

POWER IN THE 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.

Together we will discover how Power in the Spirit will encourage, nurture, and challenge as we embrace the Spirit who empowers, equips, and enlightens! Welcome to Power in the Spirit 2026!



We are celebrating 40 years of
Power in the Spirit! To mark this milestone,
we built a word cloud in the shape of a dove
using every theme from the past four decades.

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 in Olin Theatre
1:50 pm	Opening Worship in Olin Theatre
2:25 pm	Keynote Presentation in Olin Theatre
3:30 pm	Break Sponsored by VSWO
4:00-5:00 pm	Bible Study in Olin Theatre
5:30-6:30 pm	Dinner in Colket Center
7:00-8:15 pm	Fireside Chat with Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry in Olin Theatre
8:15 pm	Beer and Hymns in Olin



Virginia Synodical
Women's Organization

Friday, July 17

7:30-8:30 am	Breakfast in Colket Center
8:30 am	Morning Prayer in Olin Theatre
9:00 am	Bible Study in Olin Theatre
10:00 am	Break in Olin Gallery
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 in Miller Hall
3:15-4:30 pm	Concurrent Session C
5:00-6:30 pm	Dinner in Colket Center
7:00 pm	Worship with Eucharist in Olin Theatre
8:45 pm	Reception Sponsored by Roanoke College in Olin Gallery



ROANOKE
COLLEGE

Saturday, July 18

7:30-8:30 am	Breakfast in Colket Center
8:30 am	Morning Prayer in Olin Theatre
9:15 am	Keynote in Olin Theatre
10:20 am	Break in Olin Gallery
10:45 am	Sending Worship Service in Olin Theatre





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 Benshish, Musician

Michael Benshish (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.



Concurrent Sessions A: Friday from 10:30 AM-11:45 AM



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

Miller: 113

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

Colket: Pickle

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

Miller: 212

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

Miller: 114

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.

Miller: 012

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 Neubauer

Miller: 213

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

Antrim Chapel

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. Drew Tucker

Colket: Pickle

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

Miller: 212

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 - The Rev. Paul Pingel

Miller: 213

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

Miller: 114

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

Miller: 113

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

Antrim Chapel

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

Colket: Pickle

- Nathaniel Porter,

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

Miller: 212

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

Miller: 213

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

Miller: 112

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!

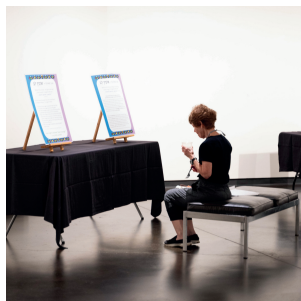
Continuing Education

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.





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.



Golf Cart Transportation

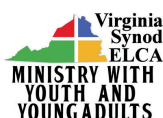
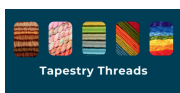
Thank you to Virginia Lutheran Homes for sponsoring golf carts. The golf carts will be available to help participants get around the Roanoke College campus. If you need a ride, call Skip Zubrod at 540-266-0357 or Bob Yates at 540-309-1566. Thank you to Skip and Bob for helping organize the volunteers for the event!



Ministry Displays

Thank you to everyone who set up a ministry display. Please take a moment to stop by and learn about the many ministries. This year, we have the following represented:

- Caroline Furnace Lutheran Camp & Retreat Center
- Deaconess Community of the ELCA
- enCircle
- GraceInside
- The Legacy at North Augusta
- Thrivent Financial
- Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy
- Virginia Synod World Hunger
- Virginia Synod Youth Ministry
- Virginia Synod Tapestry Team



Little Free Library: Take a Book, Share a Book

Take time to check out the variety of books looking for a new home. Our Little Free Library is open for all ages so there is a large variety of books and other resources. Thank you to Bill and Patty Franz for your work in setting this up each year!



Thank you for sharing your musical gifts!

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



Event Choir and Chimechoir!

The Power in the Spirit Conference Choir, directed by Michael Benshish, will share messages in song for the Friday night worship and Saturday closing worship gatherings. The Power in the Spirit Chimechoir, directed by Michael Benshish, will add to the music during the Friday Worship Service. Thank you to all who signed up to participate.

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 share Jesus in a unique way! **If you brought a guitar or other instrument, feel free to join in 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 Kathy Thompson, Pastor Chris Carr, and Judy Wilfong, who will present on the texts Ephesians 1:15-23, Acts 16:9-15, and Acts 10:1-33.

Worship Planning and Enhancement

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

Thank you to Norma Fredrickson for sharing your creativity in crafting the beautiful event-themed banner to enhance our worship experience and time together.

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





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. Information on how your congregation can participate can be found at vasynod.org/resources/world-hunger. Thank you for your support!



Items to donate include:

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

Congratulations

Congratulations to David Broyles, William Luders, Wendy Miller, Karen Nguyen, Denise Henry Orndorff, Diane Strait, and Russell Strait! To learn more about the Lay Ministry Academy, go to vasynod.org/lma or Contact Pastor Colleen Hetrick at hetrick@vasynod.org.



Congratulations to **Rev. Dr. Dave Delaney** on your retirement. We want to express our deepest gratitude for your unwavering dedication and service the past 25 years. Your commitment to guiding and inspiring countless young individuals has made a profound impact, and your legacy will continue to resonate within our community. Thank you for your tireless efforts, wisdom, and compassion. We wish you all the happiness and relaxation in this new chapter of your life!

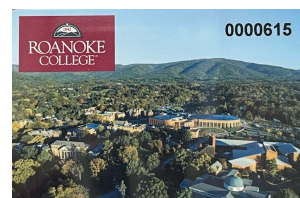
Resident Attendees (staying in the dorm on campus)

The dorm this year is Maxey, #7 on the event map. If you have any issues with your room, please contact Roanoke College staff at 540-739-4629 for assistance. When you leave, please make sure all trash is placed in the designated trash can, remove all personal items, and, if you moved any furniture, return it to its original position.

Your room key card will allow you to access both Maxey and the Bast building, #12 on the event map. The elevator in Bast provides accessibility to the upper campus, where dining and event spaces are located. When Bast is locked, use your room key to access from 6 am to 11 pm (if the key does not open the building during those hours, you can call 540-375-2310 for assistance).

Maxey Dorm Room Key Card

Resident attendees must **return their room keys to the Virginia Synod Staff or designated event boxes**. **Power in the Spirit will be charged for any cards not returned.**



Event Evaluation Survey

Please remember to complete our event evaluation survey. The committee uses the information for planning future events. Scan the QR code or go to surveymonkey.com/r/VASynodPower26. The survey will close on August 1.



POWER
I N T H E
SPIRIT

Thank you for part of this year's event!

Midwinter Power in the Spirit:
February 1-3, 2027

Summer Power in the Spirit:
July 8-10, 2027

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

Thank you to our Sponsors



**ROANOKE
COLLEGE**



Virginia Synodical
Women's Organization



Phone
540-389-1000



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

