

Currents

Newsletter of University Lutheran Church, May 2025

Congratulations to our graduates!

Adrianna Dahlberg
Elizabeth Packer
Claire Bussmann
Natalie Goetzke
John Dorschner
Vincent Quartaro
Ali Thompson



About that Sabbatical...



Well, I can now count down the weeks until sabbatical begins on one hand (starts May 15)! Phil and I are looking forward to this time of rest and renewal, as well as visiting loved ones and exploring some of my heritage. We will travel to central and western Denmark for a full month, where I will visit some of the places my grandparents lived before they immigrated to Iowa.

This sabbatical has been shaped around the theme of IDENTITY. We focus much of our ministry on accompanying students, who are at a time of life when they are asking questions, wondering, exploring, and discovering who they are and how God calls them to be in this world. That identity exploration means letting go of some things from their past, as well as adding new things or shaping some things in new ways, as they continue to become themselves. It seems fitting to me that I should also do some of that exploring, partly to enter that wondering space with students, but also to learn more about the people who have shaped me. Those who carried stories, memories, recipes, and customs from Denmark are no longer alive, so I want to put my feet on the same land and streets (sometimes literally—things are OLD over there!) where they were. I'm excited!

But a sabbatical is not only for the pastor. This time of rest and renewal is for the congregation, too. The schedule is easier in the summer and things are relaxed. We can look forward, you and I, to some renewed energy for mission and ministry after this break. To help us get into that mode of innovation and recommitment, you are invited to participate in a journaling exercise, which I will also be doing while we are apart. Through this, we'll reflect on who we are as individuals, and also who we are as ULC. Who have we been, what has shaped us and got us where we are now? And what might that mean for our next chapters together? Please consider joining together for this project. You can find the journaling prompts and more details [here](#). Write as you feel like it, on your own schedule. In the fall we'll get together to share our reflections and see how the Spirit is guiding us into the future.

Thank you so much for the opportunity for this sabbatical. I'm looking forward to the time away, and to feeling well rested when I return August 18.

If you have a pastoral concern during the sabbatical, please call the church office phone, 715-834-8026. The church council will be monitoring the phone and has instructions about how to refer concerns to the appropriate person.

Pastor Lori

Honoring our Graduates



Claire Bussmann

Northfield, MN

BS Nursing

Next: Registered nurse at UVM Medical Center, Burlington, VT

Adrianna Dahlberg

Two Harbors, MN French River Lutheran Church

BS Nursing

Next: Registered Nurse at Mayo Clinic-Rochester in Infusion Therapy Center



John Dorschner

Oshkosh, WI

BMA Applied Voice

Next: Graduate school, Bowling Green State University, Ohio

Natalie Goetzke

Dodgeville, WI, Grace Lutheran Church

BS Nursing

Summer job at Sugar Creek Bible Camp

Next: Nurse at UW Health, Madison, GI Transplant Unit



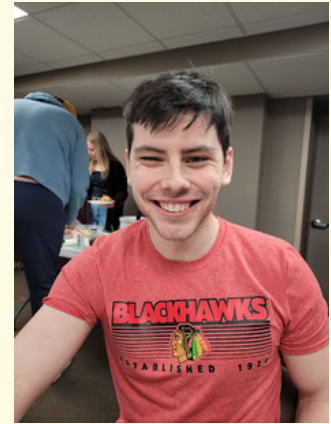


Elizabeth Packer

Duluth, MN, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
BS Rehabilitation Science, German minor
Next: Masters in Exercise Physiology, UWEC

Vincent Quartaro

Madison, WI All Saints Lutheran Church
BA Criminal Justice
Hoping for a police job in Milwaukee,
including Police Academy



Ali Thompson

Verona, WI, Good Shepherd Lutheran
BS Actuarial Science,
certificate in Business Communication
Next: passing licensing exams,
getting an internship



And a blessing along the way for:

Rachel Thompson, our pianist, will be student teaching in the fall
Danny Rupert, student teaching in the fall
Kate Thompson, studying abroad in Ireland

Hung Isaiah Nguyen

North High School, Eau Claire
Graduating in June; Summer trip to Spain
Going to the University of Advancing Technology,
Tempe, AZ for video game development



A Few New Voices on Council

At the Annual Meeting, May 4th, three new Council members and other church leaders were elected.

We all give thanks for his faithful and careful work, to **Jacob Gapko** who completed a two-year term as our Church Council President this month. Also to **Dave Anderson** and **Carol Rudd**, who finished out their terms as At-Large Member (Dave) and Joyfully Serve Ministry chairperson (Carol). Their presence on Council has been a blessing.

Newly elected to Council are: Brad Bishop, Dan Behnke, and Elizabeth Packer. They join returning members Kate Hale Wilson and Sue Diel (who also serves as Financial Secretary). Sara Bryan has one more year as Council Secretary; Cindy Rasmussen completes her year as President-Elect as she transitions into her role as President. Pastor Lori Ruge-Jones serves an ongoing critical role on Council, bringing her knowledge, guidance, and expertise to the table every time we meet.

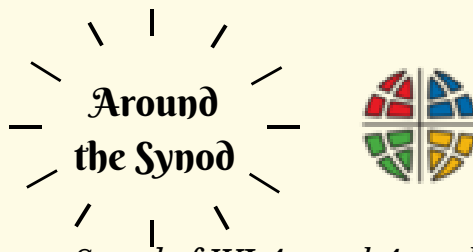
We are grateful that the following people, also elected on May 4, are willing to serve the congregation in the following roles:

Suzie Slota – Audit Committee Member for a three-year term (joining Linda Erickson who has two more years, and Carter Smith who has one more year)
Wendy Kinderman and Carol Rudd – Nominating Committee (one-year term)
Please keep all these folks in your prayers as they cooperatively do their guiding, evaluating, and decision-making work in the coming year.

John LeBrun and Sara Bryan were earlier selected by Council to be our 2025 NW Synod Assembly Delegates. That annual meeting was held on April 26th; see their report in this edition of the newsletter.

~(submitted by Sara Bryan, Congregation Council Secretary)





*A few take-aways from the Northwest Synod of WI Annual Assembly 2025
by Sara Bryan, delegate from University Lutheran Church*

On Saturday, April 26, 2025, Pastor Lori, her husband Pastor Phil, and delegates from this congregation: John LeBrun and I, made the trip north to Rice Lake for the Annual Synod Assembly held at Bethany Lutheran Church. This was the first Assembly presided over by our newly-elected (last year) Synod Bishop, Rev. Martin Halom. We enjoyed rousing music, informative messages, and a chance to contribute to the decision-making functions of the synod when we voted on the five Resolutions that came before us this year.

Those resolutions (all five passed) were:

1. “Love Your Neighbor Capital Campaign” – it was RESOLVED that this synod will conduct a three year “Love Your Neighbor” Capital Campaign with the goal of raising \$175,000 for the support and sustainability of the *Neighbor-to-Neighbor* ministry within our synod. (**Neighbor-to-Neighbor** was created five years ago by Deacon Lidixe Montoya with a particular mission to foster and support relationships with our Hispanic neighbors through education, resources, health fairs, anti-racism work, workshops, and networking.) Dave Anderson and Brad Bishop, from our congregation, are members of the Board. Email: neighbor2neighbor@nswwi.org

2. Spanish Translation/Interpretation for Synod Materials and Events - A couple highlights from the actual text: “WHEREAS, when the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was formed in 1988, it was with the intention that the church would be a diverse body, inclusive and authentically reflective of the world around us. However, despite our efforts, we remain a predominantly white, middle-class church of European descent... therefore be it RESOLVED, that the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin will make every effort to translate key documents and provide interpretation for events and experiences in both English and Spanish, as a way to more fully connect with our Spanish-speaking neighbors. This commitment will also extend to exploring translation into other languages that reflect the diverse linguistic makeup of our synod.” [full text of all of these resolutions can be found at <https://nswwi.org/synod-assembly-2025> under “Resolutions”] The cost of this translation work has already been covered for the next two years by a grant from the ELCA.

3. National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools – The text for this Resolution is extensive. I encourage you to go to <https://nswwi.org/synod-assembly-2025> and read the whole thing. For now I will just say: within our own congregation we’ve had discussion about “how to go beyond just saying” the Land Acknowledgement that we repeat each Sunday morning at the start of our worship services. Taking steps outlined in this resolution may provide part of a possible answer.

4. Operating Mission Plan – we approved the budget recommended by the Synod Council. I noted that they don’t call it a “budget” – they call it a mission plan.

5. Salary Standards 2026 – for Rostered Leaders, and Lay leaders and staff. Recommended standards put forth, discussed, ultimately approved.

This is getting to be a long article so I'll just leave you with one other item that caught my eye. In the packet we all received as we arrived, there were inserts describing various upcoming events. One is titled "Fresh Expressions: Sampler 2025." On four different dates in various locations throughout the synod, Bryan Willkom ("Curious soul seeker and creator of [getjesusfit.com](https://www.getjesusfit.com)" – gleaned from a Google search) and Rev. Diane House (Director of Evangelical Mission for our synod) "will lead examples of Fresh Expressions of church... Participants will have the opportunity to sample Yoga Church, Book Church, Dinner Church, Beer Church and Trail Church." There's food for thought!

[A primary resource: <https://nswi.org/home>]



Delegates

John LeBrun
Pastor Lori Ruge-Jones
Sara Bryan

View from the balcony
Bethany Lutheran Church
Rice Lake, WI



SYNOD ASSEMBLY 2025

"COME AND SEE!"



Summary

Resolutions Passed

1. Mission Plan for 2026-27
2. Salary Standards for 2026
3. Love Your Neighbor Capital Campaign
4. Spanish Translation

Memorial Passed to Churchwide Assembly

A memorial to address the legacies of the ELCA's role in Indian Boarding Schools

Celebrations

25 years of ordination
Reverend Margaret Isaacson
50 years of ordination
Reverend Sam Kocheł
Reverend Michael Rehak
Reverend Kermit Solem
and Reverend Larry Sturgis

Retirements Acknowledged

Reverend Lowell Bolstad
Reverend Mary Erickson
Reverend Linda Rozumalski
Reverend Paul Simmons
Reverend Laurie Skow-Anderson
Reverend Jay Ticknor

Election of Discipline Committee Members

Reverend Sarah Miller

Tom Potterton

Kris Carlrud

Reverend Sean Koos

Election of Synod Council Treasurer

Jay Rongstad

Synod Council Elections

Apple River

Matt Keenen*

Chequamegon

Nancy Young

Chippewa Valley

Linda Hedding

Dairyland

Reverend Mike Vetsch

Heart of the North

Ted Hakala*

Lake Superior

Reverend Rachel Sieja*

St. Croix Valley

Reverend Ladd Sonnenberg

An offering for the Synod Endowment Fund and Neighbor to Neighbor was collected at worship.

\$6,366

Thank you for your generosity!

The NW Synod of WI Racial Justice team invites you to join them for an

INDIGENOUS SACRED SITES TOUR

LEARN FROM AND WITH OUR INDIGENOUS NEIGHBORS IN MN

SATURDAY, MAY 17

Learn about Minnesota history from a Native perspective through story-telling and experiencing the sites in silence / meditation / reflection.

We visit sites located around confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, what the Dakota refer to as Bdote, or "meeting place of rivers," including:

- Fort Snelling State Park
- Dakota Internment Camp following the Dakota-U.S. War
- Pilot Knob Hill, a traditional burial ground

Your \$75 registration includes the cost of the tour, transportation (coach bus), bus snacks and post-tour meal from Shobi's Table in St. Paul. You may also purchase snacks at a rest stop. 50 person maximum. Pick up locations on registration form.

Questions: 715.859.6810
racialjustice.nwswi@gmail.com

Register at
nwswi.org/home/calendar



UPCOMING EVENTS

May

May 7	6:30 pm	Interfaith Prayer, First Presbyterian
May 9		Last day UWEC classes
May 11	10:00 am	Graduate recognition blessing and PL sabbatical send-off
May 12-16		FINAL EXAMS WEEK - meals served M-Th, 11-1:30
May 14		No Wednesday worship
May 15	6:30 pm	Church council meeting
May 15-17		ULC serves Beacon House. Sign up online here.
May 21		No Wednesday worship
May 25	10:00 am	Praise-in-the-Park, ULC hosting, Phoenix Park, <i>Breaking Chains</i>
May 28	5:30 pm	Wednesday worship resumes

June

June 19	6:30 pm	Council meeting
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July

July 13	10:00 am	Praise-in-the-Park, ULC hosting, Phoenix Park
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August

August 24	10:00 am	Praise-in-the-Park, ULC hosting, Phoenix Park
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ULC Ministry Contacts

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joyce4334@gmail.com

Joyfully Serve, Joyce Anderson, Chair

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Learn & Grow, Dr. Kate Hale Wilson, Chair

715-829-8620

kate_hale@me.com

Thankfully Worship - Pastor Lori Ruge-Jones

ULC Staff Contacts

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Lutheran Church
in America

