

WE ARE CHURCH TOGETHER

2024



MARCH 2024 Mission Support Memo

STORYTELLING ENGAGEMENT

Experiments in Ministry

A story from the Central States Synod

As you read this story, what connects with you?

What experiments are occurring in your synod and congregation?

How often have you heard folks in congregations lament that they just don't have the resources or learning opportunities they need to be strong leaders and vital congregations? The [Central States Synod](#) wondered how it could help address those needs and make access easy. That led to the beginning of the [Ministry Lab](#). The synod envisions the lab as a place to ask questions, learn, work with different "tools" or resources, and experiment to see what works. A lab is not just a depository for resources; it's an active place where one can gather and engage with others.

When visiting congregations, attending conferences or meeting partners, staff and leaders in the Central States Synod diligently listen to folks to identify common needs and areas of growth so that they can equip and support ministry. The goal of the Ministry Lab is to provide *"resources and tools so that we may live out God's purpose, united with Christ, as we walk the way of Jesus."*



The lab has three areas of focus: *good order*, meaning leadership, policies, building use, stewardship and meeting protocol; *means of grace*, including biblical interpretation, worship, communication and welcoming; and *living faith*, such as community engagement, social statements, collaboration and technology. Since the Ministry Lab began in fall 2023, it has offered opportunities focused on Scripture interpretation, ideas for worship and preaching during Advent, and leadership development. People learn through active engagement, not passive observation, so the Learning Lab is always lively. Some opportunities are "one and done" whereas others consist of multiple sessions.

Moving forward, the Ministry Lab is excited to offer an open conversation with the Rev. Susan Candea, bishop of the Central States Synod, about the upcoming ELCA social statement *Civic Life and Faith*, a Collaboration Lab in May and a Communications Lab in the fall. Anyone anywhere can check out and learn from the Central States Synod Ministry Lab. [See what's available now!](#)

Remember that a portion of offerings given to Central States congregations becomes Mission Support for the synod and allows staff and leaders to address congregations' needs and interests through the Ministry Lab, today and into the future.

ENGAGE WITH US

Cultivating Generous Congregations: Spring Cohort

How do we, as communities of faith, change our thinking on stewardship and generosity to meet the challenges of the moment? In partnership with the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, the ELCA is offering congregations the opportunity to reexamine their stewardship thinking and to imagine new ways of acting on their findings in their communities. The six-week webinar **“Cultivating Generous Congregations”** will offer virtual cohort sessions where congregational leaders can discuss, dissect and collaborate on how generosity might work in their contexts. The webinar costs \$550 per congregation, plus workbooks (\$40 each). For a deeper look at what the webinar entails, watch this brief [“Cultivating Generous Congregations” video](#).

Please contact the Rev. Larry Strenge (Larry.Strenge@elca.org) and the Rev. Tim Brown (Tim.Brown@elca.org) if you're interested in participating! They will work with your synod to get you registered for the spring cohort.

Mark Your Calendar:

“Cultivating Generous Congregations”

Tuesdays, April 16–May 21, 5-6:30 p.m. Central time

GRATEFUL

We want to share our gratitude for all the congregations that have submitted their Annual Congregation Report plus their Mission Support Intent forms. In our interdependence, these documents offer our church valuable data that enables synods and the churchwide organization to identify trends, maintain ministry, support staff work, and consider future funding needs and opportunities. Sometimes we may wonder if anyone pays attention to the data, but please know that it's essential in planning ministry. Thank you for your time and effort in collecting and reporting it.

With deep gratitude,

Victoria Flood, Senior Director for Congregation and Synod Support

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