English District LCMS
Board of Directors Meeting

Date: February 7, 2026
Location: Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, Lee's Summit, MO

Attendance

Present:
Mr. Jonathan Busarow; Mr. Chris Cassel; Mr. Thomas Habitz Jr.; Mr. Thomas Honebrink; The Rev. Robert J. Kieselowsky; **Mr. Rodrick Lane; The Rev. Justin D. Laughridge;** The Rev. Zachary W. Marklevitz; **Deaconess Jennifer L. Miller; The Rev. Jeffrey G. Miskus (Pres.);** The Rev. Dr. Michael A. Morehouse; **Ms. Sally Naglich;** The Rev. Anthony J. Oliphant; **Mr. Mark Pfundstein; Ms. Kristin Wellik; The Rev. Luke T. Zimmerman.**

District Staff:
Mr. Albert Amling; Mr. John Hoover; The Rev. J. Derek Mathers.

Absent: The Rev. Dr. Mark A. Wood; Mr. Ronald Grimm

Agenda

1. Preliminary Items

1.A. Call to Order
The Rev. Chairman Luke Zimmerman called the Board to Order at 8:33am.

1.B. Opening Devotions
Lead: The Rev. Anthony Oliphant
Matthew 3 --------- Baptism of our Lord at the Jordan.

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2. Organizational Matters

2.A. Roll Call and Determination of Quorum
Lead: The Rev. Justin Laughridge

Present:
Mr. Jonathan Busarow; Mr. Chris Cassel; Mr. Thomas Habitz Jr.; Mr. Thomas Honebrink; The Rev. Robert J. Kieselowsky; **Mr. Rodrick Lane; The Rev. Justin D. Laughridge;** The Rev. Zachary W. Marklevitz; **Deaconess Jennifer L. Miller; The Rev. Jeffrey G. Miskus (Pres.);** The Rev. Dr. Michael A. Morehouse; **Ms. Sally Naglich;** The Rev. Anthony J. Oliphant; **Mr. Mark Pfundstein; Ms. Kristin Wellik; The Rev. Luke T. Zimmerman.**

District Staff:
Mr. Albert Amling; Mr. John Hoover; The Rev. J. Derek Mathers.

Absent: The Rev. Dr. Mark A. Wood; Mr. Ronald Grimm

Rev. Secretary Laughridge confirmed that with a quorum present, we will proceed as scheduled.

2.B. Approval of Agenda
We have had to work creatively with a few technology challenges. MyCommittee Portal was on and offline several times in January and February. Our new Agenda is approved by consent, pursuant to the Agenda posted for all to see during this meeting.

Moved, 2nd and Approved by Consent.

2.C. Approval of November 2025 Meeting Minutes

With minimal material amendments, Made, Approved and Seconded.

2.D. Review of Previous Meeting

Lead: The Rev. Luke Zimmerman

Rev. Chair Zimmerman led a discussion, reviewing key points of the previous meeting. The Board commends Chapel of the Cross Lutheran Church in St. Louis, MO for their gracious hospitality. The Chairman noted the work of the End Statements Task Force in efficiently carrying out their work on our behalf ahead of time.

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3. Presidential and Executive Staff Reports

3.A. President's Report

Lead: The Rev. Jeffrey Miskus

Executive Summary – Bishop's Report (Nov 2025–Feb 2026)

The Bishop reported on his ongoing pastoral, administrative, and representative work in support of the English District, framed by the triennial vision *"Living the Baptized Life in Christ"* (Gal. 2:20). The theological reflection centered on James 1, emphasizing perseverance in trials, God's unchanging goodness, and the baptismal identity of the Church amid persecution and hardship.

During the reporting period, the Bishop conducted extensive travel for worship leadership, installations, congregational visits, conference participation, funerals, and pastoral support across the U.S. and Canada. He remained actively engaged in call processes, working closely with District staff, Circuit Visitors, and congregations, and reported a significant number of congregations currently in calling status.

Key areas of work included preparation for the 2026 Synodical Convention, participation in Council of Presidents (COP) activities, seminary interviews, VP and CV coordination, and oversight of district ministries such as campus ministry (ALCMSU), the Ministerial Health Commission, and LCEF Canada integration.

The Bishop updated the Board on significant Synod-wide matters, including the Central Illinois District situation, and on ongoing legal proceedings related to CCC property litigation. He also addressed pastoral restrictions, reconciliation work, and difficult congregational situations requiring sustained involvement.

The report concluded with gratitude for District staff and acknowledgment of recent personal losses within the staff, commending all work and outcomes to God's care.

Also included here in absentia, is a report from the Ministerial Health Commission:

Ministerial Health Commission Report (January 2026)

The Ministerial Health Commission (MHC) will convene its first meeting of 2026 on January 28, marking the beginning of its work for the year. The Commission expressed gratitude for the long-standing leadership of Rev. Derek Mathers in shaping its work and for Peggy Oke's assistance in updating Commission membership information on the District website.

Guiding the Commission's efforts for the 2025–2028 triennium is the goal of promoting the presence, representation, and participation of the MHC across a wide range of English District gatherings, including formal meetings, informal engagements, critical or crisis situations, and consultation settings. Early priorities for January include expanding resources available to church workers through the MHC Toolbox and identifying vetted professional counselors for each region of the District, strengthening access to care and support.

The Commission looks forward to the Bishop's participation at its first meeting of the year, underscoring the District's commitment to ministerial health and well-being.

Additionally, Pastor Tim Holzerland shared that he received a primary ecclesiastical endorsement in Specialized Pastoral Ministry as a Fire Department Chaplain in July 2025, with formal recognition by the West Bloomfield Fire Department in November. This endorsement is expected to enhance his contributions to the Commission's work in supporting church workers across the District.

Motion: "To accept the assets from Hope Fremont, CA upon its disbandment." (Cassel, Pfundstein) Motion was seconded and discussion ensued.

Discussion affirmed that regarding the Hope-Fremont property, the ED-LCMS owns it upon this motion and subsequent actions, but then all assets therein are property of the ED-LCMS for dissolution. The Board notes that the Congregation's decline has been long-term, not short nor sudden. Specific, intentional care was expressed for both the Pastor & Congregants in the future.

After discussion, this Motion was approved.

Motion: "To authorize the District President and Business Manager to execute the listing and sale of the Hope-Fremont, CA assets (at no less than the agreed upon minimum prices for each property, as indicated by Foundry BPO), pursuant to the laws and regulations of the State of California." Motion was seconded, and discussion ensued.

Q: What happens when we sell? A: The Board votes on property decisions, and that may include a quick meeting to be held remotely/online. The Board also discussed the possibility of a pre-authorized sale price to enable District President and Business Manager to act with unknown (fast) timelines. The Board says that the sales agreement would be "pending Board Approval", to remain in keeping with our own Corporate Operations and practices.

After discussion, this Motion was approved.

At 10:46am, the Board stood in its morning recess.

At 11:01am, the Board resumed its morning session.

3.B. Executive Staff Reports

3.B.1. Missions Report
Lead: The Rev. Derek Mathers

Assistant to the Bishop / Mission Executive Report (February 2026)

Rev. J. Derek Mathers reported on his evolving role as Executive Assistant to the Bishop and Mission Executive, noting a reallocation of time away from Ministerial Health leadership and toward Re:Vitality and Church Planting, while continuing to act on behalf of the Bishop in delegated situations and events. Central to this work is the district-wide implementation of the Congregational Assessment of Development and Decline Status (CADDS) tool, *now required as the starting point for congregations entering a pastoral call process*.

This report framed CADDS theologically within the district's triennial theme, Living Our Baptized Life in Christ (Gal. 2:20), and demonstrated how **it advances End Statements 3 (Healthy Church Workers, Congregations, and Schools) and 4 (Mission and Discipleship)**. CADDS is presented not as a program, but as a baptismally grounded process that

+ encourages honest assessment,

+ protects church worker vocations,

+ restores trust, and

+ fosters healthier congregational culture.

This is a process homegrown within a distinctively Lutheran theological lens. It also provides practical traction for mission by helping congregations identify neighbors, focus outreach efforts, and collaborate at the circuit level.

Rev. Mathers also reported on the review of six applications for the Bolick Foundation Campus Ministry Grant, with several declined for lack of alignment and others under active review. The report concluded with a summary of extensive travel, training, CADDS consultations, and mission-related engagements since the November Board meeting.

3.B.2. School Ministry Report

Lead: Mr. Albert Amling

Executive Summary (February 2026 – School Ministry Executive Report)

Mr. Albert Amling reported ongoing work aligned with the English District's 2022–2025 Triennium End Statements under the theme of *All Grace, All Sufficiency, and All Things* (2 Corinthians 9:8). He continues to work closely with multiple congregations pursuing new education ministries through the Synod's Genesis process, including Risen Christ (MI), Celebration (FL), and SALSA, with Faith Lutheran Church moving forward as an association partner. Circuit pastor consultations regarding SALSA are scheduled for February.

In support of church workers, Mr. Amling has resumed congregational visits, which he reports as highly encouraging, and will distribute financial aid information to workers in early February. He continues to promote vocational recruitment through Set Apart to Serve. Additionally, two Lutheran schools—Redeemer Lutheran School (Verona, PA) and St. John Lutheran (Hannibal, MO)—are currently engaged in reaccreditation. Mr. Amling expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve the District in the coming triennium.

3.B.3. LCMS Foundation / Gift Planning Report

This report was received *in absentia* by the Board prior to the Meeting.

Mr. Grimm's report notes active and expanding gift planning work across the English District. Since November, he has been working with 36 active donors representing an estimated gift value of approximately $8.0 million, with an additional 11 donors in pre-discovery. Donor engagement continues across multiple stages of the gift planning process, including discovery, design, summary, and implementation phases.

Congregational engagement remains strong, including completed lifetime plan-for-giving presentations in Scarsdale, NY and Naples, FL, assistance with multiple endowment and investment account initiatives totaling approximately $185,000, and ongoing support for capital and construction campaigns. Mr. Grimm has conducted donor and congregational visits across several states and continues to provide investment and fundraising consultation. Future plans include additional congregational visits and presentations throughout the District.

3.B.4. LCEF District Vice-President Report
Lead: Mr. John Hoover

Executive Summary (February 2026 – LCEF Report)
Mr. John Hoover provided a performance update for the English District's LCEF portfolio through January 2026. The District currently has 101 active loans with an outstanding balance of approximately $29.6 million. Since July 1, 2025, one construction and bridge loan totaling $4.4 million has been approved (Fairlawn, Akron, OH), with no new loans funded during the reporting period. Two loans were paid off, and there are no delinquent, maturing, or in-credit loans to report.

Total investments stand at approximately $47.7 million across 2,084 accounts. Current marketing efforts are focused on fixed-rate term notes and All Access Accounts. Mr. Hoover also outlined upcoming LCEF events and noted that upcoming congregational visits will concentrate on the Midwest and Northeastern Congregations in our District.

Data was provided & a general update on the progress regarding LCEF-Canada. This has been a lengthy process, and Staff members note that it has taken up a lot of time and resources. All are hopeful for an imminent resolution. District LCEF Leadership met with LCC Leadership in January

2026, and the discussions were productive but this has not resulted in a formal agreement to this point.

3.C. Constitution Committee Report
Lead: The Rev. Jeffrey Miskus

District Committee on Constitutions & Membership Report (February 2026)

The District Committee on Constitutions & Membership reported that it has **no actions requiring Board approval** at the February 2026 meeting. The Committee continues its regular work of reviewing, correcting, and tracking congregational constitutions and bylaws.

During the current reporting period, the Committee received constitutions or bylaws for **initial review** from Redeemer Lutheran Church (Lincoln, NE) and Martin Luther Chapel (Pennsauken, NJ). One congregation, Celebration Lutheran Church (St. John, FL), had documents returned due to format and process errors. St. Mark Lutheran Church (Sheboygan, WI) remains under **second review**, while Mount Calvary Lutheran Church (Lititz, PA) is awaiting final corrections following Committee feedback.

The Committee also reported several **longstanding open files** from prior triennia, with ongoing contact maintained with the affected congregations.

The report was submitted by Rev. John Kelling, Emeritus, Chairman, on behalf of the 2025–2028 Committee on Constitutions & Membership.

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4. Lunch Recess (12:07pm) and Local Ministry Visitation

The Board enjoyed Lunch at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church and gives thanks for the wonderful welcome and tour given by the Pastors and DCE at the Congregation. The Board was able to see the Church facilities and take in a glimpse of the Upward basketball program that the Church hosts in welcoming 375+ children plus their families to the campus each weekend.

Rev. Chair Zimmerman reconvened the Board @ 1:28pm

4.A. Midday Devotions

Lead: The Rev. Anthony Oliphant

Rev. Oliphant gave a meditation on the continuing theme around our Lord's Baptism that he began in our morning Devotionals. "Your life is hidden with Christ in God".

4.B. SMART Goals Review

The Bishop/President has outlined a comprehensive set of SMART Goals aligned with five major ministry priorities for the current triennium. These goals provide measurable benchmarks while advancing the District's overarching mission.

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1. Christ-Centered Servanthood

Goal: Visit 100% of English District congregations (155) over three years (approx. 50 per year).

- Preach and teach Christ-centered servanthood and "Living the Baptized Life."
- Meet with congregational leadership to encourage community compassion ministries.

Education Initiative:

- Establish two new school associations using Bollick Foundation funds.
- Ensure regular visits to District schools by both the Bishop and Education Executive.
- Provide annual budget support and weekly collaboration/reporting with the Education Executive.

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2. Spiritual Growth and Renewal

Goal: Invite and encourage 100% of church workers to attend annual regional conferences and the triennial District Convention.

- Provide worship leadership, teaching, reporting, and pastoral care at conferences.

Sacramental Practice Initiative:

- Survey congregations regarding First Communion Prior to Confirmation.
- Develop a theological and practical toolkit to support pastors and congregations in understanding and implementing (or charitably accommodating) this rite.

The Bishop will also maintain daily prayer, study, regular staff devotions, convention leadership, and broader synodical responsibilities.

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3. Healthy Church Workers, Congregations, and Schools

Congregational Health:

- Lead 25% (approx. 40) of congregations through the CADDS process.

Pastoral Care:

- Meet one-on-one (minimum one hour) with 100% of active and retired pastors during the triennium.
- Provide conflict resolution, ecclesiastical oversight, and regular pastoral encouragement.

Schools:

- Ensure 100% of District schools are visited annually by the Education Executive.

Ongoing responsibilities include investigations, call process supervision, clergy encouragement (including monthly birthday acknowledgments), and collaboration with Circuit Visitors and staff.

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4. Mission and Discipleship

Church Planting:

- Implement “Church Planting Simplified” with 100% of approved planting groups.

Campus Ministry:

- Support four new qualified campus ministries (Bollick Foundation funding).

Congregational Renewal:

- Engage 25% of congregations in Re-Vitality or comparable synodical renewal programs.

The Bishop will collaborate closely with the Mission Executive, promote district missions, visit two missions annually, and maintain synodical coordination through COP participation.

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5. Stewardship and Generosity

Communication Initiative:

- Develop and distribute a district-wide information package and video ("What the District Does").

Financial Oversight:

- Prepare and report on annual budgets.
- Meet quarterly with the Board of Directors and Endowment Fund Board.
- Meet annually with auditors.

The Bishop will promote faithful stewardship, encourage financial support of District missions, acknowledge donors, and ensure compliance with synodical and legal processes.

These SMART Goals establish clear, measurable benchmarks in congregational visitation, pastoral care, education, mission development, renewal efforts, and financial stewardship. Together, they provide a structured and accountable framework for advancing the English District's mission in alignment with its five End Statements: Christ-Centered Servanthood; Spiritual Growth and Renewal; Healthy Workers, Congregations, and Schools; Mission and Discipleship; and Stewardship and Generosity.

5. Financial Reports

5.A. Treasurer's Report

Lead: Ms. Sally Naglich

The Treasurer presented **preliminary, unaudited financial statements** for the English District for the **11 months ending December 31, 2025**, including Statements of Financial Position, Activities, and Functional Expenses for both the **United States and Canada**.

On the **U.S. books**, total assets increased by approximately **$107,000** compared to the prior year, primarily due to higher interest receivables from LCEF-Canada and increased endowment investments, partially offset by reductions in loans receivable and property held for sale. Net assets increased by **$444,439**, reflecting strong investment returns and dissolution-related income, despite continued softness in congregational giving and reduced ministry grant and Synod support expenses. The Board continues to designate a significant portion of unrestricted net assets for specific purposes.

On the **Canadian books**, total assets declined year over year, and the period closed with a **decrease in net assets**, driven largely by higher mission-related professional service expenses. Canadian financial activity continues to be reported in CAD and remains unaudited for management purposes.

Overall, the Treasurer reported that the District remains financially stable, with solid investment performance and sufficient designated and restricted funds to support ongoing ministry commitments.

5.B. Endowment Fund Report
Lead: Ms. Kristin Wellik

The Board received and reviewed the English District Endowment Fund Financial Summary Report covering activity through December 31, 2025.

Total Endowment Fund value increased from $4,780,829.18 at December 31, 2024, to **$5,391,194.88** at December 31, 2025. Growth reflected positive investment performance and continued contributions across Board-designated, permanently restricted, and temporarily restricted funds.

Board-designated funds totaled $3,462,428.38 as of December 31, 2025, with cumulative earnings of $1,360,590.54. Permanently restricted gifts to the fund totaled $223,657.05, with additional restricted scholarship funds totaling $209,540.05. Temporarily restricted earnings on gifts and scholarships were also reported.

Endowment assets were held across multiple accounts, including Vanguard, Confluence, LCEF, and other investment platforms, with Confluence and Vanguard representing the largest holdings.

After adjustments for fees, gifts, transfers, and restricted assets, the adjusted current corpus value was reported as $5,309,348.70. The increase in value and earnings for the period was $528,519.52. Calculated earnings available totaled $528,519.52, of which 75% was designated as available for grants.

The Board received the report, thanking the Endowment Fund Committee for their continued care in stewardship.

Furthermore, the Endowment Fund Board did receive our November 2025 Letter and may respond with their own suggestions for a Fund reallocation at some point in the future.

At 2:51pm, Board recessed for the afternoon break.

At 3:00pm, the Board reconvened for its 2nd Afternoon Session.

5.C. Board Participation in Annual Audit

The Board participates in an advisory capacity in the District's Annual Financial Audit. This involves working through a packet of information & a presentation by the Auditor. The Member chosen asks questions of the Auditor and helps to make sure that the Audit has been completed and that all operational issues are accounted for & completed correctly. ***Mr. Cassel and Mr. Pfundstein were both willing to serve in this capacity. Rev. Zimmerman and Miskus will participate in their respective roles.***

6. Policy and Governance Matters

6.A. Revision of BOD Flow Chart

Lead: The Rev. Luke Zimmerman

Rev. Chairman Zimmerman noted new items that have been added to the flow chart. One of the primary goals of this work was to bring incomplete (or ongoing) work of the Board to address it regularly. "Review of Incomplete Actions of the Board" was added to the May Meeting's Flow Chart.

In addition, a secondary purpose of this exercise was to clean up the formatting, by identifying WHO completes what part of a flow chart action.

Motion "To accept the Feb 2026 BoD Flow Chart Revisions as Presented".

Motion was made, seconded and carried.

6.B. Technology Improvements for Internal Use

MyCommittee has been giving us issues about its reliability. It serves its purpose well but has been unable to be accessed of late. Pricing and reliability were noted.

Question: What are the main features of it that we use? Answer: Three general purposes: 1- Agendas, 2- Communication Features, 3- Repository of Documents.

It seems "glitchy/cumbersome" sometimes. Q: Are other Districts using it? A: Prior District Staff recommended it. But, some of the features are helpful for us, including the Documents being included in the Agenda.

A few alternatives were suggested. Board Effects was noted as a possible replacement option.

Vice-Chair Cassel was duly deputized to run a trial or two on other options.

6.C. Well-being and functioning of the District

Discussion was brought up about any of the challenges brought about or considered in the opening months of this Triennium. Bishop noted that issues or challenges in the District are being actively engaged via the Smart Goals as presented during this meeting. Appreciation for the Bishop's presiding over the 2025 Convention.

6.D. Synod Convention Overture

This Overture is made in recognition of the importance of a ***Synodical Director of Church Relations*** and that Pastor's specific role in guiding and facilitating conversations between various Lutheran Church Bodies on issues of theology, fellowship, and the like. The Board noted that our own District has benefitted greatly from the service of this role and would wish to continue supporting it in a specific, explicit manner.

Motion: To adopt and commend the Overture "To Amend Synod Bylaw 3.3.1.1.2(c)" to the 2026 Synod Convention for its consideration.

Made, seconded, and approved. This Motion was submitted for Synodical Consideration on February 7, 2026.

6.E. Fitzgerald Discussion

Question has come up about how to most responsibly steward this ongoing commitment of the Board, in regard to tuition assistance for the Fitzgerald children. Members Lane and Habitz are duly deputized to submit a proposal to the May BoD Meeting.

7. Closing Items

7.A Review of the Flow Chart

The Board is satisfied that it has completed its prescribed work in relation to the Flow Chart

7.B. Identification of Action Items for May 2026 Meeting

Lead: The Rev. Luke Zimmerman

++ Fitzgerald Family Proposal

++ Response from St John Hannibal

++ Meeting Organizational Tools

++ Preview of the Chairman's report on the Board's behalf to the May 2026 PCW Conference.

++ Results of the 2026 Audit

7.C. Review of Future Meeting Dates and Sites

Lead: The Rev. Luke Zimmerman
Issue / Discussion

++ May 18-19, North Olmsted, OH

++ August 15-16, St Luke-Toronto, ON

++ November 20-22, TBD

++ February 12-14, Eternal Life – Mesa, AZ

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8. Closing Prayer / Adjournment

8.A. Closing Prayer

Lead: The Rev. Anthony Oliphant

8.B. Adjournment of Meeting

Adjournment was approved at 4:32pm.

9. Dinner

The Board unanimously recognizes that the world’s best BBQ does unequivocally and in point of fact, all come from Kansas City, MO.

Submitted by

The Rev. Justin D Laughridge

February 19, 2026