

# Southwestern Minnesota (3F) Synod Forecast

## Living in Christ's Mission:

† Engaging leaders † Equipping congregations † Serving in God's world †

Southwestern Minnesota is a hot house for growing leaders for God's church. Receiving the gifts of young leaders and helping them grow, mature and develop is one of our synod's vocations. It also is one for many of our congregations.

Our synod has 264 congregations. On a typical Sunday there are around 34,000 people worshipping God in our congregations. These congregations range in size. Our largest that would have almost 800 people at worship a week. Our smaller membership congregations that have as few as 15 people at worship a week.

Our synod's mission statement does a nice job of capturing the many mission locations of our congregations.

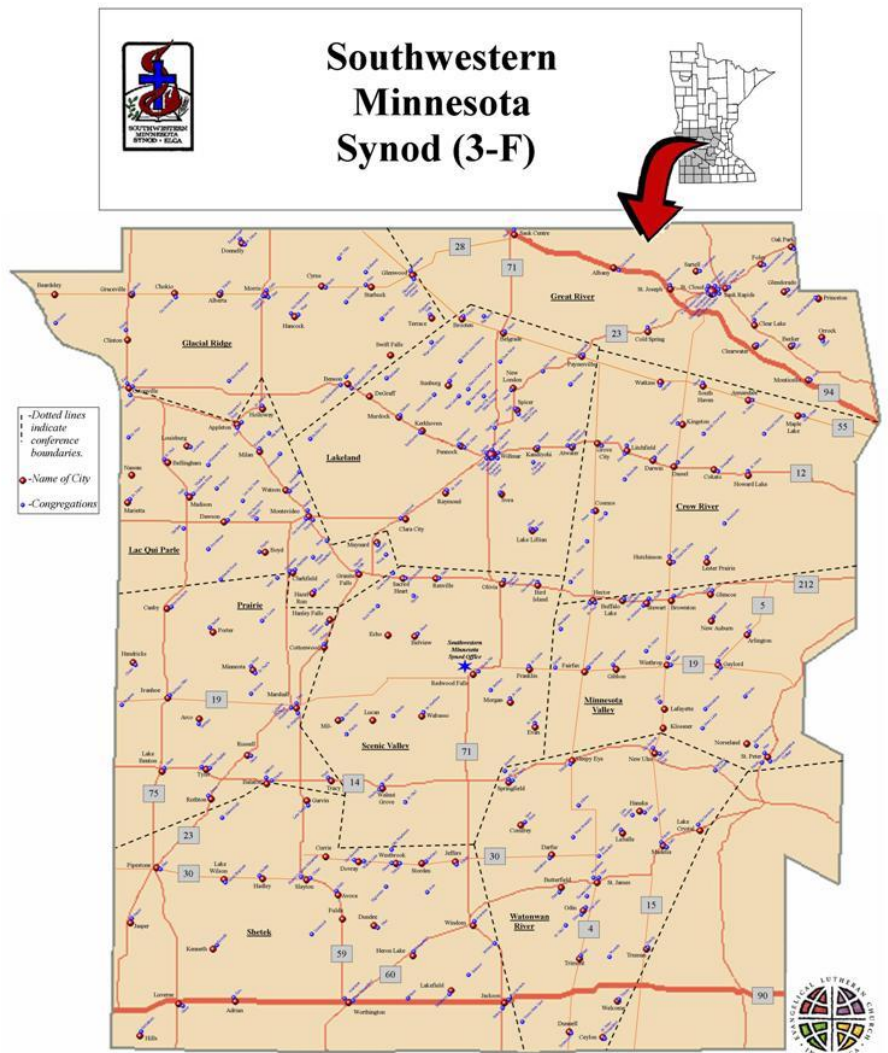
### Mission Statement

*The congregations and all the baptized who are the Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are claimed by this mission: God places us in cities, farms and towns together under one prairie sky. The Risen Christ surprises us with opportunities to plant God's Word in the world. Walking together in confidence,*

- † we cultivate life-giving congregations
- † nurture partner ministries, and
- † cooperate in the life of the ELCA.

**By God's grace, together we have what we need.**

The majority of our first call opportunities would be multiple point calls in the rural western half of our synod. Each year we also will have a number of multiple staff



congregations looking for candidates to serve. These would be located in county seat towns across the synod, but rarely in the St. Cloud area. Sometimes we have first call congregations that are solo calls.

We have had reduced mobility in the past year since the stock market decline. Still we will have a number of congregations ready to call pastors to join them in their mission in Jesus name. In the past we have placed typically 6-8 first call candidates in the spring assignment. This time we will be looking for 4-6 candidates in the Spring of 2010. Our vacancy list is at the address below. It is important to note that some congregations are just beginning their transition period and others are interviewing at this time. So the list only gives you a sense of what is happening in terms of call process in our synod's life. <http://swmnelca.org/html/Congregations%20in%20Call%20Process.html>

Our largest metro area is around St. Cloud. This is also the area where we have the most candidates requesting calls. The majority of pastors who seek to serve in our synod imagine serving in the eastern one third which is closest to the Minneapolis, St. Paul metro area. In the Southwestern corner we have a few congregations that are near to Sioux Falls. Our openings are normally in the western two thirds of our synod.

There are county seat towns throughout the synod that have populations of 5-20,000 people. We have large congregations in those communities. You may want to use Google maps to look more closely at our geography and see these towns. St. Cloud, Hutchinson, Litchfield and St. Peter have been our growing communities. Now they are hard hit by the economic issues. Willmar, Marshall, Worthington are regional centers.

There are colleges and universities in the...

St. Cloud area- St. Cloud State, St. John's University and St. Benedict's College

Marshall – Southwest State University

Morris – University of Minnesota Morris

St. Peter – Gustavus Adolphus College

There are community colleges spread through our territory.

If you are not from this area, the western third is beautiful flat prairie of the kind that Kathleen Norris describes in her book **Dakota**. Rural people are down to earth, honest and faithful. In the northern third of our synod we have some of the most beautiful lakes, hills and hard wood forests in the state. Our synod has always been a place immigrants come to live. In recent years immigrants from around the world are coming to be our new neighbors. This would include Latino neighbors, but also new Africans and also eastern Europeans. Worthington has 27 different languages being spoken. Since our synod has always placed a high importance on Global Mission we know God is simply bringing the world to us now.

Our web site is found at [www.swmnelca.org](http://www.swmnelca.org) . There you can learn much more about the Southwestern Minnesota Synod. God's peace in this time as you enter the personal and communal discernment process leading to your first call.