

September 20: Living in God’s Shalom

Pastor Michael Mandsager

The Hebrew word "shalom" is often translated, "peace," but it means more than an absence of conflict. God's vision of shalom invites us to live together in a community that cares for the thriving and well-being of all. One of the ways we live out this vision is through our civic life. This session is an introduction to the ELCA Social Statement on Faith and Civic Life, adopted by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly We will explore such questions as, how is God involved in civic life? How may we participate faithfully in the civic arena? As faith communities, how can we work responsibly with government? Christians do not all vote the same way, or share all the same opinions, but our faith can help us root our conversation in love as we seek the common good. If you want to explore further, Pastor Mandsager will be offering a more extended study on Faith and Civic Life on Wednesday evenings in the fall.

September 27: Joys of a Pastor/Politician

Pastor Emeritus Norman Wahl

Pastors sometimes take heat. Politicians often take heat. Why in the world would one do either job? You might be surprised at the joys that come from both vocations. Good people continue to serve our church, our community, and our world.

October 4: Saints and Souls: A History of Allhallowtide

Travis Beck, Director of Worship, Music, and Arts at Mount Olive Lutheran Church

Many of us know October 31 as a time for trick-or-treating, dressing up in costumes, and watching scary movies. But in Western Christianity it's also the start of the great three days of Halloween, All Saint's Day, and All Souls Day--a time to remember the dead. In this forum we'll explore the history of this season, from early Christian martyrs to Jack-o-lanterns to horror films and more.

October 11: Love and Marriage in the Bible

Dr. Cameron Howard, Associate Professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary

"Biblical marriage" is a phrase that gets thrown around a lot these days, but what did marriage really look like in the Bible? Did people marry for love, for money, for desire, or something else? Did biblical characters find happiness in marriage? Did they find love outside of marriage? We will study these questions and more as we look at some of the remarkable relationships in the Old Testament. Our goal will be to better understand these ancient love stories--some quirky, some tragic, and some beautiful.

October 18: Isolation and our Calling

Dr. Darrel Jodock, Professor Emeritus of Religion at Gustavus Adolphus College

Isolation (that is, the absence of close relationships) has been labeled the highest health risk in the U.S. In somewhat different ways, it affects people of every age. Not only does it decrease happiness, but it often fosters polarization. In the face of isolation, what does the Christian message have to offer and how does it shape our calling, as individuals and as a church?

October 25: Lutheran World Relief

Rev. Lisa Kipp, Director of Congregational Engagement, Lutheran World Relief

For more than 80 years, Lutheran World Relief has been putting God's love in action around the world. Come hear inspiring stories of lives transformed through Bethel's longtime partnership with LWR. From helping girls stay in school in Sierra Leone, to being on the frontlines when disasters strike, to the extraordinary witness of LWR Quilts and Kits, come discover the many ways your love continues to bring hope to neighbors around the world, especially in some of the hardest-to-reach places.

November 1: Religion and Law in the United States: A Complicated Relationship

Dr. Sarah Ruble, Professor of Religion at Gustavis Adolphis College

In the United States, religion and law have shaped each other. While some people contend that there is a wall of separation between the two, the reality is vastly more complicated. In this session, we will look at some key episodes in US history to explore how religion has affected law and how laws have affected religion.

November 8: A Conversation on Faith and Civic Life

Bishop Regina Hassanally Southeastern Minnesota Synod ELCA
Join Bishop Regina Hassanally as she leads us in conversation and reflection on what it means to be disciples of Jesus and engaged citizens in civic life.

November 15: Listening to the waters

John Weiss, Retired Outdoors Writer for the Post Bulletin

The word water appears over 700 times in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation in passages about creation, judgement, deliverance and spiritual life and over 70 percent of the earth is covered in water. How do we see it? Listening to the waters of the world through the eyes of St. Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis

November 22: Why Should I Look at a Bird I Do Not Know

Al Batt, Nationally known Writer, Humorist, Storyteller, & Naturalist

Looking at birds can change your life—research has shown it can reduce stress, sharpen memory, and make you happier. I believe it will make you taller, wiser, bewitching and possibly beguiling, heal faster, and parallel park like a pro. “Do something wild today. Look at a bird.”

November 29: No Sunday Morning Forum

December 6: Active Hope for God’s Earth

Rev. Emily Carson Director for Evangelical Mission & Assistant to the Bishop of SE Minn Synod

God calls us to be stewards not only of our individual lives and congregations, but of the whole earth that God loves. In this forum, we will explore the spiritual, theological, and practical connections between stewardship and creation care through the lens of ELCA social teaching. Naming both the urgency of this moment and the promise of God’s ongoing work in the world, we will cultivate a spirit of active hope. Participants will leave with encouragement, theological grounding, and practical ideas for caring for our shared home: Earth!

December 13: Faith & Pop Culture: What Christmas Movies Get Right (and Wrong)

Pastor Lisa Hawe

What do our favorite Christmas movies actually teach us about love, redemption, and what really matters? From laugh-out-loud moments to surprisingly tender scenes, holiday films like *Home Alone*, *Elf*, and *A Christmas Carol* have shaped the way many of us think about family, forgiveness, and belonging. But how do those messages line up with our faith—and where do they fall short?

Join us for a fun, conversation-based adult education hour where we’ll watch a few short clips, share perspectives, and explore the deeper themes behind the stories we return to every December. No movie expertise needed—just bring your curiosity (and maybe your favorite quote!) Come ready to reflect, laugh, and see these familiar films in a whole new way.

December 20 – January 3: No Sunday Morning Forum

January 10: Following the Footsteps of St. Francis and St. Clare

Karen & Morgan Hartman, Bethel Members

Follow the path of Saints Francis and Clare through the historic cities of Rome and Assisi. Through stories and images from a modern pilgrimage, this session will explore the spiritual, historical and cultural significance of these sacred places while examining the enduring legacy of Franciscan spirituality. The presentation will also consider how the examples of Francis and Clare continue to offer insights for faith, service and leadership today.

January 17: No Sunday Morning Forum

January 24 : How to Plan Your Funeral

Pastor Anjanette Bandel

While death is not a comfortable topic for many, we have the gift of faith that promises that death does not have the last word. Planning your funeral is a gift you can leave for your family when they are overwhelmed with grief. This class will discuss the funeral service and its elements and how a funeral or memorial service that is thoughtfully planned can bring comfort and hope. There will also be conversation about cremation, legacy gift planning, and graveside services. Handouts will be offered to help you leave the class with opportunities to put into action the next steps to plan your funeral.

January 31: No Forum Bethel Annual Meeting

February 7: : My Mother's Memories of The Belgian Resistance Movement

Denise Rostad, Daughter of Mary Rostad

At age 16 Mary Rostad joined the Belgian Resistance and French Underground serving as a courier codenamed "Squirrel" which is documented in her memoir "Squirrel is Alive." Mary met and married U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Allen Rostad and moved to Minnesota in 1946.

February 14: A Tale of Two Cities

Rabbi Michele Werner, B'nai Israel Congregation

There were two small towns in France, Le Chambon and Izieu, where Jews sought refuge during World War 2. Despite the best efforts including help from high-ranking members of law enforcement, the Children of Izieu and their care givers and teachers were deported. In Le Chambon, thanks to the leadership of a Protestant pastor, a whole town rallied and 5000 Jewish lives were saved and no residents of the town lost their lives in the efforts. As history slips away, their stories need to be retold.

February 21: Egypt and the Shaping of the Biblical World and Story

Rev. Phil Quanbeck, Prof Emeritus of Religion at Augsburg University

Egyptian culture goes back 5000 years or more. For many years Egypt was the leading power in the Ancient Near East and was also influential in shaping the biblical story as a place of refuge for Abraham, Joseph and Jeremiah and Jesus. It was also place of oppression for the Hebrews leading to the Passover story. Egypt shaped the world of the Psalms and the Temple. Later Egypt would be the fertile ground in which early Christian theology took shape. All that and hieroglyphs and pyramids as well.

February 28: Doc's Recovery House

Rick Utley, Leader at Doc's Recovery House

Doc's Recovery House is a recovery community organization and sober living community that provides housing and peer support to individuals pursuing a life of recovery from addiction in Rochester.

March 7: God and Suffering

Dr. Mark Tranvik, Professor of Reformation History and Theology

It is so easy to get things wrong when thinking about this topic. Well-meaning people often say hurtful things. But, with insights from Martin Luther, there is a way to talk and think about suffering that honors God and is honest about pain and tragedy.

March 14: The History and Customs of Easter

Travis Beck, Director of Worship, Music, & Arts at Mount Olive Lutheran Church

Every spring, Christians and non-Christians alike decorate eggs, send greeting cards, and receive gifts from the Easter Bunny. Easter is the biggest festival in Christianity, but what does it have to do with a gift-giving rabbit or decorated chicken eggs? Why does the date change from year to year? From Jesus Christ to the Cadbury Crème Egg, this forum will explore the religious, historical, and cultural significance of this holiday, which sells more candy to Americans than Halloween.

Contact any member of the Adult Education Team if you have a topic suggestion for Adult Education, or if you'd like to help with the team.

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SUNDAY MORNING EDUCATION FORUMS



September 20, 2026 – March 14, 2027

**Forums are held on Sundays
at 10:30 a.m. in Room 115**

Everyone is invited to participate!

