

SYNOD ASSEMBLY 2026 - WORKSHOPS

1:30 PM Schedule

Giving the Gift: Sharing Christ's Story: Presenter, CJ Clark, DEM

We share stories about all sorts of things in our lives. We tell people about our favorite books, our favorite TV shows, our favorite restaurants, our political and social ideologies, and more. Yet, for some reason we hold back when it comes to sharing the gift of Christ's story and the way that story is experienced in the life of local, regional, national, and global faith communities. This workshop will help stretch our evangelism muscles as we reflect on Christ's story alongside other stories we cherish so that we might share the gift of the gospel with a world in desperate need of receiving it.

Re-Creation: Rediscovering Your Congregation's Why: Presenter Pr. Elizabeth Friedman

Especially in these post-pandemic days, many congregations are mourning what was and still waiting for what will be. In this workshop, we'll be considering congregational purpose and ways to help congregations take their next most faithful steps forward in ministry.

Immigration & Advocacy: Presenter Jessica Beamer & Team

This faith-centered interactive presentation on pro-immigration advocacy explores meaningful ways to take action, deepen understanding, and promote compassionate change through education, engagement, and community relationships. Come be part of a dialogue rooted in faith, justice, and hope.

Entry Points for Leadership: Presenters Pr. Matthew Bode, LLM Dale Eckart & Pr. Jen Kiefer

Lead? Who? Me? Licensed Lay Ministers, Word and Service and Word and Sacrament are just some of the ways lay folk may find their way into ministry leadership. What is the difference between these three levels of service to God and to the church? Let's explore these opportunities in a discussion that may lead you to a different level of hearing God's call.

Turning Nothing into Something: Micah 6: Presenter Coleman Yoakum

What does it take to grow a ministry from nothing into something that powerfully reflects Christ's story? In this workshop, Coleman Yoakum shares the story of Micah 6 - a Christian non-profit community in Pontiac, MI that emerged from humble beginnings into a vibrant, impactful presence that just completed a \$30+ million renovation of a new community center (The Webster Center). With honesty about the complexity, uncertainty, and challenge of starting something new, Coleman also points to a deeper simplicity at the heart of it all: listening well, showing up, and being present in the lives of people. This is a conversation for anyone curious about new ministry, not as a formula to follow, but as an invitation to pay attention, build relationships, and trust where the Spirit is leading.

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Long Bridging: Presenters, Pr. Sara Freudenberg & Pr. Alysa Offman

We live in a polarized world, and the prevalence of an us-versus-them mentality is leading to the continued breakdown of our shared culture and future. Over the last two years, Livonia area congregations have been working with MOSES and The Institute of Othering and Belonging to create a pilot program with the goal of helping people find common ground while having difficult conversations about polarizing topics. This style of conversation is called Long Bridging. Long bridging isn't about changing people's minds or getting them to adhere to any kind of political or theological belief system. Instead, this style of conversation helps us learn more about each other and see our common goals and humanity. We utilize curiosity, empathy, and storytelling to build long bridges across polarizing issues. The skills we will practice are vitally important as we work to create a more united and less divided culture both at church and in the world.

Stewardship as Celebration, Abundance, and Invitation: Presenter, Pr. Paul Walters

A hopeful, practical workshop that reframes stewardship as celebrating God's abundance and responding to God's invitation into shared ministry. Participants will gain language, stories, and tools to help their congregations move from scarcity and obligation toward gratitude, generosity, and joyful participation in God's mission.

3:30 pm Schedule

New Shape of Church: Panel led by Pr. Katie Butler and Pr. Branden Hunt. Panelists: Pastors Anna Taylor McCants, Vicky Lovell, Ben Adams, Halim Shukair, John Cummings

"The New Shape of Church" explores how emerging ministries are reimagining what it means to be church in today's world. Through stories from mission developers serving in diverse and often unconventional contexts, this panel will highlight both the challenges and the Spirit-led opportunities of new expressions of ministry. Come listen, learn, and imagine what might be possible in your own setting.

Starting a Ministry with and for People with Disabilities: Presenter Ken Bluhm, LLM

In the US, about 56.7 million people — 19 percent of the population, or 1 in 5 people, have a disability. An inclusive church intentionally welcomes and disciples children, teens, and adults impacted by disability, mental health, and trauma, ensuring they have full access to worship, community, and spiritual growth. Let's explore this together.

Community Building/Community Organizing: Presenters Pr. Jen Kiefer & Pr. Michael Johnson

Every community of faith has various levels of engagement. this workshop will cover how community organizing skills can be used to invite folk into deeper relationships with God and with their community.

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3:30 PM Schedule (cont'd)

Use Your Facility to Expand Your Mission: Presenter Pr. Mark Fisher

The campus of St. John Lutheran Church in Farmington Hills is home to a K-12 school, an Asian-Indian congregation, and a group home for adults with special needs. With each partnership comes a sense of shared sense of mission and purpose. Come to this workshop to learn more about how to leverage for your church facility for greater impact, including a workbook that has been prepared for organizations and congregations who would like to explore similar possibilities. This workshop will include short talks and a Q&A format.

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