

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Jonathan H. Folts
Bishop

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THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE
of SOUTH DAKOTA

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To: Clergy and Lay Leaders with Congregational Oversight

Cc: Diocesan Council Members, Standing Committee Members, and Diocesan Staff

From: Bishop Folts

Date: September 29, 2025

Re: 2025 Diocesan Convention Information, Packet 3

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!

This is the final packet of information for our upcoming Diocesan Convention, which is being shared with you via email. This packet includes:

1. An updated agenda reflecting a few last-minute changes.
2. A resolution entitled "*Affirming the Sacred Worth of All People and Calling for the Rescission of Wounded Knee Medals of Honor*".
3. The minutes from the 2024 Diocesan Convention.
4. Reports from the Standing Committee, the Commission on Ministry and Diocesan Council.

Please combine this material with what was sent to you in **Packet #2** last week.

AND...we now have Diocesan Convention SWAG! If you'd like to promote our Diocesan Convention theme and support Thunderhead Episcopal Center at the same time, check out this [link](#)!! **More Diocesan Swag to follow!**

Our Convention will begin promptly at **4:30 PM on Thursday, October 3rd**, at **First United Methodist Church in Pierre**. As noted in the earlier packets:

- The **first round of ballots** for elected positions will take place on Friday, so all clergy and delegates should plan to arrive and register that day.
- The **Convention Eucharist** will be held on **Saturday at 9:00 AM**, rather than on Friday evening.

If you have any questions, please contact **Marlys Fratzke** at the Diocesan Office; she will be glad to assist you.

Safe travels, and God's blessing be with you as we gather together!

"Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action." - 1 John 3:18



FAITH IN ACTION
LOVE WITHOUT
LIMITS

DIOCESAN CONVENTION AGENDA

141st Diocesan Convention
The Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota
October 3-4, 2025
First United Methodist Church
117 North Central Avenue, Pierre, South Dakota

FRIDAY, October 3

12:00 – 3:30 pm	Niobrara Council Meeting (DeLoria Center)
3:00 – 4:30 pm	Registration and Credentials — (In front of Trinity Center, UMC)
3:00 - 4:00 pm	Property Insurance Seminar w/ Canon Maggie Riley (UMC - Office by Registration area by Trinity Center)
3:15 – 4:15 pm	Choir Practice (UMC Worship Space)
4:30 - 5:00 pm	Plenary Session 1 (Trinity Center): Call to Order, Opening Prayer, Opening Song, Land Acknowledgement, Credentials Committee Report, Approval of Agenda, Election of Convention Secretary, Crow Creek Tribal Chairman Peter Lengkeek's Remarks, Meal Grace
5:00 – 5:45 pm	Supper — (Trinity Center in UMC)
6:00 – 8:00 pm	Plenary Session 2: UMC Welcome, Introductions, Elections, Approval of Minutes, Motion to Accept Reports, Introduction of Bp. Read, Introduction of Leora Tadgeon (Keynote Speaker), Clergy who have joined Our Diocese since the last Convention, Clergy or Personnel who have Been Ordained since our Last Convention, Clergy Who Have Retired Since our Last Convention, Diocesan Staff Additions, Departed Clergy/People Since Last Convention

SATURDAY, October 4

8:00 – 8:45 am	Registration and Credentials (UMC)
9:00 – 10:30 am	Convention Eucharist
10:45 - 12:00 pm	Plenary Session 3: Election Results, Thunderhead Episcopal Center Report, ECW/ UTO Presentations, Resolutions
12:00 - 1:30 pm	Lunch / Quilt Auction / Tour the Display and Visit Exhibit Hall
1:30 - 4:00 pm	Plenary Session 4: Bishop's Charge, 2025 Financial Report, 2026 Budget Presentation, Resolutions
4:00 pm	Blessing and Dismissal



RESOLUTION #9

**141st Diocesan Convention
The Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota
October 3-4, 2025
First United Methodist Church
117 North Central Avenue, Pierre, South Dakota**

RESOLUTION #9: Resolution Affirming the Sacred Worth of All People and Calling for the Rescission of Wounded Knee Medals of Honor

Resolution Submitted by: The Very Rev. Ward Simpson, M.Div., Dean, Calvary
Episcopal Cathedral

Specialist Robin Bowen, Military Police Corp, U. S. Army,
Disabled Veteran

WHEREAS, the Wounded Knee Massacre of December 29, 1890, resulted in the unconscionable killing of Lakota, Miniconjou, and Hunkpapa, primarily women, children, and the elderly, by the U.S. Army, and is a tragic wound in the history of the United States and the relationship between the United States and the Lakota/Dakota/Nakota; and

WHEREAS, the Medals of Honor awarded to soldiers for their actions at Wounded Knee sanction this violence, perpetuate a false narrative of valor in the face of atrocity, and stand as an ongoing affront to justice and reconciliation; and

WHEREAS, the Episcopal tradition affirms the Incarnation—the belief that God became human in Jesus Christ—thereby upholding the sacred worth and dignity of every human being as created in the image of God (Imago Dei); and

WHEREAS, the Episcopal theology of the Incarnation holds that God's entry into human history dignifies all humanity. To honor actions of massacre is to directly contradict this fundamental belief. The Medals of Honor, by celebrating the destruction of human life, violate the inherent sacred worth (Imago Dei) of the men, women, and children slain at Wounded Knee. The church is compelled by its faith in the Incarnate Word to speak against any action that demeans or disrespects a member of the human family. As the Apostle Paul writes, "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" (1 Corinthians 12:26), making the continued honor of this massacre a shared suffering and a contradiction of our call to unity in Christ; and

WHEREAS, Lakota/Dakota/Nakota theology profoundly recognizes the interconnectedness of all life and creation, often expressed as Mitakuye Oyasin ("All My Relations"), a spiritual truth that demands respect and kinship for all beings; and

WHEREAS, the Lakota/Dakota/Nakota theological concept of Mitakuye Oyasin teaches that all people are related, belonging to a single, sacred family. The Medals of Honor stand as a monument to the betrayal of this kinship, an act of division and alienation. True reconciliation requires the recognition of this universal relationship and the removal of symbols that celebrate the breaking of that bond. Removing the medals is a step toward honoring Wakan Tanka (the Great Mystery) and respecting the interconnectedness of all creation; and

WHEREAS, the continued existence of these medals is a stumbling block to healing and unity, preventing the full realization of the kinship and reconciliation that both the Christian faith and Lakota/Dakota/Nakota spirituality call us toward;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this 141st Convention of the Diocese of South Dakota opposes the Secretary of Defense's decision to let the Medals of Honor issued for actions at Wounded Knee stand; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call upon the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense to rescind these Medals of Honor immediately, recognizing that such action is not a denigration of valor but an act of moral courage and historical correction; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that this action is sought not in a spirit of condemnation, but in a profound desire for reconciliation, justice, and healing, affirming the sacred worth of all people and seeking to move all people toward the unity and kinship (Mitakuye Oyasin) mandated by our shared faith in the Incarnate God and the common family of humanity.

**Minutes of the
140th Annual Convention
of the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota
Oct. 4-5, 2024
First United Methodist Church, Pierre, SD**

Friday, October 4th, 2024

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Jonathan H. Folts, XI Bishop of South Dakota, called the 140th Annual Convention to order at 6:02 p.m.

The Rev. Isaiah “Shaneequa” Brokenleg led the opening song.

The Rev. Dr. Christina O’Hara gave the Diocese’s Land Acknowledgement.

Bishop Folts read the welcome statement from Clyde Estes, retired Tribal Chairman of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe.

Bishop Folts offered an opening prayer.

Bishop Folts introduced the Rev. Jeff Lathrop, pastor of First United Methodist Church, Pierre, who welcomed us.

Bishop Folts introduced and welcomed Forrest Cuch, our keynote speaker.

Bishop Folts then introduced those at the head table with him, as well as those assisting with this Diocesan Convention: Steve Sanford, Chancellor; Lee Dayton, Vice Chancellor; The Rev. Canon Dr. Canon Lauren R. Stanley, Dispatch of Business and Secretary of Convention; The Rev. Jean Mornard, Assistant Secretary of Convention; Josh Simpson, Technology and Sound; and the Rev. Shaneequa Brokenleg, Dispatch of Worship, Song, and General Mirth.

Bishop Folts then introduced the clergy who have joined the Diocese since the last Convention: The Rev. Johannas Asmussen, a retired priest from the Diocese of Minnesota who is now helping at All Angels in Spearfish; and Lutheran Pastor Wayne Meidinger, who is doing interim supply ministry at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church and New Home Lutheran Church in Mitchell.

Bishop Folts introduced clergy who have been ordained since the last Convention: The Rev. Dr. James Foster, ordained to the priesthood.

Bishop Folts noted clergy who have left the Diocese or retired since the last Convention: The Rev. Lydia Wilson, who moved to Alaska; and the Rev. Larry Ort, who retired.

Bishop Folts introduced the new Archdeacon for Congregational Vitality, the Ven. Clay Riley, who continues to serve as the full-time rector of All Angels, Spearfish.

Bishop Folts led prayers for clergy and people of note who have died since the last Convention: Ben Conquering Bear, Senior Catechist, Pine Ridge Episcopal Mission.

Diana Mathisrud, President of the Episcopal Church Women of the Diocese, addressed the Convention on behalf of the ECW and the United Thank Offering.

The Rev. Deacon Marty Garwood presented the report on credentials and reported that there was a quorum in both the lay and clergy orders.

Bishop called for a motion to accept the Agenda of Diocesan Convention. Sam Kitto, Our Most Merciful Savior, Santee, made the motion. Conrad Schroyer, St. Matthew's, Rapid City, seconded. The motion passed.

The Convention took up Resolution 1, "Recognizing Tiospaye Wakan as a Parochial Mission under Canon 16." The Very Rev. Ward Simpson, Dean of Calvary Cathedral, presented the resolution. David Zinz, Calvary Cathedral, seconded. The motion passed.

Bishop Folts then called for the approval of the Minutes from the 2023 Diocesan Convention. Deacon Marty Garwood made the motion, Dean Ward Simpson seconded it. The motion passed.

Bishop Folts called for the acceptance of the reports from different Diocesan Committees and Commissions, which were sent out prior to Convention. Deanna Stands, Woniya Wakan/Holy Spirit, Wagner, made the motion. The Rev. Kurt Huber, Cheyenne River Episcopal Mission, seconded. The motion passed.

Bishop Folts recessed the Convention at 7:01 p.m.

Saturday, October 5

Bishop Folts called the 140th Convention back to order at 9 a.m.

Bishop Folts then delivered his annual address and charge.

A recess was called from 10:02 to 10:30 a.m., and the Bishop called Convention back to order at 10:30 a.m.

Bishop Folts introduced the Keynote Speaker, Forrest Cuch who gave his keynote address.

Bishop called for the elections for the Diocesan Standing Committee. Since there was only one person running in the Lay Order, Michele Keppen, of Grace, Madison, Canon Lauren, as Secretary of the Convention, cast a unanimous ballot. In the Clergy Order, Canon Lauren provided instructions for voting. The ballots were collected.

Bishop Folts called for a recess at 11:57 until 1:30 p.m.

Bishop Folts called the Convention back to order at 1:30 p.m.

Bishop Folts announced that The Rev. J.D. Barnes, Emmanuel, Rapid City, was elected as the clergy member for the Standing Committee.

Julie Gehm and The Rev. Kim Folts, co-chairs of the Thunderhead Episcopal Center (TEC) Committee, gave the TEC report. T

Canon Lauren, Deanna Stands, Dean Simpson, and other deputies gave the report on General Convention 2024.

Canon Maggie Riley, Canon for Finance and Property, gave a 2024 Financial YTD Presentation as well as presented the 2025 Budget. The Rev. Clay Riley, All Angels, Spearfish, moved to accept the Budget. Warren Hawk, St. Elizabeth's, Wakpala, seconded the motion. The 2025 Budget passed.

Bishop Folts led a presentation for Archdeacon Emeritus Paul Sneve on his retirement as archdeacon. The Diocesan staff presented Fr. Paul with artwork and a certificate.

Bishop thanked Forrest Cuch for his presence and presentation. Fr. Paul, Warren Hawk, Robin Bowen, and Carol Cloud Eagle presented Forrest with a star quilt.

Courtesy resolutions were presented. Dean Simpson, chair of the Resolutions Committee, presented each courtesy resolution, thus making the motion to pass each one.

- Forrest Cuch was thanked for being the keynote speaker. (Seconded by Michael Mornard, Grace, Huron. Motion passed.)
- Archdeacon Emeritus Paul Sneve was thanked for his service and continuing prayers called for. Deacon Marty, St. Andrew's, Rapid City, seconded the motion. SaraBeth Donovan, of St. Matthew's, Rapid City, presented a Dakota Hymnal that had been given to her mother, Deacon Nancy Donovan, at her ordination, and thanked Fr. Paul for his legacy at St. Matthew's. (Motion passed.)
- The Convention will send deepest thanks and gratitude to the Medical Trust Task Force and the Church Pension Fund for their hard and dedicated work on lowering our medical insurance costs for our Diocese. (Canon Lauren seconded. Motion passed.)

- The Convention conveys its thanks and deepest gratitude to the Rev. Jeff Lathrop, Pastor of First United Methodist Church; to Ron Smith their Organist; and to Elaine Scott, their Administrator for hosting us and for helping us with all of the logistical details. Convention also thanks all the staff and volunteers of First United Methodist Church for their care, delicious food, and gracious hospitality. (Seconded by Julie Gehm, Calvary Cathedral. Motion passed.)
- The Convention thanked the clergy and laity of the Northwest Deanery for their hard work and for providing us with good cheer and great snacks. (The motion was seconded and passed.)
- The Convention thanked Josh Simpson for offering his technology skills for Convention. (Seconded by The Rev. Kim Folts, motion passed.)
- The Diocese will send greetings and prayers to the eighth Bishop of South Dakota, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Craig Anderson, and his wife; to Anne Robertson, widow of Bishop Creighton Robertson, IX Bishop of our Diocese; and to Pat Tarrant, widow of the Rt. Rev. John Tarrant, the X Bishop of our Diocese, wishing them all God's blessings. (The motion was seconded and passed.)

Bishop Folts offered God's blessing on Convention.

The 140th Convention of the Diocese of South Dakota was adjourned at 3:16 p.m.

Standing Committee Report – Diocesan Convention 2025

The Standing Committee meets via Zoom on the second Thursday of the month. However, we only meet if there is business to be transacted. Current members of the Committee are: Robin Bowen (2025); the Rev. Kim Fonder (2025), President; Shirley Crane (2026); the Rev. Pat White Horse-Carda (2026); Sara Beth Donovan (2027); the Rev. Deacon Marty Garwood (2027), Secretary; Michelle Keppen (2028), the Rev. J. D. Barnes (2028). The year in parenthesis denotes the end of a person's term. One clergy and one layperson are elected every four years

A summary of the activity of the Standing Committee since Diocesan Convention 2024 is as follows:

October 10, 2024:

1. Election of current slate of officer
2. Decision made to interview Michael Mornard and Brenda Lewis in November as required by the ordination process.

November 14, 2024:

1. Approved the request for consent to the election of the Rev. Angela Maria Cortiñas as Bishop Suffragan of West Texas.
2. Approved the request for consent to the election of the Very Rev. Amy Dafler Meaux as Bishop of West Missouri
3. Interviewed Brenda Lewis and based on that interview recommended her as a Candidate for Ordination as well as recommending her as a person ready for ordination
4. Interviewed Michael Mornard and based upon that interview recommended Michael as a Candidate for Ordination. However, he was not recommended as a person ready for ordination at that time.
5. Recommended Barbara Simpson as a person ready for ordination

January 9, 2025

1. Share our reflections on the interview with Michael Mornard with Canon for Formation Ellen Huber
2. Approved the request for consent for the Reunion of the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Central Pennsylvania

April 10, 2025

1. Approved the request for consent to the election of the Rev. Angel Roberto Rivera Rodriguez as Bishop Diocesan of the Episcopal Church in Cuba.

June 12, 2025

1. Approved the request for consent to the election of the Very Rev. Rob Price as Bishop Coadjutor for the Diocese of Dallas.

Respectfully Submitted as Secretary of the Standing Committee,

The Rev. Deacon Marty Garwood

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

Report to 2025 Convention

The Commission on Ministry (COM) is a group of clergy and lay people chosen by the Bishop and the Diocesan Council that helps individuals in our diocese through the process of formation in ministry and discernment towards ordination. We pray and meet with each person in this process at the various stages of aspirant, postulant, and candidate to help them hear the voice of God in their calling. The COM also gives each person in the process a “shepherd” to help them understand and navigate the process. COM members work closely with the Bishop and Canon for Formation.

There are currently three individuals at various stages of the process of discernment toward ordination. One is an aspirant discerning a call to be a deacon, one is a postulant discerning a call to the priesthood, and one is a deacon working on studies to become a priest. Since our last report, one individual has withdrawn from the process, and two individuals were ordained to the Diaconate: The Rev. Barbara Simpson and The Rev. Brenda Lewis.

Current members of the Commission on Ministry are Jessica Bad Horse, The Rev. Shaneequa Brokenleg, The Rev. Larry Ort, Mona Vocu, The Rev. Iva Traversie, The Rev. Dr. James Foster, The Rev. Dr. Christina O’Hara, and The Rev. Cn. Ellen Huber (co-chairs of the commission). The COM would like to sincerely thank outgoing member The Ven. J. Clay Riley for his service to the COM and to the people in discernment.

For the Commission on Ministry,

The Rev. Dr. Christina O’Hara+ (co-chair)

The Rev. Cn. Ellen Huber+ (co-chair)

Diocesan Council Highlights November 2024 -August 2025

November 2024

- 1) The Rev. Ellen Huber has been hired as Canon for Formation and will begin this work on December 1, 2024, along with her current duties as Supervising Presbyterian for the Cheyenne River Mission.
- 2) Diocesan Council addressed the subject of a congregation and its financial assessment situation with the Diocese.
- 3) Bishop Folts requested the following Committees to be formed:
 - o A Diocesan Assessment Committee, chaired by Canon Stanley.
 - o A Rectory/Church Building Assistance Fund Committee, chaired by Canon Riley.
 - o A Property Insurance Committee, also chaired by Canon Riley.
 - o A Parish/Missions/Deaneries Committee, led by Archdeacon Riley.

February 2025

- 1) The Rev. Kim Folts presented a TEC Revision Update, the Diocesan Assessment Task Force Recommendations to Diocesan Council, and various reports were received.
- 2) Cn. Maggie led the Diocesan Council through a series of congregations that needed the remainder of their 2024 financial assessments forgiven.
- 3) Cn. Maggie led the Diocesan Council through the Diocesan Assessment Task Force about how to handle late appeals regarding assessments.
- 4) Various reports were received.

March, 2025 – Special Meeting

The Diocesan Council, as directors of the South Dakota Episcopal Foundation, approved the transfer of four lots to the Wakpamni Lake Community Corporation so that they could build a much-needed laundry facility, and directed the South Dakota Episcopal Foundation to take all necessary steps to effect this transfer.

April, 2025 – Special Meeting

Holy Innocents Episcopal Church, Parmelee, requested and was approved to be granted a Centennial Fund loan in the amount of \$30,000, should they need it. *(Side note: they raised the funds, and never needed to receive the loan! Alleluia!)*

May 2025

- 1) We welcomed Deacon Bonnie Slusher, Interim Black Hills Deanery Representative.

- 2) Canon Sierra Kacher was welcomed aboard as our new Canon for Thunderhead Episcopal Center and Diocesan Youth Ministries. Canon Sierra announced that the Diocese has surpassed our challenge grant goal, raising over \$108,643.42 for the camp. Our Diocese contributed \$58,643.42. Canon Sierra is looking ahead to summer 2026 and exploring programs for our young people and the Diocese. Currently, the TEC Committee is using the funds from the Grant Challenge to bring our Thunderhead facility up to code and update its appearance. Canon Sierra sincerely thanked everyone who contributed to this achievement. She said it was a wonderful way to feel welcomed to South Dakota and Thunderhead, and she is excited about the ministry ahead. In closing, Canon Sierra reminded everyone to feel free to reach out with questions and share information about TEC work weeks and TEC Savvy Nights.
- 3) Various reports were received

August 2025

- 1) We approved necessary changes to the restricted funds whose former purposes were outdated
- 2) We approved changes to the Commission on Ministry membership
- 3) We acted on a resolution from the June 2025 Niobrara Convocation
- 4) We approved a motion to help fund a Niobrara Convocation Special Committee
- 5) We received a Thunderhead Episcopal Center (TEC) Revision Update and TEC Savvy Report.
- 6) We considered and approved resolutions to present to the 2025 Diocesan Convention
- 7) We approved the Registration Cost for Diocesan Convention
- 8) We approved the Financial Report
- 9) We approved the 2026 Draft Budget
- 10) Various reports were received

This summary is respectfully submitted by Marlys Fratzke