



Synod E-news

May 11, 2026

News & Events from the Western North Dakota Synod



EVENTS CALENDAR



MINISTRIES



TRANSITIONS



CLICK HERE TO REGISTER NOW

2026 WND Synod Assembly

Rough Rider Center | Watford City, ND

May 29 - 31, 2026

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.

When it comes to the assembly, the thing on everyone's mind is,
WHAT DOES THE AGENDA LOOK LIKE?

Because the synod will be electing a new bishop, there is no easy answer to that question. A tentative schedule has been [posted on the synod website](#). Just know that this schedule is subject to change based on the various ballot results of the bishop election.

Clear as mud, right? Hopefully the lack of a definitive agenda does not cause too much angst in your planning. We look forward to seeing you at the Rough Rider Center May 29-31!



SYNOD ASSEMBLY WORKSHOPS

**Equipping Storytellers:
Practical Tools for
Storytelling in Your Church**

Friday, May 29th 1:30 – 4:30 PM CDT

Stories build connection and bring faith to life. Join pastor, speaker, humorist, and award-winning storyteller Nathan Mugaas for a practical and engaging workshop designed for both preachers and lay leaders.

Having grown up in a small rural church and serving his first call at Zion Lutheran in Minot, Nathan brings a deep appreciation for the strengths, relationships, and real-life challenges shared by congregations across our synod. This workshop is designed to encourage and equip both preachers and lay leaders, offering tools that strengthen communication, deepen connection, and bring fresh energy to ministry in congregations of any size.

Through live examples and a clear storytelling framework, participants will learn how to:

- Identify and “mine” meaningful stories already present in their congregation
- Shape stories for sermons, ministry moments, and seasonal services
- Tell stories with clarity, authenticity, and confidence
- Highlight the impact of ministry and shared life together
- Cultivate a congregational culture that celebrates the stories of faith and everyday life

Participants will receive materials to support reflection and continued storytelling beyond the workshop. Together we will explore how stories can bring warmth, humor, and renewed connection as we walk together in faith.



Best Stewardship Practices - Are You Ready for a Capitol Campaign?:

Join Paul Marsh of GSB Fundraising, one of our synod's Stewardship Specialists, for a session that focuses on several stewardship and congregational campaign case studies. Learn what is working, what is not, and how to take your church's generosity to the next level. We'll leave plenty of time for your questions and discussion.



What We Saw - A Border Immersion Witness:

Join Pastor Natasha Woitzel-Kolles, Bruce and Cindy Carlson as they share firsthand accounts from their recent border immersion experience. They encountered asylum seekers and heard the deeply human stories behind their journeys. Together they reflect on the complexity of immigration, the dehumanizing conditions many face, and how the experience challenged assumptions and replaced them with faces, names, and truth.



The Work of Being a Neighbor:

Synod Disaster Capacity Builder, Jen Engquist, invites you to join her in taking time to map out your congregation's role as a great neighbor and learn about opportunities to grow your capacity to walk alongside others when times get tough or disaster strikes. This workshop will help you map your assets, values, risks, and opportunities for learning, leadership, and partnership.



Risk Management Best Practices: Synod Attorney Murray Sagsveen will topics surrounding internal financial controls, volunteer management, property and liability insurance, background checks, employee management, responsibilities of the treasurer and audit committee, and implementation of risk management policies by continuing resolutions.



Suicide Stigma in the Christian Tradition - "It's Not Biblical": Rev. Sylvia Bull will cover the treatment of suicide in Christian history, including the origins of suicide stigma in Christian belief and practice, contrasted with biblical perspectives on suicide as a part of human experience and how faith communities can meaningfully accompany those struggling with suicide thoughts.

The Ins and Outs of Cemeteries: Topics related to the management of rural Lutheran cemeteries by congregations and cemetery associations will be addressed by Synod Attorney Murray Sagsveen, including 501(c)(13) tax-exempt status, incorporating, state law requirements, sexton responsibilities, ownership questions, oil and gas production under cemeteries, liability insurance, and financial sustainability.

Christian Public Witness in an Age of Partisanship: Come, learn, and reflect with Rev. Sylvia Bull on how Christians can faithfully engage in public witness that promotes our values and intentionally avoids participating in the harms of our hyper-partisan political environment.

Additional sessions may be added as details become available.

WHO WILL BE OUR NEXT WND SYNOD BISHOP?

Across the synod, prayerful contemplation is being given for those who will be lifted up for consideration of Western North Dakota Synod Bishop while current WND Synod Bishop, Rev. Craig Schweitzer, prepares to transition to a four-year, renewable term as Executive Director for the Christian Community and Leadership Home Area of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

The ecclesiastical ballot and election will be held during the upcoming WND Synod Assembly. Throughout this discernment process, it may be helpful to know what is expected of our synod bishop.

[CLICK THIS LINK](#) to view a document listing the job description for the Bishop of the Western North Dakota Synod of the ELCA.



Collection Sites and Dates Set

Quilts and kits for Lutheran World Relief will be collected in several communities across the WND Synod, offering comfort and care to those who need it most.

Participating congregations may drop off their quilts/kits from **9AM - 4PM** at Midwest Motor Express in the following cities:

- **May 18-19 in Dickinson (77 9th Ave East)**
- **May 20-21 in Minot (1900 22nd Ave SE)**
- **May 20-21 in Bismarck (5015 Main Ave East)**
-

If you have questions, contact info@wndsynod.org.



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, May 31st**. 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.

WATCH THIS



[A Long Legacy of Boldness & Hope](#)

Starting in 1988, LMM has encouraged men to grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus Christ. Helping them become the men, husbands, fathers, sons, brothers and leaders God has called them to be.

SAVE THE DATE



2026 BISHOP'S CONVOCATION

When: September 20th, 21st & 22nd, 2026

Where: Metigoshe Ministries, Bottineau, ND

Accommodation Options:

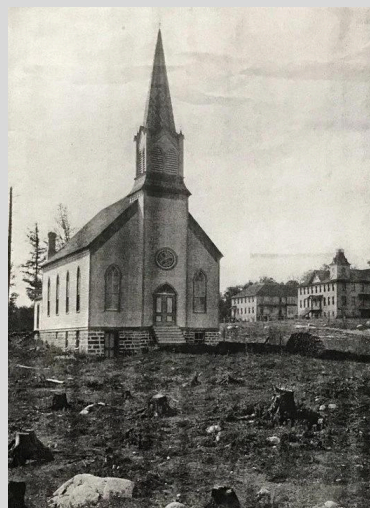
On-site through Metigoshe Ministries - (701) 263-4788

Lake Metigoshe Quilt Inn - (701) 263-6500

Cobblestone Inn in Bottineau, ND (701) 534-2121

Indian Boarding Schools: ELCA Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative – Join the work

The Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative is leading a coordinated effort to research Lutheran involvement in Indian boarding and day schools dating back to the 1820s. We are seeking both clergy and lay volunteers who want to be part of this initiative. All are welcome, including those with skills in research, data collection, organizing, education, and leadership. The goals are to find and gather information in order to share it with impacted Indigenous individuals, families, and communities; for our church members to know our history of church-sponsored Indian boarding schools and their devastating impacts on Native communities; all as part of an ongoing truth and healing process.



The work started in 2022 with 15 synods across four states. In May 2023, it expanded to 27 synods across ten states. We are now expanding to all synods across all states. We welcome you! To learn more and to get involved, click [HERE](#).



LWB-ZENTRUM
WITTENBERG
LUTHERISCHER
WELTBUND

31st LWF International Theological Seminar for Pastors

You may know about the international theological seminars that are organized at the LWF Center in Wittenberg

This year's seminar is entitled, "**Basics of Lutheran Theology – Preaching the Word of God and Celebrating the Sacraments**" and will be held November 7-21, 2026 at Colleg Wittenberg, Juedenstrasse 8, D-06886 Lutherstadt Wittenberg.

Bishops and church leaders are asked to nominate pastors for this fruitful, cross-cultural dialogue that will strengthen the communion of the LWF. Accepted participants will return to their respective home churches better equipped for the challenges in their ministry. And for the home churches, these seminars provide the opportunity to offer their pastors additional theological education and spiritual formation.

Nominations are being accepted through May 11, 2026.

You can find [MORE INFO HERE](#), or [CLICK HERE](#) to download the application form.

LSM Choral Gathering

A Day of Singing in Community

LSM LUTHERAN SUMMER MUSIC ACADEMY & FESTIVAL at St. Olaf College

Wednesday, July 1, 2026
St. Olaf College • Northfield, MN

Featuring Dr. David Cherwien
Lutheran Summer Music, faculty
National Lutheran Choir, former Artistic Director

Sing works by Abbington • Cherwien
Krentz Organ • Palestrina • Rizza

Learn More & Register
LSMacademy.org/choral-gathering

You are invited to join fellow singers for a day of inspiring, community-centered music-making at the LSM Choral Gathering. Led by Dr. David Cherwien, LSM faculty member and former Artistic Director of the National Lutheran Choir, this event offers a welcoming introduction to the music, people, and artistic life of Lutheran Summer Music at St. Olaf College.

Invite your choir members and join us! Register today: LSMacademy.org/choral-gathering

Access to Luther Seminary Archives Temporarily Paused for Inventory Work

Access to the Luther Seminary Archives will be temporarily paused for church partners and external researchers from April 1 through August 31, 2026.

During this period, archives staff will focus on inventory, processing, and preparation of the collections for the seminary's anticipated move to a new location in the Twin Cities following the 2026–27 academic year.

Archives staff will respond to individual research questions on a case-by-case basis throughout the spring and summer. Please contact archives@luthersem.edu for support.

To learn more visit [Luther Seminary online](#).



EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

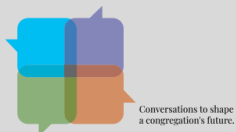


**LUTHERAN FAITH COMMUNITY
NURSE ASSOCIATION**

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.](#)

m DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

m DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH

farmwell
wisconsin



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](#)

 **Global Refuge**
Welcoming Newcomers Since 1939

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.



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America



Our [most recent Mission Support memo](#) takes us back to Palm Sunday where this year many palm waving processions continued into the afternoon with journeys through downtown areas, around state buildings, in amphitheaters and in parking lots, as we and our denominational partners cried out for justice, peace and love, during the [Palm Sunday Path](#). Our story focuses on activities in Wisconsin and specifically Northwest Synod of Wisconsin – learn about the day with dance, prayer, and calls to action. Also check out how to participate in the May 18 in the evening for a webinar on *The Stewardship of AI: Benefits and Concerns*. We continue to be grateful for partners and individuals who advocate for education, justice, peace and love.

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.



Lutheran
Disaster Response

Lutheran Disaster Response Training & Engagement Catalog

[Click to Download Your Copy, Now](#)

2026 Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts (CWTA)

The 2026 Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts (CWTA) is a high-quality, affordable conference, full of practical ideas that you can adapt to your own setting, along with meaningful worship experiences...for ministry practitioners, by ministry practitioners. It will be held **July 20-22, 2026**, on the campus of St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN.

You are invited to participate!



CWTA attracts participants from many different roles, including experienced and first-call Pastors, Deacons, and other church professional leaders; Lay people including lay leaders; Church workers – volunteer and paid; Children youth and family ministers/leaders; Artists; Church musicians; Christian education professionals; Outdoor ministry professionals; Seminarians; Others interested in deepening theological understandings and spiritual practices; and Members of congregations that are reimagining their vocation. **We'll provide opportunities for you to find those people at the conference so you can connect and share experiences.**

More information about the exciting program and registration can be found on our website. We invite you to explore it and [register today!](#)

Holden Pilgrimage on the Prairie

A collaboration between Holden Village and Shalom Hill Farm will be hosted at the beautiful prairie setting of Shalom Hill Farm in Windom, Minnesota, August 2-7, 2026.



This five-day retreat will offer a wealth of opportunities to gather for communal worship, creative expression, and faith exploration. Following the program tradition of Holden Village, there will be five nights of Evening Vespers including the beloved Holden Evening Prayer and other music created at Holden Village. Newer liturgical compositions, written specifically for Shalom Hill Farm, will also be featured.

For more information [email SHF Farm and Program Manager Zach Davis](#) or call (507) 850-4549.

Space is limited! [CLICK HERE to sign up to receive announcements today!](#)



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.

WORSHIP RESOURCES AVAILABLE

On June 14, 2026, Trinity Lutheran of rural Kenmare, ND will its Holy Closure service. After that time, they will have items available for churches of the WND Synod. If you are interested in any of the following, please contact Jean Quigley, at 701-340-9026.

- 27 - "With One Voice" songbooks
- 26 - "Family of God" red hymnals
- 40ish - "Lutheran Book of Worship" green hymnals
- 1 - banner "I am the Way"
- 1 - piano and piano bench (tuned in 2025)
- 1 - Advent wreath
- 1 - 24" x 36" framed picture of Jesus
- 2 - silverplate candle sticks with candle caps (Sudsbury)
- 1 - 24" tall stainless-steel cross (Sudsbury)
- 1 - Silverplated communion cup with lid
- 1 - Metal liturgical bookstand (with Lutheran Book of Worship for altar)
- 1 - 4.5 foot candle lighter/snuffer
- 2 - brass plated metal altar vases
- 1 - Set of seasonal altar cloths



[Click to email Jean](#)



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.



Introducing: The New ELCA.org




If you've visited ELCA.org lately, you might have noticed the new look and feel. Updated and enhanced features include:

- **ELCA.org** provides a central location to nurture your faith and discover community.
- With [Enhanced search and guided exploration](#), **ELCA.org** including the ELCA's resource library, congregation profile information, Living Lutheran articles and the ELCA's seeker site to provide better search results. Navigate resources, learn about key topics and find communities of support.
- Easier navigation to find and connect with ministries and programs to help you act on your faith.
- The clean and modern feel allows you to enjoy an inviting, clutter-free design.
- It's made for everyone following accessibility best practices.

[Explore ELCA.org today](#) and discover more about who we are as a church.

[Visit the WND Synod 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!