

SPIRIT, OPEN OUR HEARTS



Southeastern Iowa
— SYNOD —
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

2025 Annual Report

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Spirit, Open My Heart

REFRAIN

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving.
Spirit, open my heart.

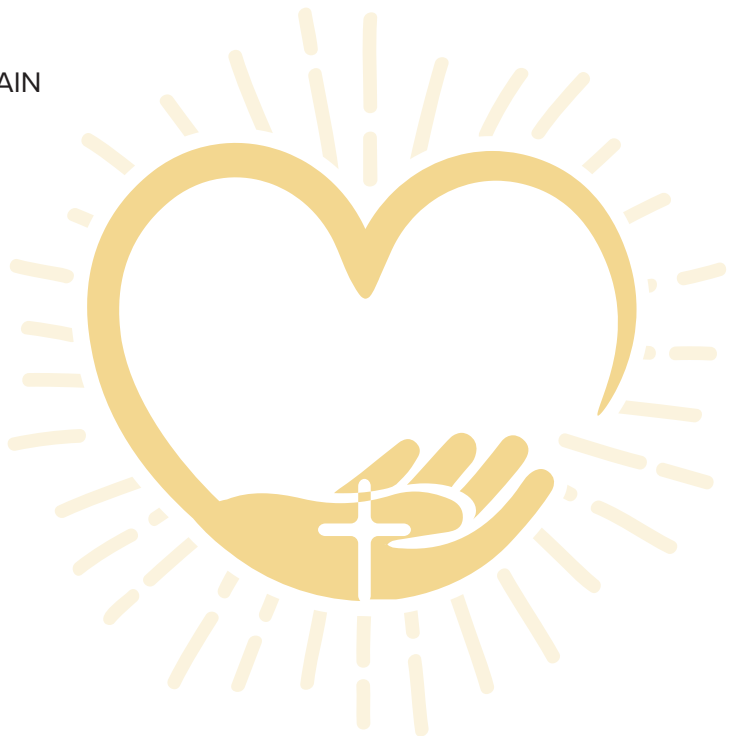
1 God, replace my stony heart
with a heart that's kind and tender.
All my coldness and fear
to your grace I now surrender. REFRAIN

2 Write your love upon my heart
as my law, my goal, my story.
In each thought, word, and deed,
may my living bring you glory. REFRAIN

3 May I weep with those who weep;
share the joy of friend and neighbor.
As I live from day to day,
love will be my finest labor. REFRAIN

Text: Ruth Duck, b. 1947

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Synod Staff



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Bishop of the Southeastern
Iowa Synod



Rev. Dan Kuckuck
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Evoke Experts
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Synod Council

Bishop Amy Current

Keith Jones
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Rev. Ronald Myers

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Rev. Joel Nau

Alan Fabel

Rev. Marsha Smith

Sue Stamm

Richard Tiegs

Bishop's Message

On behalf of the Southeastern Iowa Synod, thank you!

I am deeply grateful to all our congregations, pastors, deacons, lay leaders, and ministry partners for the countless ways you continue to share the Good News of God through Jesus Christ: in worship, in service, in your communities, and across the globe. Every gift of time, prayer, leadership, and financial support is a tangible witness to God's grace at work among us. Lives are changed because of your generosity, and I give thanks to God for you.

Each year at the Synod Assembly, we adopt a spending plan for the mission support generously shared by our congregations. The 2025 Annual Report shares how those gifts are being faithfully stewarded by supporting ministries throughout Southeastern Iowa, across the ELCA, and around the world. It also highlights the unique ways congregations are living out their own gifts, including initiatives not directly funded by mission support, such as starting a Neighborhood Food Fridge or creating space for a high school youth choir. These stories reflect the creativity and generosity happening throughout our synod alongside the ministries sustained by mission support dollars.

This year, our theme is **Spirit, Open Our Hearts**. It is both a prayer and a posture of faith. We are asking the Spirit to open us up to where Jesus is leading: to one another, and to the needs of the world. As we live into this theme, we are also praying:

Spirit, Open Us to Your Call – to hear and respond when God nudges us into new directions of service and witness.

Spirit, Open Us to Your Word – to be rooted in Scripture, nourished by the promises of God, and guided by Christ's teaching.

Spirit, Open Us to Your Presence – to recognize God's nearness in worship, in our neighbors, and even in unexpected places.

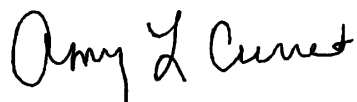
Spirit, Open Us to Your Love – to receive and to share the boundless love of God that transforms and heals.

As you reflect on these stories from across our synod, I invite you to consider how your mission support sustains our shared work when your congregation or ministry setting prepares its budget for 2026. The offerings you gather in your local setting are vital to the church's ministry. When a portion of those offerings is shared with the synod, that vitality grows. Your gifts multiply the ministry, extending generosity, hope, and witness far beyond what any one of us could go alone.

You are part of these stories. You are shaping these lives. Together in Jesus Christ, by God's grace, we are stewarding the community of faithful, loving, and thriving ministry that is the church today and the church for the future.

Thank you for the gift of serving together in this calling. It is an honor and a joy to witness the Spirit moving among us, opening hearts and lives to God's abundant love.

Peace,



Bishop Amy Current

Mission Support

Mission support is how we share in God's work together. More than financial giving, it is a tangible expression of our shared calling as the body of Christ. By increasing your congregation's mission support, you amplify the impact of ministry in your congregation, across the Southeastern Iowa Synod, throughout the ELCA, and beyond. This faithful and strategic commitment not only grows generosity, faith, and mission, but also strengthens congregations, equips leaders, builds partnerships, and proclaims the gospel more boldly—together, for the sake of the world God so loves. **Here's why increasing mission support matters more than ever:**

Support Ministry Partners

WITNESS & PARTNERSHIPS

Your mission support extends our gospel witness through partnerships with organizations that serve in Christ's name both locally and globally. From seminaries to anti-hunger to racial justice and more, these impactful ministries serve people in need and build compassionate communities in Christ's name.

Strengthen Congregations

CONGREGATION VITALITY

No congregation is alone. Mission support connects your church to a larger network of believers working together to build vibrant and faithful communities. Congregational Vitality supports new ministries, equips congregations with resources and coaching, strengthens faith formation, and provides practical training for healthy, thriving ministry.

Invest in Congregation Leaders

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Mission support helps to raise up faithful, healthy, and well-equipped leaders who can adapt to an ever-changing world through coaching, scholarships, training, resources, and support.

Fund the Synod Office

ADMINISTRATION

Your gift of mission support makes the work of the Synod possible. While only 6% of these funds are allocated to administration and general expenses, this portion is essential to providing the foundation that allows every other ministry and mission to thrive.

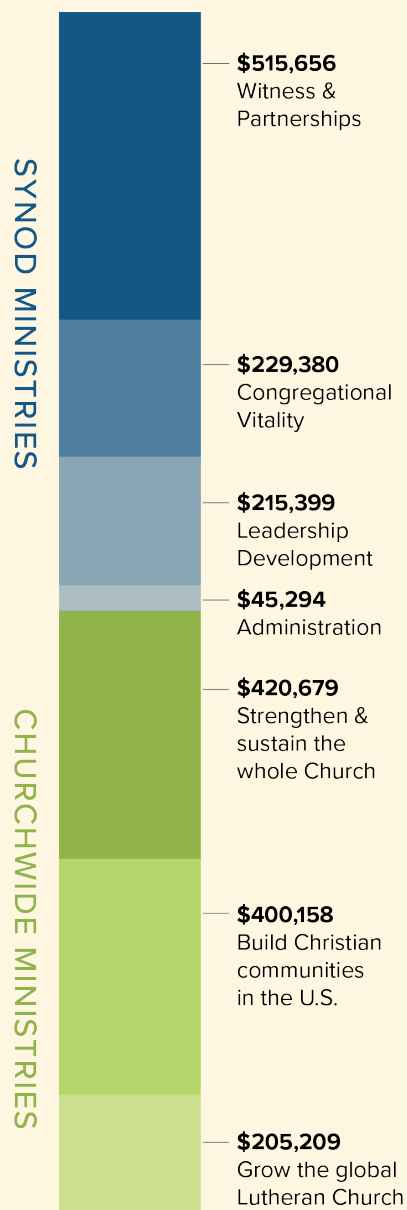
Fuel Global and Churchwide Ministry

ELCA CHURCHWIDE MINISTRIES

Mission support is a faithful expression of unity in the ELCA. Over half of the mission support received by the synod goes to Churchwide ministries that strengthen and sustain the whole Church, build Christian communities in the U.S., and grow the global Lutheran Church.

Distribution of 2025 Synod Mission Support Funds

Budgeted Mission Support—
\$2,031,775



Spirit, Open to Your Call

An openness and readiness to listen for and respond to God's guidance, invitation, and direction in one's life and ministry.



Pastor Katie Jensen and Faith Lutheran Church

Andover, Iowa

From Urbandale to Andover, Iowa, Pastor Katie Jensen's journey from discerning candidacy to ordination embodies our theme: "Spirit, Open to Your Call." Katie first sensed a call to ministry while studying Social Work and Religion at Wartburg College and engaging in campus faith life. Now, serving at Faith Lutheran Church in Andover as her first call, she is fully living into an openness to following God's guidance for her life.

Through the persistent and loving encouragement of professors, campus pastors, and friends, Katie's sense of call grew stronger. She found herself welcomed into the ELCA, and her faith was affirmed through the lens of Lutheran theology. "I knew I was called to ministry," she reflects. "I just didn't know what that would look like yet."

Through a variety of field experiences including interning at the ELCA Churchwide Office, shadowing a pastor at a Lutheran nursing home, running a summer lunch program, and completing a practicum with the Interfaith Alliance of Colorado; Katie's call to pastoral ministry took shape as she discovered her vocation to walk with people in their physical and spiritual lives, reminding them of God's abundant grace and love.

Katie accepted her first call to Faith Lutheran Church in Andover, Iowa in the Spring of 2025. She was first drawn to Faith Lutheran by the congregation's energy and deep love for their community. Even after three years without a

pastor, their commitment and resilience stood out. Instead of becoming discouraged, they grew closer together and clearer about what mattered most.

"Looking back, I can see the ways that I pushed that call away out of fear and lack of imagination. Not only had I never considered the idea of pursuing a master's degree, but the church I was raised in did not have female clergy, so it had never even crossed my mind that something like this would be possible for me. It was scary to start to imagine something so different from what I had known."



The ELCA provides guidance and scholarships for candidacy. Find out more at <https://www.elca.org/our-work/leadership>

“Faith Lutheran sustained and even thrived during the three-year interim through the dedication of an excellent staff, strong lay leadership, committed volunteers, and generous givers,” says congregation member Tricia Perron. “We continued our existing programs, including Bible study, the visitation committee, and our community garden and outreach efforts. We also looked forward to the many pulpit supply pastors who served during that time and truly enjoyed getting to know them. In the third year, we were blessed with an interim SAM, whom we came to deeply appreciate.”

At first, the idea of serving in a rural town of only 100 people felt intimidating, and Katie hesitated to imagine herself in that setting. But when she opened herself to the possibility, she recognized the Spirit at work and knew this call was right. Ministry with the people of Faith has affirmed her call and reminded her that stepping outside of her comfort zone, building new bridges, and showing deep compassion is holy work, especially in a world where division and isolation are so common.

From the people of Faith, Katie has learned about cattle and corn, but more importantly about God’s steady presence. She has seen firsthand the unique way small towns care for one another, showing up not only when it’s easy but exactly when it’s needed. In that, she has experienced what it truly means to be the Body of Christ.

At Faith, hospitality is a way of life. With Pastor Katie’s arrival, she introduced the creative idea of “Host the Pastor!” An invitation for members to welcome her into their lives. So far, she’s been invited into homes and fields, fed baby goats, calves and a rabbit, attended baseball games and a musical, visited the Clinton County Fair, and even enjoyed a local campground. This tradition will continue into the fall, and as Pastor



Katie grows more comfortable in her setting, the congregation is eager to support her as she spreads her wings in ministry.

Reflecting on her journey, Katie gives thanks for the Southeastern Iowa Synod:

“Having the support of the Southeastern Iowa Synod through the candidacy process was so important. The prayers, encouragement, and financial support the synod provided me with as I explored and discerned God’s call for my life was invaluable. I feel blessed to have had a Bishop and synod staff that were willing to really get to know me and invest in my formation and ministry, especially through the first call process.”

Katie’s story and the story of Faith Lutheran is a testimony to what happens when people remain open to the Spirit’s leading. Katie opened herself to God’s call in new and unexpected ways. Faith Lutheran opened themselves to resilience, creativity, and renewal in their waiting. Together, they are living witnesses that the Spirit’s call is not a single moment, but an ongoing journey of trust, transformation, and joy.



Spirit, Open to Your Word

A readiness to hear, trust, and be transformed by God's living Word as it speaks guidance, comfort, and hope into our lives.

Iglesia Camino de Emaús Davenport, Iowa

La Iglesia Camino de Emaús Vive en el Espíritu de La Palabra de Dios

La Iglesia Camino de Emaús es un espacio de Misión, Comunión y Espiritualidad de la comunidad latina en las Quad Cities, USA. Este es un Ministerio de la Palabra y el Sacramento autorizada por el South Eastern Synod, IA.

La Iglesia Camino de Emaús se inspira en el relato del evangelio de San Lucas 24, 13-34 sobre los dos discípulos de Jesús caminando hacia su aldea Emaús. Los dos discípulos en este relato representan al pueblo caminante, aparentemente sin esperanza, que se reúne alrededor de la Palabra y los sacramentos y se convierte en un signo de esperanza, de comunión y de solidaridad. En este espacio de comunión del pueblo latino resuena el saludo de Jesús Resucitado “la paz esté con ustedes” Reafirmamos nuestra fe y esperanza en el Espíritu de Jesús de Nazaret quien nos convoca a vivir en comunidad.

La Iglesia Camino de Emaús lo integran familias provenientes de distintos países de América Latina y los Estados Unidos de América.

Quienes asistimos a esta comunidad de fe traemos nuestra liturgia latina llena de sueños, con cantos latinoamericanos, oraciones, tradiciones de los pueblos, y testimonios de fe y de vida en perspectiva ecuménica y liberadora. Este conjunto de vivencias, alrededor de la

Palabra, se enmarca en una Espiritualidad liberadora que motiva a las personas asistentes a unirse al clamor por la justicia y la paz para la creación de Dios.

En esta comunión reafirmamos a una Iglesia de puertas abiertas, inclusiva, que continúa convocando al diálogo ecuménico, ecológico, intercultural y solidario. VENGAN: les invitamos a celebrar y caminar con nosotros en comunión. Todos somos la Iglesia Camino de Emaús. Amén

La Iglesia Camino de Emaús encarna de manera hermosa nuestro tema, “Espíritu, ábrete a tu Palabra.” Enraizada en las Escrituras y sostenida por la adoración, esta comunidad da testimonio del poder de la Palabra de Dios para reunir a personas de diferentes culturas, tradiciones y experiencias. Su ministerio refleja al Espíritu vivo de Cristo que nos encuentra en el camino, nos habla de paz en nuestras vidas y nos llama a la comunión unos con otros.

Como parte del Sínodo del Sureste de Iowa, Camino de Emaús profundiza nuestra vida compartida en Cristo al resaltar los dones de la cultura, el idioma y la espiritualidad latina. Su testimonio nos recuerda que el Espíritu está obrando en cada rincón de nuestro sínodo, abriendo corazones a la Palabra de Dios, formándonos en un solo cuerpo y enviándonos al mundo como signos de esperanza, justicia y paz.

Learn more about the ministry of Iglesia Camino de Emaús and explore how you can offer your support.

<https://www.seiasynod.org/2025-offering>



Esta colaboración se fortalece gracias a la generosidad de las congregaciones y de las personas en todo nuestro sínodo, cuyos dones a través de la ofrenda de la Asamblea Sinodal apoyan la misión continua de Camino de Emaús. Juntos, caminamos al lado de este ministerio, afirmando que el Espíritu continúa llamándonos a una comunión más profunda, al cuidado mutuo y a un testimonio compartido en Cristo.

English Translation:

Iglesia Camino de Emaús Lives in the Spirit of the Word of God

Iglesia Camino de Emaús is a space for Mission, Communion, and Spirituality for the Latino community in the Quad Cities, USA. This is a Ministry of Word and Sacrament authorized by the Southeastern Synod of Iowa.

Iglesia Camino de Emaús is inspired by the Gospel of Luke 24:13-34, which relates the journey of two disciples of Jesus walking toward their village, Emmaus. The two disciples in this account represent the seemingly hopeless people who gather around the Word and the sacraments, becoming a sign of hope, communion, and solidarity. In this space of communion for the Latino people, the greeting of the Risen Jesus, “Peace be with you,” resonates. We reaffirm our faith and hope in the Spirit of Jesus of Nazareth, who calls us to live in community.

Iglesia Camino de Emaús is constituted by Latin American families of diverse countries but also from the United States of America.

Those of us who attend this community of faith bring our Latin liturgy, full of dreams, with Latin American songs, prayers, traditions, and testimonies of faith and life from an ecumenical

and liberating perspective. This set of experiences, centered around the Word, is framed within a liberating spirituality that motivates those attending to join the cry for justice and peace for God’s creation.

In this communion, we reaffirm a Church with open doors, inclusive, that continues to call for ecumenical, ecological, intercultural, and supportive dialogue. COME: we invite you to celebrate and walk with us in communion. We are all the Church. Amen

Iglesia Camino de Emaús beautifully embodies our theme, “Spirit, Open to Your Word.” Rooted in Scripture and sustained by worship, this community witnesses to the power of God’s Word to gather people across cultures, traditions, and experiences. Their ministry reflects the living Spirit of Christ who meets us on the road, speaks peace into our lives, and calls us to communion with one another.

As part of the Southeastern Iowa Synod, Iglesia Camino de Emaús deepens our shared life in Christ by lifting up the gifts of Latino culture, language, and spirituality. Their testimony reminds us that the Spirit is at work in every corner of our synod, opening hearts to the Word of God, forming us into one body, and sending us into the world as signs of hope, justice, and peace.

This partnership is strengthened by the generosity of congregations and individuals across our synod, whose gifts through the Synod Assembly offering support the ongoing mission of Iglesia Camino de Emaús. Together, we all walk alongside this ministry, affirming that the Spirit continues to call us into deeper communion, mutual care, and shared witness in Christ.

Spirit, Open to Your presence

An awareness and attentiveness to God's nearness, creating space for encounter, connection, and renewal in daily life and community.

St. Paul Lutheran Church Anamosa, Iowa

On Wednesday nights in Anamosa, the sanctuary at St. Paul Lutheran fills with a special kind of energy. Preschoolers through high schoolers stream in from sports practices, music lessons, part-time jobs, and busy homes. At first, it feels chaotic—but soon, the Spirit gathers that energy into something sacred.

The evening begins with the WD4, which stands for Wednesday Disciples: Worship, Grow, Relate & Serve. Children light battery-powered candles, ring the bell, and learn about the rhythm of the church year. A lively song follows, then the Lord's Prayer, led by one of the youth. A closing song, often paired with actions or sign language, slows the pace before the kids head to their small groups for lessons filled with games, crafts, skits, and Scripture.

The high schoolers, meanwhile, gather in their own space with beanbags, snacks, ping pong, and all. There, they share highs and lows, check-in with one another, and dive into lessons rooted in the season of the church year. Together, they're creating more than a youth group, they're creating community.

This ministry is intentional about welcome. Leaders speak openly about wanting every young person to feel seen, heard, and valued. St. Paul strives to be a place where everyone can come as they are. The Spirit's presence is clear in the



way youth invite friends, many from other faith communities, simply because they know this is a safe place to belong.

The Spirit is also moving through music. At the request of the youth themselves, a high school choir has formed. When they're not rehearsing,

ELCA Youth Ministry connects you with resources, leaders, and programs that support youth faith formation and leadership development. <https://www.elca.org/our-work/congregations-and-synods/youth-ministry>



they share their stories, eat breakfast pizza, and support one another as friends. Their songs, sometimes with choreography, ring out with heart and passion. For the congregation, seeing youth lead worship in this way is deeply moving, a sign of God's presence alive in the next generation.

Beyond Wednesday nights and choir, the youth have taken their faith outside the church walls. On a recent mission trip to San Diego, they worked with PATH, an organization serving unhoused people. One day, while setting up an outdoor tent, they met a man who shared his testimony of once being a pastor, of hardship, and of God's continuing guidance. He sang in his native language and prayed for the group. For St. Paul's youth, it was a powerful reminder of how the Spirit works through unexpected encounters.

Through gatherings, service, music, and mission, St. Paul's youth are discovering their gifts, first as talents and later as Spirit-given callings. Leaders describe watching them grow in confidence, faith, and leadership. not by striving to meet expectations, but by being welcomed as their authentic selves.



When asked about her deepest prayer for the future of St. Paul's youth ministry, Kaileen Weaver, Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry, didn't hesitate. Her vision is simple, yet profound: that every young person would always know they have a space and a place where they can grow in their faith while being fully themselves.

For Kaileen, this vision connects directly to the theme Spirit, Open to Your Presence. The ministry at St. Paul is not about asking young people to become something they are not, but about creating space where the Spirit's presence meets them as they are: welcoming, embracing, and nurturing them on their faith journey.



Living in the embrace of God's unconditional love, and extending that love freely to others.

St. Mark's Lutheran Church West Des Moines, Iowa

"Open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, St. Mark's Food Fridge welcomes around 100 people daily, providing food, hope, and a sense of community at any hour."

At St. Mark Lutheran Church in West Des Moines, Iowa, love takes the form of a refrigerator, always stocked, always open, and always ready to serve. The St. Mark's Neighborhood Food Fridge began with a simple but powerful vision: to rescue good food that might otherwise go to waste and make it freely available to neighbors in need.

Every day, an average of 100 people stop by the fridge. Some come for a meal to get them through the day. Others bring groceries, donate surplus food from events, or share produce from their gardens. For all, the fridge is more than just a place to pick up food. It is a sign of love made tangible, a reminder that no one walks alone in hunger.

Millions of people face hunger in the United States every year. At the same time, billions of fresh meals are thrown away. A neighborhood fridge offers a simple and practical way to bridge the gap.

The fridge is stocked through food rescues from local businesses and contributions from church members and the wider community. Volunteers collect, organize, and make sure the fridge is clean and welcoming. Food moves quickly in and out: fresh vegetables, prepared meals, bread, milk, and other essentials. As one volunteer describes it, what happens inside the fridge is simple: love gets shared again and again.



ELCA World Hunger addresses hunger and poverty by supporting health clinics, clean water, meals, microloans, advocacy, and other sustainable solutions.

<https://www.elca.org/our-work/relief-and-development/elca-world-hunger>

The ministry has also opened the congregation's eyes to the needs right outside their doors. "Most of our members do not live in the immediate neighborhood," reflects one leader. "But the fridge is a tangible way for us to connect with the people around us and share God's love in a way that matters."



Sometimes, the impact is seen in deeply personal ways. A man who had just lost his job discovered the fridge one morning on his way to a job interview. Later that week, he returned just as a fresh load of food had been rescued and stocked. He was able to take home enough groceries to provide healthy meals for his daughter during a difficult weekend. "Something as simple as a bag of food," he said, "brought a bit of normalcy as we were going through so much."

For volunteers, the ministry has reshaped the way they think about food and care. "People are generous," one volunteer shared. "Nobody really wants to throw food away. They just need another option. Food is universal. We may come from different backgrounds, but we all need it."

Through the St. Mark's Neighborhood Food Fridge, the Spirit is at work. Hearts are opened to generosity, doors are opened to connection, and lives are opened to the gift of daily bread. In this ministry of presence and provision, the congregation embodies the theme: Spirit, Open to Your Love.

St. Mark's story is just one example of how congregations across Southeastern Iowa live out Christ's love through service to their neighbors. This work is not done in isolation and it reflects our shared identity as an anti-hunger synod.

Alongside local ministries addressing food insecurity, congregations also contribute to the wider church's efforts through ELCA World Hunger, multiplying the impact of their generosity both near and far.

In 2024, congregations in our synod contributed \$94,058 in pass-through donations to ELCA World Hunger, with the likelihood that even more was given directly. These gifts extend the reach of our local ministries, multiplying their impact to touch lives far beyond our own communities. In addition, two congregations in the synod received hunger grants at the end of 2024, strengthening their capacity to respond faithfully to the needs of their neighbors.

Together through local ministries, synod-wide commitments, and the global witness of the ELCA; our congregations share in God's work of feeding the hungry and caring for the world.



Partnerships

Lutheran Campus Ministry at the University of Iowa

Lutheran Campus Ministry (LCM) at the University of Iowa in Iowa City has been an active ministry since 1919.

It offers a place of welcome to students of all backgrounds and a refuge for students at which they explore, grow spiritually, and develop relationships that offer support and encouragement.

The main weekly gathering on Thursday evenings at 6:00 pm, offers a meal free of charge to the students, followed by a worship service, fellowship and relationship building. Typically, there are between twenty and thirty students who gather each week. In addition to Thursdays, there are service activities that benefit such groups as Shelter House of Iowa City and the UofI Pride House. Last spring, fourteen students participated in a weekend retreat held at Camp EWALU.

The highlight of LCM is the welcome it provides to students such as Bri Brands. Bri reflects:

“Although I grew up in a Christ-centered, Christian household, I had always been wary of the church. Going into college, I had no desire to continue my faith journey. However, something called me to attend the student organization fair on campus my first week as a freshman at the University of Iowa, where I stumbled upon the Lutheran Campus Ministry booth. I just recently started my fourth year, but I still remember the feeling of inclusivity that washed over me the moment I walked up to the LCM table. It immediately felt like I had known these complete strangers for years, and their desire to have me join LCM stemmed from a genuine place deep within their hearts.

I quickly found a home in LCM. One that I realized was much more of a home to me than any other church group I had ever attended before. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I always struggled with having a confident identity in the church. However, LCM welcomed me with open arms, exactly as I am, and opened my eyes to a new world. One where I can nurture a relationship with Christ, as well as stand firm in my previously disregarded opinions. I couldn't have done college at all without such a loving support system.”



Lutheran Campus Ministry at Iowa State University

Lutheran Campus Ministry at Iowa State University in Ames is in a redevelopment year, and is making strides to receive student organization status by the end of the '25–'26 academic year.

During redevelopment, LCM is excited about a new collaboration with The Wesley Center, a ministry of Collegiate Methodist in Ames. Pr. Jena Finch Manchester is working closely with Pr. Erika Uthe during redevelopment as together the ministries come to the table to dream and vision what the future holds for ministries like these two, and how greater collaboration will serve the students at Iowa State.

Senior Hannah Bensen has been involved with LCM since her first year and serves as a student representative on the LCM board.

Hannah says this about her time with Lutheran Campus Ministry:

“When Pr. Jen left, I was devastated, and felt committed to restoring such an inclusive and engaging congregation. As it was the first campus organization that I became involved with at Iowa State, I was able to find a sense of community and felt welcomed into the Ames area. I have repeatedly heard from others that finding a support network on campus is crucial, especially for those new to the area. Lutheran Campus Ministries has not only provided this support for students, but has always followed through with students and supported them through their entire academic journey and beyond. I look forward to the day when LCM can fully operate again in ministry at Iowa State, and give thanks to God for how LCM impacts students like me.”

LCM is grateful to the support of the Southeastern Iowa Synod and the congregations therein. We hope to be known as the place where “Love Lives Here” for MANY years to come!



Partnerships

Lutheran Services in Iowa

The past year at Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) has been one of resilience, adaptation, and unwavering commitment to Iowans in need.

Federal changes temporarily halted resettlement, leaving 191 individuals in our care. Thanks to generous donors and partners, all families secured housing, healthcare, school enrollment for children, and employment.

As government funding becomes more restrictive, private support is essential for maintaining vital programs, from citizenship and English language education to mental health services. LSI has expanded therapy services statewide, launched immigration legal services, and continued Early Childhood, Disability, and Foster Care programs.

Lutheran Day on the Hill brought over 415 attendees to the State Capitol to advocate for justice and well-being, while Governor Kim Reynolds recognized LSI's 160 years of Lutheran ministry in Iowa and declared March 11, 2025, as Lutheran Day in Iowa, a historic and meaningful tribute to our legacy of faith and service.

LSI's impact is measurable in both numbers and lives changed: 19,000+ therapy sessions, 1 million pounds of produce grown through Global Greens, 10,000+ Early Childhood home visits, 620+ families supported in Foster Care and Adoption, and 366,400+ hours of care for people with disabilities.

Through it all, LSI continues to meet Iowans where they are, walking alongside them with compassion, purpose, and enduring hope.

The CaSTLE Project

The Southeastern Iowa Synod, in partnership with Western Iowa Synod, Northeastern Iowa Synod, and South-Central Synod of Wisconsin, received over \$80,000 from The CaSTLE Grant, an initiative of Wartburg Seminary. The CaSTLE project provides resources to country and small town congregations to live into a model of congregational life that empowers members of congregations to set their foundation in their baptismal identity, rather than an identity built on the ministry of a pastor or building. In Southeastern Iowa, these funds will be used to strengthen congregations who anticipate a future without an ordained minister, providing resources for SAMs, training and compensation for mentors, and learning opportunities for congregations as a whole.

The CaSTLE Project

MEET OUR 2025 GRANTEES:
SOUTHEASTERN IOWA, WESTERN IOWA,
NORTHEASTERN IOWA & SOUTH-CENTRAL
SYNOD OF WISCONSIN

"For congregations who anticipate a future without an ordained minister, our project empowers members of the congregation to set their foundation in their baptismal identity and be witnesses to the new life and hope that comes with discipleship"

Pictured: Pastor Jen Christenson and Pastor Dan Kuckuck

Seminaries

In 2025, the Southeastern Iowa Synod provided \$52,250 in direct grants to each of the two seminaries in our Region, **Wartburg Theological Seminary** and **Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC)**. This support enables the seminaries to provide quality formation for rostered ministry and more.

From Pastor Minna Bothwell, 2014 Wartburg graduate and current board member....

As both an alumna and the Vice Chair of Wartburg Theological Seminary's Board of Directors, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact of the Southeastern Iowa Synod's support. The synod's mission support is not just a financial gift—it is an investment in future pastors, deacons, and church leaders who are deeply rooted in the gospel and prepared to serve in a rapidly changing world.

Wartburg's commitment to accessible theological education through residential, collaborative, TEEM, and distributed learning depends on this partnership. The Southeastern Iowa Synod's generosity eases financial burdens, enabling students to remain in seminary, take diverse internships, and graduate prepared to serve with confidence, resilience, and faith.

This investment strengthens not only Wartburg but also the whole church. Congregations across our synod and beyond are being served by Spirit-filled leaders whose preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and public witness reflect the fruits of this partnership.

Thank you, Southeastern Iowa Synod, for faithfully and boldly sharing your gifts to equip future leaders who will faithfully serve the wider church.



wartburgseminary.edu



lstc.edu

From Pastor Eric Jensen, 2024 LSTC graduate....

During my time at LSTC, I was blessed and challenged throughout my studies to authentically proclaim the Gospel in a world that desperately longs for God's active and liberating grace. All this was centered in a campus community who supported and upheld one another in Christly love, and I couldn't have hoped for a more wonderful group of students, staff, and faculty to learn from and among. Our Contextual Education projects and LSTC's Public Church Fellows program both pushed me to be a student out on the streets of Hyde Park and Chicagoland, as well as in the classroom. A group of students with whom I studied during a January-Term course out at Holden Village continues to be a cohort that leans on one another as we've all begun our ministries across the country in First Call. It's hard to summarize all that seminary contained over the past four years, but I know that LSTC was the perfect place for me to prepare for ministry.



Southeastern Iowa

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