod Assembly	12,391.62	30,000.00	41.31 %
Total Expenditures	\$1,334,164.59	\$1,278,282.00	104.37 %
NET OPERATING REVENUE	\$223,538.39	\$ -37,507.00	-595.99 %
NET REVENUE	\$223,538.39	\$ -37,507.00	-595.99 %

Southwestern Texas Synod

Budget vs. Actuals: Budget_FY26_P&L - FY26 P&L

February 2025 - January 2026

		TOTAL	
	ACTUAL	BUDGET	% OF BUDGET
Revenue			
I099 Mission & Ministry Income			
1-400530 M&M - Div- ELCA Endowment	67,652.70	60,000.00	112.75 %
1-400540 M&M - Interest - ELCA Mission Plus	103.48	100.00	103.48 %
Total I099 Mission & Ministry Income	67,756.18	60,100.00	112.74 %
Total Revenue	\$67,756.18	\$60,100.00	112.74 %
GROSS PROFIT	\$67,756.18	\$60,100.00	112.74 %
Expenditures			
E099 Mission & Ministry			
1-503002 M&M - Transformational Mins. Grants	17,000.00	18,500.00	91.89 %
1-503004 M&M -Lutheran Campus Ministries	40,000.00	40,000.00	100.00 %
Total E099 Mission & Ministry	57,000.00	58,500.00	97.44 %
Total Expenditures	\$57,000.00	\$58,500.00	97.44 %
NET OPERATING REVENUE	\$10,756.18	\$1,600.00	672.26 %
NET REVENUE	\$10,756.18	\$1,600.00	672.26 %

Southwestern Texas Synod

Statement of Financial Position

As of February 28, 2026

	TOTAL
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
Cash on Hand	3,018,017.51
Endowments	
1-100240 LFSW-SWTS Evang Endowment	661,143.38
Total Endowments	661,143.38
Investments	
Archives	212,404.69
Mission & Ministry	1,957,194.49
Total Investments	2,169,599.18
Total Bank Accounts	\$5,848,760.07
Other Current Assets	\$19,213.06
Total Current Assets	\$5,867,973.13
Fixed Assets	\$392,736.23
TOTAL ASSETS	\$6,260,709.36
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Credit Cards	\$14,769.86
Other Current Liabilities	
1-200250-0 Portico Employee-Paid Benefits	-1,002.02
1-200450 Lease Liability	7,663.00
L001 Events	
Current Year Events	
1-800525 Assembly Worship Offering	1,400.00
1-800591 Boundary Training	474.20
1-800597 Creating Healthy Congs Wrkshps	1,380.54
1-800599 One Day+ Events	2,810.00
Total Current Year Events	6,064.74
Total L001 Events	6,064.74
L002 Agencies/Institutes & Passthru	
Direct	
1-800780 Designated - Synod Conferences	0.28
Total Direct	0.28
Via ELCA	
1-800600 Disaster Relief	300.00
Total Via ELCA	300.00

	SA 26.05	TOTAL
Total L002 Agencies/Institutes & Passthu		300.28
L003 Office of the Bishop (General)		
1-800783 Lutheran MinistryCntr-Maint&Repairs		1,000.00
1-800902 EBFnd-NewMinistries&YoungMinisters		2,875.54
1-800935 Technology Training		186.03
1-800937 Sabbatical Support		6,082.72
1-800940 Palm Valley Sustentation Aid		102,252.96
1-800945 Generosity-Where Needed Most		21,332.15
1-800947 Lord of Life, Austin		136,464.61
1-800960 Bishop's Emergency Fund		10,452.01
1-800961 Poovey-Good SamaritanFund		44,514.43
1-802404 Clearing Monthly		4,750.00
1-802422 Companion Synod Costa Rica		39,283.55
Total L003 Office of the Bishop (General)		369,194.00
L004 Care for & Develop Leaders		
Candidacy & 1st Call		
1-802124 MinsStudents-Gifts (LFSW+)		79,902.18
1-802126 P of PAustin-Seminary DebtReduction		7,368.88
Total Candidacy & 1st Call		87,271.06
Rostered & Lay Leader Development		
1-800418 Retired Leader Gatherings		1,373.55
1-801025 Leadership Dev. events		1,512.59
1-802036 Tiemann LdrshpDevEndow Grants		5,569.13
1-802037 Leader Background/Boundary		944.70
1-802135 Lay Leadership Academy (frmly PMTP)		321.05
Total Rostered & Lay Leader Development		9,721.02
Youth & Young Adult Ministries		
1-802350 Koenig Memorial YouthScholarshipFnd		2,576.79
1-802360 Youth and Young Adults		2,372.26
Total Youth & Young Adult Ministries		4,949.05
Total L004 Care for & Develop Leaders		101,941.13
L005 Support & Resources Congs		
1-802460 Mission Fund		299,417.14
Vitality		
1-801045 Synod & Cong Vitality		37,626.81
1-802452 Transformational Ministry Grant		1,200.00
Total Vitality		38,826.81
Total L005 Support & Resources Congs		338,243.95
L006 New Mission Starts		
1-800904 SWTS EvangMssnEndwmnt-LFSW		18,578.79
1-800990 New Ministries -(Mission Starts)		30,485.78
1-802188 Brownsville Property Proceeds		9,728.49
1-802432 PrinceOfPeace,Austin-Multi-Cultural		120,725.08

	SA 26.05	TOTAL
Total L006 New Mission Starts		179,518.14
L007 Synod Wide Justice Work		
Disaster Response		
1-802400 Disaster Relief-SWTS		113,766.06
1-802466 More Than Enough		32.00
Total Disaster Response		113,798.06
IDE & Multicultural Ministries		
1-800900 LFSW-FredKern Endow-Missions		11,848.01
1-802110 Young Adult Intern-SJ&E		533.04
1-802250 Hispanic Ministry Programs		4,190.58
Total IDE & Multicultural Ministries		16,571.63
Migration Ministries		
1-802200 Border Relief		27,522.23
1-802448 Eagle Pass Frontera Ministry		30,090.74
1-803500 Holy Innovation Vitality Grant-ELCA		12,736.47
Total Migration Ministries		70,349.44
Self Organizing Ministry Team		
1-801035 Hunger Grants evaluations		1,617.11
Total Self Organizing Ministry Team		1,617.11
Total L007 Synod Wide Justice Work		202,336.24
L008 Archives-ELCA Reg.4-S		175,470.82
L009 DEM/Synodical Ministries		592,025.36
L011 Community Engagement & Program		69.54
L012 Permanent Restricted		
1-904000 LFSW-SWTS Evang Endowment Exp		406,396.46
Total L012 Permanent Restricted		406,396.46
L013 Disaster Coordinator		84,048.94
Total Other Current Liabilities		\$2,462,270.58
Total Current Liabilities		\$2,477,040.44
Total Liabilities		\$2,477,040.44
Equity		
1-20000-0 Unrestricted Net Assets		-1,177,038.89
1-20000-1 Restricted Net Assets		0.00
Donor Restricted		
1-200504 Fund Principal Mission & Ministry		1,900,751.87
1-200505 SWTS ELCA RegIV-S Archives Endwmnt		206,214.34
1-200506 Other Donor Restricted		2,641,264.30
Total Donor Restricted		4,748,230.51
Permanent Restricted		
1-200508 Fund Principal - LFSW EvangEndowmnt		661,143.38
Total Permanent Restricted		661,143.38
Total 1-20000-1 Restricted Net Assets		5,409,373.89

1-20000-9 Unrealized Gains/Losses	0.00
1-20000-9-1 Archives Endowment	39,800.11
1-20000-9-2 LFSW-SWTS Endowment	55,834.67
1-20000-9-3 Mission & Ministry	355,956.02
Total 1-20000-9 Unrealized Gains/Losses	451,590.80
Retained Earnings	-813,961.93
Net Revenue	-86,294.95
Total Equity	\$3,783,668.92
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$6,260,709.36

REVISIONS TO MISSION PLAN FOR FY 2025–2026 PROPOSED MISSION PLAN FOR FY 2026–2027

Leslie Blalock, Treasurer

BECOMING - TOGETHER

This Mission Plan is more than a financial document—it reflects who we are becoming as a synod.

We are becoming a people who invest in leaders, accompany congregations, explore new ministries, and embody God’s justice. We are also becoming more aligned, ensuring that our resources serve the mission we share.

We do not become alone. Through shared mission support and our partnerships across the wider church, we participate in God’s work beyond ourselves.

We are not a finished people. We are a people in process.

Together, we are becoming. / Juntos, estamos en proceso.

GENERAL COMMENTS

This commitment to becoming is reflected in how we shape our Mission Plan.

While we continue to maintain a line-item budget, this plan organizes resources around our four synod priorities, along with a fifth category: Infrastructure. This provides a clearer picture of how our finances support our shared mission.

In addition, the synod receives annual distributions from endowments (both synodical and congregational). While not reflected in the operating budget, these funds play a critical role in supporting ministry, including grants for congregations, leaders, and new initiatives.

Both the line-item budget and the Mission Plan will be reviewed in detail at the budget hearing on **Sunday, April 29 at 7:00 p.m.** (Zoom).

2026–2027 OPERATING FUND – REVISED MISSION PLAN

EXPENSE ADJUSTMENTS

- Increased projected **interest income** and **LFSW income** to more accurately reflect prior-year actuals (while remaining conservative).
- Reduced **Synod Assembly income and expenses** due to lower hosting costs at a congregation.

- Increased the following categories based on prior-year actuals and rising costs:
 - Building Maintenance
 - Communications Contract
 - Audit
 - Telephone and Internet
 - Staff Salaries, Benefits, Payroll Taxes, and Professional Expenses
 - Decreased **Furniture and Fixtures** expenses.
-

2027–2028 OPERATING FUND – PROPOSED MISSION PLAN

PRIORITY AREAS

The work of the synod is organized into four primary areas, plus Infrastructure. A fuller description can be found in the Office of the Bishop Report in the Bulletin of Reports.

- Care for and Develop Leaders
 - Accompany and Resource Congregations
 - Explore and Establish New Ministries
 - Cultivate Synod-wide Justice Ministries
 - Infrastructure
-

ELCA MISSION SUPPORT

The largest single budget item is the distribution of mission support to the **ELCA Churchwide Organization**.

Within the Mission Plan, these funds are aligned with our synod priorities as follows:

- Care for and Develop Leaders: **17%**
- Accompany and Resource Congregations: **20%**
- Explore and Establish New Ministries (including global): **23%**
- Cultivate Synod-wide Justice Work: **4%**
- Infrastructure: **36%**

We share:

- **46%** of mission support with ELCA Churchwide
- **4%** with regional ministry partners
- **50% total** in support of the wider church

An additional **4.0%** of mission support is designated for ELCA ministry partners and new mission starts, including:

- Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
- Wartburg Theological Seminary

- Texas Lutheran University
 - Cross Trails Ministry
 - Upbring
 - Texas Impact
 - Hispanic Ministry
-

PERSONNEL EXPENSES

The synod employs **7 full-time and 1 part-time staff**, including **2 grant-funded positions**.

Staff time is allocated across priorities as follows:

- Care for and Develop Leaders: **30%**
 - Accompany and Resource Congregations: **31%**
 - Explore and Establish New Ministries: **3%**
 - Cultivate Synod-wide Justice Work: **7%**
 - Infrastructure: **34%**
-

STAFFING AND COMPENSATION

- A **4% cost-of-living increase** is included for professional and support staff, in alignment with Synod Compensation Guidelines.
 - The **travel budget remains unchanged**, reflecting underspending in the prior year.
-

OTHER BUDGET ITEMS

Modest increases are projected in:

- Audit
 - Bookkeeping Services
-

BUDGET PROCESS

The Administration and Finance Committee begins the budget process each winter. The proposed budget is:

1. Reviewed and approved by the Synod Council (March)
2. Presented to the Assembly for final adoption

Because the budget is developed a year in advance, adjustments may be necessary as conditions change.

- If revenue declines, a **spending plan** may be implemented to manage expenses and protect reserves.
- If additional needs arise and funds are available, **supplemental expenditures** may be authorized.

MISSION AND MINISTRY FUND

Annual distributions are limited to **4% of the rolling five-year average** of year-end assets.

- Estimated 2026 distribution: **~\$59,500**

Allocated by Synod Council:

- Campus Ministry: **\$40,000**
- Transformational Ministry Grants: **\$19,500**

OTHER FUNDING SOURCES

ELCA GRANTS

In 2025, synod ministries received **\$223,667** in ELCA grants, supporting:

- Pláticas — \$13,000
- Palabra de Vida — \$7,500
- Technicolor Ministries — \$10,000
- Eagle Pass Frontera Ministries — \$53,000 (*includes AMMPARO*)
- San Antonio Mission Lab — \$81,000
- Holy Cross — \$10,417
- Embodied Grace — \$1,250
- St. John/San Juan, Austin — \$12,500
- San Pablo, San Antonio — \$17,000
- Immigration Support (H. Santiago) — \$18,000 (*AMMPARO*)

The synod also supplements these ministries through budgeted, endowed, and designated funds.

Additional support includes:

- A **three-year Lutheran Disaster Response grant** funding a full-time staff position (Bryce Kennedy)
- A **Lutheran World Relief grant** supporting program initiatives

In 2026, an additional **\$139,250** has already been awarded.

ENDOWMENT AND GRANT PROGRAMS

EVANGELICAL MISSION ENDOWMENT FUND

Supports new and vulnerable ministries.

- 956 River of Faith Network — \$9,000 (50%)
 - Wildvine Collective — \$9,000 (50%)
-

TRANSFORMATIONAL MINISTRY GRANTS

Supports congregations and ministry innovation. Annual distribution: ~\$18,500

2025 awards include:

- *Sirviendo a nuestros vecinos sin hogar* — Iglesia Lutheran San Pablo — \$2,000
 - *The Shepherd's Renewal Project* — Good Shepherd, San Antonio — \$1,000
 - *It Takes a Village* — St. Andrew, Canyon Lake — \$5,000
 - Gather Austin Spring Retreat — Triumphant Love, Austin — \$1,500
 - Holy Experiments Strategic Planning Retreat — SWT Synod — \$2,500
 - Bethany Little Free Food Pantry ("The Lifeboat") — Fredericksburg — \$5,000
-

TIEMANN LEADERSHIP GRANTS

Supports leadership development (lay and rostered):

- Cindy Struchen — \$4,000
 - Pastor Tim Bauerkemper & Retreat Planning Team — \$4,600
 - Deacon Darcy Mittelstaedt — \$5,000
-

PALM VALLEY SUSTENTATION FUND

Annual endowment distribution (in addition to mission support).

- 2025 distribution: **\$29,668**

Supports:

- Campus Ministry Name Gathering
 - Congregational Support
 - Racial Justice Training
 - Leadership Retreats
-

This plan reflects how we are aligning our resources with God's call.

Together, we are becoming. / Juntos, estamos en proceso.

SYNOD MISSION PLAN

REVENUE

	2025-2026 Revised	2025-2026 Unaudited Actual	2026-2027 Adopted	2026-2027 Revised	2027-2028 Proposed
Mission Support	\$1,150,000	\$1,302,455	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000
Program Fees	\$30,000	\$17,290	\$60,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Other Revenue	\$95,775	\$237,958	\$95,775	\$105,775	\$105,775
TOTAL REVENUE:	\$1,275,775	\$1,557,703	\$1,355,775	\$1,335,775	\$1,335,775

EXPENSES

	2025-2026 Revised	2025-2026 Unaudited Actual	2026-2027 Adopted	2026-2027 Revised	2027-2028 Proposed
Care for & Develop Leaders					
Mission Support	\$89,930	\$100,296	\$93,840	\$93,840	\$93,840
Personnel	\$142,366	\$139,757	\$148,008	\$149,568	\$155,189
Lutheran Campus Ministry	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Ministry Partners	\$29,480	\$33,388	\$32,160	\$32,160	\$32,160
Leadership Development	\$35,000	\$20,822	\$55,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
Total Care for & Develop Leaders	\$326,776	\$324,262	\$359,008	\$345,568	\$351,189

Accompany & Resource Congregations

ELCA Mission Support	\$105,800	\$117,995	\$110,400	\$110,400	\$110,400
Personnel	\$131,821	\$129,404	\$137,044	\$138,489	\$143,694
Holy Experiments			\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Synod Assembly	\$15,000	\$6,196	\$30,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Accompany & Resource Congregations	\$252,621	\$253,595	\$278,444	\$264,889	\$270,094

Explore & Establish New Ministries

ELCA Mission Support	\$121,670	\$135,694	\$126,960	\$126,960	\$126,960
Personnel	\$36,910	\$36,233	\$38,372	\$38,777	\$40,234
Hispanic Ministry	\$8,800	\$9,967	\$9,600	\$9,600	\$9,600
Total Explore & Establish new Ministries	\$167,380	\$181,894	\$174,932	\$175,337	\$176,794

2025-2026 Revised	2025-2026 Unaudited Actual	2026-2027 Adopted	2026-2027 Revised	2027-2028 Proposed
----------------------	----------------------------------	----------------------	----------------------	-----------------------

Cultivate Synod-Wide Justice

ELCA Mission Support	\$21,160	\$23,599	\$22,080	\$22,080	\$22,080
Personnel	\$36,910	\$36,233	\$38,372	\$38,777	\$40,234
Ministry Partners	\$5,720	\$6,478	\$6,240	\$6,240	\$6,240
Total Cultivate Synod-Wide Justice Ministries	\$63,790	\$66,310	\$66,692	\$67,097	\$68,554

Infrastructure

ELCA Mission Support	\$190,440	\$212,391	\$198,720	\$198,720	\$198,720
Personnel	\$179,276	\$175,990	\$186,380	\$188,345	\$195,423
*Note 1 Operating Expenses	\$91,000	\$114,982	\$93,500	\$96,600	\$97,100
Governance	\$7,000	\$4,742	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$7,000
Total Infrastructure	\$467,716	\$508,104	\$485,600	\$490,665	\$498,243

TOTAL EXPENSES:

\$1,278,282	\$1,334,164	\$1,364,677	\$1,343,556	\$1,364,874
--------------------	--------------------	--------------------	--------------------	--------------------

NET TOTAL

(2,507)	223,538	(8,902)	(7,781)	(29,099)
----------------	----------------	----------------	----------------	-----------------

NOTES: *1 - Depreciation not budgeted

\$26,184

\$249,722

ADJUSTED NET SURPLUS (removing items in 'Notes')

LINE ITEM BUDGET

	2025-2026 Revised	2025-2026 Unaudited Actual	2026-2027 Adopted	2026-2027 Revised	2027-2028 Proposed
REVENUES:					
Mission Support					
Mission Support	\$1,150,000	\$1,302,455	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000
Total Mission Support	\$1,150,000	\$1,302,455	\$ 1,200,000	\$ 1,200,000	\$ 1,200,000
Program Fees					
Synod Assembly	\$30,000	\$17,290	\$60,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Total Program Fees	\$30,000	\$17,290	\$ 60,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000
Interest/Dividend Income					
Interest Income	\$35,000	\$50,769	\$35,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
Total Interest/Dividend Income	\$35,000	\$50,769	\$35,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
Other Revenue					
Gifts and estates	\$11,500	\$130,993	\$11,500	\$11,500	\$11,500
Lutheran Foundation of the SW	\$45,000	\$51,921	\$45,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Facilities Rental	\$4,275	\$4,275	\$4,275	\$4,275	\$4,275
Total Other Revenue	\$60,775	\$187,189	\$60,775	\$65,775	\$65,775
TOTAL REVENUE:	\$1,275,775	\$1,557,703	\$1,355,775	\$1,335,775	\$1,335,775
EXPENSES:					
ELCA Mission Support	46%	46%	46%	46%	46%
ELCA Mission Support	\$529,000	\$589,974	\$552,000	\$552,000	\$552,000
Total ELCA Mission Support	\$529,000	\$589,974	\$552,000	\$552,000	\$552,000
Personnel					
Personnel					
Total Personnel (incl. travel prof expenses,P/R taxes, contract)	\$527,282	\$517,617	\$548,177	\$553,956	\$574,774
Lutheran Campus Ministry	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Ministry Partners					
Lutheran School of Theology Chicago	\$8,800	\$9,967	\$9,600	\$9,600	\$9,600
Hispanic Ministry	\$8,800	\$9,967	\$9,600	\$9,600	\$9,600
Wartburg Seminary	\$8,800	\$9,967	\$9,600	\$9,600	\$9,600
Cross Trails	\$8,800	\$9,967	\$9,600	\$9,600	\$9,600
Texas Lutheran University	\$3,080	\$3,488	\$3,360	\$3,360	\$3,360
Texas Impact	\$4,400	\$4,983	\$4,800	\$4,800	\$4,800
Upbring	\$1,320	\$1,495	\$1,440	\$1,440	\$1,440
Total Ministry Partners	\$44,000	\$49,832	\$48,000	\$48,000	\$48,000

	2025-2026 Revised	2025-2026 Unaudited Actual	2026-2027 Adopted	2026-2027 Revised	2027-2028 Proposed
Office of the Bishop-Operating Office Expenses					
Office Supplies/Postage/Bank Charges/fees	\$5,500	\$5,425	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000
Building Mtce & Utilities	\$29,500	\$30,830	\$29,500	\$34,600	\$34,600
Insurance, Audit & Legal	\$31,000	\$35,040	\$33,000	\$37,000	\$37,500
Note *1 Furniture, Fixtures, Equipment & Deprec.	\$23,000	\$43,062	\$23,000	\$17,000	\$17,000
Congregational Relations/Hospitality	\$1,000	\$556	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Inkind/other	\$0	\$69	\$0	\$0	\$0
Contingencies	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Total Office of the Bishop-Operating Expenses	\$91,000	\$114,982	\$93,500	\$96,600	\$97,100
Synod Council, Committees, Deans, Ministry Programs					
Synod Council, Committees and Deans	\$7,000	\$4,742	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$7,000
Leadership Development	\$0	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Holy Experiments	\$0	\$0	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Candidacy & First Call	\$20,000	\$14,626	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Total Synod Council, Committees, Deans and Ministry Programs	\$27,000	\$19,368	\$33,000	\$33,000	\$33,000
Synod Assembly					
Synod Assembly Expense	\$30,000	\$12,392	\$60,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Total Synod Assembly	\$30,000	\$12,392	\$60,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,278,282	\$1,334,165	\$1,364,677	\$1,343,556	\$1,364,874
NET TOTAL	(\$2,507)	\$223,537	(\$8,902)	(\$7,781)	(\$29,099)
NOTE: *1 - Depreciation - not budgeted		26,184			
ADJUSTED NETGain (removing item in'Notes')		\$ 249,721			

MISSION AND MINISTRY SPEND PLAN

	2025-2026 Adopted Annual Mission Plan	2025-2026 Actual unaudited	Revised Annual Mission Plan 2026-2027	Proposed Annual Mission Plan 2027-2028
Revenues				
Mission and Ministry				
Interest / Dividends				
1-400530 - M&M - Div- ELCA Endowment	60,000	67,653	60,000	60,000
1-400540 - M&M - Interest - ELCA Mission Plus	100	103	100	100
1-400550 M&M - ELCA Endow.Unrealized Gain/(Loss)				
Total Interest / Dividends	60,100	67,756	60,100	60,100
Total Mission and Ministry	60,100	67,756	60,100	60,100
Total Revenues	60,100	67,756	60,100	60,100
Expenses				
Mission & Ministry				
1-503002 - M&M - Transformational Mins. Grants	18,500	17,000	19,500	19,500
1-503004 - M&M -Lutheran Campus Ministries	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000
Total Mission & Ministry	58,500	57,000	59,500	59,500
Total Expenses	58,500	57,000	59,500	59,500
Net Total	1,600	10,756	600	600



2026 Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Ministers
of the Southwestern Texas Synod
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

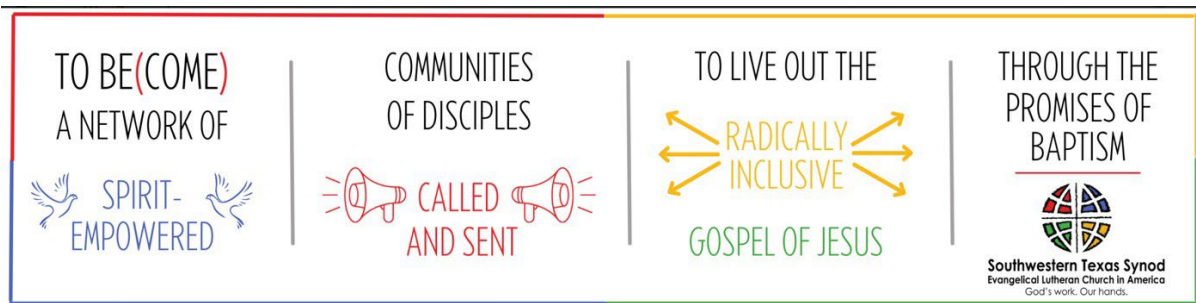
These 2026 compensation guidelines are intended to provide congregations/ministries within the Southwestern Texas Synod with a consistent framework when evaluating total compensation packages for rostered ministers. This enables consistency and equity among congregations/ministries. Each congregation/ministry is different; therefore, it is vital to have clearly defined policies communicated within your congregation/ministry.

Our Purpose:

God’s grace transforms and connects us to learn, to love, to lead. This guides our priorities and work together as a synod:

Our Vision:

The Southwestern Texas Synod embraces biblical values about the relationship between rostered ministry and congregational life and mission:



“Within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, rostered ministers may serve as pastors or deacons. The process of calling rostered ministers within the church's life is, therefore, primarily about discerning God’s will for and God’s call upon the congregation or ministry in which they will serve. *Prayerfully, the church calls forth those it believes God can best use to help it accomplish their mission together.*

Rostered leadership is not a self-called vocation but a unique calling from God through the church to serve and equip the whole people of God. This is so that the church can live together faithfully as the body of Christ, equip the baptized for their work, and fulfill its purpose to proclaim and embody the redemptive intentions of God in the world.”

“A Theology of Call” - ELCA Website

A “calling” implies a *mutuality* between those rostered people being called and the agency or congregation issuing the call. This mutuality means that congregations and other ministry sites are to live for the well-being of the rostered ministers that they call, and rostered ministers are to live for the well-being of the communities into which they are called so that together, with the whole church, they might live in Christ for the life of the world. **“We do not live to ourselves...” (Romans 14:7)**

Compensation for Rostered Ministers should involve...

Years of Rostered Experience

There are acquired skills, wisdom, and experiences that can only come from actual rostered service.

Years of Non-Rostered Experience

Second-career people bring to rostered service life experiences and skills from other fields that are helpful to mutual ministry.

Staffing and Programming

How complex is the system you're asking the rostered minister to enter? Consider additional compensation for multiple worship services, staff and/or volunteer supervision, varied programming, specialized calls, pre/school administration, solo leadership in thriving communities, and churches in growth patterns.

Advanced Training and Education

Leaders that actively equip themselves for ministry are better able and more likely to create a spirit of life-long learning in a congregation.

Local Salaries and Cost of Living

Fair compensation should reflect the realities of the congregation and community to which a leader is called. A leader should be able to provide for their own



economic needs as well as for their spouse and/or their children.

All people - rostered ministers included - are complex creatures. We are all, in the words of the psalmist, "fearfully and wonderfully made." Our well-being and our being made well include:

- Intellectual Well-being
- Social/Interpersonal Well-Being
- Emotional Well-being
- Physical Well-being
- Financial Well-being
- Vocational Well-being

All of these are tied to our spiritual well-being. None of them can be separated from the others. Compensation, goals, evaluations, work climate, continuing education, rest, and the like are vital to the well-being of leaders. For better or worse, the well-being of our leaders has a direct impact on the ministry sites they serve. It can affect the leader's health, their families and ministries' effectiveness. An open, honest and gracious conversation should lead to realistic expectations and adequate compensation.

Mutual Ministry

The mutual ministry inherent in a call requires both *mutual* responsibility and accountability. People often call synod offices and ask, "Do you have anything we can use to evaluate our pastor?" There are usually some questions in response to this query: "Have you set any mutually defined goals or objectives?" "Are you evaluating the ministry or just the minister?"

A couple of great resources:

- [Mutual Ministry: Welcoming and Honoring the Gifts of All](#)—Episcopal Resource
- [Embracing Mutual Ministry](#)—Methodist Resource

The compensation recommendations aim to address the following key areas:

Distinction between housing allowance: Pastors are eligible for a housing allowance. Deacons are encouraged to consult with a tax professional to determine their eligibility for their housing allowance.

Clarification of terminology: Standardize and clarify language related to the salaries of rostered ministers.

Congregational consistency: Promote consistency in compensation practices across all congregations.

Comprehensive and balanced approach: Ensure all components of compensation are considered in a fair and balanced manner.

Alignment with community standards: Use school district compensation models as a benchmark to reflect the values and expectations of the broader community.

Compensation Approval and Considerations

A reminder that these are just guidelines, and a conversation is helpful with the necessary people (including the rostered minister).

All compensation packages must be approved by both the Congregation Council and the Office of the Bishop prior to extending a call to a pastor or deacon.

Additional Compensation Guidelines

- **Experience-Based Compensation:** *Rostered ministers with more than 30 years of experience should receive a minimum of \$450 for each additional year of service beyond 30 years.*
- **Social Security Obligation for Pastors in Parsonages:** Pastors living in a church-owned parsonage are responsible for paying Social Security tax based on the combined value of the housing and base salary.

Clarification of Compensation Terminology

For consistency and clarity in compensation planning and reporting, the following definitions apply:

“Defined Compensation,” as recognized by Portico Benefit Services, includes base salary, housing allowance (pastors only), and Social Security offset, which serves as the basis for calculating the cost of retirement and health benefits, as well as the amount on which the rostered minister is taxed.

The term “salary” does *not include*:

- Retirement and health benefits contributions
- Continuing education allowances
- Travel or automobile reimbursements

These excluded items are categorized as organizational administrative costs and are not part of the minister’s taxable or defined compensation.

Compensation Guidelines Using School District Compensation Models

The Southwestern Texas Synod has adopted a compensation framework modeled after public school middle school



principal salary structures to ensure equity, transparency, and alignment with local community values.

Key Components:

Baseline Salary

- A minimum base salary of \$65,000 for pastors and deacons has been established as the starting point for compensation recommendations. Be mindful of second-career pastors and deacons when determining their base salary. The suggested rate would be \$450 per year of experience.

Parsonage Adjustment

- When a parsonage (church-provided housing) is offered, the fair rental value is considered part of the pastor's total salary.
- For benefit and tax purposes, Portico Benefit Services considers the value of housing to be 30% of the cash salary.
- Therefore, cash compensation is reduced by 30% when a parsonage is provided. *(See far-right columns of the salary grids for adjusted figures.)*

Housing Allowance Inclusion

- Salaries listed in the compensation grids typically include a housing allowance.
- Since it is important for pastors to reside within the communities they serve, congregations in areas with higher housing costs should adjust the housing portion upward to ensure adequate support.

Coastal/Cities Adjustments

- Congregations located in coastal regions and big cities should increase compensation to reflect higher-than-average home insurance premiums and elevated living costs in these areas.

Social Security Considerations

For Social Security and Medicare purposes, the Internal Revenue Service treats ordained ministers as self-employed, even though they are considered employees for federal income tax reporting. Because of this special status, congregations generally do not pay the employer share of FICA (7.65%) or withhold Social Security and Medicare taxes for their pastor. Instead, the pastor pays the full Self-Employment Contributions Act (SECA) tax of 15.3% when filing their taxes. To help offset this additional responsibility, many congregations provide a Social Security offset allowance, often calculated at about 8.284% of salary. This percentage is slightly higher than 7.65% because the allowance itself is considered taxable income. When calculating SECA taxes, the pastor's salary, housing allowance (or the fair rental value of a parsonage), and any Social Security offset allowance are all included in determining the amount subject to the 15.3% self-employment tax.

Sample Grid Layout

Years of Experience	Base Salary	<u>(City)</u>	<u>(Rural)</u>	Yearly Recommended Increase
0 – 5 years		\$68,000	\$54,400	3%
6-10 years		\$72,000	\$57,600	3%
11-15 years		\$76,000	\$60,800	3%
16-20 years		\$80,000	\$64,000	3%
21-25 years		\$85,000	\$63,000	3%

*Rostered Ministers with more than 25-years' experience should be compensated at a rate of \$450 for each additional year of experience.

*Rostered Ministers in parsonages take 30% less defined compensation

*Pastors living in a parsonage must pay Social Security based on value of housing plus base salary.

Housing Allowance Guidelines

The housing component of a minister's compensation is complex, involving IRS regulations, local housing realities, and variability in congregational housing arrangements.

Tax Benefit Overview

- **Pastors** may receive a **housing allowance** that is **exempt from federal income tax**, according to IRS rules.
- **Deacons and lay employees** are **not eligible** for this tax benefit.
- Housing arrangements affect how compensation is handled for tax and benefits purposes.

Pastors Living in Parsonage

When a pastor resides in **church-owned housing (a parsonage)**:

The **value of the housing** is considered part of compensation but is **not taxed as income**.

The congregation is responsible for:

- *Utilities*
- *Repairs and maintenance*
- *Insurance*
- *Lawn care and upkeep*
- *Timely remodeling and significant improvements*

The congregation pays these parsonage-related costs, **and they are not taxable** to the pastor.

Optional Additions:

- **Furnishings Allowance:** Congregations may designate a non-taxable **furnishings allowance** to help cover additional household expenses.

Equity Allowance: Since pastors in parsonages cannot build equity, congregations may provide an "**equity allowance**" to support long-term housing stability.

- Suggested amount: **5% of the pastor's cash salary per year**.

Pastors Owning or Renting a Home

For pastors who **own or rent** their residence:

- The IRS allows **actual housing expenses** (e.g., mortgage/rent, utilities, taxes, insurance) to be **excluded from taxable income**, up to the **designated housing allowance** set by the congregation.

The pastor must:

- Keep **detailed records** of eligible housing expenses each year.
- Pay income tax on any **unused portion** of the designated housing allowance.

Annual Designation Process

To comply with IRS regulations:

- Each **December**, the pastor must **request that a portion of their compensation** be designated as a **housing allowance** for the coming year.

The **Congregation Council** should:

- Acknowledge the request by formal **motion and vote**.
- Record the action in the **meeting minutes**.

Sample Motion Language:

A motion was duly made, seconded, and approved that the ministry compensation paid to Rev. [Name] during the year 20[XX] includes a designated housing allowance in the amount of \$[Amount]. This amount shall remain in effect annually until amended or rescinded.

(Source: Clergy Financial Services, Inc.)

HEALTH AND RETIREMENT BENEFITS FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS

Retirement and Medical Program

Pastors, deacons, and their families are expected to fully participate in the ELCA retirement and health benefit plan, whose cost is the responsibility of the congregation (or calling body). The retirement contribution is at least 10-12% of Defined Compensation. The premium for the medical plan (which includes medical and dental insurance, disability insurance, and death benefits) varies according to a schedule. Contact [Portico](#) directly for questions and costs at 800-352-2876. Click here for [Portico Benefits Calculator](#).

Given the exponential increase in healthcare costs over the last decade, it is understandable that your congregation may struggle to provide healthcare and benefits beyond those for employees. Consider what can be offered and talk with your minister about what is negotiable. After conducting research and comparing open-market options, it has been determined that Portico's coverage is competitive and often less expensive than that of other providers. Congregations are free to search the market for different insurance plans for their ministers, seeking a more affordable option. However, the coverage offered must be the same or better as what Portico offers, and these efforts should be made in conversation and partnership with the rostered ministers.

Sick Leave

The congregation should have a sick leave policy for all its rostered ministers and other personnel. The policy should include:

- The number of paid sick leave days available each year. This annual number should be at least 7. (Most school districts allow for the accrual of sick days, at the rate of one per month of employment, resulting in 12 annually.)
- Policies laying out procedures if an individual needs more sick days.
- Policies as to whether sick days may be accrued.

(Note: Sick leave days are essential for modeling physical stewardship. For the sake of individuals and the community, people should be able to take the necessary time to heal. Conversely, "sick days" are for illness, healing, and recuperation, or may be used for the care of family members who are ill. They are not "personal leave days." Congregations and personnel should model gracious and compassionate mutual trust and respect in creating, implementing, and using such policies.)

Mental Health Leave

The congregation should have a policy for personal, paid time off for rostered ministers seeking leave for mental health. Providing time and space for your leaders to seek therapy, prescribed medications, and/or manage burnout will benefit them and their ministry sites. Our calling as the church is to restore our leaders to health, helping them live abundantly.

Disability Leave

Disability leave provisions are coordinated with Portico Benefit Services and with Social Security.

- Congregations are to provide up to two months of continued salary, housing, and contributions to the pension program in 12 months. (ELCA disability benefits begin with the third month of disability.)

- Provision may be made for further unpaid time for recovery as agreed by the congregation, but with the stipulation that unused accumulated sick leave will not be compensated at the end of the call.

Parental Leave

The church values families. Whether parental leave is maternal, paternal, or adoptive, the synod recommends at least 12 weeks of paid leave at full salary, including housing and benefits. Bonding as a new family, supporting one another, creating a balance in schedules, and nurturing physical and mental health are just some of the many benefits of parental leave. Additional time may be negotiated by the rostered minister and the council, whether for specific concerns or needs, or to comply with the Family and Medical Leave Act (1993) standards of **twelve weeks** of parental leave.

Family Medical Leave

Paid leave of up to twelve weeks is recommended to care for a family member with serious health condition.

Vacation and Days Off

Due to the intense, ongoing, and emotional nature of the work performed by a minister, it is essential and recommended that the leader be granted four full weeks of vacation (including Sundays) per year, starting immediately upon call, to ensure emotional and spiritual refreshment. Vacation is not a reward, but rather a recognition that a person needs time for renewal to be most effective in ministry. It is not necessary to take all vacation time at once. Congregations should consider increasing vacation time for longer tenures (2 additional days per year of tenure is recommended).

The congregation should also understand that taking two days off each week for family time and renewal is essential. It is recognized, of necessity, that the minister is still “on call” during these days. The congregation needs to be trained not to encroach on days off except in an emergency. Create a policy stating whether vacation can be accrued or rolled over.

Pulpit Supply

Contact the synod office for a list of pastors and seminarians available for supply. Supply rates are **\$250** for one service and **\$350** for two or more services. Education or presentations should be counted as a “service.” Unless another agreement exists between the guest minister and the congregation, round-trip mileage should be paid to the minister in accordance with IRS business rates.

Transitional Ministers

Every effort should be made to compensate transitional ministers based on their years of experience. If this doesn’t happen, it puts the congregation too far off its adopted budget. In that case, the transitional pastor should be able to reduce their hours and responsibilities in alignment with the compensation offered in consultation with the Office of the Bishop.

Continuing Education

Continuing education is essential for rostered ministers and other staff to bring fresh insights and resources to the congregation, as well as for their own professional growth. Continuing education is a means by which the rostered ministers build upon and extend knowledge, acquire new skills, and grow into more effective ministers. Indeed, failure to maintain a regular discipline of continuing education should be regarded negatively in the annual performance and compensation review.

Congregations are asked to make at least two weeks (including Sundays) per year available to their minister(s) for continuing education. This allotted time may be used to attend conferences, classes, or workshops, and/or to do theological or ministry-based reading. In consultation with the mutual ministry committee and the congregation council, the rostered minister should determine the schedule for continuing education. Upon completing a continuing education course or reading, the minister may offer a report of their learning to the mutual ministry committee and the congregational council. They could then brainstorm how continuing education might be integrated with the

congregation's ministry. The minimum recommended level for continuing education allowance from the congregation is **\$1,500** per year.

If a special focus is in mind, rostered ministers may accrue unused continuing education time and money, but only for a period of three years. This should be done only in consultation with the congregational council.

Ministers seeking advanced degrees or certifications will not be the sole beneficiaries of continuing formal education. Because congregations will, by default, learn with their minister, it is highly recommended that the congregation make some payment toward tuition for the duration of the minister's educational program. Transparency and trust are essential, and congregations are invited to request tuition bills before making payments.

Other professional expenses, such as books, magazines, and journal subscriptions, vestments, and media resources, can be managed by allocating a set amount in the budget and paying the expenses as they arise. According to the constitution, all rostered ministers are required to attend the synod assembly and are expected by the bishop to participate in theological conferences. *Neither rostered ministers nor congregations are to consider these times as "continuing education" for time or funding.*

Sabbatical Study Leave

A sabbatical leave is recommended for rostered persons after the first seven years of service in a congregation/agency and every five years after that, in conjunction with congregational/agency mission planning. The recommended length of time for sabbatical leave is three months. For further information, see the synod's [Policy and Guidelines for Sabbatical Leave for Rostered Ministers](#).

Pay Raises

On an annual basis, congregation councils should return to the grid on page 4 to adjust pay based on years of service. In preparation for the congregation's annual meeting and budget decisions, a yearly review of the rostered minister and the congregation's ministry should be conducted. The synod offers this [Rostered Minister Review](#) (credit: TXLA Gulf Coast Synod) as a starting place for these conversations about mutual ministry. If, in lean years, the congregation is unable to give pay raises based on the grid, an increase consistent with the cost of living should be considered. Additionally, the council should discuss with the minister what non-monetary compensation might look like. Some examples include increased vacation time, additional opportunities for guest preachers (and Sundays off), an increased budget for continuing education and/or study leave, and enhanced retirement benefits. Every year, a rostered minister goes without a pay increase, causing the congregation to fall behind in meeting synod guidelines. This can result in "sticker shock" when it comes time to call a new pastor or deacon, as the expectation will be that they are paid according to guidelines. The synod will evaluate the compensation guidelines annually.

Professional Expenses

Rostered ministers receive reimbursement for professional expenses (including automobile use), but this is considered reimbursement, not compensation. Professional expenses, therefore, belong under "administrative" or "operating" costs in the budget and not under "staff salaries." The recommended amount would be at least **\$800**.

The IRS recommends that ministers be placed on an expense reimbursement plan in which business-related expenses are paid to the rostered minister upon submission of an invoice or a signed and itemized business expense form. This contrasts with a system in which the minister is given a flat monthly allowance for expenses (which is reported as income) and then deducts business-related expenses.

Automobile Expenses

As indicated, using the rostered minister's automobile for business is a congregational expense. It should be adequately listed under congregational administrative expenses in the budget rather than compensation. Reimbursement to the rostered minister per mile using an expense reimbursement plan is recommended. The **IRS rate for business use** of an automobile is the standard rate for reimbursement. Alternatively, the congregation could consider providing the rostered minister with a church-owned or leased vehicle.

Cell Phone Expenses

Ministry today is not confined to the church office. Congregants expect their pastors and deacons to be reachable for emergencies, pastoral care, and routine communication. The recommended amount is a minimum of \$75-\$100 per month.

Cell phones are often the primary means by which rostered ministers:

- Respond to crises and pastoral emergencies.
- Coordinate with staff, council members, and volunteers.
- Provide spiritual support and prayer through calls, texts, and video conferencing.
- Stay accessible to their community, especially in rural or multi-point parishes.

Other

Congregations often adopt policies or procedures to benefit the rostered minister as they grow and “stay fresh” amid their duties and tasks. Such items might include:

- A policy to reimburse certain dues and memberships deemed essential to that ministry context
- Membership in a health or fitness club
- Additional life insurance coverage
- Supplemental retirement or tax-sheltered annuity contributions in consultation with a Financial Advisor (ex., Portico)

SEPARATION OF PAY FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS

There are times when personnel are released from an organization for various reasons; unfortunately, the same happens sometimes in congregations and other ministry sites. Since rostered ministers are under call from the congregation, decisions about termination and severance should be made according to the congregation’s constitution and in consultation with the bishop. The goal must always be to steward the congregation’s ministry while also being caring and compassionate. In either case, if people are released from service to a congregation, there should be as gracious and generous a severance as possible and warranted, typically three to six months, depending on the years of service and other circumstances. Ministry leaders often function in highly specialized ways, and finding another ministry site to serve may take some time. The Office of the Bishop can be helpful to congregations and rostered ministers in these instances.



Southwestern Texas Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Part-Time Ministry Guidelines

February 2026

OVERVIEW

These guidelines outline recommendations made by the Compensation Team to the Southwestern Texas Synod concerning how to do ministry more effectively in the increasing number of congregations being served by Rostered Ministers in less-than-full-time calls.

This team consisted of rostered ministers and lay leaders: the Rev. Ildiko Rigney, Deacon John Dellis, Deacon Darcy Mittelstaedt, Vicar Lax Vardhanapu, Rebecca Guengerich, and Angie Weiss. The team acknowledges that this is a working document and can be fairly modified to meet the needs of the various congregations.

This document is divided into the following sections:

1. **Introduction:** A definition of Part-time Ministry, background, and a Philosophy of Call (pp. 2-4)
2. **Part-time Ministry Work:** How to think about prioritizing part-time work, and some suggested models for part-time ministry (pp. 4-8)
3. **Just Compensation** (pp. 8-9)
4. **Pension and Healthcare Benefits** (p. 9)
5. **Expense Reimbursement:** Travel and Professional Expenses (p. 9)
6. **Renewal and Self-Care:** Vacation and Time off, Compensatory Time, Sick Leave, and Disability (pp. 9-10)
7. **Mutual Benefit:** Continuing Education and other Synodical and Churchwide Events, Sabbatical, Mutual Ministry Committee (p. 10)
8. **Supply Preaching and Presiding** (p. 11)
9. **Open Issues:** Training for Rostered Ministers and Congregations, Coaches, Thinking Theologically and Practically about the Eucharist
10. **Conclusion** (p. 13-14)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Definition of Shared-Time Ministry (from the ELCA Roster Manual)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America understands shared-time ministry to exist when an ordained minister is called to serve in one or more settings of this church while earning income from other employment or while devoting substantial time to other activities.

Mission contexts change. Some examples of contexts and settings for which shared-time ministries may be appropriate are:

- Small-membership congregations with significant opportunities for mission and service.
- New ministries are so limited in size or slow in development that they would require a disproportionate and unwise investment of time and money if the more typical mission-development approach were employed.
- Ministries (e.g., inner city, ethnic, and rural) where the community expects that the rostered ministers will receive primary financial support from secular employment.
- Multi-staff congregations looking for ministry specialties, in addition to the services of rostered ministers and contracted laypersons.
- Parishes that would benefit from having two or more persons serving a single congregation or multiple congregations, but that cannot afford full-time salaries for several persons. Specialized rostered ministers or ministry needs of institutions and agencies that may call for a high degree of training and skill, but that may neither warrant investment of an appropriate full-time salary nor justify the engagement of a full-time staff person in that position.

The foregoing list is illustrative, not exhaustive. The particular settings for shared-time ministry will become more evident as this church gains experience with this style.

1.2 Background

The ELCA defines ministry that is less than full-time to be “shared time” (see above). However, we will use “part-time” throughout this document, as it provides more clarity regarding the type of work we are describing, which is primarily that of a solo rostered minister in a ministry setting that is not large enough to support them in full-time ministry.

The context of the church has undergone radical changes since the ELCA was formed. It has moved from the center of society to its edges. There has been a dramatic increase in the percentage of people in our country who identify with no religious affiliation. People who grew up in a faith community are choosing not to join a congregation. Across denominations, worship attendance and giving to the church have declined dramatically on average. Much like the rise of Walmart drove out lots of smaller businesses in the late 20th century, the growth of “mega-churches” has come mainly at the expense of smaller congregations who cannot “compete” in what has become a consumer-driven culture, where people “church-shop” to find the one that best “fits their needs.”

The world has undergone radical changes as well. The advent of the internet, social networking, and smartphones, which keep people connected 24/7, has changed the way we think about work and play. Rostered ministers, like other working professionals, can now stay connected to their parishioners not just in the office, but by keeping their cell phones close by, hanging out in coffee shops, and connecting on social media.

Where rostered ministers used to do ministry by visiting homes, many of the younger generation no longer expect that to be the case. Therefore, rostered ministers must learn new ways to relate to this younger generation while still connecting with many in the older generations in more traditional ways.

The expectations for rostered ministers have changed regarding the types of work they are now expected to do beyond worship leadership, visitation, and teaching. It is a challenge for both rostered ministers and congregations to strike a balance between what they desire and what the rostered minister can realistically accomplish in an average work week. It is a challenge for those who work full-time in the ministry. It is even more challenging for those who have part-time calls. However, it can also provide opportunities for greater flexibility on the part of the rostered minister and the parish, as well as increased growth in the lay leadership of the congregation.

Over 50% of the congregations in our synod are now or will shortly be served by rostered ministers on a part-time basis. Congregations and their rostered ministers are seeking guidance on structuring their work and life together, as well as on justly compensating these leaders in support of the mission they share. This document applies specifically to rostered ministers, although many of the principles and guidelines can also be considered for Synod Authorized Ministers.

This guiding document is considered supplemental to the existing Southwestern Texas Synod Compensation Guidelines.

1.3 Philosophy of Call

Within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, rostered leaders may serve as rostered ministers. The process of calling rostered ministers within the life of the church is therefore primarily about discerning God's will for and God's call upon the congregation or ministry in which they will serve. Prayerfully, the church calls forth those it believes God can best use to help it carry out their mission together.

Rostered leadership is not a self-called vocation but a unique calling from God through the church to serve and equip the whole people of God. This is so that the church can live together faithfully as the body of Christ, equip the baptized for their work, and fulfill its purpose to proclaim and embody the redemptive intentions of God in the world.

A "calling" implies mutuality between those rostered people being called and the agency or congregation issuing the call. This mutuality means that congregations and other ministry sites are to live for the well-being of the rostered ministers that they call, and rostered ministers are to live for the well-being of the communities into which they are called, so that together, with the whole church, they might live in Christ for the life of the world. "We do not live to ourselves..." (Romans 14:7)

The Southwestern Texas Synod embraces biblical values about the relationship between rostered leadership and congregational life and mission:

- The church is the body of Christ, called to live out the implications of the gospel for the sake of the world. As members of the body of Christ, all members of a congregation provide ministry in the name of Christ. **Rostered ministers who equip the church for the work of mutual ministry are valued. (Ephesians 4:11)**
- In the Lutheran tradition, so that the church may be equipped for ministry, high value is placed on equipping rostered leadership. **The personal, ethical, and educational standards required of ministers are valued. (1 Timothy 3:1)**
- Congregations are to be centers of "word and sacrament" and "word and service" as well as caring, compassionate communities that are evangelical in seeking and welcoming the "homeless" and the "stranger." **Rostered ministers who equip the church to be so Christ-centered that it is outwardly focused are valued. (Matthew 25:31)**
- Congregations are continually to seek out Christ's calling to mutual ministry in their context. **Rostered ministers who inspire an ongoing mutual discernment for ministry are valued. (Romans 12:1-3)**

Whether a rostered minister is called into full-time or part-time ministry, this expectation of mutuality and these biblical values should be honored.

2. PART-TIME MINISTRY WORK

2.1 Prioritizing Work – A Shared Responsibility

Congregational mission and ministry needs remain unchanged when a rostered minister is called to serve in a less-than-full-time capacity. The shift must happen in who takes responsibility for various tasks and aspects of mission and ministry. This conversation is essential to have openly and honestly during the negotiation of the call process. It should be revised along the way during the tenure of the rostered minister serving the congregation. This is particularly important if the rostered minister has been under full-time call and is shifting to part-time, as missional areas will be fulfilled by the laity rather than the rostered minister.

Expectations for the rostered minister's role within the ministry ought to be shaped around the gifts the person brings and the percentage of time they are called. Part-time hours do not provide the same opportunities for ministry responsibilities as full-time hours; how will the congregation's mission be reshaped accordingly?

Areas commonly considered the rostered minister's responsibility include:

- Hospital visitation
- Shut-in visitation
- Worship planning
- Confirmation planning and teaching
- Preaching preparation

- Congregational meetings
- Synod committee meetings
- Email correspondence, social media evangelism, and communication

A professional contracting on a part-time basis must limit the scope of work in a particular job to make expectations reasonable. In the case of congregation rostered ministers, the rostered minister and congregation will have to decide on what parts of a full-time rostered minister's job the part-time rostered minister will not do, and over what areas they will not have responsibility but will be covered by lay leaders.

While in staff situations, a part-time rostered minister may be called to serve in a particular ministry, by nature limited in scope (visitation, youth, education, for example), in a solo rostered minister role (most common in new part-time calls), some things will either not be done in that congregation or will be done by lay staff or volunteers. Congregations thinking of calling a part-time rostered minister will have to choose the focus of their leadership position, which may be:

- Focus on community relations, outreach, and evangelism
- Focus on weekly worship
- Focus on adult congregational programming (Bible study, Sunday school, etc.)
- Focus on youth and children's programming (Bible study, Sunday school, confirmation, etc.)
- Focus on visitation (sick and homebound members, hospital, etc.)
- Other focus

One of these could be chosen as the primary focus for a part-time rostered minister, and one or two as secondary foci (which will be attended to if time remains after the primary focus). Secondary areas will need solid lay leadership to assist the rostered minister. The other areas will have to move to lay leadership and staffing. This focus exercise and prioritization will be crucial for congregations preparing for a part-time call. **While equipping leaders is an explicit and distinct role of all rostered leaders, it is essential in part-time calls, so they are feasible and reasonable for the good of the called leader as well as the mission of the congregation.**

For congregations considering calling a part-time rostered minister, a conversation defining the expectations of the rostered minister is an essential part of the call process. These expectations and boundaries must be overtly respected; the roles of the rostered minister and the congregation must be clearly defined, and an emergency plan, in case the rostered minister is unavailable, must be established and widely understood. This emergency plan could include previous agreements with retired rostered ministers, neighboring clergy, lay staff, or other leaders.

2.2 Some Models for Part-Time Ministry

As our synod includes an increasing number of part-time rostered ministers, it is helpful for congregations preparing to call a part-time rostered minister to have some models from which to draw as they shape this special call.

A challenge for all part-time professionals is that professional positions, by nature, are not typically hourly or defined by hours; they expect professionals to complete the necessary work within reasonable limits, regardless of the time taken. In exchange for working more than the regular full-time 40-hour

work week, the professional has more flexibility in scheduling their hours (such as working several long days or an evening instead of a morning) than an hourly employee.

For most professionals, there is a societal assumption that the person will work at least 40 hours per week, on a somewhat predictable schedule (that the person will be in the office most weekdays- 5 days- from 8 am to 5 pm, for example). But most rostered ministers will work more than that because the job of a professional (as opposed to an hourly employee) is to work until the job is done.

There is no accurate data on how many hours, on average, a full-time ELCA rostered minister works; some estimates range from 45 to 65 hours. **For these recommendations, we will assume**, as do other professional positions, **that full-time work is 40 hours per week**, with professionals typically working an additional 5-15 hours per week. The 40 hours are somewhat regularly scheduled (see discussion below regarding days of the week), and the 5-15 additional hours are unscheduled and as needed. Regular hours refer to those that are often scheduled, such as office hours, Sunday worship services, other worship services, Bible studies, meetings, and confirmation classes. Unscheduled hours usually include retreats, emergency visits, social media (Facebook, etc.), after-hours calls, and e-mails. For our purposes, the following are approximate guidelines:

- Full-time = 40 hours per week “regular” hours + 5-15 additional unscheduled hours
- 3/4-time = 30 hours per week “regular” hours + 5-10 additional unscheduled hours
- 1/2-time = 20 hours per week “regular” hours + 5-7 additional unscheduled hours

Less than half-time, for these recommendations, will be considered “contract” work and not covered under these “part-time” recommendations (usually meaning that “contract” positions will not be call situations, and will not include regular ELCA benefits).

Rostered ministers often define their job not in hours, but in the number of days worked per week. Full-time, rostered ministers work six days a week, with one full day off each week (usually Friday or Monday). Often, rostered ministers do not work every Saturday but are frequently scheduled for special events. Sunday is almost always a mandatory workday, and Sundays usually determine vacation: the rostered minister has some flexibility in taking other days of the week off, but is expected, and traditionally covenanted, to be present 48 Sundays per year, with four off for vacation, and sometimes an additional 1 or 2 for continuing education.

Any professional contracting on a part-time basis must limit the scope of work in a particular job to make expectations reasonable. (See more on this in section 2.1 above.) If a part-time, rostered minister also has another job, there must be flexibility within the congregation to accommodate that second job.

Within these broad parameters, congregations and rostered ministers in part-time call processes have found several models helpful. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

2.2.1 Part-Time Rostered Minister Model 1: More Days a Week Off

This is currently the most common part-time model. As indicated in the benefits section of these recommendations (below), the part-time, rostered minister working in this model should receive the full-time number of Sundays off (vacation), which is typically 4 Sundays per year. (Note: Otherwise, part-time rostered ministers will be working more Sundays than full-time rostered ministers.) In addition to this, a part-time rostered minister will have more than one day completely off, when no work is expected. At a

minimum, this will mean that the congregation will need lay visitation people and some lay assistance with office tasks (such as phone messages), ensuring that the part-time, rostered minister is truly off those days and free to work at another job.

- For 3/4 time, 2 days per week will be off (plus standard 4 weeks of vacation)
- For 1/2 time, 3 days per week will be off (plus standard 4 weeks of vacation)

2.2.2 Part-Time Rostered Minister Model 2: Weeks (Including Sundays) Off Per Month

This model allows a congregation to have an accurate picture of what part-time ministry looks like on a Sunday, and many rostered ministers who have worked part-time consider a model that includes proportionate Sundays off the only fair model for rostered ministers, who are otherwise expected to do a full-time job at a lower salary. This approach would allow a part-time, rostered minister to enjoy some full weekends with their family, who often follow more traditional work and school schedules. In this model, the rostered minister's vacation would also be proportional (a 3/4-time rostered minister would have 3 weeks, a 1/2-time rostered minister would have 2 weeks).

- For 3/4-time, 1 week (including Sunday) per month will be off (plus 3 weeks of vacation)
- For 1/2 time, 2 weeks (including Sundays) per month will be off (plus 2 weeks of vacation)

2.2.3 Part-Time Rostered Minister Model 3: Months Off Per Year

This model is a variation of Model 2. This model might make part-time ministry an attractive option (rather than just a lower-paying option) for rostered ministers who are parents of school-aged children or spouses of teachers/ school staff. This could involve either the summer months off, /or January, for example. In this model, the rostered minister's vacation would also be proportional (3/4-time rostered ministers would have 3 weeks, 1/2-time rostered ministers would have 2 weeks, etc.).

- For 3/4 time, 3 months (12 weeks, incl. Sundays) per year will be off (plus 3 weeks' vacation)
- For 1/2 time, 6 months (24 weeks, incl. Sundays) per month will be off (plus 2 weeks' vacation)

2.2.4 Part-Time Rostered Minister Model 4: Combination Models

Some rostered ministers have chosen a compromise model between Model 1 and Models 2 and 3 to make the part-time position workable for the small congregation while also benefiting the rostered minister. In this model, the rostered minister might take extra days or partial days off a week, and additional Sundays off, with fewer official vacation days. Alternatively, they could work full-time most of the year, take four full weeks of vacation, and take more Sundays off. These Sundays off can be Sundays that are not crucial liturgically but are essential for families.

(Thanksgiving, spring break, and some during summer vacation months). This could look like one of the following scenarios:

- For 3/4 time, 1.5 days off per week, and 8 Sundays off per year (plus 3 weeks of vacation).
- For 1/2 time, 2.5 days off per week, and 16 Sundays off per year (plus 2 weeks of vacation).
- For 3/4 time, work full-time hours/days, and 6 Sundays off per year (plus 4 weeks of vacation).
- For 1/2 time, work full-time hours/days, and 6 Sundays off per year (plus 4 weeks of vacation).
- Other combinations worked out between the congregation and the rostered minister for mutual minimization of inconvenience and mutual benefit.

Note: For these accurate part-time models (Models 2, 3, and 4) to work for congregations, and as these

situations become more common, the synod will need to equip and support congregational ministry in the rostered minister's absences, including the administration of the Sacraments. See section 9 below for more discussion of this.

It is an unreasonable expectation for a part-time rostered minister to work as many Sundays as a full-time rostered minister. Thus, in Model 1 above, a part-time rostered minister who does not take Sundays as part of their part-time compensation still receives the same number of weeks (and Sundays) off as a full-time rostered minister. However, this move toward part-time ministry will also mean that the church (rostered ministers, congregations, synods, and the ELCA) will need to consider different ways for a congregation to offer additional time off to compensate for this. Additional Sundays off per month/quarter/year are discussed in models 2, 3, and 4 above. These could include an extra Sunday each quarter or additional Sundays off during the summer (50% = 26 Sundays off; 75% = 13 Sundays off).

NOTE: Time off that is part of being part-time (including unpaid time and unpaid Sundays) is different from vacation time (paid time off, including Sundays). In Model 1, above, the rostered minister receives four paid Sundays off for vacation. In Models 2, 3, and 4, the rostered minister receives three paid Sundays (3/4 time) or two paid Sundays (1/2 time) for vacation, with some Sundays included in their part-time plan.

For these accurate part-time models--those that include Sundays off as part of being part-time (Models 2, 3, and 4)--to work for small congregations, and as these situations become more common, the synod will need to equip and support congregational ministry in the rostered minister's absences, including administration of the Sacraments. Can worship be shaped differently to accommodate the absences of rostered ministers? How can neighboring congregations or mission partners support the rostered minister's ministry to facilitate these additional Sundays? See section 9 below for more discussion of this.

The four broad models presented here should be part of the conversation among a call committee, the council, and the rostered minister. No single model will work for every situation, and each call is contextual; however, congregations must be aware that calling a part-time, rostered minister entails a different model of ministry, characterized by more lay leadership, in any size congregation or ministry situation. This needs to be negotiated between the congregation's leadership and the rostered minister and then communicated to the congregation continually.

3. FAIR AND JUST COMPENSATION

The Southwestern Texas Synod Compensation Guidelines require fair and just compensation for rostered ministers, ensuring it is comparable to that of other professionals in the local community with similar education and responsibilities in not-for-profit, mission-driven organizations that serve society. We affirm that for rostered ministers in part-time calls, this should also be the case. An average hourly wage can be derived by taking an average full-time salary and dividing it by an assumed 40-hour workweek. This would then be multiplied by the number of expected work hours to determine the salary. The congregation should also provide housing and a Social Security Tax Allowance. More information on this can be found in the Southwestern Texas Synod Compensation Guidelines. Please refer to the worksheets in the Compensation Guidelines to help determine part-time salaries. We recommend a minimum of \$30 per hour as a starting point.

4. PENSION AND HEALTHCARE BENEFITS

Rostered ministers who are under a part-time call receive less than full-time pay and work less than full-time. Some benefits for part-time rostered ministers can be easily calculated by applying a straight percentage of benefits compared to those of a full-time rostered minister; others will need to be negotiated differently. For example, determining the dollar amount for pension contributions through Portico's ELCA Pension and Other Benefits Program is easily calculated once a percentage of contribution is determined (at least 10%). A contribution calculator can be found at [Portico Benefits Website](http://www.porticobenefits.org). However, negotiating full healthcare coverage for a rostered minister and their family, as recommended by the ELCA, may not be as straightforward. If a spouse/partner's insurance covers a leader, a contribution could be made to a supplemental pension account to keep this benefit in the congregation's spending plan and as a benefit for the rostered minister.

- **Full percentage (at least 10%) calculation for pension (Portico) contributions** (contribution calculators are available at www.porticobenefits.org to assist congregations in figuring out these total costs)
- **Full coverage for Rostered Minister + family for health insurance** (as recommended by the ELCA). If a leader is covered by a spouse/partner's health insurance, a contribution could be made to a supplemental pension account to keep this benefit in the congregation's spending plan and as a benefit for the rostered leader.

5. EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

5.1 Travel Expense

A full mileage allowance, as per the current IRS business rate, should be paid to the rostered minister for all travel expenses exceeding the cost of transportation to and from the office.

5.2 Professional Expenses

Rostered ministers have routine expenses such as the purchase and care of robes and stoles, magazines, books, and other professional costs. A set annual limit on professional expense reimbursement may be agreed to each year.

6. RENEWAL AND SELF-CARE

6.1 Vacation and Days off

It is expected that rostered ministers will receive the full benefit of vacation and that they will also have regular days off as part of their ministry (sabbath) as prescribed in Genesis 2:1-2 and Exodus 20:8-11. This time is crucial for rostered ministers to prioritize the health of their families and other relationships, as well as to take time for rest. This time off and vacation are just as vital to part-time, rostered ministers as they are for those working full-time.

Vacation is a benefit, but it differs from regular time off because a rostered minister is not full-time. Days off and vacation time are both parts of negotiating a part-time call, and different models can include modifications of the number of days off and the number of Sundays included in vacation time. See section 2.2 for further discussion of this topic.

6.2 Compensatory (Comp) Time

It can be mutually beneficial to offer comp time for working more extraordinary hours in a single week, particularly for overnight events such as summer camp. An example might be providing a week of comp time for each week spent at camp, which may vary from year to year.

6.3 Sick Leave and Disability

Sick leave that is reasonable and necessary for personal illness is assumed, with the congregation paying pulpit supply as needed. In this event, a conversation with congregational leaders is also considered.

Disability compensation of up to two months in 12 months, along with contributions to the ELCA Pension and/or other benefits programs, should be provided if the rostered minister is physically or mentally disabled.

No sick leave or disability time should be considered cumulative or compensated for at the end of a call.

7. MUTUAL BENEFIT

7.1 Continuing Education and other Synodical and Churchwide Events

If at all possible, the congregation shall offer standard amounts of time and money for continuing education. Rostered ministers on part-time salaries have less of their own money to spend on continuing education, but they still need ongoing education, just like full-time leaders.

Also, the congregation shall provide full allowance for synod and churchwide events, such as Synod Assembly and leadership convocations, which are expected for all rostered leaders. Time and money spent on synodical and churchwide events do not count against the continuing education allowance or vacation; it is part of the ministry to the broader church, which is part of the call. The congregation and clergy are encouraged to apply for scholarships as necessary.

7.2 Sabbatical

The ELCA recommends sabbatical leave at regular intervals for extended study and renewal. Sabbatical time of 3 months for every 7 years of ordained ministry, and after at least 5 years of service in the current call, is highly encouraged.

7.3 Mutual Ministry Committee

It is beneficial to establish a Mutual Ministry Committee to mediate any issues that arise between the rostered minister and the congregation. This committee can also provide direction for the rostered minister in setting priorities for the congregation and continue to remind the rostered minister and the congregation of their mutual boundaries and responsibilities to one another.

8. SUPPLY PREACHING AND PRESIDING

It may be desirable for rostered ministers to raise lay leaders within the congregation who could preach on Sundays when the rostered minister is unavailable, thereby allowing different voices to proclaim the good news within the congregation. This would require an investment on the part of the rostered minister and/or synod to train/coach these preachers. They could be youth or adult preachers. Preaching can creatively involve different ways of proclaiming the gospel, including dramas, testimonies, and congregation participation, among others. This affirms the priesthood of all believers and helps our disciple-members understand that we are all called to bear witness to the resurrected Christ in the world and in our lives.

On Sundays when it is not possible to have a lay leader from the congregation preach, and the rostered minister is absent, the Synod Council of the Southwestern Texas Synod recommends the following baseline levels for those providing supply preaching, since sermon preparation is involved:

- Supply preaching: \$250 for one service, \$350 for two services; plus, mileage at the current annual IRS business rate.

Based on the number of Sundays off granted to the rostered minister as part of their compensation package, minus the number of Sundays the congregation plans for lay preaching, the remaining amount should be allocated in the yearly budget for regular pulpit supply.

Currently, the sacrament of Holy Communion can only be presided over by a pastor or a synod-authorized lay minister. On Sundays when the pastor is absent, the congregation can either have a service of the Word (without Holy Communion) or they can invite another pastor to preside in their absence (often a retired pastor in or near the congregation). If the pastor is already providing pulpit supply for the congregation, the above rates would also include presiding at Communion. Otherwise, if there is a lay preacher but the congregation still desires to have Communion, the Synod Council of the Southwestern Texas Synod recommends the following baseline levels for those who are presiding only:

- Supply presiding: \$100 for one service, \$150 for two services; plus, mileage at the current annual IRS business rate.

In exceptional circumstances, the bishop may choose to authorize a lay person to preside at Communion. The presiding supply rate would be the same as that of a pastor.

9. OPEN ISSUES

Moving to more part-time rostered ministers in the ELCA will require a radical rethinking of the role of the rostered minister, what kind of training is necessary for both clergy and lay persons, and how we can support congregations as they transition to these new models, including the theological and practical issues around the administration of the sacrament of Holy Communion.

All of these are beyond the scope of this task force and individual congregations, but we believe they need to be wrestled with as vital components of our future together as the Church in the 21st century and beyond. What follows are some beginning thoughts on these issues.

9.1 Training for Rostered Ministers and Congregations

Ephesians 4:11 says, “The gifts that God gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some rostered ministers, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work in ministry.”

In the earliest churches, there were no mega churches and no multi-staff personnel hired to do the work of the church. The people of the church did the ministry of the church. From what we can gather from historical research, preachers traveled from location to location. For example, in the 6th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, St. Stephen was assigned the task of ensuring that the Hellenist widows and orphans were cared for.

Congregations with rostered ministers serving in a less-than-full-time capacity very much reflect the earliest church, where all members contribute to the church's ministry with their various skills and abilities. Two challenges facing congregations attempting to become more self-sufficient are: 1) rostered ministers are not trained to equip leaders. Rostered ministers are trained to think theologically, read Scripture accurately, and understand historical contexts. 2) In a survey of rostered ministers serving in part-time calls, most of the available time was spent in sermon preparation. A rostered minister called to part-time ministry might find it challenging, if not overwhelming, to settle into the new ministry setting, prepare for weekly worship, and learn to appreciate the structure and dynamics of the congregation.

Additional training that would be helpful to assist congregations in assuming more of the ministry:

- How to develop a mission plan (connecting with the neighborhood, asset-based planning, etc.)
- Recruiting and equipping new leaders
- Stephen Ministry and/or basic rostered minister care skills to care for the homebound and those facing illness
- Setting up a financial accountability structure within the congregation that includes basic accounting principles
- Thinking theologically and liturgically about worship
- Basic biblical and theological literacy
- Preaching

A congregation may choose to be trained in one or more of these areas as they feel called and gifted to do so. They may want to send individuals in the congregation to be trained in lay leadership or a similar program to gain overall expertise.

9.2 Coaches

The synod has trained coaches for congregations who could organize this support structure within the synod and conferences. These coaches would also be available to both congregations and Rostered Ministers to help each appreciate the changing dynamics of congregations and develop their own support structures, thereby enhancing their joint ministry.

9.3 Thinking Theologically and Practically about Holy Communion

As the ministry of congregations and rostered ministers in congregations is re-shaped for part-time calls, one of the most challenging considerations is how sacraments will be faithfully administered. Presiding at the sacrament of Holy Communion has historically been an exclusive privilege and responsibility of ordained rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament. However, in unusual cases, a bishop may grant a dispensation for trained or designated leaders to preside at the table in the absence of an ordained word and sacrament minister.

In recent years, there has been a shift in our theological understanding of Holy Communion that supports and encourages weekly communion in congregations, leading many to incorporate this practice into their weekly worship. Even as this is a theologically sound position, it does create challenges for congregations considering being served by a part-time, rostered minister.

With the dramatic increase in the number of part-time rostered ministers and the need to implement some of the models described above, the Church must adopt new alternatives to the existing restrictions on presiding at communion. This change is necessary if one wants to live in this new reality and continue the practice of weekly communion. This is a conversation about our understanding of ministry and roles of various people involved, including ordained Word and Sacrament clergy, Synod Authorized Ministers, and laity; as well as a conversation about the sacraments and what it means to administer them “rightly”, both of which are essential but beyond the scope of this team.

However, some creative and practical answers to the question in the meantime may include:

- Asking rostered ministers who are available for worship services (retired, on leave from call, specialized ministries, etc.) to preside over communion for congregations served by part-time rostered ministers, perhaps a certain number of times per year.
- Providing training and authorization for lay leaders in congregations served by a part-time rostered minister to preside at and serve communion in the context of weekly worship, in the absence of the ordained pastor.

How this question is addressed in the absence of a formal policy ought to be the responsibility of the congregation and the rostered minister, in consultation with the synod, and guided by prayer.

10. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this document is to start a series of conversations. First, a conversation in a congregation considering a part-time call. A call committee and/or council must engage the congregation in a discussion about what a part-time call will look like, and specifically, what rostered minister tasks will not be part of the call, what tasks will be prioritized, and what tasks will be taken over by lay staff and members of the congregation. The congregation and call committee/council should also be in conversation with the synod as they shape this new call.

Second, these congregational conversations must be supported by a discussion within our synod about how we, as a body, support congregations with part-time rostered ministers and those with part-time calls. This must include addressing things like supply presiders, funding for synod events and training, and many other issues. These synod conversations also need to include larger congregations that might be able to help their neighbors.

Third, this is clearly part of a larger conversation in the ELCA. The question of what the church will look like in the future includes the growing number of congregations that cannot support full-time ordained rostered ministers. For instance, how will we adapt seminary education so that rostered ministers do not leave seminary with large amounts of debt and arrive at part-time calls? If we expect some rostered ministers to be bi-vocational, how will we design seminary programs and church work schedules that accommodate this? How will we adjust to more part-time rostered ministers while continuing to move toward most ELCA congregations offering communion at every worship service? As with many other issues, navigating the next generation of the church in this place will require deep theological thinking, collaboration, and prayer.

We pray that these conversations will not only result in ways to make part-time ministry possible but also enable it to be a blessing to congregations, strengthen lay leadership, broaden career and family options for clergy, and bear witness to the creativity and tenacity of Christ's church.

* This is consistent with the Southwestern Texas Synod-approved compensation guidelines

**SOUTHWESTERN TEXAS SYNOD OF THE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
1090 OESTREICH DR.
SEGUIN, TX 78155-3403**

December 28, 2025

Calvetti Ferguson
250 W Nottingham Dr, Suite 100
San Antonio, Texas 78209

This representation letter is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (the "Organization"), which comprise the statement of financial position as of January 31, 2025, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses, and cash flows for the year then ended, and the disclosures (collectively, the "financial statements"), for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to whether the financial statements are presented fairly, in all material respects, in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States ("U.S. GAAP").

We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, as of December 28, 2025, the following representations made to you during your audit.

Financial Statements

- 1) We have fulfilled our responsibilities, as set out in the terms of the audit engagement letter dated March 23, 2023, including our responsibility for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with U.S. GAAP.
- 2) The financial statements referred to above are fairly presented in conformity with U.S. GAAP.
- 3) We acknowledge our responsibility for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.
- 4) We acknowledge our responsibility for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control to prevent and detect fraud.
- 5) The methods, significant assumptions, and data used in making accounting estimates and their related disclosures are appropriate to achieve recognition, measurement, or disclosure that is reasonable in accordance with U.S. GAAP.
- 6) Related party relationships and transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in accordance with U.S. GAAP.
- 7) All events subsequent to the date of the financial statements and for which U.S. GAAP requires adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted or disclosed.
- 8) You have proposed adjusting journal entries that have been posted to the Organization's accounts. We are in agreement with those adjustments. In this case, no representation about uncorrected misstatements is necessary.
- 9) The effects of all known actual or possible litigation, claims, and assessments have been accounted for and disclosed in accordance with U.S. GAAP.
- 10) Significant estimates and material concentrations have been appropriately disclosed in accordance with U.S. GAAP.
- 11) Guarantees, whether written or oral, under which the Organization is contingently liable, have been properly recorded or disclosed in accordance with U.S. GAAP.

12) As part of your audit, you assisted with preparation of the financial statements, related disclosures, and the 990 tax return; the calculation of depreciation; and the calculation of the right-of-use lease asset and liability. We acknowledge our responsibility as it relates to those non-audit services, including that we assume all management responsibilities; oversee the services by designating an individual, preferably within senior management, who possesses suitable skill, knowledge, or experience; evaluate the adequacy and results of the services performed; and accept responsibility for the results of the services. We have reviewed, approved, and accepted responsibility for those financial statements, related disclosures, the 990 tax return, the calculation of depreciation, and the calculation of the right-of-use lease asset and liability.

Information Provided

13) We have provided you with:

- a) Access to all information, of which we are aware, that is relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements, such as records (including information obtained from outside of the general and subsidiary ledgers), documentation, and other matters and all audit or relevant monitoring reports, if any, received from funding sources.
- b) Additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit.
- c) Unrestricted access to persons within the Organization from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.
- d) Minutes of the meetings of the governing board or summaries of actions of recent meetings for which minutes have not yet been prepared.

14) All material transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements.

15) We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.

16) We have no knowledge of any fraud or suspected fraud that affects the Organization and involves:

- 1) Management,
- 2) Employees who have significant roles in internal control, or
- 3) Others where the fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements.

17) We have no knowledge of any allegations of fraud or suspected fraud affecting the Organization's financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, grantors, regulators, or others.

18) We have no knowledge of any instances of noncompliance or suspected noncompliance with laws and regulations whose effects should be considered when preparing financial statements.

19) We are not aware of any pending or threatened litigation, claims, or assessments or unasserted claims or assessments that are required to be accrued or disclosed in the financial statements in accordance with U.S. GAAP, and we have not consulted a lawyer concerning litigation, claims, or assessments.

20) We have disclosed to you the names of the Organization's related parties and all the related-party relationships and transactions, including any side agreements.

21) The Organization has satisfactory title to all owned assets, and there are no liens or encumbrances on such assets nor has any asset been pledged as collateral, except as made known to you in the notes to the financial statements.

22) We are responsible for compliance with the laws, regulations, and provisions of contracts and grant agreements applicable to us.

23) Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is an exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Any activities of which we are aware that would jeopardize the Organization's tax-exempt status, and all activities subject to tax on unrelated business income or excise or other tax, have been disclosed to you. All required filings with tax authorities are up-to-date.



Signed: _____

Sue Briner, Bishop



Signed: _____

Leslie Blalock, Treasurer

SOUTHWESTERN TEXAS SYNOD OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Financial Statements and
Independent Auditor's Report

January 31, 2025 and 2024



Calvetti Ferguson

Index

	<u>Page</u>
Independent Auditor's Report	1
Financial Statements	
Statements of Financial Position	4
Statements of Activities	5
Statement of Functional Expenses	6
Statements of Cash Flows	7
Notes to the Financial Statements	8
Financial Awards Section	
Schedule of Internal Agency Activity - 2025	20
Schedule of Internal Agency Activity - 2024	21

Independent Auditor's Report

To the Synod Council of the
Southwestern Texas Synod of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Seguin, Texas

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (the "Organization"), a non-profit organization, which comprise the statement of financial position as of January 31, 2025, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses, and cash flows for the year then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the Organization's financial position as of January 31, 2025, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America ("GAAS"). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of our report. We are required to be independent of the Organization and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Management's Responsibilities for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events that, considered in the aggregate, raise substantial doubt about the Organization's ability to continue as a going concern for one year after the date the financial statements are issued.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not absolute assurance; as such, it is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, misrepresentations, intentional omissions, or the override of internal control.

Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Organization's internal control. Accordingly, we express no such opinion.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statements.
- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events that, considered in the aggregate, raise substantial doubt about the Organization's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are also required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control-related matters that we identified during the audit.

Supplementary Information

Our audit was conducted for the purpose of forming an opinion on the financial statements as a whole. The supplementary schedules of internal agency activity - 2025 and internal agency activity - 2024 on pages 20-21 are presented for purposes of additional analysis and are not a required part of the financial statements. Such information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the financial statements. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the financial statements or to the financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with GAAS. In our opinion, the information is fairly stated, in all material respects, in relation to the financial statements as a whole.

Other Matter

The Organization's financial statements as of and for the year ended January 31, 2024, were audited by Randy Walker & Co., an accounting firm acquired by Calvetti Ferguson on August 1, 2025. The audit report for those financial statements, which was issued by Randy Walker & Co. on December 28, 2024, expressed an unmodified opinion. The summarized comparative information presented herein as of and for the year ended January 31, 2024, is consistent, in all material respects, with the audited financial statements from which it has been derived.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Calvetti Ferguson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and date.

San Antonio, Texas
December 28, 2025

Financial Statements

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**Statements of Financial Position
As of January 31, 2025 and 2024**

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
Assets		
Current assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,947,702	\$ 1,996,827
Contributions receivable	7,077	-
Prepaid expenses and deposits	19,449	18,895
Total current assets	<u>1,974,228</u>	<u>2,015,722</u>
Noncurrent assets:		
Investments	2,337,950	2,077,206
Assets held for sale	2,071,970	2,071,970
Property and equipment, net	413,762	439,946
Finance lease right-of-use assets, net	7,340	11,834
Total noncurrent assets	<u>4,831,022</u>	<u>4,600,956</u>
Total Assets	<u>\$ 6,805,250</u>	<u>\$ 6,616,678</u>
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Current liabilities:		
Accounts payable	\$ 7,729	\$ 10,008
Deferred revenue	1,374	1,374
Finance lease payables - current	3,254	4,558
Total current liabilities	<u>12,357</u>	<u>15,940</u>
Noncurrent liabilities:		
Finance lease payables - non-current	4,409	7,664
Total noncurrent liabilities	<u>4,409</u>	<u>7,664</u>
Total liabilities	<u>16,766</u>	<u>23,604</u>
Net assets:		
Without donor restrictions:		
Undesignated	3,742,928	3,614,466
Designated by Council for		
Bishop installation	5,000	5,000
Assembly	10,000	10,000
Mission and ministry	1,924,069	1,665,826
Total without donor restrictions	<u>5,681,997</u>	<u>5,295,292</u>
With donor restrictions:		
Purpose-restricted	1,106,487	1,297,782
Total with donor restrictions	<u>1,106,487</u>	<u>1,297,782</u>
Total net assets	<u>6,788,484</u>	<u>6,593,074</u>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	<u>\$ 6,805,250</u>	<u>\$ 6,616,678</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Statements of Activities
For the Years Ended January 31, 2025 and 2024

	2025	2024
Operating support and revenue:		
General undesignated mission support	\$ 1,207,155	\$ 1,177,220
Special events revenue	67,630	23,647
Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest	50,235	47,050
Interest income	37,449	28,591
Gifts and bequests	16,628	4,765
Other income	4,275	4,275
Special events expense	(89,055)	(9,907)
Total operating support and revenue	<u>1,294,317</u>	<u>1,275,641</u>
Operating expenses:		
Program	1,033,558	1,208,992
General and administrative	132,297	151,092
Total operating expenses	<u>1,165,855</u>	<u>1,360,084</u>
Change in net assets without donor restrictions	<u>128,462</u>	<u>(84,443)</u>
Changes in net assets with donor restrictions:		
Contributions	751,434	2,483,694
Net assets released	(942,729)	(2,007,485)
Change in net assets with donor restrictions	<u>(191,295)</u>	<u>476,209</u>
Change in total net assets before non-operating activities	<u>(62,833)</u>	<u>391,766</u>
Non-operating activities:		
Investment income, net	258,243	193,679
Contributed assets from a closed church	-	2,164,319
Total non-operating activities	<u>258,243</u>	<u>2,357,998</u>
Change in total net assets after non-operating activities	195,410	2,749,764
Net assets, beginning of year	<u>6,593,074</u>	<u>3,843,310</u>
Net Assets, End of Year	<u>\$ 6,788,484</u>	<u>\$ 6,593,074</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Statement of Functional Expenses
For the Year Ended January 31, 2025 (summarized for 2024)

	ELCA Support	Lutheran Campus Ministries	Agency Support	Support Ministry	Mission Team	Leadership Development Team	Ministry Resources Team	Total Program	General and Administrative	2025 Total	2024 Total
Operating expenses:											
Payroll expenses:											
Salaries and benefits	\$ 43,404	\$ 43,404	\$ 43,404	\$ 43,404	\$ 43,404	\$ 43,404	\$ 43,404	\$ 303,828	\$ 101,277	\$ 405,105	\$ 483,544
Payroll taxes	1,144	1,144	1,144	1,144	1,144	1,144	1,144	8,008	3,426	11,434	17,806
Total payroll expenses	44,548	44,548	44,548	44,548	44,548	44,548	44,548	311,836	104,703	416,539	501,350
ELCA mission support	508,965	-	-	-	-	-	-	508,965	-	508,965	588,609
Support of agencies and institutions	-	-	46,186	-	-	-	-	46,186	-	46,186	45,374
Lutheran campus ministry	-	30,000	-	-	-	-	-	30,000	-	30,000	70,000
Depreciation	319	3,179	3,179	3,179	3,179	3,179	3,179	19,393	6,791	26,184	26,184
Travel	2,752	2,752	2,752	2,752	2,752	2,752	2,752	19,264	3,403	22,667	20,820
Building maintenance	2,178	2,178	2,178	2,178	2,178	2,178	2,178	15,246	2,696	17,942	15,204
Insurance	1,956	1,956	1,956	1,956	1,956	1,956	1,956	13,692	2,420	16,112	13,345
Audit/accounting/legal	1,714	1,714	1,714	1,714	1,714	1,714	1,714	11,998	2,119	14,117	14,135
Support ministry	1,684	1,684	1,684	1,684	1,684	1,684	1,684	11,788	2,082	13,870	15,409
Website	1,593	1,593	1,593	1,593	1,593	1,597	1,597	11,163	1,971	13,134	3,141
Equipment maintenance	1,325	1,325	1,325	1,325	1,325	1,325	1,325	9,275	1,637	10,912	7,909
Utilities	1,058	1,058	1,058	1,058	1,058	1,058	1,058	7,406	1,307	8,713	8,679
SC, exec comm, deans expenses	838	838	838	838	838	838	838	5,866	1,034	6,900	5,286
Amortization	546	546	546	546	546	546	546	3,822	672	4,494	4,849
Telephone	332	332	332	332	332	332	332	2,324	412	2,736	4,091
Equipment lease	201	201	201	201	201	201	201	1,407	239	1,646	409
Printing and office supplies	179	179	179	179	179	179	179	1,253	227	1,480	1,642
Hospitality	131	131	131	131	131	131	131	917	162	1,079	669
Other expenses	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	511	183	694	3,529
Postage	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	567	104	671	613
Computer expenses	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	357	80	437	119
Interest	46	46	46	46	46	46	46	322	55	377	554
Grants to congregations	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,100
Leadership development team	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	64
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 570,570	\$ 94,465	\$ 110,651	\$ 64,465	\$ 64,469	\$ 64,469	\$ 64,469	\$ 1,033,558	\$ 132,297	\$ 1,165,855	\$ 1,360,084

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**Statements of Cash Flows**
For the Years Ended January 31, 2025 and 2024

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
Cash flows from operating activities:		
Change in net assets	\$ 195,410	\$ 2,749,764
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash provided by operations:		
Depreciation	26,184	26,184
Amortization	4,494	4,849
Realized/unrealized gain on investments	(173,859)	(121,986)
Contributed assets held for sale	-	(2,071,970)
Changes in operating assets and liabilities		
Grants receivable	(7,077)	-
Prepaid expenses and deposits	(554)	(7,497)
Accounts payable	(2,279)	(45,053)
Net cash provided by operating activities	<u>42,319</u>	<u>534,291</u>
Cash flows from investing activities:		
Purchase of investments	(91,908)	(140,587)
Sale of investments	5,023	13,521
Net cash used in investing activities	<u>(86,885)</u>	<u>(127,066)</u>
Cash flows from financing activities:		
Payments on finance lease obligations	(4,559)	(4,774)
Net cash used in financing activities	<u>(4,559)</u>	<u>(4,774)</u>
Net change in cash flows	(49,125)	402,451
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	<u>1,996,827</u>	<u>1,594,376</u>
Cash and Cash Equivalents, End of Year	<u>\$ 1,947,702</u>	<u>\$ 1,996,827</u>
Supplemental cash flow information:		
Interest paid	\$ 377	\$ 554

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Notes to the Financial Statements January 31, 2025 and 2024

Note 1 – Nature of Activities

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (the “Organization”), a Texas 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, was fully operative January 1, 1988 as a result of the merger of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (“ELCA”), the American Lutheran Church, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. The Organization provides coordinating services among its congregations and between its congregations and the churchwide organization.

Note 2 – Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

Basis of Accounting

The accompanying statements of the Organization have been prepared on the accrual basis of accounting. The significant accounting policies followed are described below to enhance the usefulness of the financial statements to the reader.

Use of Estimates

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles (“GAAP”) requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect certain reported amounts and disclosures. Accordingly, actual results could differ from those estimates.

Basis of Presentation

The Organization is required to report information regarding its financial position and activities according to two classes of net assets:

Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions – Net assets available for use in the general operations and not subject to donor restrictions. Assets restricted solely through the actions of the Synod Council (the “Council”) are reported as net assets without donor restrictions, designated.

Net Assets With Donor Restrictions – Net assets subject to donor-imposed restrictions that are more restrictive than the Organization’s mission and purpose. Some donor-imposed restrictions are temporary in nature, such as those that will be met by the passage of time or other events specified by the donor. Donor-imposed restrictions are released when a restriction expires, that is, when the stipulated time has elapsed, when the stipulated purpose for which the resource was restricted has been fulfilled, or both. Other donor-imposed restrictions are perpetual in nature, where the donor stipulates that resources be maintained in perpetuity.

Cash and Cash Equivalents

For purposes of the statements of cash flows, the Organization considers all highly liquid savings and securities with a maturity of three months or less to be cash equivalents.

Investments

Investments are carried at market, and realized and unrealized gains and losses are included in investment income in the statements of activities. Investments acquired by gift are valued at amounts representing estimated fair market value at the date of the gift.

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**Notes to the Financial Statements
January 31, 2025 and 2024**

Note 2 – Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)***Property and Equipment***

Purchased property and equipment are stated at cost. Donated assets are recorded at estimated market value at the date of donation. The Organization capitalizes all asset acquisitions in excess of \$1,500. Depreciation is computed using the straight-line method over the estimated useful lives of five to thirty-nine years.

Contributions and Other Support

The Organization records contributions and other support in accordance with Accounting Standards Update (“ASU”) 2018-08, *Not-for-Profit Entities (Topic 958): Clarifying the Scope and the Accounting Guidance for Contributions Received and Contributions Made*. Contributions and other support are reported as increases in net assets without donor restrictions, unless use of the related assets is limited by donor-imposed restrictions. Gains and losses on assets or liabilities are reported as increases or decreases in net assets without donor restrictions, unless their use is restricted by explicit donor stipulation or law. When a donor restriction expires, that is, when a stipulated time restriction ends or purpose restriction is fulfilled, net assets with donor restrictions are reclassified to net assets without donor restrictions and reported in the statements of activities as net assets released from restrictions.

Revenue - Exchange Transactions

The Organization recognizes revenue related to exchange transactions in accordance with ASU 2014-09, *Revenue from Contracts with Customers (Topic 606)*. The Organization records revenues from exchange transactions as increases in net assets without donor restrictions to the extent that the earnings process is complete. These transactions primarily include participation fees for events (classified as special events revenue on the statements of activities). Participant fees are variable depending on the event. These types of revenues are reported on an accrual basis in the period in which fees are earned. Performance obligations are satisfied when the event occurs, at which time the revenue is recognized. There are no amounts in excess of the benefit provided. Additionally, there were no receivables, contract assets, or contract liabilities related to these exchange transactions at January 31, 2025, January 31, 2024, and February 1, 2023. Disaggregation of revenue is presented on the face of the statements of activities.

Income Taxes

The Organization qualifies as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and, therefore, has no provision for federal income taxes.

Donated Services

The Organization receives a significant amount of donated services from its members in carrying out the Organization’s ministry. No amounts have been recognized in the statements of activities because the criteria for recognition under GAAP has not been satisfied.

Functional Allocation of Expenses

The costs of providing various programs and activities of the Organization have been summarized on a functional basis in the statement of activities. Accordingly, certain costs have been allocated among the programs and supporting services benefited. These expenses require allocation on a reasonable basis that is consistently applied. The expenses that are allocated include payroll expenses, which are allocated on the basis of estimates of time and effort, as well as depreciation, utilities, and building maintenance which are allocated on the basis of square footage or some other reasonable basis.

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**Notes to the Financial Statements
January 31, 2025 and 2024****Note 2 – Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (continued)****Leases**

The Organization may have lease agreements that contain both lease and non-lease components as defined by the Financial Accounting Standards Board (“FASB”) Accounting Standards Codification (“ASC”) 842, *Leases*. The Organization has elected the practical expedient, by class of underlying asset, to account for the lease and non-lease components as a single lease component. The underlying assets include copiers and phone equipment recognized as right-of-use assets in the statements of financial position.

As the Organization’s leases do not provide an implicit rate, a risk-free rate is used based on the information available at commencement date in determining the present values of lease payments. The risk-free rate is the rate of a zero-coupon U.S. Treasury instrument for the same period of time as the lease terms.

Note 3 – Related Party Transactions

On January 1, 2002, the Organization entered into a land lease with Texas Lutheran University (the “University”). The land lease is for 99 years at \$1 a year. There are no unusual contractual obligations; the Organization does have to adhere to the standards of usage of the University.

By action of the Synod Assembly, during the years ended January 31, 2025 and 2024, the Organization contributed 50.0% of its unrestricted regular mission support receipts from congregations to the ELCA. The total contributed for the years ended January 31, 2025 and 2024 was \$603,578 and \$588,610, respectively.

Additionally, the Organization provided financial assistance from net assets without donor restrictions to the following related agencies and institutions during the years ended January 31:

	2025	2024
Cross Trail Ministry	\$ 9,237	\$ 9,075
Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago	9,237	9,075
Hispanic Ministry	9,237	9,075
Upbring	1,386	1,361
Texas Impact	4,619	4,537
Texas Lutheran University	3,233	3,176
Wartburg Seminary	9,237	9,075
Total	<u>\$ 46,186</u>	<u>\$ 45,374</u>

Note 4 – Concentration of Credit Risk

The Organization maintains cash and investment balances at multiple financial institutions and investment organizations. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (“FDIC”) insures cash balances up to \$250,000 per bank. The Securities Investor Protection Corporation (“SIPC”) insures investment balances up to \$500,000. Funds invested with the Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest, Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA, and the ELCA Foundation are not insured by the FDIC or SIPC. The Organization had uninsured investment balances of \$2,333,727 and \$2,077,206 at January 31, 2025 and 2024, respectively. The Organization’s uninsured cash balances totaled \$1,750,232 and \$1,833,701 at January 31, 2025 and 2024, respectively, without consideration of reconciling items.

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Notes to the Financial Statements January 31, 2025 and 2024

Note 5 – Fair Value of Financial Instruments

The Organization follows the provisions of ASC 820, *Fair Value Measurements and Disclosures*, which defines fair value as the exchange price that would be received for an asset or paid to transfer a liability (an exit price) in the principal or most advantageous market, and establishes a framework for measuring fair value in the principal or most advantageous market for the asset or liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date.

The valuation techniques required by ASC 820 are based upon observable and unobservable inputs, and ASC 820 establishes a three-level fair value hierarchy that prioritizes the inputs used to measure fair value. The three levels of inputs used to measure fair value are as follows:

- Level 1 inputs consist of unadjusted quoted prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities and have the highest priority.
- Level 2 valuations are based on quoted prices in markets that are not active.
- Level 3 valuations are based on inputs that are unobservable and supported by little or no market activity.

The Organization's current assets and liabilities as presented in the statements of financial position are Level 1. The Organization has no Level 2 or Level 3 current assets or liabilities. The carrying amounts reported in the statements of financial position approximate fair values because of the short maturities of those instruments.

The Organization's financial instruments also include Level 2 long-term investments. The fair values of investments are based on quoted market prices for those or similar investments.

Investments at fair value were as follows at January 31:

	2025	2024
ELCA endowment fund	\$ 1,627,023	\$ 1,432,224
STSEM endowment fund	509,221	465,052
ELCA South Archives endowment fund	181,019	159,346
ELCA Mission Plus	20,687	20,584
Total	<u>\$ 2,337,950</u>	<u>\$ 2,077,206</u>

The following schedule summarizes the return from investments for the years ended January 31:

	2025	2024
Interest and dividend income	\$ 89,407	\$ 75,504
Realized/unrealized gain	173,859	121,986
Investment fees	(5,023)	(3,811)
Total	<u>\$ 258,243</u>	<u>\$ 193,679</u>

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Notes to the Financial Statements January 31, 2025 and 2024

Note 6 – Endowment Funds

Implementation of Enhanced Disclosures for All Institutional (Endowment) Funds

The Organization has adopted the “Endowments of Not-For-Profit Organizations” standard as required by FASB ASC 958-205-45/50. This standard provides guidance on the net asset classification of donor-restricted endowment funds by a not-for-profit organization that is subject to an enacted version of the Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act of 2006 (“UPMIFA”). This topic also requires additional disclosures about an organization’s endowment funds (both donor-restricted and Council-designated) whether or not the organization is subject to UPMIFA.

General Information

The Organization maintains endowment funds established for mission and ministry purposes, which include providing financial resources both for mission and ministry development, as well as ongoing support of ministries that are not self-sustainable.

Endowment Investment Objectives

Endowment investments are invested with, and managed by, the ELCA Endowment Fund Pooled Trust, the ELCA Mission Investment Fund, and the Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest, under the direction of the Council. Funds are invested in a manner that seeks to produce results that meet or exceed the performance of generally recognized market indices, while assuming a moderate level of investment risk.

Endowment “Income” Appropriation (Spending Policy)

The Organization’s policy is to appropriate interest and investment earnings as needed for operations. The Council will review the spending policy as market conditions change.

The Organization considers the following factors in making a determination to appropriate (spend) or accumulate donor-restricted or Council-designated endowment funds:

1. The duration and preservation of the fund
2. The purposes of the Organization and the endowment fund
3. General economic and investment market conditions
4. The possible effect of inflation and deflation
5. The expected total return from income and the appreciation of investments
6. Other resources of the Organization, and
7. The investment policies of the Organization

Endowment Net Assets Composition

The Organization’s endowment net assets are composed of \$1,924,069 and \$1,665,826 in Council-designated unrestricted endowment funds as of January 31, 2025 and 2024, respectively.

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**Notes to the Financial Statements
January 31, 2025 and 2024**

Note 6 – Endowment Funds (continued)

Changes in Endowment Net Assets

The following represents the changes in endowment net assets for the year ended January 31, 2025:

	Without Donor Restrictions	Time/ Purpose Restricted	Perpetually Restricted	Total
Endowment net assets, beginning of year	\$ 1,665,826	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,665,826
Investment return:				
Interest and dividends	89,407	-	-	89,407
Net realized and unrealized gains	173,859	-	-	173,859
Other	(5,023)	-	-	(5,023)
Total	<u>\$ 1,924,069</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 1,924,069</u>

The following represents the changes in endowment net assets for the year ended January 31, 2024:

	Without Donor Restrictions	Time/ Purpose Restricted	Perpetually Restricted	Total
Endowment net assets, beginning of year	\$ 1,531,162	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,531,162
Investment return:				
Interest and dividends	64,589	-	-	64,589
Net realized and unrealized gains	121,986	-	-	121,986
Other	(3,811)	-	-	(3,811)
Appropriations for expenditure	(48,100)	-	-	(48,100)
Total	<u>\$ 1,665,826</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 1,665,826</u>

Note 7 – Contributed Assets

During the year ended January 31, 2024, the Organization assumed the assets (cash, land, and building) of a closed church pending its sale. The church's cash account balance was \$15,453 and \$92,349 at January 31, 2025 and 2024, respectively, and is included in cash and cash equivalents in the statements of financial position. The property (land and building) was recorded at estimated fair market value on the date of receipt. At January 31, 2025 and 2024, the balance of the property assumed by the Organization was \$2,071,970, and is included in assets held for sale in the statements of financial position. The assets do not have donor restrictions for the years ended January 31, 2025 and 2024.

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**Notes to the Financial Statements
January 31, 2025 and 2024**

Note 8 – Property and Equipment

Property and equipment were as follows at January 31:

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
Building and improvements	\$ 1,022,864	\$ 1,022,864
Furniture and fixtures	25,300	25,300
Equipment	14,079	14,079
	<u>1,062,243</u>	<u>1,062,243</u>
Less: accumulated depreciation	<u>(648,481)</u>	<u>(622,297)</u>
Total	<u>\$ 413,762</u>	<u>\$ 439,946</u>

Depreciation expense was \$26,184 for the years ended January 31, 2025 and 2024.

Note 9 – Right-of-Use Finance Leases

The Organization leases office equipment under multiple finance leases with various expiration dates and monthly amounts. The right-of-use leased equipment is carried at cost of \$24,401 less accumulated amortization of \$17,061 and \$12,567 at January 31, 2025 and 2024, respectively. The balance of the equipment lease payables was \$7,663 and \$12,222 at January 31, 2025 and 2024, respectively. Interest expense related to these leases was \$377 and \$554 for the years ended January 31, 2025 and 2024, respectively.

The related future minimum lease payments under these right-of-use finance leases are as follows:

<u>Years Ending January 31,</u>	
2026	\$ 3,474
2027	2,292
2028	<u>2,292</u>
	8,058
Less: Interest (3.74%)	<u>(395)</u>
Total	<u>\$ 7,663</u>

The following summarizes the weighted average remaining lease term and discount rate for the years ended January 31:

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
Weighted average remaining lease terms (years):		
Finance leases	2.62	3.62
Weighted average discount rate:		
Finance leases	3.74%	3.74%

Note 10 – Employee Pension and Other Benefits Program

Eligible employees of the Organization participate in a 403(b)(9) defined contribution retirement plan. For the years ended January 31, 2025 and 2024, the Organization's contributions on behalf of such employees were \$80,452 and \$112,316, respectively. The retirement plan is one of four plans available through Portico Benefit Services (formerly the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Board of Pensions).

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**Notes to the Financial Statements
January 31, 2025 and 2024**

Note 10 – Employee Pension and Other Benefits Program (continued)

Employees are eligible based on working 20 hours or more per week for a minimum of six months per year. Contributions are determined as a percent of defined compensation as follows:

<u>Attained Age on January 1, 1988</u>	<u>Guideline Contribution Rate</u>
55 or older	12%
Over 45 but less than 55	11%
Over 35 but less than 45	10%

The required contribution rate for all other members is 10% of defined compensation.

Note 11 – Liquidity and Availability of Financial Resources

The following reflects the Organization’s financial assets as of the statement of financial position date, reduced by amounts not available for general use because of donor-stipulated restrictions and internal designations that are amounts set aside for operating and other reserves that could be drawn upon if the Council approves that action.

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,947,702	\$ 1,996,827
Investments	2,337,950	2,077,206
Contributions receivable	<u>7,077</u>	<u>-</u>
Total financial assets, excluding noncurrent receivables	4,292,729	4,074,033
Council designations	(1,939,069)	(1,680,826)
Donor restrictions	<u>(1,106,487)</u>	<u>(1,297,782)</u>
Financial assets available to meet cash needs for expenditures within one year	<u>\$ 1,247,173</u>	<u>\$ 1,095,425</u>

The Organization’s primary source of cash flows during the year is related to apportionments received from regional churches for mission support. This revenue source provides a consistent inflow of cash throughout the year to cover normal operating expenses.

Note 12 – Prior Period Reclassification

The following reclassification between investments and cash and cash equivalents was made to the financial statements for the year ended January 31, 2024 in order to conform to the 2025 presentation: \$20,687 from cash and cash equivalents to investments. The reclassification has no effect on the previously reported change in net assets.

Note 13 – Subsequent Events

The Organization has evaluated subsequent events through December 28, 2025, the date on which the financial statements presented herein were available to be issued.

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Notes to the Financial Statements
January 31, 2025 and 2024

Note 14 — 2025 Schedule of Net Assets With Donor Restrictions

Time/purpose restricted net assets consisted of the following at January 31, 2025:

	Balance Beginning of Year	Contributions	Released from Restrictions	Balance End of Year
Archives - ELCA Region IV - South	137,199	-	-	137,199
Archives - Operating - Region IV South	16,962	25,686	5,526	37,122
Bishop's Emergency Fund	6,624	1,943	-	8,567
Border Relief	24,015	2,308	-	26,323
Brownsville Property Proceeds	9,729	-	-	9,729
Clearing Monthly	-	10,101	10,000	101
Disaster Relief	3,068	4,750	6,650	1,168
Companion Synod Costa Rica	38,446	13,235	21,772	29,909
COVID-19 ELCA Grant	3,700	-	3,700	-
DEM Administrative Expenses	5,988	10,000	11,621	4,367
Eagle Pass Frontera Ministry	5,378	65,876	27,540	43,714
EPFM Fiscal Agent	50,120	7,971	58,091	-
Esther Brittain Fund	792	2,084	-	2,876
First Call Theological Education Gifts	3,818	230	4,048	-
Generosity	10,930	6,452	-	17,382
Hispanic Ministry Programs	3,111	1,405	1,369	3,147
Holy Innovations Vitality Grant	24,028	32,735	26,998	29,765
Hunger Grants Evaluations	1,617	-	-	1,617
Koenig Memorial Youth Scholarship Fund	3,015	-	438	2,577
Lay Leadership Academy	1,650	-	1,329	321
LCM Designated	1,421	7,078	8,499	-
LCM ELCA Grant and SWTS M&M	-	9,731	9,731	-
LD Events (BoS Convo)	2,055	-	2,055	-
LDR Grant - EPFM	-	13,770	13,770	-
Leadership Dev & Wellness - Portico	2,186	15,448	6,680	10,954
LFSW Gifts - MinsStudents	77,721	14,503	14,630	77,594
Lord of Life, Austin	183,551	-	102,363	81,188
Mission Starts	8,955	10,560	-	19,515
Mission Funds	-	66,600	24,486	42,114
Platicas De Santa Sofia (SAWC)	-	3,927	3,927	-
Prince of Peace, Austin	4,262	1,727	-	5,989
Prince of Peace, Austin Multi-Cultural	169,398	54,178	60,072	163,504
Sabbatical Support	1,493	-	300	1,193
Senior and Support Staff Development	186	-	-	186
Sustentation Aid/Palm Valley	66,614	32,610	11,680	87,544
SWTS Evangelical Mission Endowment	87	32,193	80	32,200
SWTS Leaders Fund	1,000	4,000	-	5,000
Synod & Cong Vitality	42,873	-	1,546	41,327
Tiemann Leadership Development Endowment	8,006	7,293	12,299	3,000
Transformational Ministry Grant	11,041	840	11,881	-
Young Adult Intern - SJ&E	533	-	-	533
Youth and Young Adults	6,130	-	3,759	2,371

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Notes to the Financial Statements
January 31, 2025 and 2024

Note 14 — 2025 Schedule of Net Assets With Donor Restrictions (continued)

Time/purpose restricted net assets consisted of the following at January 31, 2025:

	Balance Beginning of Year	Contributions	Released from Restrictions	Balance End of Year
Community Engagement & Program				
CE&P Salary	4,652	21,639	26,291	-
CE&P Pension/Medical	-	27,556	27,556	-
CE&P Employer Share Taxes	-	4,818	4,818	-
CE&P Program Expenses	-	607	607	-
Holy Fork In The Road				
HFitR Salary	87,944	-	87,944	-
HFitR Pension/Medical	1,972	-	1,972	-
HFitR Salary Reduction Pension	1,680	-	1,680	-
HFitR SAREgA - Salary	20,800	-	20,800	-
Holy Fork Mins-Lord of Life, Austin	24,541	425	1,425	23,541
DEM				
BoSA Salary	-	12,450	12,450	-
BoSA Housing Allowance	-	18,750	18,750	-
BoSA Pension/Medical	-	17,004	17,004	-
MD				
Platicas Salary (Hlthcr Allwn)	-	147	147	-
Platicas Housing Allowance	-	2,490	2,490	-
Platicas Benefits	-	358	358	-
Platicas Salary Reduction	-	797	797	-
LMD				
Platicas Income	976	-	976	-
Platicas Salary	-	6,764	6,764	-
Platicas Employer Share PRTax	-	517	517	-
Technicolor Ministries-LoLA-Camping	32,876	-	735	32,141
Technicolor Ministries-Income	14,331	3,253	-	17,584
MD-Technicolor				
Technicolor Mins. Salary	-	5,911	5,911	-
Technicolor Mins. Housing Allowance	-	26,000	26,000	-
Technicolor Mins. Benefits	-	6,885	6,885	-
Technicolor Mins. CntEd & PrfExps	-	1,420	1,420	-
Technicolor Mins. Program Exps	-	8,494	8,494	-
MD Valley				
Valley Metanoia Network-Salary	-	6,345	6,345	-
Valley Metanoia Network-Housing Allow	-	8,378	8,378	-
Valley Metanoia Network-Income	13,818	-	3,622	10,196
SanLucas Pastor Benefits	-	23,648	23,648	-
Internal Agency Funds (see page 20)	156,490	87,544	151,105	92,929
Total	\$ 1,297,782	\$ 751,434	\$ 942,729	\$ 1,106,487

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Notes to the Financial Statements
January 31, 2025 and 2024

Note 14 — 2024 Schedule of Net Assets With Donor Restrictions

Time/purpose restricted net assets consisted of the following at January 31, 2024:

	Balance Beginning of Year	Contributions	Released from Restrictions	Balance End of Year
Esther Brittain Fund	\$ 2,876	\$ -	\$ 2,084	\$ 792
SWTS Evangelical Mission Endowment	8,087	-	8,000	87
Tiemann Leadership Development Endowment	6,645	7,961	6,600	8,006
Lord of Life, San Antonio	-	677	677	-
Senior and Support Staff Development	1,086	100	1,000	186
Sabbatical Support	9,077	-	7,584	1,493
Sustentation Aid/Palm Valley	25,534	77,760	36,680	66,614
Generosity	4,684	6,246	-	10,930
Lord of Life, Austin	43,006	549,480	408,935	183,551
Bishop's Emergency Fund	6,551	750	677	6,624
Mission Starts	38,404	10,551	40,000	8,955
LD Events (BoS Convo)	2,055	-	-	2,055
Young Adult Intern - SJ&E	1,715	-	1,182	533
Hunger Grants Evaluations	1,617	-	-	1,617
Synod & Cong Vitality	30,033	25,000	12,160	42,873
SWTS Leaders Fund	-	15,000	14,000	1,000
Leadership Dev & Wellness - Portico	2,196	50	60	2,186
LFSW Gifts - MinsStudents	71,022	13,914	7,215	77,721
First Call Theological Education Gifts	5,112	1,278	2,572	3,818
F.C.T.E. Events	-	8,927	8,927	-
Lay Leadership Academy	1,650	-	-	1,650
Hispanic Ministry Programs	3,767	610	1,266	3,111
Brownsville Property Proceeds	26,858	-	17,129	9,729
Border Relief	33,940	-	9,925	24,015
Prince of Peace, Austin	2,693	1,569	-	4,262
Youth and Young Adults	6,983	-	853	6,130
LDR Grant - EPFM	30,000	10,000	40,000	-
DEM Administrative Expenses	6,365	10,150	10,527	5,988
Koenig Memorial Youth Scholarship Fund	3,015	-	-	3,015
Coastal Area Disaster	3,068	-	-	3,068
Archives - Operating - Region IV South	5,832	16,158	5,028	16,962
Clearing Monthly	-	561,369	561,369	-
Archives - ELCA Region IV - South	137,199	-	-	137,199
Prince of Peace, Austin Multi-Cultural	165,637	53,342	49,581	169,398
Eagle Pass Frontera Ministry	32,655	31,817	59,094	5,378
Companion Synod Costa Rica	26,585	11,861	-	38,446
Transformational Ministry Grant	11,041	-	-	11,041
COVID-19 ELCA Grant	3,700	-	-	3,700
LCM Designated	-	1,721	300	1,421
LCM ELCA Grant and SWTS M&M	-	52,975	52,975	-
EPFM Fiscal Agent	13,771	40,392	4,043	50,120
ELCA - DEM Clearing	-	99,290	99,290	-
Holy Innovations Vitality Grant	-	60,000	35,972	24,028
Platicas De Santa Sofia (SAWC)	-	33,000	33,000	-

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Notes to the Financial Statements
January 31, 2025 and 2024

Note 14 — 2024 Schedule of Net Assets With Donor Restrictions (continued)

Time/purpose restricted net assets consisted of the following at January 31, 2024:

	Balance Beginning of Year	Contributions	Released from Restrictions	Balance End of Year
Community Engagement & Program				
CE&P Salary	-	46,800	46,800	-
CE&P Pension/Medical	-	16,572	16,572	-
CE&P Employer Share Taxes	-	2,271	2,271	-
CE&P Program Expenses	-	1,145	1,145	-
CE&P Program Income	-	4,652	-	4,652
Holy Fork In The Road				
HFitR Salary	-	24,267	24,267	-
HFitR Pension/Medical	-	3,101	3,101	-
HFitR Salary Reduction Pension	-	2,400	2,400	-
HFitR SAREgA - Salary	-	26,000	26,000	-
Holy Fork Mins-Lord of Life, Austin	-	139,232	2,295	136,937
DEM				
BoSA Salary	-	25,600	25,600	-
BoSA Housing Allowance	-	50,000	50,000	-
BoSA Pension/Medical	-	44,531	44,531	-
BoSA Salary Reduction Pension	-	4,400	4,400	-
MD				
Platicas Salary (Hlthcr Allwn)	-	2,310	2,310	-
Platicas Housing Allowance	-	23,400	23,400	-
Platicas Benefits	-	3,073	3,073	-
Platicas Salary Reduction	-	690	690	-
LMD				
Platicas Income	-	1,123	147	976
Platicas Salary	-	6,504	6,504	-
Platicas Employer Share PRTax	-	373	373	-
Technicolor Ministries-LoLA-Camping	-	33,000	124	32,876
Technicolor Ministries-Income	-	14,331	-	14,331
MD-Technicolor				
Technicolor Mins. Salary	-	10,950	10,950	-
Technicolor Mins. Housing Allowance	-	23,250	23,250	-
Technicolor Mins. Benefits	-	3,981	3,981	-
Technicolor Mins. CntEd & PrfExps	-	165	165	-
Technicolor Mins. Program Exps	-	2,210	2,210	-
MD Valley				
Valley Metanoia Network-Salary	-	8,000	8,000	-
Valley Metanoia Network-Housing Allow	-	19,500	19,500	-
Valley Metanoia Network-Benefits	-	8,897	8,897	-
Valley Metanoia Network-Cont.Ed&Prf	-	2,590	2,590	-
Valley Metanoia Network-Income	-	14,556	738	13,818
MD Eagle Pass				
EPFM - Salary	-	29,792	29,792	-
EPFM - Benefits	-	12,220	12,220	-
EPFM - Employer Share Taxes	-	8,109	8,109	-
SanLucas Pastor Benefits	-	18,716	18,716	-
Internal Agency Funds (see page 21)	47,114	143,035	33,659	156,490
Total	\$ 821,573	\$ 2,483,694	\$ 2,007,485	\$ 1,297,782

Supplementary Information

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Schedule of Internal Agency Activity - 2025
For the Year ended January 31, 2025

	Balance Beginning of Year	Receipts	Disbursements	Balance End of Year
Assembly worship offering	\$ 104,398	\$ 56,346	\$ 131,657	\$ 29,087
Boundary training	735	275	505	505
Creating Healthy Congregations workshops	1,380	-	-	1,380
One Day+ events	-	1,218	1,218	-
Disaster relief	-	1,100	800	300
World hunger	163	2,273	2,436	-
Synod conferences	-	2,548	-	2,548
Synod congregations	2,450	4,700	-	7,150
Lutheran Ministry Center - maint. and repair	1,000	-	-	1,000
Missions - LFSW - Fred Kern Endowment	8,180	1,628	-	9,808
Poovey-Good Samaritan Fund	38,184	17,456	14,489	41,151
Total	\$ 156,490	\$ 87,544	\$ 151,105	\$ 92,929

Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Schedule of Internal Agency Activity - 2024
For the Year ended January 31, 2024

	Balance Beginning of Year	Receipts	Disbursements	Balance End of Year
Assembly worship offering	\$ -	\$ 109,247	\$ 4,849	\$ 104,398
Boundary training	85	650	-	735
Stewardship event	-	4,039	4,039	-
Creating Healthy Congregations workshops	1,380	-	-	1,380
Disaster relief	-	2,700	2,700	-
World hunger	-	2,893	2,730	163
Texas Lutheran University	1,443	-	1,443	-
Designated:				-
Synod congregations	-	4,948	2,498	2,450
Lutheran Ministry Center - maint. and repair	1,000	-	-	1,000
Missions - LFSW - Fred Kern Endowment	6,741	1,439	-	8,180
Poovey-Good Samaritan Fund	36,465	17,119	15,400	38,184
Total	\$ 47,114	\$ 143,035	\$ 33,659	\$ 156,490

RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT JUSTICE AND PEACE FOR PALESTINE AND ISRAEL 2026 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

Submitted by: The Rev. Julie Rowe, Zion, San Antonio, and
The Rev. Lea Walker Clark, Palabra de Vida & St. John/San Juan, Austin

Whereas, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has been a steadfast advocate of peace with justice in Palestine and Israel for decades, as reflected in its initial 2005 Middle East strategy “*Peace not Walls: A Campaign for Justice in Israel and Palestine*,” and now through “*Sumud: For Justice in Palestine and Israel*;¹” and

Whereas, the ELCA is committed to preserving life and human dignity, as reflected in the 1995 statement for Peace in God’s World, which affirms that “Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world” and which urges the ELCA “to:

- Oppose genocide and other grievous violations of human rights such as torture, religious and racial oppression, forced conscription, forced labor, and war crimes (including organized rape);
- Provide for the most basic necessities of the poor; and
- Defend the human rights of groups most susceptible to violations, especially minorities, women, and children;” and

Whereas,

The ELCA has clearly condemned the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack against Israelis and internationals in southern Israel, and has reaffirmed its commitment to reject anti-Semitism and Islamophobia; and

Whereas,

Israel’s human rights violations against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, include:

¹ “Sumud” is an Arabic word that means steadfastness, and is a symbol for Palestinians of their resilience in standing through decades of occupation and injustice.

- The killing of over 71,000 Palestinians in Gaza, including over 20,000 children and hundreds of medical staff, humanitarian aid workers, and journalists since October 7, 2023;
- The displacement of more than 1.9 million people;
- Deprivation of adequate access to safe drinking water, food, medical care, and electricity;
- Destruction of buildings – including hospitals, places of worship, homes, and schools – and the destruction of electricity, sewage, and water infrastructure essential for survival;
- Expropriation of Palestinian land and the expansion of Israeli settlements;
- Settler violence and vandalism with the aim of instilling fear into Palestinian communities;
- Cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment of prisoners;
- Administrative detention (being held without trial, without charges, without the disclosure of alleged evidence for periods ranging from several months to several years);
- Restrictions on the freedom of movement within the Palestinian Territories leading to a life of constant uncertainty and obstructing the development of a stable economy and

Whereas,

the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted the resolution CA25.03.12 “*Toward Ending the Occupation of Palestine*”, urging ELCA members to support policies to end the occupation of Palestine while recognizing the right of Israel and Palestine to exist side by side and calling for the Presiding Bishop to advocate to top US leadership to:

- recognize and work to end the genocide against the Palestinian people, Recognize Palestine as a sovereign state and support Palestine’s full membership in the United Nations;
- Halt military assistance to Israel used to devastate Gaza, investigate the use of U.S. military aid to Israel to ensure compliance with U.S. and international human rights law, and work to end the genocide against the Palestinians of Gaza;
- Reject schemes to remove Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, address the catastrophic living conditions that could force

Palestinians to leave, and work to end the rampant settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank; and,

Whereas,

in November of 2025 the Palestinian Christian community issued *A Moment of Truth: Faith in the Time of Genocide*, a second Kairos Palestine² document, calling the global church to take a prophetic stand for justice, human dignity, and against genocide, apartheid, and ethnic cleansing; which was offered by our Palestinian Christian companions as a prophetic gift, reminding us that God's steadfastness calls us to faithful steadfastness in the pursuit of justice and peace;

Therefore, Be It Resolved,

that the Southwestern Texas Synod encourage its congregations to pray for, support, and advocate for Palestinians and Israelis and all Jews, Christians, and Muslims everywhere who work to create a future of justice, equality, reconciliation, and peace for all, especially:

- our companions in the region listed above;
- the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Desk;
- Arab and Middle Eastern Ministries;
- the Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage (ALAMEH);
- all ELCA Churchwide and synodical expressions of the Sumud: Stand for Justice in Palestine and Israel” initiative; and
- the Witness in Society public policy team;

Be it further resolved,

that the Southwestern Texas Synod encourage its congregations to engage in at least one educational opportunity per year to learn more about the faith, life, and realities on the ground in Israel and Palestine, especially through the lens of our Palestinian Christian companions, who need our solidarity and support to help sustain their witness and presence in the land we call holy; and

Be it further resolved,

that the Southwestern Texas Synod support and help facilitate the work of Friends of Sumud of SWT³ so that it can provide resources and support to congregations and groups that will inspire action and advocacy for peace with justice in Palestine and Israel.

² Kairos Palestine is a grassroots Palestinian Christian movement in the spirit of the South African Kairos initiative that produced the Kairos Document of 1985 that called the global church to take up their prophetic duty to join them in standing against apartheid, oppression, and injustice;

³ Friends of Sumud SWT was founded as a self-organizing ministry of the ELCA by Church Council approval in 2024;

Recommendation: The Reference and Council Committee recommends the **approval** of this resolution.

Rationale: This is an international issue related to work for peace and solidarity with our global church partners. The resolution provides some specific action the synod and congregations can take and makes use of The ELCA's resources to help congregations and the SWT Synod encourage prayer and support for both Christian and interfaith neighbors throughout Israel, Palestine, and the Middle East and share educational materials and opportunities. This resolution is consistent with this church's position and shows solidarity with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and is also in alignment with prior resolutions adopted by this synod in years prior.

RESOLUTION ON THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES ECUMENICAL DECADE OF CLIMATE JUSTICE ACTION

Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly - May 1-2, 2026

WHEREAS, the ELCA social statement, *Caring for Creation*, adopted 33 years ago by the 1993 Churchwide Assembly, acknowledged that we face dangerous global warming and emphasized that action to counter degradation is essential to the future of our children and the entire planet; and

WHEREAS, the 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly reaffirmed the commitment of this church to engage in creation care and advocacy, and on Earth Day 2023, the ELCA Church Council unanimously adopted a social message, *Earth's Climate Crisis*, stating that, “[f]rom a standpoint of faith, it is reasonable to conclude that the climate crisis is, indeed, a kairos moment” and challenged all expressions of the ELCA to “[j]oin with ecumenical, interfaith, and secular partners working to address the climate crisis;” and

WHEREAS, in his 2025 “Message on the Tenth Anniversary of the Paris Climate Accords,” ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry emphasized: “It is not too late to protect our climate. With God, it is never too late. Kairos means that this is an opportune and urgent time to address Earth’s climate crisis;” and

WHEREAS, on June 21, 2025, the World Council of Churches (WCC) launched the *Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action*, “an unprecedented commitment by the global church—a bold and prayerful response to the climate emergency...(that) calls churches to ecological metanoia and systemic change rooted in justice, peace, and the integrity of creation;” and

WHEREAS, the ELCA Social Message, *Earth's Climate Crisis*, names this as a “kairos moment” and calls us to heed “God’s urgent call for decisive action in history” and such decisive action will require additional resourcing of churchwide staff and programs dedicated to climate justice;

Therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly urges every congregation, synod, and the churchwide office of the ELCA to commit to active participation in the WCC’s *Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action*, since the ELCA is a member of the World Council of Churches; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly urges the ELCA Churchwide Organization to devote additional funds and staffing to lead the church’s work for climate

justice, and to launch a fundraising campaign, “Climate Justice Action for the Life of the World,” seeking to raise at least \$5 million for specific programs and staffing dedicated to greenhouse gas reduction and other efforts to address Earth’s climate crisis; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly instructs the Southwestern Texas Synod Council to request that the ELCA Church Council implement these actions; and urges the Conference of Bishops to lead and encourage participation in the WCC Decade for Climate Justice in synods and congregations.

Authors:

Rev. Harold Vanicek - Spirit of the Hills Lutheran Church, 830-998-4952, hvanicek@gmail.com

Rev. Candice Combs - New Life Lutheran, 512-689-6342, candice_combs@hotmail.com

Rev. Heather Hansen - Abiding Presence Lutheran, 210-317-8509, HeatherH@apl.org

Recommendation: The Reference and Counsel Committee recommends the approval of this resolution.

Rationale: This is a global issue related to our call as humans in Genesis to steward and care for creation. Part of the resolution is urging the church to follow up on its commitments as a member of the World Council of Churches and in alignment with memorials and action from prior churchwide assemblies to reduce carbon emissions. While the committee has concerns about the efficacy of this resolution to achieve the goals expressed because it is limited in much of its action to "urging," "instructing," and "encouraging," this resolution nevertheless expresses the desire to act boldly for the sake of caring for the earth. The resolution would require time and communications resources of the synod office to engage in urging, instructing, and encouraging, though there are educational resources available through the World Council of Churches for the work suggested in encouraging congregations to participate in the *Decade of Climate Justice Action*.

Supporting material

- The 1993 ELCA social statement, *Caring for Creation*, expressed concern about “climate change;” acknowledged that, “according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide“ we face “dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide;” and emphasized that “action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children’s children. Time is very short;”

- In 2022 the ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted 672-45, “to receive with gratitude the memorials from 17 synods concerning greenhouse gas emissions;” “to reaffirm the commitment of this church to engage in creation care and advocacy . . . ;” and “to encourage congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops to commit themselves to education about the urgency of the climate emergency . . . ;”
- On Earth Day 2023, the ELCA Church Council unanimously adopted a social message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*, stating that, “[f]rom a standpoint of faith, it is reasonable to conclude that the climate crisis is, indeed, a *kairos* moment” and challenged all expressions of the ELCA to “[j]oin with ecumenical, interfaith, and secular partners working to address the climate crisis;”
- ELCA social teachings have emphasized the ethical priority for the most vulnerable and marginalized, who have contributed least to the climate crisis and bear a disproportionate weight of its effects; and the ELCA calls on organizations to support strategies that enable adaptation to climate change, including protecting the land rights of Indigenous peoples, in whose care land, resources, and biodiversity are more likely to be protected;
- ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry, in his 2025 “Message on the Tenth Anniversary of the Paris Climate Accords,” affirmed the 2015 United Nations agreement that committed all nations, including the U.S., to limit global warming to well below 2°Celsius (C) while also pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C, and emphasized:

“It is not too late to protect our climate. With God, it is never too late. *Kairos* means that this is an opportune and urgent time to address Earth’s climate crisis. I am calling this church to be more connected and sustainable. This includes stewarding God’s creation as an expression of faith and seeking sustainability rooted in ways of living that honor everything God has called ‘good,’ including learning from and following the leadership of Indigenous communities. I commend to you the social message,” *Earth’s Climate Crisis*;
- On June 21, 2025, the World Council of Churches (WCC) began an Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action, which is “a prophetic pilgrimage of repentance, transformation, and hope” that calls “churches to ecological *metanoia* and systemic change rooted in justice, peace, and the integrity of creation;”
- The ELCA is a leader in resourcing churchwide staff positions dedicated to programming for racial justice and gender justice; and the ELCA seeks to lead

comparably in the work of climate justice, especially in light of its 2023 Social Message, *Earth's Climate Crisis*, which calls us to see the climate crisis as a *kairos* moment, a moment when we recognize “*God’s urgent call for decisive action in history*”; and the ELCA’s leadership in the call to decisive action will require bold resourcing of additional churchwide staff member(s) solely dedicated to climate justice.

- The fundraising campaign, “Climate Justice for the Life of World,” is critical to our successful involvement in the WCC Ecumenical Decade for Climate Justice Action. As we discovered through the ELCA Malaria Campaign (2011-2015), the \$15.4 million raised to fight malaria also generated increased awareness and stronger engagement across our whole church. (Sunday school children, college students, congregations, synods, camps, WELCA, and individuals were inspired by the goal of providing millions of malaria nets – a tangible effort that appealed to members of all ages). The success of the ELCA’s Good Gifts initiative is another example of this. Further, we have already received commitments of \$200,000 from donors eager to support this work. The Climate Crisis demands such an engaged and generous response. (Imagine what it might mean if the ELCA could raise funds for 1 million solar panels for its congregations).

POSITIONS TO BE ELECTED AT 2026 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

CONSULTATION COMMITTEE

- P1: Lay Female (6 year)
 - Gina Dieringer
 - Cynthia House
- P2: Lay Male (6 year)
 - Carl Teinert
- P3: Rostered Minister Female (6 year)
 - Pastor Susan Schnelle
 - Pastor Lea Walker Clark
- P4: Rostered Minister Male (6 year)
 - Pastor Herbert Palmer
 - Pastor Aaron Richter
 - Pastor David Tinker
- P5: Rostered Minister Male (1 year)
 - Pastor Gary Conklin

DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE

- P6: Rostered Minister Female (6 year)
 - Pastor Eileen Spehr
 - Pastor Anamae Storbeck
- P7: Rostered Minister Male (6 year)
 - Pastor Marcus Bigott
 - Charles Fredrickson

Gina Dieringer

P1: Consultation Committee: Lay Female (6 year term)

Congregation: Christ, Georgetown

Conference: Capital North

Education: BS Applied Learning and Development, UT Austin; MA Spiritual Formation, Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest

Employment: Spiritual Director, self-employed; Ministry Formation Manager, Ascension Healthcare, Jan '23 - March '26; Director of Faith Formation, Christ Georgetown, Oct. '08-June '22

Birth Year: 1971 **Ethnicity:** White **Primary Language:** English

Please list three examples of the skills, abilities and/or gifts you possess that would enable you to perform the ministry of this position:

* I am committed to a faith life that nurtures my ongoing formation both personally and in community. This includes regularly dwelling in God's presence through prayer and meditation, engaging with my Spiritual Director, actively participating in a Supervision group for Spiritual Directors, and participating in my home church's faith community.

* As a Spiritual Director with training in Narrative Focused Trauma Care, I am comfortable holding sensitive information with care and in confidence.

* I served on staff in a congregational setting for 14 years and understand the complexities inherent within congregations.

Do you have a committed view about any of the issues facing the synod? If so, please share your views in one paragraph below.

Are you open to the possibility that the Holy Spirit could lead you to change your view. if it is already formed, on any of the issues facing the synod?

Absolutely!

What do you see as the top three challenges facing our Synod?

* Determining how to best act in solidarity with those who are facing injustice, seeking to honor their inherent human dignity.

* Understanding our shared identity as people called to Christian love within our congregations, with our neighbors, and in the world.

* Adapting to the changing landscape of congregational participation.

What do you see as the top three opportunities facing our Synod?

* Compelling communities to be a voice of the good news in a hurting world.

* Raising up new leaders and equipping lay leaders in the church.

* Equipping leaders to nurture healthy congregations to live out Christ's example of love in their communities both inside and outside the church.

Identify the three most prominent themes that others would say are strongly evident in your leading and living.

- * Embodying a calm, non-anxious presence
- * Maintaining the openness and ability to consider multiple facets of a situation
- * Cultivating a deep connection with God and the movement of the Holy Spirit in my life

Describe how you help others understand their relationship to the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? My hope is that the ELCA continues to hold an identity rooted in Christ's love and God's grace for all people. I hope we remain a church that encourages communities to grow in faith together and act for justice in a hurting world.

Cynthia (Cindy) House

P1: Consultation Committee: Lay Female (6 year term)

Congregation: First, San Marcos

Conference: Cibolo Creek

Education: BS Biology

Employment: Retired

Birth Year: 1949

Ethnicity: White

Primary Language: English

Please list three examples of the skills, abilities and/or gifts you possess that would enable you to perform the ministry of this position:

Served as Administration Assistant/Volunteer Coordinator for First, San Marcos.

Served on Synod Council during an ongoing investigation of misconduct.

Have experience a contentious congregation situation with a previous pastor and have gone through the Synod process to help resolve the situation.

Have served with an Intentional Interim who taught us additional conflict resolution skills.

Do you have a committed view about any of the issues facing the synod? If so, please share your views in one paragraph below. I do not.

Are you open to the possibility that the Holy Spirit could lead you to change your view. if it is already formed, on any of the issues facing the synod?

Absolutely! Without the leading and discernment of the Holy Spirit we are doomed.

What do you see as the top three challenges facing our Synod?

Continued obstacles in integration of all races in communities.

Dwindling youth participation.

Inability to attract and retain young families.

What do you see as the top three opportunities facing our Synod?

Identify the three most prominent themes that others would say are strongly evident in your leading and living.

Faith. Faithfulness in service to church and community.

Describe how you help others understand their relationship to the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? We are a small part of a very large picture and world. It is so important to the promotion of God's kingdom that we foster an attitude of cooperation and truly accept each other and acknowledge each person's worth as the whole body of God's Church.

Carl Teinert

P2: Consultation Committee: Lay Male (6 year term)

Congregation: Triumphant Love, Austin, Austin

Conference: Capital South

Education: MS in Community and Regional Planning; BS in Geological Sciences

Employment: semi-retired; part time environmental consultant

Birth Year: 1950 **Ethnicity:** White **Primary Language:** English

Please list three examples of the skills, abilities and/or gifts you possess that would enable you to perform the ministry of this position:

1. trained Stephen Minister - taught me to listen
2. Patient
3. love for this church

Do you have a committed view about any of the issues facing the synod? If so, please share your views in one paragraph below. How do we continue to welcome and support the stranger? We have done much in our community to support the stranger with different programs. We need to continue that support and grow it as that need continues to be stressed by policies and seeming lack of care and concern by our society.

Are you open to the possibility that the Holy Spirit could lead you to change your view. if it is already formed, on any of the issues facing the synod?

One has to be open to the possibility that the Holy Spirit will lead in new directions. I have seen how she has moved in mysterious ways in the past which is often a new direction.

What do you see as the top three challenges facing our Synod?

1. welcoming the stranger
2. helping small congregations grow and thrive or to close gracefully and leave a legacy
3. congregations being involved in their communities

What do you see as the top three opportunities facing our Synod?

We have the resources and where with all to address the three challenges above.

Identify the three most prominent themes that others would say are strongly evident in your leading and living.

1. loving my neighbor
2. walking humbly with God
3. striving for justice and peace

Describe how you help others understand their relationship to the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America?

Having been involved in various synod leadership positions over the years, I saw how our congregations do amazing things together. I continue to support those programs and look forward to the new directions that Presiding Bishop Curry will lead us.

Susan (Susie) Schnelle

P3: Consultation Committee: Rostered Female (6 year term)

Congregation: Triumphant Love, Austin

Conference: Capital South

Education: Mdiv and Dmin

Employment: Director of Nurture and Outreach

Birth Year: 1961

Ethnicity: White

Primary Language: English

Please list three examples of the skills, abilities and/or gifts you possess that would enable you to perform the ministry of this position:

I bring a deep capacity for attentive listening and discernment, shaped by years of pastoral care and walking with individuals through complex and sensitive situations. I also offer emotional intelligence and grounded judgment, allowing me to hold confidentiality, navigate conflict thoughtfully, and respond with both compassion and clarity. Finally, I have a strong commitment to the integrity of the Church and its leaders, with the ability to balance accountability, grace, and fairness in difficult circumstances

Do you have a committed view about any of the issues facing the synod? If so, please share your views in one paragraph below.

I hold a strong commitment to the full inclusion and dignity of all people, including immigrants, and individuals of every sexual identity, gender, and race. I believe the Church is called to be a place of radical welcome that reflects Christ's expansive love, while also engaging differences with humility, care, and deep listening. At the same time, I recognize that these matters can be complex and, at times, deeply felt within our communities. I am committed to approaching such issues with both clarity and compassion—honoring the ELCA's commitments, upholding the worth of every person, and fostering spaces where truth, accountability, and grace can coexist.

Are you open to the possibility that the Holy Spirit could lead you to change your view. if it is already formed, on any of the issues facing the synod?

Yes, I am open to the movement of the Holy Spirit in shaping and, when needed, changing my views. While I hold convictions grounded in Scripture, theology, and experience, I also recognize that discernment is ongoing and often happens in community. I value listening deeply to others, engaging diverse perspectives, and remaining attentive to where God may be leading. I believe faithful leadership requires both clarity of conviction and humility to grow, be challenged, and be transformed.

What do you see as the top three challenges facing our Synod?

I see three significant issues facing our synod at this time. First, sustaining trust and accountability in leadership, particularly in times of conflict or disciplinary concern. Second, fostering authentic inclusion across differences—especially around race, immigration, gender, and sexual identity—while maintaining unity in the body of Christ. Third, supporting the well-

being and resilience of clergy and lay leaders who are navigating increasing demands, polarization, and changing patterns of church life.

What do you see as the top three opportunities facing our Synod?

I see three key opportunities before our synod. First, to deepen trust across congregations and leadership through transparency, accountability, and strong relational practices. Second, to more fully embody the Church's call to inclusive community—creating spaces where people of all backgrounds and identities are genuinely welcomed, valued, and engaged in leadership. Third, to reimagine ministry for a changing world by equipping leaders, fostering collaboration, and embracing new models of connection, outreach, and spiritual formation.

Identify the three most prominent themes that others would say are strongly evident in your leading and living.

Others would likely name three consistent themes in my leadership and life. First, a relational and pastoral presence that prioritizes listening, trust-building, and care for the whole person. Second, a commitment to integrity and accountability, seeking to lead with honesty, clarity, and fairness even in difficult situations. Third, a deep sense of compassion grounded in faith, guiding my work toward inclusion, healing, and the well-being of individuals and communities.

Describe how you help others understand their relationship to the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? My hope for the ELCA is that it will continue to grow as a Church rooted in the Gospel, marked by deep trust, courageous leadership, and a genuine commitment to inclusion and justice. I hope to see the ELCA strengthen its witness in a changing world by nurturing leaders, supporting congregations, and fostering communities where faith is lived out through service, reconciliation, and love.

I help others understand their relationship to the synod and the wider Church by emphasizing that we are part of something larger than any one congregation—a connected, interdependent body. Through teaching, preaching, and conversation, I highlight the ways the synod supports, guides, and holds us accountable, while also inviting participation in shared ministry. I encourage people to see their role as both receiving support from and contributing to the broader mission we share as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Rev. Lea Walker-Clark

3: Consultation Committee: Rostered Female (6 year term)

Congregation: Austin, Austin

Conference: Capital South

Education: MA, M. Div

Employment: Pastor/Transitional Pastor

Birth Year: 1954

Ethnicity: African American/Black Non-Hispanic

Primary Language: English

Please list three examples of the skills, abilities and/or gifts you possess that would enable you to perform the ministry of this position:

Counseling/Education. Bilingual-(English/Spanish) Helps Administration

Do you have a committed view about any of the issues facing the synod? If so, please share your views in one paragraph below. N/A

Are you open to the possibility that the Holy Spirit could lead you to change your view. if it is already formed, on any of the issues facing the synod?

Yes

What do you see as the top three challenges facing our Synod?

Membership Retention. Balancing justice-oriented public witness with congregational vitality remains a central challenge. Evangelically compelling

What do you see as the top three opportunities facing our Synod?

Giving pastors the ability to serve multiple congregations and various part-time calls
Holding high our legacy to remain •Confessionally Lutheran •Socially engaged

Identify the three most prominent themes that others would say are strongly evident in your leading and living.

Spiritually Mature. Spirit Lead. Prayer Warrior

Describe how you help others understand their relationship to the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America?

I am proud to promote my SWTX Synod and the ELCA for its strong global and justice-centered partnerships. The SWTX synod is renewing its relationship with the Lutheran Church in Costa Rica (ILCO), a church known for its prophetic witness among migrants, Indigenous communities, women, and LGBTQIA+ persons.

- It signals that SWTX is leaning into global justice, not retreating from it.

- It continues to open doors for cross-cultural ministry, immersion trips, and shared formation—especially relevant for East Austin’s multicultural context.

- It shows the synod values partnerships with churches that center marginalized voices.

Herbert Palmer

P4: Consultation Committee: Rostered Male (6 year term)

Congregation: Shepherd of the Hills, Austin

Conference: Capital SouthAustin

Education: Master of Divinity

Employment: Retired Clergy

Birth Year: 1951

Ethnicity: White

Primary Language: English

Please list three examples of the skills, abilities and/or gifts you possess that would enable you to perform the ministry of this position:

Rostered Clergy of the ELCA. Having served in congregational life in the role of clergy I bring that perspective to the conversation.

Spiritual Direction. In retirement I received my certification in Spiritual Direction through Perkins Theological Seminary in Dallas. This is a ministry of listening deeply for God and listening to another.

Discerning through listening and giving feedback.

Do you have a committed view about any of the issues facing the synod? If so, please share your views in one paragraph below.

The Synod, meaning the congregations committed to mission in a geographical area of the ELCA, has a defining moment in our position on immigration. We are a church that not only has benefited from immigrant communities establishing our worship communities; but we are defined by Christ to be a welcoming communities. Our welcome is to not only welcome into our faith communities but also to welcome others into our neighborhood. Global Refuge is a wonderful partner to help us imagine what welcoming can mean for us.

Are you open to the possibility that the Holy Spirit could lead you to change your view. if it is already formed, on any of the issues facing the synod?

I fully recognize that my perspective needs adjusting. Time, prayer, experience, perspective from others are ways the Holy Spirit leads us in change.

What do you see as the top three challenges facing our Synod?

One challenge is for congregations to embrace being part of something bigger than the local congregation.

A second challenge is to trust that God is faithful and that God is invested in our life as the church. We have every reason to reject thinking about what we don't have and to give attention to what we do have. It is difficult when church leaders see diminished resources and members.

With what we do have, however, what is God leading us to imagine ministry.

Finally, we live in divisive times. That bleeds into congregational life. How do we help our people to identify what is concerning them, developing skills to listen to one another, and to claim that it is Christ who unites us.

What do you see as the top three opportunities facing our Synod?

When congregations have more building then needed with the current ministry plan, reimagining how to use space to serve the larger community.

Secondly, I am convinced, that people who are not affiliated with a local congregation, are curious about God. Our opportunity is to listen to our neighbors, not with the objective of getting them into our congregation but to journey with them with their questions.

Another opportunity facing the Synod is to be playful as often as possible.

Identify the three most prominent themes that others would say are strongly evident in your leading and living.

I often hear from others that I am a good listener. I believe they are saying that I am giving attention to them, respecting confidentiality, and they feel seen.

I am discerning. I need time for prayer, reflection, and conversation with others. I try to honor that discerning for others as well.

I am curious. I love to hear a person's story. I ask questions and learn so much. When I travel, I want to learn about the people, their history, and their culture.

Describe how you help others understand their relationship to the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? I hope that the ELCA believes our voice as the church is life giving. I encourage people to see what we do together and how it is making a difference, some times one person at a time.

Aaron Richter

P4: Consultation Committee: Rostered Male (6 year term)

Congregation: Triumphant, Garden Ridge

Conference: Cibolo Creek

Education: M. Div. Wartburg Seminary **Employment:** Pastor

Birth Year: 1980 **Ethnicity:** White **Primary Language:** English

Please list three examples of the skills, abilities and/or gifts you possess that would enable you to perform the ministry of this position:

Prior to serving at TLC, I served on the synod staff in New Jersey, and have experiences working with congregations and rostered leaders in a variety of situations. In those experiences, I noted the importance of active listening skills, taking the necessary time and effort to hear from all those impacted, and strive for the most faithful and compassionate response.

Do you have a committed view about any of the issues facing the synod? If so, please share your views in one paragraph below. I don't believe I have any committed views about any of the issues. To be honest, I'm not entirely sure what this question wants to know, so maybe that implies that I'm pretty uncommitted.

Are you open to the possibility that the Holy Spirit could lead you to change your view. if it is already formed, on any of the issues facing the synod?

Again, I'm not sure what this question is asking, but I think I'm open to learning new ways of thinking.

What do you see as the top three challenges facing our Synod?

1. A complex and diverse area that requires faithful nuance, compassion and creativity to share the good news of Jesus.
2. culture that increasingly looks for meaning and value in places other than congregations.
3. The decline of people, resources, and purpose that drive up anxiety and conflict.

What do you see as the top three opportunities facing our Synod?

1. We are a complex and diverse people, recognizing that Jesus can gather us together in a world that is increasingly divided.
2. We also have the interesting balance of rapidly growing areas and declining areas. How can both work together?
3. I believe strongly that people are wanting and hoping for grace from faith communities, especially since their experience has been judgment.

Identify the three most prominent themes that others would say are strongly evident in your leading and living.

1. I make sure to listen carefully and respond clearly to discover what people are going through.

2. I think and act creatively and joyfully with others for the sake of the good news.
3. I hope that we're better working together, and invite people to consider new ways to be community.

Describe how you help others understand their relationship to the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? Being part of the church requires recognizing that its' breadth and width are larger than you imagine. We can be bound together and be the people of God beyond what can separate us.

David Tinker

P4: Consultation Committee: Rostered Male (6 year term)

Congregation: Christ Elm Creek, Seguin

Conference: Cibolo Creek

Education: BS University of Texas at Austin, TX; M.Div. Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, OH

Employment: Christ Lutheran Church of Elm Creek, Seguin, TX

Birth Year: 1966 **Ethnicity:** White **Primary Language:** English

Please list three examples of the skills, abilities and/or gifts you possess that would enable you to perform the ministry of this position:

Listening for understanding. Exhortation toward faithfulness to God and to the Gospel message

Do you have a committed view about any of the issues facing the synod? If so, please share your views in one paragraph below. One issue is the lack of available candidates to serve as pastors and deacons. I think we need to continue to be creative in how we train, place, and support rostered ministers, Synodically Authorized Ministers and other lay leaders of congregations. There are a great deal of models out there among ELCA synod and even in non-ELCA Lutheran Contexts for training and placing ministers.

Are you open to the possibility that the Holy Spirit could lead you to change your view. if it is already formed, on any of the issues facing the synod?

Yes. God the Holy Spirit keeps working on us throughout our lives. It is the wonderful gift of, "...(working) out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

What do you see as the top three challenges facing our Synod?

Numerous aging congregations. Finding ways to supply ministers for a wide variety of contexts. Funding future ministry

What do you see as the top three opportunities facing our Synod?

Creative ministry to meet our needs. Investing in Bible Study growth in congregations. Utilizing veteran pastors, deacons, and congregational leaders to mentor current and future leaders.

Identify the three most prominent themes that others would say are strongly evident in your leading and living.

Patient listening. Carefully considering a situation, and then working toward a proper solution. A great love for God and the Body of Christ, the Church.

Describe how you help others understand their relationship to the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? We are in this together. We have so much we can find to be common which can bring a better future. My hope is that we will push back against the culture of extremism of any kind, division, and hate for others or any viewpoint, context, etc.

Gary Conklin

P5: Consultation Committee: Rostered Male (1 year term)

Congregation: Mc Allen, Edinburg

Conference: Rio Grande

Education: TEEM program LSPS

Employment: Pastor Our Savior, McAllen

Birth Year: 1955

Ethnicity: White

Primary Language: English

Please list three examples of the skills, abilities and/or gifts you possess that would enable you to perform the ministry of this position:

Listening. Problem solving. Working well with others

Do you have a committed view about any of the issues facing the synod? If so, please share your views in one paragraph below. Immigration: Our synod needs to not only work with individuals in the system but also work in ways to help effectively reform the system overall.

Are you open to the possibility that the Holy Spirit could lead you to change your view. if it is already formed, on any of the issues facing the synod?

Yes, always open to the Holy Spirit

What do you see as the top three challenges facing our Synod?

Immigration issues. LGBTQIA+ issues (More welcoming & inclusive). Financial

What do you see as the top three opportunities facing our Synod?

To effect real change in immigration

Looking for new ways to be church in our communities

Work with other organizations to bring about social change

Identify the three most prominent themes that others would say are strongly evident in your leading and living.

Good Listner. Empathy. Peace maker Calming influence

Describe how you help others understand their relationship to the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? I continual show people how the ELCA and Synod are a huge part of what the Local congregation and how each part helps the other. The three entities make up a whole that can do much work worldwide.

Eileen Spehr

P6: Committee on Discipline: Rostered Female (6 year term)

Congregation: Zion, San Antonio

Conference: Alamo

Education: B.S - Iowa State U M. Div - Lutheran School Theology Philadelphia

Employment: retired pastor

Birth Year: 1949 **Ethnicity:** White **Primary Language:** English

Please list three examples of the skills, abilities and/or gifts you possess that would enable you to perform the ministry of this position:

Attentive listening skills; deep concern for the integrity and well-being of the Church and all of God's people; ability to remain calm and work for solutions in crisis situations

Do you have a committed view about any of the issues facing the synod? If so, please share your views in one paragraph below. Not at this time

Are you open to the possibility that the Holy Spirit could lead you to change your view. if it is already formed, on any of the issues facing the synod?

I believe the Holy Spirit knows more than I do and should be listened to at all times.

What do you see as the top three challenges facing our Synod?

To support churches, rostered leaders, and lay in the challenges they face in today's world
To be a strong voice in strengthening the work of the gospel as it addresses injustice and the misuse of Christianity for power and dominance
To enable and celebrate the work of the Body of Christ to pass on the faith to all generations present and future

What do you see as the top three opportunities facing our Synod?

In addressing the challenges lies the opportunity to make a difference in lives and in the world, to proclaim God's love, forgiveness and reconciliation to a hurting world, to share the joy of living and celebrating God's abundant and amazing love to all

Identify the three most prominent themes that others would say are strongly evident in your leading and living.

Strongly grounded in faith; grace filled living in word and deed; compassion for those in need

Describe how you help others understand their relationship to the synod and the

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? I hope the ELCA remains a strong voice as a global church working for the sake of the world. Each body of church, synod, and churchwide work interdependently to provide resources and support to fulfill the mission of the Church. In this

way the foundation of our Lutheran faith continues to reform while remaining faithful to God's Word as together we work to bring hope and healing to a broken world in Christ's name.

Anamae Storbeck

P6: Committee on Discipline: Rostered Female (6 year term)

Congregation: Living Word, Buda
Stated Supply at Salem, Austin

Conference: Capital South

Education: Doctor of Ministry in Rural Outreach, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary,
Austin TX M. Div. Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, OH B. A. Taylor University, Upland, IN

Employment: Retired Roster

Birth Year: 1952 **Ethnicity:** White **Primary Language:** English

Please list three examples of the skills, abilities and/or gifts you possess that would enable you to perform the ministry of this position:

Listening skills. Confidentiality keeping. Comfortable in addressing difficult conversations. Able to provide sincere feedback

Do you have a committed view about any of the issues facing the synod? If so, please share your views in one paragraph below. I am committed to fair and just treatment of all people, including out immigrant neighbors who are being targeted for detentions and deportations. I agreed with the lawsuit our synod signed onto and won, at least initially, barring ICE from entering houses of worship during service times.

Are you open to the possibility that the Holy Spirit could lead you to change your view. if it is already formed, on any of the issues facing the synod?

Yes.

What do you see as the top three challenges facing our Synod?

1. Retaining members and active congregations open to all kinds of ministries with others.
2. Inviting and guiding options for shrinking congregations into renewed and collaborating/cooperating ministries with other ELCA congregations
3. Exploring ecumenical partnerships that retain Christian witness for their local communities.

What do you see as the top three opportunities facing our Synod?

1. The hugely underserved population of non-affiliated people living in all neighborhoods of all congregations.
2. Linking community outreach ministries to work together with congregations where common interests exist.
3. Holding fast to the Gospel understanding of the diversity God's Kingdom on earth encompasses and opening our eyes to offer support here and around the world for all people who live in suffering circumstances made worse by apartheid, climate change, natural disasters and wars.

Identify the three most prominent themes that others would say are strongly evident in your leading and living.

Courageous. Willing to function as an agent of change. Compassionate and generous.

Describe how you help others understand their relationship to the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? Congregations, synods, and the ELCA function for one ultimate purpose--to announce in word and deed God's love for all people, everywhere. Each expression of the church in the ELCA needs the others to strengthen and expand the mission we share as we live God's Kingdom not yet so fully, but more fully than before, when well supported!

Marcus Bigott

P7: Committee on Discipline: Rostered Male (6 year term)

Congregation: Emanuel's, Seguin

Conference: Cibolo Creek

Education: Master of Divinity

Employment: Full Time - Rostered

Birth Year: 1986

Ethnicity: White

Primary Language: English

Please list three examples of the skills, abilities and/or gifts you possess that would enable you to perform the ministry of this position:

I am a cooperative person and find great value and hope in working with colleagues to find the best direction forward no matter the situation before us.

I listen with extreme detail and focus and pride myself in being someone who can walk in the middle of the road.

I am deeply faithful to the witness of our church, the call of rostered leadership, and the role we collectively share in proclaiming the Gospel and caring for all whom God has made.

Do you have a committed view about any of the issues facing the synod? If so, please share your views in one paragraph below.

I believe our Synod is poised and ready for truly amazing ministry. Our congregations, on the whole, are seeing community change unlike many have ever witnessed before, whether that is grow or decline, and we are at a precipice of either sliding backwards and living what we have always been or pressing for what we can be. We have experimented with so many programs, initiatives, and growth projects that I feel we are exhausting the resources we have, people, passions, finances, congregations, etc., at a rate that not sustainable. I would love to see, as the next three to four years unfold, a focus on three key aspects: one thing that we do really well, one thing we could do better, and one thing new to our ministry. Then give it time to plant, settle, and grow.

Are you open to the possibility that the Holy Spirit could lead you to change your view. if it is already formed, on any of the issues facing the synod?

Absolutely. We must, I must, always be open to the Spirit's guidance, leadership, and teaching, especially in times of discernment and listening.

What do you see as the top three challenges facing our Synod?

Dwindling financial contributions that can sustain a vibrant and diverse staff.

Programmatic versus missional role of the Synod and the delicate balance of both.

Congregational stubbornness about change and shared ministry.

What do you see as the top three opportunities facing our Synod?

Some of the fastest growing areas of our nation.

Congregations poised for new opportunities for cooperative ministry.

New resources and partnership, fostered through the Synod, to aid in congregational vitality.

Identify the three most prominent themes that others would say are strongly evident in your leading and living.

Deeply passionate about the work of the church as it exists in and for the community it serves. Always looking for ways to partner and share in this larger call to be the Body of Christ beyond the walls of our churches.

An energetic and joyful person who brings a smile, hope, and support to all he does.

Describe how you help others understand their relationship to the synod and the

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? My hope for the ELCA is similar to that of hopes I have for the Synod. I served six years as a ELCA Council member, member of ELCA Board Development, and member of the Executive Committee. So much energy gets used chasing programs, frameworks, and initiatives that, if we were twice as large, might be feasible, but in our current reality they are not. So, instead of chasing those pieces, focus on the three from above, what we do really well, what we already do and make it better, and one thing new to our ministry. This allows for a system refresh that doesn't unplug it all for the sake of change, but provides space for the Spirit to do what the Spirit does, take what is planted and make it grow and flourish.

Charles Fredrickson

P7: Committee on Discipline: Rostered Male (6 year term)

Congregation: MacArthur Park, San Antonio
Embodied Grace, San Antonio

Conference: Alamo

Education: BA, M-Div, **Employment:** Supply Pastor; Yoga Instructor -
Embodied Grace SA; Admin. Staff - Brock, Guerra, Strandmo, Dimaline, Jones, P.C.

Birth Year: 1961 **Ethnicity:** White **Primary Language:** English

Please list three examples of the skills, abilities and/or gifts you possess that would enable you to perform the ministry of this position:

With more than three decades of pastoral ministry across a wide range of contexts—interim, associate, solo, missionary, and mission development—I bring a set of gifts well-suited for service on the synod’s discipline committee. First, my long experience in diverse congregational settings has honed a deep capacity for pastoral discernment, the ability to listen beneath the surface, hold complexity, and seek truth with both clarity and compassion. Second, years of navigating transitions, conflict, and cross-cultural ministry have strengthened my commitment to procedural fairness and due process, ensuring that every person is treated with dignity and that decisions are grounded in our shared Lutheran theology of grace, accountability, and the well-being of the whole Body. Finally, my work as a mission developer and interim pastor has cultivated a steady presence of calm leadership, able to hold tension, maintain confidentiality, and guide difficult conversations toward restoration and integrity. Together, these gifts position me to serve faithfully and constructively in the church’s ministry of discipline, always seeking the healing and reconciliation Christ desires for the community.

Do you have a committed view about any of the issues facing the synod? If so, please share your views in one paragraph below.

The rapid growth of those who identify as “spiritual but not religious” signals not a rejection of the sacred but a longing for meaning, belonging, and authenticity that many no longer associate with institutional church. This shift presents a profound missional opportunity: people are still hungry for transcendence, community, and purpose, but they seek it in ways that feel embodied, honest, and spacious. For a Lutheran church grounded in grace, humility, and the freedom of the gospel, this moment invites us to listen deeply, to meet seekers where they actually are, and to offer practices of reflection, service, and spiritual formation that resonate beyond traditional boundaries. Rather than lamenting decline, we are called to recognize the Spirit’s movement outside our familiar structures and to join that movement with creativity, courage, and a renewed commitment to the healing of the world.

Are you open to the possibility that the Holy Spirit could lead you to change your view. if it is already formed, on any of the issues facing the synod?

Of course; God willing.

What do you see as the top three challenges facing our Synod?

The SWTS (and the whole of the ELCA) faces a convergence of significant challenges, including declining congregational capacity that strains both pastoral sustainability and traditional call structures. At the same time, synods must help congregations navigate a rapidly shifting cultural landscape requiring new forms of mission, formation, and public witness. Added to this is the increasing complexity of governance and conflict resolution, as synods are called to address personnel concerns, boundary violations, and congregational conflict with transparency, consistency, and trauma-informed care. Together, these realities demand adaptive leadership, deep theological grounding, and a renewed commitment to the church's healing and hopeful future.

What do you see as the top three opportunities facing our Synod?

The SWTS stands at a moment rich with possibility, beginning with the growing opportunity to engage the "spiritual but not religious" through authentic, embodied practices that speak to a deep cultural longing for meaning and connection beyond institutional forms. At the same time, shifting congregational realities invite the church to reimagine ministry through adaptive, collaborative models that free congregations to focus on discipleship and service rather than survival. Finally, in an increasingly polarized society, the SWTS has a distinctive chance to offer a credible public witness rooted in grace, humility, and neighbor-love, modeling civil discourse and advocating for justice in ways that reflect the heart of Lutheran theology.

Identify the three most prominent themes that others would say are strongly evident in your leading and living.

Three themes consistently shape my leading and living: a deep commitment to what I call embodied grace, where faith becomes tangible through presence, listening, and practices that honor the whole person; a steady orientation toward adaptive, collaborative leadership, formed through decades of ministry in diverse settings and grounded in the belief that the Spirit works through shared discernment and creative partnership; and a persistent call to bridge the sacred and the everyday, helping people encounter God's compassion, courage, and hope in ways that are accessible, authentic, and rooted in real human experience. These themes guide my pastoral identity and continue to shape how I serve the church and the wider community.

Describe how you help others understand their relationship to the synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? I pray that I help people understand their relationship to the synod and the ELCA by framing the synod and larger Church not as a distant institution but as a living network of mutual support, accountability, and shared mission. I emphasize that congregations are not isolated outposts but part of a larger body - even Global - that walks with them in times of transition, provides resources for healthy ministry, and connects them to the wider church's commitments to justice, discipleship, and global partnership.

Through conversation and pastoral presence, I hope I translate the ELCA's structures into accessible language, helping individuals and congregations see how their gifts, challenges, and callings fit into the broader work we do together for the sake of the gospel.

AMMPARO

Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities

RE: Who is My Neighbor: Campaign for Human Dignity

Dear Bishops and Synod staff,

Greetings from ELCA AMMPARO in this really tumultuous year where immigration enforcement and related issues are in the news on a daily basis! We believe that we are living in an era of strategic dehumanization, not just in the United States but in this world!

As you plan your assemblies and upcoming synod gatherings, we urge you to take a look at some new resources developed by AMMPARO to begin what can hopefully be conflict-free conversations around immigration, or to study our ELCA social message on immigration or at a deeper level to discuss this concept of strategic dehumanization and begin to find action steps to raise awareness about it.

Here is a link to the google folder that contains these resources:

[Who is My Neighbor - Campaign on Human Dignity - Google Drive](#)

Let me describe each one:

Sacred Crossroads – This document helps prepare for candidate discernment around elections using our social statements and messages. **(Basic)**

Created in the Image of God: Affirming Our Shared Dignity – This resource focuses on the social message on immigration and can be used as a one-time study with discussion questions for personal reflection or group work. **(Basic)**

Conversations Around Immigration - In our congregational and public life, we find ourselves sitting in the pews with people who share the same faith but who may support different candidates or policies than we do. This facilitated conversation guide helps us address how we reach across these divides as a congregational community and listen to each other, and how we can begin to find common ground with each other. **(Basic)**

Words Create Worlds- This basic document helps people understand why the use of the word ‘illegal’ is not an accurate description of human beings; nor is it affirming of human dignity. **(Basic)**

Faithful Resistance: Fighting the Sin of Dehumanization – this blog piece is a short piece to begin the discussion of strategic dehumanization from a faith perspective. **(Intermediate)**

Strategic Dehumanization, Sovereignty and Citizenship: The Role of the Church of and With the Forcibly Displaced – This resource describes in detail what is meant by strategic dehumanization and encourages individual and perhaps congregational action toward human dignity for each person.

We hope to continue posting resources in this folder so you can refer to them as needed. A resource guide is being prepared and will be posted in this folder soon. It will include educational materials, videos, lists of suggested speakers and other helpful information. My hope is that you will consider how these materials can be used for synod events and promoted in congregations, conferences and theological conferences. We would be happy to assist you in designing a theological conference with outside speakers.

As we celebrate 10 years of AMMPARO, we are working with the Europe desk and Wittenberg Center to create a series of events starting this fall on the role of the church in migration and with the forcibly displaced with theologians from around the world.

Thank you for your support of vulnerable members of our communities in this most challenging time.

On Behalf of the AMMPARO team,

Mary Campbell



ELCA Federal Credit Union

Faithful financial services for ELCA members and ministries



The ELCA Federal Credit Union (ELCA FCU) provides a full range of financial products and services to members, congregations and ministries of the ELCA. **As the first of the ELCA's financial ministries to offer loans to individuals**, the Credit Union offers savings and checking accounts, CDs, loans and lines of credit, credit cards, home mortgage loans for purchases or refinances, as well as home equity loans and lines of credit.

The ELCA FCU serves ministries through federally insured deposit accounts, a flexible corporate credit card program, auto loans and unsecured ministry loans up to \$100,000 to support smaller projects such as building repairs and purchases. In addition, the Workplace Banking program allows ministry organizations and congregations to offer ELCA FCU Credit Union products and services, along with other exclusive perks, to their employees.

A new cohort joined the ELCA's Resourceful Servants program, **designed to improve financial wellness and assist rostered leaders in building emergency savings funds**. Through this matching program, ELCA rostered leaders make ongoing deposits to their Credit Union emergency savings accounts. The Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA matches those deposits up to an established amount. Together, more **than 700 rostered ministers** have been served, collectively depositing more than \$1 million in emergency savings.

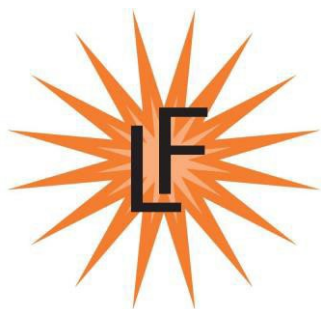
A **strong online presence** means members have access to funds with an ELCA Federal Credit Union Mastercard Debit Card at more than 30,000 surcharge-free ATMs. The ELCA FCU also offers account-to-account (A2A) transfers, person-to-person (P2P) payments (similar to Venmo and Zelle), remote deposit, bill pay and more.

Why choose the ELCA Federal Credit Union?

- **The ELCA Federal Credit Union supports the ELCA's mission of good stewardship.** We provide full services to all ELCA members, congregations and related ministries.
- **As a not-for-profit financial cooperative chartered to serve our church, we offer socially responsible banking solutions often priced more competitively** than traditional banks. We have demonstrated success in providing savings to our members.
- **With the church as our sponsor, we operate in ways that are consistent with the church's values.**

Membership is open to every ELCA member, synod, congregation and ministry—and their employees.

For more information about the products and services of the ELCA Federal Credit Union, please visit our website, elcafcu.org or call us toll-free at 877-715-1111.



Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly 2026

Report from the Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest, Mark S. Armstrong, Executive Director

In 2025 we did over \$19.4 million in gift planner activity.

The total breakdown is as follows: \$225,825 of current gifts developed and paid out in 2025, \$2,560,521 of currently funded endowments, charitable trusts, managed assets, and \$16.14 million of legacy gifts. We also worked with churches that invested over \$479,469 in the ELCA Ministry Growth Fund.

We also paid out over \$1.34 million in endowment income and outright gifts to our Sponsors. In addition, we distributed \$390,616 to ELCA churches, \$154,999 to ELCA seminaries, and \$212,489 to other Lutheran and non-profit organizations.

Below is a breakdown of activity in 2025 for your organization.

Trusts and endowments that were funded in 2025. Legacy gifts are gifts set up in the future.

Current trusts and endowments	\$1,482,227
Legacy gifts	\$2,758,625
ELCA Ministry Growth Fund	
investments by synod congregations	\$144,006
Endowment Income paid out to Synod	\$207,093
Distributions to synod congregations	\$228,245

By continuing to strengthen our relationship with you, and working with your staff, we hope to continue growing legacy gifts you will benefit from, as well as growing your annual checks that will enhance your ministries now.

Your synod gift planner, Signe Fredrickson, is available to work with you and your congregations to make legacy plans that will bless family, the ministries of our church, and other non-profit organizations. Contact her at (210) 618-7067 or sfredrickson@lfsw.org. Our staff is available to meet with individual clients and congregational leadership groups in person, by Zoom video conferencing, and by phone.



Dear ministry partners in the Southwestern Texas Synod,

The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago is grateful to share highlights from our seminary in this 2026 report to supporting synods. Thank you for your continued support of our innovative and thriving seminary. As we reflect on the past year and look ahead to 2026–2027, I am pleased to share some key developments and our aspirations for the future:

- This year marked a historic leadership transition as I began service as LSTC’s eighth president on July 1, 2025. [My vision for this new chapter](#) is rooted in accessibility, collaboration, and hospitality: theological education for all who desire it, strengthened partnerships across synods and the wider church, and a community where every learner is seen, valued, and accompanied. My inauguration, held alongside our Sem inary Showcase this past November, publicly launched this next era of mission- driven innovation at LSTC.
- LSTC is also [pleased to announce the appointment of The Rev. Robert O. Smith, Ph.D.](#), as our new Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs, effective January 12, 2026. An enrolled citizen of the Chickasaw Nation and an ordained ELCA pastor, Dr. Smith brings deep expertise at the intersections of race, religion, and Indigeneity, along with extensive experience in global mission and ecumenical leadership. In addition to serving as Associate Professor of Authentic Diversity, Justice, and Public Church, he will oversee our academic programs and guide LSTC’s Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice commitments, including the Center of Christian- Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice and the Pero Center for Intersectionality Studies.
- Our 2024– 2029 Strategic Plan, [On the Way](#), continues to guide LSTC’s work across four core areas: Asynchronous Education, Philanthropic Campaign, Policy Review, and Staffing Strategy. This past year we celebrated the successful completion of Phase I of our “Time to Re- Imagine, Re- Invent, Reaffirm, and Re- New” campaign, surpassing our initial goal and securing significant scholarship support. Now, we are embarking on Phase II of our Campaign, a two- year journey to support our institution’s programs, pathways, and scholarships.
- [Project Starling](#)—LSTC’s asynchronous digital learning platform—has moved from vision to reality. Under the leadership of Vice President for Enterprise Innovation Keisha Dyson, Project Starling is now in its final user testing phase and provides flexible formation for TEEM (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries), Synodically Authorized Ministers (SAMs), and independent learners who seek high- quality theological education beyond traditional degree paths. Through Project Starling, learners can access content at their own pace, engage with LSTC faculty and practitioners, and participate in user- testing cohorts that help shape future offerings. Partnerships with synods continue to inform our design and priorities for this work.

- A central expression of Project Starling is the [SAM Development Training Program](#), an asynchronous, certificate-based training pathway for Synodically Authorized Ministers. Developed by LSTC faculty and aligned with ELCA competency areas, this program helps SAMs:
 - understand and assess ministry contexts using public-church and ethnographic frameworks;
 - engage key themes in church history and Lutheran theology;
 - reflect on identity and vocation through intercultural and intersectional lenses;
 - grow in community organizing, contextual leadership, and pastoral practice; and
 - deepen spiritual disciplines for lay ministry.Designed for use in cohorts or as individualized study (with bishop authorization), the SAM program provides synods with a scalable, high-quality resource for forming lay leaders for emerging ministry contexts.
- In 2025, LSTC received a [Pathways for Tomorrow implementation grant](#) from Lilly Endowment Inc. to launch a Public Church Hub and expand accessible, community-designed learning for pastoral and lay leaders. Building on Project Starling, this three-year initiative will co-create short, flexible offerings—modules, intensives, workshops, certificates, and cohorts—with LGBTQ-affirming missional communities and Latiné and African-descent ministries. New staffing funded by the grant will support congregational listening, pilot sites, and iterative program design. The Public Church Hub widens pathways beyond degrees, strengthens recruitment into our degree programs, and advances LSTC's commitment to form leaders in partnership with the communities they serve.
- Campus life and formation remain central to our mission. Christian worship continues to be enriched by the leadership of the Gordon Braatz Chair of Worship, Dr. Christian Scharen, and our faculty and student leaders. Homecoming and the Queer Symposium will gather alumni, students, and friends for learning, celebration, and reflection on the intersections of faith, identity, and justice. We look forward to welcoming a new class of learners in the coming year and to celebrating our next commencement, when we send graduates into the world as public-church leaders.

To learn more about LSTC, Project Starling, the SAM Development Training Program, and the Public Church Hub, please visit www.lstc.edu. We are deeply grateful for your prayers, financial support, and partnership in forming leaders for the church and the world.

With gratitude,

Rev. Dr. Shauna Hannan, President
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago



Mission Investment Fund

The Mission Investment Fund: Helping ELCA congregations bring ministry to life



The Mission Investment Fund (MIF), a *financial services ministry of the ELCA*, has been a **steady and reliable financial partner** for congregations, ministries and individuals for more than 150 years. Through times of growth and uncertainty alike, MIF has remained committed to strengthening ELCA ministries and communities — delivering customer-first- support backed by flexible financing solutions.

In 2025, MIF continued to support ministry growth across the ELCA. Your investments helped expand worship spaces, rebuild congregations after fires and natural disasters, provide spaces for people to age with dignity, start green projects and support accessibility remodeling for community spaces. Each project strengthens ELCA ministries, ensuring that they stay vibrant, inclusive and fully prepared to support the communities they serve.

By the numbers:

- **Total Loans Outstanding:** \$614,967,000
- **Total Assets:** \$779,189,000
- **Total Investment Obligations:** \$551,452,000
- **Net Assets & Capital Ratio:** 27.4%

What makes MIF unique?

- **Proven stability:** With more than a century and a half of experience, MIF has weathered changing economic and political landscapes, maintaining financial strength for ELCA ministries.
- **Deep expertise in church and ministry financing:** We understand the unique needs of faith communities and have longstanding experience in congregation and ministry building projects.
- **Competitive rates and terms:** Our financial offerings are structured to support ministries of all sizes.
- **A full suite of financial services:** In partnership with the ELCA Federal Credit Union, we provide a range of financial solutions for congregations, ministries and individuals.
- **Faithful stewardship:** Investments in MIF directly support loans that fund hundreds of capital projects across the church.

MIF continues to enhance our tools and financial services to better support ELCA ministries. And even as we look ahead with fresh vision and innovation, our foundation remains the same: enduring trust, time-tested stability and commitment woven through generations. In every chapter, we journey with ELCA members and ministries, united in faith — a steadfast partner supporting God’s work in the world.

MIF at work in the Southwestern Texas Synod (as of December 31, 2025):

- 13 Mission Investment Fund loans, with a balance of \$15,807,752
- \$8,900,874 in Mission Investment Fund investment obligations.

For more information about MIF capabilities, please visit our website, mif.elca.org or contact Deacon Jerry Johnson, Regional Manager: 773-682-5954 jerry.johnson@elca.org

ELCA Region 4-South Archives

The ELCA Region 4-South Archives exists to assist the church in remembering the history of the antecedent synods of the ELCA located in Texas, Louisiana, and in parts of New Mexico and Arkansas. We are housed in the Lutheran Ministry Building on the campus of Texas Lutheran University. The bishops of the three Texas-Louisiana synods provide oversight to the archives, established in 1988 by the newly formed Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The collection includes the parish records of disbanded congregations, historical information about disbanded and active congregations, synod files of deceased rostered leaders, minutes and various records of judicatories, their institutions and organizations, and historical photographs, films, and recordings. It also maintains a library of publications related to Lutheran church history.

Staffed by volunteers, the archives continues to

- update rostered leaders biographical information;
- maintain active congregation files with important events and historical data;
- receive and catalog pertinent documents/photos/records/books relating to the history of the Lutheran Church in the three synods;
- welcome guests who wish to research topics relating to the churches in our synods,
- process requests from all over the world (Australia, Canada, France) and many states in the United States for copies of documents/photos/records pertaining to baptisms and family history;
- help with research requests for individuals who cannot come to the archives;
- furnish information to congregations who want to know about preserving records in their own congregations.

If your congregation has published a more recent history or celebrated an important anniversary, please send a copy of the history and/or bulletin to the archives (1090 Oestreich Dr., Seguin, 78155) so that we may place it in the congregation's active file.

Our online catalog may be accessed at swtsynod.pastperfectonline.com

We may be reached by telephone at 830-379-9900 or by email at archives@swtsynod.org. Johnana Clark is the archivist, assisted by librarian Shirley Bowie, and historian emeritus Rev. Luther Oelke.

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

HIGHLIGHTS Seafarers International House

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: A Homecoming for Prisoners of Hope

Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope; even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you.

Zechariah 9:12

Dear friends of Seafarers International House (SIH):

In February 2024, a report released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that refugees and asylees have generated tens of billions of dollars more in local, state, and federal tax revenues over the last 15 years than they have cost in direct government services — ultimately representing a net fiscal gain at all levels of government. (See text box for details.)*

And yet, throughout 2025 and especially today, many refugees and asylum seekers are being threatened with deportation and imprisonment. As SIH board member Ralie Deffenbaugh reminds us, in September 2025, the Council of Churches in Namibia convened an event titled “we are prisoners of hope,” which drew parallels between Namibia’s historical struggle for liberation and the current plight of refugees and asylum seekers. The phrase is based on Zechariah 9:12 and has historically been used by leaders like Bishop Zephania Kameeta and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. What a powerful connotation.

Here at SIH, we have been charting a course toward a grand Homecoming — a return to a new home through the purchase of a property in downtown Manhattan. Just a stone’s throw from our original site in 1873, this new space will become a true home away from

home for asylum seekers and seafarers, many of whom are “prisoners of hope.” Within these walls, our guests will find safety, welcome, and the assurance that they have reached a secure harbor.

During 2026, we will begin renovating this right-sized mission building, creating 16 guest rooms and community space to accommodate both small asylum-seeking families and individuals, as well as visiting seafarers. With these improvements underway, we are looking ahead to opening our doors in early 2027, ready to offer refuge and rest to all who arrive.

Parallel, we will be launching a comprehensive campaign to pay for the renovations, reduce the burden of a loan for the new building, and strengthen our services to seafarers and asylum seekers. We will keep you posted in the months to come.

In April 2025, we had a most successful Setting the Course reception thanks to the generosity of our honorees Susan Winfree, Willie Barrere, and notably Robert Sappio, - and their friends. The boost in event support enabled us to expand our services through a partnership with the Houston International Seafarers Center with our port chaplain Pastor Tammy Sharp in that busy port in the Lone Star State.

Thus, we continued a robust port mission in now six ports with nine port chaplains and ship visitors, and a fleet of six vans that we use to visit ships and to transport seafarers. In the summer and fall, volunteers from the Propeller Club, congregations, board members,

MISSION

Seafarers International House (SIH) is the Lutheran response to the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and immigrants.

SIH offers hospitality, social assistance, and advocacy to a multi-national and multi-faith community in the Ports of Albany, Baltimore, Duluth, Houston, New Haven, and New York & New Jersey, and in New York City.

and individuals helped us assemble satchels. These efforts paid off with 3,405 Christmas-at-Sea satchels delivered to seafarers connecting donors with seafaring “prisoners of hope” who experienced the joy of Christmas.

In 2025, we served 19,519 people including 19 asylum seekers we welcomed providing them with shelter, food, and social work assistance; a far cry from the 33 and 49 in 2024 and 2023 respectively because asylum seekers are fearful of coming out of the shadows. Obviously, the curtailment on asylum seekers has had its effect.

With these positive 2025 highlights in mind, perhaps we are all “prisoners of hope” in that as we are bound together in despair, we are also bound together in hope that will not leave us imprisoned.

“For I know the plans I have for you” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29:11

Peace,



Marsh Luther Drage
Pastor and Executive Director

Exhibit F

* From 2005 to 2019, refugees and asylees paid a total of \$123.8 billion more in taxes than they cost in government services, for a net fiscal gain of \$31.5 billion to the federal government and \$92.3 billion to state and local governments combined. Refugees and asylees paid an estimated \$363 billion to the federal government through payroll, income, and excise taxes, and \$218 billion to state and local governments through income, sales, and property taxes. Even when factoring in their spouses and children under 18, many of whom are U.S. citizens, refugees and asylees still provided a net fiscal gain, costing \$723.4 billion in government services yet paying \$739.4 billion in tax revenue, for a net gain of \$16 billion.

2025 Program Impact

19,519 immigrants and seafarers directly benefited from SIH's services (up from 19,066)

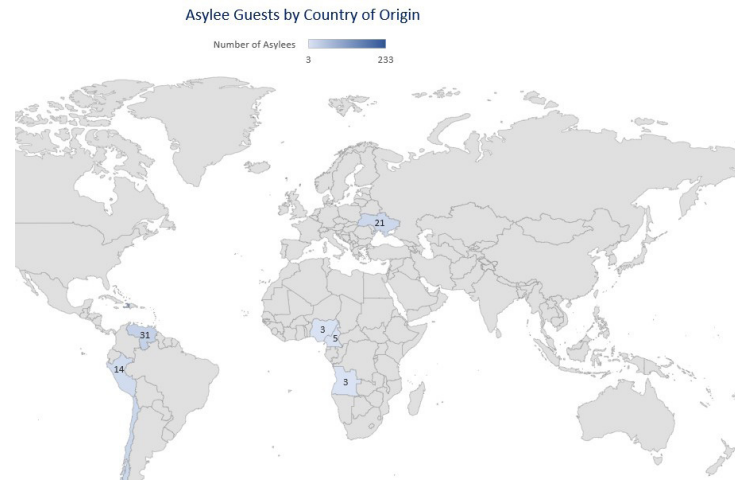
2,351 lodging nights (up from 2,225) provided to 139 seafarers in Manhattan.

14,078 seafarers were visited and counseled (up from 13,556) on 1,347 vessels, receiving essentials they requested.

1,878 seafarers were transported to a mall or medical facilities.

3,405 seafarers, regardless of faith, received Christmas-at-Sea satchels filled with warm clothing and holiday greetings to spread joy beyond borders and oceans.


19 asylum seekers received free lodging for a total of 1,328 nights. They hailed from Angola, Cameroon, Chile, Cuba (3), Haiti (5), Nigeria, Peru, Ukraine, and Venezuela (5). See map below.



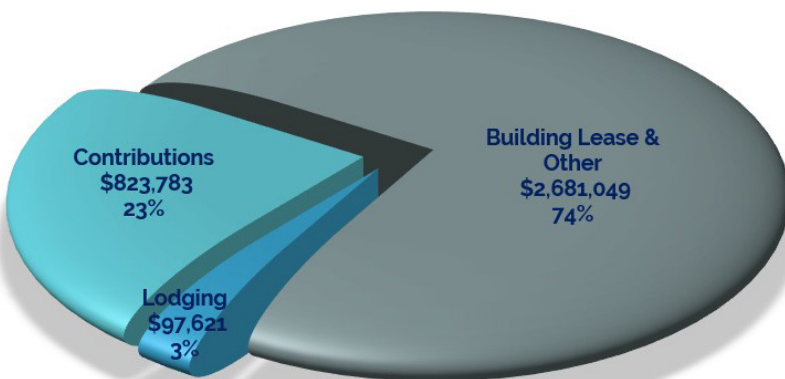
2025 FINANCIAL REPORT

In accordance with our 2024 - 2028 strategic plan, operating gains continued to help build reserves for the purchase of the new right-sized mission headquarters (\$1M). These gains also allow for capital repairs on the guesthouse (\$324,806), which is leased to Breaking Ground, a NYC-based non-profit which provides transitional housing to the community.

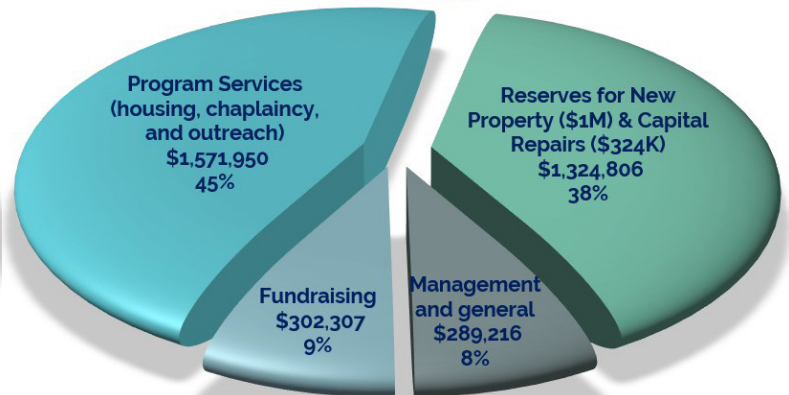
Lease revenue needs to be augmented by donations to support our services and the purchase and renovation of our new home starting in 2026. Program services and reserves accounted for 83% of expenses with only 17% spent on management and fundraising. These figures reflect unaudited revenue and expenses and are subject to change.

To request the audited 2025 financial statements please send an email to henryk@sihny.org. 

Operating Revenue 2025 (pre-audit) \$3,602,453



Operating Expenses & Reserves for New Property 2025 (pre-audit) \$3,488,279





Report for the Synod Assembly Bulletin of Reports, March 2026

St. Luke's Lutheran Health Ministries, Inc. ("SLLHM") was established in 1994 as the mission-successor to St. Luke's Lutheran Hospital and to support healthcare ministries through the San Antonio region. It is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, a simple majority of whom must be members of ELCA churches.

St. Luke's Lutheran Health Ministries (SLLHM) awarded \$416,900 in grants to nonprofit organizations during the calendar year 2025, with a median grant of \$7,500. Through SLLHM, you and your fellow members of the SWT Synod helped improve the lives of more than 101,000 people through grants to these organizations.

Applications Approved in 2025

Organization Name	Project Name	Grant
Any Baby Can of San Antonio	Comprehensive Family Support Services	\$5,000
AugustHeart	Screen Your Teen	\$5,000
Autism Community Network	The Pathways Program	\$10,000
Boys & Girls Clubs of San Antonio	FY26 Resiliency Restored	\$10,000
Camp Agape	2026 Summer Camp Support	\$5,000
CASA of Central Texas	Advocacy for Children/Youth Experiencing Abuse/Neglect	\$5,000
Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of San Antonio	Grace Counseling	\$7,500
Celebrate Dyslexia	Medical Initiative	\$7,500
Center for Health Empowerment in S. Texas	Health Care Coverage Connection	\$20,000
Child Advocates San Antonio	General Operating Expenses	\$5,000
Children's Association for Maximum Potential (CAMP)	Staff Retreat following Summer 2026 Floods	\$3,640
Children's Association for Maximum Potential (CAMP)	Strengthening Individuals with Disabilities through the Campership Project	\$10,000
Children's Bereavement Center of S. Texas	Kerr County Services Following the Summer 2025 Floods	\$6,760
Children's Bereavement Center of S. Texas	School-Based Counseling Services	\$10,000
ChildSafe	Core Services for Primary and Secondary Victims of Child Maltreatment	\$10,000
Clarity Child Guidance Center	Clarity's Continuum of Care for Kids	\$10,000
Communities In Schools of San Antonio	CIS-SA's Stay In School Program	\$10,000
ConnectAbility	Crisis Assistance Funding	\$5,000
Corazon Ministries	Health & Wellness	\$3,000
disABILITYsa	Deploying Disability Engagement Across San Antonio	\$5,000
Ecumenical Center	Counseling and Mental Health Services for Under-Resourced Children and Adolescents	\$10,000
Friends of CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Foundation	CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Mobile Mammography Unit	\$5,000
Guardian House	Safe Havens for Victims of Domestic Violence - SVXC	\$5,000
Haven for Hope of Bexar County	Continuity of Care Transition Services	\$5,000

Hill Country Family Services	HCFS Mental Health Services	\$7,500
Hill Country Mission for Health	Health and Human Services Operational Grant	\$10,000
House of Neighborly Service of San Antonio	Westward Reach: Assistance thru Partnership (WRAP)	\$8,000
House of Prayer Lutheran Church	Luther House Restoration	\$5,000
Jewish Family Service of San Antonio, Texas	Partnership for Mental Wellness	\$10,000
Lifetime Recovery	Residential Treatment for Substance Use Disorders	\$20,000
Magdalena House	Coordinated Family Wellness Program	\$10,000
Meals on Wheels San Antonio	Comfy Casas	\$10,000
Mission Road Developmental Center	Health Care Equipment for Direct Care for Adults Diagnosed with IDD	\$5,000
NAMI Greater San Antonio	Building Resilience: NAMI Classes and Peer Support for Individuals and Families	\$10,000
Northeast Senior Assistance (NESA)	Senior Transportation and Wellness Services	\$3,000
Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch	Adaptive Riding and Equine-Assisted Learning Program Support	\$2,500
Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services	Child & Family Program in San Antonio	\$5,000
Raphael Community Free Clinic	Diabetes Education Program	\$8,000
REBOOT Recovery	REBOOT: San Antonio	\$4,000
Rise Recovery	Empowering San Antonio Youth Through Substance Use Recovery	\$10,000
River City Advocacy, Inc.	General Operating Support	\$7,500
Ronald McDonald House Charities	Share a Night	\$2,500
Roy Maas Youth Alternatives Inc.	Caring for Traumatized Children and Young Adults	\$10,000
SAMMinistries	Mental Health Services for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness	\$10,000
San Antonio Birth Doulas	SABD: Health Moms, Healthy Babies	\$5,000
San Antonio Christian Dental Clinic	General Operations	\$10,000
Sleep in Heavenly Peace, Inc	Building a Better Future: Providing Beds for Kids in Need	\$3,000
SLEW Cancer Wellness Center	Addressing Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) for Underserved Women with Cancer	\$10,000
Texas Ramp Project	San Antonio Ramp Project	\$7,500
The Chromosome 18 Registry & Research Society	Tissue Culture Microscope	\$5,000
Thrive Youth Center Inc	Homeless Youth Mental Health Care	\$7,500
University Health Foundation	RX Box: Fresh Produce for Food Insecurity and Chronic Disease Management	\$2,500
UT Foundation (for UT Health)	Student Faculty Collaborative Practice: free clinic program (SFCP)	\$10,000
Wonders & Worries San Antonio	Wonders & Worries Therapeutic Support for San Antonio Children With A Seriously Ill/Injured Parent	\$5,000
YMCA of Greater San Antonio	Davis-Scott Family YMCA –Community Wellness Programs serving the Eastside	\$5,000
YWCA San Antonio	Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening, Care Navigation, and Prevention for the Medically Underserved	\$10,000

St. Luke's Lutheran Health Ministries

Current Executive Committee (2025-2026)

President:	Hon. Xavier Rodriguez
Vice-President:	Loretta Patterson
Secretary:	Lauren Malitz, DDS
Treasurer:	Stephen Wendel
ELCA Clergy	Rev. Dave Schulte
Member-at-Large	Lyssa Ochoa, MD

Current Board Members (2025-2026)

Michael Aguirre	Brett Kraemer
Haley Amick	Balous Miller, Sr.
Adam Braaten	Jan Schubert Norris
Amy Buechler-Steubing, PhD	Laura O'Donnell
Ida Flowers	Eugenia Osei-Wusu
Linda Johnson, PhD	Rev. Howard Stendahl
Daniel Juarez, MD	John Toohey
Cindy Katz	David Way, MD
Steve Klaffke	Ronda Wenzel

An update on Board nominations will be submitted to the Synod after April 28. Thank you for your support.

Respectfully submitted,



Amy Dameron Phipps
Executive Director
P. O. Box 6101
San Antonio, TX 78209
(210) 820-3038
aphipps@sllhm.org



Report to the ELCA Synod Assemblies - April 2026

Founded in 1874, the mission of St. Olaf College is to challenge students to excel in the liberal arts, examine faith and values, and explore meaningful vocation in an inclusive, globally engaged community nourished by Lutheran tradition. St. Olaf's current student population of approximately 3050 degree-seeking undergraduates represents 49 states and 100 countries. 21% are first-generation college students, 22% identify as domestic students of color, 11% are international students, and 22% are income-eligible for Pell grants. St. Olaf continues to be one of only a handful of higher education institutions nation-wide that meets the full demonstrated need of all admitted students through a variety of financial assistance programs, [including a new study abroad affordability commitment to be launched in 2027, thanks to the generosity of Louis and Mary Kay Smith](#). Approximately half of our students indicate that they are affiliated with a Christian denomination, with 15% self-identifying as Lutheran and another 5% as members of a denomination in full communion with the ELCA.

St. Olaf's core curriculum engages students with the full array of liberal arts disciplines, including one required course examining Religion, Faith, and Values, one on Christian Theology in Dialogue, and one on Ethical Reasoning in Context. Among our class of 2025 graduates, 97% had participated in a "high-impact educational practice," such as a mentored research experience, a learning community, study abroad/away, or an academic civic engagement course. Over the past three years, an average of 94% of our recent graduates were working, pursuing further education, or engaged in full-time military or other service programs within seven months of graduation.

Under the leadership of president Dr. Susan Rundell Singer, the college is now implementing a six-year strategic plan, focused on elevating vocation, expanding innovation, and sustaining community. Leading the implementation of the strategic plan are three implementation teams and the President's Leadership Team, including our new vice president for academic affairs and provost Dr. Tarshia Stanley and chief of staff Kathryn Lohre '99. Dr. Stanley comes to St. Olaf from Wagner College on Staten Island where she served as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Ms. Lohre comes to St. Olaf after serving for fifteen years in the Presiding Bishop's Office as the Executive for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations and Theological Discernment.

St. Olaf continues to offer [daily Chapel services and Sunday worship](#) throughout the academic year, led by College Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Matthew Marohl, and featuring members and friends of the St. Olaf community as speakers and musicians. Consistent with St. Olaf's identity as a "rooted and open" ELCA institution, the College Ministry team also includes an Associate Chaplain for Jewish Life and an Associate Chaplain for Muslim Life. This year, St. Olaf was ranked #4 on Niche's [Best Christian Colleges in America](#) list, recognizing St. Olaf as an academically strong, faith-based institution.

In the fall of 2025, the College named [Dr. Kiara Jorgenson, Associate Professor of Religion and Environmental Studies, as the Martin E. Marty Chair in Religion and the Academy](#). The [Marty](#)

[Chair](#) fosters ongoing dialogue that explores the intersection between significant religious and cultural issues and St. Olaf's role as a liberal arts college of the church.

The [Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community](#) continues to advance a compelling vision for Lutheranism in the 21st century, foster interreligious engagement, nurture vocational discernment, and provide thought leadership on campus and in the community. A key part of the Lutheran Center's work is to help all the college's constituencies understand the role of Lutheran tradition in supporting the things they value most about St. Olaf. The Center has recently completed or is nearing completion on two projects made possible by grants from the [Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education](#). The Life on Purpose project infused vocational exploration in St. Olaf students' experiences by supporting shifts in advising, classroom projects, and faculty and staff capacity building around vocation. The Honest Storytelling project engaged twenty staff and faculty and one student to research and tell untold and undertold stories from the college's first 150 years, and will result in the publication of a volume in honor of the college's sesquicentennial due out through Fortress Press this fall.

In 2025, grants from [Lilly Endowment Inc.](#) continued to support two complementary initiatives—the [Nourishing Vocation Project](#) and the [Nourishing Vocation with Children Project](#)—advancing congregational leadership, vocational discernment, and intergenerational, arts-enriched worship. The Nourishing Vocation Project, part of the Thriving Congregations Initiative, strengthened congregations and ecclesiastical partners by fostering peer leadership, deepening vocational discernment, and expanding practical ministry tools. Pastoral coaching pilots and adaptable resources enhanced leaders' capacity for contextually grounded discernment, while integration with broader institutional and interfaith efforts extended the initiative's reach and sustainability.

The Nourishing Vocation with Children Project advanced child-attentive, arts-enriched worship through the Nurturing Children through Worship and Prayer Initiative. Resources were refined and expanded, engaging congregations across multiple states and denominational contexts. New liturgies and participatory art experiences nurtured children's faith while strengthening congregational life.

We look forward to an exciting summer 2026 at St. Olaf as we welcome back [Lutheran Summer Music](#) to campus for the first time since 1994 and the national conference of the [Association of Lutheran Church Musicians](#).

We invite lay, professional, and rostered church leaders to the [2026 Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts](#), July 20–22, 2026, at St. Olaf College, under the theme “Nourishing Vocation: Every Time + Every Age + Every Place.” We encourage you to take advantage of the many opportunities and resources St. Olaf provides for education, artistic engagement, and spiritual enrichment. We look forward to welcoming you to campus, and to welcoming the prospective students you introduce to St. Olaf.



Report to the 2026 Synod Assembly Southwestern Texas Synod

As we move into the next three years with our new strategic plan, Boldly Forward, we are excited about the many opportunities we'll have to partner with you to further the mission of Lutheran higher education.

Highlights of the 2025–26 year at Texas Lutheran University include:

- Successfully launching the new initiative of TLU Sunday, a day of giving in partnership with the bishops of the synods of Texas and Louisiana. This special day celebrates the strong connection between TLU and our congregations as we work together to prepare faithful, educated leaders for the church and the world. Many thanks to all of our participating churches!
- Successfully completing our previous strategic plan, *TLU2025*, and launching our new strategic plan, *Boldly Forward: TLU 2026–28*.
- Maintaining healthy enrollment, with just under 1,400 students enrolled in the fall semester. Our largest majors this year are Business, Education, Kinesiology, Nursing, and Psychology.
- Looking forward to the graduation of our first Doctorate in Interdisciplinary Leadership (EdD) cohort in Spring 2026.
- Continuing to see growth in our accelerated nursing programs in Houston and New Braunfels, with 120 students enrolled at our New Braunfels campus and 137 students enrolled at our Houston campus. We are also one step closer to opening a nursing program in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.
- Being named one of the top ten Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) programs in Texas by Nurse.org.
- Appointing Chris Mueller as interim Chief Financial Officer in addition to his role as Vice President for Development while we mount a national search for a new Vice President for Finance.
- Celebrating the opening of our Verne Lundquist Student Athletic Center, a nearly 10,000-square-foot addition that includes a state-of-the-art strength and conditioning center for student-athletes, as well as locker rooms for the women's soccer and softball teams and a visitor center featuring Lundquist's amazing sports memorabilia collection.
- Appointment of four new members to the TLU Board of Regents: Dr. Sandra Harper, Lori Swann, the Rev. Leslie Price, and Sarah Metzger.

- Appointment of four new members to the TLU Corporation Board: the Hon. Donna Dodgen, the Rev. Stephen Shortess, Kerri Sturm, and John Roalson.
- Three new tenure-track faculty members were added in August 2025, bringing our total tenure-track faculty number to 75.
- TLU continues to strengthen its future through generous external support. Fiscal year-to-date, TLU has raised \$5.6 million in gifts—an increase of nearly 8% over last year—primarily supporting annual scholarships, endowments, capital projects, and unrestricted needs.
- Along with ongoing fundraising, we are excited to be preparing for the public launch of our focused Comprehensive Campaign. A campaign committee has been formed to lead what is anticipated to be a multi-year \$80 million campaign to support all aspects of our university.
- TLU had another strong year in athletics, with many of our athletic teams moving on to regional and even national competitions.
- Once again, TLU was singled out by *U.S. News and World Report* and the Princeton Review.
- All of these efforts and highlights align with and reflect the priorities identified through the four pillars of our strategic plan, *Boldly Forward*:
 - 1) Financial Sustainability
 - 2) Commitment to Students
 - 3) Campus Vibrancy
 - 4) Community Connections

We are in the midst of a challenging time within the realm of higher education, so we are more grateful than ever for another strong year at Texas Lutheran University—something we do not take for granted. More than ever, we are thankful for your ongoing support and prayers. Our commitment remains, as it has always been, to serve our students well, honor our faith and our diversity, and ensure a strong and certain future. We are proud to be part of the ELCA's life and ministry, and we welcome your support across our efforts. Thank you for your partnership with us in our mission of faith-based, independent higher education.

Debbie Cottrell
President
Texas Lutheran University



Advancing Child Wellbeing

About Upbring

For over 140 years, Upbring has empowered children to heal, grow and thrive while strengthening the families, communities and systems they depend on to reach their full potential. Child wellbeing is at the heart of our mission, driving us to create lasting, meaningful change and a brighter future—one child, one family and one community at a time.

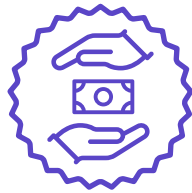
What We Do

We provide essential services like shelter, education and emotional support while advocating for systemic change that promotes safety, stability and opportunity.



Over 80

locations across Texas



100%

of individual gifts go to children's services



14,000+

children served through Upbring programs

How to get involved

We would love for you to get involved! To learn more about ways to serve, please visit our website at Upbring.org or email info@upbring.org.

Thank you for your support!

Upbring® Fast Facts



4,280

volunteer hours coordinated through Upbring

500

children served through Upbring Foster In Texas



45

new foster families verified

41

young adults offered transition services by Upbring BeREAL

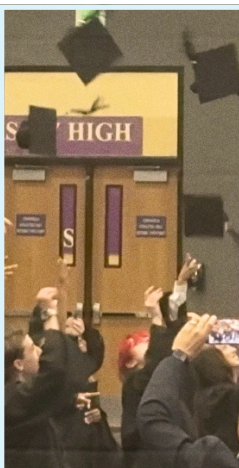


768

children served through Trinity Charter Schools

97% of TCS students identified as at risk

75% are or have lived in foster care



1,365

students and families prepared for kindergarten by Upbring Head Start

\$1.6 MILLION

in food or utility payments distributed in Lubbock area

57

tons of food distributed in Lubbock County

VectorPoint™

Launched VectorPoint™, a patent-pending, data-driven program set to drive a transformative cultural shift in child welfare



69

girls given a safe place to heal at Upbring New Life Children's Center

86%

of children served through VectorPoint™ maintained or showed improvement in their behaviors at home or in school



Forming Valued Leaders for God's Mission

The Rev. Dr. Kristin Johnston Lergen

Dear Partners in the Southwestern Texas Synod,

Greetings from your siblings in Christ at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. I am excited to share with you some of the ways Wartburg is fulfilling its mission, with your partnership and support.

Last year marked the completion of the first year of The CaSTLE Project, funded by a \$7.4 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., to instantiate a new *baptismal ecclesiology*, focusing not on pastors and programming, but on the formation of Christian discipleship in daily life. To date, we have launched a new website (<https://thecastleproject.org/>), awarded sub-grants to 26 synods, and curated dozens of resources that support leadership formation and thriving congregational life in rural and small town contexts.

This year, we launched *FLOURISH*, a holistic network of support for students and staff in all aspects of life. This program includes coaching, counseling, meditation tools, and financial coaching, all without cost to our community members. We are forming leaders for the long haul, and as a part of their formation at Wartburg Seminary, we seek to include practices that support long-term health and wellness.

Wartburg Seminary is a leader in competency-based education, and our CBE TEEM program, available fully in both English and Spanish, is growing rapidly. Students appreciate the go-at-your-own-pace approach, with a team of advisors and mentors that supports student formation in doing, knowing, and being, a hallmark of the competency-based approach. In fact, this distinct pedagogical model has been so successful that this year, we have launched a pilot SAMs (Synodically Authorized Ministers) formation program. This is a one-year experiment to see how this model might support the distinctive call of a SAM to foster Christian discipleship in daily life, with the congregation as the locus for this transformation.

Let me conclude my report with a genuine expression of gratitude for your prayers, for your crucial financial support, and especially for your partnership in raising up leaders for service to the church and the world in the name of Jesus Christ. Wartburg Seminary forms leaders in intentional Christian community, including in a vibrant residential community, with daily worship as our center. We are a special place, and you are warmly invited to come and see! For more information about Wartburg Seminary, please visit us at www.wartburgseminary.edu.

Yours in Christ,

The Rev. Kristin Johnston Lergen, Ph.D.
President