



2025-26

ANNUAL REPORT

CAMPUS MINISTRY

IN THE SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN SYNOD

All.together Community
Lord of Light Lutheran Church and Campus Ministry
Zoë Oakland



MINISTRY TO, WITH, AND FOR YOUNG ADULTS

The campus ministries of the Southeast Michigan Synod serve the campuses of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor (Lord of Light Lutheran Church and Campus Ministry); Wayne State University, the University of Michigan-Dearborn and Henry Ford College (All.together Community); and Oakland University (Zoë Oakland).

Together, these ministries represent a dedicated effort on the part of the Church to show up for young adults at the most vulnerable time in their lives, to spread the good news of Jesus Christ, and to invite these young people into authentic community and leadership in a faithful context.

If you know a college or graduate student who is anywhere in the country, you can connect them to their campus ministry by referring them through LuMin, our ELCA Lutheran Campus Ministry Network: www.luminelca.org.

Thank you for all the ways you support ministry to, for, and with young adults in this synod!

At Lord of Light Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Campus Ministry at the University of Michigan, we are **gathered** as we are, into inclusive Christian community; we are **fed** in body, mind, and spirit; and we are **sent** to love and serve the whole world.

Lord of Light Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Campus Ministry at the University of Michigan is a vibrant, student-led, intergenerational community serving the University of Michigan and the wider community. LCM at U of M was founded in 1917 by Trinity and Zion Lutheran Churches as the “Lutheran Student Club,” and the congregation was formed in 1971. Given student schedules and preferences, our weekly worship service is at 5pm on Sundays. These services are followed by a community meal, which is the most important way we build and strengthen relationships between young people on campus and our older members. Thank you so much to our 2025 congregational partners: Beautiful Savior Lutheran, Bloomfield Hills; St. Paul Lutheran, Dearborn; Zion Lutheran, Ann Arbor; Zion Lutheran, Chelsea; and Trinity Lutheran, Ann Arbor. We are so grateful for your financial support and prayer, and we are exceedingly grateful for all of the congregations and wonderful folks who provide Sunday night dinner throughout the year!

In this community, we are growing the leadership of the church. In addition to serving as student leaders, students and young adults take on leadership roles on the LoL council and the LCM board. Three of our students traveled to Phoenix to serve as voting members from the SEMI Synod at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. Our council is made up mostly of students and young adults, with a “grown-up” representative. Young people make real decisions about the direction of our community and what we will focus our ministry efforts on each year. They make decisions about worship, budget expenditures, and learn the roles of council members. Our hope is that when our students graduate, move, and come to your churches, they will be ready and eager to serve in leadership roles in the church.



In addition to weekly worship services for the whole community, we offer weekly Bible studies for undergraduates and for Gather Ann Arbor, our group for graduate students and young adults. On Wednesday nights, undergrads meet at 8pm for *Seriously, Not Literally*, a Bible study for college students that incorporates craft activities into deep wrestling with theological topics. This fall and winter, we worked our way through Genesis, and beginning in Lent, we used the devotional from “A Sanctified Art” to guide our discussion. Gather Ann Arbor meets for weekly Bible studies on Thursdays at 6pm and for monthly social gatherings, and is currently led by Curtiss Engstrom, a Ph.D. candidate in survey methodology.

Highlights from the 2025-26 school year include: A full LoL/LCM-affiliated Ragnar van, which raised well over \$14,000 for Living Water Ministries; an autumn retreat with All.together Community; a disability justice talk and conversation with Rev. Sarah Mayer-Flatt, organized by our student leaders and paid for by a grant they applied for and received; a winter anti-racism retreat at Love Rising Lutheran Church in Detroit, facilitated by Rev. Michael Johnson; an ecumenical Triduum series in partnership with the Wesley Foundation (UMC), Canterbury House (TEC), and Campus Chapel (RCA).

As we close another school year, we are continually grateful for the leadership of the Southeast Michigan synod in its support of campus ministry and ministry to, for, and with young adults, who are often overlooked in this church. The Spirit is moving in new and exciting ways, and we continue to be surprised and inspired by how God is working among us. **Thank you so much for all of the ways you support our young adults!**





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In Isaiah 43:19 the Lord says, "Behold, I am doing a new thing," and in All.together Campus Ministry, we feel that. Every semester since our start in 2021, God has led us to new people, in new places, and has shown us new ways of being the church on campus to meet the needs of our student community. One of the most exciting developments this year has been the work of discerning the possibility of a subsidized, intentional, Christ-centered residential community for our students.

This idea has been kicking around for some time, but this past November, we were invited to partake in a peer visit to the University Episcopal Community in Minneapolis where we explored their 417 House. Pastor Ben, Board President Rev. Halim Shukair, and Wayne State student Ezra Simon flew out for the visit and came back excited and in unanimous agreement that we should continue pursuing the idea of establishing a house for our students. After we got back, we posed the idea to St. Paul Lutheran Church in Dearborn to consider using their vacant parsonage for student housing and they are excited about this possibility. Next steps will involve bringing some St. Paul council members together with some All.together board members and we will see where things might lead, so stay tuned to see what God will do with this idea!





But, even as God is doing new things, we continued with established rhythms of weekly on-campus community groups and dinner and worship on the first Sunday of every month, but this year we began hosting dinner and worship at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, a new but familiar and inspiring space. We have also continued traditions that have been established in just a short five years. Some of those traditions include our annual trip to Hell, MI, our fall retreat with our friends from the Lutheran campus ministry at UofM Ann Arbor, our free homecoming foodtruck event with Fed Up Ministries, our White Elephant Holiday Party at Pastor Ben's house, our midwinter retreat in Chicago with Province V of the Episcopal church, and our end of the year trip which this year is bringing 26 people to Puerto Rico for an Island Immersion in May (by the time we meet a Synod Assembly we will have taken this trip, so ask us about it!).

For all of the new things God is doing through our community, and for all the traditions we are keeping alive, none of it would exist without the Southeast Michigan Synod, so thank you. We are so grateful for the Synod's support that allows us to meet new students, take them to new places, and discover together the new ways that God is calling us to be the church on campus.



Zoë Oakland exists to create connection, make a difference, and learn from Jesus. This year, that mission took shape in Monday meals, service projects, discipleship conversations, and a growing network of congregations committed to investing in the next generation of the church.

The centerpiece of the ministry has been the “Make it Through Monday” Meals—free weekly dinners hosted at Oakland University during the school year. What began as a simple act of hospitality grew into something much more: a gathering place where 70 unique students showed up over the course of the year, where service projects took shape around the table, and where spiritual questions were taken seriously. In November, an “Ask Me Anything” evening drew 19 students who engaged deeply with questions about sin, suffering, and what it means to follow Jesus faithfully.

Beyond the meals, Zoë Oakland served. Students tied fleece blankets for refugee families through Samaritas, packaged 60 hygiene kits for HOPE Warming Shelter, decorated cookies for healthcare workers at Pomeroy, and served meals at Micah 6 Community in Pontiac. Zoë Oakland’s Monday Meal program was recognized by Oakland University’s Office of Student Involvement as the Outstanding Community Service Program of the Year—a remarkable acknowledgment for a ministry still in its early years.





None of this happened in isolation. Zoë Oakland is, at its core, a shared experiment—and our partner congregations have been essential to everything we have accomplished. King of Kings Lutheran Church in Lake Orion collected over 250 cans of soup for the OU Golden Grizzly Pantry. Abiding Presence Lutheran Church in Rochester Hills donated hygiene items, assembled 50 exam care packages through their high school students, and hosted our inaugural Luau Benefit, which drew 78 guests from six ELCA congregations and raised just over \$5,000 for the ministry. Beautiful Savior (Bloomfield Hills), Calvary (Clarkston), and King of Kings (Shelby Township) all supported the ministry financially.

With 70 unique students engaged this year and a growing presence at Oakland University, the relational foundation is being laid. The students are asking real questions. The infrastructure—meals, service projects, discipleship pathways, community partnerships—is in place.

It is also important to acknowledge a significant leadership transition. Pastor Eric and Laura Johnson, who have poured themselves into Zoë Oakland alongside their ministry at King of Kings Lutheran Church, are stepping down as Pastor Eric answers a new pastoral call. Zoë Oakland was, in many ways, a tremendous experiment in what becomes possible when there is a shared vision for reaching people who are new to faith, young in years, and diverse in background.

Zoë Oakland has been a manifestation of the ELCA's commitment to reach new, young, and diverse people. The table is still set, and there are students at Oakland University who are hungry—for food, yes, but also for community, for purpose, and for the abundant life Jesus promised.

Thanks be to God for what has been. And thanks be to God for what is still to come.

