



News and Events

SAINT PAUL AREA SYNOD
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

January 13, 2025

Registration is open!

Tool Kit for Congregational Leaders & Conference Assemblies

Saturday, Feb. 22 - 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. | Shepherd of the Valley, Apple Valley

Registration is open for Tool Kit for Congregational Leaders, which brings together lay leaders, ministry volunteers and church staff from across the synod for learning and networking. It's an opportunity to learn from experts in a variety of areas related to congregational life and to hear experiences and perspectives from people in other congregations. The workshop sessions include:

- Presidents & Vice Presidents: Leading a Church Council – Jim Buckley & Rolf Lowenberg-DeBoer
- Decision or Discernment? – Deacon Krista Lind
- Understanding the Opioid Crisis – Pastor Seth Perry & Sean Young-Stephens
- Embodied Practices for Social Justice – Rachel Svano Moynihan
- Grief in the Church System – Pastor Jules Erickson
- The Joys and Challenges of Shared Ministry – Pastor Cassie Nault
- Becoming an Effective Treasurer – David Laden



plus conference assemblies!

- Healing Nature Trails – Steven Yahr
- Introduction to Centering Prayer – Pastor John Keller

[Click here for descriptions of all the sessions.](#)

The registration fee is \$20 per person and includes lunch. Tool Kit will be held in conjunction with conference assemblies, when the synod's six conferences meet separately for pre-synod assembly business which may include elections, proposed resolutions or other matters.

[LEARN MORE & REGISTER](#)

Tool Kit Session Spotlights:

Presidents & Vice Presidents: Leading a Church Council

Leading a church council can be daunting! This session is for all church council members and it is geared toward how to lead a council and congregation through normal times and not so normal times. This session will discuss trust building, discipleship, governance, management, strategy, constitutions, running meetings, making decisions and more. Come and learn together, connect with one another, and dive into lay leadership!



***Jim Buckley** is the president of St. John's in Lakeville. **Rolf Lowenberg-DeBoer** is the assistant to the bishop for lay leadership and equity initiatives.*

Becoming an Effective Treasurer

The materials covered will provide a basic lesson on budgets, expenditures, cash flow, and balancing the books while keeping good stewardship of your congregation's financial resources in mind. Treasurers and financial administrators are encouraged to attend!



***David Laden** is the comptroller at Como Park Lutheran, St. Paul, serves as synod council treasurer, and is a member of the synod's Finance Committee.*

The Reverend of Roller Derby

The sport of roller derby has been around since the 1930s. It's a fast-paced, full-contact sport that Andrew Tengwall calls "poetry in motion."

Using the moniker "Reverend Killjoy (taken from The Simpsons)," Tengwall serves as one of five announcers for the Minnesota Roller Derby (MNRD), which is housed at St. Paul's Roy Wilkins Auditorium. He's more commonly known in church circles, however, as "Pastor Tengwall" because he's one of the pastors in our synod. He currently serves as the interim pastor at Trinity in Lindstrom.



Q: Your derby bio says you're no longer surprised that being a pastor and derby announcer have so much in common. Is that true?

A: Announcing roller derby is a lot like leading worship, in that I'm willing to stand in front of everybody and run my mouth while ultimately pointing everyone toward something much more important than myself or my words. I love being part of the show, but the ringmaster is never the star at the circus. If I do my job well, kids will look up to these skaters as normal people who can accomplish extraordinary things. If I do my job well as a pastor, people will forget about me and instead remember powerful experiences of worship and being close to God and to one another. Also, both church and roller derby have ample opportunities to manage interpersonal conflict, engage in creative problem-solving, and event planning. I will admit that derby afterparties are better than church coffee hour, however!

[Read the full interview here.](#)

PRAYER SERVICE FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS

Thursday, January 16 at 9 a.m. | Bethlehem, Bayport
Scripture, music & prayers with other pastors and deacons in the synod



Where Do We Go From Here? Deep Listening & Racial Justice

Saturday, Jan. 25 - 9 a.m.-12 noon | Gustavus Adolphus, St. Paul

Individuals, leaders, and racial justice ministry teams are all encouraged to participate! Engaging in antiracist action demands that we bring our whole selves to our experiences. For this reason, the synod's Advocates for Racial Equity work group and Vitality Team are hosting a morning that focuses on embodied antiracism. This workshop will introduce us to the value of deep listening and teach us practices aimed at paying attention to what is happening internally within us in racist or racialized situations with the goal of growing our capacity to engage, confront, and question rather than shut down. This is a great session for individuals and for ministry teams interested in racial justice! The featured speaker is [Rachel Svanoe Moynihan](#), somatic coach and embodied antiracism leader (formerly with the Center for Leadership & Neighborhood Engagement). The cost is \$20 per person, but if the registration fee is a barrier to participating, please email tmaybee@aglcigh.org.



[REGISTER](#)

Extravaganza Synod Lunch

Saturday, Jan. 25 - 11:45 a.m. | Patrick O'Shea's, Louisville KY



Are you a CYF person in the synod planning to attend the 2025 Extravaganza this month from the ELCA Network for Children, Youth & Family Ministry? Our synod is teaming up with the Minneapolis Synod for a special lunch in Louisville. Join the group to build community with others doing the same good work as you! The cost is \$23 per person. [Register here](#) by Jan. 19 if you plan to attend.

Spiritual Gifts Retreat

Saturday, Feb. 1 - 9 a.m.-4 p.m. | St. Mark, Circle Pines

This experience will help you answer the question, "Who has God created me to be?" Using spiritual gift inventories, conversation and other tools, you'll go home with a better sense of who you are and how you might best serve your faith community and the world!

Retreat leaders are Pastor Justin Grimm (Saint Paul Area Synod) and Pastor Kirsten Fryer (Bethlehem in the Midway, St. Paul). The cost is \$25 per person and includes lunch. [Register here.](#)



Addressing Hunger:

An Abecedarian Blog From an Abecedarian

by Vernita Kennen (Incarnation, Shoreview)

A "what"? What does "an abecedarian" have to do with hunger and food insecurity? Perhaps not much but, hopefully, it will get you thinking...which often leads to action!



An abecedarian is a person who is learning the alphabet or the basic elements of a subject. As an adjective, the word relates to the first letter of the alphabet or list or series. I began contemplating an abecedarian when a book arrived for our church library, *A is for Alabaster*. It is a delightful book with alphabetical entries for words from both the Old and New Testaments....Give some thought for how we might consider hunger and food insecurity in an alphabetical way.

[Read Vernita's full post.](#)

Cultivating Good Soil Through Storytelling

Saturday, Feb. 8 - 9 a.m.-2 p.m. | Gustavus Adolphus, St. Paul

Everyone has a faith story! Learn to tell yours and learn how storytelling can deepen the spiritual life of your congregation. Join us for an interactive workshop designed to help you reflect on your personal experiences with God and confidently share your story with others. During this workshop, we will:

- Explore the importance of storytelling in sharing our faith
- Identify key moments in your spiritual journey that highlight God's presence
- Learn practical tips for crafting a clear and authentic faith story
- Practice sharing your story and hear the stories of others in a supportive and encouraging environment

Through these skills and tools, this workshop will provide confidence to share your faith story and God's story for the sake of a more vital church. The cost is \$20 per person.

[REGISTER](#)

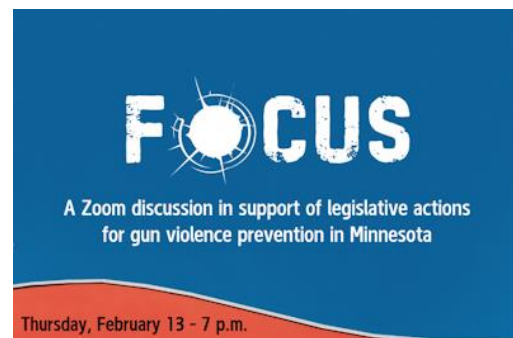


ENGAGE Focus

Thursday, Feb. 13 - 7 p.m. | Online

In 2023, 569 people died by gun violence:

- 407 by suicide
- 147 by homicide
- 8 by accident and police
- 8 undetermined



It is proven that rightly-focused legislation for gun violence prevention (GVP) saves lives. Join

this online Zoom conversation with knowledgeable gun violence prevention (GVP) and legislative leaders to discuss steps forward. This session is brought to you by the ENGAGE Work Group of the Saint Paul Area Synod. All ELCA synods in Minnesota are invited to participate. [Register here for the Zoom link.](#) Questions? Email letnes.ron@gmail.com.

National Day of Racial Healing

Tuesday, Jan. 21 - 10 a.m.-2 p.m. | Online

Presented by the ELCA in partnership with Augsburg Fortress Publishers, this free online event will feature worship, workshops, music and guided reflection while centering the voices of ELCA leaders of color. An exceptional lineup of workshops and speakers is designed to raise awareness of the need for racial healing and to inspire collective action toward building common ground for a more just and equitable world. The event is open to all ELCA rostered ministers, lay leaders and members. [Learn more.](#)



EVENTS OF INTEREST

The Faith Community's Call to Caregiving

Thursday, Jan. 23 - 6-8 p.m. | Online

With recent emphasis on aging in place, the faith community is in a key position to answer the call to be or assist caregivers. Faith community nurses are uniquely equipped to meet this call by developing programs, educational initiatives, research, and policymaking. Information, tools, and resources about integrating an age-friendly vision of caregiving with the faith community will be provided. Participants will learn how to support family caregivers and understand the barriers to support in the faith community. While geared toward Faith Community Nurses, others are welcome to attend. The cost is \$30 for LFCNA members and \$50 for nonmembers. [Learn more.](#)

SafeTALK Suicide Prevention Training

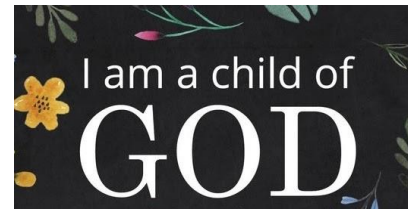
Saturday, Feb. 8 - 9 a.m.-1 p.m. | Bethlehem, Minneapolis

Learn how to support someone's desire for safety by recognizing the warning signs of suicide, identifying people who are at risk, and applying the TALK steps (Tell, Ask, Listen and KeepSafe) to connect a person to suicide first aid resources. Listed on the national best practice registry, safeTALK allows time for both practice and discussion. safeTALK is based on research that shows people experiencing thoughts of suicide often send out subtle invitations to help them stay safe. This free four-hour class is for members of the community over the age of 16 who want to learn and practice the basic best practices in suicide prevention. The class is hosted by Mental Health Connect, a collaborative of Twin Cities faith communities that work together to help destigmatize mental illness and assist all in finding the help they need. [Register here.](#)

**ReFresh ReNew Remember: A Day for Women
Connecting**

**Saturday, Feb. 15 - 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. | Bethesda, Inver
Grove Heights**

Women of all ages from surrounding congregations and neighborhoods are welcome to this retreat to help you remember who you are: a beloved child of God! This event includes a continental breakfast and lunch, music and worship, small groups and fellowship and speaker Taunya Todd. The cost is \$30 per person (scholarships available). Advance registration preferred, but walk-ins accepted. [Learn more.](#)



Prairie Fire Preaching Cohort

Proclaiming the Gospel is a privilege; it can also be a daunting and time consuming task. Do you dream about creative ways to engage our constantly changing culture? Do you long for fresh preaching rhythms? Do you wonder how to give your preaching the attention it deserves? Prairie Fire, a preaching community of Continuous Growth Pathway, is accepting applications starting Jan. 1 for its 2025-2026 cohort for ELCA rostered leaders. The program runs September 2025 through August 2026. This year-long experience includes cohort time with peers, as well as four in-person three-day retreats that feature deep conversations, a retreat preacher and experts from other fields. The cost is \$600. The retreat location is Mt. Olivet Conference & Retreat Center in Farmington. [Learn more.](#)

Other Events:

- [Children's Ministry Gathering](#) - Jan. 13 | Online
- [Youth Ministry Gathering](#) - Jan. 13 | Arbeiter Brewing Co., Minneapolis
- [Gather Twin Cities Winter Retreat](#) - Jan. 18-19 | Luther Crest Bible Camp, Alexandria
- [JUSTMove Youth Lock-In](#) - Jan. 19-20 | Woodlake, Richfield
- [A Day for Making Comfort \(WELCA\)](#) - Jan. 25 | Our Savior's, Stillwater
- [National Lutheran Choir Choral Tune-Up](#) - Jan. 31-Feb. 1 | Roseville, Roseville
- [2025 Synod Assembly](#) - May 16-17 | St. Andrew's, Mahtomedi
- [Seminar on Lutheran Liturgy](#) - Aug. 13-15 | Minneapolis

SYNOD STAFF IN CONGREGATIONS

Bishop Patricia Lull

- Jan. 19 - Lyngblomsten, St. Paul (preaching)

Pastor Justin Grimm

- Jan. 19 - Gethsemane, Maplewood (preaching)
- Jan. 26 - Minnesota Faith Chinese, Roseville (preaching)

[Blogs](#)

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The Saint Paul Area Synod, which includes 106 congregations and new mission starts, is one of 65 synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.



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