



Northwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



These all look to you to give them their food in due season; when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. Psalm 104:27-28

Dear Beloved in Christ,

What a joy it is to invite you to our first in-person Synod Assembly since 2019! The world has changed, but not our faith in Jesus! Come and gather with leaders from across Northwestern Minnesota as we worship, learn, and make decisions about our shared mission. Our Assembly will be held on May 17th and 18th, with check-in beginning at noon and orientation beginning at 2:00 on Friday, and continuing until about 4:00 on Saturday, at Concordia College in Moorhead. Registration is open now; you can find the link at <https://www.nwmnsynod.org/events>. You must register by April 15th to receive the early bird discount. Registration will close on May 3rd. We'll be blessed to hear from former Bishop of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod and current Director of Rural Ministry at Luther Seminary, Pastor Jon Anderson, who will serve as our keynote speaker and Bible study leader. Jill Beverlin, ELCA Director of Coaching, will be our Churchwide representative.

Our theme will be "Good Soil," celebrating our corner of God's good creation and the wonderful diversity of places where our lives and our faith are nurtured. Our gathering takes place right before Pentecost, and the texts of that day inform our theme. We witness the Spirit of God poured out upon people from so many unique places across the ancient world. In Ezekiel, the prophet envisions God restoring the faith of God's people from the soil of Israel. The poet in Psalm 104 marvels at God's abundant blessing of the earth and its creatures. Behind all these texts sit the cherished places and soils from which God's people are formed.

Among other things at this year's Assembly, we will honor our Indigenous neighbors, the original inhabitants of these cherished lands, as we bless the launch of a new ministry on the White Earth Indian Reservation, intended to build trusting relationships and move toward the healing of the wounds of cultural genocide, betrayal, and displacement. We will also celebrate how God is raising up Synod Authorized Ministers across our church to serve the Gospel and God's people in

exciting new ways. During our worship on Saturday, May 18th, we'll celebrate a commissioning of any of the 42 of these wonderful ministers who will be in attendance!

I so look forward to seeing you on May 17th for our first in-person Synod Assembly in five years!

In Jesus our Lord,



Pastor Bill Tesch, Bishop of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA

Goals of the Assembly

Here are our goals for the Assembly:

1. *Be Faithful in Relationships*
 - a. (Re) Connect with old and new partners in ministry from around our congregations' region.
 - b. To accompany leaders through support and encouragement as they lead Christ's church.
2. *Be Authentic in Welcome*
 - a. Reaffirm our commitment to be a diverse church, welcoming all in the name of Jesus.
 - b. Experience hospitality in each other's presence as followers of Jesus.
3. *Love that Makes a Difference*
 - a. Make decisions that build up the body of Christ and benefit our beloved neighbors.
 - b. Invest in our time and work to positively impact the Northwestern Minnesota Synod.

Registration is open now!

You can find it online here: <https://nwmnsynod.regfox.com/2024-synod-assembly>

Early registration closes on April 15, 2024.

Registration closes on May 3, 2024.

Keynote Speaker: Pastor Jon Anderson



Pastor Jon Anderson serves as Director of Rural Ministry at Luther Seminary. He grew up on a dairy farm south of Belgrade, MN (between Willmar and Sauk Rapids). His first ancestors in this country came to the area, and family have lived on the land there since the late 1850s. His family farm is located on land that was the traditional homeland of the Dakota people.

In his early ministry, he served at camps and congregations in Texas and Minnesota. In 2021, he completed eighteen years of service as bishop in the Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the

ELCA. As Director of Rural Ministry, he provides leadership in the area of Luther Seminary's Small Town and Rural (STaR) Ministry. He is an instructor in the academic work of Luther Seminary. He also is part of online education work creating courses and pathways for rural ministry inside Luther's Faith+Lead Academy.

Planting seeds, growing plants and walking with people as they grow (especially his grandchildren) give him joy.

Churchwide Representative: Jill Beverlin

Jill Beverlin serves as the ELCA Program Director - Coaching Ministries. Jill's coaching specialties include grief & loss, stewardship, spiritual disciplines, and mission development & congregational vitality. Coaching has been a true lifeline for Jill, and became an invaluable tool for moving forward following the death of her youngest son in 2013. She views coaching as a gift that offers a safe space for individuals to live into their identity as beloved of God, gifted by God and invited by God into God's work of loving and healing the world. Jill has been a church professional for 28 years, and has served at every expression of the church.

Jill lives in Appleton, WI, with her husband, Dave, and near their adult son, Andy. She loves her family, friends, faith community and nature.



General Information

Location

We will be gathering all together at Concordia College in Moorhead. Our meetings, worship, and meals will all be in the Knutson Campus Center.

Tentative Schedule

Friday, May 17th

Check-in will begin at noon. We will have an orientation at 2:00 p.m., and the first plenary will begin at 4:00 p.m. On Friday, we will conclude after dinner.

Saturday, May 18th

We will begin with a Bible study opportunity with Pastor Jon Anderson at 8:00 a.m., with worship beginning at 9:00 a.m. We will conclude with our business by 4:00 p.m.

Some of the business we will tend to includes elections for Synod Council and our Synod's 2025 Churchwide Voting Members; voting on the budget; hearing reports from our Churchwide Representative and Bishop Bill; and voting on compensation guidelines. A Synod Assembly Handbook and one set of business items will be mailed to each congregation. More information on all reports and business items will be on the website when they are available.

Pre-Assembly Information

We'll be hosting two informational sessions to help prepare voting members for all the items of business that will be considered by the Assembly. These sessions will provide an overview of what is being proposed, along with a time for questions and answers. **We will also practice our (new to us) virtual/electronic voting.**

- **Sunday, May 5th, at 7:00 p.m.**

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://cord.zoom.us/j/99949542901>
Meeting ID: 999 4954 2901

- **Monday, May 6th, at 1:00 p.m.**

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://cord.zoom.us/j/91263196853>
Meeting ID: 912 6319 6853

Recognitions

Congregation anniversaries and rostered minister anniversaries and retirements will be recognized in a presentation during the Assembly.

The Offering

This year, our Spring/Synod Assembly Appeal will go towards "Funding Wellness and Partnership," two vital needs in our Synod. The offering will directly help our new mental health initiative for leaders and our new ministry partnership with the Episcopal Church in White Earth, which was voted on at the 2023 Synod Assembly.

Offering can be shared in two ways:

- Scan the QR code on the right, or go online at:
<http://nwmnsynod.org/donate> The dropdown menu has "Spring Appeal/ Synod Assembly Offering" as an option.
- Checks made out to the Northwestern Minnesota Synod, with "Spring Appeal" written on the memo line, and mailed to:



Northwestern Minnesota Synod
Concordia College
Moorhead, MN 56562

Information and resources will be added to this website:

<https://www.nwmnsynod.org/pages/spring-appeal>

Voting Members

Rostered Ministers Under Call

All Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ministers of Word and Service serving under call on the roster of this synod and attending the Synod Assembly shall be voting members. Note: retired rostered ministers currently serving under contract as interim ministers in congregations shall also register under this category.

Synod-Authorized Ministers (SAMs)

All Synod-Authorized Ministers under contract can be additional lay voting members; they do not need to be elected lay voting members, but must register as a SAM.

Lay Voting Members

Congregations with fewer than 175 baptized members shall elect **a minimum of one** lay voting member, and **may elect up to two** lay voting members (a male and a female).

Congregations with 175 to 750 baptized members shall elect **two** lay voting members (one male and one female).

Congregations with 751 or more baptized members may register additional lay voting members (half male, half female) as described in the listing of congregations of the synod at:

<https://www.nwmnsynod.org/pages/synod-assembly>

Note: All congregations are expected to send voting members to the Synod Assembly, and all costs for the Synod Assembly are paid out of registration fees. *Congregations that register fewer than the required number of lay voting members will be charged \$170 per absent member.* This fee may be paid through the online registration form.

Lay Voting Members Between Ages 15 and 30

Confirmed youth who are voting members of their congregations may be elected by their congregations to serve as "regular" lay voting members of the Synod Assembly. Any congregation that has elected its minimum number of "regular" lay voting members may also elect an "additional voting member who is a confirmed voting member of that congregation between the ages of 15 and 30 years." (\$7.21.d). Only these additional youth voting members may register at this reduced rate.

Rostered Ministers Not Serving Under Call

Ministers of Word and Sacrament on the roster of the synod who are retired or disabled may register at a reduced rate, and will have both voice and vote. Note: Congregations may not elect retired Ministers of Word and Sacrament as Lay Voting Members.

Ministers of Word and Service on the roster of the synod who are retired or disabled may register at a reduced rate, with voice but not vote. Exception: retired or disabled ministers of Word and Service may be elected by congregations as Lay Voting Members, with both voice and vote. The congregation, however, must register them at the full Lay Voting Member rate.

Rostered ministers on the roster of the synod who are "on leave from call" may register at a reduced rate, with voice but not vote.

Non-voting Members and Guests

Non-voting members and guests may attend via Livestream on Facebook free of charge, or they may register and pay to be on-site and will have a name tag indicating that they are non-voting. They may have a voice to address the assembly only if provided in the agenda, invited by the chair to speak, or upon a majority vote of the voting members present and voting.

Registration Fees and Rights

	Early Reg. ¹	Late Reg. ²	Voting Rights	Speaking Rights
Rostered Minister Under Call	\$200	\$230	Yes	Yes
Synod Authorized Minister ³	\$200	\$230	Yes	Yes
Lay Voting Member ⁴	\$200	\$230	Yes	Yes
Retired Pastor ⁵	\$170	\$200	Yes	Yes
Retired Deacon ⁶	\$170	\$200	No	Yes
Additional Youth Voting Member ⁷	\$170	\$200	Yes	Yes
Rostered Minister On-Leave from Call	\$170	\$200	No	Yes
On-Site Visitors	\$170	\$200	No	Yes

1 Early registration closes at 11:59 p.m. on April 15, 2024.

2 Late registration closes at 11:59 p.m. on May 3, 2024.

3 Per §7.21.02 of the Synod constitution, Synod Authorized Ministers may register as an additional Lay Voting Member of the Assembly from the congregation where they are serving as a SAM.

4 No minister of Word and Sacrament may be registered as a Lay Voting Member.

5 Exception: retired pastors currently serving under contract as interim pastors shall register as "Rostered Ministers Under Call."

6 Exception: as members of the laity, retired ministers of Word and Service may be registered as Lay Voting Members, but their congregations must pay the full Lay Voting Member registration fee.

7 This applies only to additional lay voting members ages 15-30. If a confirmed youth or young adult is elected to fulfill the congregation's minimum number of lay voting members, they must be registered as Lay Voting Member.

We look forward to being together with you all on Friday, May 17th.

Deacon Julie Wilson
Synod Assembly Planning Chair

Kristina Johnson Dernier
Synod Assembly Manager