



News *and* Events

SAINT PAUL AREA SYNOD

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

August 25, 2025



Mission Support Celebration Dinner

Our Mission Support Celebration Dinner last Monday brought together 180+ people from more than 60 congregations to enjoy a meal, conversation and glimpses of how we are church together in this synod. The event is an opportunity to express a

heartfelt “thank you” to congregations for their mission support, which funds the synod’s programs and ministries.

We heard from representatives of Eternal Flame in Vadnais Heights on being a mission development; St. Mark in Circle Pines on increasing generosity; First in Harris, Calvary in Stanchfield and Spring Lake in North Branch on shared ministry. We also enjoyed the enthusiastic insights of two young adults from Lutheran Campus Ministry-Twin Cities. We were encouraged and inspired by hearing all of their stories...thank you to all who shared!

We are grateful to St. Andrew’s in Mahtomedi for hosting us and to Shobi’s Table for the delicious meal. Thank you to Pastor John Klawiter (Faith in Forest Lake) for serving as emcee, Pastor Tim Maybee (Amazing Grace in Inver Grove Heights), along with Synod Treasurer Emeritus David Laden and Bishop Patricia Lull, who rounded out the remarks.

Participants went home with a magnet from the table centerpieces to remind them of the night’s theme: “You shall be like a watered garden.” Just as a healthy garden brings forth beauty and life-giving nourishment, your congregation’s mission support helps bring growth, spiritual nourishment and the kingdom of God to life now. Thank you!



Lutheran Night at Target Field

Lutheran Night at the Twins has been a hallmark of summer for 31 years. The annual baseball outing gives Lutherans across the region an opportunity to gather in a playful setting. This year's event was organized by Pastor Seth Perry from Elim in Scandia and Pastor John Klawiter from Faith in Forest Lake.

During the opening ceremonies, Yeni and Juan Chavez, members of Cristo Rey in New Brighton, received the Lutheran Night Service Award on behalf of their congregation's outreach support of the Latino community in the Twin Cities. It was presented by Grace Taylor from the Gammelgarden in Scandia. Zebby Matthews, pitcher for the Twins, was awarded the Faith in Action Award, presented by Jay Pernu, in honor of his son Jayson Pernu, who was a victim of the opioid epidemic.

Our own Bishop Patricia Lull joined Bishop Jen Nagel of the Minneapolis Area Synod to throw out the ceremonial first pitch. And lots of folks you know joined the choir to sing the National Anthem and *Take Me Out to the Ballgame* during the seventh inning stretch.

It may not have been a win for the Twins, but Lutheran Night was a great experience for many. If you missed it, check out the video clips here:

- [Bishop Lull Throws Out the First Pitch](#) (she did great, by the way!)
- [Cristo Rey Receives Service Award](#)
- [Lutherans Sing the National Anthem](#)
- [Lutherans Lead Take Me Out to the Ball Game](#)



Video clips and most photos provided by the Minnesota Twins.

Guatemala Gala

**Sunday, Sept. 28 - 4-8 p.m. |
Midland Hills Country Club,
Roseville**

The synod's Guatemala Committee invites you to attend its 2025 Guatemala Gala, which supports the ministries of the Iglesia Luterana Agustina de Guatemala (ILAG) for education, health, leadership development, music and the SEED program. Pastor Karen Castillo and Diego Gil are coming from Guatemala to share stories of hope and transformation as we celebrate the synod's 20 years of companionship with the ILAG.



Festivities begin at 4 p.m. with a social hour, which includes a marketplace, music, cash bar, Giving Tree and more. A weaving demonstration will remind us how we are woven together with the ILAG. Dinner features the recipes of Chef Amalia Moreno-Damgaard. Tickets are \$65 per person. Table sponsorships are also available. [Learn more and register.](#)



Bishop's Theological Conference

**Sunday, Oct. 12-Tuesday, Oct. 14 |
Arrowwood Resort, Alexandria**

This event is for rostered ministers for pastors and deacons in the Saint Paul Area Synod, including those who are retired. The Bishop's Theological Conference is a time for study, worship, unstructured time and abundant conversations.



Under the theme of Faithfulness, Courage and Hope in the Face of Tyranny, the Rev. Heidi Neumark will lead us in discussions about tyranny in the times of Isai and today, alongside Isaiah's poetry of hope in the face of such realities. Pastor Neumark serves Immanuel Lutheran Church in Kingston, NY. She was a founding member of South Bronx Churches, an ecumenical community organizing group that trained local leaders, built hundreds of low-cost homes, and established a top-ranked public high school. Rev. Neumark is the author of three books, including *Sanctuary: Being Christian in the Wake of Trump*.

Members of the Bishop Election Committee will also be present at the conference for a listening session as we prepare for a new synod bishop in 2026. The conference registration is \$525 for a single room and \$475 for a double (additional fees when paying by credit card).

[REGISTER](#)



Addressing Hunger:

Impact of SNAP Cuts

by Venita Kennen - Incarnation, Shoreview



Perhaps you, like many of us, have been overwhelmed with all that is included in the “Big, Beautiful” bill passed by our federal representatives and senators and signed by President Trump. I hope you have been paying special attention to how this legislation will affect many Americans who depend on SNAP funding to supplement their diets and daily lives.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides food benefits to low-income families to supplement their grocery budgets and is the largest federal nutrition assistance program. Work requirements have been extended effective immediately and there are likely 150,000 Minnesotans who will find they need to work 20 hours per week to retain their SNAP benefits. When the full implementation of the bill comes later, that number can increase to 450,000 Minnesotans.

While other reductions and rules will not take effect until after the 2026 elections, they are going to be significant and will make hunger and food insecurity even worse...not only here in Minnesota, but all around the country. States will be asked to pick up more of the losses and certainly food shelves and people of faith will be asked to provide even more than ever before.

Second Harvest just provided [this helpful link](#) to help you understand how the “Big Beautiful” bill impacts SNAP. I recommend you read it and share it with your congregations. It will help you understand what is happening to our neighbors and God’s hungry children.

[View Vernita's other Addressing Hunger posts.](#)

Protecting Home & School:

Safe Gun Storage

Monday, Sept. 15 - 7-8 p.m. | Online



This session is for all parents and caregivers who want to protect the children and teens entrusted to us. Led by a dedicated parent and South Metro volunteer for the Be SMART campaign, this nonpartisan and non-legislative presentation provides simple, practical tools to foster safer homes, schools and meaningful conversations. The Be SMART framework encourages us to:

- secure all guns in our homes and vehicles,
- model responsible behavior,
- ask about unsecured guns in other homes,
- recognize the role guns can play in suicide, and
- tell others to Be SMART.

By embracing these steps, we uphold our commitment to the well-being of our youth, reflecting our values of integrity and care. Together, we can empower families to take simple but powerful actions that save lives and protect the future of our children. This session is offered by the synod's ENGAGE gun violence prevention work group. [Register for the Zoom link.](#)

Boundary Workshop

Thursday, Nov. 13 - 9 a.m.-3 p.m. | Lutheran Church of Peace, Maplewood

Rostered ministers in this synod are expected to participate in boundary training every five years. This year's boundary workshop for rostered ministers is a little different this year! These trainings often



focus solely on the leader. What if healthy boundary tending also included consideration of the systems in which the leader inhabits? We are grateful to partner with Healthy Congregations, Inc. to lead us in boundary training for pastors and deacons from a systems perspective. It will be an interactive day to explore boundaries from a new lens. Registration is limited to 50 participants. [Learn more and register.](#)

Fall Communicators Retreat

Thursday, Oct. 9 - 9 a.m.-4 p.m. | Mt. Olivet Retreat Center, Farmington

The Minneapolis and Saint Paul Area Synods invite all congregation communicators to a fall retreat! This is a great opportunity to connect with others, build community and learn about leveraging video in your ministry (and where to start if you haven't yet). Sitraka Rakotoarivelo, media production specialist for [Faith+Lead](#), and a panel of congregation communicators will talk about how they use video in their settings. The cost for the day is \$55 per person. Lunch and snacks will be provided. Whether your job title has "communications" right in the name or if it's one of the many hats you wear as a church employee, you are welcome to join us! [Register here.](#)



Called to One Another: Cultivating God's Kin-Dom Together

Monday-Wednesday, Jan. 12-14 | Holiday Inn, Alexandria

Female-identifying and non-binary rostered ministers in ELCA Region 3 (our synod!) are invited to apply for this leadership summit that explores what makes a "quality call" experience. The time together will include 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 nine synods in Region 3 to participate. More information and the application form will come in early September.

The synod office will be closed on Monday, Sept. 1, in observance of Labor Day.

EVENTS OF INTEREST

Frogtown Food Shelf

Faith Lutheran in St. Paul announces the expansion of its food pantry, the Frogtown Food Shelf. It offers a wider selection for the community and is open every Saturday from 12-2 p.m. Enthusiastic volunteers are needed! [Learn more.](#)

Produce Distribution

Open Hands Midway invites you to broadly share about their upcoming produce distribution, held in conjunction with Second Harvest Heartland. Fresh produce will be distributed free of charge to people in need on Aug. 27 and Sept. 3 and 10 (noon-2 p.m.) in the parking lot of Bethlehem in the Midway, St. Paul (436 Roy St. N.). Helping hands are also needed as volunteers! [Learn more.](#)



Global Refuge Community Event

**Thursday, Sept. 11 - 6:30 p.m. | Edina
Community Church, Edina**



Global Refuge, the public-facing name of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, and its partners at Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, invite you to this event. Global Refuge President and CEO Krish O'Mara Vignarajah will be present to share

updates on refugee resettlement and immigration in the United States. Krish will be joined by a colleague from LSSMN, who will also share more about the work locally in Minnesota. A Q&A will follow the presentations. Refreshments will be provided. Join this important conversation with local friends committed to the holy work of welcoming newcomers to the United States. Space is limited; [register here](#) by Sept. 1.

Bowen Family Systems Theory

Less anxious. Better and best thinking. Responding not reacting. Principled decision making. More time for what matters most. These are just some of the many ways clergy have said their church leadership and families have been aided by Bowen Family Systems Theory. Pastor Wendy Vie will offer two opportunities for pastors and church leaders to discover and apply family systems:

- **Introduction to Bowen Family Systems Theory** - For those new to the theory and its concepts. Meets Sept. 11, Oct. 9, Nov. 13, Dec. 11, Jan. 8, Feb. 12, March 12, April 9, May 14, June 11, July 9 & Aug. 13 | Online
- **Continuing with Bowen Family Systems Theory** - a continuing seminar to support those in their ongoing process. Meets Sept. 25, Oct. 30, Nov. 20, Dec. 18, Jan. 29, Feb. 26, March 26, April 30, May 28, June 25, July 30 & Aug. 27 | Oak Knoll Lutheran Church, Minnetonka & Online

The cost for either seminar is \$600. Email revwendyvie@gmail.com with questions or to register.

Planting an Acts 2 Church

**Saturday, Sept. 13 - 10 a.m.-2 p.m. | St. Paul's/Iglesia Luterana
San Pablo, Minneapolis**



The Agora Program has been a lay school of ministry providing training to leaders of ethnic-specific and multicultural congregations. Five area synods - including Saint Paul - have been part of the program. Its last event took place right before the pandemic and after several years of inactivity, the leaders have decided that Agora must officially come to a close. This event is a celebration of the ministry and will include tributes to past leaders and alumni, worship with songs in the languages of Agora (most students were immigrants) and a festive meal. The event will also feature a teaching moment led by the Rev. Dr. Alexia Salvatierra, an ELCA pastor and academic dean of Fuller Seminary's Centro Latino, and associate professor of mission and global transformation. She specializes in immigration, faith-rooted organizing, cross-cultural ministry and building holistic Christian communities. The event will be bilingual (English and Spanish) and free to individuals and congregational groups. [Learn more.](#)

Virtual Discernment Event

Sunday, Sept. 14 - 3-5 p.m. | Online

Join representatives from all seven ELCA seminaries to explore your sense of call, learn about seminary options and consider next steps. [Register here.](#)

Global Health Ministries Fall Symposium

Saturday, Sept. 27 | Normandale Lutheran, Edina

Global Health Ministries is an independent Lutheran nonprofit that specializes in capacity-building for Lutheran health systems in under-resourced countries, serving some of the most vulnerable people in the world. GHM invites you to a morning of stories, insight and hope for global health under a theme of "Healing in a Wounded World." Featured



speakers are Dr. Rebecca Duerst, Archbishop Musa Pantil Filibus and the Rev. Doug Cox. [Learn more and register.](#)

Screenagers Viewing with Dinner

& Discussion

Tuesday, Sept. 30 - 6-8 p.m. | Bethlehem, Minneapolis

Screenagers Elementary Edition is a powerful resource for students, parents, caregivers and educators who want to build strong, mindful habits around technology use—while deepening connection and supporting kids' emotional well-being in today's digital world. The film and panel discussion will cover healthy screen time habits and navigating digital challenges like social media and video gaming. This edition is geared toward kindergarten through 7th grade and their caregivers. This free event is offered by Mental Health Connect. [Register here.](#)



Other Events:

- [God's Work. Our Hands. Sunday](#) - Sept. 7
- [Peace of the Prairie Retreat for Church Musicians](#) - Sept. 11-13 | Shalom Hill Farm, Windom
- [CYF Healthy Boundaries Training](#) - Sept. 16 | Online
- [Becoming a Health Promoter](#) - Sept. 16 & 30, Oct. 14 & 29, Nov. 11 | Online
- [LSS Celebration for Changing Lives Gala](#) - Sept. 20 | The Depot, Minneapolis
- [From Scratch: Shobi's Table Fundraiser](#) - Sept. 25 | Gustavus Adolphus, St. Paul

- [Lutheran Campus Ministry-Twin Cities Fall Gathering & Fundraiser](#) - Oct. 9
| University of Minnesota, Minneapolis
- **The Word in an Inviting Church** - Oct. 25 | Prince of Peace, Burnsville
- **Joint Fall Ministerium** - Oct. 30 | Lutheran Church of the Resurrection,
Roseville
- **Bega Kwa Bega Fall Festival** - Nov. 8 | Incarnation, Shoreview

SYNOD STAFF IN CONGREGATIONS

Bishop Patricia Lull

- Sept. 7 - Christiania, Lakeville (preaching)

Pastor Justin Grimm

- Sept. 7 - MN Faith Chinese, Roseville (preaching)

[Blogs](#)

[Calendar](#)

[News About Calls](#)

[Job Openings](#)

[ELCA](#)

[Living Lutheran](#)

The Saint Paul Area Synod, which includes 106 congregations and new mission starts, is one of 65 synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.



spas-elca.org | 651-224-4313