



For a video summary of this month's headlines, click the video above.



Vitality Initiative for Congregations

Are you feeling STUCK and not sure how to get UNSTUCK? Were you thinking the changes you made to worship, Sunday School, Bible study, Council meetings, and youth group were just short-term substitutes? Are you beginning to realize there is no such thing as going back to the old “normal”? What’s next for your congregation?

From its earliest days, the Nebraska Synod has seen its mission rooted in congregations that witness and serve in their communities and demonstrate generosity, innovation, resilience, collaboration, and grit. To support and at the same time challenge, the Nebraska Synod is launching a new initiative - *Vitality Initiative for Congregations*. It’s not a “voila” and everything will be all hunky-dory. Answers and direction come by asking questions, assessing the congregation’s vitality, discerning vocation through spiritual, theological, biblical, practice, and contextual exploration and becoming equipped and strengthened for embracing change as they respond to God’s invitation to engage in community risk-taking experiments. The *Initiative* is an eighteen-month intense adventure of discovery, learning, listening, and discernment with monthly online learning sessions followed by assignments to be completed before the next session. Cohorts will gather in person periodically to share stories, assess learning and network. A trained and certified ELCA coach will walk with the congregation for an additional six months, supporting the leadership team and congregation as they engage in their community experiments and build new relationships.

The Fall 2021 Cohort of the *Vitality Initiative* has room for twelve congregations. Additional information is at [this link](#). The application and resources to support the application process are posted on the Nebraska Synod web site. **Applications are due June 1.**

Thriving congregations are lively outposts of “good news”; sources of comfort, hope and joy in their communities, living fully the interplay between their unique giftedness, the specific needs of the community that surrounds them and the God who unites them in creative, meaning-filled relationships. A thriving congregation may be a two-point parish or single site, rural or big city, 15- years old or just 10 years old. We are looking for congregations willing to connect the dots in new ways, dream dreams and dare to live into their vocational call.

If reading this article stirs your heart and challenges your thinking, check out the details on the web site. Maybe your congregation is ready to participate in *Vitality Initiative for Congregations*.

For more information contact [Deacon Sunni Richardson](#), Director for Leadership Development.

2021 Assembly Online

In order to help keep people safe and healthy amid the continued global pandemic, the 2021 Nebraska Synod Assembly will be held exclusively online on Saturday, June 5. The event will be a one day remote gathering to do the business of the church, worship, and engage in learning and fellowship together.

More information and registration materials will be coming soon.

Keep informed by following the Nebraska Synod [Facebook page](#) and [website](#).



PMA Convocation

[Worship, Word, and Whys: Practicalities and Possibilities](#)

April 16-17, 2021 online

As the central communal act of our faith and a prime time encounter with our living Lord, worship deserves more than rote and changeless repetition. We live our faith and explore

the Word as our weeks, years, and decades unfold in the midst of life inside and outside church.

Based on the Emmaus story, we'll explore the elements of Lutheran worship, why they matter and some of the possible variations. After large group presentations (40 minutes max.), each small group will apply their learning by crafting a worship service for a specific season or festival in the church year. You'll be challenged to work out the use of all five senses, movement, the participation of people of all ages and abilities, balancing the fresh with the familiar, and being attentive to resources and context. Worship outlines will be shared with all participants after Convocation. Question and Answer times with presenters and time with our bishop are included.

To prevent Zoom fatigue we will alternate between large group presentations, small groups, breaks, and brief devotions. Register at [this link](#).

Lenten Resources 2021

The Nebraska Synod continues to lift up voices from across the synod during Lent as part of a five-week series on “**The Gifts of Discipleship**.” It is intended that this series would be utilized as an option for worship and faith formation opportunities during the week particularly for the five Lenten Wednesdays (February 24-March 24) between Ash Wednesday and Holy Week, but can be adapted and used in any way that is helpful and meaningful. These resources are available [at this link](#). Sermons will be available at [this link](#).

Resources

Resources for Congregations and Leaders can be [found here](#).

Links to Forms and Pulpit Supply can be [found here](#).

[Parish Paper](#)

[Nebraska Synod. Blog_and Facebook](#)

Can't find what you're looking for on the synod website, search the [website directory](#).

[Interim Ministry Network Continuing Ed & Events](#)

[Lombard Mennonite Peace Center Trainings](#)

[Eucharistic Practices During the Pandemic](#)

[Considerations for Electronic Meetings](#)

[4G Network Videos & Resources](#)

[Second round of Payroll Protection Program \(PPP\) loans](#)

[ELCA Annual Report Covers](#)

[Season of Hope Lenten Resources](#)

[ELCA Lenten Resources](#)

WORKING HERE FUND GRANTS

There are grant opportunities available for congregations with hunger and nutrition ministries, such as hygiene and food pantries. For more information visit [this link](#).

2021 Reports to the Bishop

[Those under call use this link](#)

[Retired/Not Under Call use this link](#)

All questions with an asterisk require a response. You may receive a copy of your report by clicking the button at the end of the report. To submit, be sure to click the SUBMIT button.

Thank you for the ministry you do and for taking the time to complete your 2021 Report by **March 1**. If you have an urgent matter to be addressed, please email [Bishop Maas](#).

Annual Meetings

As your congregations gather for their annual meetings, the Nebraska Synod staff would like to invite you to share [this video](#) with your members as part of your time together. We would like to thank you for being a part of the church and for your partnership as we Grow Disciples, Walk Together, and Serve God's World.

Events

Let's Talk: Where are You in Your Anti-Racism Efforts?

The next Let's Talk about Racism session will be Monday, March 15, at 7:30 p.m. CT. Please register [HERE](#). The registration link for the March 15 session is also on the [R.A.R.E. website](#).

For the March 15 session we will offer a quick overview of what we've covered since we launched the Let's Talk about Racism series last June in the aftermath of George Floyd's death. We'll also offer a preview of R.A.R.E.'s top priorities moving forward in 2021, and we'll take some time to discuss as a group where we all are now after 9 months of education, awareness-building and activism.

Here are some questions to consider: How have you been successful in your anti-racism efforts? What have been the challenges and roadblocks? What actions have you taken? What have you learned? What are your next steps?

If you missed any of R.A.R.E.'s previous Let's Talk sessions, you can find links to all of them on the [R.A.R.E. webpage](#), along with resources including books, articles, films and podcasts.

We would love feedback, ideas and suggestions at any time, so please don't hesitate to email us at rare@nebraskasynod.org with any questions or thoughts.

We look forward to seeing you on March 15!

Nebraska Synod Events:

Mar 15, 2021- Let's Talk with RARE (Save the Date)

Apr 16-17, 2021 - [PMA Convocation \(Online\)](#)

Apr 25, 2021- PMA Sunday

May 3-7, 2021- [Nebraska Synod Mission Trip](#)

Jun 5, 2021- [Synod Assembly Online](#)

Sept 12, 2021- Save the Date for [God's Work. Our Hands.](#)

[NLOM Events](#)

March 21-23 -- CJH UFO (UnFinished Objects) crafting Retreat

April 10 – Heart of Camp Gala

June TBD – Heart of the Hills Benefit Dinner

July 18 – 21 -- CJH UFO (unfinished Objects) crafting Retreat

July 31 – Quilt Auction

2022 ELCA Youth Gathering-

The [ELCA Youth Gathering](#) will be held July 24-28, 2022, in Minneapolis. There will be two pre-events, the [Multicultural Youth Leadership Event](#) (MYLE) and [the tAble](#), scheduled for July 21-24, 2022. If you have questions, please contact the Nebraska Synod Gathering Coordinator [Amy Wagner](#).

Other Events (You're Invited):

Please visit the [Nebraska Synod Website Calendar](#) and select the month/year for which you would like to search the event calendar.

[The NEXUS Institute Completes Fourth Summer of Programming](#)

[The Nexus Institute 2021](#)

[40th Annual Ecumenical Rural Ministry Conference](#)



We Want to Hear Your Good News

The Nebraska Synod is looking for stories of Good News, Congregations at work- serving their communities, and more to share across the synod. Please share your story by sending a summary and any photos to communications@nebraskasynod.org.

To Help Support the Nebraska Synod Ministries, click on [Give Now](#).

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