

Together in Mission 2026 Workshops

Morning Workshops 10:00 am – 11:15 am

- **Beyond Borders: How engaging with our Tanzania and El Salvador partnerships can energize your congregation.**

Presenters: Sarah Wehmeier Aparicio and Rev. Chris Marien.

Join us for a conversation on the ways your congregation can revitalized by learning about our companion synods in the Diocese of Meru and the Salvadoran Lutheran Church.

- **Community Design Workshop**

Presenter: Tia Richardson

This is a fun, engaging hands-on collaborative workshop where participants will have a chance to make a difference by sharing their ideas for a mural that expresses the heart of the synod community. No art experience required! Tia Richardson is a community artist whose work is seen around the Milwaukee area. The workshops offer people a chance to freely express their feelings, acknowledging what they believe the challenges are with race relations in the synod community, think of choices they believe can help make that better, and imagine a brighter future as a result of those choices. People may choose one workshop to attend. *In-person film screening and discussion of Rockford Taking Flight is a pre-requisite to attend a session. This film will be shared during our opening presentation at Together in Mission. To learn more about Tia's work, visit www.cosmic-butterfly.com.

- **Conflict Resolution/Management in Congregations**

Presenter: Rev. Becky Erb Strang

Even with the best of intentions, congregations often find themselves navigating through conflict, bullying, and gaslighting. Pastor Becky Erb Strang will lead a workshop on how to identify conflict situations before they get messy, how to address sticky situations, and how to create a healthy congregational life.

- **Discovering the Gifts of your Congregation's Land**

Presenter: Rev. John Norquist

Come and learn how one congregation experienced renewal as they partnered with neighbors to restore natural habitats to the land surrounding their building, including planting a two acre prairie in 2019. Participants will be equipped with tools to lead similar projects in their own congregations and in their homes.

- **Lutheran Church of the Great Spirit Dreamcatchers: Their Meaning and Purpose**

Presenters: Rev. Char Giuliani and members of Lutheran Church of the Great Spirit

We will share who LCGS is and how we incorporate Lutheran liturgy and Indigenous culture (Smudging, Four Directions Prayer) into our Worship, sharing meaning behind each and definitions. Participants will also be able to make a dreamcatcher to take home.

- **Milwaukee Wild Church: The Sacred Within**

Presenter: Rev. Larry Harpster

This workshop will share the birth story of the new Greater Milwaukee Synod mission community, Milwaukee Wild Church.

It will focus on:

- Learning about the Wild Church and Forest Church movement happening across the world.
- What is Nature Spirituality?
- What is Celtic Spirituality?
- How can I incorporate nature spirituality into my existing community?
- What techniques can I try to lift up spirituality in my own personal life?

You will also get a chance to learn how you can partner with Milwaukee Wild Church as it grows and develops.

- **Protecting All of God's Children**

Presenters: Rev. Jenny Nettesheim and Rev. Myron Crawford

Join us as we discuss best practices around working with children. Topics will include:

- Child and vulnerable adult safety policies
- Mandated reporting
- Setting boundaries
- Risk Prevention
- Awareness
- Response Actions

You will leave this session feeling more confident in your and your church's ability to protect our young people. *"And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them."* -- Mark 10:16.

- **Seriously? Women in Ministry**

Presenter: Rev. Kristin Nielsen

In 2018, a short video was created by the North Carolina Synod - ELCA, to raise awareness about the sexism that women in ministry regularly faced from colleagues and parishioners. In this workshop, we will watch the video, and participate in facilitated discussion in small and large groups.

- **Talking without Microaggressions**

Presenter: Deacon David Behling

As we seek to deepen and expand the holy work of welcome, inclusion, and celebration of LGBTQIA+ people in the church and in society, we often find ourselves asking questions like "How can we be better allies for people we care about who are LGBTQIA+?" or "Are there things we say or do that unintentionally hurt LGBTQIA+ people?" or even "What does LGBTQIA+ mean?"

This workshop is for people who ask those types of questions, and others. It will help those hoping to guide their faith community in ongoing education, as well as individuals with an open heart and mind who want to learn more about God's expansive diversity of

creation. Participants will gain practical insight into recognizing, interrupting, and preventing microaggressions—ensuring our communities embody authentic welcome in both words and actions.

Together, we can co-create safer and braver spaces as we learn the skills and tools that support a fully inclusive and welcoming ministry.

- **Women of the ELCA – For Such a Time as This**

Presenters: Rev. Marilyn Miller and Mrs. Donna Yourell

We will Dwell in the Word using Esther 4: 1-17 and discuss, what it means to be 21st Century disciples who follow Jesus “for such a time as this.” We will plan how we want to organize and operate as the Greater Milwaukee Synod’s - Synodical Women’s Organization (SWO). Finally, we will share registration information about the upcoming Triennial Gathering, “I Am Worthy” July 16 – 19, in Des Moines, Iowa. You will want to be there because you are worthy! Membership is open to congregation groups and individuals!

Afternoon Workshops 1:30 pm – 2:45 pm

- **Are you wondering what might be next for your church?**

Presenter: Rev. Chris Marien

If you would rather focus on pondering the possibilities for the days ahead then tend to more of the same. You are invited to learn about a relatively simple approach to vision casting without the need of a costly outside consultant. Who better to dream about the future than the leadership of your own community of faith? Borrowing from the strategic planning of Harley Davidson, come learn a simple process to craft a 1,3,5, and/or 10-year vision for your congregation. Drawing on 25 years of ordained ministry in congregations on the West coast, Pacific Northwest, and in the Greater Milwaukee Synod - Pastor Chris will share the nuts and bolts of the process and provide you with the steps to guide you from "maintaining what is" to "tending what tomorrow might bring."

- **Church Property Resource Hub: *Where Should We Begin? Exploring new strategies for faithful property stewardship***

Presenters: Sarah Jones and Sarah Kretschmann

Many churches realize that the traditional models of property use, management, and financing no longer fit their current moment, but can struggle with developing new stewardship strategies that are both practical and mission-driven. The Church Property Resource Hub is a new, Churchwide initiative to help leaders leverage their buildings and land for both mission impact and congregational vitality.

Join the Church Property Resource Hub team to learn about how your church can gain new understanding of your property’s potential, explore new possibilities for property stewardship, and discern how the Spirit is moving towards new life for your land and

buildings. Participants will leave with an understanding of what their congregation's next steps for faithful, practical property management might be and tools to help their leaders navigate the journey.

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- **Don't Just Do Something, Sit there**

Presenters: Danette Braun and Sonja Wolfe

Explore listening as a foundational practice for communal spiritual transformation—listening to God, to one another, and to the wisdom of neighbors. Participants will engage in simple active listening practices that are part of the Adventures in Renewal series, practices that foster curiosity and open the way for Spirit-led discernment and community collaborations. Come and rediscover the transformative power of attentive presence.

- **How to Have Hard Conversations**

Presenter: Rev. Afi Dobbins-Mays

If you have ever wondered, "How do we start conversations about race in our congregation?" this workshop is a great place to begin to find an answer. In this workshop Pr. Afi will work with participants to discuss practical steps and/or ways to create space for beginning conversations about race.

- **How to Start a Racial Equity and Justice Team in your Congregation**

Presenters: Racial Equity and Justice Team

Come and learn what a racial justice team is and how others have started their own Racial Justice teams in their congregations. Use what you hear to create next steps for your own congregation.

- **Leading in Ambiguous Times**

Presenter: Rhonda Hill

In uncertain times, faith-rooted leaders are called to guide with clarity, courage, and compassion especially when the path forward is unclear. But what happens when leaders themselves feel uncertain or overwhelmed? This interactive workshop invites

participants to reframe ambiguity as not just a challenge to overcome, but as a sacred space for spiritual growth, innovation, and trust-building.

Faith leaders have a unique ability to harness the unknown, recognizing that uncertainty is often where spiritual growth, deepening faith, and transformative leadership emerge. Through strategic frameworks, and cultural wisdom—including Indigenous and ancestral teachings leaders will explore how to foster psychological safety, deepen relational trust, and create actionable steps for navigating the unknown. Together, we'll embrace ambiguity as an opportunity for collective transformation, cultivating environments where uncertainty becomes a source of creativity, resilience, and spiritual joy.

- **Legacy Giving**

Presenter: Rev. Chris Manke

If your congregation wants to financially thrive for the next 20, 30, or even 50 years—not just survive—this class will provide you with the roadmap. Legacy giving isn't just about writing wills—it's about planting seeds your congregation will rely on long after today's budget is forgotten. In this session, we'll cut through the mystery and show you how to start (or strengthen) a legacy gift ministry in your own congregation, step by step. You'll learn practical tools, simple workflows, and future pathways that help your congregation leave meaningful, faithful gifts that will impact the financial health of your congregation for decades to come.

Spoiler Alert! This class is an intro teaser session for a significant learning opportunity that will be presented to our Synod after the completion of Together in Mission.

- **Lunch Church Workshop**

Presenters: Rev. Sarah Stumme and Rev. Jaime Larson-McLoone

Breakfast, Lunch, or Dinner Church: There are many ways to worship around a table. If our Together in Mission Lunch Church stirs your curiosity, come and connect with others who want to learn more and those who have experiences, ideas, and resources to share. Come see what happens when we gather around a table with intention. Leave with inspiration and simple liturgies to try table-centered worship in your congregation or community.

- **Walking with our Immigrant Neighbors**

Presenter: Bishop Paul Erickson

In this time of heightened anxiety for so many, come and learn how to accompany and support our immigrant and refugee neighbors. Practical resources will be shared that will help your congregation become a more welcoming place for all.

