



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

Synod E-news

November 24, 2025

News & Events from the Western North Dakota Synod



EVENTS CALENDAR



MINISTRIES



TRANSITIONS



Many of our neighbors are worried about how they are going to put food on the table. If you or someone you know are worried about food, there is help - you are not alone. There are local pantries and caring neighbors ready to lend a hand.

FIND FOOD for yourself or a neighbor at <https://greatplainsfoodbank.org/get-help/>

Click on the **"Food Pantries, Soup Kitchens and Shelters"** button.

Users can search by county and city using the interactive statewide map or clicking on county links below the map.

WAYS YOU CAN HELP

- Check-in with family and neighbors, ask "How are you?"
- If you can, offer a ride to the pantry or go to the pantry for them.
- Invite them to dinner.
- Bring them some extra groceries.
- Print them a list of pantries.

WAYS YOUR CONGREGATION OR COMMUNITY CAN HELP

- Donate to your local food pantry. Did you know that \$1 donated to *Great Plains Food Bank* helps provide \$4 worth of groceries to neighbors in need!
- Host a food drive for your local pantry.
- If you have extra, unopened, shelf stable, nonperishable, not expired food, drop it off at your local pantry.

This is an extremely stressful time for many of us. Talking about our worries and fears can really help. Sometimes it's easier to open up to someone you don't know. If that's true for you, **CALL or TEXT 211** anonymously.

SEEKING STORIES! - Hunger/SNAP/Food Security

While we continue through the aftermath of the recent government shutdown, we are seeking to highlight actions taken by our area churches. If you know of a hunger ministry or collaboration that is upping its game in this season, please notify our Synod Disaster Capacity Builder, [Jen Engquist](#)

This is intended to be a celebratory way of lifting up our congregations while we walk through these difficult times together. Thank you!




The Synod Authorized Ministers of the WND Synod gathered on Saturday, November 22nd at Faith Lutheran Church in Bismarck for a one-day summit. This annual get together is intended for SAMs to gather and share their ministry successes, struggles, and to equip the group to better serve their congregations.

Ground Floor Grace

by John Stevens

**A 2025 Advent
Worship Resource**

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

DOWNLOAD .DOC

"To encourage and equip the ministries of the Western North Dakota Synod-ELCA, so that the Good News of Jesus Christ is proclaimed, and all God's children feel welcomed and included in the ministries to which God calls us."

It is our hope that this resource will equip clergy, synod authorized ministers, worship leaders, councils, etc., to share the Good News of Jesus Christ during the season of Advent.

A special thanks to the contributors for this resource, who helped experiment with the possibility of creating a gift to the Western North Dakota Synod:

Rev. Brad Dokken, Rev. Tera Kossow, Rev. Kim Gifford, Rev. Russell Lambert, Rev. Kathi Nygaard, Rev. Katie Rodriguez, Rev. Emmy Swedlund, Rev. Mary Wiggins, and of course, to Rev. John Stevens, Pastor, Zion Lutheran, Oregon City, OR, author of the book, "Ground Floor Grace".

[Please use this resource any way you like](#), feel free to edit it for your needs, and if possible, send a message to the Western North Dakota Synod - ELCA if you use it! We'd love to see how far it reaches

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](#)



Cemeteries

Synod Attorney Murray Sagsveen has authored a [memorandum](#) for congregations that care for rural cemeteries. The memorandum offers guidance for sextons, as well as guidance on risk management, legal requirements, and other issues. The memorandum can be found on the synod website under the ["Legal Resources"](#) tab.

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.



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.

WND SYNOD PRESENTS

SUNDAY SERMONS

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, 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.

Minot Area Youth Groups: Making an Impact

In September, youth from eight ELCA congregations in and around Minot gathered under the spreading trees of Oak Park, turning a pleasant autumn evening into a vibrant outdoor sanctuary for nearly 300 worshippers.

As part of the service, supplies were collected for Fresh Start Kits, sturdy backpacks prepared for people stepping out of the Youth Correctional Center, the North Dakota State Penitentiary, and the Missouri River Correctional Center. Each kit is a small anchor of hope, filled with practical essentials and the quiet message, "You're not alone as you begin again."

By the end of the night, more than 60 Fresh Start Kits were packed, and later delivered to Trinity Lutheran Church in Bismarck, ready to be placed in the hands of those about to take their next brave step.



thrivent®

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 Bokinski, PhD, RN, PNM Program Director, at 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 Forsynodleaders.eventbrite.com](https://rjcforsynodleaders.eventbrite.com)



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.

[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.

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



Center for Climate Justice and Faith
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

APPLICATIONS DUE DECEMBER 15, 2025



CERTIFICACIÓN EN JUSTICIA CLIMÁTICA Y FE

Inscripciones abiertas hasta el 28 de noviembre, 2025

Inscríbete aquí



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.

[CERTIFICATE IN FAITH-ROOTED COMMUNITY ORGANIZING FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE](#)
[ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS THROUGH DECEMBER 15, 2025](#)



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.

November 26th, you're invited to a one-hour free webinar titled **"Rethinking Addiction: A Faith Leader's Guide"** hosted by the Center of Addiction & Faith. Guest presenter will be Rachel Bowling, Director of SAFE Communities at SAFE Project, a national nonprofit working to end the addiction epidemic. Faith leaders are often called upon to support individuals and families navigating the complexities of substance use, addiction, and recovery. Examine how we understand and respond to substance use and share insights from professionals and recovery advocates.

[CLICK HERE to register](#)



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.

In Search Of...

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.



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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