

POWER
I N T H E
SPIRIT



July 16-18, 2026
at
Roanoke College





“But you will receive power and ability when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be My witnesses [to tell people about Me] both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the ends of the earth.”

-Acts 1:8

When our Lord ascended to heaven, he left us with a remarkable, almost breathtaking promise: that the Holy Spirit would come and empower, equip, and enlighten the church in its witness to God’s gift of grace and

salvation for the entire world (Acts 1:8). The Apostle Paul fastened onto this promise to encourage a young pastor named Timothy as he entered a new and challenging ministry at Ephesus (2 Timothy 1:7). All of us are heirs of this same promise, and it provides the theme for the summer 2026 Power in the Spirit: “The Spirit Empowers, Equips, and Enlightens.”

As people of the church of Jesus Christ, we lay claim to this promise, knowing that if the challenges of proclaiming grace at this time and in this world are formidable, the grace is even more so. The speakers, workshops, and worship at this summer’s Power in the Spirit have been chosen and designed to help us translate Christ’s promise into action that we may be faithful in our witness and persistent in our work.

It is in this context of the promise and challenge of ministry that we are so privileged and honored to have **Presiding Bishop Curry** with us at Power in the Spirit. Presiding Bishop Curry will lead a fireside chat on Thursday night, serve as our preacher on Friday night, and will also lead workshops. We can all look forward to hearing him share his goals, plans, and vision for our church.

The Rev. Susan Briehl will be our Bible study leader this summer, focusing on the work of the Spirit in the book of Acts. She has served the wider church as teacher, writer, and liturgist, and she has taught parish worship and preaching at Wartburg Seminary. Her hymn lyrics and liturgical texts appear in several denominational worship books. Among her books are *Holden*, *Prayer Around the Cross: Handbook to the Liturgy*, and *On Our Way: Christian Practices for Living a Whole Life*.

The Rev. Drew Tucker will be the event’s keynote speaker. He is the Executive Director of HopeWood Outdoor Lutheran Camp on the shore of Lake Erie in Ohio. Before this calling, Tucker served as University Pastor, Director of the Center for Faith and Learning, and part-time faculty member at Capital University. Tucker is the author of *4D Formation: Exploring Vocation in Community*.

Michael Benschish will return as the event musician for Power in the Spirit. Benschish serves as music director at Lutheran churches in Chicago and Portsmouth. He has performed in concert around the world and has written numerous compositions, including a Jazz Mass. He is a gifted, collaborative musician and hopes that you will participate in our worship this summer by joining the choir or playing an instrument.

We will also take time to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Power in the Spirit, the retirement of the Rev. Dr. Dave Delaney, and recognize our new commissioned lay ministers. Power in the Spirit is indeed an inspirational event for people of all ages who wish to explore God’s call to service through joyous worship, Bible study, keynote addresses, workshops, and the fellowship of the saints. Please come join us and discover how Power in the Spirit will encourage, nurture, and challenge as we embrace the Spirit who empowers, equips, and enlightens!



Special Guests

The Rev. Yehiel Curry, Presiding Bishop, ELCA

The Rev. Yehiel Curry is the presiding bishop of the ELCA. Previously, he served as bishop of the ELCA Metro Chicago Synod. He has chaired the ELCA Conference of Bishops, fostering ecumenical relationships and theological engagement across the Lutheran community. Prior to his role as bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, Presiding Bishop Curry served as the mission developer (2007–2012) and pastor (2013–2019) of Shekinah Chapel Lutheran Church in Riverdale, IL. He earned a Bachelor of Arts from Lewis University in Romeoville, IL, and a Master of Divinity from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. He and his wife, LaShonda, are the proud parents of three daughters.



The Rev. Susan Briehl, Bible Study Leader

Susan Briehl, a Lutheran pastor, is called to serve the wider church as teacher, writer, and liturgist. She has served in team ministries in parish, university, and retreat center settings and has taught parish worship and preaching at Wartburg Seminary. Her hymn lyrics and liturgical texts appear in several denominational worship books. Her other writing includes books on Christian practices, worship, and prayer.



The Rev. Drew Tucker, Keynote Leader

The Rev. Andrew (Drew) Tucker serves as Executive Director of HopeWood Outdoors, an ELCA outdoor ministry organization in Ohio. Drew served his first call in the Virginia Synod of the ELCA. Prior to his work in outdoor ministry, Drew spent a dozen years in campus ministry from Duke University to Virginia Tech and Radford to Capital University. In addition to multiple articles and book chapters, Drew has written two books: *4D Formation: Exploring Vocation in Community*, released by Fortress Press in 2022, as well as the forthcoming *Called to Being: Grounding Your Identity in God's Presence and Promise*. When not writing, you can find Drew swimming in any sufficiently large body of water, reading science fiction, or listening to history podcasts. Drew lives in Westerville, Ohio, with his wife Michelle and their two dogs, Jack and Moses.



Michael Benschish, Musician

Michael Benschish (music leader) has been performing on the piano, organ, and synthesizer, primarily throughout the Chicago area and Southeast Virginia, as well as throughout the U.S. and internationally, since 1988. Currently, he is active as the Director of Worship and Music at Lutheran Church of the Master in Carol Stream, IL, a musician at St. Andrew Lutheran in Portsmouth, VA, a freelance collaborative pianist, band member/leader, and recording artist. Utilizing this rich variety of musical diversity, along with the blessing of gifted musicians, is Michael's favorite thing to incorporate into worship, with offerings ranging from Bach chorales to modern praise music and everything in between.



Event Schedule

Thursday, July 16

11:00 am-1:30 pm	Event Check-in at Colket Center
12:00-1:00 pm	Lunch in Colket Center
1:30 pm	Gathering and Welcome
1:50 pm	Opening Worship
2:25 pm	Keynote Presentation
3:30 pm	Break Sponsored by VSWO
4:00-5:00 pm	Bible Study
5:45-7:00 pm	Dinner in Colket Center
7:00-7:45 pm	Fireside Chat with Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry
7:45 pm	Beer and Hymns



Friday, July 17

7:30-8:30 am	Breakfast in Colket Center
8:30 am	Morning Prayer
9:00 am	Bible Study
10:00 am	Break
10:30-11:45 am	Concurrent Session A
12:00-1:00 pm	Lunch in Colket Center
1:30-2:45 pm	Concurrent Session B
2:45 pm	Break
3:15-4:30 pm	Concurrent Session C
5:00-6:30 pm	Dinner in Colket Center
7:00 pm	Worship with Eucharist
8:45 pm	Reception Sponsored by Roanoke College



Saturday, July 18

7:30-8:30 am	Breakfast in Colket Center
8:30 am	Morning Prayer
9:15 am	Keynote
10:20 am	Break
10:50 am	Sending Worship Service



Pasta with a Purpose

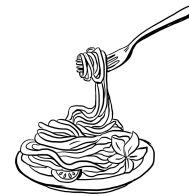
During the summer months, local food pantries face higher demand while donations often slow down. Children also miss out on nutritious meals when school cafeterias are closed. Pasta with a Purpose is a joyful response for an easy, meaningful way to help families in our community put a nourishing meal on the table.

Please bring pasta-related food items to the event. We will weigh the collection before delivering it to our local pantry and share our total contribution (in pounds) to see how our small gifts, along with those of other ELCA churches across Virginia, add up to something powerful.



Items to donate include:

- Dry pasta (spaghetti, penne, rotini)
- Jars of pasta sauce
- Boxes of macaroni and cheese
- Canned pasta meals (ravioli, spaghetti)
- Gluten-free pasta



Golf Cart Transportation

Thank you to Virginia Lutheran Homes for sponsoring golf carts. The golf carts will be available to help participants get around the Roanoke College campus. If you are interested in helping to drive a golf cart during the event, email Debbie Hux by June 23 at hux@vasynod.org.



Ministry Displays

During the event there will be a variety of ministry partner displays set up. Please plan on taking time to visit the tables to learn about their ministry. If you are interested in having a display contact Lenae Osmondson at osmondson@vasynod.org by May 11.

Little Free Library: Take a Book, Share a Book

We will have space available for you to share books that touch on matters of faith, and to pick up a book or two for yourself. This is a good way to get a new home for the books you have finished. You may also find something new to read. Our Little Free Library will be for all ages, so think about picture books, novels, and non-fiction works that address matters of faith and spirituality. All books will be available to Power in the Spirit participants even if you don't bring a book to exchange. Questions? Contact Patty Franz at pdsfranz@gmail.com.



Do you love to sing and/or play an instrument?

We continue to offer new opportunities for musical involvement at Power in the Spirit, to connect musicians from across our synod.



Event Conference Choir!

The Power in the Spirit Conference Choir, directed by Michael Benschish, will share messages in song for each of our worship gatherings. All voice parts are needed! This is an excellent opportunity for singers, directors, and musicians from our synod to join together and connect. The choir will practice outside of the workshop times. The rehearsal schedule will be announced at the opening on Thursday afternoon. Won't you join us?! Sign up as you register!



Beer & Hymns Pickup Band!

A fun fellowship opportunity is our Beer & Hymns gathering. We will sing a variety of hymns and songs - it's a true "all y'all sing"! There's no rehearsal. There's no order. We get together, sing songs of faith and joy, and uniquely share Jesus! **Bring a guitar or other instrument and join us for this exciting gathering!**

Biblical Storytellers



The Shenandoah Valley Biblical Storytelling Guild is an ecumenical group of individuals who learn scriptures by heart and tell them to others *from* the heart. Our goal is to share the stories as was done in the early oral tradition, and have listeners experience the stories/scriptures in a new way, with an emphasis on the emotions evoked in the passages.

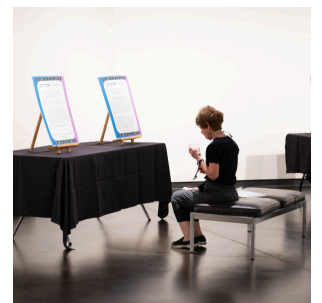
During Power in the Spirit, you will hear from biblical storytellers Pastor Chris Carr and Kathy Thompson, who will present on the texts Acts 16:11-15 and Ephesians 1:15-23.

Worship Planning

Special thanks to worship planners Michael Benschish, Pastor Heidi Moore, and Pastor Paul Toelke.

Meditation Chapel

The Meditation Chapel invites you to explore this year's theme, "The Spirit Enlightens, Empowers, Equips," through meditation on scripture and art, sharing stories, and noticing the Spirit's work in the church and the world. There will be time and space for quiet contemplation as well as lively interaction. Let us celebrate together the wonderful Power of the Spirit! Thank you to Pastor Terrie Sternberg, Pulaski, for helping to create this year's meditation opportunity.





Offering Designation

Horizon Apprenticeship Program is an innovative, year-round initiative that empowers youth and young adults, ages 16-20, from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds to grow as leaders through hands-on ministry, mentorship, and community engagement. Through the program, they will:

- Develop practical leadership skills in a supportive, faith-based environment
- Make a meaningful impact in your congregation, camp, or community
- Connect with a network of peers and mentors from across the ELCA
- Earn a stipend while growing in purpose and confidence

Join in shaping the future of the church and the world.



Give now to
Support Horizon
Apprenticeship Program



Rooted in Faith. Rising in Leadership

Continuing Education

Rostered ministers and commissioned lay ministers who attend will receive 10 CEUs. If a certificate is needed, you can contact Lenae Osmondson at osmondson@vasynod.org.

Accommodations

You can register as a commuter, off-campus attendee, and secure your own lodging at an area hotel, or register as a resident, on-campus attendee, where you will stay in a Roanoke College dorm room. **All resident attendees will need to bring their own sheets, linens, and pillows.** Bed sizes are Twin XL, but queen-size sheets can work with the college dorm beds. The dormitories are often chilly, so pack accordingly. Consider bringing an extra blanket for your comfort!

We have created discounted room blocks for participants who stay off-campus and commute. Please note the group deadlines. You can [download the list here](#).

Children are Welcome

Power in the Spirit is an event for all ages! Children are invited to attend with their parents or guardians. **We won't be offering childcare this year.** If you note on your registration that a child will attend, we'll set up a playground space for the child and their parent or guardian to use in our main space. Children attending will need to be registered for the meals to be provided.

Concurrent Sessions A: Friday from 10:45 AM-12:00 PM



A1 If God Calls, Why Not the Church? - The Rev. Dr. Jean Bozeman

Travel with Pastor Jean through her journey of how the spirit has enlightened, equipped, and empowered her to love the church deeply, while sometimes discovering that the church was still learning what in the world to do with someone like her. This November 14, 2026, will mark the date that, 50 years ago, Jean became the first woman to be ordained by the Virginia Synod. What began as a simple “yes” to God’s call became a lifelong journey of ministry filled with unexpected turns, highs, moments of doubt, and countless experiences of joy and grace.



A2 Born of Water and the Spirit - The Rev. Susan Briehl

Explore the multi-faceted meaning of the Sacrament as proclaimed by baptismal fonts, both ancient and new.



A3 Vocation in the Real World: Serving God in Secular Spaces - Marty Holliday, CLM, Zion, Floyd

This workshop explores how our baptism sends us not only into congregational life but also into offices, farms, classrooms, hospitals, homes, and communities as bearers of Christ’s presence. Together, we will reflect on the spiritual challenges of modern work and reclaim our daily roles as holy callings. Whether you are employed, retired, caregiving, volunteering, or discerning what’s next, discover how the Spirit is already at work through you for the sake of the world.



A4 From Hurts to Heeding: How the Church Helps Souls Heal from Moral Injury, so They Can Heed the Spirit’s Call - The Rev. Chris Bowen, Roanoke College

An introduction to moral injury and its impact on our ability to hear and heed the call of the Spirit. This will be a space for church leaders to explore the practices and rituals that free the baptized to live into their vocations anew.



A5 Ministry in Transition and Beyond - The Rev. John Wertz Jr., Virginia Synod

Congregations across the Virginia Synod are experiencing a time of transition. In this workshop, we will explore tools for managing transition, opportunities for collaboration and partnership, and ideas for strengthening ministry during a pastoral transition.



A6 Bible Rhymes for Spirit Times - The Rev. Joel Neubuer, St. Mark, Yorktown

How might poetry and song help our modern analytical minds listen for the Holy Spirit’s creative power? Relish gospel passages from our liturgical cycle with Pastor Joel Neubauer, using music and meter to explore an artistic approach to Bible study.



Concurrent Sessions B: Friday from 1:30-2:45 PM

B1 Rostered Ministers and SAMs Conversation with Presiding Bishop Curry, ELCA

Reflecting on one of the ELCA's priority areas - a connected, sustainable church - Presiding Bishop Curry's focus for this year is to emphasize a connected church. Come and have a conversation about what that would mean for rostered ministers and appointed SAMs.



B2 It's Time for You to Act: Your Purpose and Your Self in the 21st Century Church - The Rev. Tucker

While Lutherans rightly emphasize the Triune God as the primary actor in history, too often this becomes justification for Christian inaction in the face of injustice. In this workshop, Drew Tucker will make the case that Christ is calling Christians in this era to specific actions. While these activities vary from one person to another, everyone has a role in bearing God's good news. Tucker will draw upon scripture and Luther's Freedom of a Christian, along with his own work on vocation and identity, to emphasize the Spirit's role in our own activity and catalyze participants to choose new ways to live out the Gospel that make a tangible difference in both the church and the world.



B3 Exploring Essential Oils of the Bible - Jamie Serafin, Wellness Advocate

Come explore the history and spiritual significance of essential oils in Scripture (referenced over 600 times), as well as aromatic plants and oils like frankincense, myrrh, cedarwood, and more. The session will cover their ancient uses, medicinal properties, and modern applications for physical, spiritual, and emotional wellness. Attendees will experience several oils firsthand and receive a sacred anointing roller blend, connecting biblical tradition with contemporary natural living.



B4 Braver Conversations, Bolder Witness...for such a time as THIS! - The Rev. Paul Pingel

In October 2025, the ELCA gathered representatives from each of the 64 Synods of our denomination in Chicago to talk about racial justice in our nation and in our denomination. We'll review the information presented on Critical Race Theory (CRT) - a legal theory whose primary author was a devout Christian - as well as talk about racial justice in the ELCA. Then, we'll discuss a very practical three-step method that any of us can use to create a "safe space" and challenge ignorance and racism in our daily lives.



B5 The Spirit at work in Synod Youth Ministry - The Rev. Dr. Delaney, Virginia Synod

A review of the most important ministry commitments of Virginia Synod's Youth Ministry and a look ahead at some ministry possibilities for the next chapter.



B6 Helping without Hurting - A Practical Guide to Walking with Low-income People - The Rev. Terrie Sternberg

How do we define "poverty?" How we see poverty shapes how we serve our neighbors who seek financial assistance from our church. Drawing from the work of Brian Fikkert and Steve Corbett (*When Helping Hurts*), we will explore where we fall short in addressing poverty alleviation by responding to symptoms rather than holistically addressing the complex roots of our neighbors' poverty. In the process, we will discover our own sort of poverty.



Concurrent Sessions C: Friday from 3:15-4:30 PM



C1 Laity Invited to a Conversation with Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry, ELCA

Reflecting on one of the ELCA's priority areas - a connected, sustainable church - Presiding Bishop Curry's focus for this year is to emphasize a connected church. Come and have a conversation about what that would mean for the laity. Commissioned lay ministers who are not appointed as SAMs are invited to this session.



C2 God is Neurodivergent: Theology and Practice to Include All Brains - Nathaniel Porter, CLM, Our Saviour, Christiansburg

This session includes an overview of neurodiversity and a range of neurodivergent types (such as autism, ADHD, bipolar, and many learning disabilities), an introduction to disability theology with specific consideration of how the Bible reflects and addresses neurodiversity, and practical ideas for more fully integrating neurodivergent folk into the lives of congregations.



C3 Exploring Essential Oils for Emotions & Support - Jamie Serafin, Wellness Advocate

Discover a hands-on way to understand how stress and emotions affect daily life, relationships, and faith. You'll learn how scent influences the brain and explore gentle practices with essential oils that support calmness, emotional balance, and resilience. Each person will make a custom roller blend to take home.



C4 Compassionate Community through the Enneagram - Christina Nelson, St. Stephen, Williamsburg

The enneagram is a powerful tool for increasing self-awareness, spiritual receptivity, and collective liberation. As we wrestle with the gifts, challenges, and wisdom of our type, radical acceptance and compassion are essential. In this workshop, we will dive deeper not only into the unique aspects of each enneagram type but also into how we can resonate with and understand one another. There will be opportunities for small-group discussions designed to foster self-reflection and community care. You do not need to know your type to participate. The goal of this workshop is to give participants a taste of how powerful a tool for transformation the enneagram can be in their lives.



C5 Crafting Crystal Seashell Wonders - Maribeth Ocock, St. Mark, Yorktown

Dive into the enchanting world of crystal crafts this workshop. Discover the magic of transforming ordinary seashells into sparkling ornaments using simple, everyday ingredients. Perfect for all ages, this hands-on experience will ignite your creativity and leave you with stunning, handcrafted treasures to cherish or gift. Join us for a journey of discovery and creativity by the sea!



Order a Power in the Spirit Event T-shirt - \$10

The 2026 Power in the Spirit shirt features this year's event logo on the back of the shirt and a 40th anniversary logo on the front. See the registration form for sizing options. The shirts will be available for pickup when you check in for the event.



All items needs to be ordered and paid for during registration.

The deadline for ordering is June 22.

Order Power in the Spirit 40th Anniversary Merchandise

In celebration of 40 years of Power in the Spirit, we are selling other merchandise. The items will be available for pickup when you check in for the event. The deadline to order is June 22.



Long-sleeved T-shirt - \$15

Event logo on the back of the shirt and the 40th anniversary logo on the front.



Polo Shirt - \$30

40th anniversary logo embroidered on the front.



Sweatshirt Jacket - \$35

Full Zip w/hood
Power in the Spirit logo embroidered on the front.



Fleece Jacket - \$40

Full Zip NO hood
40th anniversary logo embroidered on the front.



Fleece Blanket with Strap - \$25

40th anniversary logo embroidered on the front.



Panel Tote Bag - \$20

w/mesh side pockets,
front pocket, secure zippered top
40th anniversary logo embroidered on the front.

Need a Quick Meal Saturday before you head home?

Boxed Lunches for Saturday, July 18 can be **\$15** purchased during registration

Options:

- Ham & Swiss Croissant
- Turkey & Cheddar Croissant
- Grilled Veggie Wrap



Boxed lunches include chips, whole fruit, cookie & bottled water.

*Gluten free lunches available

We look forward to seeing you soon!

Each time I have been to the Conference, it has a different flavor. All I have to do is soak it up like a sponge.

This is my summer spiritual retreat!

Life changing

This was a very spiritually uplifting event. I enjoyed great fellowship and reunions with my friends in the Virginia Synod.

Each year, the programs are more diverse and timely!

Thank you

to our Sponsors



ROANOKE COLLEGE



Phone
540-389-1000



Website
vasynod.org/power-in-the-spirit

