



News and Events

SAINT PAUL AREA SYNOD
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

March 24, 2025

We Are Church

Together: Supporting Lay Leaders

Thank you for your congregation's faithful and generous sharing of mission support with the synod and churchwide expressions of the ELCA during February 2025.



As a layperson himself, Rolf Lowenberg-DeBoer, assistant to the bishop for lay leadership and equity initiatives, is passionate about accompanying other laypeople as they explore ways to serve in their communities. He describes how your mission support helps the synod equip and support lay leaders in their roles on church council, committees and other areas of congregational life:

The Saint Paul Area Synod supports lay leaders and various aspects of lay leadership in a number of ways. One of the main ways we do this is through our annual Tool Kit for Congregational Leaders, which focuses on equipping lay leaders for God’s mission in their contexts. Around 240 leaders attended this event last month. There were nine fantastic workshops throughout the day...a wonderful lineup that encouraged, connected, and resourced leaders in congregations across the synod.

This fall, we will hold a six-part cohort series for presidents, vice presidents and other council members. Several former and current council leaders will join me in leading this series. It will be similar to the programming we offered in 2022-2023 with Dr. Dave Webb. Titled “Deeper Dive for Church Councils,” the series will focus on many aspects of leading a church council and overall congregational leadership. I spend quite a bit of time walking with councils and executive teams as they seek to engage deeply in God’s mission. We work together with the Holy Spirit to find the way forward!

[Read Rolf's full message.](#)



Worship in an Inviting Church

This past Saturday's "Worship in an Inviting Church" event attracted more than 90 participants from 20+ congregations. Those who attended went back home with ideas



percolating for using technology in worship, for making their facility and culture more welcoming and for

creating intentional contemporary worship experiences. Bishop Patricia Lull shared 9.5 Theses about worship in an inviting church, which created engaging conversation. We are so grateful for the workshop presenters (the Rev. Dr. Karna Moskalik, Anne Gerriettes, Deacon Nina Joygaard, Daniel Diemer, Sara Renner and Nate Crary) as well as for Trinity Lutheran in Stillwater for their wonderful hospitality, welcoming volunteers, A/V techs, ministers and musicians. [View photos from the day here.](#)

EcoFaith Summit

Saturday, April 5 - 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.
| First Lutheran, Duluth & Livestream

The ever-increasing cries of Creation in crisis could easily overwhelm us. Instead let them serve as a clarion call to help bring life out of potential death, to help give renewed birth to all Creation, to all creatures including ourselves. This event is sponsored by the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, Northwest Synod of Wisconsin and our own Saint Paul Area Synod's Care of Creation work group as well as other partner organizations.



The keynote speaker is author and theological ethicist Dr. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda. She lectures internationally on climate justice matters related to race and class, moral agency and hope, public church, ethical implications of resurrection and incarnation and faith-based resistance to systemic injustice. She is a professor at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and found director of its Center for Climate Justice and Faith.

The summit features engaging sessions, worship, exhibits, networking opportunities, lunch and encouragement for our communities to give birth to strong, creative action. Tickets are \$30 per person (\$25 if you carpool). Young adults under age 30 and online viewers are free. [Learn more and register.](#)



Cultivating Good Soil Through Prayer Ministry

Saturday, April 5 - 9 a.m.-12 noon | Gustavus Adolphus, St. Paul

As people of God, we are rooted and connected in prayer. Our congregations are fertile places for uniting in prayer and deepening our spiritual practices. Join us as individuals and/or teams to experience and learn spiritual practices.

Participants will:

- reflect on why prayer matters
- learn about different models of prayer ministries
- experience a variety of spiritual practices



You'll leave transformed and motivated to do something powerful with prayer in your home church! Your presenters are Pastor Justin Grimm (assistant to the bishop for congregational vitality) and Deacon Nina Joygaard (Faith, Forest Lake). Registration is \$10 per person.

[REGISTER](#)

Guatemala Friends

Saturday, April 5 - 9:30-11 a.m. | King of Kings, Woodbury

The Saint Paul Area Synod has a companionship with the Iglesia Luterana Agustina de Guatemala (ILAG), the Lutheran church of Guatemala. Join supporters of the companionship to learn about the elementary school that the ILAG runs:

the Colegio Luterano Agustino de Guatemala (CLAG). Pastor Esther (the founder), Pastor Beatrice (the administrator), and one of the dynamic teachers will be on Zoom to share the successes and challenges of this 25-year-old ministry with children from marginalized neighborhoods. Opportunities for supporting the school will be shared. No registration is necessary; just show up!



Spring Ministerium

**Tuesday, April 8 - 9 a.m.-12 noon |
Beaver Lake Lutheran, Maplewood**

Rostered ministers of the synod are invited to gather for a meaningful worship service with the renewal of vocation and Holy Communion. Bishop Patricia Lull will preach. Following fellowship and refreshments, we will hear from Peg Carlson-Hoffman and Chuck Hoffman, who create space for community, spirituality and social change through their art and workshops.



Chuck and Peg are former executive directors of Holden Village in Washington State. Peg is a painter, lettering artist and designer and formerly served as creative director and product developer for Hallmark Cards. Chuck is a painter and designer, formerly employed as a creative director for the Walt Disney Company. He received the Art & Innovation Fellowship and the St Paul Interfaith Scholarship Award from Luther Seminary, where he completed his M.A. in art and theology. There's no registration fee, but please let us know if you plan to attend!

[REGISTER](#)

Addressing Hunger:

Lent, Prayer and Advocacy

*by Vernita Kennen - Incarnation,
Shoreview*



We are deep in the liturgical season of Lent. It's our time as Christians to reflect on the suffering of Jesus as he is scorned, rejected, and finally crucified. For many of us, this is a time of more quiet, more introspection and more prayer.

I have joined in a Lectio Divina group for several Lenten seasons, which has provided me more time for a closer connection with God. Lent has also been a time when prayer seems to take the primary spot in my life while my advocacy concerns for those who hunger take a back seat. Why, I wonder? Why is not prayer a way to advocacy? Or, more importantly in my life as an advocate for people who live with hunger, why is not advocacy a prayer? Have you ever thought of it that way?

March is Minnesota's "Food Share" month and perhaps your congregation and local food shelf are asking for special donations of food and monies. This March is even more important as we need to keep the needs of those who hunger before our state and federal legislators. No matter how much we try, local efforts and food shelves cannot begin to fill the needs of those who hunger. Is advocacy not a way for me to pray?

Yes, we are once again deep in the liturgical season of Lent. Yes, our God continues to call us to advocate for those who have less, including those who live continually under the threat of not enough food and nutrition for their lives. But, also "yes," I ask you to consider your advocacy, which you certainly do prayerfully, as a Lenten prayer discipline. Prayer isn't only our quiet time; it's a call to action.

Pray, advocate and act on behalf of others during this Lenten season!

Synod Assembly

Friday, May 16-Saturday, May 17 | St. Andrew's, Mahtomedi

Is your congregation registered for Synod Assembly yet? [Click here for the 2025 Voter Allocation Chart](#), which shows how many voting members each congregation in the synod may bring. Online registration is open through May 2; at-the-door registration begins at 5 p.m. on May 16.



"How are they to hear without someone to proclaim..." Romans 10:14

Assembly business takes place on two days this year! The business of the assembly begins on Friday, May 16, at 7 p.m. and will include elections and deliberations on resolutions and memorials, as well as Churchwide representative Rev. Miguel Gomez-Acosta's presentation. The assembly reconvenes on Saturday, May 17, at 8:30 a.m. for more business, festive worship and Dr. Lois Malcolm's keynote address. A mission fair featuring work groups, ministry partners and affiliated organizations is open on Friday from 5-7 p.m. and on Saturday through the lunch break. Under this year's assembly theme of "Called to Invite," we'll be exploring what it means for each of us to be a witness to life in Christ.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Youth Ministry Gathering

Tuesday, April 8 - 3 p.m. | Blackstack Brewing, St. Paul

Kids live amidst a digital world of stories — in TikTok, Instagram, What's App, Netflix, and more. How do we help young people navigate the multiple and competing stories to be found there? What are some practices that ground and nourish young people trying to live with faith in this world? Dr. Mary Hess from Luther Seminary has been doing digital storytelling as a form of faith formation for the past two decades and just completed a year-long project concerning care for creation and climate change, through story. Youth ministry staff and key volunteers from the Saint Paul and Minneapolis synods are invited to join her for a discussion of "Create, Share, Believe: Storying Faith in Digital Spaces." No registration is necessary; just show up! Questions? Email josh@christusvictor.org.



Youth Group Night at Luther Seminary

Wednesday, April 23 - 6:30-8:15 p.m. | Luther Seminary, St. Paul

Congregations are invited to bring their confirmation (6th-grade graders) and/or high school youth groups and adult leaders to the Luther Seminary campus for a night of worship, learning, pizza, and exploring the idea of "vocation." This event is free, but please [register](#) by Wednesday, April 9.

Young Adult Travel Grants

Applications are beginning to come in! Thanks to funding through the synod's Planting Hope Campaign, grants are now available for young adults who are planning trips with their congregations to visit companions in Guatemala and Tanzania. Applicants ages 16-35 are invited to apply for funds of up to half the total cost of their travel.



Global partnerships have provided life-changing experiences for many in our synod and the grants are a way to make those experiences more accessible to young people. This ties into one of the Planting Hope Campaign goals of raising up the next generations of leaders. Please help us spread the news to potential young travelers in your congregation! [Learn more.](#)



Keeping Kids Safe From Guns

Tuesday, April 8 - 7-8:30 p.m. | Online

Guns are a leading cause of death for American children and youth. This program will help you learn how to help keep kids safe from guns and to practice communication strategies around gun safety.

ENGAGE: Lutherans for Gun Violence Prevention is hosting this program, which will be led by representatives from Be SMART, an organization that reaches out to all community members, gun owners and non-gun owners. The Be SMART approach is endorsed by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, the National Parent Teacher Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and many other agencies. [Register to receive the Zoom link.](#)



The Everflowing Stream Webinar Series

Tuesdays Through March 25 - 7 p.m. | Online

Lutheran Advocacy-MN invites you to a new webinar series featuring non-partisan presentations from LA-MN/ELCA staff and partner organizations with the goal of providing information, rekindling hope and taking meaningful action toward a more just future. Here's the final date and topic:

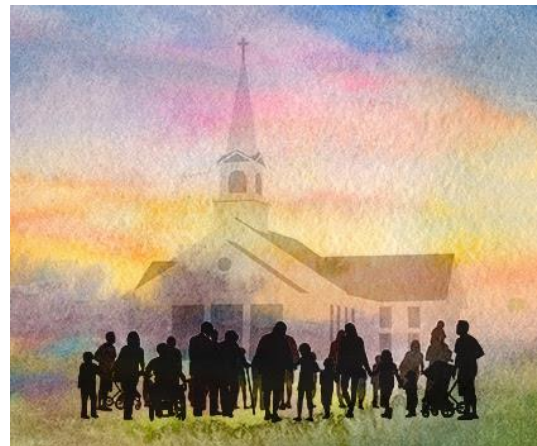
- March 25 - Poverty and Hunger (housing, nutrition programs, Medicaid, safety net cuts)

The session will include a review of the ELCA's theological stance (Why do Lutherans care about this topic?) and Q&A with panelists. [Learn more.](#)



Draft Social Message on Child Protection

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), at least one in seven children has experienced abuse or neglect in the last year. A new draft social message from the ELCA addresses this crisis and outlines the church's sacred responsibility to protect and nurture children. The ELCA Church Council authorized the development of the social message, as requested by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly. (Our synod was one of several synods that brought forth memorials on the topic.)



You are invited to read a draft of this social message and provide feedback on it to help strengthen the final document. ELCA social messages are teaching documents that draw from existing social teaching but focus direct attention on a particular social issue. The public comment period is open through June 30. [Read the draft and complete an online survey.](#)

Mental Health Faith Forum

**Saturday, May 3 - 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. | Trinity,
Stillwater**

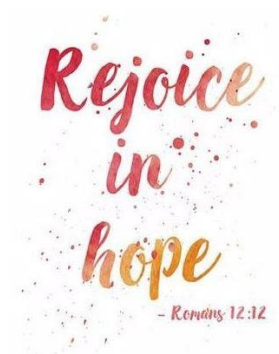
This event helps empower communities to support addiction and mental health recovery. You'll hear inspiring talks from experts and advocates and updates from state policymakers, visit informative exhibits, and be part of the launch of a new *Our Stigma* podcast. The Mental Health Faith Forum features faith community leaders, Minnesota state policymakers and mental health/addiction experts sharing their expertise in an educational setting. The event includes cultural programming, speakers, and a large Q&A session. Indigenous, Hmong, East African, and African American presenters will all contribute to the discussion. The keynote speaker is social media influencer Kody Green, who has overcome challenges that include addiction, incarceration and serious mental health struggles. Registration is \$15 per person. [Learn more and register.](#)



Synodical Women's Convention

Saturday, May 3 | Holy Cross, Oakdale

This year's synodical women's organization (SWO) convention has the theme of "Rejoice in Hope" from Romans 12:12. Featured speakers are Deb Hadley from TK Humble Hearts Foundation (keynote), Bishop Lull (Bible study) and Pastor Meredith McGrath (worship leader). The day will also include workshops by Amy Perron (MN STAR Program), Sally Harris (Radio Furaha) and Deanna Thompson (Joy, Patience & Perseverance in Christian Life Today), as well as a business meeting to elect officers and board members, consider resolutions, approve the budget and set future direction. The cost is \$45. [Learn more.](#)



ELCA Young Adult Network Facilitators

The ELCA is looking for seven young adults to support the developing network of young adult leaders as Young Adult Network Facilitators. They will collaboratively work with other regional and synodical support systems for young adults as well as the many expressions of young adult ministry. For those of you who love to connect others and are passionate about building communities of leaders, this is for you! The monthly stipend is \$450. [Read the job description.](#) The application deadline is March 31; [click here to apply.](#)

EVENTS OF INTEREST

Pastoring With a Dual Diagnosis

Wednesday, March 26 - 12 noon | Online

Pastor Seth Perry (Elim, Scandia) will share his personal journey of pastoring while living with a dual diagnosis. He will explore the challenges and stigma that clergy face in seeking mental health and addiction recovery as well as the unique strengths that come from leading with lived experience. He is the author of the devotional and podcast, *Our Stigma*, with the goal of breaking down barriers in faith communities. [Register here for the link.](#)



Last Supper Escape Room

**Fridays-Sundays, March 28-April 13 |
Spring Lake, North Branch**

Tri-United Parish (Calvary in Stanchfield, First in Harris, and Spring Lake in North Branch) is hosting a unique ministry project this Lent — a Last Supper themed escape room — and invites ages 12+ to participate! Here's the gist: *You are hired to clean up*

from a dinner but find out there was a life-changing message revealed. You will follow the clues to discover the way to eternal life. Participants will need to solve a variety of puzzles, including riddles, locks, math problems, mazes, logic problems and more. The 10 players in your room will need to work as a team to complete all the tasks in 30-60 minutes.



This project has been a vision for this faith community for years as a fun activity that also serves to fill neighbors' lives with Jesus and provide resources for those in need. The event is free; donations are appreciated and will be shared back to the community. [Learn more and register.](#)



Recovery Café Frogtown's Reaching for the Stars

Thursday, April 10 - 5-8 p.m. | Faith, St. Paul

Together, we shine brighter! Recovery Café Frogtown nurtures recovery, wellness and wholeness through connection, advocacy, hope and healing. You are invited to its spring fundraiser, which features a catered dinner, inspiring speakers, a live band and silent auction. The cost is \$50. [Learn more.](#)



Better Together: Jason Gray Live Recording Tour

Friday, April 25 - 7 p.m. | Faith, St. Paul

Jason Gray is a contemporary Christian singer-songwriter who has toured with such performers as Jeremy Camp, Sanctus Real, Matthew West and many others. He won the ASCAP Performance Awards for *More Like Falling in Love* and *Good to Be Alive*. He has shared the stage with many major artists such as Michael W. Smith, Steven Curtis Chapman and Lauren Daigle. Admission is \$20 or \$40 for VIP access. [Learn more.](#)

Other Events:

- [National Faith + Climate Forum](#) - March 27 | Incarnation, Shoreview
- [All Hands on Hope MobilePack](#) - April 30-May 4 | Incarnation, Shoreview
- [CYF Healthy Boundaries Training](#) - May 6 | Online
- [2025 Synod Assembly](#) - May 16-17 | St. Andrew's, Mahtomedi
- [Churchwide Assembly](#) - July 28-Aug. 2 | Phoenix, Ariz.
- [Seminar on Lutheran Liturgy](#) - Aug. 13-15 | Minneapolis
- [God's Work. Our Hands. Sunday](#) - Sept. 7

SYNOD STAFF IN CONGREGATIONS

Bishop Patricia Lull

- April 2 – Good Shepherd, King of Prussia, PA

The Rev. Justin Grimm

- March 30 - Tri-United, Harris/North Branch/Stanchfield

- April 6 - Luther Memorial, South St. Paul (preaching)

Deacon Krista Lind

- March 30 - Tri-United, Harris/North Branch/Stanchfield

[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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