

Together in Mission Workshops

February 10, 2024

Morning Workshops: 10:15 am – 11:30 am

The Reconciling in Christ Journey – Aubrey Thonvold

The work of welcome is a lifelong journey of setting and reaching milestones. Together let's discover how to implement a journey for your faith community to publicly and intentionally welcome people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions; and commit to the work of racial equity. We will learn about the resources, tools, and materials ReconcilingWorks has available to support you and your faith community in what it means to be Reconciling in Christ.

ELCA Statement on Civic Life and Faith – Dr. Anthony Bateza

The ELCA is developing a social statement on Civic Life and Faith, the relationship of church and state and related matters, as called for by the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. Social statements are the ELCA's primary documents to address significant social issues. They are intended to aid reflection and shape conscience and to set forth the ELCA's teaching and policy on the major social issues and questions of contemporary life. The first draft of the proposed statement will be published in December, and this workshop will allow participants to share comments and feedback as part of a formal hearing. These comments will shape the second draft, which will be developed in the fall of 2024.

***Please note:** Hearings are public gatherings where participants share their specific affirmations or concerns about a draft statement. Participants are strongly encouraged to read the document before the workshop and to come prepared with questions and suggestions. The document and more information is available here:*

www.elca.org/civicsandfaith

Breaking Barriers: A Workshop on Implementing Authentic Diversity through Congregational Assessment – Authentic Diversity Strategic Planning Team

Join us for a transformative workshop designed to guide congregations during their antiracism journey. Explore a powerful assessment tool that helps determine where your congregation is so they can plan where to go. This is the first step to equip congregations with the skills and understanding needed to begin initiating meaningful conversations and actions within their churches. This interactive session will provide hands-on experience in utilizing the assessment tool. You will also learn more about our Strategic Planning Taskforce, the work done so far, and where they hope to go. We invite you to take the first step towards building a more inclusive congregation.

Storytelling and Mission Renewal – Rev. Matt Short

Jesus taught through stories. Faith is shared and strengthened through stories. In this session, you will learn simple practices and tools you can take back to your congregation that will inspire you and reignite a sense of vitality and excitement about what God is doing in your church and why it matters for the world!

How to Make a Communications Plan That Works for Your Congregation – Robyn Bayland

Join GMS Communications Manager Robyn Bayland (she/her) for a crash course on how to get the word out while being good stewards of your congregation's time, talents, and treasures. Participants will leave with practical tools to bring back to your congregation, including a comms strategy planning exercise and a curated list of free/low-cost resources for troubleshooting and skill-building. All are welcome, regardless of tech proficiency: the skills from this workshop are meant to apply to both digital and print communications.

A Basic Understanding of Israel and Palestine for Lutherans – Rev. Lisa Bates-Froiland and Churches for Middle East Peace

Rev. Lisa Bates-Froiland and co-presenters from Wisconsin Christians for Justice in Palestine, with information from our partner organization, Churches for Middle East Peace (cmep.org), will provide a foundation for understanding the current war in Israel and Palestine. A historical timeline will be shared, along with explanations of key terms you've been hearing in the news: the Occupation, Zionism, Settlers, "From the River to the Sea," and more. Did you know there are 6 Palestinian Lutheran congregations comprised of 2000 members?

Let's Talk So We Can Hear – Rev. Debra Trakel

We will explore how we talk to one another and how what we say, and how we say it, can get in the way of our ability to hear one another. We will talk about stopping harsh words, and how to have hard conversations more productively. We will talk about how to guard our hearts from painful words and how to help guard one another's. We will talk about what authentic listening looks like.

How Churches Can Work Together: Collaborations, Consolidations & Mergers – Rev. John Bischoff

Partnering in ministry is the future of the church. Consolidations, mergers, and collaborations are a few ways in which your congregations can continue providing ministry while also providing avenues for new ministry opportunities. Come and hear what it takes to successfully join congregations together and the benefits of partnering together.

Ending well: accompanying loved ones as they near the end of their lives – Shantell Riley
If you had an opportunity to prepare and plan for your death, what would that look like?

Would you have your funeral home picked out? Or maybe you want to be cremated? What about the outfit or music? Who would be the person you would want to speak for you when you can't speak for yourself? What or who would like to be surrounded by on your death bed? What would you like to leave behind? In a world where we don't talk about death (a softer term is *end-of-life*) openly. It has been a taboo or "hush-hush" topic. Like talking about it will cause you to die. It has become an experience that takes place other than home, like the hospital. I want to assist you emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually with the navigation of situations related to end-of-life. *Wanting to make the departure as significant as the arrival...*

Afternoon Workshops: 1:30 pm – 2:45 pm

Let's Talk SOGIE – Aubrey Thonvold

As we seek to deepen and expand the holy work of welcome, inclusion, and celebration of LGBTQIA+ people in the church and society, we can find ourselves asking, "What does LGBTQIA+ mean?" Together we will co-create a safe space to learn helpful skills and tools to support you and your ministry. The Let's Talk About SOGIE training and "Lutheran Introduction to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, & Gender Expression" are complementary resources, to be used side by side in your learning of language, and ways to extend hospitality to our LGBTQIA+ siblings. The training is great for those who are hoping to support their faith community in ongoing education, or for individuals who have an open heart and mind on learning more about God's diversity of creation.

Jesus and Justice – Dr. Anthony Bateza

Our morning preacher will help us explore the connections between our faith and our engagement in the issues facing us.

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Practices and Principles for Renewal – Rev. Matt Short

We all know the church and the world are changing rapidly! In this session, we will learn a handful of easy practices and some foundational principles that can help your congregation “behave its way into new thinking” and make new connections with new people. If you are looking for a rich conversation about how to build new ways of being the church together, this is the session for you!

Treasurer’s Workshop – Rev. Karen Pahl

Everything you ever wanted to know about synod financial information and being a great congregational treasurer! Let us help you with resources and information that will make your easier.

We All Belong – Rev. Marilyn Miller and Kathleen Schluter

Milwaukee Inner City Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAHA) has launched the We All Belong Campaign. Join us for this introduction/discussion where we talk about - Protecting Democracy, Rejecting "christian" nationalism, and Building Beloved Community. Includes video presentations by Bishop Curry, Episcopal Church, and Bishop Eaton, ELCA. This model can be used in your congregation.

All-Ages Sunday School, Worship and Service – Rev. Lynn Erickson

Want to try something new to strengthen relationships, support parents and grandparents, engage new volunteers and deepen faith? It’s not magic, it’s all-ages Sunday School (and more)! Hands-on learning in mixed age groups adapted to your setting is an exciting way to strengthen Christian education and encourage intergenerational relationships. We will hear from congregations that have experimented with all-ages Sunday School, worship, and service. Try a few things together and take home a complete ready-to-adapt curriculum on the Body of Christ.

Wild Church – Rev. Larry Harpster

Come talk with Pr. Larry Harpster, a self-professed crazy nature lover and pastor. Learn what he is finding inspiring in a new movement called “Wild Church.” Hear some stories about nature spirituality and the Celtic Church. Take home some concrete ideas about how your congregation could begin holding small groups and outdoor gatherings that help you connect with the sacred in new ways. You may even find new ways to connect with some people in your neighborhoods! Leave with inspiration and some simple action steps you could take back into your congregation!

Spiritual Practices, Meditation, and Mindfulness - Rev. Jackie Cook

Do you sometimes find it difficult to slow down to pray and to study? In this workshop, participants learn about ways to deepen your spiritual practice repertoire. Activities may include praying in color, finger prayer labyrinths, breathing, visualization and Ignatian contemplation, and a loving kindness meditation.