English District LCMS
Board of Directors Meeting
Date: May 18–19, 2026
Location: Ascension Lutheran Church, North Olmsted, OH

Attendance

Present:
Mr. Jonathan Busarow; Mr. Chris Cassel (Online Attendance); 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 (present May 19)**;** ***Ms. Sally Naglich*****;** The Rev. Anthony J. Oliphant; ***Mr. Mark Pfundstein; Ms. Kristin Wellik; The Rev. Dr. Mark A. Wood; The Rev. Luke T. Zimmerman.***

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

Absent: The Rev. Dr. Michael A. Morehouse (May 18 only)

Agenda

1. Preliminary Items

1.A. Call to Order
The Rev. Chairman Luke Zimmerman will call the meeting to order at 1:03pm.

1.B. Opening Devotions
Miskus, Hymn 492 & LSB 282 & James 1: 19-27. Bishop Miskus reflected on the Baptized Life in Christ, continuing the Theme of his devotions from our February 2026.

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2. Organizational Matters

2.A. Roll Call and Determination of Quorum
Roll Call as indicated above was taken and finding a quorum to be present, Rev. Secretary Laughridge affirmed said Quorum pursuant to ***ED-LCMS Bylaw 9.3.4*** and the meeting will proceed as planned.

2.B. Adoption of Agenda

The proposed Agenda for this Meeting as reflected in these Minutes was adopted by unanimous consent. <u>This Agenda was duly approved by unanimous consent.</u>

2.C. Approval of FEB 2026 Meeting Minutes

The submitted Draft Minutes for the Board's February 2026 meeting were received and approved.

Motion: "To approve the February 2026 Draft Minutes as presented."

<u>Motion was made, seconded and carried.</u>

2.D. Review of FEB 2026 Meeting
The Board expressed their strong satisfaction with the oucomes of this meeting and furthermore thanks our kind hosts @ BSLC @ Lee's Summit, MO.

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3. Presidential & Executive Staff Reports

<u>3.A. President's Report</u>

"What God is Doing Through Us Together in Mission"

Bishop Jeffrey G. Miskus shared a slidedeck with the Board of Directors that can be used in Congregations to explore the work and the ministerial impact of the ED-LCMS as a whole. The Board offered a couple of minor suggestions and Bishop Miskus indicated that he will also be presenting these slides to the Professional Workers Conference in North Olmsted, OH later in the week.

Meanwhile, the Bishop's Report for the May 2026 Board of Directors meeting centers on the triennial theme "Living the Baptized Life in Christ," grounded in Galatians 2:20. Much of the report is reflecting upon James 1 and the Christian response to persecution, repentance, faithful living, mercy, and perseverance under trial. Alongside theological reflection, the report documents extensive district activity from February through May 2026, including:

congregational visits,

pastoral installations,

conferences,

convention preparation,

and leadership meetings throughout the English District.

Significant attention is given to ***pastoral shortages, seminary placement statistics, congregations currently in the call process, and concerns about declining worship attendance across the Synod.*** The report also discusses <u>district staffing transitions</u>, congregational closures and departures, legal matters involving CCC property litigation, and ongoing support for church workers and congregations facing conflict or hardship. Additional updates include campus ministry initiatives, ministerial health efforts, LCEF Canada integration, and preparations for the 2026 Synodical Convention, all emphasizing pastoral care, mission support, and spiritual renewal across the district.

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The Official Acts Report, as a subset of the Bishop's overall report to the Board, documents ministerial activities and personnel changes within the English District from February 1 through April 30, 2026. Several pastors and commissioned workers were installed, including

Rev. Charles St.-Onge in Pembroke, Ontario;

Rev. Colton LaMay in Windsor, Ontario;

and Rev. Travis Schmidt in Arlington Heights, Illinois.

Deaconess Carolyn Lindenmuth was both commissioned and installed at Trinity Lutheran Church in Albion, Pennsylvania.

The report also records calls accepted, pending, and returned, along with transfers into and out of the district. Congregational closures included Hope Lutheran in Fremont, California, and previously pending closures in Harrisburg and Chicago. Numerous congregations across the district remain in pastoral vacancy, including churches in Arizona, California, Ontario, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. Several congregations are temporarily served through vacancy pastors, circuit arrangements, or pulpit supply.

Additional updates include pastoral retirements, one pastoral death, and the appointment of Rev. Solomon Spangler as Circuit Visitor for the Detroit South Circuit.

3.A.1. Action Items Pursuant to Bishop's Report

This standing agenda item is included to record any actions taken by the Board of Directors in response to matters presented in the Bishop's Report. No actions were taken at this meeting. The item will remain in future minutes to provide a consistent place for documenting any Board actions arising from the Bishop's Report.

The Board of Directors went into afternoon recess at 2:50pm.

The Board of Directors returned from recess at 3:08pm.

3.B. Executive Staff Reports

3.B.1. Mission Report

Rev. J. Derek Mathers – Assistant to the Bishop Report (May 2026)
Rev. Mathers frames his report around the theme "Living the baptized life… without borders," emphasizing a shift from institutional maintenance to mission-driven leadership. Central to this is the CADDS tool, which helps congregations move from a "vacancy mindset" to a "provision

mindset," aligning pastoral calls with local mission needs. He encourages both personal and board-level reflection on whether decisions are advancing Gospel outreach across boundaries.

The report highlights strategic initiatives, including Bolick Foundation grants supporting campus ministry and school development, and the REV7:9 pilot program, which equips congregations to engage increasingly diverse communities in North America. Pastor Mathers is actively forming leadership clusters and receiving coaching to advance this work. His activity log demonstrates extensive engagement with congregations, call committees, and mission planning efforts. Overall, the report underscores a trajectory toward culturally aware, mission-focused ministry in a changing demographic landscape.

3.B.2. Education Report

Albert Amling – Education Executive Report (May 2026)
Mr. Amling's report to the Board of Directors highlights ongoing efforts to strengthen Lutheran education across the English District through relationship-building, operational support, and mission expansion. Over the past year, he personally visited ***all 36 district schools and preschools***, while maintaining regular communication with church workers to support administration, budgeting, and collaboration. He plays a key role in conflict resolution, worker support (including those under restriction), and facilitating calls for Concordia-trained church workers. Financial aid distribution and recognition programs like the Lumen Christi awards remain important aspects of his work.

Missionally, Amling is advancing school development initiatives, including

a Tucson-area school association,

and new schools in multiple states.

Enrollment continues to trend upward overall, which is encouraging, even as a number of challenges remain. Among the most significant are school closures in some areas, increasing competition for students, and ongoing shortages of church workers. Throughout his report and work, there is a clear commitment to servant leadership, fostering spiritual growth, and strengthening both the workers and institutions entrusted to our care. The emphasis remains not only on addressing immediate challenges, but also on cultivating healthy, faithful, and sustainable ministries for the future.

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

Ron Grimm's Gift Planning Counselor report summarizes ongoing stewardship, donor engagement, and endowment development work throughout the English District. Since February 2026, Grimm has worked with 48 active donor gifts estimated at over $11 million, while also cultivating relationships with 13 additional prospective donors. His work included assisting congregations with planned giving presentations, endowment creation, and investment account development totaling a potential $1.75 million. He also supported a Lutheran high school gymnasium fundraising campaign projected at $5.1 million and currently 42% complete.

Grimm conducted visits across California, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York City, and other locations to meet donors and congregational leaders regarding gift planning and stewardship initiatives. Ongoing work includes donors in multiple planning phases, congregational investment reviews, and gift confirmations already underway.

Future plans include presentations in Canada, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Michigan, and Texas focused on long-term endowment planning and congregational stewardship development.

3.B.4. LCEF District Vice-President Report

The English District LCEF Report, presented by John Hoover for May 2026, provided an overview of lending, investment, and district engagement activities through April 2026. The report noted 95 active loans within the English District, totaling approximately $29.42 million in outstanding balances, with no delinquent or maturing loans to report. A significant approved construction and bridge loan of $4.4 million for Fairlawn Lutheran Church in Akron, Ohio, was highlighted, while Christ Lutheran Church in Aurora, Ontario, completed repayment of its loan. Current congregational and residential loan interest rates were also reviewed.

Advent-Zionsville & Fairlawn-Akron have both begun school building projects in conjunction with LCEF partnership and support.

Accordingly, investment activity within the district also remains strong, with $52.53 million invested across 2,064 accounts. Current promotional efforts are focused on fixed-rate term notes and All Access Accounts. Mr. Hoover also summarized recent congregational visits and participation in call nights, while outlining upcoming visits planned throughout Canada and several U.S. states.

3.C. Constitution Committee Report

(Submitted by Bishop Miskus on behalf of Pastor Kelling)

The District Committee on Constitutions and Membership submitted its May 18, 2026 report to the English District Board of Directors. The committee recommended approval of constitutional and bylaw amendments for five congregations:

1- St. Marks Lutheran Church in Sheboygan, Wisconsin;
2- Redeemer Lutheran Church in Lincoln, Nebraska;
3- Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church in Lititz, Pennsylvania;
4- Martin Luther Chapel in Pennsauken, New Jersey; and
5- Calvary Lutheran Church in Harrisburg (Mechanicsburg), Pennsylvania.

The proposed changes included updates to term limits, spending authority, language clarifications, job descriptions, and board structure. The report also noted that the committee has completed its current workload of submitted constitutions and bylaws for review. The report was respectfully submitted by Chairman Rev. John Kelling.

<u>Motion "to accept these recommendations and approve such changes as advised by the District CCM" was made, seconded and carried.</u>

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4. Financial Matters

4.A. Audit Review: Fiscal Year Ending JAN 31, 2026

The Board received the English District Audit Management Letter for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2026, prepared by the LCMS Internal Audit Department. The audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and included consideration of the District's internal financial controls as part of the audit planning process.

The auditors reported that no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in internal control were identified during the audit. The report noted that the review was not intended to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of internal controls, but rather to support the financial statement audit process. Appreciation was expressed to district staff for their cooperation and assistance throughout the audit.

Directors Pfundstein and Wellik thanked District Staff and spoke encouragingly of their experience serving in this capacity as a part of the Audit Review team.

4.B. Treasurer's Report
Ms. Sally Naglich

Treasurer's Report – May 2026 Summary

The Treasurer's Report for the May 18–19, 2026 English District LCMS Board of Directors meeting presents a very strong and stable overall financial position for both the English District and English District Canada. Total district assets increased substantially to approximately $9.59 million, compared to $8.84 million in April 2025. This growth was driven primarily by continued strength in endowment investments, increased cash reserves, and growth in charitable trust holdings and related investment accounts. Net assets likewise rose significantly to approximately $8.64 million, reflecting the district's overall financial health, even as undesignated operating funds experienced only modest declines during the reporting period. District liabilities remained stable and fully manageable at roughly $947,000, indicating continued careful oversight of debt and financial obligations.

The report further highlights exceptionally strong investment performance during the opening months of the fiscal year, with net investment returns greatly exceeding budget projections through the first quarter. Congregational support and mission giving also surpassed anticipated budget levels, providing additional stability for ongoing district operations and ministry activity. Major expenditures during the reporting period included mission and congregational support initiatives, ecclesiastical administration, educational and school ministry programs, district operations, and fulfillment of Synodical commitments and obligations.

The Canadian financial statements similarly reflected positive financial improvement and responsible stewardship. Total net assets for English District Canada increased to approximately CAD $354,000, while liabilities were effectively eliminated in comparison to the prior year's position. Canadian operations reported favorable changes in net assets supported primarily through strong congregational giving, positive investment performance, and disciplined expense management. Overall, the Treasurer's Report reflects healthy and responsible financial stewardship, sustained investment growth, manageable liabilities, and continued support for the district's ministry priorities and mission commitments across both the United States and Canada.

The Board stood in Recess at 4:50pm.

The Board enjoyed fellowship and an evening meal at Great Lakes Brewing Co. in Cleveland, OH.

The Board reconvened on May 19, 2026 @ 8:32am.

Opening Devotions – Rev. Dr. Morehouse

Vice President Morehouse led the Board through Confession and Absolution, as well as the service of Morning Prayer, and reflected upon the readings from Psalm 27 & Acts 22.

The Board wishes to thank Pastor Joshua Ulm @ Ascension Lutheran Church for his presentation on the ministries of the Congregation, highlighting several of the projects in the Congregation that have been undertaken by way of District Endowment grants.

4.C. Endowment Fund Report
Lead: Ms. Kristin Wellik

The Board received reports on the English District Endowment Fund's

1-financial position and

2-grant activity.

In summary, the Endowment continues to demonstrate strong growth, increasing from approximately $5.39 million at the close of 2025 to $5.58 million as of April 30, 2026, reflecting healthy investment performance and prudent stewardship of entrusted resources. Available earnings for ministry grants totaled nearly $396,400 for the current cycle, supporting key areas including new missions, scholarships, church worker debt reduction, campus ministry, human care and disaster relief, and other ministry initiatives. The reports highlighted the Endowment's ongoing role in strengthening the District's mission and ministry through sustainable, long-term financial support.

Following this report on overall health and activity of the Endowment Fund, a discussion ensued pursuant to the importance formal policy around revenues from sales or other income (how those gifts are carried into the Endowment Fund and other actions associated with gift distribution). It was noted that an informal policy that has worked well up to this point is in place, but no formal policy directs the Board to designate these revenues in any specific way.

Therefore, ***Directors Pfundstein, Miller, Laughridge & Naglich*** will work on a proposed Policy for the ED-LCMS Corporate Ops Manual. Their work will be updated in future Board of Directors Meetings.

4.D. District Staff Housing Allowance Confirmation

A request has been made of the Board to Confirm a Staff adjustment for Housing Allowance as permissible under IRS Code for ministers of the Gospel.

Therefore, a Motion was made ***"To receive and approve the $20,000 Housing Allowance Resolution for Rev. Jeffrey G. Miskus". This Motion was seconded and carried.***

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5. Alignment of District Regions for 2028–2031 Triennium

District Bylaw 3.3(a): **"*The President and Vice-Presidents of the District and the Board of Directors acting jointly shall determine the membership of the four regions 24 months prior to Conventions of the District.*"**

Accordingly, a proposed regional alignment for the 2025-2028 Triennium has been made. This proposal has been presented for approval.

Motion "To retain and affirm the regional alignment for the 2025-2028 Triennium" was made, seconded and carried.

6. Unfinished Matters

6.A. Proposal for Fitzgerald Scholarships

Directors Honebrink and Lane were charged with finishing this task and following through on commitments made in relation to education funds for the Fitzgerald family daughters. This item remained unfinished for several reasons, and the proposal to complete this task and fulfill this commitment is before the Board today.

Motion "To bestow a memorial gift in the amount of $10,000 to Mrs. Erin Fitzgerald, to honor the memory of Mr. Lucas Fitzgerald" was made, seconded and carried.

6.B. Results of BOD Portal Experiment

Trial of BoardPro was conducted. There are 2 levels of functionality and the Task Force's proposal would be to use the "Essentials" Level at a cost of $1300/year. Board members were able to interact with a Trial. Director Cassel notes that if this decision results in a change of platforms, there will also be a further discussion about archiving, integration of our BoD flow chart for our work, and other utilizations of features.

Motion *"To discontinue use of MyCommittee and utilize BoardPro at the Essentials-package level"* was made, seconded and carried.

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7. Policy & Governance Matters

***7.A.* Consideration of BOD Member Appointment**

The Board will consider whether to appoint Mr. Grayson Beckman as a voting member. This would be an exercise of the authority granted by Synod Bylaw 4.5.1:

"Each district shall elect a board of directors, the size and composition of which shall be determined by the Bylaws of the district. The district board of directors shall also have the authority to choose to appoint to the board up to three voting lay members from the district's congregations to obtain additional skill sets (legal, finance, investment, administration, etc.). It shall have such powers and duties as are accorded to it by the Constitution, Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, resolutions, and policies of the Synod, as well as those of the district."

The Board entered Executive Session at 10:26am.

The Board exited Executive Session at 10:36am.

7.B. Report of President's Annual Executive Staff Review

This review is necessitated by our flow chart and thus, the Chair is to report in May on the President's Staff review. This meeting was conducted on April 21. The Chair presented his written summary of this meeting to the Board.

Consequently, this action was fulfilled and no further action is required by the Board of Directors.

7.C. Appointment of President's Salary Review Task Force

Current Board of Directors members shared their experiences. Directors Lane and Cassel noted that there are past documents to assist this Committee, as well as guidelines and current status of this salary and historical data points from within the Treasurer's office. Director Wellik notes the many considerations that must be taken into account year by year, and according to who holds this Office at the time.

Directors Pfundstein, Habitz, & Busarow have been appointed to this Task Force. They will report to the August 2026 Meeting.

7.D. Appointment of Personnel Review Task Force

Again, this a flow chart action initiated, and the Board receives reviews of the President's work as it pertains to the End Statements.

-- Did the President carry out his work pursuant to the End Statements?

-- Did the Board do its work according to its own policies, AND are those policies sufficient?

Directors Laughridge, Zimmerman, & Lane will work toward this & report back in August.

7.E. Review of BOD Report to MAY 2026 Professional Church Worker Conference

The English District Board of Directors report outlines the leadership structure, recent actions, strategic priorities, and future initiatives for the 2025–2028 triennium. The report identifies voting and non-voting members of the Board, including officers, vice-presidents, and appointed leaders.

Key actions taken between August 2025 and February 2026 included appointing district representatives and committee members, adopting new End Statements and the FY2027 budget, revising district bylaws for Synod compliance, supporting clergy debt reduction efforts, and overseeing property matters related to Hope Lutheran Church in Fremont, California.

The Board also submitted an overture to the 2026 Synod Convention regarding ecclesiastical representation.

The report emphasizes five major ministry priorities:

Christ-centered servanthood,

spiritual renewal,

healthy church workers and congregations,

mission and discipleship,

and faithful stewardship.

Anticipated future work includes policy revisions, district restructuring discussions, and implementing any convention-directed bylaw changes.

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8. Closing Items

8.A. Review of BOD Flow Chart

Directors are satisfied that all Flow Chart items were met.

8.B. Identification of Action Items for AUG 2026 Meeting
Lead: The Rev. Luke Zimmerman

-- Presidents Salary

-- Personnel Review

-- Policy on fund allocation from property sales

8.C. Review/Determination of Future Meeting Dates and Sites
Lead: The Rev. Luke Zimmerman

August 14-16, 2026 --- St Luke Lutheran – Toronto, ON

November 20-22, 2026 --- Grace Lutheran - Vine Grove, KY

February 12-14, 2027 --- Eternal Life Lutheran - Mesa, AZ

May 17-21, 2027 --- Zion Lutheran – Detroit, MI (in conjunction with District Workers Conference)

9. Adjournment & Closing Prayer

9.A. Closing Prayer
Rev. Dr. Morehouse led the Board in the Order of Service for Noon Prayer & bestowed a blessing upon those traveling in the days ahead.

9.B. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was approved at 11:04am.

The Board now stands in recess.

Submitted By,

Rev. Justin D Laughridge

Secretary, ED-LCMS