



«Mail_To»
«Address_Line1» «Address_Line2»
«City», «State» «Postal_Code»

December 1, 2025

Enclosed you will find several important materials for your congregation.

- The letter from Bishop Bill is to be included with your annual report.
- Please feel free to use the annual report cover provided for your own report.
- Stapled items should be directed to your church treasurer.
- The included postcard-sized items are designed for display — **please consider placing them on your church bulletin board** for your congregation's awareness.

Important Dates and Reminders

- Begin using the new remittance forms beginning **February 1, 2026**.
- Submit your statement of intent by **February 2, 2026**.
- Return your congregation's updated information by **March 9, 2026**.
- **Once it becomes available** a letter from Presiding Bishop, Yehiel Curry, of the ELCA will be shared with you.

For additional details or updated resources, please visit our website at NWMNSynod.org.

Thank you for your continued partnership in ministry.

Northwestern Minnesota Synod – ELCA
310 14th Ave S, Moorhead, MN 56560

Mailing Address: 901 8th St S, Moorhead, MN 56562

Phone: 218-299-3019 | Website: NWMNSynod.org

Office Hours: Monday–Thursday, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Annual Report

*Freed by God's grace to be wholly devoted to
Jesus and our neighbor in love.*

2025





On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

-- Matthew 2:11

Dear Beloved in Christ of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod,

When the Magi first saw the child Jesus, their first instinct was to *pay him homage*. The word translated “homage” comes from the Greek *proskynēō*—from *pros* (“toward”) and *kyneō* (“to kiss”). Their worship was literally a *kiss toward Jesus*—a gesture of love, humility, and devotion.

That image captures what we long to be about in Northwestern Minnesota. Our vision—to be “a people wholly devoted to Jesus and our neighbor in love”—is another way of saying that we want everything we do together to be a kiss toward Jesus: a homage to the gentle One who heals, forgives, and sends us out in love.

This past year, our shared ministry offered many such kisses toward Christ:

- We **welcomed 15 new Synod Authorized Ministers**, ensuring that Word and Sacrament continue to touch lives in every corner of our synod.
- We **entrusted 14 new candidates for ordination**, nurturing leaders who will teach and serve in the spirit of Jesus’ humble strength.
- We **walked with congregations in transition and conflict**, showing that reconciliation itself can be an act of homage.
- We **sparked renewal** in rural congregations through our *Rural Revival Journey*, breathing hope and fresh imagination into places where Christ’s light still shines bright.
- And through *Jeremiah 29* and *F.A.C.E.S. of Leadership*, we are **equipping 41 leaders** to guide their communities toward deeper devotion—a daily kiss toward Jesus.

Friends, thank you. Your prayers, offerings, and faithful witness make these stories possible. Every kindness shared in Jesus’ name, every act of generosity, is another kiss toward the Savior we adore.

And in a time when Jesus’ name is sometimes used to divide us from one another or demean vulnerable neighbors, let us be clear about the One we worship. We pay homage not to a Lord of domination or fear, but to the humble Christ who welcomes the stranger, lifts the poor, blesses our most vulnerable siblings and honors the image of God in every person. The world has seen that kind of power come and go. The Magi journeyed far to worship a *different* kind of king—the one who reigns through mercy, not might.

As this year draws to a close, I invite you to join me in one more act of homage—a gift that becomes a kiss toward Jesus. Your congregation’s support and your personal generosity sustain ministries that bear Christ’s love to every corner of Northwestern Minnesota.

May our every gift, and every act of love, be a kiss toward the One who reigns from a manger and calls us to follow him in humility, justice, and joy.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Tesch".

Bp. Bill Tesch
Bishop of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

OPENING LITURGY

Confident in God's generosity and gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us praise God and give thanks...

God, we praise you and give thanks.
You are good, and your mercy endures forever.

You gave us a garden with good food to eat.
We praise you for food that nourishes us.

You rescued your people from slavery.
We praise you for freedom.

You gave us prophets to correct, rebuke and encourage us.
We bless you for your justice and mercy.

You gave us your Son, Jesus, to love, redeem and save us.

We praise you for his death and resurrection.

You gave us your Holy Spirit to be our Advocate and Comforter.

We bless you for the gifts of every tribe and nation.

Strengthen your church with every spiritual gift.

and commission us again to be your servant people.

Multiply in us the fruit of the spirit:
love, you, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Send us in your love and mercy,
that the world may know and praise you.

Now Thank We All Our God



1 Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices,
2 Oh, may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
3 All praise and thanks to God the Fa - ther now be giv - en,

who won - drous things has done, in whom this world re - joic - es;
with ev - er joy - ful hearts and bless - ed peace to cheer us,
the Son, and Spir - it blest, who reign in high - est heav - en,

who, from our moth - ers' arms, has blest us on our way
and keep us all in grace, and guide us when per - plexed,
the one e - ter - nal God, whom earth and heav'n a - dore;

with count - less gifts of love, and still is ours to - day.
and free us from all harm in this world and the next.
for thus it was, is now, and shall be ev - er - more.

Text: Martin Rinkhart, 1586–1649; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878
Music: NUN DANKE ALLE GOTT, Johann Crüger, 1598–1662

Let us pray.

Gracious God, you are the giver of every good gift. Bless us with all that we need for ministry in your name, that we might be a blessing to others. In the name of the one who broke bread and fed the multitudes, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.



Northwestern Minnesota Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Synod Staff

Our synod staff is made up of both full-time and part-time team members who work together to support congregations, leaders, and ministries across Northwestern Minnesota.

Full-time staff serve in ongoing roles and provide leadership, support, and coordination across a wide range of synod ministries and operations. You'll find them regularly engaged in day-to-day synod work, available for questions, and present at most synod events.



Rev. Bill Tesch

Bishop

btesch@cord.edu



Rev. Genelle Netland

Associate to the Bishop
for Leadership

genellenetland@cord.edu



Rev. Rebel Hurd

Associate to the Bishop
for Mission

Director for Evangelical Mission
rebelhurd@cord.edu



Rev. Keith Pearson

Minister for Generosity

keithpearson@cord.edu



Morgan Olson

Communications &
Events Coordinator

morganolson@cord.edu



Rachel Haun

Office Administrator

rhaun@cord.edu



Northwestern Minnesota Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Part-Time and Contract Staff

Part-Time staff serve in part-time or specialized roles. They bring unique gifts to the synod for a particular project, area of ministry, or time-limited need. While they may not be involved in all aspects of synod life, their contributions are essential to our shared mission.

Engagement Ministers

CONFERENCE 1

Roseau

Rev. Dave Swonger

CONFERENCE 2

Thief River Falls

Rev. Genelle Netland/
Rev. Bill Tesch

CONFERENCE 3

Crookston

Rev. Chris Leach

CONFERENCE 4

Bemidji

Rev. Chris Leach

CONFERENCE 5

Moorhead

Rev. Laurie Skow-
Anderson

CONFERENCE 6

Detroit Lakes

Rev. Laurie Skow-
Anderson

CONFERENCE 7

Fergus Falls

Rev. Dennis Preston

CONFERENCE 8

Alexandria

Rev. Dennis Preston

Financial and Data-Systems Specialist

Joan Meulebroeck

Synod Authorized Ministers Coordinator

Kip Fontaine

Minister for Vocations

Rev. Jon Olson

Minister for Mental Health & Wellness

Rev. Dr. Aaron Suomala Folkards

Minister for First-Third Ministry

Kristina Johnson-Dernier

Behold The New Has Come! Project Coordinators

Jody Johnson
Rev. Melissa Pickering

- Please report the leadership in your congregation by filling out this form and returning it to the NWMN Synod office by March 9th, 2026.
- Primary communication for leadership is by email. Any mail for church leadership will be sent to the church.
- **It is very important that we have complete information for each congregation in the Synod.**

A fillable online version of this form is also available on the Synod website at: www.nwmnsynod.org/pages/congregation-forms

Congregation _____ Congregation ID# _____

Mailing Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Physical Location of Congregation _____
(if different from mailing address)

Congregation Office Phone _____

Congregation Email Address _____

Congregation Website _____

If you are part of a multi-point parish, name of parish: _____

Church/Parish Leadership

Rostered Minister/SAM _____ Position _____

(if more than one rostered minister or SAM, please add additional names and contact information on the back of this form)

Home Mailing Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Number _____

Preferred Email Address _____

Parish/Church Office Secretary _____

Preferred Phone Number _____

Preferred Email Address _____

Congregation President _____

Preferred Phone Number _____

Preferred Email Address _____

Council Treasurer _____

Preferred Phone Number _____

Preferred Email Address _____

Do you have any members from confirmation age—29 years old serving on your church council? _____

Do you have a Foundation/Endowment? If yes, please complete contact information on the reverse.

Yes

No

OVER

Additional Leadership (including Youth, visitation, etc.)

Rostered Minister/SAM/Youth _____ Position _____

Home Mailing Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Number _____

Preferred Email Address _____

Rostered Minister/SAM/Youth _____ Position _____

Home Mailing Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Number _____

Preferred Email Address _____

Lay Leadership (including WELCA Chair, parish nurse, etc.)

Youth Leader _____

Preferred Phone Number _____

Preferred Email Address _____

Name _____ Position _____

Preferred Phone Number _____

Preferred Email Address _____

Name _____ Position _____

Preferred Phone Number _____

Preferred Email Address _____

Name _____ Position _____

Preferred Phone Number _____

Preferred Email Address _____

Foundation/Endowment Contact Information

Name _____

Preferred Phone Number _____

Preferred Email Address _____

CHECKING HERE GIVES PERMISSION FOR ALL LEADERS LISTED TO RECEIVE THE SYNOD'S E-NEWS. _____

Thank You! Please return by March 9th, 2026:

Mail to:

Northwestern Minnesota Synod
901 8th St S
Moorhead, MN 56562

Email to:

rhaun@cord.edu
(Rachel Haun, Office
Administrator)

Fill out online at:

<https://www.nwmnsynod.org/pages/congregation-forms>



Dear Council Treasurer,

Please complete your forms and return by the due date. This year, we offer three options for completing and returning your forms:

1. Mail to:

Northwestern Minnesota Synod
901 8th St S
Moorhead, MN 56562

2. Email to:

rhaun@cord.edu
(*Rachel Haun, Office Administrator*)

3. Submit Online:

<https://www.nwmnsynod.org/pages/congregation-forms>

Important Dates and Reminders

- Begin using the new remittance forms starting **February 1, 2026**.
- Submit your Statement of Intent by **February 2, 2026**.
- Return your congregation's updated information by **March 9, 2026**.
- Treasurer 101 on **Tuesday February 9th, 2026**.
 - Register by **February 8th, 2026**.
- Once available, a letter from Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry of the ELCA will be shared with you.

For additional details or updated resources, please visit our website at [NWMNSynod.org](https://www.nwmnsynod.org).

Thank you for your continued partnership in ministry.

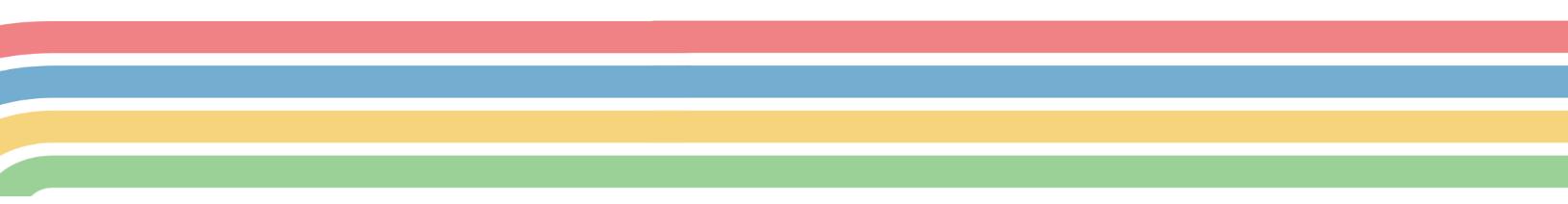
Thank you!

Northwestern Minnesota Synod – ELCA
310 14th Ave S, Moorhead, MN 56560

Mailing Address: 901 8th St S, Moorhead, MN 56562

Phone: 218-299-3019 | Website: [NWMNSynod.org](https://www.nwmnsynod.org)

Office Hours: Monday–Thursday, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

A decorative footer consisting of four horizontal stripes of different colors: red, blue, yellow, and green, stacked vertically.



December 1, 2025

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Grace and peace to you in this holy season of Advent and Christmas.

As we hear John the Baptist's cry again, "*Prepare the way of the Lord,*" I find myself giving thanks for the ways you have done just that across Northwestern Minnesota this year. You have made space for Christ's love to be known in worship and witness, in generosity and prayer, and in the ordinary yet extraordinary ways you serve your neighbors in Jesus' name.

Advent invites us to prepare not only for a baby born in Bethlehem, but for the presence of Christ who continues to be born among us today. Through your faithfulness and generosity, God's love takes on flesh in real and tangible ways: in meals shared, prayers spoken, baptisms celebrated, and communities strengthened. Together, we are living signs of Emmanuel, God with us.

As we celebrate the birth of Christ, may we also be renewed in the joy of giving. Every act of generosity, every offering of time, prayer, and resources, is part of how we prepare the way for what God is still doing among us. I am deeply grateful to serve alongside you in this season of hope, love, and light.

Thank you for your faithfulness and your partnership. Together, we trust that God is at work through us all. It is GREAT to be church together, AMEN!

With deep gratitude and joy,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebel Hurd".

Rev. Rebel Hurd
Associate to the Bishop for Mission/Director for Evangelical Mission
Northwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA 218.299.4447 or rebelhurd@cord.edu



TREASURER 101

YOU ARE INVITED TO A PRACTICAL SESSION DESIGNED TO SUPPORT CHURCH TREASURERS IN CONGREGATIONS OF EVERY SIZE. WHETHER YOU ARE BRAND NEW TO THE ROLE OR HAVE BEEN DOING IT FOR YEARS, THIS CONVERSATION WILL OFFER CLARITY, CONFIDENCE, AND COMMUNITY.

THE EVENT IS FREE, BUT PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED TO HELP US PLAN WELL AND PROVIDE MATERIALS IN ADVANCE. REGISTER BY FEBRUARY 8TH, 2026.

**FEBRUARY 9, 2026
MONDAY 6-7 PM**

REGISTER AT:

[HTTPS://WWW.NWMNSYNOD.ORG/EVENTS/TREASURER-101](https://www.nwmn synod.org/events/treasurer-101)

YOUR GUIDES FOR THIS EVENT:



DORI CARLSON
FINANCIAL SECRETARY AT OUR SAVIOR'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH, PARK RIVER, ND



PAUL HAARSTICK
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS AT FIRST LUTHERAN
CHURCH, DETROIT LAKES, MN

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- **HIGH-LEVEL BEST PRACTICES FOR TREASURER WORK**
 - **HOW TO INTERPRET FINANCIAL DATA**
 - **HOW TO CLEARLY COMMUNICATE REPORTS TO YOUR CONGREGATION**

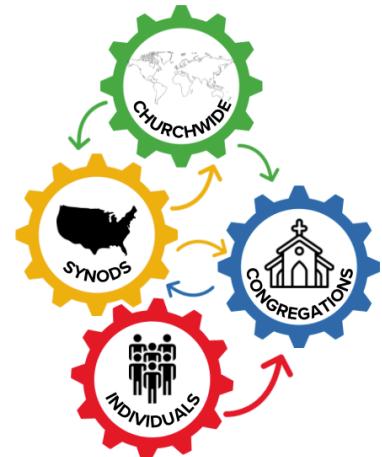


2026 Congregational Statement of Intent for Mission Support

The Statement of Intent is your congregation's annual pledge of **Mission Support** partnership with our synod and the ELCA churchwide organization.

Mission Support is essential in providing the resources that fund the ministry we do together. Information on your Statement of Intent form is critical to us on the synod staff - as well as to our Synod Council - as we manage the synod's budgeting process and the stewarding of financial resources for ministry.

Thanks in advance for making sure the synod receives your congregation's 2026 Statement of Intent **Monday, February 2, 2026** if possible.



Date: _____

Name of Congregation: _____

Congregation ID Number: _____

Address: _____

City, State, ZIP code: _____

Submitted by: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Your Congregation's Mission Support Intent for 2026: _____

Please note that the amount listed on this form should reflect Mission Support only, NOT other designated gifts you plan to give to World Hunger, missionaries, Fund for Leaders, etc.

All Mission Support gifts are divided in the synod office between the ELCA churchwide organization (47%) and the Northwestern Minnesota Synod (53%).

Mail to:

Northwestern Minnesota Synod
901 8th St S
Moorhead, MN 56562

Email to:

rhaun@cord.edu
(Rachel Haun, Office
Administrator)

Fill out online at:

<https://www.nwmnsynod.org/pages/congregation-forms>

This form may be used beginning **February 1, 2026**. The fiscal year for synod ministries is Feb 1, 2026 – Jan 31, 2027.



Northwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

2026 CONGREGATION REMITTANCE FORM

INSTRUCTIONS: Make **all** checks payable to **NORTHWESTERN MINNESOTA SYNOD**. Mail payments to the synod office monthly **together with a completed remittance form for every remittance check**.

Please **SAVE** this form and enclose a completed copy with each of your congregation's 2026 remittances.

Congregation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Check enclosed	<input type="checkbox"/> Electronic payment
City/Town:	<input type="checkbox"/> Check arriving separately	
ID number:	Check number _____	

Treasurer's name _____ Treasurer's email _____

Treasurer's phone _____ Church's email _____

Breakdown of enclosed remittance check: PLEASE BE SPECIFIC and PRINT LEGIBLY.

Contributions	Designation	Amount
Mission Support - ELCA/Synod	47% funds ELCA churchwide ministries 53% funds NW MN Synod ministries	\$
ELCA World Hunger		\$
ELCA Global Ministries	Name of missionary or mission project:	\$
NW MN Synod Fund for Leaders Endowment	Funding for ELCA seminarians from our synod	\$
NW MN Next Generation Fund	Endowment fund to reduce educational debt for first-call ministers in our synod	\$
Other:		\$
Other:		\$
Other:		\$
TOTAL REMITTANCE SUBMITTED	Grand total of all of the above...	\$

Please do not use this remittance form to send gifts for ministries that are not funded through the NW MN Synod - e.g. a food shelf, the Salvation Army, a Bible camp, etc. Please send gifts from your congregation directly to these organizations. Thanks!

Mail to:

Northwestern Minnesota Synod
901 8th St S
Moorhead, MN 56562

Email to:

rhaun@cord.edu
(Rachel Haun, Office
Administrator)

Fill out online at:

<https://www.nwmnsynod.org/pages/congregation-forms>



MISSION SUPPORT

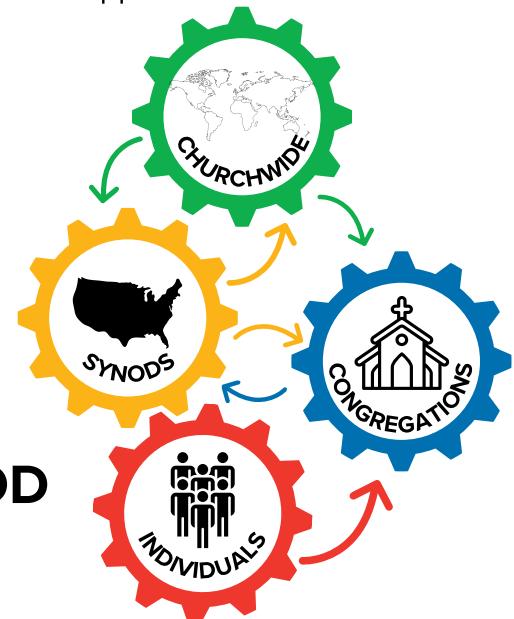
how we're church, together

Every year, around \$1.6 billion is shared through regular offerings to ELCA congregations and worshiping communities. A portion of that generosity flows outward—first to our 65 synods, and then to the churchwide organization—in a system we call Mission Support.

Mission Support is how we fund our shared ministry together:

- Congregations give a portion of their offerings to the synod,
- the synod shares a portion of that with the Churchwide organization,
- and together we sustain ministry locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.

In 2024, the Northwestern Minnesota Synod shared \$647,862 directly in Mission Support with the ELCA Churchwide Organization



MISSION SUPPORT IN THE NW MN SYNOD

In 2024, congregational mission support funded **83%** of our Synod Mission Plan—our ministry budget.

Of that, **47%** was shared with the churchwide organization, strengthening ministries that reach beyond our synod's borders.

Our synod's ministries extend these partnerships locally:

Equipping Leaders and Strengthening Congregations

16 Rostered Ministers & SAMs accompanied into new calls

11 Ministers completing training for Racial Justice, Equity, & Right Relationship

14 Candidates in Candidacy

16 Congregations participated in Rural Revival renewal efforts

Connecting Community and Church

Over

3,000

hours of engagement by Synod Ministers for Community & Leader Engagement

Supporting Vital Ministry

\$166,268
for Partners in Ministry

\$38,700

distributed to rostered ministers to reduce seminary debt

\$15,744

in Fund for Leaders scholarships

Why it Matters

When you give through your congregation, your offering doesn't stop at your local church—it ripples outward.

Each gift becomes part of something larger: God's church in motion—sharing Jesus' love and transforming lives here in northwestern Minnesota and around the world.

MISSION SUPPORT MAKES POSSIBLE

 Campus Ministry

 Youth Ministry

 Candidacy & First Call

 Accompanying Congregations

Supporting & Equipping Leaders



Gathering Together as a Church



Loving & Serving Our Neighbor



Global Companions



THE IMPACT ACROSS THE CHURCH

Mission Support connects every congregation to God's work throughout the world;

IN THE U.S.

- Planting and supporting hundreds of worshiping communities
- Revitalizing congregations and reaching neighbors
- Supporting ELCA colleges, universities, and seminaries
- Providing leadership formation and youth/young adult events



GLOBALLY

- Training and sending missionaries
- Building relationships with 149 Lutheran churches worldwide
- Partnering with 65 companion churches
- Working for peace, justice, and global sustainability



SHARED MINISTRIES AND GOVERNANCE

- Supporting ELCA governance, assemblies, and leadership records
- Sustaining ecumenical and interfaith relations
- Developing new worship, stewardship, and discipleship resources
- Maintaining technology, communications, and strategic planning



Thank you!

Your generosity through Mission Support fuels ministry from the prairie to the world.

Together, we are living out what it means to be "church together"—continuing the Reformation's call to faith in action, truth, and freedom.





ROAD TRIP

Resources



[https://www.nwmnsynod.org/
pages/2025-road-trip](https://www.nwmnsynod.org/pages/2025-road-trip)

**Scan the QR code, or visit
the synod website to
view Road Trip Resources**

**Thank you for our shared ministry!
It is GREAT to be church, together!**