



Licensed Lay Ministry Report to the 2026 Synod Assembly

“He himself granted that some are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 20:11-12)

The Licensed Lay Academy & Ministry program provides an awesome opportunity for lay leaders who feel a call to pursue more intentional study and service to the Southeast Michigan Synod. The gifts of Academy participants, current LLMs and our Academy instructors continue to be a great blessing for the program.

Under the bishop’s leadership, this ministry is guided by an Advisory Board that includes Pr. Matthew Bode, LLM Wayne Butts, LLM Dale Eckart/Administrator, Pr. Sara Freudenberg, and LLM Robin McCants/Director. In 2025 we thanked LLM Jane Alder for her service and welcomed LLM Valinda Vincent to the Advisory Board.

The year in review:

- **Synod Council has incorporated a Continuing Resolution (S8.12.A25 -E25) and details the role of Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs) and the role of Synodical Authorized Ministers (SAMs).**
- One participant continues an internship
- Two participants have completed Academy requirements and are preparing for internships
- Three participants are in various stages of their Academy requirements
- Several new instructors have been recruited:
 - Rev. Dr. Denise Rector (TLS @ Capital Univ) - Issues in Lutheran Ethics & Discipleship
 - Rev. Joel Brandt – Introduction not the Old Testament
 - Rev. Albert LeBlanc – Proclaiming the Gospel / Preaching
 - Rev. Beth Birkholz – Systemic Theology
- We have 19 LLMs on the 2025-2026 roster and celebrate them as they continue to seek God’s direction in faith and service. They serve their own congregations, are available for pulpit supply and/or provide support to various ELCA and Synod committees, task forces, etc.
- There are 9 SAMs currently serving as pastoral presence in a congregation.
- Our 2025 Fall Retreat featured Living Red, led by Pastor Vicky Lovell and Reike Master Danielle Groth, who introduced our ministers to deeper thinking, breathing practices and understanding themselves better to assist the larger community.

The remaining courses for 2026 are:

- Christian Discipleship, April 18 – May 23 (Dr. Denise Grant, Trinity Lutheran Seminary)
- Annual Interviews – June 20
- Introduction to the New Testament, Fall, 2026
- Annual Retreat – Fall 2026

Respectfully submitted,

Robin McCants, LLM, Director r.mccants@semisynod.com

Dale Eckart, LLM, Administrator, deckart1@gmail.com

2025 Licensed Lay Minister – Roster *



Name	Home Congregation	Email
1. Alder, Jane	Celebration/Westland	alderjane1@gmail.com
2. Archer, Paul	Hope/Dearborn	pgarcher@umich.edu
3. Amstutz, Rachelle	St. Mark/Roseville	rachelle.amstutz@yahoo.com
4. Barents, Herb	Fellowship/Sterling Heights	herbbarents@gmail.com
5. Bluhm, Ken**	Spirit of Christ/Clawson	bluhmken@gmail.com
6. Brooks, Joyce	Gracious Saviour/Detroit	joycebrooks6032@gmail.com
7. Butts, Wayne	Christ/Monroe	rwbutts@chartermi.net
8. Campbell, Jan	Bethel/St. Clair Shores	jlcamp@gmail.com
9. Cebelak, Gail	Holy Cross/Livonia	gcebelak@gmail.com
10. Cook, Judy	Emmanuel/Livonia	jcook48152@gmail.com
11. Davis, Wesley	Abiding Presence/Rochester Hills	wesdavis291@comcast.net
12. Eckart, Dale	Zion/Chelsea	deckart1@gmail.com
13. Evalt, George	Celebration/Westland	evalthaus@comcast.net
14. Fisher, Pete	Amazing Grace/Warren	petefisher513@gmail.com
15. Fogt, Ben	Unity / Southgate	benfugt@gmail.com
16. McCants, Robin	Genesis/Detroit	r.mccants@semisynod.com
17. Pike, Scott	Our Saviour/Port Huron	smav1281@gmail.com
18. Ritter, Christine	St. Peter/St. Clair	critter2009@ymail.com
19. Vincent, Valinda	Grace In Action/Detroit	valindavincent@comcast.net

** completing internship

(SAMs) Synodically Authorized Ministers and Congregations Served:

1. Brannon, Robert	Bethlehem/Harrison Twp. & Triumphant Cross/SCS	brannon.robert43@gmail.com
2. Corliss, David	Trinity/Riga	davidjcorliss@gmail.com
3. Denomme, Sharon	Bethany, Roseville	sldenomme@yahoo.com
4. Hudson, David	Trinity/Brown City	BGJ8184@comcast.net
5. Ireland-Black, Rose	St. Peter/New Haven	riblack@comcast.net
6. Maxwell, Cathy	Good Shepherd/Monroe	max_cat_63@hotmail.com
7. Puhl, James (Jim)	St. Paul/Maybee	cesspuhl@outlook.com
8. Strong, Doshia	Gracious Saviour/Detroit	doshiastrong@gmail.com
9. Udell, Geraldine	St. Peter/Warren	geraldineudell@att.net

LLM Advisory Board:

Rev. Matthew Bode	Zion/Ferndale	mdbode76@gmail.com
Rev. Sara Freudenberg	Emmanuel/Livonia	pastorsara@emmanuel-livonia.org
LLM Wayne Butts		
LLM Valinda Vincent		
LLM Dale Eckart, Admin		
LLM Robin McCants, Director		