



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

Synod E-news

January 19, 2026

News & Events from the Western North Dakota Synod



EVENTS CALENDAR



MINISTRIES



TRANSITIONS



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](#)

Rejoicing  Spirirts



502 N 4th St.
Bismarck, ND 58501

Rejoicing WORSHIP Spirirts

A worship service that provides people with intellectual and developmental disabilities with the opportunity to explore and experience faith.

2ND SUNDAY OF THE MONTH
TRINITY LUTHERAN @ 2 PM
Beginning January 11, 2026

This innovative ministry works with congregations to provide a meaningful, inclusive worship service in a loving and supportive community for people with intellectual disabilities and the people who love and support them. People are free to be themselves while actively participating as contributing members in an inclusive faith community.

All are welcome



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, January 25th**. 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!!

Immersion Delegation to El Paso/Juarez

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](mailto:veschmidt45@msn.com) if you are interested in attending: [\(701\) 361-4517](tel:7013614517), or veschmidt45@msn.com.

If you'd like to ask questions of a past delegate regarding prior experiences, contact Pastor Natasha Woitzel-Kolles: natasha@gslcbismarck.com

LSM LUTHERAN SUMMER MUSIC ACADEMY & FESTIVAL
Enrollment Deadlines

Enrollment Category	Deadline
Priority Enrollment (250 Students)	December 1, 2025
Standard Enrollment	March 1, 2026
Late Enrollment (150 Late Fee)	May 1, 2026

Nominate Students: 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.



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](#).



WHEN PLAY BECOMES A PROBLEM: *Internet Gaming and Spiritual Formation*

Explore the role of internet gaming and digital technology in the lives of children, adolescents, and adults, highlighting both the potential benefits and the risks of problematic or compulsive use.

This FREE one-hour webinar entitled "When Play Becomes a Problem: Internet Gaming and Spiritual Formation" will be January 28th, 2026, from 12-1:00 PM CT featuring special guest Michael Hsu, MD, a board-certified addiction psychiatrist and health services researcher and clinical faculty at the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine.

The goal of this session is to help faith leaders recognize signs of unhealthy gaming or technology use, understand when gaming may be serving deeper emotional or spiritual needs, and offer practical, compassionate ways to support individuals and families while encouraging balance, community, and healthy limits.

[CLICK HERE to register now.](#)



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 or call/text 701-866-3063.

Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS) Discernment Weekend

Are you wondering if seminary might be right for you? Consider joining PLTS visit and discernment weekend, *Signs Along the Way*, March 13th - 15th in Berkeley, California. This weekend is a great opportunity to connect with others in discernment, get to know PLTS faculty, and explore what it's like to be an online student in the MDiv, MA in Spirituality and Social Change, or Lutheran Year programs. This weekend is designed for folks interested in online seminary education. PLTS covers lodging and meals during the event and can offer travel assistance for those who need it. Visit plts.edu/signs to learn more and sign up.



Stephen Ministries Celebrates Anniversary, Launches National Tour

Since Stephen Ministries was founded in 1975, a wide range of ministry resources and training events have been developed, serving hundreds of thousands of individuals, and working with churches and organizations across the denominational spectrum, including many Lutheran congregations.

To mark this ministry milestone, earlier this year a nationwide tour was launched to mark Stephen Ministries' 50th Anniversary with a variety of learning events. These events, which are open to anyone, feature presentations to equip and inspire participants for making their part of the world a more caring place. Topics covered include grief, supporting those with cancer, what Jesus teaches us about empathy, how congregations can help combat the mental health crisis, and more.

For additional information and resources, visit [Stephen Ministries online](#).

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER



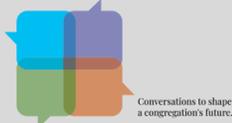
Lutheran Faith Nurses

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

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



**DIALOG
WORKS**

Conversations to shape
a congregation's 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.](#)



SPIRIT IN THE DESERT



DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE



DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH



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.*



Global Refuge

Welcoming Newcomers Since 1939



Our [most recent Mission Support memo](#) introduces us to the community of Radford, VA, where Christ Lutheran closed to allow for Nineveh to open. Read about this new ministry that started its work with and among the people and organizations in Radford offering the community a safe haven and house of healing for all seeking the justice, mercy and compassion of the Spirit, especially people on the margins: those suffering from addiction and their families and friends, and those seeking an affirming and inclusive faith community in the New River Valley. Find out how to partner with our *ELCA Innovation team*, which works closely with synods, congregations and other ELCA ministry partners as they explore new and unique ways of doing ministry. In this time of Advent — a time of watchfulness, preparation and waiting for the light of Christ to come — we continue to be grateful for the ways we stay connected and for the Mission Support received that fosters these stories.

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.



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

2026 Annual Report Letter

used in your congregation's Annual Report, [here it is!](#) helpful.

If you've been looking for a copy of the Bishop Craig Schweitzer's letter to the Synod that can be Use it as you wish in whatever way you feel is



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.

Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership, Candidacy, and Call, Brad Dokken, is a part of the Moses Project, which is a year-long continuing ed event specifically for pastors who serve rural settings. Recently Brad was in Des Moines for an in-person conference. At the end of the month he'll be off to St Louis for the ELCA YMN Extravaganza and in his "down time" is working on a SAM manual for both SAMs and their mentors.

DEM, Tera Kossow, has been busy assembling a mid-week Lenten Resource for the congregations of the WND Synod. It can be found by [CLICKING HERE](#).



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](#)



Share This Email



Share This Email



Share This Email

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

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!