



Courageous, resilient, and faithful leaders for the sake of the world

The Excellence in Leadership Team

Reverend Lou Blanchard

Office of the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Colorado, retired

The Reverend Canon Lou Blanchard was ordained in 1991 in the Episcopal Church. She served four congregations in the Episcopal Diocese of Colorado and served on the Bishop's staff for 11 years as Canon Missioner in charge of Congregational Development and Transition Ministry for the 107 congregations in the state of Colorado. As Canon Missioner, Reverend Blanchard directed the Church Development Institute in Colorado and in Utah, led workshops in leadership and congregational development, and conferences for specific congregational leaders of various size congregations. For the past four years, she has assisted Pastor Sarah Moening in the ELCA Rocky Mountain Synod in leading a modified version of the Church Development Institute in Wyoming, Utah, and New Mexico. Reverend Blanchard is married with two children and two grandchildren.

Pastor Julie Brooks

Saron Lutheran Church, Strasburg, CO

Pastor Julie Brooks has degrees in her favorite subjects: Psychology (St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN) and all things Biblical and Churchy (Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN). She has served congregations in the greater Denver area over the past 22 years: Westminster, Erie, Strasburg, and Longmont. She FINALLY went on sabbatical last summer, walking St. Cuthbert's pilgrimage across Scotland/ England. She has been working on her Centering Prayer and launching her three children; there might be a connection. Pastor Brooks currently serves on the Rocky Mountain Synod Council and Executive Committee, and she does Colorado things in her spare time: hiking, biking, skiing, camping and, well, book club.

Pastor Katie Emery

First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Longmont, CO

Pastor Katie Emery grew up in Wisconsin, but her life and ministry has taken her many places throughout the world. Having lived, studied, and served on three continents and in multiple contexts, her guiding light has been the unity in the gospel found amidst the diversity of the world. Pastor Emery accepted a call to the Rocky Mountain Synod in 2018 and currently lives in Longmont with her husband, Will, and her dog, Loki. Her passion for ministry is rooted in raising up and empowering God's people to live and lead in faith, making the Excellence in Leadership program a wonderful fit for her. Aside from her work in ministry, she is also a foodie, a musician, an avid knitter, and loves to be outdoors.

Pastor Kim Gonia

Risen Lord Lutheran Church, Conifer, CO

A practitioner of the scenic route, Pastor Kim Gonia's life has been enriched by serving with the global church in Madagascar, as deacon for pastoral care in a congregation, as support staff at the RMS Office of the Bishop, parenting three now adult children, completing an MA at Iliff which led to an MDiv at LSTC, serving in three Lutheran and one Episcopal congregation since her ordination as pastor in 2011, and her new venture, Finding a Way Coaching. In her life as pastor and coach, Pastor Gonia is energized by exploring what kind of leadership is needed as congregations, and whole communities of faith, evolve within the changing landscape of our world. Running, walking with her spouse, making good food, reading voraciously, and occasionally knitting all keep Pastor Gonia grounded.

Pastor Will Johnson

Cross of Christ Lutheran Church, Broomfield, CO

Pastor Will Johnson loves gardening, running, board games, and all things pirates. He grew up in Western Washington and moved to Colorado in 2018. His love of learning leads him to an eclectic variety of subjects, including the early Church, the future of the church, and discipling leaders into that future. He sees the importance of Excellence in Leadership in that it helps leaders understand who they are emotionally and spiritually. It also teaches multiple methods of how to understand the present and enact positive change for the future. Pastor Johnson graduated from Luther Seminary in Minnesota with a Master of Divinity Degree. After seminary, he and his wife spent a year in South Africa, Cameroon, and western Europe studying preaching and the future of the church. He then served as a pastor in eastern Montana before being called to Cross of Christ.

Katie Andert Kline

Trinity Lutheran Church, Fort Collins, CO

Katie grew up in Minnesota and since has called many places around the world home. Most recently she served with ELCA-Global Mission in Colombia where her role was to accompany the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia in leadership development and training as well as strengthening pedagogical skills in Christian education; she is fluent in Spanish. Katie has an

MA from Luther Seminary in Leadership and Innovation for Ministry and focused her research on (and is very passionate about) the systemic support for healthy and flourishing leaders (lay and ordained) in the church. In her free time, Katie enjoys spending time with her husband, hiking, running, crafting, and exploring.

Pastor Sarah Moening

Assistant to the Bishop for Congregational Life

Reverend Sarah Moening serves as Assistant to the Bishop for Congregational Life and as Creative Director of Excellence in Leadership for the Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA. She has been ordained for twenty years and has served congregations in Wyoming, Colorado, and California. As a young adult, she lived in intentional Christian community for seven years, including as a Jesuit Volunteer and as a community member in the Urban Servant Corps in Denver. Before going to seminary, she worked as an elementary school teacher in urban communities in Milwaukee and Chicago and as a parent advocate for children with disabilities in Fort Collins. Pastor Moening is passionate about nurturing spirituality and discovering capacity for leadership. She believes the two go hand in hand. She is a trained coach and has been certified in EQ-i 2.0 assessment. Pastor Moening lives in Windsor, CO with her beloved husband, her son, and her niece.

Pastor Inga Oyan Longbrake

Messiah Community Church, Denver, CO

Pastor Inga Oyan Longbrake is a native of small-town South Dakota but has done all of her pastoral ministry in the Denver metro area. She has been ordained for 15 years and is currently in her third call. For the last ten+ years, Pastor Oyan Longbrake has been a student of Bowen Family Systems Theory. Its application has helped her to stay healthy and enjoy parish ministry in addition to supporting her congregational contexts to function creatively and non-anxiously. Pastor Oyan Longbrake is passionate about supporting the health and effectiveness of the Church into the future - and its leaders in gospel proclamation in a new world.

Pastor Kristin Schultz

All Saints Lutheran Church, Albuquerque, NM

Pastor Kristin Schultz is thrilled to be living in her hometown of Albuquerque and serving as pastor at All Saints Lutheran Church. She has also served as Associate Pastor at All Saints Lutheran Church in Palatine, IL, St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in Albuquerque, as well as a number of short-term bridge and interim positions. She is married and the mom of three teenage boys. Pastor Schultz completed the Church Development Institute, the program which led into EiL, in the spring of 2019, and has spent years exploring the Enneagram. She is passionate about the intersection of art and spirituality. Amid the challenges of this year, she is having fun with the adaptive challenge of creating meaningful, engaging worship online.

Pastor Sara Wirth

King of Glory Lutheran Church, Arvada, CO

Pastor Sara Wirth has been called to three congregations in Montana and Colorado since being ordained in 2001 and is currently serving as an intentional interim pastor at King of Glory in Arvada. She is a trained coach and supports faith leaders at www.PurposefulPastor.com with individual and group coaching. She is a wife, a mother of twin teenagers, and frequent indulger of the family dog, Patch. Swimming, cycling, snowboarding, skiing, hiking, cooking, and reading keep her connected with family and spiritually centered.

Dana Anderson

Program Manager, Excellence in Leadership

please direct EiL questions to danderson@rmselca.org

Living by the motto “Bloom Where You are Planted,” Dana looks back on her life and believes God has led her to do just that, even when the path was crooked and overcast. A native of Western Nebraska, Dana has an associate degree in Drafting and a bachelor degree in Interior Design. Following a career in drafting and interior design, Dana’s love of high school youth drew her to the education field. She worked in the Student Services sector in community colleges and high schools in Nebraska and Colorado. Dana is a participant in the first EiL cohort. Learning from the amazing EiL trainers and absorbing all that the program has to offer has given her an added zeal to grow deeper in her relationship with God and her neighbor, to bloom where she has been planted at this moment in time.