

## **Niobrara Convocation 2026: A Gathering of Faith, Culture, and Community**

The Niobrara Convocation, one of the longest-running Indigenous Christian gatherings in North America, will take place June 25–28, 2026, at St. Michael’s in Batesland, South Dakota, hosted by the Pine Ridge Episcopal Mission (PREM). The annual gathering brings together Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota Episcopalians, clergy, lay leaders, families, and visitors from across the region for worship, fellowship, cultural celebration, and church governance.

For generations, the Niobrara Convocation has served as a spiritual homecoming for Native Episcopalians throughout the Great Plains. The event combines Episcopal worship with the rich cultural traditions of the Oceti Sakowin (Seven Council Fires), creating a unique expression of Christian faith rooted in Indigenous identity and community.

### **A Brief History of the Niobrara Convocation**

The first Niobrara Convocation was held on October 5–6, 1870, in Santee, Nebraska. Bishop Robert H. Clarkson called clergy and lay delegates from Native missions throughout the Dakota field to organize what became the Indian Missionary Convocation. Each chapel was represented by delegates, establishing a tradition of shared leadership that continues today.

Over the decades, the Convocation evolved into an annual gathering that brought together families and congregations from across the region. Historians note that the gathering fulfilled a social and spiritual role similar to traditional summer gatherings among the Dakota and Lakota peoples, where relatives and friends came together for fellowship, ceremony, and community renewal.

The Convocation became a major event within the Episcopal Church, attracting visitors from other denominations, government officials, and church leaders. Even President Calvin Coolidge attended during its early years. Throughout its history, the gathering was canceled only a handful of times due to extraordinary circumstances, including illness, a smallpox outbreak, World War II travel restrictions, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, the Niobrara Convocation remains a central institution of Indigenous Episcopal life and continues to unite more than 50 Native congregations across the Dakotas and neighboring states.

### **2026 Convocation Details**

The 2026 Convocation will be hosted by the Pine Ridge Episcopal Mission and will run from June 25 through June 28.

The Diocese of South Dakota is encouraging participants to bring the items listed below in their efforts to emphasize on creation care by reducing disposable waste during the gathering.

- Camping chairs
- Reusable plates and cutlery
- Personal items for outdoor activities and worship

### **Lodging and Camping**

Hotel accommodations are available in Martin, South Dakota, and Gordon, Nebraska. Camping opportunities are also available near the Convocation site and in surrounding communities.

Attendees wishing to support the event may submit hospitality contributions payable to:

2026 Niobrara Convocation PREM  
Pine Ridge Episcopal Mission  
P.O. Box 207  
Martin, SD 57551

### **Continuing a Sacred Tradition**

More than 150 years after its founding, the Niobrara Convocation continues to be a powerful witness to Indigenous faith, resilience, and leadership within The Episcopal Church. The gathering remains a place where worship, culture, family, and mission come together, honoring both Christian faith and the enduring traditions of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota peoples.

As participants gather in Batesland in 2026, they will join a tradition that stretches back to 1870—one that continues to strengthen relationships, celebrate Indigenous

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June 2026

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identity, and proclaim the Gospel within Native communities across the Northern Plains.

If you would like to register for the 2026 Convocation, please use the link below:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfQ\\_6S00rMLH\\_bV-8mBrisaJooJ4rcSZ0o26fFsw01nAxlpmw/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfQ_6S00rMLH_bV-8mBrisaJooJ4rcSZ0o26fFsw01nAxlpmw/viewform)