

## Additions to Mobility List | January 16 - March 13, 2025

A detailed list of transitions is available at [milwaukeeesynod.org/congregations-in-transition](http://milwaukeeesynod.org/congregations-in-transition)

### In Leadership Transition

Bethania, Racine  
Church of the Resurrection, Pewaukee  
Emaus ELCA, Racine  
Faith/Santa Fe, Milwaukee  
Peace, Burlington  
Reformation, Milwaukee

### Ministry Exploration Team

Adoration, Greenfield  
Atonement, Muskego  
Incarnation, Milwaukee  
Living Faith, Racine  
Luther Memorial, West Allis  
Martin Luther, Milwaukee  
Our Savior's, Hartland  
Redeemer, Hartford  
St. John, Grafton  
St. Luke, Waukesha

### MSP Posted

Good Shepherd/Trinity, Milwaukee  
Lutheran Campus Ministry (UW-Milwaukee), Milwaukee  
Our Savior, Oconomowoc

### Names Submitted

First United, Sheboygan  
Mount Carmel, Milwaukee  
North Cape, Franksville  
St. Luke, Sheboygan Falls  
St. Mary's, Kenosha  
St. Paul, Milwaukee  
Unity, Brookfield  
Vernon, Mukwonago

### Call Extended

Ascension, Milwaukee  
Christ, Paddock Lake  
St. Mark, Waukesha

### Rostered Ministers in Transition

**Rev. Melody Brink** – from solo pastor at Messiah, Twin Lakes to shared pastor at Messiah, Twin Lakes and Christ Lutheran, Paddock Lake  
**Rev. Laura Frost** – from candidate for ministry to called pastor at St Mark, Waukesha  
**Rev. Tom Gaulke** – on leave from call, transferred to the South Central Synod of Wisconsin  
**Rev. Kimberly Jordan** – from Church of the Resurrection, Pewaukee to on leave from call  
**Rev. Aida Muñiz** – from transition pastor at Ascension, Milwaukee to called pastor at Ascension, Milwaukee  
**Rev. Mike Skunes** – from Christ, Mequon to the Nebraska Synod

### Remembering Rostered Ministers Who Have Died

**Rev. Donald A. Johnson** died on Saturday, January 18, 2025. He was ordained in 1965 and served four congregations in North Dakota before being called to North Cape Lutheran Church in Franksville, where he served from 1976 - 1993. Following this call, Pastor Johnson was a chaplain at Lincoln Lutheran Home in Racine from 1993 - 1999, when he retired.

## Upcoming Events

**Tuesday, April 15**

Chrism Service | Holy Cross, Menomonee Falls

**Mondays, May 5 - 19 & June 2 - 16 @ 6 - 8 pm**

Synod-Wide Book Study: "My Grandmother's Hands" | Zoom

**Saturday, May 17 @ 9 am - 4:30 pm**

Deconstructing Racism (Introductory Anti-Racism Training) | Galilee, Pewaukee | Register by Friday, May 9

**Friday, May 30 - Saturday, May 31**

Synod Assembly | Brookfield Conference Center  
Register online by May 13

**Thursday, June 12**

Reconciling in Christ Pride Worship | Details to come

**Monday, September 29 - Wednesday, October 1**

Fall Leadership Conference | Lutherdale

Learn more at [milwaukeeesynod.org/events](http://milwaukeeesynod.org/events)



Greater Milwaukee Synod

## Life Together | Spring 2025

### Notes from the Bishop:

#### All Are Welcome—Yes; All Is Welcome—No.

"All are welcome" is a common phrase, seen and heard in most, if not all, of our congregations. We sing it in hymns, it shows up on our message boards and in our bulletins, presiding ministers often say these words as they invite folks to communion, there was even a campaign a number of years ago that allowed congregations to market themselves as "the welcome place."



As a synod, we declared ourselves to be a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) synod (the original language used the term "reconciled") in 1991, publicly stating that we understood this expression of welcome to include people in the LGBTQIA+ community. We have affirmed this stance in

a variety of ways and in a number of assembly resolutions ever since, and our synod council will be presenting a resolution at this year's assembly to update and expand our synod's RIC statement of welcome. Our synodical statement of our vision, mission, values, and practices ([milwaukeeesynod.org/about-us/vision-mission-values](http://milwaukeeesynod.org/about-us/vision-mission-values)), declares that our understanding of God's vision for love and justice includes "everyone, including all races, genders, identities, abilities, and social status."

We strive to be a welcoming place, in part to overcome the ways in which our predominantly White, Northern European heritage has excluded people, but primarily because we understand the Gospel to proclaim a radical, inclusive welcome that extends to every single person.

And yet, I have seen and heard of situations in our congregations in which folks have wrestled with how to live into and express this radical welcome. Specifically, I'm referring to the challenges we face when a person or group of people speak or act in a way that harms or discriminates against others—racist jokes, bullying, insensitive comments that demean or dismiss. I have experienced times when such behavior is met with shrugs and statements like, "but everyone's welcome." All people are welcome, yes; but not all behavior is welcome.

I believe we need to deepen our understanding and expression of our commitment to being welcoming congregations and communities to more clearly articulate what people are being welcomed into. In other words, we need to be welcoming people into communities of grace, mercy, hope, and healing. Behavior that inhibits how people experience the justice, love, and mercy of God is not welcome.

I recognize that trying to define the types of behavior that are or aren't welcome is challenging on several levels. Who gets to decide? How shall we respond? What are the consequences? I don't pretend that this will be easy, but I hope that we can discover the courage to explore how to more fully reflect God's vision for our world. I am personally guided by the words of

Paul to the church in Ephesus, the fourth chapter:

*But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.*

This passage guides us as we engage in these hard and holy conversations to ask these basic questions when evaluating potentially troubling speech or conduct: is it truthful? Is it loving? Does it build up the body of Christ?

Unless and until we find ways to lovingly and courageously call out that which does not reflect our values as a community of grace, love, and justice, our words of welcome will ring hollow, and God's vision, for our world and for our church, will remain unrealized.

In Christ,

Bishop Paul Erickson

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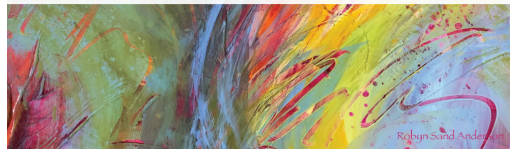
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[milwaukeeesynod.org](http://milwaukeeesynod.org)



@MilwaukeeSynod

## 2025 Synod Assembly Preview



Friday, May 30 - Saturday, May 31

Brookfield Conference Center

Our annual synod assembly brings together pastors, deacons, and lay leaders from congregations across our synod to worship, enjoy fellowship, and consider business including elected positions, annual budget, resolutions, and more.

This year's assembly theme is "Compassion: Spirit, Open our Hearts." Inspired by one of our four core values, we are grateful to feature the artwork of Robyn Sand Anderson with her work titled 'Autumn Winds.'

On Friday evening, we will welcome **Rev. Khader El-Yateem** as our keynote dinner speaker. Dinner tickets are included for all registered assembly members. Individual tickets may be purchased by the general public for \$50 each at [tinyurl.com/GMSAssembly2025-DinnerTickets](https://tinyurl.com/GMSAssembly2025-DinnerTickets).

After dinner, **Tyra Dennis** will lead an energetic and contemporary-style worship. This service is open to all, and it is not necessary to register to attend worship.

Learn More and Register at [tinyurl.com/GMSAssembly2025](https://tinyurl.com/GMSAssembly2025)



### Keynote Dinner Speaker

**The Rev. Khader El-Yateem** is the Executive Director of the Service and Justice home area of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Pastor El-Yateem has served as Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission with the ELCA Florida-Bahamas Synod. Prior to joining the synod staff, he served as pastor of Salam Arabic Lutheran Church in Brooklyn, N.Y., a congregation he started as a mission developer in 1995. El-Yateem also worked in patient relations at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn from 2010 to 2017 and was chief financial officer at Bethlehem Bible College in Bethlehem from 1990 to 1992.

Born and raised in Bethlehem, El-Yateem received his Bachelor of Theology from Bethlehem Bible College in 1989 and his Bachelor of Theology and World Religions from the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo in 1991. He received his Master of Divinity degree from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Seminary) in 1996.



### Worship Leader

**Tyra Dennis**, better known as "Tyralucia," was born and raised in Los Angeles, California and has always been drawn to the stage by her talents: singing, composing music, playing the piano (as well as 11 other various instruments), acting and writing. The singer, songwriter and musician has accomplished so much and continues to excel beyond expectations, from performing with the greats such as Chaka Kahn, Stevie Wonder, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame member Jackson Browne, Ray Charles and Slash from Guns and Roses while still being in high school to having a key role in developing and starring in the first Apple iPod commercial.

Since 2016, Tyra has been able to show her passion for worship and love for Christ by becoming a worship leader within the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America) when answering the call to serve at Another Level Ministries. She has led the music for many events, including but not limited to Western States Youth Gathering (WYLE), Theoasis (SYC Synod), Synod Assembly (SWC Synod), ELCA Gathering, Extravaganza and more. She is honored to use her gift in a way that elevates God's kingdom and gives back to the one that has given her everything.

## Synod Assembly Worship - Youth Gathering Style!

All high school youth are invited to join us for Synod Assembly worship at 7 pm on Friday May 30! This worship will be led by Tyra Dennis, the worship leader at the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering, and will be in the energetic style of Youth Gathering worship. **We'd love to have youth to serve as readers, ushers, communion assistants, and more!** Contact us at 414-671-1212 if you have youth that would like to serve in worship.

**After worship, we invite youth and their chaperones/leaders to gather at WhirlyBall**, located in the Brookfield Square Mall, from 9 - 11 pm. Bishop Erickson and Tyra Dennis have promised to WhirlyBall, too! Save the date and stay tuned for more information.



Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

## Authentic Diversity Update: "Working, Learning and Healing Together"

Greetings Beloved Friends in Christ,

Spring tends to be a time of blooming and growth for many of us. As I think about the work we have done as a synod towards Authentic Diversity in the past few months, I am amazed and filled with gratitude at how much that seems to be true for us.

Last spring, I shared updates about how our Strategic Planning Task Force (SPTF), synod staff and council, and Reconciling in Christ and Anti-Racism Teams had developed and were starting to implement our synod's Strategic Plan for Authentic Diversity. Since then, all of these groups have continued to work diligently together to make progress — and we are!

Combining our efforts, we have made significant headway. Since the work of the SPTF has been completed, we have realized that we need a team of people to continue to walk with, provide resources for, and be an accountability partner to the synod's leadership and congregations. This group was created and has been named the Authentic Diversity Accountability Team. Their most recent focus has been evaluating and consulting on implementation of our synod's anti-discrimination policy.

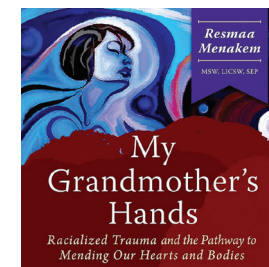
There are many moving parts where becoming authentically diverse is concerned. I can assure you that what we have done so far is on the cutting edge throughout the nation — not only for the ELCA, but across most mainstream denominations.

Thank you for your support, prayers and presence you have given these last few months and years to this initiative. It has helped to till the soil and water the plants, and God has caused it to grow.

...But we are not done yet! The wounds of oppression run deep, yet they can be healed. This spring, I'll be leading a synod-wide book study that is designed to provide a space for learning, healing and growing together. I'm inviting you to join in! Let's continue to walk together through this season and discover what else God can and will do!

Blessings, Peace and Grace,

Rev. Afi Dobbins-Mays - Assistant to the Bishop for Authentic Diversity & Leadership



### Synod-Wide Book Study: "My Grandmother's Hands" by Resmaa Menakem Mondays, May 5 - 19 and June 2 - 16 @ 6 - 8 pm on Zoom

"In this groundbreaking book, therapist Resmaa Menakem examines the damage caused by racism in America from the perspective of trauma and body-centered psychology. The body is where our instincts reside and where we fight, flee, or freeze, and it endures the trauma inflicted by the ills that plague society. Menakem argues this destruction will continue until Americans learn to heal the generational anguish of white supremacy, which is deeply embedded in all our bodies... *My Grandmother's Hands* is a call to action for all of us to recognize that racism is not only about the head, but about the body, and introduces an alternative view of what we can do to grow beyond our entrenched racialized divide."

Register at [milwaukeeesynod.org/event/my-grandmothers-hands-book-study](https://milwaukeeesynod.org/event/my-grandmothers-hands-book-study)