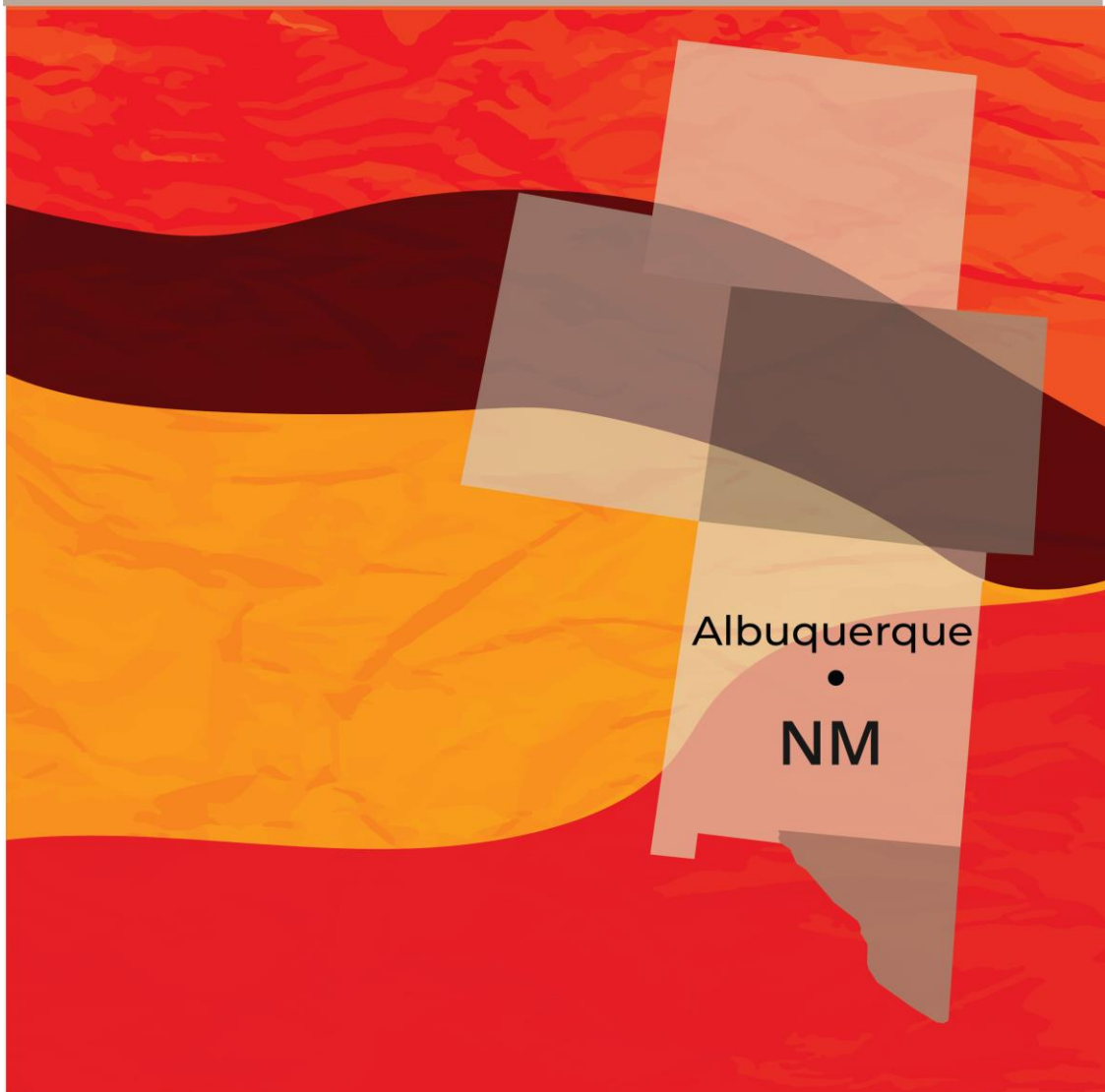


2025 Assembly Handbook

May 22–24, 2025 | [Albuquerque, NM](#)

[Embassy Suites by Hilton & Convention Center](#)

Dios está aquí.
God is Here.



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THE ASSEMBLY: “Dios está aquí. God is Here.”

Through sharing the Good News of God’s presence, we will worship God, learn together and pray for the future of our ministries.

What to Bring

- Internet capable mobile device (smart phone or tablet) is required for voting
- Mobile device, computer etc for accessing documents, websites
- Water bottle
- Bible & journal
- Comfortable clothing for warm weather and walking shoes

Parking

- Parking is \$8/day upon arrival at the Embassy Suites for both visitors and registered guests at the hotel

Transportation

- Transportation is available to worship Thursday night and the ABQ Adventures on Friday night.

Assembly Scripture Readings

- **Opening Bible Study & Worship**
 - Exodus 3:1–15, guiding story for the Assembly
 - Matthew 18:19-20
 - Psalm 139:1-18
- **Friday Morning Prayer** (Campus Ministry)
 - 1 Kings 19:9b–14
- **Saturday Morning Prayer** (Pastor Kate Davidson, outdoors with hot air balloon)
 - Psalm 104:1-4
 - John 3:5–8

ASSEMBLY SCHEDULE

Thursday, May 22

| Time | Event |
|------------|--|
| 11:00 a.m. | Exhibit set up begins |
| 12:00 p.m. | Registration Opens—Embassy Suites, Convention Center Entrance |

| | |
|-----------|--|
| | Voter Help Desk Open |
| 2:00 p.m. | Assembly is Convened in the Assembly Hall (Sandia Ballroom) |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening of Assembly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Land Acknowledgement ○ Bishop's Opening Reflections • Opening Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Credentials Report, Rules of Procedure, and Program ○ Reference and Counsel – Memorials & Resolutions ○ Introductions ○ Nominations for Committees • <u>Dave Jarvis</u> (Executive Director of Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp) Retirement Blessing • Synod Council Officer Reports |
| 4:15 p.m. | Break |
| 4:30 p.m. | Workshop 1 <i>*See Workshop Descriptions or HERE</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multicultural Ministries and Communities: Reflecting <i>the Richness and Unity of the Body of Christ</i> (Sierra I) • Synod Budget Overview (Sierra II) • Equipping Lay Leaders for Ministry, with, without, or alongside a rostered leader (Sierra III) • At a Crossroads (Ocotillo II) |
| 5:30 p.m. | Hotel Cocktail hour (One complimentary drink card per hotel guest, valid for two drinks daily) |
| 5:45 p.m. | Dinner (Sandia Ballroom) |
| 7:30 p.m. | Opening Worship at <u>St. Paul's Lutheran Church</u> (offsite) 1100 Indian School Rd NE, Albuquerque, NM 87102 (<i>limited transportation available, carpooling is encouraged</i>) |

Friday, May 23

| Time | Event |
|----------------|--|
| 6:00–9:00 a.m. | Breakfast (complimentary to hotel guests in atrium) |
| 8:30 a.m. | Morning Prayer - Campus Ministry (Sandia Ballroom) |
| 8:50 a.m. | Plenary 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bishop's Report & Vice President's Report • Resolutions & Memorials • Voting • Holy Stories featuring Emmy Baylis (Youth Synod Council Rep/Churchwide Rep), Pastor Rhonda Newby–Torres and Luis De Vargas (NM Campus Ministry, Luther House) |
| 11:00 a.m. | Break (Sponsored by Clergy Financial Resources) |
| 11:15 a.m. | Workshop 2 <i>*See Workshop Descriptions or HERE</i> |

| | |
|------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission for Renewing the Lutheran Church (Sierra I) 2025–2026 Synod Budget Overview (Sierra II) Congregational Ministry Team (Sierra III) Pastoral Leadership Transitions (Ocotillo II) |
| 12:00 p.m. | Lunch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interest Lunches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Madagascar Companion Synod Update (Sierra I) World Hunger Network (Sierra II) Rocky Mountain Synod Women's Organization (RMSWO) (Sierra III) Rocky Mountain Synod Women's Organization (RMSWO) (Ocotillo II) |
| 1:30 p.m. | Plenary 3 (Sandia Ballroom) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announcements Election Report/Follow-up Election Consideration of Budget, Questions, and then Budget Vote |
| 2:30 p.m. | <p>My Father's House, a documentary that tells the story of how a community center that celebrates diversity came to be.</p> <p><i>Pastor Marcel Narucki, Co-Founder & Director of Multi-Faith & Community Affairs and Village Exchange Center</i></p> |
| 3:30 p.m. | Break |
| 3:45 p.m. | RMS Mission and Vision (Bp Meghan) (Sandia Ballroom) |
| 4:45 p.m. | Churchwide report with Mary Campbell, Program Director AMMPARO |
| 5:30 p.m. | Hotel Cocktail hour (<i>One complimentary drink card per hotel guest, valid for two drinks daily</i>) |
| 5:45 p.m. | Dinner (Sandia Ballroom) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ruth Hoffman, Council VP Farewell and thank you for Ruth's years of service in the Synod. Rostered Leader Anniversary Celebration A word from Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains (LFSRM) President & CEO, James Horan |
| 7:00 p.m. | <p>Choose Your ABQ Adventure (off-site) <i>(limited transportation available, carpooling is encouraged)</i></p> <p><i>*Sign-up HERE</i> <i>*Each activity has a capacity limit, so early selection is encouraged to help hosts plan.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beer & Hymns (St. Luke Lutheran Church) Sip & Paint (All Saints Lutheran Church) Labyrinth Presentation & Experience (St. Paul's Lutheran Church) Campus Ministry—Open house at the Luther House Evening Bosque Stroll Explore Albuquerque (on your own) |

Saturday, May 24

| Time | Event |
|-----------------|--|
| 7:00–10:30 a.m. | Breakfast (complimentary to hotel guests in atrium) |
| 7:00 a.m. | Morning Prayer (Outside hotel), led by Pastor Kate Davidson of Lord of the Mountains in Dillon, CO. |
| 9:30 a.m. | Plenary 4 (Sandia Ballroom) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extended Voting time, if needed.• God is here! Guided takeaways What three areas will you focus on for congregational health, leadership, and outreach? How can Synod assist in these efforts? |
| 11:00 a.m. | Closing Worship & Sending |

ASSEMBLY DETAILS

Chaplaincy

- Pastor Barbara Berry Bailey is the Assembly's Chaplain.
- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Table Talks** over mealtimes with Pastor BBB can be scheduled at the Registration desk.
- The Chapel is located in the Pinon Room for quiet time, contemplation and prayer.

Offerings



- Assembly Offerings will benefit Betela Seminary, Campus Ministry and Camping Ministries
- Cash, check, and [online donations](#) are all welcome—Thank you for your generosity!
- Checks should be made payable to “Rocky Mountain Synod” Scan the QR, select “Synod Assembly Offering” from the Tithely menu and enter your information.
- Never scanned a QR code? Aim your phone camera at the code and tap on the link that appears on your screen.

Synod Stories



Our 2025 theme is “Dios está aquí. God is here.” Share how you've experienced God's presence in your life or ministry, and if you'd like, a photo that accompanies your story.

**With your permission, stories and photos may be featured at the Assembly and in Synod communications. [Share Your Story.](#)*

ABQ Adventures



PLEASE **SIGN UP** FOR YOUR ADVENTURE




*****Transportation is available to ABQ Adventures.**

Get ready for a Friday evening of community, creativity, and connection at the **Friday Night ABQ Adventure**—a highlight of the Synod Assembly designed to bring participants together in fun and meaningful ways, all hosted by local ELCA congregations in Albuquerque!

**Each activity has a capacity limit, so early selection is encouraged to help hosts plan. Scan the QR Code or click the link to sign-up!*

Adventure Options Include:

- 🎨 **Sip & Paint** at All Saints Lutheran Church **(30 limit)**
Create your own Sandia Mountains masterpiece under the guidance of a local artist, with food and drink included.
- 🎵 **Beer & Hymns / Open Mic Night** at St. Luke's Lutheran Church **(150 limit)**
A spirited evening of music, song, and community with local musicians and an open mic—refreshments provided.

-  **Bosque Trail Sunset Stroll (50+ limit)**
Enjoy the beauty of Albuquerque's nature with a guided walk along the scenic Paseo del Bosque Trail.
-  **An Evening at the Labyrinth** at St. Paul Lutheran Church **(20 limit)**
A reflective outdoor experience blending spirituality, movement, and mindfulness under candlelight. Led by Pastor Kate Schlechter
-  **Campus Ministry Open House** at Luther House **(25 limit)**
S'mores, music, and fellowship hosted by the UNM/NM Tech Campus Ministry—featuring a brass band!
- **Explore Old Town/Sawmill District (on your own)**

Workshop Descriptions

This year's Synod Assembly offers a variety of workshops to equip leaders, members, and ministry teams. Topics include congregations in transition, leadership, the synod budget and more. Whether you're experienced or new, these sessions will inspire ideas, build connections, and strengthen your ministry.

Workshop blocks will be offered twice, one on Thursday, May 22, 4:30pm and another block on Friday May 23, 11:15am.

Assembly Workshops include:

Thursday May 22, 4:30pm

Multicultural Ministries and Communities: Reflecting the Richness and Unity of the Body of Christ | Sierra I

Led by Pastor Quirino Cornejo and Vicar Margarita Reyes

Explore how ministries and congregations can truly become more Culturally Diverse & Inclusive by engaging in Cross-Cultural & Racial Equity Learning.

2025–2026 Synod Budget Overview | Sierra II

Led by Lisa Guthrie & Jon Johnson

Preview and ask questions about the proposed two-year Synod budget ahead of Assembly approval.

Equipping Lay Leaders for Ministry | Sierra III

Led by Pastors Diana Linden-Johnson & Katie Emery

Discover tools to strengthen lay leadership with or without a rostered leader—covering pastoral skills, SAM, and leadership programs.

At a Crossroad | Ocotillo I

Led by Pastor Sara Wirth

Explore four pathways for congregations in discernment: revitalization, partnerships/mergers, maintenance, and holy closure.

Friday May 23, 11:15am

Commission for Renewing the Lutheran Church | Sierra I

Led by Ralie Deffenbaugh

Hear updates and recommendations from the [Commission on renewing the Lutheran Church](#), from a Rocky Mountain Synod representative.

2025–2026 Synod Budget Overview | Sierra II

Led by Lisa Guthrie & Jon Johnson

Preview and ask questions about the proposed two-year Synod budget ahead of Assembly approval.

Congregational Ministries Team | Sierra III

Led by Pastors Travis Norton & Andrea Kragerud

Learn how congregations are creatively engaging God's mission and revitalizing ministry in diverse contexts.

Pastoral Leadership Transitions | Ocotillo I

Led by Pastors Diana Linden-Johnson, Sara Wirth & Katie Emery

Learn about leadership transition options including the call process, TEEM, and Synodically Authorized Ministers (SAM).



Bishop's Report to the 2025 RMS Synod Assembly

“Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” (Exodus 3:5)

Dear friends in Christ and coworkers in the Gospel: ¡Dios está aquí! God is here!

In the first ten months of serving in this call as Bishop of the Rocky Mountain Synod, I have often felt like Moses. Not the Charlton Heston version, posing heroically and brandishing his staff mightily to part the Red Sea! But the Moses of the book of Exodus, who finds God on the journey and who asks, “Who am I that I should go...?” (Exodus 3:11). And like Moses, who is invited by God to remove his shoes to be fully present and connected (through his sole, you might say) to God’s presence as holy ground. As I have traveled throughout the synod during this first year, I have felt that sense of holy ground in every place: in our congregations and ministries, in joyful and heartbreaking conversations, in prayer and in worship. I know without a doubt that the Holy Spirit is present and moving in the people and communities of our Rocky Mountain Synod!

And God is here in our neighbors and in the world around us—in moments of celebration and in moments of grief, anxiety, and loss. Here and now, many of us and our neighbors are hurting. Ministries with refugees and immigrants, through congregations and partner organizations of this synod like Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains and Border Servant Corps, have been significantly challenged. Many of our members and neighbors who are LGBTQIA+, Black, Indigenous, Latiné, Asian or Arab-American are frightened. And here and now, the Rocky Mountain Synod is responding in ways large and small: through advocacy, immigrant accompaniment, and communities of belonging for youth and young adults at our campus ministries and outdoor ministries; through preschools, food pantries, and a genuine welcome extended to people trying out church again—or for the first time.

In Jesus, God is here: in places of the cross, and places of new life. As the body of Christ, we are called to be here with others—to “rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn” (Romans 12:15). How will we do this as the Rocky Mountain Synod—this part of the ELCA and the body of Christ in New Mexico, West Texas, Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado? These questions will be at the forefront of the coming time for us as a synod and a church—and as people who seek to love God and our neighbor in our work, our relationships, our communities and citizenship. I don’t believe this time will be easy. I believe we will be faced with challenges and difficult choices. But because God is with us on the way, I also believe that we will find joy: in our relationships in shared work and play, in the proclamation of the Word and the sharing of the Sacraments, in music and art, in the blessings of our landscapes and the gifts of our communities. In faith, hope, and love (and the greatest of these is love!)

Thank you for being a part of this ministry, this mission, and this synod, as we continue to proclaim: ¡Dios está aquí! God is here!

Ministry Highlights:

Ordinations to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament

The Rev. Gabrielle Brown (Sat. Oct. 19 at Ascension Lutheran, Colorado Springs, CO)

The Rev. Mikaela Eskew (Thurs. Mar. 20 at First Lutheran, Colorado Springs, CO)

Receptions onto the ELCA roster of Word and Sacrament

The Rev. Michael Eisenman (Sun. Jan. 19 at Our Savior's Lutheran, Casper, WY)
The Rev. Todd Bertani (Sun. Mar. 9 at Trinity Lutheran, Boulder, CO) [reinstatement]

Installations

The Rev. Gabrielle Brown (Sun. Oct. 20 at Grace Lutheran, Colorado Springs, CO)
The Rev. Brigitte Weier (Sat. Oct. 26 at St. Matthew Lutheran, Taylorsville, UT)
The Rev. Derek Fossey (Sun. Oct. 27 at Shepherd of the Mountains Lutheran, Park City, UT)
The Rev. Nicole Garcia (Sat. Nov. 9 at Epiphany Lutheran, Denver, CO)
The Rev. Deb Abbott (Sun. Nov. 10 at Our Saviour's Lutheran, Greeley, CO)
Vr. Thania Drake (TEEM installation Sun. Dec. 1 at New Hope Lutheran, El Paso, TX)
Vicar Roxie Larsen (TEEM installation Sun. Dec. 1 at Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Fort Morgan CO)
The Rev. Barbara Berry-Bailey (Sun. Dec. 8 at Our Savior's Lutheran, Denver, CO)
The Rev. Nicol   Ferry (Sat. Dec. 14 at Trinity Lutheran, Monument, CO)
The Rev. Marty Lettow (Sun. Dec. 15 at Westview Lutheran, Boulder, CO)
The Rev. Michael Eisenman (Sun. Jan. 19 at Our Savior's Lutheran, Casper, WY)
The Rev. Monica Butler (Sun. Mar. 9 at St. Aiden's Episcopal/CU Boulder Lutheran Campus Ministry, Boulder, CO)
The Rev. Eugene Zeller (Sun. Mar. 16 at Prince of Peace Lutheran, Gillette, WY)
The Rev. Cheryl Hoffman (Sat. Apr. 5 at Shepherd of the Valley, Grand Junction, CO)
The Rev. Michael Tekrony (Sat. Apr. 12 at St. Stephen's Lutheran, Northglenn, CO)
Deacon Korra Looschen (Sat. May 10 at First Lutheran, Longmont, CO)
The Rev. Todd Bertani (*upcoming*—Sun. June 1 at Shepherd of the Mountains Lutheran, Estes Park, CO)

Commissionings and Blessings of Lay Leaders

Synodically Authorized Ministry Team (Sun. Jan. 26 at St. Paul Lutheran, Calhan, CO)
Lay Preaching Team (Sun. Feb. 2 at King of Kings Lutheran, Pueblo, CO)

Congregational Holy Closure

House for all Sinners and Saints, Denver, CO – Sun. Feb. 2
St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Arvada, CO – Sun. June 8 *upcoming*

Congregational Welcome

Well of Hope Lutheran Church – welcomed at 2025 Synod Assembly

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following information will assist voting members in the discharge of responsibility.
The material obtained from the [Constitution and Bylaws of the Rocky Mountain Synod](#) is identified by the symbol: "RMSC."

- [READ MORE](#)

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The *Glossary of Terms* is a quick reference guide to key [ELCA](#) terminology, helping users—especially newcomers and leaders—understand the church’s structure, roles, and processes. It supports informed participation in the [ELCA’s](#) mission by clarifying terms related to governance, leadership, regions, education, and assemblies.


- [READ MORE](#)

RULES OF PROCEDURE

The *Rules of Procedure* guide the Synod Assembly’s business to ensure order, fairness, and efficiency. Based on the RMS Constitution and Robert’s Rules of Order, they define voting rights, speaking privileges, and participation. Voting members include elected lay representatives, rostered ministers, and designated individuals, with emphasis on diversity. Non-voting participants may have voice, including church officials and ministry reps. The bishop presides, with other roles handled by synod officers. The rules also cover elections, proposals, voting, and debate time limits.

- [READ MORE](#)

Additional Information for voting: Red and green cards are provided in your assembly packet.

- Please hold **ONE** card high as you are voting **in favor (Green)** or **opposed (Red)** an assembly action.
- Do not lift the two cards together, as that is visible from the rear of the hall and gives a false vote impression.
- Assembly Voting Members will use a cell phone or tablet for elections with the BallotClick voting application.
- As part of registration, each participant will upload the application and login to ensure that everyone is ready to vote.
-  Nominations from the floor will be received. You can nominate yourself, and no second is required for nominations. Prior to coming to the microphone, please ensure that the individual being nominated is willing to serve.

Voting Member Responsibilities

1. Study the pre-assembly materials.
2. Attend all sessions of the assembly.
3. Participate in all legislative actions. Vote. Be present in the Assembly Hall during all voting. If an issue is not clear, ask the chair for clarification.

4. Share the information and actions of the assembly with your congregation!
5. Teach your congregation what you learned and help your congregation to know about the work of ministries beyond your congregation.

2025 NOMINATIONS

We will be electing one Synod Council member and several committee positions. Click the link below to learn more about the positions and nominations.

- [VIEW AVAILABLE COUNCIL & COMMITTEE POSITIONS AND 2025 NOMINEES](#)

MEMORIAL AND RESOLUTIONS

In the [ELCA](#), memorials and resolutions are formal ways for individuals, congregations, or synods to address church issues. They are discussed and voted on at synod assemblies or larger gatherings.

- **Memorials:** Petitions requesting changes in church policy, doctrine, or practice, usually directed to higher bodies like the Churchwide Assembly.
- **Resolutions:** Statements expressing a synod's stance on an issue, often to show support, concern, or solidarity, without requesting action.

These documents give the synod a voice in shaping the church's direction on key issues.

We have **ONE MEMORIAL** and **THREE RESOLUTIONS**.

- [READ MORE ABOUT EACH MEMORIAL AND RESOLUTION](#)

SYNOD BUDGET INFORMATION

RMS Budget information & documents:

- The [RMS](#) 2025/2026 Proposed Two-year Budget is available [HERE](#)
- The Year-end Financial Report as of 1/31/25 is available [HERE](#)
- The 2024 Congregational Mission Support is available [HERE](#).

Synod Council

- Bishop Meghan Johnson Aelabouni
- Ruth Hoffman (Vice President)
- Sharen Kamp (Secretary)
- Lisa Guthrie (Treasurer)
- Pr Gary Sandberg (Metro South)
- Pr Matthew Weber (Boulder/Broomfield)
- Pr Samm Melton–Hill (At-large Rostered)
- Pr Tim Orłowski (North NM)
- Jeff Fairfax North CO
- Ray Ferry (At-Large Lay Male)
- Pr Carrie Baylis (SE CO)
- Pr Debra Jimenez (Utah)
- Cynthia Bailey (Young Adult)
- Lynette Schurdevin (At-Large Lay Female)
- Ken Maldonado (Metro West)
- Emmy Baylis (Youth)
- Pr Jeff Swanson (Border)
- Pr Joshua Bruns (Wyoming)
- Pr Chelsea Achterberg (Metro East)
- Person of color/primary language other than English:
Andraïne Sinaga
- Person of color/primary language other than English:
Laura Garcia Villalpando

Current Synod Council composition:
Lay=11; Rostered=10

Office of the Bishop Staff

- **Bishop Meghan Johnston Aelabouni**
- **Pastor Barbara Berry-Bailey**, *Special Assistant for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*
- **Father Quirino Cornejo**, Synod Minister for *Director for Evangelical Mission–South & Synod Minister for Multicultural Witness*
- **Pastor Chris Davis**, Synod Minister for *Director for Evangelical Mission–North and Synod Minister for Generosity*
- **Pastor Diana Linden-Johnson**, - Synod Minister for Rostered and Lay Leadership
- **Pastor Katie Emery**, Temporary *Synod Minister for Transition Support*
- **Jon Johnson**, Synod Minister for Finance and Human Resources
- **Kurt Rager**, Director of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry, New Mexico
- **Deacon Mary Stoneback**, Synod Minister for Strategic Communications & Events
- **Yvonne Wilken**, Synod Minister for Administration
- **Pastor Sara Wirth**, *Synod Minister for Transitions and Healthy Ministries*

2025 Rostered Leaders Anniversaries

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>Word and Sacrament</p> <p>5 years Amanda Achterberg Nicolas Leither</p> <p>10 years Christine Hjelmstad Kathryn Emery William Johnson</p> <p>15 years Carrie Baylis David Ryder Joshua Bruns Marcel Narucki Patrick Van De Motter Phillip Kettering II Richard Brenton Richard Reiten Adam Berndt Scott Thalacker Beverly Johnson Mark Alam Filbert</p> <p>20 years Chad Kohlmeyer Chris Davis Gabi Aelabouni</p> | <p>20 years cont. Inga Oyan Longbrake Joel Pancoast Kristi Koppel Pamel Stofferahn Themba Lancelot Mkhabela</p> <p>25 years William Dohle Jr. Garrett Struessel Michael O'Grady Michael Stadmueller Nathan Blom Sarah Moening</p> <p>30 years Debra Engquist Mary Frohs Pamela Challis Paul Carlson</p> <p>35 years Ann Hultquist Jason McSpadden Milton Jensen Paul Ziegler Walter Taylor II</p> <p>40 years Brian Bergum Carol West</p> | <p>40 years cont. Cynthia Wolf David Brock Michael Lemke Philip Wangberg Robert Moss Ronald Bockhaus Scott Beebe</p> <p>45 years Anthony Auer Barbara Linder Bonita Bock Mark Twietmeyer Nathan Doerr Richard Mayfield Susan Gamelin</p> <p>50 years Robert McNamara Donald Thurn George Tinker John Pederson</p> <p>55 years Don Fahrenbrink Duane Ferchen Ervin Hesterberg Keith Long Larry Sydow Thomas Lange</p> | <p>60 years Edward Schlachtenhaufen Harold Nilsson James Engel Jay Spoonheim Paul Gilbertson Robert Tyce Ronald Beckman</p> <p>65 years Paul Schairer Robert Vogel William Hershey</p> <p>70 years D Frederick Castor Dwight L Ellefson William L Puder</p> <p>Word and Service</p> <p>5 years Katherine Kline Ryan Cronshaw</p> <p>10 years Gail Britt</p> <p>25 years Sandra Templeton</p> <p>35 years Judith Lounsberry Beverly Johnson Mark Filbert</p> |
|---|--|--|---|