



**SYNOD
OF THE SUN**

Synod Assembly

Spring Assembly | February 22-23

Presbyterian Mission Center

Irving, TX

Synod of the Sun

2026 Spring Assembly | February 22-23

Presbyterian Mission Center, Irving, TX



Event Schedule - Monday, February 22

Monday, February 22

9:00am	Pre-Assembly Event	ALICE Training
Noon	Morning Prayers	Karen Rogers
12:30pm	Lunch	
1:15pm	Assembly Plenary	
6:00pm	Dinner	
7:00pm	Worship	Communion and Installation of Libby Janes

Tuesday, February 23

8:30am	Morning Prayers	Mitch Miller
8:45am	Assembly Plenary	
11:45am	Closing Prayers	Ron Fike
Noon	Box Lunches	



**SYNOD
OF THE SUN**

Declaration of Quorum

**Seating of Corresponding Members &
Visitors**

Adoption of Agenda

Acknowledgement of Land & People

**Approval of Fall Stated Assembly
Minutes**

Synod of the Sun

2026 Spring Assembly | February 22-23

Presbyterian Mission Center, Irving, TX



Proposed Agenda - Monday, February 22

Welcome, Introductions, Opening Prayer

Synod Moderator, Ron Fike

Declaration of Quorum

Seating of Corresponding Members & Visitors

Adoption of Agenda

Acknowledgement of Land & People

Approval of Fall Stated Assembly Minutes

Commissioner Orientation/Training

Mitch Miller, Synod Leader and Stated Clerk

Synod Goals and Priorities

2026 Budget Approval

Bill Wiles, Treasurer

BREAK

Committee Meetings

Orientation and Community Building

REPORT: CSP

Thomas Riggs, Director

REPORT: SPDR

Libby Janes, Director

PRESENTATION: Rev. Dr. Ted Foote

Synod of the Sun

2026 Spring Assembly | February 22-23

Presbyterian Mission Center, Irving, TX



Proposed Agenda - Tuesday, February 23

Plenary Continues

Report of the Synod Leader/Stated Clerk

Mitch Miller, Synod Leader and Stated Clerk

Committee Reports

Connecting

Polly Williams, Moderator

Empowering

Leah McFadden, Moderator

Equipping

Molly Casteel, Moderator

Coordinating Team

Sharon Curry, Moderator

BREAK

Greetings from Ghost Ranch

Plenary Continues

Covenant Partner Reports and Renewals

Closing Prayers

Ron Fike

2025 Fall Stated Meeting Minutes

Synod Stated Meeting First Presbyterian Church | El Paso, TX October 27, 2025

Welcome & Introductions –Synod Moderator Sharon Curry called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. CT.

Roll Call & Declaration of Quorum – In accordance with the Bylaws, Sec. 3.1.3 whereby 50% or more of the elected commissioners constitutes a quorum, a quorum was declared by Synod Leader/Stated Clerk Mitch Miller. 20 of 26 Commissioners were present (*Attachment A*).

Seating of Corresponding Members & Visitors – Corresponding Members and Visitors were also acknowledged and seated. Ron Fike moved and Polly Williams seconded that the Corresponding Members and visitors be seated and given privileges of the floor. Motion carried (*Attachment A*).

Opening Prayer – Coordinating Team Moderator Ben Davidson opened the Assembly with prayer.

Adoption of the Agenda – With the meeting agenda presented, Polly Williams moved and Carlos Baladez seconded that the agenda be adopted. Motion carried (*Attachment B*).

Acknowledgement of Land & People – Commissioner Jerry Boles invited the attendees to pause and remember the Indigenous peoples who had lived on the land long before them, including the Mescalero Apache and the Lipan Apache. He offered thanks for the church's long-standing presence and contributions to the spiritual and social life of the border community since its founding in 1882. Jerry emphasized honoring the connection between people and the land, committing to Christ's boundless love, and allowing that love to transform them into a unified church family. He concluded with a reflection that their words, thoughts, and deeds might deepen their relationship with the Creator and foster a renewed connection to the land that sustains them.

Approval of Minutes – Moderator Curry presented the minutes from the previous Synod Assembly on February 24-25, 2025, for approval. Approval of the minutes for the Stated Meeting were moved by Ben Davidson and seconded by Ed Wolf. Motion carried (*Attachment C*).

Presentation by Presidente Pastor Felipe Barandiarán of R. Sinodo Nacional Del Noroestes - Presidente Felipe Manuel Pastor presented an overview of the National Northwest Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Mexico. He explained that the synod covered a vast territory, including Baja California, Durango, Monterrey, and Ciudad Juárez, and was organized into five presbyteries, some of which had recently been restructured. He introduced the leadership

2025 Fall Stated Meeting Minutes

team, including moderators and presidents of the various presbyteries, and described the synod's mission to support presbyteries through evangelism, education, resources, and prayer. Felipe emphasized the goal of fostering unity, cooperation, and mutual support among presbyteries, particularly along the border, and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve, highlighting a commitment to giving and building relationships rather than merely receiving (*Attachment D*).

Finance Report and 2026 Proposed Budget – Treasurer Bill Wiles summarized the budget's three main components—cash income and expenses, reserve funds, and donor-restricted funds—while explaining accruals and deferred incomes that balanced the apparent \$21,000 deficit. The presenter highlighted that the Synod had approximately \$750,000 in operating cash, \$3.1 million in investments, and \$9 million managed by a supporting foundation, totaling about \$13.4 million in financial resources. He also shared that 80% of funds were allocated to programming, with only 20% to administrative costs, emphasizing that the 2026 budget allocated \$418,000 to programs like the Synod Youth Workshop and the Hispanic Mission Ministries Network, reinforcing the organization's healthy financial position and ongoing commitment to mission and ministry (*Attachment E*).

Bill asked representatives of Synod Youth Workshop and Hispanic Ministry Missions Network to talk about their ministries.

Commissioner Leah McFadden reported that the Synod Youth Workshop in July at the University of Tulsa was highly successful, with 146 participants from eight presbyteries across four states, supported by \$13,158 in scholarships from the Synod of the Sun. She invited alumnus William to share how his 2019 experience as a freshman inspired community building, faith-led service, and lifelong friendships, noting that many former participants now serve as adult leaders. The 2026 workshop was previewed, with keynote speaker Michael Eastman, broader presbytery participation encouraged, and the event scheduled for July 13–18 at Tulsa.

Commissioner Carlos Baladez shared how his mother's teaching to advocate for the vulnerable shaped his nursing career and later ministry work. Recognizing patients as human lives inspired him to help revitalize the struggling Hispanic Mission Ministries Network by launching "Developing Tomorrow's Leaders Today," a leadership program funded through grants and workshops. The initiative trained participants to craft and deliver sermons, emphasizing that Christ equips all leaders and that no church is pastorless. It empowered young leaders to step into ministry, successfully leading services in pastors' absence, demonstrating the lasting impact of investing in people and fostering a mindset of service and abundance.

Following those presentations and on behalf of the Coordinating Team, Bill moved the proposed 2026 budget for the Synod of the Sun to Assembly for approval. Motion carried (*Attachment F*).

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Human Resources Committee – Scott Campbell, Moderator of the Human Resources Committee, reported to the Assembly. Scott introduced the newly formed HR team and invited nominations for an additional member with significant HR experience. He reported that the HR team recommended, and the council approved, a 2.8% cost-of-living adjustment for staff, aligned with CPI and Social Security changes, emphasizing it was not merit-based. The team also highlighted a shift from traditional personnel management to a people-centered human resources approach, including increasing discretionary funds from \$10,000 to \$20,000 to support confidential counseling and other staff needs. Additionally, they presented a consolidated and updated HR manual, incorporating consistent terminology, recordkeeping, continuing education changes, and other feedback, describing it as a living document open to ongoing review and questions. On behalf of the Committee, Scott moved the adoption of the new HR manual. Motion carried (*Attachment G*).

Moderator's Report – 2025 Synod Moderator Sharon Curry reported to the Assembly. She reflected on their first year in the role, highlighting the collective accomplishments of the organization's 11 presbyteries, 22 commissioners, 700 congregations, and over 150,000 members. She provided an overview of the work done by commissions and committees, including initiatives like the Synod Youth Workshop and Commissioned Pastors Network. The moderator recognized key leaders, staff, and committee moderators for their dedication and noted upcoming events such as a retreat for commission pastors and small church leadership development. She encouraged participants to explore the Synod's website for more information and expressed gratitude for the collaborative efforts that sustain the organization, emphasizing the ongoing impact and future promise of their collective work (*Attachment H*).

Communication Services Plan – Thomas Riggs, Communication and Administration Coordinator, reported on the CSP Program. The Communications Services Program (CSP) partners with mid councils and Presbyterian programs across the denomination, offering website creation and maintenance, newsletters, and social media support—from Boise to St. Augustine and beyond. In addition to serving clients in states like Arizona, Kansas, Arkansas, and Louisiana, CSP is building new websites for several presbyteries and celebrating the creative ministry of Communications Contractor Lindsay Freeman-McCarthy. Through these partnerships, CSP helps share the stories of vibrant ministries addressing racial justice, anti-racism education, disaster preparedness, and social concerns like housing and food insecurity. From supporting presbytery mergers to amplifying local initiatives, the Synod of the Sun continues to strengthen Presbyterian witness through communication, collaboration, and storytelling (*Attachment I*).

Synod Leader/Stated Clerk Report - In his Fall 2025 report to the Synod Assembly, Synod Leader and Stated Clerk Rev. Mitch Miller reflected on a year of transition, partnership, and

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ministry across the Synod of the Sun. He expressed deep gratitude to Rev. Kathy Lee-Cornell for her leadership of the Synod Partnership for Disaster Recovery (SPDR) as she moves to a national role with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Highlights of the year included the Synod Leadership Retreat at Mo-Ranch, the addition of NOROC (New Opportunities for Romanian Orphaned Children) as a new Covenant Partner—accompanied by Miller’s eye-opening visit to Romania—and ongoing engagement with presbyteries and partners across the region. He also reported on the Oklahoma presbyteries’ plans to explore merging Cimarron, Eastern Oklahoma, and Indian Nations presbyteries into one, requesting an exception to Book of Order provisions during this process. Having traveled extensively to attend presbytery meetings, retreats, and gatherings, Miller reaffirmed his commitment to presence, partnership, and strengthening ministry connections throughout the Synod (*Attachment J*).

Introduction of Libby Janes – Synod Leader Mitch Miller formally introduced Elizabeth “Libby” Janes as the new Director of the Synod Partnership for Disaster Recovery.

Libby Janes is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with experience in hospital, counseling, and community social work. Libby earned a Master of Divinity degree at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, a Master of Social Work degree at Texas Tech University, and her Bachelor of Arts from Austin College, majoring in Religious Studies and History, and minoring in Anthropology and Non-Profit Organizations & Public Service. Libby is certified call-ready for ordination as a Minister of Word and Sacrament. Libby presently serves as a member of the PC(USA) Task Force to Explore Theology and Practice of Ordination.

Libby expressed a lifelong call to ministry and described pivotal social work experiences from her past work. In this new role as Director of the Synod Partnership for Disaster Recovery, Libby expressed hope in building relationships, celebrating strengths, and exploring what’s possible. Libby offered prayer for the people in Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti, and other Caribbean Islands presently being hit by Hurricane Melissa.

Empowering Committee – Moderator Lisa Almon reported on behalf of the committee. The Empowerment Committee’s Fall 2025 report celebrates how God is “doing a new thing” (Isaiah 43:19) through the ministries supported by the Synod of the Sun. Guided by the Synod’s mission, the committee awarded grants to border, youth, and Hispanic ministries that fostered growth, connection, and transformation across the region. The Tres Rios Border Foundation continued its advocacy and education work with migrants and will host the 2025 Fall Assembly in El Paso. The Synod Youth Workshop in Tulsa gathered 146 participants for worship, service, and healing after recent tragedies, supported by 57 scholarships that increased diversity and access. The Hispanic Ministries Mission Network held multiple workshops, expanded digital outreach, and is planning a regional gathering to reimagine Hispanic ministry within the PC(USA). The Network for Dismantling Racism produced new podcasts, continued vital

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dialogue, and seeks to renew engagement through future events. Through these efforts, the committee witnesses God's ongoing renewal and empowerment across the Synod (*Attachment K*).

Grants and Scholarship Commission – Moderator Polly Williams reported on behalf of the committee. In 2025, the Synod of the Sun's Grants and Scholarships Committee distributed **\$104,196.25** in mission dollars to ministries and programs across ten presbyteries, supporting a wide range of efforts that embody faith in action. These included border and refugee outreach, youth and young adult programs, Hispanic and LGBTQ+ leadership development, humanitarian and homeless ministries, and higher education and seminary scholarships. Highlights included support for the Genesis Creative Collective in Austin, refugee aid through Clear Lake Presbyterian Church, youth scholarships for the Synod Youth Workshop and Intercultural Youth Conference, and compassionate outreach from New Orleans to Houston. Funds also strengthened international partnerships through mission trips and sustained covenant partners like NOROC and Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services. Each grant reflected the Synod's shared commitment to serving God's people, fostering community, and nurturing new generations of faithful leaders (*Attachment L*).

Equipping Committee – Moderator Molly Casteel reported on behalf of the Committee. In 2025, the Equipping Committee focused on defining its mission and identifying key priorities for training and resource development across the Synod of the Sun. The committee invites participation from members throughout the synod and seeks input on educational and equipping opportunities, including required trainings such as boundary, sexual misconduct prevention, and anti-racism training, as well as sessions on cultural competencies, COM/CPM and PJC training, Synod standards for commissioned pastors and lay leaders, and the Communication Services Plan. Their goal is to discern how best to support and strengthen leaders and ministries through relevant, accessible, and collaborative learning opportunities (*Attachment M*).

Greetings from the Office of Stewardship and Funds Development – Lemuel García-Arroyo and Sarah McDowell brought greetings from the Office of Stewardship and Funds Development. Sarah introduced upcoming changes to the PC(USA) Special Offerings, effective January 1, 2026. The denomination will consolidate from four offerings to three, with no mission partners losing support. The Pentecost Offering will be retired, and its youth and young adult programs will move under the Christmas Joy Offering. The Peace and Global Witness Offering will be rebranded as the World Communion Offering. A major new feature will be an easy grant application process—replacing the small local retention funds—to provide minimum \$500

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grants to congregations, presbyteries, or synods. Webinars and Q&A sessions will be offered in December to guide churches through the transition.

Greetings from PC(USA) Mid-Council Relations – Sallie Watson, Associate Director of Mid Council Relations for the PC(USA) Interim Unified Agency, brought greetings from the PC(USA) Mid-Council Relations office. She explained that the denomination is in the midst of a major restructuring, merging the former Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Office of the General Assembly into a single governing body—currently called the “Interim Unified Agency,” a placeholder name soon to be replaced. The new agency’s focus will center on supporting and strengthening mid councils rather than operating from a top-down model. Sally described her work connecting with presbytery and synod leaders, advising search committees, coordinating leadership gatherings, and preparing for the 227th General Assembly in Milwaukee next summer. She noted strong participation in upcoming events, including the Mid Council Leaders Gathering and the Moderators’ Conference, and encouraged presbyteries to submit commissioner names by December 24.

Connecting Committee – Moderator Polly Williams reported on behalf of the Connecting Committee. The Synod of the Sun Connections Committee has been actively engaging with and celebrating covenants with partners such as Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center, Lyon College, the Presbyterian Historical Society of the Southwest, Tres Rios Border Foundation, and Trinity University, with meetings held throughout 2025. Key ongoing considerations include ensuring covenant partners receive boundary training, maintaining strong historical and denominational ties, and keeping detailed records of covenant-specific responsibilities, including Synod representation on boards and management of scholarships. The committee is also exploring ways to uniquely connect with the denomination, such as sponsoring events like Stewardship Kaleidoscope in New Orleans (2025), a Presbyterian Professional Chaplains breakfast (2026), and approving space for Presbyterian Women gatherings. These efforts reflect a commitment to fostering meaningful, structured partnerships across the Synod (*Attachment N*).

Signing of Covenant Agreement and Covenant Partner Reports –

Lyon College – Maggie Alsup, chaplain at Lyon College and commissioner from Arkansas Presbyterian, shared updates on the college’s growth and initiatives since 2018. Highlights included the opening of the state’s first dental school with 80 students, the groundbreaking of a new veterinary school specializing in shelter animal care, the return of college football with a new on-campus stadium, and high student enrollment reaching near-capacity. The college also prioritized student well-being through programs like “Sabbath Scholars” for spiritual and mental health, a food pantry and snack program to address food insecurity, and the addition of

2025 Fall Stated Meeting Minutes

a therapy dog named Bear for pastoral care. Alsup emphasized Lyon College's commitment to hands-on learning, service, and community support, noting the diversity of the student body, including a significant population from Nepal, and the ongoing efforts to foster academic, spiritual, and emotional growth (*Attachment O*).

Presbyterian Pan American School – Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo, an alum and board member of Pan-American School, expressed gratitude for the ongoing support from the Presbyterian Church, highlighting the school's century-long mission of educating and preparing Christian leaders from diverse backgrounds. Pan-American School serves students from multiple countries, creating a vibrant, multicultural environment where students learn, worship, and grow together. Despite recent challenges such as declining enrollment after COVID and immigration policies, the school continues to provide high academic achievement and college readiness, supported by scholarships and partnerships. Lemuel invited continued engagement from the church community—as board members, faculty, or supporters—to help sustain and expand the school's mission, emphasizing its role as a home, a place of faith, and a platform for intercultural learning and leadership development (*Attachment P*).

Trinity University – Alex Serna-Wallender, chaplain at Trinity University, introduced the university and its president, Dr. Vanessa Beasley, highlighting their covenantal relationship with the Presbyterian Church since 1869. Dr. Beasley, the first female president of Trinity, shared accomplishments under her leadership since 2022, including the university's rise in national rankings, strong student success and employment outcomes, and a commitment to character-driven education. She emphasized Trinity's focus on developing leaders who could engage respectfully with diverse perspectives, citing programs like a semester-long "listening class" that taught students to listen with curiosity and compassion. Beasley also underscored the university's dedication to nurturing students' mind, body, and spirit, promoting both academic excellence and community engagement, and reaffirmed the importance of the longstanding covenantal partnership with the church in shaping the university's mission and values (*Attachment Q*).

Presbyterian Historical Society of the Southwest – Without a representative from PHSSW present, the signing of the Covenant Agreement will take place at a future Assembly (*Attachment R*).

Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center – Joel Gill, Executive Director at Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center, described Ferncliff as a thriving hub of mission, ministry, and community impact. Once struggling with aging infrastructure and finances, Ferncliff gained independence as a 501(c)(3) and transformed into a center of healing, outreach, and service—hosting students affected by school shootings, supporting disaster relief through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, and offering year-round mission opportunities. With programs like a nature

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preschool, volunteer service projects, and a focus on outdoor learning and creation care, Ferncliff emphasizes the lasting impact of kindness, collaboration, and spiritual growth. Upcoming projects, such as stream restoration, reflect the camp's commitment to caring for creation while providing meaningful experiences on its expansive 12,200-acre campus (*Attachment S*).

Tres Rios Border Foundation – Members of the Foundation noted that during the previous day's activities, they had ample opportunity to share their mission to inspire, equip and connect Presbyterian congregations in the U.S.–Mexico border region (and beyond) to meaningful ministry, by responding to migration-related challenges with a focus on narrative change, systems change, and personal transformation (*Attachment T*).

Solar Under the Sun – Expressing gratitude for the support of the Synod and partners like Solar Under the Sun, Board Member Tom Ulrich highlighted how their collective efforts bring life-changing miracles around the world through solar-powered solutions. These initiatives provide children with light for studying, access to clean water, and medical care in previously underserved areas, demonstrating the transformative power of faith, compassion, and collaboration. Through vivid stories from Haiti and Ukraine, Tom illustrated how small acts of generosity—installing solar panels, sharing resources, and fostering cross-cultural partnerships—illuminate hope, inspire curiosity, and improve lives, showing that even modest contributions can create lasting impact and reflect God's love in tangible ways (*Attachment U*).

Installation of 2026 Moderator – In the space of closing worship, Commissioner Ron Fike was installed as the 2026 Moderator of Synod of the Sun. With the Assembly's business concluded in closing worship, Polly Williams made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ron Fike. Motion carried.



**SYNOD
OF THE SUN**

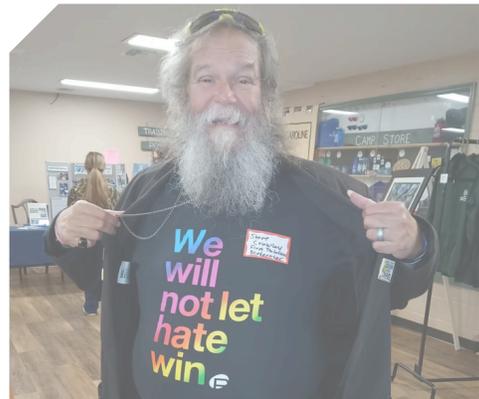
CSP & SPDR Reports

Serving Christ

**The Communication Services
Plan of the Synod of the Sun**
 A ministry to and for the
 Presbyterian Church (USA)

to the
 of
 Peaks





The Communication Services Plan of the Synod of the Sun

A ministry to and for the Presbyterian Church (USA)

Synod of the Sun

Presbytery of Arkansas

Mission Presbytery

Pines Presbytery

Presbytery of South Louisiana

Eastern Oklahoma Presbytery

Indian Nations Presbytery

New Covenant Presbytery

Synod of Lakes and Prairies

Synod of the Southwest

Presbyterian Programs

Assoc. of Mid Council Leaders

Presbyterian Leadership Formation Program

Presbyteries

Twin Cities Presbytery

Snake River Presbytery

Presbytery of Northern Kansas

Presbytery of Southern Kansas

Missouri Union Presbytery

Grand Canyon Presbytery

de Cristo Presbytery

Mountain Laurel Presbytery

Presbytery of Coastal Carolina

Central Florida Presbytery

Presbytery of Peaks and Plains

Presbytery of Wabash Valley

Presbytery of South Alabama

St. Augustine Presbytery

Notes:

We have 27 partners from four time zones.

We generate between 8 and 12 newsletters or flyers per week.

We generate an average of 100 social media posts per week.

Synods

Synod of the Covenant

Synod of South Atlantic

Synod Partnership for Disaster Recovery “SPDR” Report
Synod of the Sun Assembly
February 2026

The SPDR Leadership Group consists of:

- Kathy Lee-Cornell (2025), Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
- Matt Miles (2022), Tres Rios Presbytery
- Julia Farrell (2025), Pines Presbytery
- Richard Williams (2022), Presbytery of South Louisiana
- Cheryl Pennington (2024), Indian Nations Presbytery
- Bill Wiles (2025), Synod Treasurer
- Mitch Miller (2024), Synod Leader and Stated Clerk, Synod of the Sun.

The SPDR Leadership Group met for an in-person meeting on October 14, 2025 in New Orleans, LA. Members of the Leadership Group will next meet virtually on March 4, 2026.

The SPDR Presbytery Liaisons Team consists of:

- Ray Stephens, Presbytery of Arkansas
- Jim Ellor, Grace Presbytery
- Sandra Murray, Mission Presbytery
- Tim Schlais, Oklahoma Presbyteries
- Charley Shurtz, Presbytery of New Covenant
- Joe Gambill, Palo Duro Presbytery
- Nancy Bergeron, Pines Presbytery
- Rebecca Lovingood, Presbytery of South Louisiana
- Mike Burnett, Tres Rios Presbytery

SPDR hosts quarterly virtual Liaisons Calls to check in with each presbytery and share any relevant information and resources among the team. The SPDR liaisons met virtually on February 2, 2026 and will next meet on May 11, 2026. SPDR liaisons’ goals for 2026 are:

1. to establish active disaster committees in each presbytery to facilitate communication between the SPDR, the presbytery, and congregations before/during/after disasters;
2. to update congregations’ contact information in each presbytery, so SPDR and presbytery disaster committees can communicate directly with church leaders;
3. to increase liaison representation to two representatives per presbytery;
4. to update written guidelines of role descriptions, establish expectation of two-year renewable liaison service terms, outline system processes, and list basic resources for SPDR liaisons;
5. to coordinate an in-person training meeting for Fall 2026.

SPDR continues to provide regular communication through “*The SPDR Web*” blog and the Synod of the Sun e-newsletter. **Please be sure to subscribe** by entering your email on the pop-up box on the www.synodsun.org website.

SPDR engages in macro-level community organizing efforts by attending **Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster “VOAD”** regional and statewide meetings in Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana. SPDR and local church leaders attend **Long-Term Recovery Group “LTRG” meetings**, which support recovery efforts and meeting unmet needs following disasters. SPDR strives to continuously learn about disaster preparedness and share helpful training and resources with the Synod of the Sun as much as possible. SPDR will be attending several **disaster response conferences** this spring with other disaster recovery partner agencies, with the hope of bringing new evidence-based practices, training, and resources from the professional field of disaster recovery, back to the Synod of the Sun, so that congregations can be provided access to this information.

SPDR collaborates closely with **Presbyterian Disaster Assistance “PDA”** and assists presbyteries in applying for a variety of grants, including initial, long term recovery, resilience, church damage assistance grants. SPDR additionally offers emotional/spiritual support and disaster preparedness trainings and resources as needed to local congregations.

SPDR attends **presbytery disaster response team “DRT” meetings** and is collaborating with presbytery leaders and SPDR liaisons to develop disaster response teams in every presbytery. Each active DRT has engaged disaster response work in areas of focus that are specific to their region, and SPDR liaisons assist in sharing resources from these areas of expertise between various presbyteries.

In 2025, the Synod of the Sun experienced several disasters across eleven presbyteries. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and the Synod’s Grants Commissioned awarded a total of **\$160,500 in disaster assistance funds**. See the included 2025 Year-In-Review report for more information.

Winter Storms Update:

In 2026, SPDR supported the whole Synod of the Sun to prepare for and respond to the Jan. 23-28 **winter storms**. Meteorological updates and NOAA forecast images from the Jan. 21 Texas Gulf Coast Regional VOAD meeting were shared through the Synod e-newsletter to encourage churches to prepare for coming storms. SPDR received great feedback from several churches and presbyteries that this advance notice helped many churches adequately prepare for the storms, and minimal damages were reported. AR-DRT reported every church they called to check on had seen SPDR’s warning message, and no damages were reported for their presbytery. SPDR hopes to continue strong communication, to bring statewide resources to support and prepare local congregations, and to collaborate with presbytery disaster response teams to check on local churches during, and in recovery efforts following, disasters.

During the storms, SPDR called to check on congregations within areas affected by power outages, per public data online, and connected presbyteries with PDA initial assistance grants for winter storm recovery.

2026 previous and upcoming visits & presentations:

- Jan 4: Preaching, First Presbyterian Church of Kerrville, TX
- Jan. 4-6: Synod Leadership Retreat at Mo-Ranch
- Jan 6: Visit to Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX
- Jan. 11: Preaching, Fires Presbyterian Church of Copperas Cove, TX
- Jan. 12-14: Visit to Presbytery of South Louisiana, New Orleans, LA
 - Visited Rev. Kathy Lee-Cornell for SPDR handoff, disaster recovery leaders, Pointe-Au-Chien tribe, YAVs, Okra Abbey, a historic cemetery, and Jefferson Presbyterian Church's Food Bank
- Feb. 16: Grace Presbytery Small Churches' Zoom Gathering
 - Presentation on church safety planning, with Jeff Hampton from FPC Copperas Cove
- Feb. 20-21: Tri-Presbytery Meeting, Stillwater, OK
 - SPDR 1-hour presentation & supporting presbytery clean-up kit mission project
- Feb. 22-24: Synod Assembly Meeting, Irving, TX
 - Collaborating with Grace DRT for their brief "ALICE: What's it about?" mini training
 - Installation service as SPDR Director, evening of Feb. 23
 - SPDR 1-hour presentation
- Feb. 26: Grace Presbytery Meeting, Flower Mound, TX
 - Brief SPDR introduction & tabling with Grace DRT
- March 6-7: Mission Presbytery Meeting, Cuero, TX
 - Questioning by COM/Presbytery for ordination approval
- March 9-10: 2026 Disaster Summit, hosted by the Lt. Governor of Louisiana, Baton Rouge, LA
- March 13-14: Arkansas Presbytery Meeting at the University of the Ozarks, Clarksville, AR
- March 20-21: Young Adult Conference at Mo-Ranch
 - Preaching at worship service & serving on planning team
- April 6-8: Commissioned Pastors' Retreat at Mo-Ranch
 - Presenting about church disaster planning
- April 12-16: PDA Annual Conference at Zephyr Point, Lake Tahoe, NV
- May 1-2: Tri-Presbytery Meeting, Oklahoma City, OK
- May 4-7: National Voluntary Orgs. Active in Disasters (VOAD) Conference, Reno, NV

Respectfully submitted,

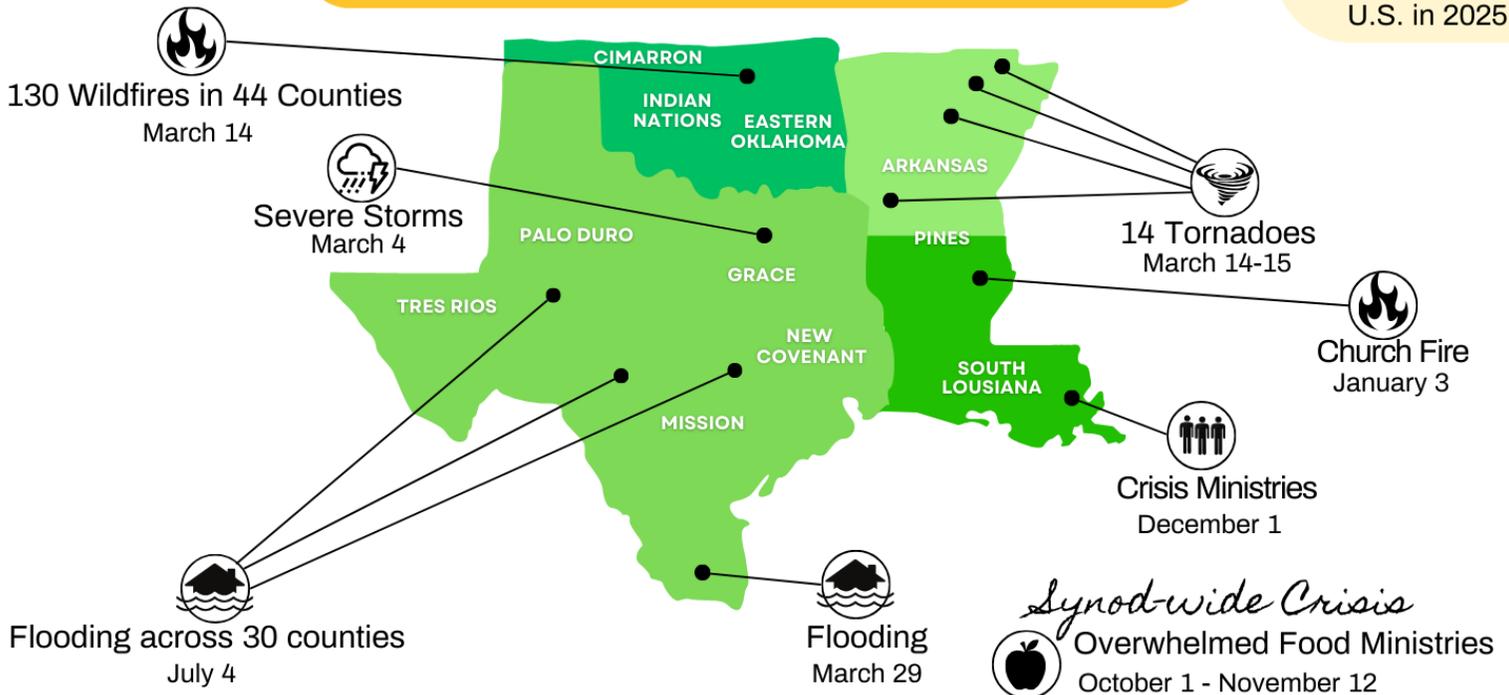
Libby Janes, Director of the Synod of the Sun Partnership for Disaster Recovery



2025 *Year in Review*

10 Days
The average time between billion-dollar weather and climate disasters in the U.S. in 2025.

Disaster Relief Across 11 Presbyteries



2025 DISASTER GRANTS



\$78,000 Long Term Recovery Grants



\$15,000 Church Damage Grants



\$67,500 Initial Response Grants

\$160,500 TOTAL GRANTS

Awarded by
Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
& the Synod of the Sun



DISASTERS:

sudden calamitous situations that overwhelm a church community, causing widespread destruction and severe disruption to social and economic functioning, requiring external aid for recovery

SPDR partners with presbytery disaster response committees to support local initiatives such as:



Weather-related disaster recovery programs



Community partnerships for long-term recovery



Supporting overwhelmed church food ministries



Encouraging First Aid/CPR/AED & Active Shooter Response trainings



Providing church disaster preparation trainings



**SYNOD
OF THE SUN**

**Synod Leader/Stated Clerk
Report**

Synod Leader and Stated Clerk Report: February, 2026 Synod Assembly

Last Fall we welcomed our new Director of the Synod Partnership for Disaster Recovery, Libby Janes to the staff. She is quickly proving to be more effecting and invaluable than we expected. We look forward to her installation into the position at our Spring Assembly in Irving. Now that we fully staffed and I look forward to continuing the work of strengthening the mission and ministry of the Synod of the Sun in 2026 and beyond.

Again, we are thankful to our sisters and brothers in Grace Presbytery for their willingness to provide the Synod office space in the Presbyterian Mission Center in Irving. Their gracious (pun intended) support of the synod is not only invaluable but truly meaningful and Spirit affirming.

The Stated Clerks will be meeting immediately following this Assembly to review presbytery minutes for 2025.

The offer of covenant partnership from Sinodo Nacional del Noroeste is being explored. Many thanks to the Rev. Carlos Baldez who has been serving as a liaison. His help has been invaluable in moving the process forward. We hope to have covenant for your review and approval soon.

I have continued with my goal to strengthen the synod relationships with our covenant partners, inter-acting when possible with Partner events and leadership.

In early January (4th through the 6th) we held the annual Synod Leadership Retreat at MO Ranch. At this gathering we examined the work of the synod over the past year, and reset our synod priorities for 2026. What follows are the top priorities we have set for our work in the coming year.

- **Focus on Commissioners** - build better scaffolds for Commissioner success: enabling support through training/orientation, setting expectations, clarity around roles and responsibilities, connection to passions and gifts, recruiting and retention.
- **Racial Equality and Intercultural Communities** – commit resources to race equity and relations across synod committee and commission functions. Foster healthier relationships with intercultural communities.
- **Commissioned Pastors and Smaller Congregations** – support Commissioned Pastors and support presbytery conversations seeking collaboration around CPs. Facilitate connections and support for smaller congregations across the synod.
- **Grow Synod Youth Workshop** – work to grow Synod Youth Workshop by 20%, focused on racial diversity and expanding participation to all presbyteries.
- **Campus Ministry Network** – create and enable a new Campus Ministry Network by tapping into the resources of our existing Covenant Partners.
- **Officer Training** – Share approaches and resources for officer training.
- **Fulling Functioning Committees** – supporting the work of synod committees with resources and fuller commissioner and at large membership.

- **Review and Operations Manual** – review the synod Operations manual, updating policies and procedures.
- **HMMN** – continue to support the growth and expansion of Hispanic Mission and Ministry Network initiatives.
- **SPDR** – continue to expand the vision of the Synod Partnership for Disaster Recovery, supporting the creation of disaster response teams in every presbytery.
- **Strengthen Spirituality** – promote energy, intelligence, imagination and love by becoming a more prayerful and Spiritually motivated synod.

These are certainly not all that we will be doing, and there are many other important tasks, both required by our charge as a synod and those we have always found the need to do. But with so much on our plate and so many challenges facing the Church, we felt it necessary to give some guidance and focus on our efforts and that of the synod staff in the coming year.

Some of the Synod Leader’s Activities since the last assembly:

- Attended presbytery meetings in Oklahoma, Palo Duro, Tres Rios, and Grace Presbyteries
- Attended the online EP Forum gatherings
- Represented the SOTS and participated in the board meeting of the Pan-American School in Kingsville, TX
- Led the Synod Leadership Retreat at Mo Ranch
- Hosted the Fall Gathering of the PCUSA Synod Executives in Dallas
- The first five people to give the name of the first Synod in America and the year founded (within 10 years) get choice of prize
- Attended the Annual Gathering of the Association of Partners in Christian Education (APCE) in Pittsburgh
- Participated in one ordination service
- Attended HMMN gathering in San Antonio.
- Driven over 4600 miles and flew another 2400 miles.

Upcoming Dates:

March	6 Mission Presbytery Meeting (Cuero, TX)
	7-8 Mission Presbyterian Women’s Retreat (Mo Ranch)
	13-14 Synod of the Sun Presbyterian Women Gathering (Irving, TX)
	23-26 PCUSA Synod Clerks Gathering (Irving, TX)
April	6-10 Flourishing in the Spirit (Gilmont, TX)
	21 Austin Seminary Visit
May	1-2 Oklahoma Presbyteries (OKC)
	14-15 Pan-American School Board Meeting

16 Pan-American School Graduation
June 22- July 2 227th meeting General Assembly of the PCUSA

2026 promises to be a busy and exciting year. I will continue to attend as many presbytery meetings as possible and continue to preach when invited, and strengthen our ties with covenant partners.

I welcome your questions, suggestions, input, encouragement, and prayers.

Your Servant in Christ,

Mitch Miller



**SYNOD
OF THE SUN**

**Committee/Commission Reports
Connecting Committee**



Report

Monday, February 23 and Tuesday, February 24 2025

I am collaborating with Princeton Abaraoha and Diana Smith who served with me in 2025 AND I AM SO THANKFUL, to propose updates to our web page.

Mitch and Carlos Baladez have been working with the **Presbyterian Pan Am School** to revise the covenant language addressing concerns raised at the El Paso Assembly regarding outdated terminology.

Mitch and Synod Treasurer Bill Wiles are working with the **Presbyterian Historical Society of the Southwest** to mutually sign a current covenant.

We invite you to join us in holding **Andy Odom** and his family in hearts, thoughts and prayer. Recently retired, he served as the representative to the Board of Trustees to the **University of the Ozarks** on behalf of the Synod of the Sun before ANY could imagine his mother and younger members of his family would survive the July 4th 2025 floods in Hunt and surrounding areas but their property would not. Flood waters destroyed a beloved residence that had been in his family for generations.

He has stepped back from the board temporarily.

Defining Covenant Partnership

We've been challenged to articulate what it means to be a covenant partner. As a starting point, I offer this quote from the PC(USA) 219th GA Social Witness Policy, *Living through Economic Crisis: the Church's Witness in Troubled Times*:

"COVENANT IS THE NAME FOR HUMAN COMMUNITY DEFINED BY THE INDIVIDUAL'S COMMITMENT TO THE WELLBEING WITHIN THE COMMUNITY... WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT SHALOM—THE PEACE THAT GROWS OUT OF JUST AND LOVING RELATIONSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER AND WITH GOD—IS ROOTED IN OUR ACTUAL INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND INDEPENDENCE."

For our purposes, we must also address and define:

- Historical denominational ties and roots of covenant relationships;
- Current partnerships with other Reformed traditions; and
- The role of individuals who, per the covenant, serve on boards of trustees/directors of Synod partners.

As we look to future Synod gatherings, we consider the invitation list and are in the process of updating our contact information. Options include:

Representatives currently serving on partner boards; One representative per covenant partner; and/or

Only those whose covenant will be mutually signed at the meeting.

Feedback Welcome

Your input on the covenant definition and meeting participation is appreciated.

Yours in Christ, **Polly Williams**

The Rev. Miss Polly Warren Williams - Moderator, Synod of the Sun Connecting Committee 2026

pollywarren@icloud.com

214/740-0122



**SYNOD
OF THE SUN**

**Committee/Commission Reports
Empowering Committee**

Empowering Committee Report
Synod of the Sun Spring Assembly 2026

The Empowering Committee is pleased to continue with the work of 2025 and beyond. We are grateful that all of our members from last year are serving and are delighted to welcome new member Arthur Herman. We are especially grateful for the inspiring leadership of 2025's moderator, Rev. Dr. Carlos Baladez. Thankfully, Carlos will be serving on our committee as an at-large commissioner. The moderator for 2026 is Leah McFadden and the Vice-Moderator is Ben Davidson.

The Empowering Committee will once again focus on supporting all our networks with special emphasis on the goals set by Synod of the Sun Leadership for 2026. One of the highlights of 2025 was the renewal of our relationship with our brothers and sisters in the R. Sinodo Nacional Del Noroestes. Carlos is leading the effort to complete a covenant agreement with them as we explore ways to work alongside each other and expand opportunities for Border Ministry.

The committee will continue to support and focus on Hispanic Ministries Mission Network (HMMN) and Youth and Young Adult Ministries. The HMMN report of their many accomplishments and goals for 2026 is attached. The Synod Youth Workshop (SYW) report is also attached. Continued efforts to grow the conference in participation, racial and geographic diversity are a priority. The committee will also be working on creating a Campus Ministry Network. Ed Wolf will serve as our liaison to the Dismantling Racism Committee and Leah McFadden and Jerry Boles will serve on the Human Resources Committee.

We are looking forward to working together to God's glory in 2026.

Respectfully Submitted,

Leah McFadden
Moderator, Empowering Committee

Synod Youth Workshop Report
Spring Assembly 2026

“May the Lord be with you” is the theme for Synod Youth Workshop 2026. The conference is July 13 - 18 at the University of Tulsa in Tulsa, Oklahoma. We are excited to hear God’s word through this Star Wars theme from the Book of Numbers! Participants are youth entering 9th grade through just graduated seniors and adult sponsors. Cost for the conference is \$450. Registration is now open. As always, our goal is to provide a nurturing, safe space for all participants to feel the presence of the Holy Spirit as they grow in love and faith.

Rev. Michael East, Senior Pastor of FPC Norman is our keynote speaker. Michael holds degrees from Austin College and Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. He is married and the father of three young children. Michael is working with our youth planning team to present our daily large group sessions. This year we have 8 youth on our planning team.

The SYW Leadership Team would like to express our gratitude for the \$19,000 awarded by Synod of the Sun for scholarships. We also ask that everyone aid us in promoting the conference and letting potential participants know that scholarships are available. We are grateful for the continued support of our Synod as we strive to increase participation from all presbyteries.

May the Lord be with You!

Respectfully Submitted,

Leah McFadden
SYW Leadership Team
Moderator Empowering Committee



To our esteemed colleagues in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ: Peace and blessings to you!

God continues to pour out an abundance of blessings upon the Hispanic Ministries Mission Network (HMMN) of the Synod of the Sun! Below please find a summary of activities since HMMN's March 2025 Annual Meeting at Austin Seminary.

Workshops

Are You There?

Sept. 6, 2025, Emmanuel PC, San Antonio

This workshop looked at technology and how to use it in our churches. Presentations addressed equipment, social media presence and accuracy of information. The discussion flowed into the question: Can your congregation be found virtually – or physically? The final presentation reviewed how to file a statistical report.

Are You There, Now?

Oct. 4, 2025, Emmanuel PC, San Antonio

Participants looked at HMMN's IT equipment and discussed their congregations' technology needs. There was a long Q & A session, and participants learned how church records can be stored online using Google. Finally, participants learned about applying for grants and scholarships from their respective presbyteries.

Technology and Travel Grants for churches that attended workshops

\$1,000 Technology Grants were awarded to:

- First Presbyterian Church, New Braunfels
- Memorial Presbyterian Church, San Marcos
- Emmanuel Presbyterian Church, San Antonio
- Emmanuel Presbyterian Church, Farmers Branch
- El Buen Pastor Presbyterian Church, Austin
- Iglesia Cristiana Latina Presbiteriana, Houston

A total of \$1,000 in travel grants were given to attendees of September and October Workshops who traveled 100 miles or more.

Encuentro Regional / Regional Gathering

Re-Imagining Hispanic Ministries: November 13-16, 2025, Emmanuel PC, San Antonio

This event was sponsored by PCUSA and came about because of RSG-05 (<https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2024/7/3/racial-equity-advocacy-committee-members-celebrate-passage-rsg-05>). Our meeting was the third of six Encuentros.

- Participants: 27
- Special Guests: Synod Leader Mitch Miller and Transitional General Presbyter Rev. Bobby Musengwa of Mission Presbytery.
- Presenters: Rev. Dan Gonzalez Ortega, Ph. D.; Rev. Dr. Jorge Abdala; Rev. Edwin Andrade; Rev. Marissa Galvan Valle; Rev. Marieles Barreto; Rev. Rosa Miranda
- PCUSA presented HMMN with translation equipment (microphone and headsets)

Funding

Mission Presbytery's Administrative Commission for Church Development and Vitality (ACCDV) has awarded \$20,000 to HMMN for developing websites for Hispanic Presbyterian churches in Mission Presbytery.

In September, the Empowering Committee authorized a \$10,000 grant from the Synod's MACC fund (Mexican American Coordinating Council).

Total 2025 Synod funding to HMMN: \$23,000.

Ambassador Visits

HMMN's Developing, Empowering Leaders (DEL) committee continues to visit our congregations and promote our Leadership Development Workshops. Churches visited in the past year are:

Nazareth, San Angelo (6/01/2025)
Gethsemane, Kingsville (6/08/2025)
Iglesia Cristiana Latina, Houston (6/29/2025)
Juan Marcos, Houston (6/29/2025)
RGV churches, Brownsville (8/02/2025)

Central TX Convención, Austin (10/19/2025)
RGV Convención, Brownsville (11/01/2025)
Segunda, Harlingen (11/02/2025)
Sinaí, Laredo (1/04/2026)

HMMN Website – www.hmmnetwork.org

Austin Seminary student Yoan Zamora has created HMMN’s website and new logo; Yoan also manages our social media accounts – Facebook and Instagram – and serves as HMMN’s webmaster.

Meditations

Every week a mediation, written by Co-Moderator Elect Larry Sears and translated by Yoan Zamora, is posted on the HMMN Facebook page and emailed to HMMN family and friends.

Annual Meeting at Austin Seminary: April 24-25, 2026

- Theme: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow / Ayer, Hoy, Mañana
- Preacher for Friday night worship: Rev. Dr. Jesús Juan “Jesse” González
- Saturday Keynote Speaker: Rev. Dan González-Ortega, Ph.D. (Co-Moderator of the National Hispanic Caucus)
- Saturday presentation: Rev. Dr. Isabel Vélez-Rivera, History of Hispanic churches in the Presbytery of New Covenant
- Cost: \$70

Hispanic Presbyterian Women’s Conference at MoRanch

- September 25-27, 2026
- Theme: Tapestry of Grace... Woven by God/ Tapíz de gracia... tejidas por Dios
- 45th Conference Anniversary!

Challenges

HMMN recognizes that we will need to take events/workshops to our HMMN congregations, as many members are not able to travel to Central Texas. A Youth Leadership Workshop was planned for Jan. 2026 at John Knox Ranch, but the event was cancelled because of increased immigration enforcement in the Kyle and Buda area. This event has been rescheduled for late February and will be held in Houston.

Goals for 2026

On January 10, 2026, HMMN’s Developing Empowering Leaders (DEL) committee met at Austin Seminary and set the following goals:

1. www.hmmnetwork.org – Finalize the HMMN website and begin promotional campaign in Feb. 2026. Announcements will be shared with the Synod and all 11 presbyteries. HMMN also has a new logo and Instagram account.

2. Hold Education Workshops / Talleres Educativos in three different presbyteries: Grace, New Covenant and Arkansas (Members of Grace Presbytery are planning an event in late Spring).
3. Workshop Letter. Send a list of *HMMN's Developing Tomorrow's Leaders Today* workshops and introductory letter to our congregations, asking churches to review and see if any workshops could benefit their congregations. Upon request, HMMN can schedule the desired workshop(s) at a date/time convenient for their congregation and send presenters to the churches.
4. Report on HMMN activities at presbytery meetings.
5. Create an HMMN brochure/info card to share at presbytery meetings.
6. Invite Everlasting Hope (Taylor) and Faith/Fe (Lockhart) to participate in project to build simple websites for churches, using grant funds from Mission Presbytery's Administrative Commission for Church Development and Vitality grant and talents of HMMN's webmaster, Yoan Zamora.
7. Hold 2026 Annual Meeting at Austin Seminary on April 24-25.
8. Work with one of our partners (perhaps Austin Seminary or Synod of the Sun) to be able to receive online donations on behalf of HMMN.
9. Continue the HMMN Ambassador program of visiting Hispanic Presbyterian churches throughout the Synod.

HMMN would like to thank the Synod for its continued support and prayers, and we look forward to seeing where and how the Holy Spirit calls us to serve in 2026.

Bendiciones,

Lisa Almon and Estela Sifuentes
HMMN Co-Moderators



Photo from HMMN's
DEL Committee meeting at
Austin Seminary, 1/10/2026





Hispanic Ministries Mission Network (HMMN) of the Synod of the Sun Goals for 2026

On January 10, 2026, HMMN's Developing Empowering Leaders (DEL) committee met at Austin Seminary and set the following goals:

1. www.hmmnetwork.org – Finalize the HMMN website and begin promotional campaign on Feb 1, 2026. Announcements will be shared with the Synod and all 11 presbyteries. HMMN also has a new logo and Instagram account, along with our Facebook Group.
2. Hold Education Workshops / Talleres Educativos in three different presbyteries: Grace, New Covenant and Arkansas (Members of Grace Presbytery are planning an event in late Spring).
3. Workshop Letter. Send a list of *HMMN's Developing Tomorrow's Leaders Today* workshops and introductory letter to our congregations, asking churches to review and see if any workshops could benefit their congregations. Upon request, HMMN can schedule the desired workshop(s) at a date/time convenient for their congregation and send presenters to the churches.
4. Report on HMMN activities at presbytery meetings.
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6. Invite Everlasting Hope (Taylor) and Faith/Fe (Lockhart) to participate in project to build simple websites for churches, using grant funds from Mission Presbytery's Administrative Commission for Church Development and Vitality grant and talents of HMMN's webmaster, Yoan Zamora.
7. Hold 2026 Annual Meeting at Austin Seminary on April 24-25.
 - a. Theme: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow / Ayer, Hoy, Mañana
 - b. Friday night preacher: Rev. Dr. Jesus Juan "Jesse" Gonzalez
 - c. Saturday morning: Keynote speaker: Rev. Dr. Dan Gonzalez Ortega; presentation by Rev. Isabel Rivera-Velez – History of Hispanic Ministries in the Presbytery of New Covenant
8. Work with one of our partners (perhaps Austin Seminary or Synod of the Sun) to be able to receive online donations on behalf of HMMN.
9. Continue the HMMN Ambassador program of visiting Hispanic Presbyterian churches throughout the Synod.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Almon
Co-Moderator of HMMN

Border Ministries Report for Synod of the Sun 2026 Spring Meeting

In October of 2025, the Rev. Mitch Miller, Synod Leader/Stated Clerk for the Synod of the Sun received a letter dated, 10/02/2025, from President Pbro. Felipe Barandiaran S. and Secretary Pbro. Ramon Antonio Garcia Sanchez. The topic of the letter was two-fold; to send greetings and to propose exploring the possibility of reestablishing a relationship of mutual mission and ministry and re-unification of forces to collaborate once again in working together as synod siblings along the Mexican and U.S border. The letter informs Rev. Miller a desire and an agreement that was reached at their last Synod meeting held in Zacatecas, Zacatecas, within the National Presbyterian Church of the Divine Savior, to have a rapprochement and resume fraternal and working relations in border synods; specifically El Sínodo Nacional del Noroeste (National Synod of the Northeast) and The Synod of the Sun.

The letter also conveys a deep desire to continue in the creation of social and mercy projects, as well as education on common topics such as the Church and its development, support for vulnerable sectors of society, and the educational aspects, as well as the Mission of the Church.

With the above in mind, the letter concludes with an invitation and a proposal to meet in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, at the end of October of this year, 2025.

The invitation was gladly accepted and arrangements were made to meet as proposed. On 10/27/2025, the Reverends Mitch Miller, Lemuel Garcia, Matthew Miles, and Lydia Hernandez Tricky met with President Pbro. Felipe Barandiaran S. in Ciudad Juarez with a reciprocal visit to the fall Synod of the Sun assembly by President Pbro. Felipe Barandiaran S. held at First Presbyterian Church in El Paso, TX on 10/29/2025.

The vision of reestablishing covenant between the two bordering synods; the Synod of the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico Noroeste and Synod of Sun PCUSA was welcomed by all leaders in attendance. Consequently, it was mutually agreed to continue in dialogue.

A verbal agreement was reached to continue to explore the possibility of reestablishing collaborative work between the two international synods.

During the last day of the Synod of the Sun assembly, it was voted upon to ask the Rev. Dr. Carlos Baladez to assist in facilitating the dialogue in an attempt to reestablish the vision of fellowship and shared ministry between these two border sister synods.

Rev. Baladez and President Pbro. Barandiaran held their first meeting through Zoom on 12/15/2025. It was agreed upon to work on a new covenant agreement drawing from the previous 2007 Covenant Agreement.

A follow-up meeting between Rev. Baladez and President Pbro. Barandiaran has been set for 02/17/2026 to review a new tentative covenant agreement.

Respectively submitted,

Rev. Dr. Carlos Baladez



**SYNOD
OF THE SUN**

Additional Notices

Synod of the Sun – *Grants and Scholarships
Commission*



Report

Monday, February 23 and Tuesday, February 24 in Irving

Grants and Scholarships update:

Our first meeting of 2026 took part over two days. We met Thursday, February 5, 2025 and needed additional time which concluded over zoom on Tuesday, February 10, 2026.

Traditionally, we meet four times throughout the year though under Mitch's leadership, we appreciate time to meet at Synod gatherings.

Our first meeting of the year is actually for the consideration of Fourth quarter considerations: and the early receipt for Synod of the Sun Presbyterian Foundation scholarship consideration.

We are strengthened this year with returning voting members Todd Freeman and Lynn Hargrove. Also, Lisa Almon representing HMMN, with our synod leader and synod treasurer – Mitch and Bill provide invaluable insight when considering best use of available funds. ALWAYS grateful for any generosity, of course, we strive to respect donor or prior synod placed restrictions and keep an eye on stewardship, not all of our line items receive quarterly income.

In 2026, we welcome the input, enthusiasm, connections and familiarity with our Synod of SPDR's director, Libby Janes.

WE (meaning YOU) as we represent you, are awarding a **KERR MUNSON** scholarship for the first time in years. This family has been hoping and expecting a generous legacy to be awarded annually to Presbyterian students studying education and pre medicine related courses at Austin College and Trinity University.



To date, in 2026, we have awarded: \$20,600.00

Yours in Christ, Polly Williams
The Rev. Miss Polly Warren Williams
Moderator, Synod of the Sun Connecting Committee 2025 and
Chair, Grants and Scholarship Commission 2025
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