



Synod E-news

February 16, 2026

News & Events from the Western North Dakota Synod



EVENTS CALENDAR



MINISTRIES



TRANSITIONS



WND Synod Receives Grant *Support for Rural/Small Town Congregations*

Western North Dakota Synod is honored to announce that it has been selected as a grant recipient through The CaSTLE Project: The Country and Small Town Lived Ecclesiology Project, a five-year initiative led by Wartburg Theological Seminary to support renewal in small town and rural congregations.

With this grant, Western North Dakota will receive funding to strengthen and support Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMs) and the mentors who walk alongside them. This investment will deepen those relationships while continuing to equip SAMs for the real, on-the-ground work of ministry. Through this grant, meaningful SAM education will be offered in both day-long workshops and retreat-style settings, creating space for learning, reflection, and renewal. Additionally, SAM mentors will have opportunities to connect with a coach, helping them grow in confidence, clarity, and skill as they support leaders serving in complex and changing contexts. The project seeks to deepen baptismal identity and cultivate thriving, Spirit-led communities of faith in rural contexts.

"We are grateful for the opportunity to partner with Wartburg Theological Seminary and The CaSTLE Project," said Rev. Brad Dokken, Associate to the Bishop for Call, Candidacy, and Leadership. "This grant will allow us to strengthen our already excellent SAMs in a more unified way across the synod, equipping them for a future rooted in hope and purpose."

The CaSTLE Project, funded by the Lilly Endowment Inc., aims to renew a baptismal ecclesiology for the long-term flourishing of rural congregational life. Western North Dakota Synod joins a growing cohort of synod grantees, shaped by mutual learning, community building, and innovation.

"We are excited to walk alongside the leaders of Western North Dakota in this journey of renewal," said Rev. Ramie Bakken, Director of The CaSTLE Project.

For more information about The CaSTLE Project, visit:

<https://www.wartburgseminary.edu/castle-project> and <https://www.thecastleproject.org>



2026 WND Synod Assembly

Rough Rider Center | Watford City, ND

May 29 – 31, 2026

REGISTRATION OPENS IN APRIL.

CLICK HERE TO BOOK YOUR HOTEL NOW!

Look for news and event updates posted on the [Synod Assembly page](#) as they become available.

“Jesus said to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’” (Luke 10:2)

Grounded in Jesus' sending of the seventy in Luke 10:1–9, the 2026 Western North Dakota Synod Assembly gathers under the theme ***Walking Together***. The word “synod” literally means “walking together”. As people of faith who call the congregations of this synod their faith home, we are called into relationship and sent into the world two by two. At this year's synod assembly, we will gather for worship, holy conversation, and faithful decision-making. As we listen for the Spirit's guidance, we will be invited to deepen our connections, strengthen our common life, and recommit ourselves to God's mission of healing, hope, and peace in our congregations, communities, and across western North Dakota.

Event registration will begin in April, 2026, but **hotel reservations can be made now!** Hotel room blocks have been made at the following places and are reserved under "Western North Dakota Synod". **Room blocks are reserved until April 29th, after which rooms will likely be unavailable.**



Inn at Hunter's Run

3617 6th Ave NE

(701) 444-1100

\$99.00 + tax and fees

(Breakfast included in room price)



Roosevelt Inn and Suites

600 2nd Ave SW

(701) 842-3686

\$99.95 + tax and fees

(Buffet breakfast available for a fee)



Little Missouri Inn & Suites

109 9th Ave SE

(701) 842-6262

\$99.00 + tax and fees

(Breakfast included in room price)



Teddy's Residential Suites

113 9th Ave SE

(701) 842-6480

\$109+ taxes and fees

(Breakfast can be purchased next door at Little Missouri Inn)



The Western Whirlwind

Get the latest from the WND Synodical Women of the ELCA. The WND SWO requests that you take a moment to consider your gifts and how those might be used within our women's organization. Fill out the "Willingness to be Considered" form included in the latest edition of *The Western Whirlwind*.

[Read the March Western Whirlwind now](#)



Lent is a time of growing deeper in faith. In this time of reflection, we focus on the symbol that sums up our faith: the cross of Christ. We look at the empty cross so that we can focus our hearts and minds on the blessings of Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

When you [download the 2026 Lenten Resource pdf](#), you find it contains only a mid-week service. For other worship resources, [please see the 2025 resource pdf](#). Be sure to change dates, scripture, etc., to match the readings for this year, Year A in the lectionary cycle.

During these services, there is a time for quiet reflection following the reading of the gospel text. In the weeks before Lent, encourage people to bring crosses from home to be blessed during the service. You could also make a cross that you can hang (paper on the wall, wood standing cross, be creative) so that people can write their burdens on cloth or paper and hang them on the cross. These could also be laid at the foot of a cross that already exists in your worship space.

If you are interested in being part of a future writing project, please let me know. Please share this resource among colleagues and friends near and far.

Blessings,

Rev. Tera Kossow, Director for Evangelical Mission, Western North Dakota Synod

[Download the .doc file of the 2026 Lenten Resource](#)

[Download the .doc file of the 2025 Lenten Resource](#)



The Palm Sunday Path is a growing, ecumenical movement of church leaders that recognize now is the time for Christians to publicly witness to our Christian values as laid out for us by Jesus in Matthew 25. We will publicly and visibly discuss and advocate for these values of feeding the hungry, healing the sick, and

welcoming the stranger. We will stand up to violations of these values by our elected leaders and we will call on every elected leader at every level - regardless of party - to work with us on policies that promote these values.

Together, we will join in with those in other upper Midwest states and across the country in a non-partisan path of action with multiple points of entry, roles, and room for everyone who holds these values.

The Palm Sunday Processional Worship taking place on Sunday, March 29th, 2026 will begin at Trinity Lutheran Church (502 N 4th St, Bismarck) at 3:00pm. We will process to the steps of the ND State Capitol Building. An ecumenical worship service highlighting our values of feeding the hungry, caring for

the sick, and welcoming the stranger will start at 4pm on the Capitol Steps. While an RSVP is not required, RSVPs help our core team prepare for the event. [CLICK HERE to be taken to the website where you can RSVP to this event.](#) You can also download the Palm Sunday Path Toolkit to help share this movement with others in your circles and communities.



To help satisfy a growing need, DEM Tera Kossow 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, March 8th**. When videos and manuscripts have been produced, the links are 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.



NEW LOCATION COMING SOON!

The current lease that the synod office is currently occupying is expiring at the end of February. We attempted to extend the lease but were unable to come to an agreement with the building's ownership.

A new location has been found, and an agreement has been signed. Stay tuned for details!!



Rejoicing  Spirits



502 N 4th St.
Bismarck, ND 58501

Rejoicing WORSHIP Spirits

2ND SUNDAY OF THE MONTH
AT TRINITY LUTHERAN @ 2 PM

This innovative ministry is an inclusive worship service that provides people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (and people who love and support them) with an opportunity to worship and to be themselves while actively participating in an inclusive faith community.

All are welcome



Enrollment Deadlines

December 1, 2025	March 1, 2026	May 1, 2026
Priority Enrollment \$50 Deposit	Standard Enrollment	Late Enrollment \$200 Late Fee

Nominate Students: LSMacademy.org/nominate

Nominate Young Musicians for LSM

LAST CALL for LSM 2026! Enrollment for this summer is over 80% full, but there's still time for young musicians to **apply**, and for you to **nominate students**.

Lutheran Summer Music is the nation's premier faith-based music academy for high school musicians. Students come together from around the country for a joyful summer of music-making through large ensembles (band, choir, orchestra), chamber music, private lessons, elective classes (conducting, composition, jazz, musical theatre, handbells, pipe organ) and use their musical gifts in performance, and in worship.

WATCH THIS



We Are Not Alone

A message of hope from ELCA Bishops in MN and Presiding Bishop Curry.
Remember that in our baptism, we are set free in Jesus and we have what we need to show up for our neighbors...we will not grow weary for we are not alone.

The Rev. Regina Hassanally, bishop of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod
The Rev. Patricia Lull, bishop of the Saint Paul Area Synod
The Rev. Jen Nagel, bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod
The Rev. Amy Odgren, bishop of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod
The Rev. Dee Pederson, bishop of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod
The Rev. William "Bill" Tesch, bishop of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod



Registration for the [2026 Rostered Ministers Gathering](#), happening July 6-9 at the JW Marriott in Indianapolis, Ind., is **now open!** All ELCA deacons, pastors and bishops (under call, on leave or disability, or retired) and candidates approved for call are invited to a time of intentional connection when we can renew our strength, enjoy camaraderie with colleagues and reflect on the Holy Spirit's work among us.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER TODAY](#)

Your registration fee includes access to sessions with keynote speakers, small-group discussions, affinity groups, workshops and more.

Early Registration: Jan. 9–March 31
Registration fee: \$325

Regular Registration: April 1–June 5
Registration fee: \$400

A limited number of scholarships are available. For more information on how to apply, visit the [Rostered Ministers Gathering webpage](#). Gathering participants will be responsible for arranging their own travel

and event accommodations. You can find more information about accommodation options on the [Rostered Ministers Gathering webpage](#).



Stewardship for All Seasons is a year-long cohort experience that helps congregations lead a healthier annual stewardship appeal—one rooted in mission, gratitude, and trust rather than shame or obligation. Through guided coaching and practical tools, congregations learn how to write and time encouraging, honest messages that grow generosity step by step.

Participating churches often experience **10–20% or more growth in annual giving**, along with renewed energy and confidence in stewardship leadership.

Learn more at a free information session on **Wednesday, February 25 at 10 a.m.**
Register here: <https://bit.ly/2026SASOverview>

CHURCH PROPERTY RESOURCE HUB

You are invited to learn more about the [Church Property Resource Hub](#), a new project of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), at one of three **upcoming town halls**.

These webinars are an introduction to the project for congregations and all people connected to the management of church property. Join to explore support available to congregation leaders as they seek to steward property in faithful and practical ways.

Tuesday, March 17, 1 p.m. Central time
[Register now for this event.](#)

Thursday, March 19, 4 p.m. Central time
[Register now for this event.](#)

Tuesday, March 24, 1 p.m. Central time
[Register now for this event.](#)

Developed in response to requests from synod and congregational leaders, the Church Property Resource Hub offers support in navigating the **opportunities and challenges that buildings and land represent** for congregational vitality and the wider mission of the church.



COURSES &
RESOURCES

Find **resources** and expand your knowledge of church property management through templates, guides, explainers; and **courses**.



SUPPORT
FORUM

Share advice and get support from colleagues with experience answering property management questions, all on our digital **forum** (forthcoming).



SUCCESS
STORIES

Be inspired by **success stories** of faith communities using underutilized space in exciting new ways to fulfill their missions.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

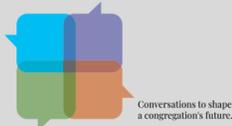


LUTHERAN FAITH COMMUNITY
NURSE ASSOCIATION

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.](#)



DIALOG
WORKS

Conversations to shape
a congregation's future.

Conversations Shaping the Future

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

[Browse upcoming live courses.](#)



SPIRIT IN THE DESERT

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.



Our [most recent Mission Support memo](#) connects us to Community Lutheran Church in Sussex County, Delaware where they are working to build-bridges for justice and love. Read about how they deeply care for their community through being a feeding hub, offering English classes and advocacy, caring for creation, and working toward dismantling racism, building equity, and empowering inclusion. Learn how to join our new ELCA Church Property Hub on Feb. 12th for Property Development 101 for Synods. In these times, staying connected through our stories seems vitally important, so please share your stories by contacting us at missionsupport@elca.org.

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.

opening borders ABRIENDO FRONTERAS

El Paso, Texas - Juarez, Mexico
April 10-17, 2026

Sponsored by the
Western North Dakota Synod

Facilitator: Vicki Schmidt

You are invited to join this delegation to explore issues of immigration and hear the stories of those who live the daily struggle for survival along the border of Texas and Mexico.



\$600 plus airfare
Contact Vicki Schmidt for information and application forms:
Veschmidt45@msn.com

Learn more: openingborders.com

Rostered leaders and congregational members are invited to join an upcoming delegation to the U.S. border **April 10-17, 2026** to learn firsthand the realities of immigration and how our policies affect those seeking safety and a new life in the United States.

This will be a challenging and meaningful experience, inviting honest questions and deep listening as we hear stories of trauma, resilience, and hope.

We will meet people of faith and organizations who accompany the most vulnerable and live out the Gospel's call to compassion and justice. If you feel drawn to learn, listen, and be transformed, we invite you to consider being part of this delegation.

Please [contact Vicki Schmidt, Border Immersion Facilitator](#) if you are interested in attending: (701) 361-4517, or veschmidt45@msn.com.
If you'd like to ask questions of a past delegate regarding prior experiences, contact Pastor Natasha Woitzel-Kolles: natasha@gsxcbismarck.com

In Search Of...



Will you host a baby shower? A diaper drive?

Heart River Bridges of Hope is inviting you to help us meet a need at the Heart River Correctional Center, a women's prison located on the same campus as the Youth Correctional Center. There are currently about 70 women incarcerated at that facility, and a much larger women's prison is under construction on the same campus.

Unfortunately, some of the inmates are pregnant and babies will be cared for by family members or friends during the mother's incarceration. HRCC staff have reached out and asked for help with baby items. Here's the message we received:

We are in need of some baby items as we continue to have pregnant women transferred to our care. We love to be able to send them off with some starter items to help ease the burden of families and to make their pregnancy time feel special. I don't know if the church can assist with any of these, but here are some of our current needs if you are able to help us out:

1. Newborn diapers (smaller packs are best)
2. Baby wipes
3. Baby hygiene items (lotion, baby wash, diaper cream, towels etc.)
4. Bibs/Burp cloths
5. Baby socks and onesies
6. Baby hats/glove sets
7. Footed snowsuits
8. Newborn or 0-3 month clothing (especially neutral or for girls).

We still have plenty of receiving blankets and washcloths. We are totally okay with gently used items.

Please contact Pastor Gail Hagerty with questions info requests – pastor.gail@heartriverlutheran.org.

Thank you for the ongoing gifts of quilts and fresh start kit supplies. Our ministry to youth and women who are incarcerated is truly a ministry of the synod and a ministry that touches lives.



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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