



ELCA Coaching aims for growth in life and ministry

Coaching resources can help leaders and congregations use their gifts to accomplish goals

by Marcia Hahn

An untapped resource in the Northeastern Iowa Synod is ready to help ministers, lay leaders and congregations unlock their potential for growth and transformation.

ELCA Coaching was introduced at the Northeastern Iowa Synod in June as a ministry that helps people discover their strengths and where God is leading them. The Northeastern Iowa Synod encourages coaching as a ministry resource and is offering synodical funding to help make it an affordable option for leaders and congregations across the synod.

“We feel like coaching is really valuable support in this time when congregations and ministry leaders

are dealing with declining attendance and challenges that they never faced before,” says Pastor Kristen Rod, Director for Evangelical Mission. “There aren’t any easy answers or quick fixes, but coaching can help congregations and leaders identify the gifts and resources they have, as well as what energizes them. These things can then give guidance to discern how they might best use their gifts,



Kristen Rod

resources, and energy to address challenges.”

COACHING THROUGH TRANSITION

Pastor Kristi Grieder is one of six coaches from the Northeastern Iowa Synod. Grieder became familiar with coaching in 2020 when she connected with an ELCA coach as a source of community for her own self-care during the Covid pandemic. She loved having a coach so much that she started training as a coach in 2021.

Grieder points out that coaching is not therapy or mentoring; instead, coaches ask questions designed to help clients work out their next step

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or figure out what they are missing. This confidential process can help pastors with problem solving to manage their stress and prevent getting burned out. Coaching sessions can focus on the personal part of a pastor's life or issues within their congregations, and help the pastor develop a plan to take care of themselves.

"Coaching is a safe space for a pastor to receive the support that they give to everyone else and to know that everything is held in confidence," Grieder says.

As a certified coach, Grieder specializes in grief coaching. She does formal one-on-one sessions with people who are dealing with grief due to the death of a loved one or a myriad of reasons not death-related, such as a change of call, loss of identity or relationship, loss of health, or a congregational closure. She also applies coaching skills in her work as a minister, previously as a hospice chaplain and currently as visitation pastor for Bethlehem Lutheran, Cedar Falls.



Kristi Grieder

Grieder used coaching principles to set up Bethlehem's grief group as a structured safe space for people to listen and be present with one another. Rather than give advice or try to fix another person, people in the group share a covenant to actively listen, not interrupt and allow silence.

Grieder used coaching principles to set up Bethlehem's grief group as a structured safe space for people to listen and be present with one another. Rather than give advice or try to fix another person, people in the group share a covenant to actively listen, not interrupt and allow silence.

"The grief group is a powerful ministry and is a good example of how to be community through practiced skills to relate to one another," Grieder says.

A topic that often comes up with pastors is discernment of a call, leaving a congregation or other transition. When it comes to big life decisions, Grieder says coaching helps her clients develop greater confidence in what they know and the decisions they are making.

"Clients have space to process through the details and gain clarity to take their next step forward," Grieder says. "I see people make a shift in their demeanor and how they talk about themselves. They find the potential God has given them and come away with a greater awareness of how God wants them to be."

A NEW CULTURE OF COACHING

Pastor Sarah Nye recalls being at an event where the Rev. Dr. Mark Hanson, who was the ELCA presiding bishop at that time, talked about something that his coach had said to him.

"I remember thinking that if even the presiding bishop of the ELCA would find it helpful to have someone to bounce ideas off of and to prompt their thinking, then certainly it could be helpful to me as well," Nye says.

Nye connected with a coach who she says helped her accomplish changes in key areas of her life and ministry. "It has been a lifeline in times of difficulty and continues to be an encouragement in times of new opportunity."

WHAT IS COACHING?

"... partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential."

— from the International Coach Federation

Nye went on to receive training to become an ELCA coach while serving the Southwestern Texas Synod as the synod and congregational vitality coordinator. She and two of her colleagues helped start a coaching ministry for the entire synod.

"ELCA coach training turned out to be the single most helpful piece of continuing education that I have ever experienced," Nye says. "Coaching became an absolutely vital gift to my ministry and to the synod as a whole."

Nye and her husband, Pastor Joel Nye, moved to Iowa in 2021 to serve the Cross Roads Lutheran Parish at Osage, Nora Springs and Mitchell. Nye also serves as the Northeastern Iowa Synod's coach coordinator and says that one of her goals is to help encourage a culture of coaching to form throughout this synod.

"I love that coaching affirms that each of us has the gifts, wisdom and resources to accomplish that to which God has called us," Nye says.

>> Continued on page 6

Coaching can help us be the people God created us to be

“For, while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” — *1 Timothy 4:8*

Who is that one coach, teacher, instructor, or mentor who made a significant impact on your life? Was it a piano teacher who made you believe in yourself enough to play in front of an audience? Was it a teacher or professor who inspired a passion in you that you carry to this day? Was it an athletic coach who taught you the value of working to improve a natural talent?

Whoever it is, you probably remember them for the way that they made you aware of and drew something out of you that you didn't know (or believe) was there. The best coaches and teachers don't do the work for us and they don't show us shortcuts to success. They help us see the gifts and resources we already have and inspire us to work

toward mastering skills and abilities to use them.

ELCA coaches do the same thing for our ministries. They work with our leaders (clergy, staff, councils, and synod networks) to identify local resources that we may believe are lacking. Sometimes those resources and abilities lie within us. Just as often, ELCA coaches encourage us to identify those abilities in people and resources we often overlook. Coaches encourage us to work at using those resources and abilities so that they become second nature to us, a sort of “muscle memory” for ministry.

We are fortunate to have a number of ELCA coaches and coaches in training in the Northeastern Iowa Synod. We also have the entire ELCA coaching network available to assist our congregations. Coaches are an economical way to bring energy and direction to a ministry when it is brand new or seeking to be revitalized.

Jesus was constantly coaching the disciples and others who came to him. He helped them see their gifts

and the things (ideas and actions) that got in the way of using those gifts for the sake of the world. His love and forgiveness set them free to be more fully the people God created them to be. Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is still coaching us, through the Church, the Body of Christ in the world.

May you be blessed this Advent and Christmas season by the presence of the one who is more than coach, teacher, and mentor—Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

— *Bishop Kevin Jones*



Join a book club Zoom with author Pastor Kenneth Wheeler

Feb. 22, 2024

A Pastor's Cry, Lament, and Warning

Bishop Kevin Jones and the Northeastern Iowa Synod Racial Justice Network invite ministers and congregational leaders to a book club Zoom with Pastor Kenneth Wheeler on Thursday, Feb. 22, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

Wheeler is a retired Black pastor and former assistant to the bishop for the Milwaukee Area Synod. Last year he wrote *US: The Resurrection of American Terror*, which tells his journey of being Black in America and in the ELCA.

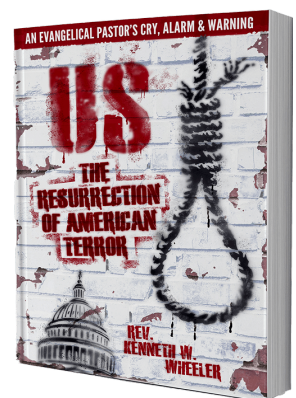
A native of Jackson, Mississippi, Wheeler earned a B.A. in religion from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn., and an M.Div. from Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. He is a guest lecturer on pastoral leadership in the 21st century at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque.

Those planning to attend should read Wheeler's book (bookshop.org) ahead of time or listen to the audiobook (Amazon) of him reading his own memoir. The Zoom will include small and large group discussions, including

with Bishop Jones. There is no cost to attend.

To register, call the synod office at 319-352-1414 or email Pastor Liz Bell, belle@ne-iasynod.org.

The Zoom link to join the meeting will be emailed to everyone who registers.



Virtual Treasurers Meeting

Jan. 11, 2024

Congregational treasurers, pastors, financial committee members, and others are invited to attend the Congregation Treasurers Meeting set for Thursday, Jan. 11, 6 to 7:30 p.m., via Zoom.

Presenters will be:

- Keith D. Oltrogge, CPA, Denver, on W-2s, church payrolls and contributions.
- The Rev. Steve Brackett, assistant to the Bishop, with information about the Northeastern Iowa Synod's 2024 Minimum Compensation Guidelines.

There is no charge to attend. Information about how to join the meeting through Zoom or by phone will be emailed to treasurers by Dec. 15. Others interested in attending may call the synod office at 319-352-1414 or email Jan Glaspie, glaspiej@neiasynod.org.

Video Sermons for the Holidays

Two video sermons will be available this Christmas season for congregations to use. One will be an Advent 4 sermon for use on Sunday morning, Dec. 24, and the other a Christmas 1 sermon for the week after Christmas.

The videos will be posted at www.neiasynod.org/download-category/worship-resources in the Sermon Video Library and on the synod's YouTube channel.

Lutheran Day on the Hill

February 19, 2024

Mark your calendar for Monday, Feb. 19, 2024, to join Lutheran Day on the Hill in Des Moines. This annual event is sponsored by Lutheran Services in Iowa and the three Iowa ELCA synods to advocate for family and children's services with Iowa legislators.

Check for more details on the LSI website, www.lsiowa.org/LDH.



SHARE YOUR INPUT

Draft social message on gun violence and trauma

The ELCA is currently working to create a social message about gun-related violence and trauma. A draft version of the message has been released for review and public comment. The draft's themes focus on trauma, public health, and peacemaking.

Social messages are ELCA teaching documents that draw from existing social teaching but throw a fuller and sharper spotlight on a particular social issue.

FEEDBACK IS DUE BY JAN. 31, 2024

Please take the time, alone or with a group, to study the draft version of this social message and share your affirmations, concerns and suggestions via an online survey form by Jan. 31. Submitted comments will be taken into account in revising the draft, which will then be considered for adoption by the ELCA Church Council in late March of 2024.

Find links to the social message draft and survey at www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Current-Social-Writing-Projects/Gun-Trauma. Questions, comments and requests for a printable version of the survey can be emailed to draftsocialmessage@elca.org.

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Send news for the Jan./Feb. 2024 issue to Marcia Hahn by Jan. 8.

Articles in this newsletter may be duplicated for use in synod congregations and organizations, with credit to the *Star* newsletter.

Please notify the synod office with name and address changes. The *Star* can be downloaded at www.neiasynod.org/blog/newsletter. To request a printed version, call the synod office.



www.neiasynod.org

'Human Sexuality – Gift and Trust' Reconsiderations Process

A new ELCA web page offers information about the reconsideration process of the ELCA's social statement *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* and how to apply to be on the reconsideration task force.

In 2022, the Churchwide Assembly authorized two reconsiderations:

- A review of specific text references that "would consider the import that marriage legally is now a covenant between individuals"
- A possible revision that reconsiders the "church's current concept of the four positions of bound conscience" found on pages 19-21 of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*

The new web page provides more information about the reconsiderations, a series of frequently asked questions, an application/nomination form to join the task force, and a document outlining expected commitments of task force members. Applications and nominations for the task force will be accepted through Jan. 31, 2024.

To learn more, visit www.elca.org/reconsiderations.



Synod to Host New 'C³' Event

JUNE 1, 2024

Mark your calendar for Saturday, June 1, for the first Northeastern Iowa Synod "Creative Collaborative Congregations (C³)" event, which will take place at Wartburg College, Waverly.

This new event will feature workshops, service opportunities, networking, worship and more for all congregation members to attend. The C³ event will take place every other year alternating with the Synod Assembly, which will meet again in 2025.

Anyone who would like to suggest workshop topics or speakers for the 2024 C³ event should contact Jan Glaspie, executive assistant for synod administration, glaspiej@neiasynod.org.

'Living Faith at Home' Newsletter

Looking for new activities that families can do together to celebrate Advent and Christmas? This month's *Living Faith at Home* newsletter, which is included with this issue of the *Star*, features family rituals and traditions, including family conversation starters and an Advent calendar with fun Christmas traditions.

The Home Life Network creates the *Living Faith at Home* newsletter to give families and congregations ideas for celebrating liturgical seasons throughout the year. The newsletter can be reprinted in congregational newsletters and shared with others through email and social media. Past issues can be downloaded at www.neiasynod.org/download-category/home-life.



Holy Land Crisis Resources

In response to the Hamas attacks in southern Israel on Oct. 7 and Israel's declaration of war against Hamas, the ELCA has created a web page with statements from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and Lutheran and global partners in the region, along with worship resources and more.

Visit <https://elca.org/crisis-holy-land>.

Mission Support Intent Form

The Mission Support Intent Form for 2024 is now available online. The completed forms should be submitted to Michelle Van Riper at vanriperm@neiasynod.org or by mail to PO Box 804, Waverly, IA 50677-0804. Download the form from the synod website at www.neiasynod.org/download-category/congregations.

“Coaches affirm and come alongside us with really great questions to prompt our thinking, get us to see past whatever it is that might be blocking our imagination, and help us identify the next step forward.”

Nye says that coaching can be especially powerful when a person or congregation senses that a change is needed, but they are not sure how to make that change. A coach can serve as a sounding board to help rostered ministers clarify their thinking as they prepare to work with a congregation. Lay leaders may want to connect with a coach when beginning the call process, forming a new outreach program, discerning closing a congregation or entering a shared ministry partnership.

“Coaching is most successful when an individual or group wants to focus on a particular topic and has a sense of what they would like for an outcome,” Nye says.

TEAM COACHING TO ACHIEVE MINISTRY GOALS

Congregational councils, committees and leadership teams seeking to form a new vision or accomplish a change together can benefit from a formal relationship with a team coach.

“It is incredibly powerful for a team to work together with a coach—usually from outside their immediate context—to gain clarity, direction and consensus on the next steps to take as they live into the future into which God is calling them,” Nye says.

Team coaches can help congrega-

tions and synod networks move forward in mission development, congregational vitality, race relations and more. The synod has a pilot program for coaches to help congregations in the closing process.

The Northeastern Iowa Synod’s Care for Creation Network recently worked with an ELCA team coach to set an action plan for the network’s goal to help 15 congregations over the next two years achieve net zero emissions. Network members met with the coach over four detailed sessions to fine tune a document outlining their objectives, actions, milestones, timeline, resources and accountability.

“The coach brought a more objective look to the process, and we got a good product out of it,” says network member Leslie Sand. “It took some time, but we have something that is measurable and includes accountability. I don’t think we would have gotten there without her help. Now it is up to us to follow through.”

Congregations and teams can also benefit from informal coaching when a congregation member or ordained minister is trained as a coach and uses those skills in their own congregations.

“Congregations that have leaders trained as coaches benefit from



Sarah Nye

those types of informal coaching interactions on a daily basis,” Nye says.

HOW TO GET STARTED

One of the best ways to find out how coaching works and how it might be beneficial is to sign up for a free online mini coaching session. People can bring a specific question or decision they are wrestling with to discuss in a half-hour conversation.

“It is a great way to see the benefits of coaching quickly and meaningfully,” Nye says.

Coaching is client-led, with the client deciding how many sessions and how often they want them—usually four to six hour-long sessions weekly or monthly. Coaching sessions take place over Zoom with coaches from throughout the ELCA. In-person sessions can be arranged when working with a local coach.

Fees can range from free for coaches in training to \$25 to \$100 per session; however, the synod may be able to cover most or all the cost for first-time coaching clients and those wanting to be trained as coaches.

Rostered ministers, lay members and congregations interested in coaching and supplemental funding should contact Pastor Kristen Rod, rodk@neiasynod.org. People can also connect with a coach and learn about coach training through the ELCA Coaching website, www.elcacoaching.org.

Listening to the story from another perspective

from the Racial Justice Advocacy Network

Growing up, I loved decorating for Christmas. The days after Thanksgiving were prime time to pull down the boxes of Christmas decorations from the closet. One of my favorite things to set up in the house was the nativity scenes.

I loved setting up nativity scenes because it connected me to the Christmas story. Setting up Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus was always done first. I noticed from a young age that not all the nativity scenes contained all the same pieces. Some had just Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. Others contained a donkey or an ox. Others shepherds and sheep. Still others magi and camels. Our largest set had dozens of pieces, including a whole band of children playing instruments with the little drummer boy. Maybe these weren't biblical, but they added a flavor to the story.

The other thing I noticed was how the different sets were decorated and how each character was portrayed. My parents explained to me that many of these sets came from different countries around the world. Some were crafted in the United States and Western Europe. I noticed in these sets the characters looked a lot like me: light colored skin, and blonde or light brown hair. They often wore expensive looking robes, even the shepherds. This was in contrast to some of the other sets. One was a hand carved set made of olive wood from Bethlehem. The set was masterfully carved, with great detail, yet the carving told a simpler story of Jesus' birth. The clothes were simpler, like what an artisan such as Joseph could afford. Whenever I pulled this set out of the box, I was re-



minded that Jesus' birth didn't happen in rural Iowa, but in Bethlehem far away. This helped me feel more connected to the global community.

We also had a few sets from Mexico. These sets were painted with vibrant colors: pinks, yellows, light blues, and bright oranges. These characters had darker skin and black hair. Mary was ornately decorated. One set from Mexico was styled after Tonala pottery. It featured abstract shapes for the individual pieces. Baby Jesus' arms were extended to make the shape of the cross. Each of these pieces had detailed designs for both the features and the clothing. These many sets came together to tell a deeper story of Jesus' birth, a story each set could not communicate by themselves.

Every year as I set up the nativity scenes in my own home, I am reminded of the rich diversity that makes up our world. Different cultures tell

the story of Jesus in different ways, using their own cultural and artistic mediums. Each scene tells a story. It's important to pay attention to that story, to recognize someone else's experience may cause them to tell the story in a different way. I think there's a lesson here for seeking racial justice. If we only see the world from our experience, we will find we have a rather limited view. What if one particular nativity scene was our only way of telling the Christmas story? We would miss out on so much! We need to hear the stories of others. As we seek racial justice and equity in our own communities, are we listening to the stories of others? Or are we dismissing their experiences before we ever hear them? In addition to listening to others' stories, it is important for us to reflect why we tell our story the way we do, so that as we listen, we are not simply comparing our experience against that of another.

At Christmas, we celebrate God becoming a human being in Jesus Christ. We get to know God more deeply through getting to know Jesus' story. The same is true as we listen to the stories of our neighbors. In this season, let us commit ourselves to listening to the stories and experiences of people who may look different from us, whose cultural practices might differ from our own. We might be challenged by what we hear. The stories may be different from our own. But through the voice of our neighbor, we may hear God's voice calling us into a new and more just future for all God's children.

— *Pastor Daniel Hanson*
Trinity Lutheran, Mason City

New Name: Global Church Together Network

by Pastor Liz Bell

Synod networks were designed to grow organically, to be nimble and to evolve as the needs and realities of the network participants and community change. It is in this spirit of networks serving the members and work, that the synod's two companion networks—the Namibia Network and Hungary Network—joined forces to create the new Global Church Together Network.

Iowa Lutherans understand that we are connected globally, not simply economically, but also as people of faith. We are an immigrant church with roots that go back to home countries around the world. We are a welcoming church known internationally for our work with refugees over the past 100 years. We are a mission-minded church sending quilts, baby care kits, health supplies, and more to people all

“O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth.” — *Psalms 65:5*

over the world. We are a connected church, valuing real relationships with the Lutheran Church in Hungary, the Lutheran Churches in Namibia and, most recently, the Lutheran Church in Angola. Iowa Lutherans know the value and importance of global partnerships and relationships founded in Jesus, and that we need the wisdom, warmth, and love of our global neighbors and siblings in Christ.

The Global Church Together Network is made up of people who seek “to share the transformative experiences, connections, and stories that come

from global engagement and partnership.” The ministry of this network includes fostering relationships with our companion churches in Hungary, Namibia and Angola, the ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission, and ELCA Missionaries.

Our big project for 2024 is a Global Church Together Event in August 2024. Imagine workshops and forums, food and booths, a Hungarian Goulash Cook Off and more. This all-day event will be great for youth groups, families, individuals who enjoy learning and traveling, and musicians interested in global music and worship.

If you are interested in joining the Global Church Together Network or would like to learn more, contact Pastor Liz at belle@neiasynod.org.

Young adults can apply for new year of YAGM service

Applications for the 2024-2025 Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) service year are being accepted, with a priority deadline of Jan. 15, 2024. Final deadline for the upcoming service year, which begins in August, is Feb. 1. Young adults ages 21 to 35 are welcome to apply.

YAGM is a one-year, international service-learning and faith-formation opportunity for young adults to serve in accompaniment with Lutheran companion church bodies and organizations, and to become immersed in a new community. Young adults work with congregations, schools and social service ministries, and gain work experience in several types of fields, including health care, education, immigration, youth ministry and more.

Candidates apply to the YAGM program at-large rather than to a specific country. YAGM country programs in-

clude: Argentina/Uruguay, Central Europe, Jerusalem/West Bank, Mexico, Senegal and United Kingdom. The safety and security of YAGM volunteers is a top priority. The five YAGM volunteers who were serving in Jerusalem and the West Bank for the 2023-2024 year have come home due to the ongoing situation in that region.

To learn more, visit www.elca.org/Our-Work/Global-Mission/Young-Adults-in-Global-Mission.



Join us in investing in Lay Ministry Training

Can you imagine if every congregation in the Northeastern Iowa Synod had two or three people who could speak confidently about their faith, could bring insights based on the Lutheran way of reading the Bible into conversations and decisions at church, and could preach, lead worship or visit the sick on a regular basis or when the pastor is away?

Are you someone who has that feeling that God might be encouraging you to learn more, deepen your faith or get trained to preach, lead a Bible study or do ministry in new ways? Do you know someone who might be a good candidate?

We need your help to identify people to participate in the new Lay Ministry Training program starting in September 2024. Right now, please encourage people you know by sharing with them why you think they would be a great candidate for this training and ask them to pray about the opportunity. More details about the program and how to sign up will be announced in the coming months.

We also need you to consider investing seed money into the creation of the lay ministry training program. With your financial gift, we can make sure this program is done well and done right. In early December many of you will receive a letter with more information inviting

you to give. In that letter you will learn about one of our own congregations that stepped up when a medical emergency made it impossible for the pastor to lead. As you might imagine, they figured things out, but it wasn't easy.



In the future, with your help, congregations will have trained lay leaders who know how to preach, lead worship and cover some of the pastoral bases. These lay leaders will be able to step in with the confidence that comes from hands-on experience and training.

Please consider a gift today! You can give online at <https://secure.myvanco.com/YJN9/campaign/C-14CGW> or use the URL code. Or send a check made out to the Northeastern Iowa Synod with "lay training" in the memo to 201 20th St. SW; PO Box 804; Waverly, IA 50677.

Your investment in lay leadership will go a long way to growing ministry in Iowa and beyond!

— *Pastor Liz Bell*



Apply for a 'Ride Against Hunger' Ministry Grant

Lutherans in Iowa know generosity and the importance of investing in hunger ministry!

In 2023, the three Iowa synod bishops joined together to raise funds and awareness for hunger and poverty ministries by biking in RAGBRAI. Congregations and individuals responded generously by donating close to \$100,000! Of those funds, \$50,000 went to ELCA World Hunger, and approximately \$14,000 went to each synod to invest in their own hunger ministries.

The Northeastern Iowa Synod is offering "Ride Against Hunger" Ministry Grants to sustain and grow hunger ministries in Northeastern Iowa. Congregations and hunger ministries can apply for a \$250 sustaining grant, a \$500 partnership grant or a \$750 new initiative grant.

Grants are for programs and ministries connected to an ELCA congregation or conference. Non-congregation-based grants require a letter of support from an ELCA congregation.

Grant applications will be reviewed

monthly. All applications in before the 15th will be reviewed that month; checks are typically sent out by the end of the month.

A simple two-page application can be found on the synod website at www.neiasynod.org. Please invite your favorite hunger ministry leader or team to apply!

Thank you for your gifts to alleviate the pain and hunger related to poverty and hardship!

How Lutherans can respond to the climate crisis

by Donna Rasmussen, Care for Creation Network

The ELCA has published *The Earth's Climate Crisis* social message, and an ELCA Task Force on Civic Life and Faith tells us that we cannot separate our faith from caring for all of God's creation. We know that the most vulnerable are suffering the most.



Solutions are out there; they need to be enacted. Putting a price on carbon at its source is the fastest, most effective solution. This means that fossil fuel producers (Exxon, BP, etc.) will pay fees to bring fossil fuels, such as coal, into the economy.

Sending all the net revenue from those fees back to Americans will make it possible to weather the transition to renewable energy. This will

1. give us affordable, clean energy,
2. put money in our pockets,
3. get us to net zero by 2050, and
4. save lives.

Learn more at www.energyinnovationact.org. To learn more about advocating for specific, effective climate solutions, go to www.citizensclimate.org, where you can join the Citizens' Climate Lobby Lutheran Action Team.

- ELCA Civic Life and Faith, <https://>

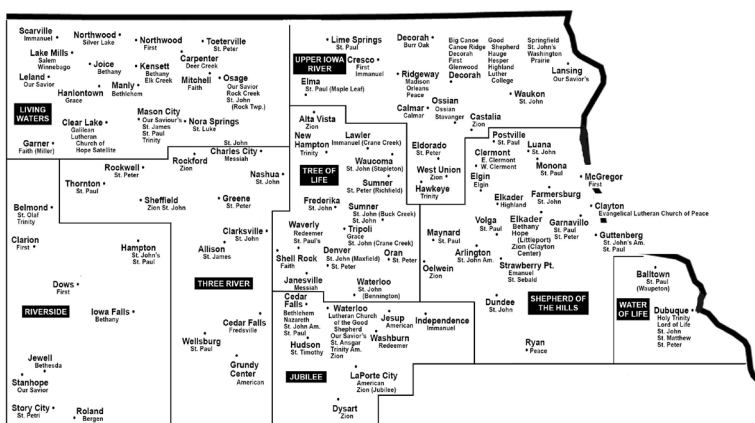
elca.org/civicsandfaith

- [ELCA Carbon Pricing Basics](#) (Oct. 2019)
- [ELCA Carbon Tax Implementation Considerations](#) (Dec. 2020)
- ELCA Earth's Climate Crisis social message, www.elca.org/climatecare (April 2023)
- *Earth's Climate Crisis* powerpoint, https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1H6DQjvJY7qcvZRhatO_HIT5YoNu3KjGs/edit#slide=id.p1
- Join the Citizens' Climate Lobby and its Lutheran Action Team, www.cclusa.org/action-teams.

New Synod Conferences Map

Congregations from the Northeastern Iowa Synod's Shechem Conference have joined other conferences, so there are now eight conferences instead of nine. The new synod map and a list of the conferences—including deans, chaplains and correspondents—are available to download from the synod website, www.neiasynod.org/download-category/conferences.

Northeastern Iowa Synod Conferences



OBITUARY

The Rev. Edgar Arthur Zelle, 98, died Oct. 9, 2023, at Bartels Lutheran Retirement Community in Waverly. He was ordained in 1953 and served as the head pastor at Zion Lutheran, Castalia, and then as pastor for Good Shepherd Lutheran, Waterloo, from 1958 until his retirement in 1988.

A funeral service took place Oct. 16 at St. Paul's Lutheran, Waverly. He is survived by his wife, Verona Zelle of Waverly; four children, nine grandchildren, and eight great grandchildren.

The full obituary is available at www.kaisercorson.com.

DECEMBER EVENTS

- 7 Transitional/Interim Ministry Luncheon with Bishop Jones, Synod Office, 12 noon
- 8 Candidacy Committee, Synod Office, 8:30 a.m.
- 13 Racial Justice Advocacy Network, Synod Office/Zoom, 1 p.m.
- 21 Youth Ministry Network, TBD, 10 a.m.
- 22-29 Synod Office Closed, Christmas Break

JANUARY 2024 EVENTS

- 1 Synod Office Closed, New Year's
- 4 Transitional/Interim Ministry Colleague Group, Zoom, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 10 Racial Justice Advocacy Network, Synod Office/Zoom, 1 p.m.
- 11 Executive Committee Meeting, Zoom, 3 p.m.
- 11 Congregation Treasurers Meeting, Zoom, 6-7:30 p.m.
- 13 SWO/Cluster Leadership Meeting, Synod Office, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- 15 Synod Office Closed, Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 17-21 Extravaganza 2024, New Orleans
- 20 Synod Council Meeting, Zoom, 9 a.m.
- 25 Youth Ministry Network, ThreeHouse, Cedar Falls, 10 a.m.
- 27 SWO/Cluster Leadership Meeting (snow date), Synod Office, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

FEBRUARY 2024 EVENTS

- 1 Transitional/Interim Ministry Colleague Group, Zoom, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 9-10 Candidacy Retreat, Shalom Spirituality Center, Dubuque
- 15 Youth Ministry Network, Synod Office, 10 a.m.
- 19 Lutheran Day on the Hill, Des Moines

MARCH 2024 EVENTS

- 7 Transitional/Interim Ministry Colleague Group, Zoom, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 9 SWO Board Meeting, Synod Office, 9 a.m.-12 noon
- 16 Synod Council Meeting, Synod Office, 9:30 a.m.
- 21 Youth Ministry Network, Trinity, Mason City, 10 a.m.
- 29 Synod Office Closed, Good Friday

APRIL 2024 EVENTS

- 4 Transitional/Interim Ministry Colleague Group, Zoom, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 18 Youth Ministry Network, TBD, 10 a.m.

INSTALLING

- Rev. Charles Peterson, St. John's, Dubuque, Nov. 15
- Rev. Erika Breddin, invitation to extended service, Zion, Waterloo, Dec. 3
- Rev. Katherine Longtin Johnson, Bethany, Elkader & Emanuel, Strawberry Point, Emanuel, pending
- Rev. Selvaraj Periannan, American, La Porte City pending

INTERVIEWING

- Decorah, Big Canoe & Highland, Rev. Waldemar Gies, contract interim
- Decorah, Decorah, staff
- Dows, First, Rev. Anita Nuetzman, interim**
- Dubuque, St. Peter, staff
- Eldorado, St. Peter**
- Garnavillo, St. Peter & Clayton, Peace, Rev. Harold McMillin, contract interim
- Greene, St. Peter
- Hampton, St. Paul, Rev. Nikoli Falenschek, interim
- Janesville, Messiah**
- Jesup, American & La Porte City, Zion (Jubilee)
- Lake Mills, Salem
- Leland, Our Savior & Garner, Faith (Miller)**
- Mason City, Trinity, staff
- Maynard, St. Paul, Rev. Susan Friedrich, interim
- Rockwell, St. Peter
- Toeterville, St. Peter & Carpenter, Deer Creek
- Thornton, St. Paul**
- Waterloo, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd**
- Waterloo, Our Savior's, Pastor Lisa Kruse, contract **

SELF-STUDY

- Asbury, Lord of Life, Rev. Karla Wildberger, interim
- Decorah, St. John's & Hauge**
- Decorah, Good Shepherd
- Dysart, Zion
- Elgin, Elgin & Elkader, Highland, Rev. Adam Starrett, interim*
- Hawkeye, Trinity**
- Osage, Our Savior's
- Ossian, Ossian
- Washburn, Redeemer*
- Waterloo, Trinity**
- Waverly, St. Paul's, staff

ROSTER CHANGES

- Rev. Derek Rosenstiel, transfer to South Central Synod of Wisconsin
- Rev. Edgar Zelle, deceased

**Part-time Call*

PRAYER CALENDAR

DECEMBER 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					H. George Anderson Fund for Leaders Rev. Dennis D. Niezwaag, Charles City Rev. Lee Gable, Cedar Falls 1	St. Paul, Wellsburg 2
Jean M. Swiggum, Cedar Falls Rev. Amy Eisenmann, Cedar Falls Rev. Cindy S. Krause, Osage 3	Zion, West Union 4	Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, Chicago 5	ELCA Churchwide Staff, Chicago 6	Northeastern Iowa Synod Council, Waverly 7	Bishop Lorna Halaas & Staff of the Western Iowa Synod, Storm Lake 8	Rev. Lynn J. Noel, Postville 9
Rev. Tracy K. Hinkel, Sumner 10	Rev. Dr. Kristin J. Wendland, Waverly 11	Rev. Gregory L. DeBoer, Independence 12	Bishop Amy Current & Staff, Southeastern Iowa Synod, Iowa City 13	Rev. Dr. Elaine G. Siemsen, Rochester, Minn. 14	St. James, Allison 15	Zion, Alta Vista 16
Middle East Peace Immanuel (Crane Creek), Lawler 17	Rev. Dr. Charles Peterson, Dubuque 18	1517 Media/ Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis 19	Aase Haugen Senior Services, Decorah 20	Rev. Nathan H. Wicks, Ridgeway 21	Rev. James L. Cherry, Waverly 22	Rev. Keith Sievers, Savage, Minn. 23
Joan Dalen, Mason City Rev. Joan E. Haug, Dubuque 24	Rev. Daniel J. Baldwin, Cresco Rev. M. DeWayne Teig, Dubuque Rev. Paul H. Schaeedig, Waverly 25	Bartels Lutheran Retirement Community, Waverly 26	Bethany Life Communities, Story City 27	Margaret Browne, Waterloo Rev. Calvin C. Fick, Allison 28	Rev. Maureen Howard, Iowa Falls 29	Carolyn B. Oppedahl, Dubuque 30

JANUARY 2024

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	H. George Anderson Fund for Leaders Camp Shalom, Davenport 1	Rev. Todd A. Burrichter, Nashua 2	ELC - Republic of Namibia 3	Linda Groe, Waukon Rev. Kathleen J. Graves, Mason City 4	EWALU Camp and Retreat Center, Strawberry Point 5	Rev. Michael L. Sherer, Waverly 6
Carol A. Koeneman, Tucson, Ariz. Rev. Ruth Ann Shriver, Urbandale 7	Rev. Gary C. Heidt-Johnson, Waterloo 8	Faith Lutheran Home, Osage 9	Good Neighbor Home, Manchester 10	St. John Evangelical Lutheran, Arlington 11	Lord of Life Lutheran, Asbury 12	Trinity Lutheran, Belmond 13
St. Olaf Lutheran, Belmond 14	Calmar Lutheran, Calmar 15	Springfield Lutheran, Calmar 16	Middle East Peace Zion Lutheran, Castalia 17	Rev. Adam T. Starrett, West Union 18	Rev. Kurt A. Hansen, Dubuque 19	St. Paul Lutheran, Cedar Falls 20
Verona Zelle, Waverly Rev. Luther H. Thoresen, Grundy Center 21	Rev. Lois D. Knutson, Austin, Minn. 22	Jane Chilson, Rochester, Minn. 23	Fredsville Lutheran, Cedar Falls 24	Rev. Nancy J. Larson, Waverly 25	Bethlehem Lutheran, Cedar Falls 26	St. John American Lutheran, Cedar Falls 27
Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran, Cedar Falls 28	St. John Lutheran, Charles City 29	Messiah Lutheran, Charles City 30	Rev. Dr. Sarah A. Nye, Osage 31			



Good News

Nov/ Dec
2023

As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society and the world.

From our President

Here we are at the end of harvest, fall is ending and we are enjoying the peak time for all the beautiful colors of fall. On my way to church on Sunday, God painted a beautiful scene of ribbons of low-lying fog and the sun coming up from the east shining on the bright red and gold and rust colored trees, they looked like they were on fire! It was such a beautiful scene only God could create. We will soon be enjoying Thanksgiving and giving thanks for everything to God. Then we'll be entering the winter season and in December we all will celebrate the birth of Jesus our savior. Let us take these two months of November and December and give thanks and glory to our creator for this beautiful world he created and for coming into this world so that we may be saved. I pray and hope that all of you have a wonderful Thanksgiving, a blessed Christmas and an awesome New Year.

Sondra Nelson, President

Welcome to the Board, Darlene Emery

I am a member of Burr Oak Lutheran Church which is 10 miles north of Decorah. I am active in WELCA, Circle, and altar committee. In the winter months, I enjoy helping tie quilts for LWR. My husband Ron & I have been married for 54 years and have three grown daughters, Nicolle, Brandy & Kelly, sons-in-law, Rob & Phil and seven grandchildren. Before retiring 9 years ago, I worked as a nurse's aide for 35 years. I enjoy my vegetable and flower gardens and feeding of our animals on our hobby farm. I am active in the Mabel Legion Auxiliary Post 299 and Upper Ia. Cluster D. I also volunteer at Winn Med Hospice. Once a week, I am part of the Bible Study Fellowship (BSF), which is a worldwide, nondenominational group with a chapter in Decorah. This year's study is the Gospel of John. This group has brought me closer to God and helps me understand what his word means to me and how it relates to my life now. Being on the

NEIASWO Board, I have much to learn but with God's help, I will do my best.

Justice Committee



What is it?

- Faith in action, addressing inequities in political, economic, and social systems
- Equity and impartiality, mercy and compassion
- Service to God in ways that bring healing and wholeness to the church, society, and the world

What can we do for Justice?

- Pray
- Host a Bible study about justice issues
- Promote awareness by having a speaker
- Contribute to organizations dealing with those issues
- Volunteer in organizations dealing with those issues
- Join other people to promote legislation
- Organize safe places for victims



TAKE ACTION

Submitted by Chris Vandeventer

Stewardship Committee

Beginning in the late 19th century, Lutheran women were given small Thankoffering boxes to place in a special location in their homes as a visible reminder of blessings received. Women would add coins to those boxes almost daily as particular blessings were noted. From their use came the idea of an annual church service to celebrate their collection, and so the women of the congregation would come together for a Thankoffering service. The concept of

Thankoffering celebrations dates back more than 100 years and beyond Lutherans. The Episcopal Church Women held their first recorded Thankoffering service in 1889, and the World Thank Offering service of the United Methodist Women has been a tradition for over 100 years. In the Lutheran tradition, the General Synod's Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society created their first Thankoffering service in 1889 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the organization. At that first Thankoffering, \$6,100 was collected. Today, Women of the ELCA collects more than \$1 million in Thankofferings annually for the ministries and mission of our women's organization. To plan a Thankoffering service go to [Thankofferings – Women of the ELCA](#)

Taken from Women of the ELCA Website

Discipleship Committee

Following the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel and the Israeli siege of Gaza, many *Gather* readers contacted Women of the ELCA churchwide staff to ask about the safety of *Gather* Bible study author the Rev. Dr. Meghan Johnston Aelabouni and her family. Johnston Aelabouni reported: "We are safe in Jerusalem and continue our work, accompanying the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), which is now more important than ever." Johnston Aelabouni serves as ELCA Theologian in Residence for the Middle East and North Africa desk. She and her spouse, the Rev. Gabi Aelabouni, Area Desk Director for the Middle East and North Africa, have three children. "We remain incredibly thankful for the outpourings of prayer and love for our family and for all the people of the Holy Land," Meghan and Gabi shared in an Oct. 21 special update. "We have felt the power of your prayer; it has sustained us. We truly do feel safe where we are; and we also feel deeply called to be where we are to offer whatever help we can as we accompany our local partners on behalf of the ELCA." Lutheran Disaster Response is accepting donations at <https://community.elca.org/gaza>

From the Women of the ELCA website

CALENDAR

- Jan 1 Deadline for Jan/ Feb *Good News*
- Jan 13 SWO/ Cluster Leadership @ Synod Office
- Mar 1 Deadline for Mar/ April *Good News*
- Mar 9 SWO Board @ Synod Office
- May 1 Deadline for May/ June *Good News*
- May 4 SWO Board @ Synod Office
- Jun 14 SWO Board @ Redeemer, Waverly
- Jun 15 SWO 36th Annual Gathering @ Redeemer, Waverly
- July 1 Deadline for July/ Aug *Good News*

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Contact NEIA Women of the ELCA:

[neiasynod.org/women-of-the -ELCA](http://neiasynod.org/women-of-the-ELCA)

NE IA Women of the ELCA- Check us out and give a like or post about your church's activities!



Living Faith @



Dear Faith Shapers,

Our family calendar is quite full and I'm sure yours is as well. Sometimes my family even struggles to sit down for a meal together. However, we still strive to make sure that we are continuing to form impactful shared experiences in the busyness of our daily lives.

Studies in family psychology tell us that family traditions and rituals are key in developing family bonds, a sense of belonging, and creating a memorable childhood. Family traditions and rituals are associated with marital satisfaction, adolescent's sense of personal identity, children's health, academic achievement and stronger family relationships.

Traditions & rituals do not have to be extravagant or expensive. They can be silly, free, fun, faithful, and meaningful. The important thing is that they are something your family can come to expect and look forward to. This issue of Living Faith at Home is filled with family rituals & Traditions. The holiday season is a great time to start making new traditions & rituals.

May your Thanksgiving, Advent & Christmas be filled with traditions that share the good news of great joy of the coming of our Lord and Savior.

Deacon Lisa Kammerer

Rituals of Family Conversation

Here's some super easy and fun fall conversation starters to get your family talking. Use these at meals, during car rides, before bed or text them to your family.



- ⇒ **Tell us about your favorite fall activity**
- ⇒ **Name three things you are grateful for**
- ⇒ **What is your favorite fall scent?**
- ⇒ **Name an experience that has reminded you life is good**
- ⇒ **What are you most looking forward to about thanksgiving?**
- ⇒ **What is something you hope to be thankful for next year?**
- ⇒ **What invention are you most thankful for?**
- ⇒ **What was the hardest part of you day and why?**
- ⇒ **Tell about a person who has shown you God's love**
- ⇒ **What is something new you would like to learn and why?**
- ⇒ **What made you laugh today?**
- ⇒ **What is the biggest problem you are facing right now?**
- ⇒ **How were you a blessing to someone today?**
- ⇒ **What are three things you can thank God for right now?**
- ⇒ **Name a talent or ability God has given you.**
- ⇒ **What makes you a good friend?**
- ⇒ **What is your favorite song right now?**
- ⇒ **How can we pray for you?**
- ⇒ **Invent a new fall family tradition. What would it be?**
- ⇒ **Where did you see God at work today?**
- ⇒ **What language would you like to be able to speak and why?**
- ⇒ **What is one thing you love about our family?**
- ⇒ **What is the best Thanksgiving side dish?**
- ⇒ **How many times did you say thank you today? How does it feel when someone thanks you?**
- ⇒ **If you could invite 2 famous people to dinner, who would they be and why?**

This information is prepared for you by the Northeastern Iowa Synod-Home Life Network for use by families and local congregations.



Like our page on Facebook and our posted resources will appear in your newsfeed. Our page is [Northeastern Iowa Synod Home Life Network ELCA](#)

GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY

An Advent Calendar of Scripture and Fun Christmas Traditions



<p>1 <i>Isaiah 9:6</i> Make an Advent Wreath & Decorate for Christmas</p>	<p>2 <i>Isaiah 7:14</i> Play Christmas Charades, Pictionary, or Minute to Win It Games</p>	<p>3 <i>Luke 1:26-28</i> <i>1st Sunday of Advent</i> Donate Food to your Local Food Pantry</p>	<p>4 <i>Luke 1:29:33</i> Have a Christmas Music Dance Party in your Kitchen</p>
<p>5 <i>Luke 1:34-35</i> Send a Christmas Card to Someone in the Military</p>	<p>6 <i>Luke 1:38</i> Celebrate Saint Nicholas Day</p>	<p>7 <i>Luke 1:46-50</i> Candy Cane Bomb a Parking Lot</p>	<p>8 <i>Luke 1:51-55</i> Bake Christmas Cookies or Candies</p>
<p>9 <i>Matthew 1:18</i> Deliver Treats to a Neighbor Without Getting Caught</p>	<p>10 <i>Matthew 1:20-25</i> <i>2nd Sunday of Advent</i> Make a Homemade Christmas Ornament</p>	<p>11 <i>Matthew 2:4-6</i> Take Funny Family Christmas Pictures</p>	<p>12 <i>Luke 2:1-5</i> String Cranberries for the Birds</p>
<p>13 <i>Luke 2:6-7</i> Build a Snowman or A Whole Snow Family</p>	<p>14 <i>Luke 2:8-9</i> Have a Sleepover Under the Christmas Tree</p>	<p>15 <i>Luke 2:10-11</i> Draw Your Own Picture of the Birth of Jesus</p>	<p>16 <i>Luke 2:12-14</i> Put Quarters in the Machines at the Laundromat</p>
<p>17 <i>Luke 2:15-18</i> <i>3rd Sunday of Advent</i> Call A Relative and Sing Christmas Carols</p>	<p>18 <i>Luke 2:19</i> Bring Coffee or Hot Chocolate to an Outside Worker</p>	<p>19 <i>Luke 2:20</i> Put on PJs & Look at Christmas Lights</p>	<p>20 <i>Luke 2:21</i> Do A Christmas Science Experiment</p>
<p>21 <i>John 1:14</i> Complete a Random Act of Christmas Kindness</p>	<p>22 <i>Matthew 2:1-2</i> Have a Hot Chocolate Bar and Watch a Christmas Movie</p>	<p>23 <i>Matthew 2:10-11</i> Add Stars to the Tree & Talk About the Kings</p>	<p>24 <i>John 3:16</i> <i>4th Sunday of Christmas & Christmas Eve</i> Read A Christmas Story</p>

