

Saturday, May 31st - Synod Assembly Workshops & Afternoon Activities

Two-Hour Workshops (offered at 1:45 PM and 3:45 PM)

Imagining a world with Land Acknowledgements and Reparations (Land Ack and Land Back)

Location: Ruby 1

Land Ack and Land Back

Over the past two decades, governments, organizations, churches, and individuals from around the world have been honoring Mother Earth, Indigenous peoples, their Ancestors and Tribal Nations by practicing land acknowledgments when people gather. This class will introduce participants to the history and purpose of land acknowledgments, why they are important, as well as how and when groups and individuals should practice them. There are appropriate and respectful ways to deliver acknowledgments and knowing these ways will be promoted and leave lasting impacts.

In addition, the Land Back movement has impacted the lives of Tribal Nations and Tribal Members across Turtle Island. Class participants will learn more about this movement and reparations, why the movement is important to not only Indigenous people but for all people, and how best to engage in the restorative justice practices that such a movement fosters and demands. Asking people and organizations to choose justice in this way can prove challenging, yet starting the conversation gets us all closer to healing.

Presenter:

Vance Blackfox, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, is the founder and director of Other+Wise, a multi-site cultural education and cultural immersion program for youth from across the country. Vance previously served as the Director of Communications at the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, as the Director of Communications for Native Americans in Philanthropy, and has held executive director positions at the Haskell Foundation, which supports Haskell Indian Nations University, and the Oaks Indian Mission. Vance has served as the Guest Curator of the Indian Museum at the University of Texas at San Antonio Institute of Texan Cultures and as the Indigenous Theologian for the Faith-Based Initiative for the City of San Antonio. An alumnus of Texas Lutheran University and the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Vance has served the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in multiple capacities, from taking a post as National President of the Lutheran Youth Organization

as a teenager to later working as a diversity and cultural education professional for the Women of the ELCA, Augsburg Fortress Publishers, California Lutheran University, ELCA Youth Gathering, and LSTC's Youth in Mission. In addition to serving numerous ELCA and ecumenical teams and committees throughout the years, he is at present the Indigenous Theologian and Coordinating Team Member for the ELCA's Theological Round Table, ELCA's Director of Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations, as well as creator and producer of the Vine Deloria Jr. Theological Symposium, hosted at LSTC.

Imagine Being Prepared for Disaster Response

Location: Ruby 4

These days, it seems there is always a news story about a new or ongoing disaster response somewhere in our country or the world. And we certainly know that Nebraska is not immune from severe weather or other hazards. What do faith communities need to know about preparing for and responding to disasters in the most helpful and faithful ways? Hosted by the Synod Disaster Team, this two-hour workshop will be full of stories from people who've been there, questions and scenarios to talk through with your colleagues, and lots of helpful information to take home.

Presenters: Synod Disaster Team

One-Hour Workshops Offered At 1:45 PM and 3:45 PM

Imagine Becoming a Reconciling in Christ Congregation

Panel Discussion facilitated by Pastor Erick Hill with David Magnuson, Pastor Tobi White, and Pastor Jan Petersen

Location: Ruby 2

Since 1983, the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Program has been a public way for faith communities to see, name, celebrate, and advocate for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions in the Lutheran church. The RIC Program comprises congregations, synods, colleges, seminaries, outdoor ministries, and other Lutheran organizations.

Do you have questions about becoming a Reconciling in Christ Congregation? Do you wonder if it's right for your congregation? Join this panel discussion to hear about their experiences and to learn about the steps of becoming RIC, including the discernment

process. What are the starting steps? What is it like to be RIC years later? How did it change the church to become RIC? Ask your questions from those who have been through the process and are RIC congregations.

Presenters:

David Magnuson is a member of Holy Cross Lutheran in Omaha and was part of the RIC core team at Holy Cross, and serves on the synod's LGBTQIA+ affirming team.

Pastor Tobi White serves as pastor at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Lincoln. OSLC is currently an RIC congregation and has been since their quarterly congregational meeting on November 19, 2023. Their first official celebration of that decision was on January 7, 2024, when they blessed Pastor Tobi's daughter with her new name. Pastor Tobi has been at OSLC for over 15 years and began the RIC process in the fall of 2019. Pastor Tobi was part of the Inclusivity Team from the beginning and continues to be on that team at OSLC.

Pastor Jan Petersen serves as pastor at Augustana Lutheran and Saint Matthew's Lutheran, both of which are RIC congregations in Omaha. She has attended several RIC trainings and is a member of the synod's LGBTQIA+ affirming team. Pastor Erick Hill is a member of the synod's LGBTIA affirming team.

Imagining Equitable Communities: Privilege Beads and other hands-on ways to help your community understand the dynamics of power and privilege

Location: Ruby 3

How do we help people understand the dynamics of power and privilege? In this workshop, you will participate in the privilege beads activity and discussion and learn about other ways to teach these dynamics.

Increasing our awareness of the privileges we hold presents us with opportunities to find out where we can intervene and what it means to us as people of faith.

The [privilege](#) beads activity is an introductory exercise that can be helpful for raising our awareness of things we take for granted by the very nature of the fact that we don't have to think about them in our daily lived experience.

Presenters:

Pastor Elizabeth Goehring and Sister Mary Arie are rostered leaders in the Nebraska Synod.

Imagine a Pivot in Ministry

Location: Ruby 5

We know the church is being called into different ways of being. Join Bishop Scott Johnson and the hosts of the Pivot podcast (who will be with us virtually) from Luther Seminary as they discuss four key pivots the church is making for a hopeful future: posture, focus, structure, and leadership.

Presenters:

The Rev. Scott Alan Johnson was born and raised on a family farm near Wakefield, NE. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Classics from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a Master of Divinity degree from Luther Seminary. Prior to being elected bishop of the Nebraska Synod in 2022, he served as pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in Barrett, MN, as campus pastor of the University Lutheran Center at Iowa State University in Ames, IA, as pastor of St. Petri Lutheran Church in Story City, IA, and as Director of Campus Ministries at Midland University in Fremont, NE. Scott and his wife Kristin are the proud parents of two daughters, and they live in Fremont, NE.

Terri Martinson Elton began teaching at Luther Seminary as an adjunct instructor in 2004 before becoming the director of the Center for Children, Youth, and Family Ministry in 2008. In addition to her continued work with the Center, Elton accepted the position of associate professor of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry in 2010 and associate professor of Leadership in 2014.

Prior to her call to Luther Seminary, Elton served as an associate to the bishop in the Saint Paul Area Synod where her responsibilities included working with congregations, leadership development, First Call theological education and youth and family ministry.

Before her work in the synod, she served at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Burnsville, Minn., for 16 years. While at Prince of Peace, she worked in various roles within children, youth, and family ministries, as well as served as the director of Changing Church Forum, an outreach ministry of Prince of Peace. She also authored

To Know, To Live, To Grow, a confirmation curriculum, and co-authored What Really Matters, a book for congregational leaders, with the Rev. Mike Foss.

Elton holds a B.A. in communications from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn. (1986). She earned both her M.A. (1998) and Ph.D. (2007) degrees in Congregational Mission and Leadership from Luther Seminary

Dwight Zscheile joined the Luther Seminary faculty in 2008 as assistant professor of Congregational Mission and Leadership and was promoted to associate professor in 2014 and full professor in 2022. He has also served as vice president of innovation since 2018. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree with distinction from Stanford University, Calif., in 1995, having also attended Oxford University, and a Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn., in 1998. He completed the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Luther Seminary with a focus on congregational mission and leadership in 2008.

Zscheile is the author of *Embracing the Mixed Ecology: Inherited and New Forms of Christian Community Flourishing Together* (with Blair Pogue, forthcoming Seabury Books 2025), *Leading Faithful Innovation: Following God into a Hopeful Future* (with Michael Binder and Tessa Pinkstaff, Fortress Press, 2023), *Participating in God's Mission: A Theological Missiology for the Church in America* (with Craig Van Gelder, Eerdmans, 2018), *The Agile Church: Spirit-Led Innovation in an Uncertain Age* (Morehouse Publishing, 2014), *People of the Way: Renewing Episcopal Identity* (Morehouse Publishing, 2012) and *The Missional Church in Perspective* (with Craig Van Gelder; Baker Academic, 2011). He is the editor of *Cultivating Sent Communities: Missional Spiritual Formation* (Eerdmans, 2012).

The Spirit is Moving: A Jazz Liturgy of Renewal

Location: Plenary Session Hall

From Congo Square in antebellum New Orleans to the music of Duke Ellington, Mary Lou Williams, and John Coltrane, jazz music has a long history of being explicitly tied to worship and spirituality. This workshop will explore how jazz carries meaning through sound and how it intersects with Lutheran liturgical traditions, including through Jon Ailabouni's new liturgy setting entitled *The Spirit is Moving: A Jazz Liturgy of Renewal*.

Presenter:

Jon Ailabouni: Palestinian-American trumpeter, composer, and educator Jon Ailabouni

(he/his) is a sought-after musician based in La Crosse, WI. With a background steeped in Western European classical and Black American jazz traditions, Jon's creative work focuses on instrumental composition and improvisation that uses deeply felt stories as a focal point for expression. Ailabouni's improvisation as a soloist has been described as "sharp and resourceful" (AllAboutJazz.com). His 2023 album, *You Are Not Alone*, featuring his original compositions, was released on SkyDeck Music and has been performed at the Iowa City Jazz Festival Main Stage and Cappella Performing Arts Center in La Crosse, WI.

An emerging national leader on the intersection of jazz and liturgical traditions, Jon regularly serves as a guest [jazz worship director](#), bringing the sophistication and soulfulness of the jazz tradition into familiar hymns and liturgy in churches, synod assemblies, and gatherings across the country. His approach to liturgy emphasizes congregational singing, grooves that move the body, and the sacred in the jazz tradition. Ailabouni has self-published over 50 arrangements of hymns, which are available [here](#).

A *summa cum laude* graduate of Luther College with a degree emphasizing classical trumpet performance, Ailabouni went on to receive a Master of Music degree in Jazz Studies from Western Michigan University (WMU) in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Ailabouni then joined the WMU music faculty, where he taught jazz brass lessons, directed the Jazz Lab Band, and served as co-director of the Western Invitational Jazz Festival. Ailabouni taught on the music faculty of Luther College for eight years and currently serves as an Assistant Teaching Professor at the [University of Wisconsin - La Crosse](#), where he teaches the trumpet studio, Music Appreciation, and directs the Jazz Ensemble and Hoefer Brass Quintet. He is a frequent clinician and guest artist, having made recent appearances at the Tallcorn Jazz Festival at the University of Northern Iowa and the Southern Arkansas University Jazz Festival.

One Hour Workshops Offered At 2:45 and 4:45

Imagining A Cross-Generational Model of Ministry

Location: Ruby 3

In today's American society, a faith community is often the only institution that has the opportunity to consistently gather all seven living generations into one space and time. But when the elder and child enter most churches, they are whisked away to different

rooms. Congregations have a vast, untapped potential for bringing the generations together to accompany one another through life's milestones, challenges, celebrations, and the mission of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. In this Cross+Generational Ministry workshop, we will explore what Cross+Generational Ministry is, what it is not, and how a congregation can look for ways to implement this ministry into the life of their congregational community.

Presenter: Deacon Kristin Johnson

Originally from Oregon, Deacon Kristin Johnson earned her MA degree in Youth and Family Ministry from Luther Seminary (2003). With 24 years of Youth Ministry experience, she has had the privilege to serve in several different denominations, including ELCA Lutheran, United Methodist, and Presbyterian. She has a heart for cross+generational relationships being at the church's core. She has a passion for helping connect the wisdom of the elder to the wonder of the child in the same sacred space. Kristin has led Confirmation programs, Children's and Youth Ministry programs, and Cross+Generational ministries. Kristin is married to Bishop Scott Johnson, and they have two teenage daughters, Ainsley and Alanna, and two dogs.

Imagining Peace and Justice in the Holy Land

Location: Ruby 2

The Nebraska Synod has a long history of accompanying our siblings in the Holy Land. In the workshop, we'll review that history and explore how we can accompany people today through listening and actions. We will share practical resources for conversation in your congregations. We will also kick off the Miller-Stubbendick Tour of Nebraska. Adam and Jordan Miller-Stubbendick served as coordinators for the Young Adults in Global Mission in Palestine and were evacuated from Jerusalem in October of 2023. This summer (July 2025), they will be traveling to Lutheran churches around Nebraska to share their stories of life in the Holy Land and why continued accompaniment matters. During the workshop, they will join us by Zoom to share a taste of how you and your congregation can get involved.

Presenters:

The Nebraska Synod Holy Land Accompaniment Team will be joined (remotely) by Adam and Jordan Miller Stubbendick. Pastors Jordan and Adam Miller-Stubbendick served as co-country coordinators for the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission program in Jerusalem and the West Bank from 2022-2023. With their two children, they lived in Jerusalem for a year and a half, accompanying the Palestinian people of the

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan (ELCJHL) and the Holy Land. Their time in the Holy Land ended when they were evacuated back to the United States due to intensifying violence against the people of Gaza in October 2023. As they said goodbye to Palestinian friends in October, one friend implored them with the following words. "Tell your country what is really happening in Palestine." In continued accompaniment with the Palestinian people, Pastors Jordan and Adam share stories of the life-changing work of the ELCJHL, stories of Palestine, and ways that the people of the ELCA can help fellow Christians in the Holy Land. Their presentations take the often overwhelming issue of the relationship between Palestine and Israel and humanize it by sharing pictures and accessible stories of the real people who live and work in Palestine.

Imagining Creative ideas for Use in Worship

Location: Ruby 5

This workshop will offer new ways to share the Good News, lift up and pray for members of your congregation, and engage with the community. Together, we will think outside the box about creative and inexpensive ideas that are easy to implement. Join this workshop to get ideas from other congregational leaders about what they are doing in all sizes and shapes of congregations. There will be time to brainstorm and share ideas. Leave this workshop with new ideas and a new network of people to connect with.

Presenter:

Sarah Effkin Purcell is a member of the Synod Council and the assembly planning team. She is the convener of this workshop but is grateful for the ideas and resources shared by other leaders.

Imagining Life in our Companion Synods

Location: Plenary Session Hall

Please grab a cup of coffee, pull up a chair, and spend time in informal conversation with the leaders of our companion synods. This is your chance to dig deeper into their keynote addresses or to find out more about the ministries they do. Come ready to ask questions and engage in dialogue. Learn more about ministry worldwide and imagine how you can adapt it to your congregation.

Presenters:

Rev. Dr. Fredrick Shoo, Bishop of Tanzania and Pastora Mariela Alejandra Pereyra,
Presidenta of Argentina / Uruguay

Four-Hour, Off-Site Accompaniment Experiences **1:45 PM -5:45 PM**

**Note: Participants are responsible for their own transportation to off-site experiences.
Four-hour experience includes travel time to and from the experience*

Cost of Poverty Experience (COPE) **First Lutheran Church, Kearney**

The Cost of Poverty Experience is a 2.5-hour simulation that explores the lived experience of poverty firsthand through the eyes of real families. The experiential nature of this training helps organizations and communities more deeply understand the human and systemic impacts of poverty.

For years, many top-down or well-intentioned approaches to poverty have left out the wisdom and leadership of those closest to the challenges. Created with the input of individuals with personal experience in poverty, COPE sheds light on these challenges and catalyzes meaningful dialogue and action. This experience challenges participants to rethink poverty, respond effectively, and partner with those affected for change.

Following the 2.5-hour simulation, participants will spend an hour on action planning to help them figure out how to apply what they have learned to their communities. They will also be invited to participate in a one-year cohort where they will work with a coach to explore ways they can educate their communities and reduce poverty. Participants will spend significant time investigating the correlations between race and poverty in their communities.

Learn more [HERE](#).

*This experience is funded by a grant from the ELCA Strategy Towards Authentic Diversity

A Firsthand Look at Mosaic

Mosaic, Axtell

Spend the afternoon on the Mosaic campus at Axtell. You'll have the opportunity to help with a project on the campus, but there will also be time for a tour and conversation and a chance to learn about Mosaic in your community as well as Mosaic's international programs.

Baking Bread and Building Community

Campus Lutheran Center, UNK, Kearney

Learn how to bake artisan breads, including gluten-free options for communion. While bread is baking, you'll talk about how you can engage in hunger ministries in your communities and hear more about campus ministry at UNK, including their "dinner church."

Stop by and visit activities

1:45 PM - 5:45 PM

Serving arms (in the hallway)

Visit the tables of the Nebraska Synod serving arms and learn how you can get involved.

Letter writing for advocacy (back of the plenary room)

Stop by the table and write a letter to your state and national legislators as a part of Bread for the World's offering of letters to ensure an end to hunger in the U.S. and around the world.

Blanket tying (back of plenary room)

Tie a fleece blanket to be donated to CHI Good Samaritan in Kearney. (Used by the Chaplains as "blessing blankets")