



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

Synod E-news

News & Events from the Western North Dakota Synod

September 15, 2025



EVENTS CALENDAR



MINISTRIES



TRANSITIONS



Hunger Sunday, October 12th

The first official Hunger Sunday will be celebrated in WND Synod on October 12th, 2025. [Here you will find a worship liturgy to use.](#) It is our hope that these worship resources could be used by congregations so that in unity with other ELCA congregations we can pray and seek an answer to the crippling hunger needs of our time. You are welcome to use all or some of the liturgy, sermon, children's sermon, hymn suggestions etc. to enhance your worship experience. When it has been prepared, a recorded sermon will be found on the [Congregations](#) page of the WND Synod website.



Institutions are changing. Budgets are changing. Cultural norms are changing. And yet, you are empowered to be a follower of Jesus in your everyday life, right where God has placed you. And you are not alone. You have other Christians, also empowered by the Holy Spirit, to walk with you along this faith journey.

[A booklet has been compiled](#) with some tools that can help you and other leaders at your congregation learn more about the options that lie in front of you. It lists many different paths you may discern are the right path for your congregation at this time. This booklet is meant to be an early tool on the journey, but we encourage you to walk closely with the synod staff during this time. You do have options, and the Western North Dakota Synod staff is here to walk with you as you follow the Holy Spirit's guidance.

OCTOBER 20TH . **OCTOBER 21ST**
(in Minot, ND) (in Bismarck, ND)

ONE DAY ONLY
BOUNDARIES
workshop



Merriam-Webster defines a boundary as “something that shows where an area ends and another area begins.” As a synod, we are committed to providing you with opportunities to explore the intersections of healthy boundaries and your core identity as a beloved child of God. We are also committed to providing a safe and supportive space in which we explore what this means together.

Join us on **October 20th in Minot** or **October 21st in Bismarck** for a one-day boundaries workshop, led by Pastor Emily Carson, Director for Evangelical Mission & Assistant to the Bishop for Generosity, Stewardship and Financial Administration, in the Southeastern Minnesota Synod. Pastor Carson has been facilitating power and boundaries workshops for lay and rostered people across the country for the past 8 years.

If you are unable to attend one of these sessions, more will be offered in the spring of 2026.

Each session is limited to 35 participants.

[Register for the MINOT workshop](#)

[Register for the BISMARCK workshop](#)



FALL CLUSTER GATHERINGS

The **Badlands Cluster** Fall Gathering will be held Saturday, September 20, 2025 at Belfield Lutheran Church, Belfield, ND. Registration the day of the event will be at 9:30am MT with Cluster activities starting at 10am MT.

The **Upper Missouri Cluster** will be held Saturday, October 4, 2025 at Grace Lutheran Church, Wildrose, ND.

Registration the day of the event will be at 9:30am CT with Cluster activities starting at 10am CT.

The **East Missouri Cluster** will be held Saturday, October 11, 2025 at Peace Lutheran Church, Lincoln, ND.

Registration the day of the event will be at 9:30am CT with Cluster activities starting at 10am CT.

The **Heart River Cluster** will be held Saturday, October 11, 2025 at Zion Lutheran Church, Beulah, ND. Registration the day of the event will be at 9:30am CT with Cluster activities starting at 10am CT.

The **Lonetree Cluster** will be held Saturday, October 11, 2025.

The Western Whirlwind

In the latest edition of the Western Whirlwind, you'll find information on the upcoming Cluster Gatherings as well as the 2026 WELCA Triennial Gathering in Des Moines, Iowa, July 16 - 19, 2026. The theme for this event is "I Am Worthy".

[Read the September, 2025 Western Whirlwind](#)



Disaster Capacity Builder Introduced



The Eastern and Western North Dakota Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are pleased to announce the calling of **Jen Engquist** as the first **Disaster Capacity Builder**.

This newly created position, funded through a three-year grant from Lutheran Disaster Response, will focus on building disaster resiliency and preparedness among ELCA congregations and communities across North Dakota. Engquist will work closely with both synods to recruit and support a statewide resiliency team, identify disaster-related challenges, build public advocacy capacity, and coordinate synod responses to disasters when they occur.

Engquist brings a wealth of experience in community building, justice-focused ministry, and international service. Most recently, she served as the Executive Director of a shelter for people who are unhoused and a community-building organization in Colorado, where she also welcomed youth groups to summer Service Learning Camps. Prior to that, she served as Country Program Coordinator for the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission program in Cambodia, following her own YAGM year in Argentina. She has also served as a Director at Churches United in Moorhead, MN, worked in domestic poverty research and international development, and began her service to the church as a youth leader in a rural North Dakota congregation.

Engquist officially began her work with the Synods on **September 8, 2025**.

SAVE THE DATE

GIFTS Event

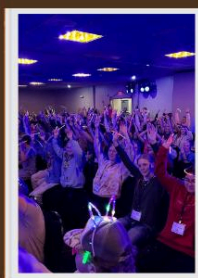
Karoline Lewis, author of "A Lay Preacher's Guide: Crafting A Faithful Sermon" will be speaking at the GIFTS Lay Preaching Academy

October 11, 2025
Springbrook Bible Camp
Epping, North Dakota



One-on-one coaching will also be available with a local pastor.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER NOW!](#)



LYO 2025: Wanted

Gather your group and get to the event of the year! **LYO 2025: Wanted** will be held October 16 & 17 (high school) and October 17 & 18 (middle school) in Dickinson, ND. [CLICK HERE to find the details and to register online.](#)

[The Adult Leader Guide is downloadable here.](#)

Also, we are taking youth nominations for the LYO Board. Fill them out, along with an Adult Recommendation form, and get them to [WND Synod LYO Coordinator, Lora Isakson](#).

WATCH THIS



Meet the Bishop-elect of the ELCA, Rev. Yehiel Curry

On July 30, the Rev. Yehiel Curry was elected presiding bishop of the ELCA.
Learn more about Bishop Curry and his journey of faith.



YOUTH & CHILDREN'S MINISTRY *Conference*

Keynote speaker

DEACON BETH ANDERSON

Guest speaker

JOY HENSEL

27 Sept 2025 | **10 AM-4 PM**

LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH
1143 N 26TH ST | BISMARCK, ND 58501

**YCM IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ANYONE WORKING WITH
YOUTH AND CHILDREN TO CONNECT AND LEARN MORE.**

A YOGURT BAR AND LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED.
THERE WILL ALSO BE AN OPTIONAL DINNER FOR MORE CONNECTION TIME.

REGISTRATION - \$25/PERSON
REGISTER USING THE QR CODE

GRANTS ARE AVAILABLE AT:
[FORM.JOTFORM.COM/252405102992149](https://form.jotform.com/252405102992149)



WND SYNOD PRESENTS

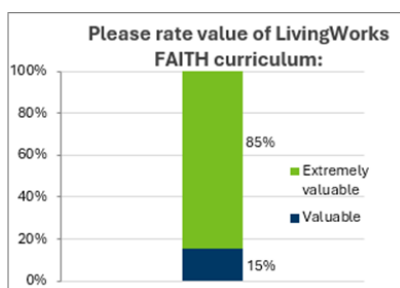
SUNDAY SERMONS

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 is for **September 21st**. It has been uploaded, and you will find it on the [Congregations](#) page of the WND Synod website. You can find the complete list of sermon videos and manuscripts on that page. When the next video and manuscript have been produced, the links will be activated and can be downloaded for use.

For those who like to plan ahead, the October sermon will be done to go with the liturgy for Hunger Sunday on October 12th.

The list of available sermons will be updated on this page as they become available. Check back often.



LivingWorks FAITH Curriculum

Last year, the MN Department of Agriculture and partners in Wisconsin and South Dakota offered a Suicide Prevention for Rural Ministry course, which paired the online [LivingWorks FAITH](#) course with four virtual discussion sections.

This program reached 75 faith leaders in MN, ND, SD, and WI and received strong positive reviews from participants.

We have 40 additional enrollments for LivingWorks FAITH available, and we want them to be used! The course typically costs \$150 per person, but we're making it available to rural clergy and ministry leaders from any denomination or faith tradition at no charge. The simple online application form is [here](#).

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

[Farm and rural suicides](#) happen more frequently than in urban areas and are frequently shrouded with stigma. People may turn to clergy and other ministry leaders for help, but you may have little training in knowing how to ask someone about thoughts of suicide, how to connect them to help, or how to provide ministry after a suicide attempt or death.

ABOUT LIVINGWORKS FAITH

The course is interactive, online, and asynchronous (at your own pace). It takes approximately 6 hours to complete and teaches approaches and skills that will equip you for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention (bereavement) tasks so you can effectively care for people who are struggling with thoughts of suicide or who have been impacted by suicide.

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must be clergy or other ministry leaders who work in a rural area of Minnesota, Wisconsin, South Dakota, or North Dakota.

HOW TO APPLY

Visit <https://forms.gle/jq9hcY5EHmcJ9r5t7> (this is a MN Dept. of Agriculture Google Form).

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](#)



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.

Signs Along the Way

Oct 31st -
Nov 2nd
BERKELEY, CA

Discernment Weekend
4:00 pm Friday - 2:30 pm Sunday

plts

PACIFIC LUTHERAN
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Discernment Weekend

Are you wondering if seminary might be right for you? Consider joining Signs Along the Way at PLTS in Berkeley, California 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. PLTS is transitioning to only offer online study with in-person intensives, so this weekend is designed for those interested in online learning. 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.



The most recent [Mission Support Memo](#) provides a picture into the 2025 Churchwide Assembly where almost a thousand ELCA Lutherans made their way to toasty Phoenix, Ariz., to gather July 28 to Aug. 2. Hear about what a joyous, thoughtful and busy week it was for the voting members who considered resolutions, memorials and social statements and also elected a new presiding bishop and secretary to lead our church for the next six years. Assembly also included a NEW [ELCA Mission Support video](#) available for all to learn what mission support does and to share with others. Each memo ends with words of gratitude and this month we express how extremely grateful we are for all the people who made Churchwide Assembly run successfully.

You can even get the [memo in pdf](#) too!

If you want to access the memo in other ways, attached is both a .pdf and in Word .doc. 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.



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.



GROUP & INDIVIDUAL CRISIS INTERVENTION

**(BASIC GROUP CRITICAL INCIDENT
STRESS MANAGEMENT)**

SEPT 23-25, 2025

TUE-THURS

8:00 am – 5:00 pm

Minot City Auditorium

420 3rd Ave SW

Minot, ND 58701

Sponsored by the North Dakota Dept. of Human Services, the Group and Individual Crisis Intervention course is an invaluable educational resource for all who deal with critical incident stress management.

The course will be instructed by Carol Staben-Burroughs who is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor in private practice in Bozeman, MT. She is a past president of the American Mental Health Counselors Association and the Montana Clinical Mental Health Counselors Association. Carol is a retired instructor at Montana State University in the Dept of Education, Health and Human Development. She is a trainer for the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation and has been an active volunteer in the Montana Critical Incident Stress Management Network. Carol lectures on a wide variety of subjects relating to first responders and has a humorous, high-energy, interactive training style.

[Click to download a flyer containing course details and registration information.](#)

LATINE MINISTRY COMPETENCY WORKSHOP



RESISTING - RESTORING - RENEWING

RENEWING THE CHURCH THROUGH THE
FAITH AND WITNESS OF THE LATINE
COMMUNITY

There are 1,000+ ELCA congregations with significant Latinx population in their zip code. Is your church one of these?

How are you equipping yourselves for cross-cultural ministry among the fast-growing Latine community?



THE REV. DR. RUBEN DURAN, leads three sessions on Latine Ministry Competency along with a team of experienced practitioners. Through Coaching, Consulting, and Cross-Cultural Immersions, Pr. Duran equips leaders for Evangelism and Justice ministries in church and world.



Rev. Patricia Avila



Rev. Alvaro Nova



Rev. Peter Olson



Ms. Elizabeth Sanchez



Rev. Violeta Siguenza

The Latine community is moving forward with deep faith and courageous spirit, despite the negative narrative, divisive rhetoric, and a culture of fear at work in the public arena. You are invited to be in dialogue with a group of learners and practitioners seeking to share insights and strategies to start or enhance ministry among the diverse Latine community in your context. Learn ways to become an ally and accompany your Latine neighbors at this crucial time. Open your church to be renewed by the faith and witness of the Latine community.

This initiative is part of an ELCA churchwide effort to “activate ourselves so that more people may know the way of Jesus and experience community, justice and love.”

Cost: Individual \$250 or Congregation \$600

Register: Online at wartburgseminary.edu/CTLM

Three Sessions:

October 2, 2025
5 p.m. – 8 p.m. (CST)

October 3, 2025
5 p.m. – 8 p.m. (CST)

October 4, 2025
9 a.m. – 12 p.m. (CST)

**FREE
EVENT**

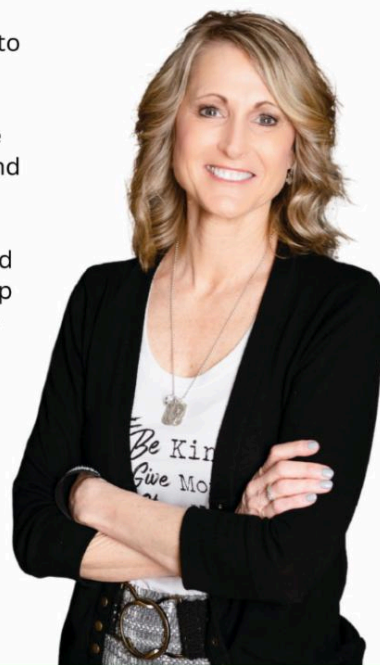
DEB HADLEY

**FREE
EVENT**

INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKER

We all have dreams and plans for what we want our life to look like, and in a moment, everything can change through a loss, illness, or unexpected tragedy.

Deb Hadley shares her personal story of surviving the devastating loss of her two children, Kaylie and Tyler, and through her suffering gives hope to others as she has learned to live life with joy and purpose despite the hardships she has endured. With her practical tools and resilient faith, she brings healing, and inspiration to help others live their best life. Deb's message will have you laughing, crying, and hanging on to her every word!



Belfield Lutheran Church

506 2nd Ave NE • Belfield, ND

Saturday, Sept. 20th

Coffee • 9:30am

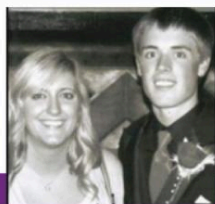
Deb Hadley • 10am-Noon

For more info contact

Rita Freitag 701.440.1228 or

Deb Patterson 701.523.6482

Deb is living out her life mission serving God using her gifts as an inspirational speaker, author, podcaster, blogger, grief coach, and founder of KT Humble Hearts. Deb is a wife, mom, bonus mom, grandma, and lives in Alexandria, MN.



KAYLIE & TYLER

**Men, Women
& Young Adults**
*** sorry no daycare ***



debhadley.com



kthumblehearts.org



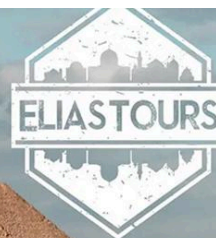
kthumblehearts@gmail.com



KT Humble Hearts - Deb Hadley

sponsored by The Badlands Cluster, the women of SWND ELCA churches (WELCA groups)

BEST OF EGYPT with WND Synod



Join Bishop Craig A. Schweitzer and the Western North Dakota Synod on an unforgettable journey to Egypt—a land where ancient wonders and vibrant culture come to life.

Stand in awe before the Pyramids of Giza, sail along the majestic Nile River, and wander through temples that have stood for thousands of years. Feel the pulse of Cairo's bustling bazaars, marvel at sweeping desert landscapes, and, if you wish, unwind along the pristine shores of the Red Sea. Discover Egypt's deep Christian heritage as you visit historic Coptic churches, including the Hanging Church and the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus—believed to have sheltered the Holy Family during their time in Egypt—as well as the sacred St. Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai. From exploring its pharaonic treasures to savoring the bold flavors of Egyptian cuisine, every moment in this captivating country will leave you with memories to treasure for a lifetime.

DETAILS:

- Trip departs on January 22, 2027, and returns on January 31, 2027

PRICING:

- \$3,790.00 per person based on double occupancy (*Land Only*)
- Single room supplement - \$790.00

PAYMENT PLAN:

- \$300.00 deposit per person with registration to secure space
- Balance due on or before September 26, 2026

REGISTRATION:

- Registering online? [CLICK HERE](#) and fill out the online form; you can pay by check or with a credit card (*a nonrefundable 4% platform fee applies*)
- Registering by mail? Please download and complete the registration form (both the personal information page and the terms and conditions page signed at the bottom) with a copy of your passport and a deposit of \$300.00 per person made payable to Elias Tours and mailed to 4941 Chalden Ln NE, Marietta, GA 30066



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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