



Conference 1 Report for 2026 Southeast Michigan Synod Assembly

Our conference includes the following congregations:

All Saint Lutheran-Hartland, Pr. Diane Sponheim (interim)

Grace Lutheran-Howell, Pr. Ken Greble

Holy Spirit Lutheran-Grand Blanc, Pr. Nathan Allen

King of Glory Lutheran-Flushing, Pr. Monica Villarreal (contracted stated supply)

Lord of Life Lutheran-Brighton, Pr. Kristin Vander Ploeg (interim)

Messiah Lutheran-Swartz Creek, (supply)

Our Risen Lord Lutheran-Burton, Pr. Karole Langset

Salem Lutheran-Flint, Pr. Monica Villarreal

Shalom Lutheran-Pinckney, Pr. Dan Quagliata

St George Lutheran-Brighton, Pr. Ken Staib

St John Lutheran-Fowlerville, Pr. Diane Greble

Transfiguration Lutheran-Fenton, Pr. Kate Zywicki

Conference 1 gathers both in person and on Zoom (usually alternating months) to support one another and share updates about the congregations we serve. In the first few months of 2025, we discussed the pericope texts for Lent. In June, we welcomed our DEM, CJ Clark, to talk with us about mission development and explore the “Strategic Recommendations” report from Fuller and Barna. In August, the conference welcomed via Zoom Dr. Amy Allen, who presented her new book, *The Gifts They Bring: How Children in the Gospels Can Shape Inclusive Ministry*. In November, we heard from Dave Morin, CEO of Samaritas, to receive updates on their ministry across the state.

There were a number of transitions and celebrations from Conference 1 in the past year. On July 19, members of the conference celebrated with Pr. Monica Villarreal and her spouse, Andy, as their second son, Joseph, was baptized at King of Glory.

In September, Pr. Denise Russell stepped back from her role as pastor at All Saints in Hartland while remaining the Region 6 Candidacy coordinator. Pr. Diane Sponheim continues to serve the congregation in an interim capacity as they journey through the call process.

After 25+ years of ministry, Pr. Dale Hedblad retired as pastor of Lord of Life in Brighton at the end of December. Pr. Kristin Vander Ploeg returned to Conference 1 to serve as the interim beginning in January.

For 16 months, Pr. Sean Meyers served as the interim pastor of Our Risen Lord in Burton until January of this year when they welcomed Pr. Karole Langset, who was installed on February 14, 2026.

In the midst of a changing landscape, the congregations in Conference 1 continue to faithfully proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ in their local contexts, and I am grateful for the faithfulness and creativity of my conference colleagues as they serve in our Synod.

Respectfully submitted,

Pr. Nathan Allen, Dean