

Walking Together

Church Without Walls

March 21, 2025

Bethany Lutheran Church

Rice Lake, WI



Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Schedule

8:00 Registration & Fellowship

Narthex

9:00 Opening Welcome & Keynote

Sanctuary

10:00 Workshop 1

See Workshop Grid

11:00 Workshop 2

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Workshop 3

2:00 Workshop 4

3:00 Workshop 5

4:00 Departure

Thank You!

We are grateful for all the people who made this event possible:

Bethany Lutheran Church Staff for the facility use and assistance before, during, and after the event.

Workshop Presenters for their time, wisdom, and important conversations.

Participants who attended today.

Adventures Restaurant for catering our midday meal.

Synod Information

Synod Office



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Synod Staff

Rev. Martin Halom

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Rev. Randy Olson

Synod Minister - Leadership,
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Rev. Diane House

Director for Evangelical Mission

Deacon Laura Ramlow

Synod Minister - Faith Formation,
Communication, Malawi

Deacon Lidixe Montoya

Mission Developer - Neighbor to
Neighbor Ministry;

Welcome!

Greetings and thank you for joining us for this year's Walking Together Event. The theme this year is "A Church Without Walls." At the beginning of the witness of scripture in Exodus 3: 9-12 we hear our God declare this, *"the cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites out of Egypt."* But Moses said to God, *"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"* God said, *"I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain."*

Later in the witness of scripture in John chapter 4 we hear the story of Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman at a well. Even though the Israelites and the Samaritans disagreed about which "mountain" the people were to worship God on, and Jesus and he woman could have had an argument over where, when, and how God is worshipped and glorified, that was not the content of their conversation. Instead, Jesus enters into a friendly relationship with this woman eventually revealing himself to her as the Messiah! The Samaritan woman grows in her understanding of Jesus in this outside space and even though she is not completely sure that Jesus is the Christ, she does not let that stop her from being a witness to her community.

In John 4: 39-42 we hear the reaction to that witness: *Many Samaritans from that city believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."*

It is my hope that throughout the day we can grow in our understanding of Jesus and consider his call to follow wherever Jesus and the Holy Spirit lead. Whether that is out and into overlooked places in our communities, or into gatherings of people we never thought we would encounter, or into spaces we never thought we would enter, we are all called to cross boundaries and build bridges so that we can live in loving relationship with God and with our neighbors.

Together in faithfulness,

Rev. Diane House

Director for Evangelical Mission

Workshop Options

Time	Workshop Title	Workshop Leader	Location
10:00	Building Bridges	Holly Hassemer	Sanctuary
10:00	"My Two Elaines" Dementia Awareness	Former Governor Martin Schreiber	Gathering Room
10:00	Symbols of Faith and the Stories They Tell	Rev. Melinda Halom	Room 108
11:00	Neighbor to Neighbor	Deacon Lidixe Montoya	Sanctuary
11:00	The Art of Neighboring	Rev. Michael and Trisha Houle	Gathering Room
11:00	Organizing the Organized	Lyn Buske	Room 108
1:00	The Justice Seeker	Mary Trettin, Eve Erickson, Karen Novecheck	Sanctuary
1:00	Church of the Wild	Rev. Christine Emerson	Gathering Room
1:00	Walking the Migrant Journey	Michelle Pride	Room 108

Workshop Options

Time	Workshop Title	Workshop Leader	Location
2:00	Building Cross-Cultural Relationships	Mercedes Falk & John Rosenow	Sanctuary
2:00	Walking With Other Communities	Dale Kringle & Pilgrim Baptist Church	Gathering Room
2:00	Composting: Is it a Resurrection?	Magge Ericson	Room 108
3:00	Hobby Church	Brian Willkom	Sanctuary
3:00	The Silence of Sheep	Bishop Martin Halom	Gathering Room
3:00	The CaSTLE Project	Rev. Randy Olson & Bob Giese	Room 108

My Workshop Choices

10:00	
11:00	
1:00	
2:00	
3:00	

Workshop Descriptions

Building Bridges: Effective Communication Across Language & Cultural Differences

Equip your team with practical tools to communicate clearly and respectfully with multilingual employees and community members. This interactive workshop explores common cultural differences, best practices for cross-cultural communication, and practical strategies to create a more connected environment. Participants will learn how to use Google Translate, design clear and meaningful signage, and better understand the impact of culture shock and stress on multilingual individuals.

Participants will leave with actionable practices they can implement immediately to improve communication, build trust, and support a more welcoming community.

“My Two Elaines” – Dementia Awareness

Former Wisconsin Gov. Martin J. Schreiber is an award-winning crusader for Alzheimer’s caregivers and persons with dementia. Reaching audiences nationwide at live events and through various forms of media, Marty uses humor and compassion as he shares lessons from his nearly twenty-year journey as caregiver. Marty’s book, *My Two Elaines: Learning, Coping, and Surviving as an Alzheimer’s Caregiver*, has won acclaim from caregivers across the country.

Prior to writing *My Two Elaines* – and while still caring for his wife at home – Marty helped the Alzheimer’s Association launch Operation: Stronger Together in 2015. This multi-year awareness program has helped the Southeastern Wisconsin Chapter connect record numbers of families to education and resources that are vital to successful caregiving. He also collaborated with Wisconsin state government and various business groups to help create the online Dementia-Friendly Employers Toolkit, which is now used by human resources departments and employee assistance programs. These initiatives have led to Marty being recognized with awards from the Alzheimer’s Association and other organizations.

Symbols of Faith and the Stories They Tell

What do our Christian symbols communicate to those within faith communities, and to our neighbors? Do they proclaim the Gospel? What barriers might they unintentionally create? Let’s gather and look, laugh, and learn about the symbols we use!

Neighbor to Neighbor – Spanish 101

“Let’s learn together the very basics of Spanish. Focusing on vowels and some consonant sounds, we will do some poetry and children stories reading.”

The Art of Neighboring: Reaching Your Community with the Love of Jesus

What does it really look like to love your neighbor? Join us for The Art of Neighboring, a hands-on workshop exploring how we, as Valley Vineyard Church in Chippewa Falls, intentionally reach and serve our community. We’ll share the heart behind our local outreaches and highlight meaningful moments, like our community food distributions, school supply drives, neighborhood events, holiday outreaches, and prayer initiatives that have blessed families across Chippewa Falls. This workshop will help you discover practical ways to live on mission right where God has placed you, so that together we can continue to be a church that loves boldly, serves joyfully, and reflects Jesus throughout your city.

Workshop Descriptions

Organizing the Organized: Modeling the Larger Community After Congregational Communities

Joining our Neighbors, Advancing Hope, or JONAH, works in building community and empowering individuals to address root causes of poverty and injustice. Why does JONAH work with churches? What can larger communities learn from how congregational communities are modeled? How can grassroots organizing tools both help engage communities with faith values and enable your congregation to do good work to uphold your faith values?

The Justice Seeker Ministry: We Are Better Together

The Justice Seeker Ministry is a six ELCA church ministry in northern Wisconsin. Please join us to hear about how we grew our Justice Seeker ministry from one church to six in order to learn, grow, and support one another in seeking ways to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God.

Church of the Wild

Springing from the tradition of Spiritual Direction, Church of the Wild is a gathering of people who desire a deeper relationship in connecting with the natural world as a sacred expression. Wild Church is a “theology of place”, of rewinding our spiritual lives away from seeing nature as “other”. Wild Church gatherings offer opportunities to invite people into intimate relationships with some of the most vulnerable victims of our destructive culture: the land, waters, and creatures with whom we share our homes. It includes holy wandering, mindfulness and wondering in nature, grief and praise, advocacy, and ecological restoration on behalf of all that God created. It is not simply conducting a worship service outdoors but rather recognizing that we worship alongside a full creation claimed as good by the One who created it, a creation that not only has value as God sees it, but as kin alongside us. Come join us to hear about this movement called Church of the Wild and also to find out more information on the Wild Spirituality Retreat coming in July at the Christine Center. “I don’t agree that church or nature exist to meet our spiritual demands. It’s just so...entitled. There must be a way, I thought, to challenge this false competition – Some practice to help us re-place our spirituality into deep relationship with the rest of the world.”– Victoria Looz – from the book Church of the Wild

Walking the Migrant Journey

No need to pack a bag! The Migrant Journey is a hands-on learning experience developed by AMMPARO, a ministry of the ELCA, where participants step into the roles of real migrants traveling through the Americas. Through storytelling and guided role-play, we’ll explore not only the challenges of migration, but also the resilience, courage, and determination that drive individuals and families to seek safety and live with dignity.

Building Cross-Cultural Relationships

Director of Puentes Mercedes Falk and Co-Founder John Rosenow will discuss what they’ve done to build relationships with newcomers to their agricultural community over the past couple decades. This workshop will identify how cultural differences can be a strength and not a barrier and delve into ways to build trust and increase cultural understanding.

Workshop Descriptions

Composting: Is it a Resurrection?

John 6:12, Jesus says, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted," Jesus is referring to stewardship of resources. What is our relationship with our God, the creation and human being.

In this workshop there will be a review of the history of composting. Learn the circle of composting and replenishing God's creation to be healthy. Learn how much waste Americans send to dumps. Where do we start with our congregations? Learning what compostable and sustainable products are available. What resources are there to take your compostables or have picked up. You will have time to share who is using compostables and composting

Hobby Church

Pickleball? Fishing? Reading? Yoga? Hiking? Board Games? Everyone has a hobby. What if your hobby is where God is calling you? What if the solution to declining church attendance isn't something new - What if it's something you love? What if the future is less churchy and more human? Join Fresh Expressions pioneer, Bryan Willkom as he walks you through a simple framework to start an approachable spiritual community using your hobby.

Silence of the Sheep: When Communication Gaps Exist Between Laity and Leadership

Are your church leaders a part of a triangulated system? Does your church have a culture of unresolved conflict? Let's learn how to improve patterns of communication for the benefit of your collective mission! When a church can move its energy from conflict to healthy communication, then its mission ultimately benefits!

The CaSTLE Project

With a \$50,000 grant from Wartburg Seminary our synod has embarked upon an initiative to work with country and small town congregations. The focus is to further an understanding and practice of the ministry of the laity. As congregations grow smaller and fewer pastors are available to serve in these settings Synodical Authorized Ministers step forward to lead. Their role has opened a renewed understanding of vocation and what it means to be both the gathered and sent people of God. Nine rostered leaders have been trained and are serving as mentors to our SAMs as a way to instantiate this lived ecclesiology. The workshop will provide the theological framework for the project and speak to the growing role of our SAMs in the renewal of our church.

Special Guests

Natalia Terra

Natalia is a Lutheran pastor, podcaster, and author who lives in Minneapolis with her her loves, Sam and Layla, and kitty babies. When she's not working or writing, you'll find her reading in her couch nest, ideally with a cat on her lap, watching Turkish television, taking walks in the neighborhood, looking at trees, or making good food for the people she loves.

Former Governor Martin J. Schreiber

Former Wisconsin Gov. Martin J. Schreiber is an award-winning crusader for Alzheimer's caregivers and persons with dementia. Reaching audiences nationwide at live events and through various forms of media, Marty uses humor and compassion as he shares lessons from his nearly twenty-year journey as caregiver.

His speaking tour takes him to conferences, civic organizations, senior communities, libraries and more around the country. He has given more than 800 presentations since launching his awareness campaign in late 2016. Whether in Texas, Idaho, New York, Missouri, Florida, Ohio, Michigan, Maryland, Mississippi or closer to home, caregivers tell Marty that his message gives them encouragement and hope that they can manage their challenging situation.

Marty's book, *My Two Elaines: Learning, Coping, and Surviving as an Alzheimer's Caregiver*, has won acclaim from caregivers across the country. It was rated as the No. 11 "Best Alzheimer's Book of All Time" by bookauthority.org, and was named to Caring.com's list of "Best Caregiving Books" of both 2017 and 2018. Now in its fifth print edition, *My Two Elaines* also has been released as an e-book, an audiobook and on CD. Net proceeds are used to promote Alzheimer's caregiver support.

Prior to writing *My Two Elaines* – and while still caring for his wife at home – Marty helped the Alzheimer's Association launch Operation: Stronger Together in 2015. This multi-year awareness program has helped the Southeastern Wisconsin Chapter connect record numbers of families to education and resources that are vital to successful caregiving. He also collaborated with Wisconsin state government and various business groups to help create the online Dementia-Friendly Employers Toolkit, which is now used by human resources departments and employee assistance programs. These initiatives have led to Marty being recognized with awards from the Alzheimer's Association and other organizations.

Marty's work on behalf of older citizens goes back decades to his 16 years in public service as a state senator, lieutenant governor and governor focusing on elderly concerns, improved quality of nursing home care, and development of the in-home Community Care Organization. He went on to become a successful insurance executive and publisher before starting his own government relations firm in 1988.

He attended Valparaiso University in Indiana and the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, and earned a doctorate of law from Marquette University in Milwaukee.

Marty and his wife Elaine, who died in 2022, are the parents of four children, Kathryn Lyon, Martin Schreiber, Kristine Haas and Matt Schreiber. They have thirteen grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren.

Upcoming Events!

Palm Sunday Path

March 29, 2025 + 3:00 - 4:00 pm + Trinity Lutheran Church, Eau Claire
<https://nswi.org/event/yqqc28s/palm-sunday-path>

Let's Learn Spanish - 102

April 9-10 + Trinity Lutheran Church, Eau Claire
<https://nswi.org/event/j77fhqx/let-s-learn-spanish-102>

Lighthouse: Middle School Youth Gathering

April 11 + Bethany Lutheran Church, Rice Lake
<https://nswi.org/synod-youth-board>

Let's Learn Spanish 101 for Rostered Leaders and SAMs

April 13-14 + Trinity Lutheran Church, Eau Claire
<https://nswi.org/event/tdrpf8x/let-s-learn-spanish-for-rostered-leaders-and-synod-authorized-ministers>

EcoFaith Summit

April 18, 2025 + Duluth, MN & Online
<https://www.ecofaithnetwork.org/ecofaith-summit-2026>

Pre-Assembly Forums

April 12, 14 & 16 + Via Zoom
<https://nswi.org/2026-synod-assembly>

Synod Assembly 2026

April 25, 2023 + Bethany Lutheran Church, Rice Lake
<https://nswi.org/2026-synod-assembly>

Dish With the Bish

May 3, 2026 + St. Paul's - Medford
<https://nswi.org/event/g4vzccd/dish-with-the-bish>

Daylily Dig for Malawi

July 23-25, 2026
Kaufmann Farm - Chippewa Falls



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