



## **Nebraska Synod Fall Leadership Gathering 2024**

### **Wednesday Workshops**

#### **Workshop #1 - "Understanding Your Role in Life."**

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the whole church was released? The church shouldn't be nor can be in the hands of professionals. We talk of anyone approaching God, talking, and listening to God, but we seem only too happy to settle for letting someone else do the talking and listening. Someone holier, better educated, more experienced. God, by the Holy Spirit, has gifted the whole church. That means you. That means me. If the church is the body of Christ, then everyone is involved in the work of the Church. One pastor calls it "potluck Christianity." When we come together, everybody brings something. Then, the meal is rich and plentiful. Everyone feasts. Everyone is grateful for what others have brought to the table. The church isn't a place where people look for something to join, attend, or perform. Rather, the church becomes our calling, our purpose. It has nothing to do with institutions, jobs, or charters. It is the people of God who know who God created them to be and live it. Who celebrate it!

#### **So it is fair to ask, What is my role? What am I called to do? To be?**

Join us for a deep dive into the fourth chapter of Ephesians as we explore Paul's understanding of how the church is gifted with five anointings (there's a word we Lutherans don't use much!): Apostles, Prophets, Evangelist, Shepherds, Teachers. Come to be affirmed in who you are! Relax into how God has wired you to serve and be Jesus in the world. (Spoiler! You aren't expected to be everything Jesus was – just be you!). Come to see how you can release God's people in your ministry setting.

As we explore flipping the script, consider with us a new/old vision of the church. We still have leadership, but everybody is involved. Everyone fits into the fivefold ministry roles. Be what God designed you to be! Live in the apportionment of grace given you by Jesus. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the whole church was released?

**Presenter: Rev. Greg Berger, Assistant to the Bishop**

Greg grew up in Southeast Nebraska, farming with his Dad for ten years before heading to seminary. Greg earned a Bachelors in Social Science at Peru State College and his Master of Divinity at Gettysburg. He served as a Licensed Lay Minister in the Disciples of Christ Church at the Peru Community Church, where he also was Campus Pastor for United Ministries in Higher Education. After seminary, he served as Associate Pastor at St. Paul Lutheran, Grand Island, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Hooper, and Messiah Lutheran, Ralston. He has been on Synodo Staff since November 2022. Greg and his wife, Kim live in Omaha and have two sons, two daughters-in-law and three beautiful granddaughters.

**Required Preparations:** Prior to the workshop, take the [Five Fold Survey](#). Bring your results with you to the workshop. Bring your Bible.

**Workshop #2 - "Come Away and Rest Sacred Space"**

This workshop is a living retreat space. We will offer various forms of contemplative exercises, artistic expression, and guided meditations with interspersed teachings on the Way of Jesus.

**Presenter: David Pinkston, Seeking the Spirit Within (StSW) Program Director**

This workshop will be led by David C. Pinkston, and various StSW alumni. A practicing contemplative and spiritual leader, David has been an ordained minister and community leader for over 25 years. He and his wife served the Pasadena area for nearly 3 decades. He's been associated with urban ministry and justice initiatives, as well as a touring musician.

He discovered his passion for the ministry of spiritual direction in 2015 and received certification through the School of Sustainable Faith. He then graduated with a Masters in Spiritual Formation from Portland Seminary at George Fox University in 2020. As a spiritual director, he specializes in clergy care and those who are spiritual but not religious.

David loves serving as Program Director for Seeking the Spirit Within. He and his wife happily live in their new hometown of Fremont, Nebraska with their oldest son and a very cuddly, plush-lop-eared bunny named Jack Fremont.

## **Workshop #3 - "Having the Tough Conversations: Creating Safe Space Where All Voices Can Be Heard"**

Flipping the script isn't easy. And some aren't going to like it. How do we create a space where all voices can be heard and discussion can happen? How do we open the door for tough conversations on religion and politics, religion and social issues, religion and daily life? How do we allow for conversation where it's ok to disagree and all voices are heard, but all are respected as loved children of God?

Join Pastor Carla Christopher and Gretchen Ahrens for this workshop on learning how to create a safe space. We'll cover everything from the basics of what you need to do beforehand and how to create an environment to enter the conversation with a trauma-informed mindset and how to ask questions or start the conversation and what to do when the conversation doesn't go as planned. Pastor Carla will provide resources along the way with and we will have breakout rooms to practice our new skills.

This workshop is on Zoom. Join from your hotel room if you are staying in town (you will need to ask for late checkout) or join from your living room, office or favorite Zoom spot if you need to be head home.

Please bring: Notetaking supplies

### **Presenters: Pastor Carla Christopher, ELCA Pastor and Gretchen Ahrens, Director of Youth and Justice Ministries for the Nebraska Synod**

Pastor Carla is a trainer, writer-activist focused in the areas of Cultural Competency, LGBTQIA+, BIPOC, Trauma Informed Care/Mindfulness, Justice, and Youth Advocacy. She serves as assistant to the Bishop for the Delaware, Maryland and Lower Susquehanna Synods.

Gretchen will be providing technical support for Pastor Carla during the workshop.