



Bishop's Report

The Rev. Dr. Meghan Johnston Aelabouni

Dios está aquí.
God Is Here.



- How has God been here in the Rocky Mountain Synod this past year?
- Where are we now (*what's our "here"?*)
- Where is God leading us?

How it started...

Synod Assembly 2024



Rocky Mountain Synod Ministry Highlights



in the community and on the mountain!

Rocky Mountain Synod Ministry Highlights



Celebrating Bishop Jim Gonia

Rocky Mountain Synod Ministry Highlights



2024 ELCA Youth Gathering/MYLE/tAble

Rocky Mountain Synod Ministry Highlights



New Bishop on the Move!

Rocky Mountain Synod Ministry Highlights



Theological Conference, Ghost Ranch NM

Rocky Mountain Synod Ministry Highlights



Malagasy Lutheran Church Companion Synod visit

Rocky Mountain Synod Ministry Highlights



Bishop Meghan's Installation @ Augustana

Rocky Mountain Synod Ministry Highlights



**Ordinations to Rostered Ministry
Receptions and Reinstatements to the ELCA Roster**

Rocky Mountain Synod Ministry Highlights



Installation of a new Rostered Minister

Rocky Mountain Synod Ministry Highlights



Holy Closure, House for All Sinners and Saints

Rocky Mountain Synod Ministry Highlights



Commissioning and Blessing Lay Leaders

Rocky Mountain Synod Ministry Highlights



Advocacy Ministry in NM and CO

Rocky Mountain Synod Ministry Highlights



First Call Accompaniment Retreat (Region 2)

Rocky Mountain Synod Ministry Highlights

Risen Lord – Conifer, CO

Zion's – Trinidad, CO

Christ – Highlands Ranch, CO



New Reconciling in Christ congregations!

Dios está aquí.
God Is Here.



Gratitude!

+RMS Transition Team

Deb Elstad

Pr. Ruth Ann Loughry

Pr. Kate Schlechter

Dr. Jack Lindsay

Nolan Bly

Dios está aquí.
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Where are we now?

+What's our "here"?

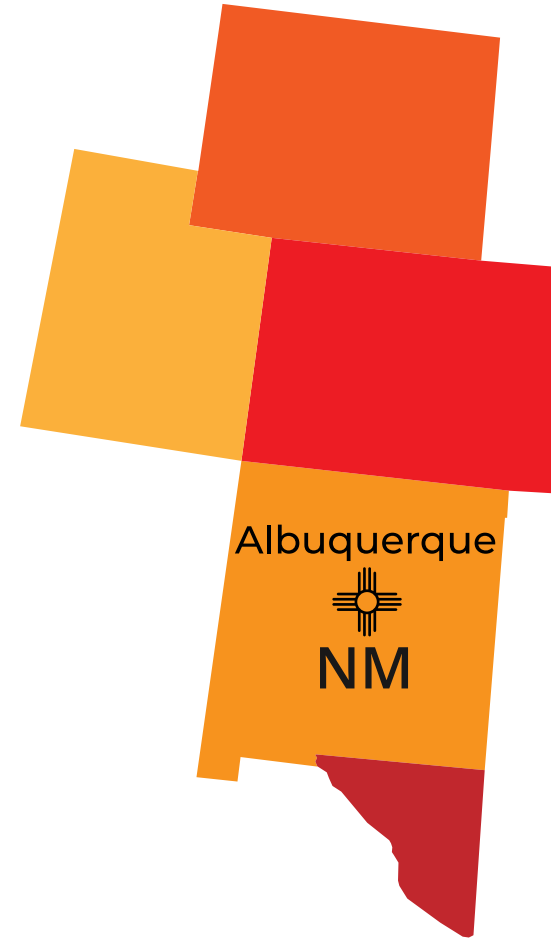
+Synod staff & Second
Fruits

We are here...

- 2025
- New Mexico, El Paso (TX), Utah, Colorado, Wyoming
- Ev. Lutheran Church in America
- Rocky Mountain Synod:
 - 35,000 members
 - 150 congregations/ministries
 - 200 pastors and deacons
 - 200 pastors and deacons retired
 - Social Ministry, Ecumenical, Interfaith partners
- We are here, now, for a reason.
- What is it? What's our WHY?

Why a Synod?

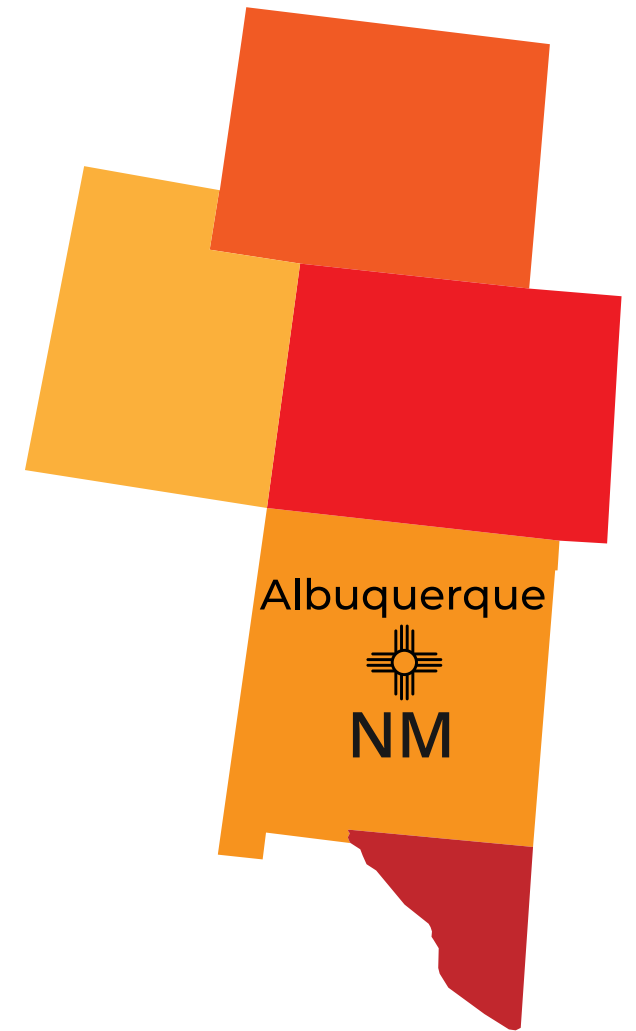
- What is the purpose and role of the synod office?
- What is the help that is helpful?



**The RMS office is
here to:**

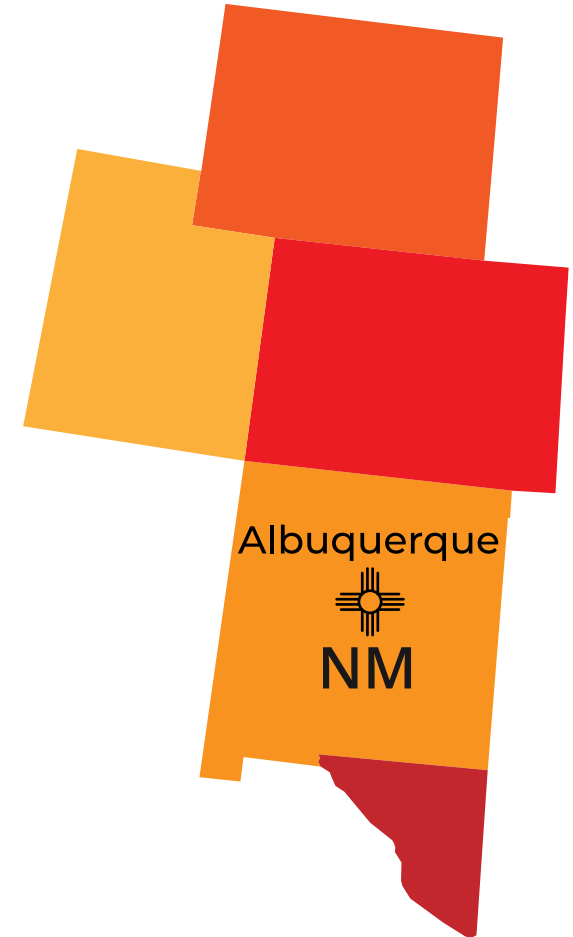
RELATE | SUPPORT | CONNECT | EQUIP

*the people and ministries of the whole
synod*



How?

- +Staffing for relationship, support, connection and equipping
- +Releasing property for “second fruits” ministry



Staffing Process and Timeline

- **All staff invited to stay for three-month discernment period**
- **Synod staffing team (call committee):** Bishop Meghan, Ruth Hoffman (VP), Pr. Matthew Weber (exec. committee), Pr. Steph Lord (Dean), Pr. Jeff Carlson (Dean), Susan Sharkey (finance committee)
- **Aug.-Oct.:** Staffing plan and job description creation; RMS staff invited to extend. Farewell for Pr. Dana Peterson (Director of Evangelical Mission—DEM)
- **Nov.-Apr.:** Call process: posting of job descriptions, interviews; Farewells for Peter Severson (Lutheran Advocacy Ministry Colorado), Dn. Katie Kline (Interim Director of Transitions) Dn. Sarah Bjornebo (A2B for Communication and Innovation)
- **Dec.-May:** Interviews continued; calls extended
- **May 15:** Staff complete!
- **How did it go?** Not perfectly, not rapidly, but faithfully!

Synod Staffing

- **New Calls:**

- Pr. Diana Linden-Johnson, Synod Minister for Rostered and Lay Leadership
- Dn. Mary Stoneback, Synod Minister for Communication and Events
- Pr. Sara Wirth, Synod Minister for Transitions and Healthy Ministries
- Fr. Quirino Cornejo, Director for Evangelical Mission-North
- Pr. Chris Davis, Director for Evangelical Mission-South and Synod Minister for Generosity

- **Continuing:**

- Yvonne Wilken, Synod Minister for Administration
- Jon Johnson
- Kurt Rager
- Pr. Barbara Berry-Bailey
- Pr. Katie Emery

“Synod Ministers”: what’s in a name?

Called to the whole synod and our shared ministry

Gifts of new staffing:

- More support for congregations and leaders in transition, conflict, crisis, or viability discernment
- Development of lay leadership support, including lay pastoral leadership and Synodically Authorized Ministers (SAMs)
- Communications as “telling God’s story”
- DEM team to strengthen evangelism and mission in a larger synod: DEM North (Utah, WY), DEM South (NM, El Paso) and shared CO
- Generosity support to increase synod resources for ministry (stewardship, grants, donor gifts)

Dios está aquí.
God Is Here.

Albuquerque



NM

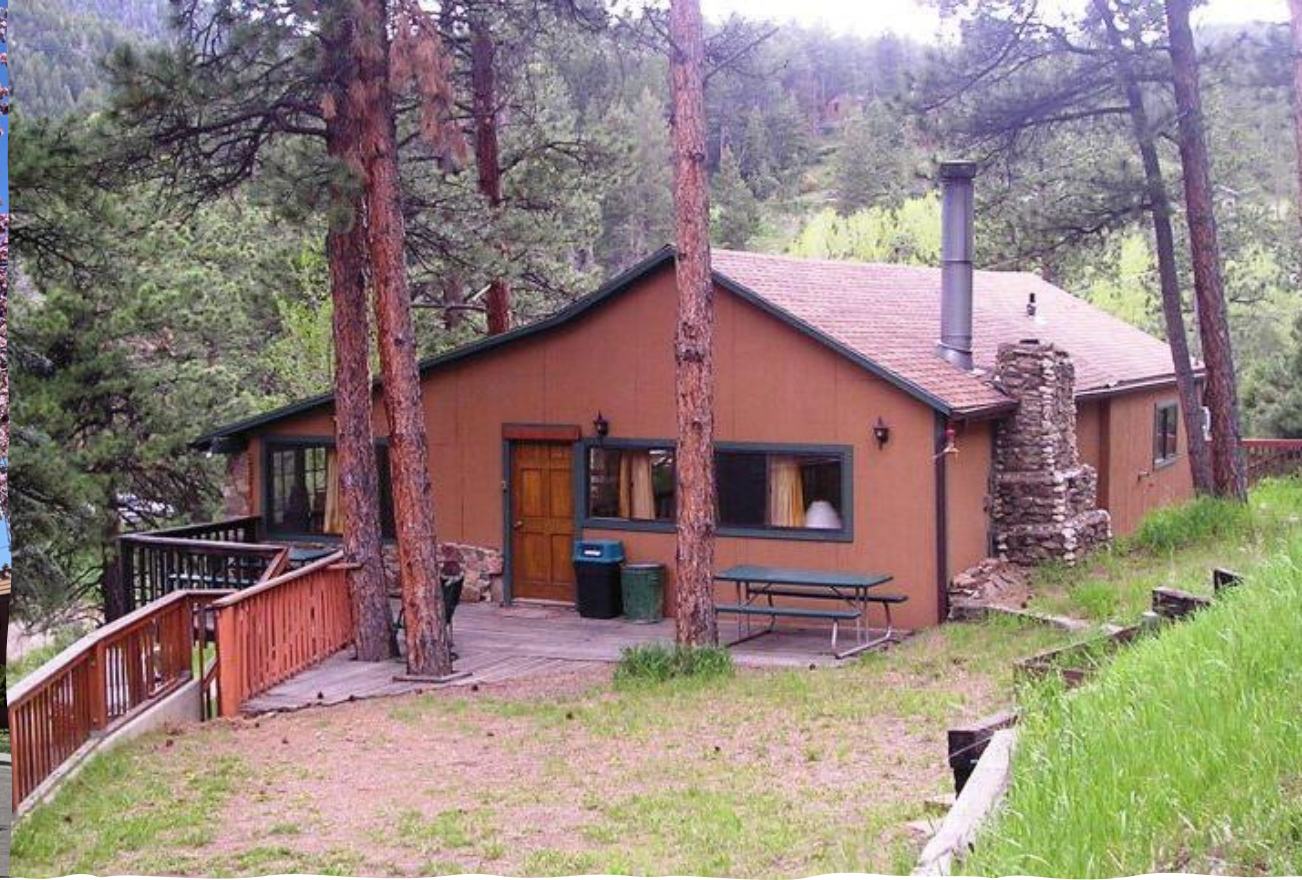
Gratitude!

- RMS staff, past and present
- Applicants for open positions
- Bridge support
 - +Pr. Will Johnson, transitions
 - +Rebecca Burris, EConn.
 - +Pr. Kate Davidson, website
 - +Pr. Carrie Baylis, Assembly
- RMS Staffing team
 - Bishop Meghan,
 - Ruth Hoffman (VP),
 - Pr. Matthew Weber (exec. committee),
 - Pr. Steph Lord (Dean),
 - Pr. Jeff Carlson (Dean), Susan Sharkey (finance committee)



From first fruits to second fruits

- Releasing property for mission and ministry
- Messiah Mountain Retreat Center (Indian Hills, CO)
- Lutheran Center (Denver, CO)



Beginning with our *why*: what is the purpose and role of the Rocky Mountain Synod (office and budget)?

From property and program administration to ministries of relationship, support, connection, and equipping



Messiah Mountain Retreat Center (Indian Hills, CO)

First fruits:

- Gifted to the synod by Messiah Community Church in Denver, CO
- Supported by the RMS capital campaign
- Supported by and used by the synod for retreat ministry from 2019-2025 (complicated by COVID pandemic and 2024 water leaks in bunkhouse)

Second fruits:

- MMRC was purchased by Pine Preservation LLC, a small family business that helps individuals, groups, and families to experience the outdoors
- The Rocky Mountain Synod received net proceeds of just over \$1,021,000 that can be used to support future mission and ministry. The RMS Council will include Messiah Community Church in discernment of how to use these funds.



The Lutheran Center

First fruits:

- Gifted to the synod by Valley Lutheran Church in Denver, CO
- Total capital investment of \$1.4 million, including initial outlay of \$892,000 (\$484,000 remaining on mortgage); \$97,000 annually for operations; \$243,677 for one-time costs (capital campaign, operating budget, and donation)
- Supported by and used by the synod for Office of the Bishop since 2014; Highlands Lutheran Church since 2023



The Lutheran Center

Realities:

- Expensive to operate (\$8,000 per month)
- Major deferred maintenance
- Safety and security concerns
- Space no longer needed for current staff configuration (hybrid work and travel)
- Maintaining property depletes synod staff capacity to carry out their primary role and purpose
- Ministry opportunities for local community (including unhoused neighbors) exist, but neither synod staff nor Highlands have capacity to manage the property needs that accompany this



The Lutheran Center

Second fruits:

- Lutheran Center sale may not recoup total capital investment since 2014 but will likely pay off mortgage and provide additional **proceeds that can be reinvested** in mission and ministry
- Significant **anticipated savings** to RMS budget from moving into a smaller, less expensive space and partnering with synod congregations for larger spaces
- **Staff time and capacity** freed up from property maintenance to focus on primary purpose and role—ministering to the whole synod
- “The OOB is coming to town!” Hope of **increased presence** by synod ministers throughout the synod territory

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Gratitude!

- RMS Property Committee
- Lutheran Center Discernment Team
- Lisa Guthrie and Jeff Fairfax

Albuquerque



NM

God is here, so where are we going?



Tune in to this afternoon's session on the vision of the Rocky Mountain Synod as we ponder how we will:

- +RELATE
- +SUPPORT
- +CONNECT
- +EQUIP

the church together!

THANK YOU!