GRACE IN A DIGITAL SPACE

2026 NWMN Synod Assembly Summary

MAY 30, 2026 | VIRTUAL

Gathering Around God's Mission

The 2026 Northwestern Minnesota Synod Assembly gathered virtually under the theme Grace in the Digital Space (Acts 1:8). More than 270 voting members from across the synod came together for worship, learning, discernment, elections, and decision-making. Throughout the day, participants reflected on how God's grace continues to connect, equip, and send us into a changing world, including the digital spaces where people increasingly build community and seek meaning.

Churchwide Greetings

ELCA

Representatives from the ELCA Churchwide Organization, Phillip LaDeur and Sarah Weaver, shared stories of ministries supported through Mission Support, including innovative children's ministries, ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response, and resources that strengthen congregations across the church. A video greeting from Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry reminded us that we are part of a church that is connected across communities, states, and nations.

Report of the Bishop

Bishop Bill Tesch reflected on the mission and vision of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod and highlighted signs of hope throughout the synod. He celebrated congregations that have responded to community needs with generosity, noted excitement around the upcoming ELCA Youth Gathering in Minneapolis, and shared updates on theological education, leadership development, and upcoming churchwide conversations on important issues facing the church.

Keynote: Incarnation in the Digital World

Keynote speaker Jeremy Steele invited the assembly to think differently about digital ministry. Drawing on his work through TikTok and the online community. Steele emphasized that many people—especially younger generations—are seeking belonging, connection, and authentic community online.

Steele challenged congregations to view digital spaces not simply as places for advertising worship services but as real mission fields where relationships can be formed and faith can be nurtured. Just as Jesus entered the world and met people where they were, the church is called to be present in the places where people gather today.

2026 NWMN SYNOD ASSEMBLY

Actions of the Assembly

Consent Agenda Approved

The assembly approved a consent agenda that included several important items affecting the life and work of the synod. Through a single vote, voting members:

- Approved the 2027 Compensation Guidelines.
- Approved updates to the Northwestern Minnesota Synod Constitution.
- Established a Continuing Resolution creating a Care for Creation Committee.
- Approved the agenda, rules of procedure, and the 2025 Synod Assembly minutes.

FY2028 Mission Plan Approved

The assembly approved the FY2028 Mission Plan with projected revenues of $2,086,485 and a positive balance of $17,988. The plan reflects the synod's ongoing commitment to leadership development, congregational support, ministry partnerships, and mission across Northwestern Minnesota.

Skjeberg Lutheran Church Received into the Synod

The assembly voted to welcome Skjeberg Lutheran Church into the Northwestern Minnesota Synod. The resolution celebrated the congregation's ministry and affirmed its place within the shared mission of the ELCA and the Northwestern Minnesota Synod.

Bishop Election Process Updated

Voting members approved revisions to the synod's bishop election pre-identification process. Changes include a shorter election timeline, clearer procedures for recommending candidates, and updated expectations for incumbent bishops considering re-election.

Mileage Equity Resolution Adopted

The assembly adopted a resolution directing Synod Council to develop a Travel Equity Policy. The goal is to reduce the financial burden experienced by rostered ministers and Synod Authorized Ministers who travel long distances from rural and remote communities to attend required synod events.

Climate Justice Resolution Adopted

Voting members approved a resolution encouraging congregations, ministries, and organizations throughout the synod to participate in the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action. The resolution invites congregations to engage in creation care, climate resiliency, advocacy, and community engagement while recognizing the importance of consultation with those involved in agriculture and rural communities.