



**Western North Dakota Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
 God's work. Our hands.

## Synod E-news

News & Events from the Western North Dakota Synod

December 8, 2025



EVENTS CALENDAR



MINISTRIES



TRANSITIONS



Have you ever wondered, "What has the Synod Staff been up to lately?" The answer is...A LOT! Here are a few of places that have beckoned, recently.

The entire staff brought their Western North Dakota charm (along with a few extremely talented and entertaining guests) to Alexandria, MN where we hosted the Region 3 synod retreat.

Bishop Craig Schweitzer was in Santa Ana, El Salvador, to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Cristo Rey Lutheran Church.

Many congregations in the WND Synod have a long-standing history with Cristo Rey!

DEM Tera Kossow had her traveling shoes on as she made several whistle stops to places like Portland, Chicago and several points in between...like Turtle Lake, and Mercer where she was on hand for the installation of Pastor Sam Trotter!

43 Synod Authorized Ministers from Western North Dakota were invited to Faith Lutheran Church in Bismarck on November 22nd for the annual SAM Summit. The SAM Summit is a time set aside by Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership, Candidacy, and Call, Brad Dokken, for our lay leaders to come together for a day filled with worship, learning and fellowship.



Many congregations are restarting servant ministries since COVID, and synod-sponsored groups have been a great fit when individuals from different congregations prefer to gather together. If your congregation or other group is interested, there is an opportunity to engage and participate with volunteers supporting long-term recovery from the widespread damage caused by Hurricane Helene in the Carolinas.



**Hope.  
Healing.  
Renewal.**

 LDR Carolinas

A year after this natural disaster, some families are only now asking for help in their damaged homes. The region still needs volunteer teams to help with home repairs, debris removal, and community resilience projects in 2026 and beyond.

A group from our synod that has already deployed here...and are scheduled to return in summer 2026... is from Faith Lutheran Church of Bismarck. They have sent 16 volunteers who have helped with construction and land mitigation.

If you would like to learn more, you can fill out a [Group Interest Form](#) with a best-guess for group size, preferred dates, and any accessibility or skill considerations. Submit the form...even if details are incomplete...and a follow-up communication will be scheduled to align goals and answer questions. Teams are matched with ongoing projects that suit their skills and availability.

Most volunteer groups stay at ELCA [NovusWay](#) camps, Lutheridge or Lutherock, though some choose local AirBnBs or hotels. Volunteer housing is being added in Boone and a new site is being developed in Hendersonville to expand options. An overview of what is being done in the area can be found on [LDR Carolinas](#) website.

Sample itineraries, travel guidance, accessibility information, and tips for team preparation can be provided to make planning simple and accessible. Teams serving in North Carolina will work with Amy Phillips, WNC Response Coordinator. She can be reached at [amy@ldrcarolinas.org](mailto:amy@ldrcarolinas.org) or 704-633-4059. Teams serving in South Carolina will work with Kelli Fulmer, SC Response Coordinator. She can be reached at [kelli@ldrcarolinas.org](mailto:kelli@ldrcarolinas.org) or 803-271-5507.



## The Western Whirlwind

Get the latest from the WND Synodical Women of the ELCA.

Did you know that "The Twelve Days of Christmas" was written as a catechism song for young Catholics? In this edition of the *Western Whirlwind*, you'll learn the hidden meanings in the song and a whole lot more!

[Read the December Western Whirlwind now](#)

## WELCA Triennial Gathering

*Early bird registration available until January 5*

Register now for the **EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT**. Invite your daughters, granddaughters, sisters, and friends. Share the Gathering and remind them that they are WORTHY!

Register now for inspiration, service, learning, and dancing! Visit the website, [website](#), click 'Register here,' book your hotel, and plan your Des Moines trip today.

Help us spread the word by sharing event details with your congregation and beyond. Everyone is invited!



july 16-19, 2026 ✨ des moines, iowa

## WATCH THIS



### Grounded in Grace, Growing in Generosity

Generosity has the power to transform ministries and communities. See how the ELCA Foundation is partnering with Resurrection Lutheran Church in Oro Valley, Arizona, and the Grand Canyon Synod to nurture a spirit of giving that will last for generations.

## LISTEN TO THIS

LSM Musical  
Advent Calendar  
Nov 30-Dec 24  
*2025*

Join us each day this Advent for a musical meditation on Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube, with all videos available at [LSMacademy.org/acal](https://LSMacademy.org/acal).

LSM LUTHERAN SUMMER MUSIC ACADEMY & FESTIVAL

### Musical Advent Calendar

Experience the fifth annual Musical Advent Calendar from Lutheran Summer Music, November 30th – December 24th...daily musical meditations to inspire reflection throughout the Advent season. Follow along on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or [YouTube](#), with all videos archived at [LSMacademy.org/acal](https://LSMacademy.org/acal).

WND SYNOD PRESENTS

# SUNDAY SERMONS

To help satisfy a growing need, DEM Tera Kossov has arranged for pastors of the WND Synod to provide one video sermon and manuscript to share each month.

The next monthly sermon will be for Sunday, December 28th. When the next video and manuscript have been produced, the links will be activated for download on the [Congregations](#) page of the WND Synod website. You can find the complete list of sermon videos and manuscripts on that page.

The list of available sermons will be updated on this page as they become available. Check back often.



If you missed the November 13th Zoominar featuring Bishop Craig and Synod Attorney Murray Sagsveen speaking to the updates to congregational constitutions that were approved by the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, have no fear! The Zoominar was recorded, so you can [watch it now by following this link](#). In this recording, you will learn of the best ways to implement the changes into your own congregation's constitution.

## Annual Appeal from LCM

We are humbled by all the ways we've seen the work of God's Holy Spirit through Lutheran Campus Ministry this semester and are grateful to be able to continue this work. We are also grateful for you and your support of the Minot State community through your partnership with LCM through the years.



We depend on your prayers, volunteer time, gifts of winter weather gear, and financial support, truly seeing this as a ministry of the congregations and individuals of the whole Western North Dakota Synod.

In this season of gratitude and giving, we ask that you consider a gift of \$20, \$50, \$150, \$500, or even \$1000 or more to this shared ministry. You can also [contact Pastor Rachel](#) if you are interested in



## BRING GENEROSITY TO LIFE

Have you directed your **THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS** to a charitable organization yet?

Eligible members can recommend where Thrivent distributes a portion of its charitable funding by directing Choice Dollars®.

Your WND Synod and all three synod endowment funds are participating organizations (Ministry Endowment, Mission Endowment, Accompaniment Endowment).

It's an easy way to support the ministries of our church.



**CONCORDIA COLLEGE**  
MOORHEAD, MINNESOTA

The Parish Nurse Ministry Program of Concordia College in Moorhead, MN will be offering the Foundations of Faith Community Nursing course March 5, 12, and 19 (on-line via ZOOM) and April 9, 10, and 11 (in-person at First Lutheran Church, 619 N. Broadway, Fargo, ND, 58102). The deadline to register is February 5, 2026. The program is open to licensed RNs who are interested in personal growth and/or starting a health and healing ministry within a faith community.

The program cost of **\$450** includes the participant workbook, current practice standards for FCNs, and a binder of program specific materials. We are working on the application to offer 36.5 contact hours (ANCC).

Please visit the [Concordia Parish Nurse Ministry website](#) for detailed information, program resources and to complete your registration. For additional information, please email Dr. Jean Bokinskie, PhD, RN, PNM Program Director, at [bokinski@cord.edu](mailto:bokinski@cord.edu) or call/text 701-866-3063.



SYNOD STAFF

## **RACIAL JUSTICE LEARNING COHORT**

**WEDNESDAYS @ NOON (JAN 14-MAR 4)**

**\*EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION BY DEC 1**

**How do we lead sustainable racial justice efforts in the synod that “move the needle” and avoid the typical polarization, isolation, and fatigue that often come from this work?**

*INTRODUCING **AN 8 WEEK PROGRAM** DESIGNED TO CONNECT AND EQUIP LEADERS WITH TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO CATALYZE CHANGE IN THEIR SYNODS. PARTICIPANTS IN THIS COHORT WILL:*

**CONNECT** with other justice seekers who are willing to share best practices

**UNPACK** our own real issues as they arise in real time with real people

**EXPLORE** topics of Culture, Power, and Race (CPR) with a biblical lens

**LEARN** developmentally appropriate frameworks for leading social change

**IDENTIFY** goals and next steps for ourselves and our organizations



**David Scherer (AGAPE\*)** is a racial justice edutainer, author, and facilitator who has facilitated transformational experiences for individuals and organizations for the past 20+ years. Teaching Intercultural Development and Christian Public Leadership at Luther Seminary, David combines his academic frameworks and his experience in multiracial faith communities to lead communities toward God's justice. David is also a member of the Mpls synod's racial justice team.

**\*\*\*ALSO FEATURING OTHER SPECIAL GUESTS!!!!\*\*\***



**[REGISTER: RJC FOR SYNOD LEADERS.EVENTBRITE.COM](https://rjcforsynodleaders.eventbrite.com)**

## **EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER**



### **Lutheran Faith Nurses**

A national search is on for Registered Nurses who are trained as Faith Community/Parish Nurses and who are interested in joining the Lutheran Faith Community Nurse Association. If you are or know a Faith Community/Parish Nurse, please consider joining this vital network. A search is also on for ELCA churches that are interested in beginning a Health Ministry Program.

[Learn more and join this association.](#)

**Conversations Shaping the Future**



**SPIRIT** IN THE DESERT



Here you will find practical tools to help leaders develop skills, confidence, and capacity for the future.

[Browse upcoming live courses.](#)

## Connect. Refresh. Renew.

Spirit in the Desert hosts programs and retreats for participants of all faiths to experience reconciliation, renewal and healing.

[Browse upcoming events.](#)

## Suicide Prevention Skills for Rural Ministries

Together with a cohort of other faith leaders, you will learn approaches and skills that equip you for prevention, intervention, and postvention (bereavement) tasks so you can effectively care for people struggling with thoughts of suicide or those impacted by suicide.

[Learn More and Register for this course](#)

## Welcoming the Stranger

Guided by our call to welcome the stranger, Global Refuge (*formerly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service*) has developed resources especially for you and your congregation.

- [\*\*Welcome the Stranger Worship Order:\*\*](#) Everything you need to lead worship highlighting scripture, prayers, liturgy and hymns about seeking and providing refuge.
- [\*\*Journey to Welcome Educational Simulation Exercise:\*\*](#) An educational and service-based activity which is a great fit for students, church youth groups and even adults.
- [\*\*Disinformation Toolkit:\*\*](#) a toolkit for countering disinformation through common myths and facts as well as talking points and stories to share with community.
- [\*\*Fresh Change Service Project Opportunity:\*\*](#) Pack bags to welcome our neighbors at the border and throughout the country with care and dignity.
- [\*\*Bulletin Inserts:\*\*](#) Download bulletin inserts about our new name and what we do to share in your community.

**Certificate in Community Organizing for Climate Justice**  
A 9-month online program for faith-rooted teams ready to act for climate justice

- January - November 2026
- Teams of 3+ people from any faith tradition
- 3-week cycle:
  1. Full Group workshop
  2. Team coaching
  3. Team implementation

**Build skills. Grow relationships. Take action.**

**APPLICATIONS DUE DECEMBER 15, 2025**

**CERTIFICACIÓN EN JUSTICIA CLIMÁTICA Y FE**

Inscripciones abiertas hasta el 28 de noviembre, 2025

**Inscríbete aquí**

Logos of partner organizations: Centro Para la Justicia Climática y Fe, UBL, ULS, ELCA, Federación Luterana Mundial, Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico, Instituto Pastoral Contextual.

The Center for Climate Justice and Faith at PLTS is accepting applications to two of our certificate programs – the Certificate in Faith-rooted Community Organizing for Climate Justice and the Spanish-language Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith.

Since 2021, the Center for Climate Justice and Faith at PLTS has equipped 293 students from 36 countries with the skills, spiritual-grounding, and community of support needed to be effective advocates for climate justice.



Our [most recent Mission Support memo](#) celebrates stewardship in its many forms. Meet Rev. Tauna Roth, Pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in our East Central Synod of Wisconsin. She has a passion for connecting with people, collaborating with fellow congregations, learning together, and especially sharing food. She was awarded The Dr. Richard Lee Peterman Stewardship Award for 2025 from our ELCA Congregation and Synod Support Team and Stewardship ministry, an award celebrating our churches abundant and creative forms of stewardship. In this memo learn how, "Is there going to be food?" can be the start to an important stewardship experience.

You also do not want to miss the time to gather on Monday, Dec. 8, 6 p.m. CST, to explore, "Christmas Eve as a Missional Moment". Join to wonder how we can use our large service times with glorious influxes of people to introduce new worshipers to the mission of our community and share stewardship-of-mission moments. Our Congregation and Synod Support Team of the ELCA continues to be grateful for the many ways we connect across our church. Let us give thanks.

As always, you can get the [memo in pdf](#).

We cherish hearing about the inspiring stories in your synods, regions and congregations - feel free to reach out to Karen at [karen.kretschmann@elca.org](mailto:karen.kretschmann@elca.org).

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A leadership summit for female-identifying and non-binary  
Rostered Ministers in Region 3 - ELCA

**Monday - Wednesday**

**Jan 12-14, 2026**

**Holiday Inn, Alexandria MN**

Gather for a time of honest conversation and exploration of what makes a “quality call” experience. Our time together will be shared in scripture study, small groups, experiential learning, and the belief that “the wisdom is already in the room.”

Eight leaders will be selected from each of the 9 synods in Region 3 to participate.  
Application and more information coming soon!

*Funded in part by the Quality of Call Initiative for Women in Ministry of the ELCA.*



A congregation within the WND Synod is in need of a chair lift for their church. If you know where they could find an inexpensive...or FREE...chair lift, please [contact Lesley Gorby](#) at the synod office. Additionally, this congregation is also looking for ELW's! If you have extras that your congregation could part with, again, [contact Lesley Gorby](#) at the synod office. Thanks.

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## Employment Opportunities

If you or someone you know is being called to work as a congregational leader, [CLICK HERE](#) to check our website for job openings at some of our WND Synod Congregations.

[Visit our Website](#)



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Western North Dakota Synod-ELCA | 1000 Tacoma Ave, Suite 300 PO Box 370 | Bismarck, ND 58502 US

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