



## Synod E-news

February 2, 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>



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.

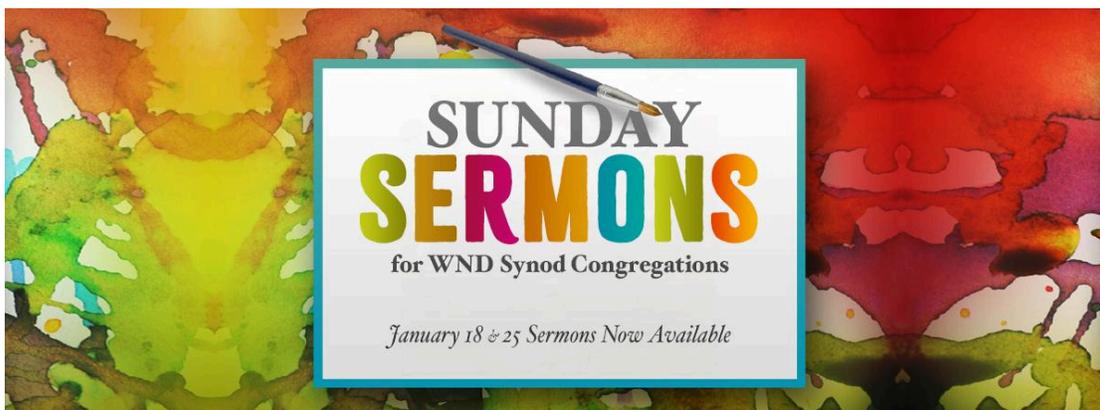
When you [download the 2026 Lenten Resource pdf](#), you find it contains only a mid-week service. For other worship resources, [please see the 2025 resource pdf](#). Be sure to change dates, scripture, etc., to match the readings for this year, Year A in the lectionary cycle.

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](#)



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, February 15th**. 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.

**2026 WND Synod Assembly**



Details are being released for the 2026 WND Synod Assembly May 29-31 in Watford City, ND

The Rough Rider Center in Watford City will host to the annual event this year, under the theme of ***Walking Together***, based on Luke 10:1-9. Event information will be posted on the WND Synod website when they become finalized.

Event registration will begin in April, 2026, but ***hotel reservations can be made now!*** Hotel room blocks are all reserved under "Western North Dakota Synod" and are available until April 29th. There is no guarantee of room availability after that date.

Hotel options are as follows:

**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)*



## 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

2<sup>ND</sup> 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*



**LSM LUTHERAN SUMMER MUSIC ACADEMY & FESTIVAL** Enrollment Deadlines

December 1, 2025	<b>March 1, 2026</b>	May 1, 2026
Priority Enrollment 2:50 Deadline	Standard Enrollment	Late Enrollment 3:00 Late Fee

Nominate Students: [LSMacademy.org/nominate](https://LSMacademy.org/nominate)

## Nominate Young Musicians for LSM

Young musicians from across the country are headed to St. Olaf College this year for the 2026 Lutheran Summer Music Academy & Festival (LSM). Students in grades 8-12 will be immersed in a supportive community that nurtures their musical growth and invites them to share their musical gifts in performance and in worship. The Standard Enrollment deadline is March 1, and spots are filling fast.

Do you know young musicians who would thrive at LSM? [Nominate them today](#), or remind them to [submit a free application](#) by March 1st.

## 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



**FEBRUARY 3RD  
WEBINAR**

Presented by Erin Ramirez,  
Founder of Real Change Studio

## How do you lead change without losing your people?

When change hits a congregation or synod, the technical work is rarely the hardest part. It's the people part.

Join The CaSTLE Project Feb 3rd from 1–2:15pm CT for a 75-minute, interactive webinar:

- Understand where resistance is coming from.
- Transform opposition into curiosity.
- Find traction when people feel stuck.
- Stay grounded when the path forward feels uncertain.

Come ready to work. Bring a real change you're facing and apply what you learn immediately.

[Click Here to Register Now!](#)

## EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

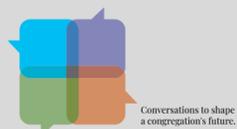


**LUTHERAN FAITH COMMUNITY  
NURSE ASSOCIATION**

### 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.



## 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.



Welcoming Newcomers Since 1939



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. 12<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto: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](mailto:karen.kretschmann@elca.org).



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

## 2026 Annual Report Letter

If you've been looking for a copy of the Bishop Craig Schweitzer's letter to the Synod that can be used in your congregation's Annual Report, [here it is!](#) Use it as you wish in whatever way you feel is helpful.



# WHERE'S THE STAFF?

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.

Bishop Craig Schweitzer recently attended the winter meeting of the Board of Regents of Concordia College, one of 26 colleges and universities that are part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America!!

The work at Concordia College is another example of your mission support dollars at work, making a positive impact on lives.

Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership, Candidacy, and Call, Brad Dokken, is currently in St Louis, MO for the ELCA YMN Extravaganza where the theme for the 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering, "Imagine More" was announced.

DEM, Tera Kossow, has been busy lining up sermon videos for the coming months. The February 15th sermon will be provided by Rev. Kathi Nygaard of Zion Lutheran in Beulah. Rev. Martha HarriSon of Trinity Lutheran in Bismarck will provide the sermon for March 8th. And Tera herself will deliver a sermon video for the Sunday after Easter, April 12th. You can find the video sermons on the [WND Synod website](#) as they become available.



## In Search Of...

Searching for a new home for the sound system at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of Bismarck! Good Shepherd is in the process of updating their speakers, amplifiers and mixer board and would like to re-home their current system to a congregation that may need it. Please [contact Carson Schmidt](#) for details

The Heart River Correctional Center is in need of baby items as pregnant women continue to be transferred to their care. What a gesture of love, to be able to send them off with starter items to help ease the burden of families making their pregnancy time feel special. Here are some current needs:

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).



## 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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