

# Synod School 2025



**July 20-25, 2025**

**Buena Vista University  
Storm Lake, Iowa**

**Re-Forming “Normal”: Expanding HOPE**

Cover Art: Metanoia by Bilhenry Walker and students from Bethel University



Inside Cover Art: Our cover art was created from a deconstructed sculpture originally carved by Charlie Girsh from a dead tree in his yard in St Paul. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “Metanoia” as a transformative change of heart. Others suggest it means having a new perspective on the world or oneself.

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Is this heaven? No, it’s Iowa!”

Synod School is a leadership development ministry of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

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## What is Synod School?

Synod School is a learning and personal enrichment experience for people of all ages. We seek to create an environment of hospitality, healing, and hope. The week is designed for laity, clergy, individuals and families with classes and activities for adults, youth, and children.

People come from all over the country with their friends and families to share in this week of worship, study, play, and life together. It is an opportunity to learn something new, to continue conversations begun by key speakers with others over meals or a board game, to share talents of creativity and music, to worship without being in charge, to be energized for service, and to enjoy not having to cook for a week.

### 2025 Synod School Theme: Re-Forming “Normal”: Expanding HOPE

Many of us carry perceptions of what “normal” is, without ever really questioning or examining them. Mary Ann McKibben-Dana notes, “the ‘myths of normal’ permeate almost every aspect of human experience—not just in mental health, but also in race, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, class, disability, nationality, religion, and more.” These myths don’t really serve us well, or fit every individual, family or community. Both Mary Ann and Liz Theoharris, our worship leader, will explore how our personal experiences of hope might expand as we let go, or re-form, our understanding of “normal” in today’s world.

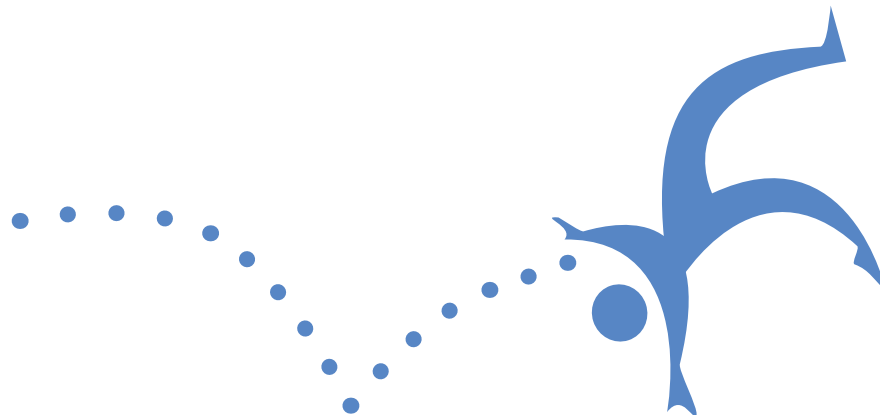
*“With that kind of hope to excite us, nothing holds us back!” - 2 Corinthians 3:12, The Message*

## The Synod School Community Covenant

At Synod School we seek to live in a strong, caring, and responsible community—a place where we treat everyone like extended family members and live with compassion toward each other and the BVU staff. We will work together to create an environment of hospitality, healing, and hope for all participants. We commit ourselves to being good stewards of the environment, our resources, and campus property. We will seek and honor God’s presence in each person.

### All Are Welcome

As a community of people striving to love God and one another we strive to celebrate and uphold the divine image in each and every person in our midst. This understanding is the foundation of Synod School’s commitment to be a place of welcome, affirmation, and celebration of all LGBTQIA+ people. Regardless of where you are in your journey of becoming; out of the closet, in the closet, still figuring things out, or somewhere else, we hope Synod School will be a place where you can connect, grow, and thrive!



# Synod School Schedule

## Saturday

3:00 p.m. Early Registration begins

## Sunday

1:30 p.m. Registration begins  
 4:15-4:45 p.m. Faculty Orientation Meetings  
 4:45-6:30 p.m. Dinner in Siebens Forum  
 6:15-6:45 p.m. Meet and Greet for Children's Programs Dixon Eilers 209  
 6:45-7:00 p.m. Gathering with Music in Schaller Memorial Chapel  
 7:00-7:45 p.m. Opening Worship  
 7:45-8:00 p.m. Welcome and Orientation  
 8:00 p.m. Fellowship and Hospitality on the lawn and a campus tour (First Timers encouraged)  
 10:00 p.m. Quiet Time in Dorms  
 11:00 p.m. Curfew

## Monday-Thursday

6:30-8:00 a.m. Breakfast  
 7:30 a.m. Qigong outside Forum main door  
 8:05 a.m. *Drop Off begins for children, infants through K (Dixon Eilers)*  
 8:15 a.m. A Song and a Prayer  
 8:25 a.m. Elementary children and youth released to classes  
 8:25 a.m. Announcements  
 8:30-9:15 a.m. Adult Convocation in Schaller Memorial Chapel  
 9:30-10:30 a.m. Morning AM 1 Classes  
 10:45-11:45 a.m. Morning AM 2 Classes  
 11:50 a.m. *Pick up children from Dixon Eilers*  
 11:45-1:30 p.m. Lunch  
 1:00-2:00 p.m. Free Time/Art Share/Quiet Time in Dorms  
 2:05 p.m. *Drop Off begins for children*  
 2:15-3:30 p.m. Afternoon PM 1 Classes  
 3:45-5:00 p.m. Afternoon PM 2 Classes

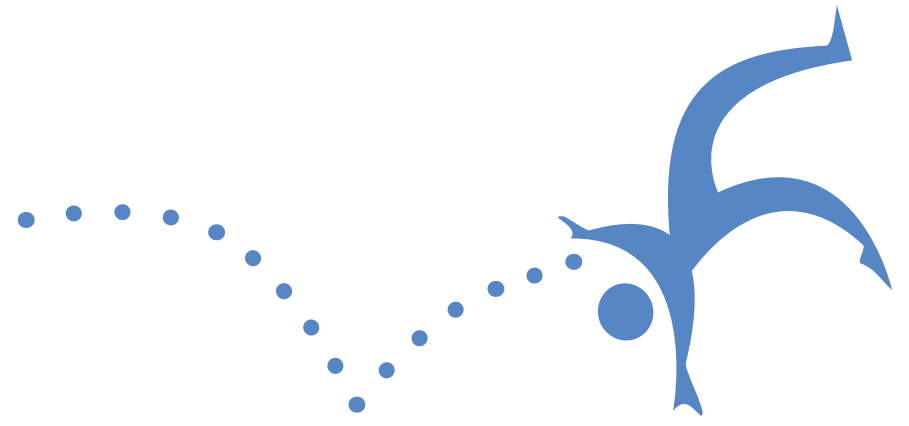
5:05 p.m.  
 5:00-6:30 p.m.  
 6:40 p.m.  
 6:45-7:30 p.m.  
 7:45 p.m.  
 10:00 p.m.  
 11:00 p.m.

*Pick up children from Dixon Eilers*  
 Dinner  
 Announcements in Schaller Memorial Chapel  
 Evening Worship  
 Evening Activities  
 Quiet Time in Dorms  
 Curfew

## Friday

7:00-8:45 a.m.  
 7:30 a.m.  
 8:00-9:00 a.m.  
 8:50 a.m.  
 9:00 a.m.  
 9:10 a.m.  
 9:15 a.m.  
 10:00-10:45 a.m.  
 11:00-11:45 a.m.  
 11:50 a.m.  
 12:00-12:30 p.m.  
 12:30-1:00 p.m.  
 1:30 p.m.

Breakfast  
 Qigong outside Forum main door  
 Packing Time—out of rooms by 10:00 a.m.  
*Drop Off begins for children infants through K (Dixon Eilers)*  
 A Song and a Prayer  
 Elementary children and youth released to classes  
 Announcements  
 Convocation (30 minutes)  
 Morning AM 1 Classes  
 Morning AM 2 Classes  
*Pick up children from Pierce/White or Dixon Eilers 209*  
 Closing Worship Celebration of Future—featuring ritual for children and youth  
 Lunch  
 Off campus and on the way home!



## Convocation Speakers

**The Rev. MaryAnn McKibben Dana** (she/her/hers), is the Adult Convocation Speaker. She is a writer, pastor, speaker, and ministry coach living in the Virginia suburbs of DC. She is author of three books, *Hope: A*

*User's Manual*, *God, Improv, and the Art of Living*, and *Sabbath in the Suburbs*, and writes a weekly newsletter for thousands of subscribers called The Blue Room. Her writing has also appeared in TIME.com, The Washington Post, Huffington Post, Religion Dispatches, Journal for Preachers, the Christian Century, and Presbyterians Today. She was featured on PBS's Religion and Ethics Newsweekly for her work on Sabbath and was recognized by the Presbyterian Writers Guild with the 2015-2016 David Steele Distinguished Writer Award.

She currently serves as associate pastor at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Herndon, VA. MaryAnn is a graduate of Rice University in Houston, Texas and received her M.Div. from Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. She is a mother of three, an imperfect knitter, and an occasional ultramarathoner.

**Rev. Pepa Paniagua** (she/her/hers), Youth Convocation Speaker, is a pastor, facilitator, educator, innovator, writer, advocate and ally. Growing up on the West Coast between the Redwoods and the Pacific, Pepa believes that as much can be learned by placing your bare feet in the sand and listening as can be learned from any book. Pepa is a proud and loyal SF 49ers fan and loves a good story, good food, and good coffee. As a graduate of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and longtime member of Grace Presbytery, Pepa has learned to faithfully follow God's leadership as she has now lived more than 18 years in Texas, which is approximately 18 more years than she ever planned. Pepa has served in a variety of roles in her ministry. She was the founder of kin-dom community, a New Worshipping Community of the PCUSA, and is currently serving as the Coordinator for Innovation of New Ministry Development at Grace Presbytery. Pepa and her wife, Kelli, live in North Texas with their two dogs, Juneaux and Opie.



## Worship Leaders

**Morning Song and a Prayer** will be led once again by

**The Rev. Dr. Matt Sauer** (he/him/his), a neighbor, disciple, husband, father, community activist, and pastor. He is the pastor of Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry, an innovative ministry of First Presbyterian Church and Peace United Church of Christ, in Manitowoc, WI. Matt is a co-founder of the Manitowoc Warming Shelter and the Neighborhood of Manitowoc County. He calls himself a Mr. Rogers Christian and embraces those in poverty and oppression as his neighbors.



**The Reverend Dr. Liz Theoharis** (she/her/hers), a theologian, pastor, author, and anti-poverty activist, will lead our **Evening Worship**. She is the Director of the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights, and Social Justice and Co-Chair of the Poor People's Campaign: A

National Call for Moral Revival. Liz has been organizing in poor and low-income communities for the past 30 years. Her books include: *You Only Get What You're Organized to Take: Lessons from the Movement to End Poverty*, *We Cry Justice: Reading the Bible with the Poor People's Campaign*, and *Always with Us?: What Jesus Really Said about the Poor*. She has been published in the *New York Times*, *Politico*, *the Washington Post*, *Sojourners* and elsewhere. Rev. Dr.



Theoharis is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and teaches at Union Theological Seminary. She has been awarded the Freedom Award from the National Civil Rights Museum, the Selma Bridge Award, the Women of Spirit Award from the Presbyterian Church (USA) and many others.

## Artist in Residence

**Bilhentry Walker** (he/him/his), sculptor, will serve as our Artist in Residence for Synod School 2025. With 55 years of experience sculpture making, his work has been featured in museum



collections, public commissions, and many exhibitions throughout the country (IA, WI, IL, SD, FL, NY, CO, TX, MN, RI, MD, and CA). He is entitled his time at Synod School, *Social Justice: The Process of Transformation*. He says, "Although many of these pieces began in the tragedies of life on the streets in the "inner city", they eventually promote transformation with regards to empathy and understanding of the social events we don't want to grapple with. The message becomes one of transformation in our thinking and promotion of ideas to help alleviate the social problems underlying many of our misperceptions." His show is guaranteed to stimulate both conversation and creative thinking.

## Worship and Spiritual Formation

Whether you're a first timer or longtime attendee, Synod School is an exceptional experience, especially because of the many opportunities it offers for enriching worship and nurturing spiritual practices. Every class or activity offered during the week enriches our faith lives. Some classes and experiences are included especially because they invite us to worship and engage God in ways that may be new to us. All worship experiences are planned to be intergenerational.

### Qigong

Qigong, pronounced "chi gong," was developed in China thousands of years ago as part of traditional Chinese medicine. It involves using exercises to optimize energy within the body, mind, and spirit, with the goal of improving and maintaining health and well-being. Qigong has both psychological and physical components and involves the regulation of the mind, breath, and body's movement and posture. (NCCIH) Kathy Reid Walker and Bilhenry Walker will lead this practice at 7:30 each morning outside Pierce/White and Siebens Forum. All are welcome.

### Morning Song and Prayer

A time of song and prayer to start our day together. This time is inspired by Presbyterian minister, Fred Rogers, and led by Matt Sauer.

### Intergenerational Evening Worship

The community gathers for worship each evening after dinner. Other activities are not scheduled during this time so that everyone can participate.

Given that there are no other activities, responsible adults are expected to be with their children and youth, hopefully in worship! Communion will be celebrated on Thursday evening. A special offering for the Synod School Scholarship Fund will be received during worship on Wednesday. Liz Theoharris is our worship leader for these services, along with the Synod School Band.

## Spiritual Direction

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to meet with a spiritual director? Would you like some help in weaving together your Synod School experience so that you can discern what the Spirit might be trying to communicate to you during this week? Sally Carlson, an experienced spiritual director, will be offering free spiritual direction to Synod School participants in an atmosphere of prayer to help you become more aware of and responsive to the presence of God in your life. Participants may sign up for individual spiritual direction sessions throughout the week at the Synod School office.

## Personal Spiritual Reflection

Visit the Spirituality Center for a time of quiet, personal reflection. Experience contemplation and prayer in new and creative ways and join others in meditative coloring of our community mandala. You can also sign up to receive an electronic document with ideas and instructions for creating a Spirituality Center in your own church. The Spirituality Center, with its prayer stations, is open daily from morning through evening for people of all ages to enjoy. Thanks to Jan Davison and Erin Davison-Rippey for this gift!

## Synod School in Mission

Back by popular demand, we will once again be compiling kits for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. You will have the opportunity to donate towards this project when you register. Materials will be purchased in bulk and put together at Synod School. This year our Dollar a Day program will benefit Hope Haven, [www.hopehaven.org](http://www.hopehaven.org). Over 50 years ago, Hope Haven opened its doors as a school for children with disabilities in Rock Valley, Iowa. Currently, services are available in over 15 communities in the Midwest, and we've delivered 130,000+ wheelchairs to those in need around the globe.

## Afternoon Activities

### Art Share

During the afternoon break, Art Share offers everyone the opportunity to create a special Synod School memory. Synod School participants take turns during the week offering a mini-experience of their particular art or craft. You can bring something you already have to embellish or purchase a t-shirt or tote bag for a project. You can also bring your “UFOs” (unfinished objects) to work on (and maybe finish). Watch for special opportunities for children to be creative.

Cindy and Tim Lowe (and team) offer the opportunity to silk screen the theme and logo from Synod School during this time. You might consider silk-screening the Synod School logo or theme onto a t-shirt that you tie-dye!

## Evening Activities

After evening worship, there are optional learning, mission, or fellowship opportunities available. Pick and choose at your own pace.

### Mini-Courses

On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings, you can spend an hour in one-time only sessions addressing a wide range of topics. Prior registration is not required for evening mini-courses. One of these will be a time to continue the discussion begun each morning with convocation speaker MaryAnn McKibben Dana. Each evening’s mini courses will be listed in the Program Guide you receive at registration. They will also be posted daily on the bulletin boards near the Synod School Office as well as in the announcement slides prior to worship services.

### Movies

There will be *one* movie shown during the week this year. The rating will be posted for adult discernment for children.

### Coffee House and All School Dance

Visit over refreshments at the Coffee House after mini courses on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday evenings. Live music and entertainment will be provided by our many talented Synod School musicians. Watch the announcements during the week for the schedule. On Wednesday everyone is invited to The All-School Dance from 7:45-9:00. It will be for youth only from 9:00-10:00.

### Board Games

Join with others in the CRUSH to play cards or board games. Learn something new or play your favorite game with participants of all ages. Steve Tykila coordinates this area for us.

### Tie Dyeing

On Monday and Tuesday evenings, join the Synod School tie-dye craze led by Sue Rutford. Bring a 100% cotton article of clothing or another item to dye, or plan to purchase a t-shirt or tote bag from Sue to transform into something unique. We reserve the right to limit the number of pieces an individual can dye so that everyone interested can participate.

## Children and Youth Programming

Programming for children and youth is based on the grades they will *enter* in August or September. All children and youth must have a parent or an accompanying adult at the school. Because the Synod of Lakes and Prairies values and encourages family participation, prices reflect subsidies for all children and youth.

There is information on the website with suggestions of ways to make the Synod School experience great for all ages and to clarify expectations.

### Children’s Programs

Children (infants through 5th grade) participate in carefully planned programs appropriate for each age group during convocation and the four scheduled class periods. Younger children are grouped as infants through young 3-year-olds and older 3 year-olds through kindergarten. They will use their senses to experience and explore the wonders of God’s creation through use of art, music, scripture, and age-appropriate activities.

Elementary classes (grades 1-5) are multi-graded and use a workshop rotation strategy where they will have three different classes each morning and each afternoon. **This year all children's programs will be in Dixon-Eilers.**

Parents and accompanying adults of children (birth-5th grade) are encouraged to stop in Dixon-Eilers 209 on Sunday between 6:00-6:45 p.m. for an opportunity to learn more about the program plans, procedures, and expectations for the week.

## Middle School Program

All middle school youth (entering grades 6-8) will have planned programming in the morning, including a convocation time with Pepa Paniagua, as well as small group activities.

### Morning Schedule

8:15-8:25 a.m.	Morning Song & A Prayer	Schaller Chapel
8:25-8:45 a.m.	Large group game and gather	MS Siebens 100, HS Anderson Auditorium
8:45-9:45 a.m.	Youth Convocation	Anderson Auditorium
9:45-10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00-11:45 a.m.	Small Groups	Various locations

Middle School youth will pre-register for their two afternoon classes each day. Thursday afternoon will feature an All-Afternoon Middle School Outing to Kings Pointe Waterpark. *Afternoon classes need to be selected at the time of online registration. Some classes will have limited numbers.*

## Afternoon Classes for Middle Schoolers

### Monday

*Choose either the all-afternoon class or one from PM1 and one from PM2.*

### All Afternoon Basic Cooking - limit 12 participants

Cook like a Superhero! Vanquish those hunger pangs! Starring Fabulous Breakfast, Awesome Snacks, and Super Treats! With Kitchen Safety, Food Safety, Recipes, Menu Planning, and Budgeting.

### PM1

#### Outdoor Games - PM1

Join in the fun of outdoor sports including but not limited to Ultimate frisbee, soccer, 9-square, capture the flag. Time may also be spent inside the fieldhouse for volleyball, basketball, and dodgeball.

#### Something Artsy - PM1

Feeling crafty? This class will offer opportunities to create your own masterpiece or work on a group art project. You can also bring something you're working on. Maybe friendship bracelets, beading, a painting? The options are endless.

### PM2

#### Outdoor Games - PM2

Join in the fun of outdoor sports including but not limited to Ultimate frisbee, soccer, 9-square, capture the flag. Time may also be spent inside the fieldhouse for volleyball, basketball, and dodgeball.

### Tuesday

*Choose either the all-afternoon class or one from PM1 and one from PM2.*

### All Afternoon Advanced Cooking - limit 12 participants

Cook like a Superhero! Vanquish those hunger pangs! Starring Fabulous Breakfast, Awesome Snacks, and Super Treats! With Kitchen Safety, Food Safety, Recipes, Menu Planning, and Budgeting.

### PM1

#### Outdoor Games - PM1

Join in the fun of outdoor sports including but not limited to Ultimate frisbee, soccer, 9-square, capture the flag. Time may also be spent inside the fieldhouse for volleyball, basketball, and dodgeball.

#### Something Artsy - PM1

Feeling crafty? This class will offer opportunities to create your own masterpiece or work on a group art project. You can also bring something you're working on. Maybe friendship bracelets, beading, a painting? The options are endless.



## PM2

### Outdoor Games - PM2

Join in the fun of outdoor sports including but not limited to Ultimate frisbee, soccer, 9-square, capture the flag. Time may also be spent inside the fieldhouse for volleyball, basketball, and dodgeball.

## Wednesday

Choose either the all-afternoon class or one from PM1 and one from PM2.

### All Afternoon Advanced Cooking - limit 12 participants

Cook like a Superhero! Vanquish those hunger pangs! Starring Fabulous Breakfast, Awesome Snacks, and Super Treats! With Kitchen Safety, Food Safety, Recipes, Menu Planning, and Budgeting.

## PM1

### Outdoor Games - PM1

Join in the fun of outdoor sports including but not limited to Ultimate frisbee, soccer, 9-square, capture the flag. Time may also be spent inside the fieldhouse for volleyball, basketball, and dodgeball.

### Something Artsy - PM1

Feeling crafty? This class will offer opportunities to create your own masterpiece or work on a group art project. You can also bring something you're working on. Maybe friendship bracelets, beading, a painting? The options are endless.

## PM2

### Outdoor Games - PM2

Join in the fun of outdoor sports including but not limited to Ultimate frisbee, soccer, 9-square, capture the flag. Time may also be spent inside the fieldhouse for volleyball, basketball, and dodgeball.

## Thursday

Go to Waterpark.

## High School Program

High school youth (entering grades 9-12) will have a convocation time with Pepa Paniagua, small group discussion, and morning classes.

8:15-8:25 a.m.	Morning Song & A Prayer	Schaller Chapel
8:25-8:45 a.m.	Large group game and gather	Anderson Auditorium
8:45-9:45 a.m.	Youth Convocation	Anderson Auditorium
9:45-10:00 a.m.	Break	
10:00-11:45 a.m.	Small Groups	Various locations
2:15-5:00 p.m.	Classes	Various locations

High school youth will take two adult/HS classes. *Afternoon classes need to be selected at the time of online registration. Register early for craft classes as they fill up.*

## Children and Youth Safety

### Family, Children, and Youth Covenant - New This Year

Synod School is a covenant community for all ages. While we offer planned programming for children and youth during much of the day, some of the day is free. In order to protect the youth and create a safe space for all, it is expected that all children and youth attend their planned programming as well as nightly community worship. It is also expected that during their free time (after lunch and evenings) parents or responsible adults are keeping track of their youth. A detailed covenant will be sent to all parents and caregivers of middle and high school aged youth for them to review together before arriving on campus. During check-in you will stop at the youth table to sign the covenant.

Parents/responsible adults are expected to enforce the 10:00 p.m. quiet time in the dorms and the 11:00 p.m. curfew by making sure all children and youth are in their own dorms at the appointed times.

The safety of the children and youth at Synod School is a paramount concern of the Synod School Committee. While at Synod School, please remember that Buena Vista is a college campus and is not designed with young children in mind. Bikes, skateboards, skates, and other similar recreational equipment are not permitted on campus. While we believe that Storm Lake is a safe community, vigilance is always wise. Please

supervise your children closely when they are outside to ensure their safety. We have never had a serious mishap, but children and young people should be appropriately supervised, including during mealtimes and worship. We offer these guidelines for the safety of children and youth:

- **Elementary and younger children** should be under adult supervision.
- **Middle school youth** should be in groups when outdoors or visiting restrooms, and after dark should walk outdoors only with adult supervision. They are expected to participate in worship (or be with their responsible adult at that time).
- **High school youth** should stay in groups or pairs when walking outdoors or visiting restrooms and after dark should only walk outdoors in a group. They are expected to participate in worship (or be with their responsible adult at that time).



## Online Registration

To register for Synod School, beginning at noon April 1, 2025, go to [www.lakesandprairies.org/synod-school](http://www.lakesandprairies.org/synod-school) and click on the Registration link.

A few things to pay attention to as you register:

- **If you are registering as a family**, register each person BEFORE checking out.
- **If you are registering a middle school or senior high youth**, please include his/her/their email as the instructors will send at least one email with small group information prior to Synod School (or be sure to forward it!).
- **If you are registering a middle school or senior high youth**, they will need to select their two afternoon classes during the online registration process. Please note that a lot of the craft type of classes have limits so early registration is advised.
- **If a class has a limited enrollment**, you will see that in the catalog and when you choose your classes. If a class has already reached its enrollment limit, you will have the option of joining the waiting list.
- **All materials you will need for Synod School** will be added to the registration website as they are available. Only those who request materials by mail or who register by mail will receive them by mail. Materials (maps, registration information, packing lists) will be online by July 15 for you to download.
- **Set up an account.** After you complete your registration, you will be invited to set up an account. We advise you to do so in order to make changes to classes, etc. as needed.

**Payment by Check:** If you do not want to pay your registration fee online, you may register online but pay by check. Please send payments to the Synod School office (address on inside front cover). All payment deadlines apply. We will post it to your registration online so that you can see it was received. (Same is true for scholarships/payments from churches or presbyteries.)

**Register by Mail:** If you would like to register by mail, please complete the form at the back of the book and mail it to the Synod School office with your payment. We will register you.

# Accommodations

**Introducing a New Residence Hall!** The new four-story apartment building will offer three different fully furnished room styles, including studio options, with all units having individual temperature-controls, kitchenettes, private bedrooms, and private bathrooms. There are units that are fully ADA compliant.

## Accessibility Advisory Statement:

As we know, accessibility accommodations are not one-size-fits-all. All BVU classroom buildings have ramps and elevators and ADA-accessible restrooms, and most residence halls have ADA-accessible sleeping rooms. If you need assistance traveling to and from Storm Lake, moving luggage to and from your room, carrying your tray in the cafeteria, getting around in the buildings, or getting in and out of transportation buggies, please attend with someone you can count on to help you throughout your stay on campus. If you need mobility assistance, please bring your own equipment. The University's wheelchair is reserved for medical emergencies only. Buggy transportation between buildings on campus is provided each day to help those needing assistance from 7:00 a.m. to 15 minutes after evening programs end.

**Service Dogs and Service Dogs in Training:** Any service dog expected to be present at Synod School must be pre-approved by the Synod School and BVU prior to July 1. If a dog is in training, a discussion will be held to determine when and where the dog can be present. There is a legal distinction between what is required for licensed service dogs and dogs in training. No other kind of service animal is permitted at Synod School.

## Meals

All meals are served in the college cafeteria. A variety of items are available at every meal which should accommodate all special dietary needs.

## Special Dietary Needs

If you have dietary limitations or needs (food allergies, gluten intolerance, lactose intolerance, vegetarian, etc.) or if you have housing requests (such as a particular roommate or special considerations in housing assignments), please indicate that on your registration form and we will communicate that information to the college food service and housing

coordinator. If they are unable to accommodate all the needs, the Synod School Committee will explore some alternatives and let you know.

## Housing

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- There is no linen service provided. If you are traveling from a distance, you can mail yourself a package or plan with friends who are driving. The mailing address is on back page of the catalog
- **The new apartment building on campus is available to us in 2025. (It is beautiful!). Most apartments have two bedrooms with two beds and a private bathroom in each room. There is a shared living room with sofa, sink, and refrigerator. The rooms can accommodate children campers. There are elevators in the building so all floors are accessible.**
- All registrants residing on campus will be housed in campus residence halls and will eat in the cafeteria.
- All rooms are air conditioned.
- All rooms have two single beds that take XL Twin sheets.
- The "dorm" buildings have bathroom facilities "down the hall," and group lounges on each floor.
- The "suite" buildings have multiple suites of 3 bedrooms (with two beds in each bedroom) that share a communal living room; each suite bedroom has a private bath.
- The apartment building has multiple suites with 2 bedrooms, each of which has a private bath.
- Requests for single rooms in the dorms will be accommodated, as available, on a first-come, first-served basis. We pay per room per night. So, a double occupancy splits the cost. There may be some singles available in the apartment building, but due to pricing structure, they will be significantly more expensive than the dorm. If you are interested in a single in the apartment building, please contact Deb DeMeester directly for pricing and registration information. [ddemeester@lakesandprairies.org](mailto:ddemeester@lakesandprairies.org)
- Registering for a "double" means that you will share the room with another person, either of your choosing or assigned by the housing coordinator.
  - If you are requesting a specific roommate, both registrations must be received before you will be put on the room assignment lists.
  - If you do not request a particular person as a roommate, we will select one for you.

Please note that rooms are assigned according to your registration date. If your preferred housing is sold out when you register, you will need to choose one of the other two choices.

You can see typical room layouts at <https://www.bvu.edu/student-experience/storm-lake-campus/living-on-campus>

## Sleeping Options for Children and Middle School Youth

Children through 8<sup>th</sup> grade are provided with two housing options:

- **Bed:** Children are assigned a bed in a dorm or suite.
- **Camper:** If both beds are already full in a room, children and youth *up through 8th grade*, can “camp” in the room. This may mean a portable crib, a sleeping bag on the floor or on a cot or air mattress brought from home. There must be at least one adult in the room or an older youth who is acceptable to parents. Up to two children can be “campers” in each room but no more than 4 people can be assigned to any room. Families choosing this option should also bring all sleeping supplies and linens needed for each “camper.” Note, both beds in a room must be filled before someone can be registered as a camper so if there are just two people in a room, both must pay for the beds. If a family requires more than one room for housing, adjacent rooms will be assigned.

## Early Arrival Option

We are continuing the option of coming on Saturday and having a day to “catch your breath” prior to Synod School beginning. There is the additional cost/person for the BVU per capita, meals and room which is \$70/adult and \$40/child/youth.

## What to Bring...and Updates/Questions

Synod School is a wonderful week full of inspiration and joy. It is also a week when 550 people live together in community and in dorm rooms. Not all of the accommodations will be perfect for everyone. So, if you are particular about *anything*, **BRING IT WITH YOU!** We encourage you to read or re-read the “tips” on our *Questions and Answers* sheet, available online now. You can also check out the Synod School Facebook page for ideas or to ask questions, too (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/77936670308/>). The Synod School Committee will do our best to make your week wonderful.

## First Timers

We expect many will be attending Synod School for the first time. We will have a tour of the campus on Sunday after worship for any first timers who are interested. There will also be a place of hospitality set up in Siebens Forum throughout the week as a place to meet people and build relationships. Look for your special Welcome Table when you arrive to register!

## Commuters

Commuters are welcome at Synod School and are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the school. Registration should be completed in advance of Synod School to ensure that the desired courses are available. A la carte meals may be purchased at the Synod School Office.

## Information about Buena Vista and Storm Lake

The Buena Vista campus is in the city of Storm Lake, Iowa. For maps, pictures, and other information about the college, city and region, go to [www.bvu.edu/campus-life/storm-lake/](http://www.bvu.edu/campus-life/storm-lake/).

## Fees

These fees are all inclusive (except for commuters who also need to pay for the meals they eat). The fees include tuition, meals, lodging, per capita paid to cover maintenance to BVU, as well as snacks, and other expenses.

### Birth - 2 years staying on campus

Camper	\$75
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### Age 3 through grade 5 staying on campus

Double Dorm Room	\$200	Pierce or White
Double Suite Room	\$225	Constitution or Briscoe
Double Room in Apt	\$245	New Building
Camper in Dorm or Suite	\$190	

### Middle School Youth (Grades 6-8) staying on campus

Double Dorm Room	\$260	Pierce or White
Double Suite Room	\$290	Constitution or Briscoe
Double Room in Apt	\$310	New Building
Camper in Dorm	\$250	
Camper in Suite	\$260	

### High School Youth (Grades 9-12) staying on campus

Double Dorm Room	\$315	Pierce or White
Double Suite Room	\$360	Constitution or Briscoe
Double Room in Apt	\$370	New Building

### Adults staying on campus

Double Dorm Room	\$400	Pierce or White
Double Suite Room	\$450	Constitution or Briscoe
Single Dorm Room	\$490	Pierce or White
Double Room in Apt	\$475	New Building

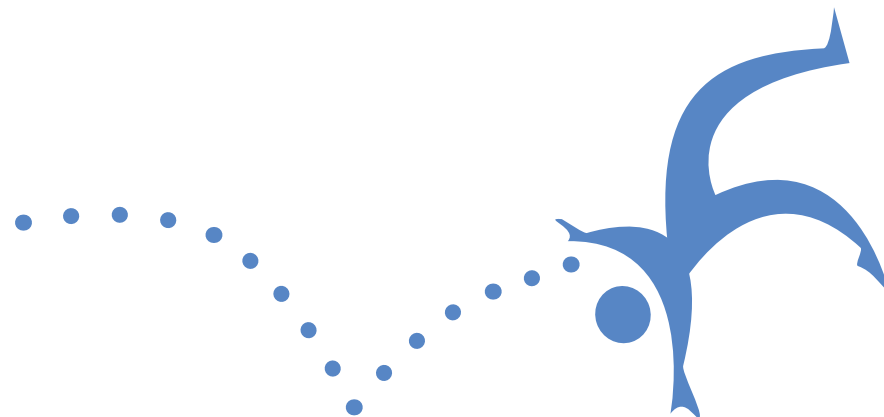
### Commuters

Adults	\$160 plus meals
Children and youth	\$80 plus meals

Early registration is encouraged, especially for those with special needs or requesting specific housing.

## Registration Deadline and Refunds

- Registrations must be received by July 1.
- We request that **all fees be paid by July 10**. Online registrants can check their balance due by logging into their registration at any time. *If you are applying for a scholarship, make sure the granting church or presbytery has your scholarship check to our office by this deadline or your credit card will be charged the balance due. This is an automated process.*
- \$100 per adult and \$25 per child/youth must accompany your registration.
- If you don't pay online, make check payable to Synod of Lakes and Prairies and send to 2115 Cliff Drive, Eagan, MN 51225-3327.
- If you wish to register additional people without using the online registration, registration forms may be downloaded from [www.lakes-andprairies.org](http://www.lakes-andprairies.org). **If you register by mail or email and do not receive a confirmation within two weeks, please call to make sure your registration was received.**
- **Refunds:** If you cancel prior to July 7 your registration fees will be refunded except for \$20/person to cover the administrative fees. No registration refunds are available for cancellations after July 7. On-site participation fees will be refunded if requests are received by July 7. They will be considered on a case-by-case basis after that, as we need to pay for the rooms and meals that we guarantee BVU on July 8.



## Scholarship Information

**First Timer Scholarships.** Because of the generosity of previous Synod School participants, we are able to offer a \$60 scholarship to the first 71 first-time registrants in celebration of our 71st annual Synod School. If you are a first-time attendee for Synod School, enter the code "First" at the end of your registration to receive a scholarship.

**The Paul & Salee Stanfield Scholarship Fund** will provide up to six scholarships for the 2025 Synod School. This fund will *match* local church scholarships up to half the cost of tuition, room, and board.

**Synod School Scholarships.** Other Synod School Scholarships are also available from the annual Synod School offering received from participants. These are ordinarily matching grants.

Application forms for the Stanfield and Synod School scholarships are available on the Synod School website (<https://lakesandprairies.org/engaging-leaders/synod-school/>).

## Registration for Adults

### Dig into some areas of study!

If you are interested in focusing on a particular area, you might consider:

- Exploring the Bible: AM2-39, AM2-40, PM1-55, PM1-62, PM1-63, PM1-64, PM2-67
- Faith and Culture: AM1-7, AM1-16, AM1-18, AM2-35, PM1-45, PM1-52, PM1-57, PM2-72, PM2-73, PM2-76,
- Congregational Life: AM1-5, AM1-14, AM1-15, AM1-19, AM1-20, AM2-30, PM-43, PM1-49, PM2-84, PM2-85
- Literature: AM1-8, PM2-82,
- Social Justice/World events and mission: AM1-12, AM2-26, AM2-28, AM2-34, PM1-51, PM1-65, PM2-83
- Music lovers: AM2-25, AM2-36, PM1-56, PM2-72,
- Christian Tradition: AM-01, AM1-11, AM1-23, PM2-70,
- Physical Activity: AM1-6, AM1-22, AM2-32, AM1-53, PM1-54, PM1-60, PM2-74, PM2-79, PM2-86
- Creative Classes: AM1-9, AM1-10, AM1-13, AM2-29, AM2-31, AM2-38, AM2-40, PM1-46, PM1-59, PM1-61, PM1-69, PM2-75, PM2-78, PM2-80, PM2-81
- Personal faith/life: AM1-17, AM1-21, AM2-27, PM1-48, PM1-50, PM2-66, PM2-71, PM2-77

# Course Descriptions

## All Morning Classes (9:30-11:45 a.m., Monday-Friday)

### AM-01 John Calvin and the Reformation

John Calvin was a pivotal figure in the Protestant Reformation. He worked to make complex theological concepts accessible and coherent. He implemented a shared system of church governance, a collective leadership structure in which power is shared between elders and pastors. He stressed trusting in God's good intentions and so much more! Come and learn about our Presbyterian roots, theology, and practices from a well known Calvin scholar!

*Elsie Anne McKee is emerita (Archibald Alexander) Professor of Reformation Studies and the History of Worship at Princeton Theological Seminary, where she taught for 29 years. Most of McKee's academic research has focused on the 16th c. Reformation, particularly books on John Calvin and a woman reformer, Katharina Schütz Zell. Alongside teaching and research, McKee is involved in a number of non-profits which support theological education, medical work, and issues of gender and justice in Congo.*

### AM-02 Food From The Great Iowa Grate. You Want It, We Got It.

Enjoy going to your State Fair and sampling all of the many food offerings? Join us as we make foods on a stick, deep-fried, grilled, baked, and fried. We will try out corn dogs, mini-donuts, anything on a stick, funnel cakes, deep-fried turkey, and other exotic snacks. Class is very hands-on and will be doing the food prep and cooking. Class is limited to 18. The cost is \$40.

*Meet our Celebrity Chefs: Our very own Tie Dye Chef Boy-Arnie Hart is a retired reliability engineer who loves the aroma of cooking and has led outdoor cooking classes at Synod School for many years. Rose Miller is a Dutch oven cooking enthusiast who learned from her son, Eagle Scout Mike, and his Boy Scout Troop.*

## AM1 Classes (9:30-10:30 a.m., Monday-Friday)

### AM1-5 Creating Rituals

This class will discuss different kinds of rituals, such as rituals around transitions (moving, starting or ending a job) and birth and death. We will also share creative and innovative ways to begin your own ritual practices for individuals, families and congregations. Come prepared to learn and share ideas with one another! Open to all people.

*Brittany Sutherland and Gina Meester met in seminary at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in 2016 and have remained friends and colleagues since. Brittany currently serves as Head of Staff and Campus Minister for First Presbyterian Church in Murray, KY. Gina currently works for Norton Healthcare as their NICU Chaplain. They share a love of fiber arts, cats, and planning all their life events to happen at the same time. They both bring experience creating rituals in different contexts, both personally and professionally.*

### AM1-6 Intermediate Pickleball

Pickleball is a rapidly evolving sport and Synod School is the perfect place to showcase your skills on the court. This class will cover strategies to apply, reinforcing the basics, and making sure the rules are hammered in! PARTICIPANTS WILL NEED TO BRING THEIR OWN PADDLES. Everything else will be provided. This class is for those that know how to play the game and want to improve. Class is limited to 10.

*Matthew Tatschl and Branden Sewing, great friends and Pickleball competitors, will co-teach this class.*

### AM1-7 The Theology of Breaking Bad

Through film clips from the five seasons of Breaking Bad we will see the main character, Walter White, slide from being a morally upright teacher to a man who is morally bereft. Eventually Walter White's actions can only be described as evil. Pride will be his ultimate downfall. Some scenes will include violence.

*Claudia Welty is a Ruling Elder at Glen Avon Presbyterian Church, Duluth, MN. She is a graduate of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities with a MARL in Social Transformation. Tanner Holcomb, recent graduate of Harbor City International School, Duluth, Minnesota and obsessed fan of Breaking Bad.*

## AM1-8 Shakespeare Out Loud

Do you like going to Shakespeare plays but can't get through reading one on your own? Do you have fond memories of studying Shakespeare and want to recall some of the Greatest Hits at Synod School this year? In this class we're going to read the best scenes of (some of) my favorite plays... OUT LOUD. Parts will be rotated, scene by scene, and no acting experience is required. Signing up just to listen and discuss is also cool! The focus will be on enjoying Shakespeare's ridiculously creative language and making it come alive together. The tentative plan is to read bits of Richard III, Midsummer Night's Dream, Much Ado about Nothing, Hamlet, and The Winter's Tale.

*Sarah Outterson-Murphy has a Ph.D. in English Literature from the City University of New York, focusing on Shakespeare's interest in how ghosts, statues, and corpses are portrayed by living actors. Now she teaches high school English in Cedar Rapids, IA.*

## AM1-9 Zarzo Baskets - Basketweaving 201

A Zarzo basket is a Spanish cheese basket traditionally woven from willow. In this class, participants will create a modified Zarzo basket using round reed instead of willow. This is a more advanced basket class. Students should have completed baskets successfully in previous classes and have confidence in their ability to learn new techniques quickly. Class is limited to 10. The cost is \$25.

*Jennifer Giles is from Urbandale, IA, and works in a medical research lab. In her spare time, she teaches her three boys how to weave baskets. Donna Gray is a recently retired pastor who now has more time for basket weaving!*

## AM1-10 Not Your Granny's Granny Square!

This class is for crocheters who are interested in learning more about how to make interesting items with granny squares beyond the basic blanket. Prior crochet knowledge not required but basic stitch knowledge will be helpful. Participants will spend time outside of class throughout the week working on their granny squares to be able to put their creations together at the end. Participants will receive a supply list ahead of time. Class is limited to 12.

*Elissa Bailey is the Stated Clerk of Great Rivers and East Iowa Presbytery as well as a therapist. She lives in Bloomington, IL with her three kids and three cats. Crocheting is her favorite pastime and self-care activity.*

## AM1-11 Imagining Mary Magdalene

Although nothing definite is known of Mary Magdalene beyond a handful of brief and intriguing references in the gospels, she has inspired Christian imagination for centuries. She is a crucial figure in the Gnostic gospels, the protagonist in colorful medieval legends, and the subject in an astonishing variety of visual art. She has been adopted as a symbol for evangelism, for repentance, and for the contemplative life. More recently, she has appeared as the person closest to Jesus in modern re-imaginings of his life like *The Last Temptation of Christ* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Our imagined versions of Mary Magdalene are interesting both for their own sake and for what they reveal about our need to generate stories. This class will appeal to anyone who is interested in the history of the Church and role of women in the Church.

*Scott Stanfield is Professor Emeritus of English, Nebraska Wesleyan University.*

## AM1-12 Fighting Hunger! Doing Justice and Showing God's Love!

Hunger continues to increase both locally and globally. Matthew 25 calls us to put our faith in action. What can we do? How can we do it? Most churches have some ministry that seeks to address hunger and food insecurity. In this class we will share and discuss our church's hunger missions and learn from others about what they do. The goal is to share and discover new ideas and best methods for fighting hunger. Topics will include collecting food, operating food pantries, feeding programs, mobile food distribution, church gardens, community gardens, outreach efforts, advocacy, developing community partnerships, securing funds and volunteers, and marketing. Participants will also learn about the Presbyterian Hunger Program and how their church can be designated as a Hunger Action Congregation by the PC(USA). Come join us as we learn together how to better serve our neighbors!

*Tom Stovall is a Ruling Elder at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Dubuque, Iowa. He is the Coordinator of the Westminster Hunger Outreach Program and serves on the Dubuque County Food Providers Network and the Dubuque County FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Board. Tom retired as executive director of a community action agency.*



### **AM1-13 Eco-Printing and Dyeing Paper & Cloth**

Learn how to use common seasonal plants and household ingredients to create nature-inspired art and gifts! This class includes cooking and printing paper and fabric with leaves, flowers and seeds. We will use some of the resulting art to create booklets or wearables and possibly other projects. Have fun indoors and out as we learn to identify plants that are safe and well-suited to this art form. No experience necessary. Class is limited to 10. The cost is \$15.

*Jennifer Schultz is an artist and costumer from Minneapolis, MN. When not working for the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, she teaches youth sewing and papermaking, creates and sells her own artwork, and runs a little vintage business on the side in addition to costuming the occasional community theater production.*

### **AM1-14 Leadership Models beyond the “One Church, One Pastor” Model**

Today’s church has adopted leadership models which are based more on secular business models than leadership models used throughout most of church history. Jesus sent his disciples out two by two and in the early church leaders seldom worked alone, yet we send out pastors to work by themselves. One of the most common reasons pastors leave ministry is isolation and loneliness. This class will explore outside-the-box models with pastors working in teams or pairs that could be used by any size of church. We can reclaim models from the early church which effectively developed leadership and initiated incredible growth by working together across congregational, community, and even denominational boundaries.

*Paul Snyder is a pastor of a Shared Ministry with one PC (U.S.A.) congregation and one ELCA congregation. He has been called to several multi-point parishes and has a passion for helping small, rural churches. He has done research on the effective leadership models of the early church and feels these are models which can be reclaimed today to provide leadership in places where the “one church, one pastor” model is no longer sustainable but more Biblically based leadership models might be more practical and effective.*

### **AM1-15 Nurturing Children through Worship and Prayer**

The 1517 Media Initiative is designed to nurture the faith of children by helping congregations to engage more fully and intentionally in intergenerational corporate worship and prayer practices. As a result of in-depth

research with current congregational leaders, this initiative is designing and producing new resources for worship and prayer. This class will give you a sneak peek into the new resources that will launch in 2025.

*Dawn Rundman is the Director of Congregational Development and Marketing for 1517 Media, and the lead for the Lilly Endowment Grant that funds this project. Cathy Kolwey is a writer of these upcoming resources, and a long time Synod School teacher/artist. She has worked at the intersection of arts and spirituality for over 20 years and brings that experience into these resources.*

### **AM1-16 Religion in the Theatre**

Some of the most fun and interesting Broadway shows retell faith stories and explore religious beliefs! Each day, we’ll explore a different show and discuss how it can inform or challenge our faith! This is a class for theater buffs as well as theater-curious! We’ll look at productions like *The Christians*, *Hadestown*, and *Prince of Egypt*! Some of your favorites from Tonys of 2025 and yesteryear are sure to pop up! A list of shows will be sent to participants in advance so that they can “watch ahead” if they wish. Curtains up on a lively class!

*Kathy Lorenzen is a professor of theatre at Hastings College! She has her B.A. in theatre from University of South Florida and her M.F.A. from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. When not teaching or attending performances, she is designing for and constructing them! She also enjoys playing with her favorite niece and nephew as well as being a “crazy cat lady.”*

### **AM1-17 Exploring Your Personal Canon**

Self-exploration leads us to try to understand why we do what we do and why we do not do other things. Where do we spend our time? What causes do we support? Which causes do we not support? How do we respond to normal conversations? To frustrating situations? How do we engage in relationships with family? Strangers? Neighbors? How does our life witness to the Christian message? What forms the basis for our choices and actions in life – what is our personal Canon, the Biblical passages and confessions that shape our Judeo-Christian beliefs?

*Christjahn Schnucker is a lifelong member of the Presbyterian church who enjoys gardening, cooking, knitting, playing stringed instruments, and having conversations with others about how to show God’s Love to the world. Having come from three generations of reformed ministers he is predestined to ponder Christ’s witness to the world. He is blessed with a loving, supportive extended family and is currently employed by a large national bank.*

## **AM1-18 Why should the Devil have all the good music? Larry Norman and the Perils of Christian Rock**

Based on a book by the same title and a song from the musical group, Petra, we will take a look at the intersection of faith and art. Larry Norman focused on blending rock music with Christian messages, challenging the belief that they were incompatible with each other. Christian institutions were skeptical of his unconventional methods and questioned the legitimacy of his work. Nonetheless, his work inspired future artists and contributed to the evolution of contemporary Christian music. This class will explore the music from the Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) era of evangelicalism.

*Karl Ver Burg was raised in a conservative Christian community in the late 80s and 90s. He is married to Sara for a short 20 years and has a kid in college.*

## **AM1-19 Stewardship Unlimited**

In this class, we will explore together what it means to be a steward and the many contexts where that calling plays itself out. Using scripture, our confessions and cultural touchpoints, participants will come away with a deeper – and more hopeful – understanding of their own calling and ways to live more fully into it. Topics will include stewardship and vocation, hope, money, creation, and citizenship.

*John Wilkinson serves as Director of Ministry Engagement and Support for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). John has served congregations in Chicago, Rochester, NY, and Philadelphia, and has been active at all levels of the church.*

## **AM1-20 Clerk of Session for Beginners**

New to Clerk or just never felt like you were getting it all together? This may be the class for you. We will cover duties of Clerks including minute-taking, permanent records, audits and more. Plus, we will share stories of challenges and help each other overcome them – or at least laugh together. Be prepared for just a bit of pre-work to make sure our time together is valuable to you. Please Note: This class is not for the Clerk who has years of experience but rather for the novice.

*Barb Davis, a retired Human Resources Professional, and Clerk of Session at First Presbyterian Church Sioux City, brings her experience to share with novice Clerks. Attention to detail and a flair for knowing and following the rules will help Barb familiarize you with some of the responsibilities of being Clerk of Session for your church. Presbyterian by choice, Barb gained much of her experience at Underwood Hills Church in Omaha before moving to Sioux City in 2009.*

## **AM1-21 Stories My Grandfather Told Me**

History books tell us the story of major events, and oral history provides the story of those who lived that history and how it affected their lives. Each of our stories allows us to see a more complete history. In this class, you will learn how oral history has been used, and how you can use it in your family, church, or other group. Included are oral history methods, sample questions for the interview, and how to obtain the legal rights to the interviews. You are encouraged to bring a device that you can use to conduct a 5 to 10-minute interview. This class is for genealogy buffs and people who are interested in local community and church history.

*Brenda Griffin makes her home in Georgetown, Kentucky where she works part-time for Bluegrass Community and Technology College as an adult education instructor. She teaches ELL and GED classes. She graduated from Sangamon State University (University of Illinois-Springfield). While in graduate school she took part in an oral history project interviewing coal miners. She is a retired Spanish teacher.*

## **AM1-22 Gentle Yoga**

This yoga encourages the participants to be present in and caring towards their body while moving through a guided practice designed for the beginner. Class is relaxing and a source of rejuvenation. Limited to 20 participants.

*Theresa Miller is a yoga instructor and teacher in the Storm Lake Community School District.*

## **AM1-23 Animal Ethics and Theology**

This class will explore our relationship with non-human animals from ethical and theological points of view. Humans affect animals in countless ways. We eat them, keep them as pets, and both destroy and sometimes attempt to preserve their habitats. In this group we will systematically investigate these practices and the moral and theological issues they raise. We will ask questions like: Are other animals conscious? What kinds of thoughts and feelings do they have? What (if any) moral obligations do we have to them? And what do the Bible and Christian theology have to say about all this? This class is for anyone who's interested in fun discussions about philosophy and theology!

*Luke Wassink is software developer with a background in math. He has long-standing interests in philosophy, theology, and animals, and has taught courses on these topics at his home church.*

## Morning 2 Classes (10:45-11:45 a.m., Monday-Friday)

### AM2-25 25 Hymns You Probably Don't Know, But Should

There are approximately 200 hymns that are common to the four hymnals currently used by the PC(USA) (Glory to God) and the denominations with whom we are in full communion: the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Worship), the RCA (Lift Up Your Hearts), and the UCC (The New Century Hymnal). A couple of weeks prior to Synod School, those who have signed up for this class will help identify the Top 25 least-known of these hymns. Using the old adage of “see one, do one, teach one,” we’ll take the hymns one at a time, first learning about how that hymn came to be written (and how its tune came to be composed) and watching a video of a performance of that hymn. Then we’ll learn it, sing it together, and explore some practical tips on introducing it to a congregation. We’ll also look at how to use it within the liturgy and celebration of the Liturgical Year. Audience: Pastors, Church Musicians, Choir/Ensemble Members, Anyone who likes to sing!

*John Allen T. Bankson is a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA) as well as a musician, composer/arranger, and conductor. John Allen serves as the Pastor of Union Presbyterian Church in Fort Madison, IA.*

### AM2-26 Diplomacy and the Crises of Order in the 21st Century

The conduct of relations among nations—diplomacy—assumes some agreement on the ‘international, rules-based order’. But what that order includes, and who sets its terms, are changing. The week will look at great power competition, smaller power maneuvering—and whatever crises have arisen leading up to Synod School. The class is intended for anyone curious about international affairs and U.S. foreign policy. No prior study or reading is expected.

*Bill Davnie is a retired Foreign Service Officer, and a member of the Presbytery of Twin Cities Area, which he previously served as Stated Clerk.*

### AM2-27 Oh Lord, it's Hard to be Humble

It can't be denied, a healthy ego is a great thing to have. It gets you out of bed in the morning, keeps you motivated at work and gives you the confidence to stand up for yourself. And taking pride in your appearance, the quality of your work or your beautiful children—all admirable traits, right? Yet we know scripture is pretty clear on the matter: we must be

humble. In this class we will explore the Christian virtue of humility and learn why it is so important for our spiritual growth. We'll uncover the negative aspects of pride and conceit, how they show up in our lives (often in disguise), and how they harm us. We'll also find practices to cultivate humility and—here's the kicker—learn how it can become our greatest superpower, giving us the ability to join with Paul in saying, “whenever I am weak, then I am strong.”

*Christi Hartwell is a ruling elder living in the middle of Minnesota. She shares her humble home with her humble husband and two decidedly non-humble cats. At last year's Synod School she taught a class on St. Francis of Assisi, who was a stellar example of humility. Christi makes no such claim for herself, but she admires the virtue from afar and enjoys talking about it with anyone who cares to listen.*

### AM2-28 Introduction to Christian Nationalism

Scholars and journalists use the term “Christian nationalism” to describe a nostalgic mythology driving the imposition of theocratic government. American Presbyterians, traditionally, have defended the separation of church and state. This course looks at this intersection of American and Presbyterian history and identifies current trends and themes of Christian nationalism.

*Tom Willadsen has taught at Synod School since 2013. After more than 25 years as an installed pastor he transitioned to transitional pastoring six years ago. It's a good match for his short attention span and lack of ambition. He brings a passion for accuracy and fairness to the discussion of the line separating church and state in American history.*

### AM2-29 Hymnal Upcycling

Have you ever wondered what happened to those old red hymnals from 1955? Apparently the gravitational pull of the universe brought them all to Buena Vista University! We'll learn how to make beautiful ornaments and crafts from those hymnals that are gathering dust. Come honor our heritage!

*Melanie Hauser is the University Chaplain at Buena Vista University and proud servant to Reepicheep, the campus therapy cat.*

## **AM2-30 Books & Church & Magic & Kids: Faith According to Mo & Co.**

We love using children's books in the context of congregational life because the world of children's literature is both vast and highly entertaining! And it's chock full of themes that we find woven throughout Scripture – God's Great Story of Faith. There are so many fun and enlightening things we can learn about faith through these stories, and the possibilities for how they can be used are nearly endless. Plus, when you use these familiar, secular stories in the context of Christian faith formation, when children encounter them out in "the real world" (in their classroom, in their school library, at a friend's house, etc.), it becomes a mental trigger for the lessons they learned at church. It gives them an outlet for sharing their faith, even at such a young age. This course will look at a wide variety of kids' books (some new, some old) and explore ways to use them in the life of the church—in worship, sermon, Christian ed., etc.

*Lisa Johnson is the pastor at the Presbyterian Church of Oronoco in southeastern Minnesota. She has three kids of her own, and far more books than she's willing to admit (kids' books and otherwise). She is also the child of a life-long children's librarian (see other instructor). Dianne Pinney is a retired children's librarian and life-long lover of books, kids' and otherwise. Her super power is reading aloud (cape optional), especially when it comes to bringing children's books to life. She lives in Le Sueur, MN (and is the mother of the other instructor).*

## **AM2-31 Make a Mixed Media Accordion Book**

We will learn how to assemble a small accordion book from cardstock (4"x6"), including fun pockets and flaps for journaling and decorating; and making a cover with a ribbon tie. Book will be decorated with quotes and phrases, papers and washi tape, paint and stamps, tassels and ribbons. Those who like a guided project will be led through a book with the words of Psalm 23. For those who want to follow their own creative path, you're welcome to make the book with any theme you choose. Class is limited to 15. The cost is \$10. No experience is necessary.

*Siobhan Warren is half of a clergy couple, and serves at First Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, IL. She has recently learned importance of creativity in her own spiritual life, and has enjoyed learning new paper crafting techniques.*

## **AM2-32 Ballroom and Nightclub Dance**

Step onto the dance floor with confidence and style! In this engaging and fun ballroom dance class, we will focus on the elegant Rumba and the

energetic Hustle. The Rumba is a slow and romantic dance that's perfect for weddings and the Synod School dance. The Hustle is a high-energy dance that's a staple at clubs and parties, especially when the disco music is playing! We'll cover the basics as well as some exciting variations to keep the dance floor buzzing. Beginner and advanced dancers are welcome—come on your own or bring a partner.

*Jill and Jason Johnson are retired ballroom dance teachers and competitors from Saint Paul, MN.*

## **AM2-33 Enhancing Your Trivia for Fun and Nonprofit!**

Whether it's a weekly trivia night or a once-a-year fundraiser, and whether your audience is looking for Disney and Bluey or Star Wars and the Marvel Cinematic Universe, there are proven techniques to add excitement and variety to trivia games. And they can be used at any level of difficulty as well as on any topic. You'll not only learn the techniques, but will have the opportunity to practice and receive advice on how to word your questions and structure a game for maximum excitement and maximum chance your audience will look forward to the next one. It's all about making trivia fun!

*Rick Goldfarb ran trivia games on AOL for over 20 years and lost on Jeopardy!*

## **AM2-34 Beyond the Mission Trip: Partnering with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church**

A Reformation is taking place in Ethiopia as Protestants break off from the long-established Orthodox church and reach out to new believers. Learn about the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus ("friend of Jesus"), founded in 1974, the fastest growing church in the world. Both Presbyterian and Lutheran, it preaches social justice, ordains women and believes in "the whole gospel for the whole person for the whole world." Find out how your church or presbytery might want to get involved in meaningful ways. Hear exciting news about how our new "sister church" is growing by leaps and bounds. Learn about Ethiopian religion both in Africa and the Midwest and just explore possible avenues for future involvement.

*Gilo Gora Agwa, originally from Gambela in the far west of Ethiopia where he and his tribe, the Anuak, have suffered persecution, is now the pastor of Foundations of Life church community in the Twin Cities. He has seminary degrees from Addis Ababa and Dubuque Seminary. Heidi Vardeman, a popular Synod School teacher, started her retirement 2023 by teaching at Terfa Jarso Seminary in Mettu, Ethiopia.*

### **AM2-35 I Don't Want to be a Cyborg: A Critical Look at the Technology that Shapes our Lives**

AI. The Singularity. Smartphones. Robot pets. We hear about this stuff all the time, but is humankind really prepared for the speed of these changes? In this class we will take a deep, critical look into understanding how technology reshapes our relationships, lives, and our brains. We'll examine some cutting-edge thinkers (McLuhan, Rushkoff, Buolamwini, Turkle) to help us navigate a brave/scary new world. If you've ever felt overwhelmed by new technology, you're not alone. Recommended reading: *Program or Be Programmed* by Douglas Rushkoff.

*Dave Penn is a son, brother, husband, and father, making his attempt at existing in the Boston Metro area. He teaches theology at a little private college in New Hampshire, which allows easy access to some pretty fun mountain bike trails. He is also a percussionist, performing, teaching, and arranging music across genres.*

### **AM2-36 Grunge and the Gospel: Finding God and Ourselves in '90s Rock**

As GenX came of age and millennials were born, a new type of rock was birthed in the Pacific Northwest which firmly repudiated the excesses of the music of the 1980s. This class will examine the music of bands like Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, and Alice in Chains as a lens through which we can learn about God and ourselves. Topics will include Christology, soteriology, evangelism, and imago dei. Content warning: music might include adult language and themes, including suicide.

*TJ Shirley is the pastor of Calvin Presbyterian Church in Long Lake, Minnesota. TJ is a classically trained vocalist and trumpeter and served for almost 20 years in music ministry before his call to Calvin. In the past, he has gigged as a jazz and rock musician and has published articles about the confluence of contemporary music and mainline theology.*

### **AM2-37 Creating Accessible Documents (And Fixing Ones That Aren't)**

In today's digital landscape, accessibility is crucial for ensuring that all individuals, regardless of ability, can access and engage with content. This hands-on course is designed to equip participants with the skills needed to create and remediate accessible documents across various platforms.

Throughout this course, you will learn about applying accessibility standards, creating accessible documents, remediating existing documents, and

utilizing accessibility tools. By the end of the course, you'll be equipped with the knowledge and skills to ensure that your documents are accessible to everyone, enhancing usability and compliance while fostering an inclusive environment.

*Dawn Griffin is an Instructional Designer for the Human Development Institute (HDI) at the University of Kentucky. HDI is Kentucky's Center on Disability and is part of a nationwide network of University Centers of Excellence. As an Instructional Designer Dawn creates online training primarily for Early Childhood Professionals, utilizing the principles of accessibility.*

### **AM2-38 Intro to Spinning Yarn on a Drop Spindle**

Have you ever wanted to spin your own yarn? Maybe you were put off because you didn't have a spinning wheel. Or maybe it just seemed too complicated. Come join us as we learn the magic of spinning yarn on a simple and portable tool—a suspended (or drop) spindle. Materials cost: \$25 which includes a spindle and fiber for spinning. Class is limited to 16.

*Sandy Maxa spins, weaves, sews and generally aspires to living a creative life. She lives with her husband and some cats in Lenox, Iowa. Rhonda Osborn cares for children by day and loves to do crafts.*

### **AM2-39 Even More Reading the Bible on Turtle Island**

In 2024, Chris introduced us how some Indigenous Christians read the Bible and what difference interpreting the Bible from an "Indigenous lens" makes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Christians. This work is based on his upcoming book on the same topic. Chris has even MORE stories to share regarding Indigenous notions of salvation/healing, reading Daniel in light of the Boarding School Experiences, reading the Psalms alongside the hymns sung along the Trail of Tears, and how Indigenous people might help us to rethink such notions of 'promised lands.' No prior knowledge of the previous years course is necessary. This class is for anyone who loves reading the Bible, pastors, lay leaders, anyone who loves listening to good stories.

*Chris Hoklotubbe, is an assistant professor of Classics at Cornell College (Mount Vernon, Iowa) and Director of Graduate Studies for NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community. He is the lucky husband to Stephanie Hoklotubbe (who you probably hear during worship) and father to his two daughters, Claire and Emily. He comes to Synod School as an Iowa transplant and former ruling elder and deacon of Fourth Presbyterian Church, South Boston.*

## AM2-40 Wire Wraps, Links, and Beads

Explore the links you can make and wrap with wire, adding beads and wrapped stones to make pendants, earrings, rings, and bracelets. Bring your own beads or stones if you wish, and create a piece (or pieces) using them. Or use the ones I'll bring - there will be plenty to play with. You'll need a basic set of jewelry tools. Class is limited to 10. The cost is \$5.

*Marjorie Goldfarb is a retired writer/editor (and earlier, geologist) who has been making jewelry for many years. She accumulates wire, chain maille rings, beads, and stones the way knitters collect yarn and quilters collect fabric.*

## AM2-41 PW/Horizons 2025-26 Bible Study: Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ

*by Rhashell D. Hunter with suggestions for leaders by Joyce MacKichan Walker*

In this Bible study, we will explore resilience, modeled for us by several biblical characters, gospel and epistle writers, as well as Jesus. This ability to spring back into shape and to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or stress—such as from family, relationships, health, workplace, and financial stressors—is key for those who survive and thrive well in change.

The Bible study is also about joy. How do we find joy in a chaotic world? Joy is sometimes confused with happiness. For Christians, joy is the second fruit of the spirit, preceded by love and followed by peace (Gal 5:22-23). Trusting in God when we are in trying times can fill us with glorious joy and peace. We have joy in our suffering, because ultimately our joy is found in Jesus Christ.

We will also seek to rediscover our identity, which is more than who we are or who we show ourselves to be. At its core, it points to our humanity. Our core identity is not found in our titles, our positions, our spouses, our partners, or our possessions. For Christians, our identity is found in Jesus Christ.

*Mary Pol, former Synod School Dean, retired pastor, and passionate Bible Study teacher will facilitate this class.*

## All Afternoon Classes (2:15-5:00 p.m., Monday-Thursday)

### PM-43 Presbyterian Polity

What makes Presbyterians Presbyterian? Why do we do what we do? Many of the answers to these questions are found in the theology and polity of the Presbyterian Church (USA). This class will explore the foundations of

the *Book of Order* as well as the *Book of Confessions*.

*Pam Prouty currently serves as Stated Clerk for the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys and the Synod of Lakes and Prairies. She is also pastor of the congregation in Windom, MN.*

## PM1 Classes for Adults and Senior Highs (2:15-3:30 p.m., Monday-Thursday)

### PM1-45 Let's Talk About Taylor

Taylor who? Taylor Swift, of course! Taylor Swift is more than a pop singer: she's a cultural phenomenon. Through her recordings, her concerts, and especially her songwriting, she has shown a unique ability to connect with people of all ages and backgrounds. In this class we'll watch Taylor Swift videos, look at her lyrics, and talk about what she means to her fans. As we do this, we'll explore how her message relates to Christian faith and its expression in contemporary society. Whether you're a diehard Swiftie or just wondering what the excitement is all about, this class is for you.

*Richard Francis is a retired Presbyterian minister who lives in Carroll, Iowa, with his wife, Kathy. In addition to serving as pastor to churches in Missouri and Iowa for 39 years, he served for a time as a Stated Clerk. He has been playing and listening to all kinds of music for as long as he can remember. Camryn Church is a recent college graduate originally from Atlantic, Iowa. She has been a lifelong member of the First United Presbyterian Church in Atlantic, serving as a Deacon throughout high school. Music has been an integral part of her life, whether it be listening to the classic hits of the 80s, or of course, Taylor Swift.*

### PM1-46 Calling all UFOs, WIPs, WIPes, and PIGS!

For all you crafty people, you may already know what I mean. Unfinished Objects, Works in Progress (...Eventually), and Projects in Grocery Sacks. Join a no-judgement, guilt-free, supportive group with one goal in mind, allowing yourself the time, energy, and focus to knock a few of these projects out. Bring what you need to finish your project and let's do this! But if you'd rather just take the chance to breathe and clear your mind we won't judge...then we can simply call it a class for getting ready to get ready. Scheduling time to scrapbook, journal, sew, knit, etc, just because you want to can be difficult. Let this be your time to create.

*Linda Wycoff has a long-standing relationship with UFOs, from quilts to cross-stitch, embroidery, woodworking, and most anything DIY that can be found on Pinterest. She understands the expectation of the nebulous "they" that every minute should be productive, but that time to create is an absolute need.*

### **PM1-47 Real Conversations: Staying Present and Engaged in Difficult Circumstances**

Real Conversations dives into conversation and practical skills for staying grounded and engaged in life's difficult circumstances. Do you find yourself stressed and silenced in tough conversations? You are not alone. Together, we'll look at the impact our values, needs, emotional responses, ability to make requests, listening into shared values and knowing our intentions have in moving us deeper into or out of relationship. We'll notice when we figuratively leave the room and explore ways we can return and stay put.

*Jamie Deering is the Director of Franciscan Spiritual Connections with the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota, a ministry that creates events and programs focusing on deepening connection with God, self, others, and all of creation within and in the world. She created the six-week series Real Conversations: Staying Present and Engaged in Difficult Situations, which she co-teaches with a Franciscan Sister. Jamie is also a spiritual director with her own private practice who companions others on their spiritual journey.*

### **PM1-48 Spirit Open My Heart: Exploring Difficult Topics through Novels**

When we read, we expand our capacity for empathy and compassion. We will discuss novels that give us insights regarding immigration, climate change, neurodiversity, LGBTQIA+, and people around the world.

*Stacy Cavanaugh is an avid reader, member of the local library board of directors, and a pastor at Union Presbyterian Church in Monroe, Wisconsin. She is an omnivore, reading historical fiction, international fiction, mysteries, thrillers, history, fantasy, science fiction, memoirs, biographies, history, cookbooks, gardening books, travelogues, and art history.*

### **PM1-49 Radical Moderation: Facilitating Meetings for the Transformation of the World (and Ourselves)**

How do we moderate councils and committees so we can move toward the world we actually yearn for? How can groups discern the "new thing" God is doing in a way that actually lets us be changed? Group discernment is spiritual work that calls us to embody and point toward the kingdom of heaven among us. We will share skills and practices for nurturing trust, focusing on the right question at the right time, and navigating uncertainty. Insights from nonviolent communication, emergent

facilitation, and inquiry-based learning will help shape our conversations. This course is designed for moderators who lead meetings in a formal capacity, but the principles apply to any group participant who longs for a more whole world.

*Nathan Williams moderates the session at Covenant Presbyterian Church in West Des Moines and has served as moderator of Des Moines Presbytery.*

### **PM1-50 What Rules Your Life? Crafting Your Own Rule of Life**

Are you living intentionally? Discover the power of creating a personal Rule of Life in this class designed for those seeking deeper purpose and alignment in their daily routines. We will embark on a reflective journey to explore the rhythms and patterns that currently shape our lives. Through engaging discussions, Scriptural insights, and thoughtful readings, participants will uncover their unique values and priorities. Each day there will be a time of reading and discussing as well as individual work and time for reflection. By the end of the week, participants will have the tools to be on your way to crafting your own, personalized Rule of Life.

*Anna Sheetz is the Director of Christian Education at First Presbyterian Church of Iowa City, where she has served since 2016. She lives in Cedar Rapids with her husband, Layne, two children, Emily and Oliver, and family dog, Bentley. Anna enjoys reading, kayaking, hiking, and writing; forever a learner!*

### **PM1-51 For the Sake of Peace**

In a world saturated in militaristic ideologies, political strategies, and pop culture expressions—like camo baby clothes!—peace-making is essential to human thriving. But peace-making is more than kissing and making up. Because tensions persists long after peace "is made," ongoing peace demands long commitments of time, shared storytelling, and community rebuilding. Join Ellen Smith in discussions on true peace, barriers to peace-making, and what lasting peace requires of individuals, social orders, and governments.

*Ellen Smith has served as Regional Liaison for Central and Eastern Europe (living in the region beginning in 2001) and a member of the Militarism Working Group of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.*

## **PM1-52 Dream a Little Meme With Me**

Memes are ubiquitous in our digital world. We chuckle, grimace, pause or say “Hmmm” when seeing them. Sometimes we also then share them on our own social media platforms. Join in the exploration as we use memes as conversation starters. What interesting questions might we find as the basis for any particular meme? Let’s discover what is thoughtful, helpful, and or positive in a selection of memes on various themes. We will conclude the week by creating a meme(s) about Synod School.

*Bill Lawser is a Retired Teaching Elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA). He has served the church from coast to coast to coast as an associate pastor, interim pastor, and presbytery staff. He spends his time attending sporting events at the University of Illinois in Champaign Illinois and making awesome Blueberry Pie and Christmas Cookies.*

## **PM1-53 Ultimate Sports I**

Volleyball, Ultimate Frisbee, Basketball, Soccer and other sports will be played in a friendly, but competitive atmosphere.

*Tim Maxa is a SW Iowa Pastor, who has led the Ultimate Sports class for many years. Jazzy Group is a former Ultimate Sports participant who now assists with the class.*

## **PM1-54 Running for Joy and Connection**

Do you love to run? This inclusive running opportunity is built for all ages, all paces and it’s as simple as can be. We will start the run from a specific meet up point in town and go 20 mins out and back. No distance expected. Just get as far as you can in the time, After we will gather together for fellowship and stretching before the next class. The goal each day is to get out, explore a new location and make friends. Some runs will start from campus while others begin elsewhere. Participants should come with appropriate running gear, shoes, and water bottle.

*Shannon Borgman is a small church pastor in a small town and has a lovely trail called the Blue River Rail Trail in Marysville KS where she does most of her running. Running is a way for her to disconnect as well as build community with a small group of friends who run with her. They are all at different paces and abilities for runs so they meet up and do what they can together.*

## **PM1-55 Defining Disability: Disability Inclusion of Neurodiversity**

Understanding disability and ways the church can be inclusive includes looking at the inclusion of those who are neurodiverse. How does neurodiversity manifest itself and how can we respond? How does the Epistle of James intersect with neurodiversity and the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)?

*Kerry Jennings holds a degree in Clinical Psychology and Community Mental Health. He has served as a Commissioned Ruling Elder, counselor and foster parent. Kerry is a father, husband and severe dyslexic.*

## **PM1-56 Acoustic Sounds**

Players, singers, and listeners of all skill levels are invited to gather together in Acoustic Sounds to share music in a relaxed atmosphere. Bring your instrument, voice, or simply desire to help the group pick out songs. It’s a four-day sing-a-long of popular songs from yesterday and today! We will pick the songs as a class and typically work from very rudimentary chord charts available on the Internet. We will share a couple of class favorites at the all-school Open-Mic on Thursday night. (Check out the Facebook page to find performances from prior years.)

*Curt Anderson lives in Los Angeles and Mac Stanfield lives in Des Moines, each on a continuing quest to be involved in live music as musicians, songwriters, and technicians.*

## **PM1-57 Marveling with the Bard: An Entirely Too Serious Look at the Marvel Cinematic Universe**

In their time, the plays of Shakespeare were considered somewhat low brow, pop culture artifacts that didn’t qualify as “high art.” It was only over time that their role in culture became understood. Everyone knows that the Marvel Movies are silly, pop culture entertainment. But if we forgot that, and looked at them as pieces of high art, what deeper, or even spiritual meaning might we be able to find?

*Dan McCurdy is the Pastor of The Presbyterian Church of West Salem, WI, a creator on Tiktok, a published author of the book “Goodnight, Tiny Bard” and generally a massive nerd. He is fascinated by all matter of storytelling and always looking for new ways to understand how the culture we are surrounded with informs our lives.*



## PM1-58 Zeus: King of the Gods?

Zeus (and his Roman equivalent Jupiter) is known in Greek mythology as the “king of the gods.” But how much power can one god have in a world with many gods? In this class, we will look at ancient literary depictions of Zeus and ask questions like: Who is Zeus? How did he become the king of the gods? Is divine justice really all that just? And how is the Greco-Roman conception of the divine different than the Judeo-Christian? This will be a great class for anyone who loves mythology.

*Matt Sherry teaches Classical Mythology (among other things) at Elon University.*

## PM1-59 Watercolor “Playshop”

This is not a traditional class or workshop. It is a chance to come and simply play with watercolors. Written instructions and some demonstrations will be provided for various watercolor techniques and projects. But you decide what you would like to do. There are no rules other than to have fun. No previous experience or artistic skill is required. If you have your own paints, brushes, watercolor pencils, markers, etc. feel free to bring them otherwise materials will be provided. Class fee is \$10. Class is limited to 22.

*Howard Chapman is a retired pastor who has been working in watercolors for many years. He has attended watercolor classes and workshops in places like Tuscany, Italy, Ghost Ranch, NM, Door County, WI and Chautauqua Institute, NY. He has taught watercolor classes in previous years and was the Synod School Artist in Residence in 2014*

## PM1-60 Folk Dancing

Are you needing a wake-up in the afternoon? Look no further—Folk Dancing is back! Together we will learn about and experience dances in several styles, including Longways Sets, Circle Dances, and more. Plan to explore many new dances from various cultural traditions and (of course!) revisit a few favorites from past courses. Wear comfy shoes and bring your enthusiasm! Please note: Participants will be moving quite a bit, but anyone who can walk at a quick pace should be comfortable in this class. No previous folk dancing experience required!

*Allison Penn is a voracious reader who also teaches elementary music just outside Boston. She has loved how folk dancing brings people together, promoting laughter and reducing stress. Good food and conversation are an essential part of her daily life, with an occasional bike ride or walk thrown in for good measure. She and her family are always ready to set an extra place at their table or welcome travelers, especially ones who are ready to play a good game!*

## PM1-61 One Rock at a Time: Painting Faith Rocks

Even if you are “not artistic” (like me!), you can create beautiful Faith Rocks to leave around town. Make someone’s day. Share your God in a very beautiful and simple way. We’ll be using paint markers, easy paint tools and learn various techniques to make beautiful rocks to share. All materials (including rocks) are provided. The cost is \$10.

*Dianne Pinney is a retired librarian and has been collecting rocks since her first child said, “Look at THIS! Let’s take it home!” Now she loves painting simple rocks that share her love of God.*

## PM1-62 THAT’S in the Bible?!: Murders

The Bible is full of stories which are not appropriate for kids, and a lot of fun to discuss. From Absalom’s dangling death in the forest to Ananias and Sapphira’s death by stewardship snafu, we’ll talk about dramatic, unusual deaths in scripture and what they might show us about human nature.

*Katie Styr lives in Davenport, IA and is the pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Milan, IL. She spends her time driving across the Mississippi River, playing games with her two daughters, and reading space operas. She likes leading Bible studies about scriptures which make terrible sermons.*

## PM1-63 A Card When You Need One

As the saying goes, “be prepared.” After taking this class you will be! You will make over a dozen cards for any event, including sympathy, get well and congratulations cards. Students need to bring scissors and their choice of adhesive. There is a fee of \$5. Class is limited to 16. Youth and adults are welcome!

*Liz Snyder has been making cards for twenty years. She belongs to two groups of stampers, which include some members whose cards have been published. These groups make cards for hospitals and cancer patients. Liz lives in Altoona, WI. Carol Ferrell has been making cards for over twenty years. She is a retired teacher and enjoys sharing the fun of card making. She lives in West Des Moines, IA and is a member of Heartland Presbyterian Church.*

## PM1-64 Creating Tiny Monsters

Imagine a world filled with tiny dragons you can fit into your pockets, or tiny gargoyles that can guard your bookshelves. It's possible with a little imagination and the right tools. In this class we will be using polymer clay to create a variety of adorable monsters for you to take home. We will also spend one day focusing on a service project by crafting "Beads of Courage" for a Tucson-based non-profit that provides beads of encouragement and victory for children and youth all over the world to mark milestones as they face medical challenges. Participants are encouraged to bring their imaginations, all other supplies will be provided by the instructors. The cost is \$20 and the intended audience are the creative and curious!

*Ani Ver Burg from Tucson, AZ, has grown up attending Synod School. She is a student at Hope College in Holland, MI, majoring in Studio Art and Theater Production. Ani's co-teacher is Sara Ver Burg, the pastor of Papago United Presbyterian Church, a ministry partner of de Cristo Presbytery to the Tohono O'odham Nation. Both Ani and Sara are excited to share a passion of slightly geeky, slightly weird, but always wonderful art with their Synod School family.*

## PM1-65 Faith and Ambition: Reviving the American Dream and Revitalizing the Role of the Church

Through interactive learning, this course delves into the intricate relationship between the American Dream and the Christian Church, exploring how religious institutions have both shaped and reflected the evolving narrative of opportunity and collective prosperity in the United States. We will investigate how the Church contributes to and critiques the political, economic, and social compromises impacting the realization of the American Dream. Special attention will be given to disparities that challenge the promise of equal opportunity and whether the Church has effectively responded to these challenges. The course will also consider the implications of current social and economic trends and the potential for the Church to influence future course corrections.

*Gordon Govens is Associate Professor of Criminal Justice and History at Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He serves as Executive Director of the College's Faith-Based and Social Justice Initiatives. Jim Koon serves as the Director of Financial Services for the Synod of Lakes and Prairies. He previously served as President of TCF Bank of Illinois/Wisconsin/Indiana, and prior to that as Director of Retail Pricing and Financial Efficiency for Bank of America.*

## PM2 Classes (3:45-5:00 p.m., Monday-Thursday)

### PM2-66 The Soundtracks of Our Souls

Music and emotions and faith journeys have always been woven together, from Gregorian chant to hymns, to past and current hit music, and more. For this class, we're going to spend the week listening to music together and talking about how that music impacts our faith. Each day will revolve around a theme (joy, lament, praise, etc.). You'll be invited to bring your favorite songs to class each day (title and artist only ... we'll find the tunes through Spotify or YouTube), we'll listen to the songs, and we'll discuss how they form and inform our faith. Open to all.

*Lisa Johnson has been the pastor at the Presbyterian Church of Oronoco, MN for more than 12 years. She is a mom to three kiddos, and she's been an avid and eclectic music lover her whole life - from hymns and contemporary Christian music to "golden oldies" to country to popular music and (almost) everything in between. The soundtrack of her soul is long!*

### PM2-67 "Where you go, I will go: The Book of Ruth"

We will closely examine and reflect upon one of the most beautiful books of the Bible. We will discover a text which is not only lovely, but also relevant to our lives today.

*Andrew Davis is pastor of Union Presbyterian Church in Saint Peter, MN.*

### PM2-68 Bible Fanfiction

There are a lot of books in the world that engage with the Bible seriously as a work of theology, a historical text, a guide for one's life, or a source of wisdom. This class is not about those. Instead, it's about the people who've decided over the years to write their own stories, often great and much acclaimed ones, but with biblical characters and themes. From online fanfiction on sites like Archive of Our Own to the oldest poem in English, the Dream of the Rood, this class asks how writing and consuming Bible fanfiction affects how we think about God and how we think about storytelling.

*Philip Styrts writes and reads more fanfiction than is healthy, and also has supposedly read the Bible at least once. He teaches literature at St. Ambrose University in Davenport, though the Catholic diocesan institution has in no way vetted the claims in this class.*

## PM2-69 Bible Art Journaling

Don't let the word "art" scare you! The goal of this class is not to teach you art, but to offer various ways that art can be used to grow a deeper connection to the Word and to lock in what has been read & learned. The best part of Bible Art Journaling is there is no right or wrong way to do it! Each day will revolve around a portion of scripture that we will read together, contemplate, and journal about. We will also go over different ways of engaging with scripture and talk about the extensive history of art journaling. Whether you've taken the class before or this will be the first time, come excited to encounter God & scripture in a new way. Class participants are encouraged to bring a bible or notebook for their journaling. Colored pencils, watercolor paints, colored paper, markers, and more will be supplied! Open to high school and adults. Creativity is not a requirement. The cost is \$5.

*Jessica Harrison is a Certified Ruling Elder, full time bank branch manager, and nerd. She enjoys reading, knitting, and spending time with her friends trying new restaurants, playing different TTRPGs (tabletop role-playing games), and watching horrible movies. Bible Art Journaling has helped her grow a deeper understanding of scripture & a closer relationship with God.*

## PM2-70 Learning from Modern Day Mystics

When we hear of mystics, it would not be surprising if the first names that came to mind are people like Hildegard of Bingen, John of the Cross or Julian of Norwich. But while it is true that Medieval Europe experienced a flowering of Christian mysticism emphasizing direct experience of God, we find mystics in every generation and from all parts of the world. This course will invite us to reflect on the lives, writings and teachings of some of the modern day men and women who deserve the label of mystic. Some of them will be familiar names, like Thomas Merton, while others, like Simone Weil, are perhaps less well known (though no less valuable to know about). The course will include an experiential element. We will take some time in each session to engage in a contemplate practice drawn from the mystics we will consider and to share the fruits of our reflection.

*Susan Stabile is a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the University of St. Thomas School of Law and an adjunct Instructor in Theology at St. Catherine's University, where she co-directs a Lilly Grant secured by that university to bring contemplative practices to congregations and parishes. An experienced spiritual director and retreat director trained in the Ignatian tradition, Susan offers retreats and other programs of spiritual formation in parishes and congregations, retreat houses and other venues around the country.*

## PM2-71 Deep Meaningful Conversations

In today's world of soundbites, let's learn to have conversations that are deep and meaningful about problems in our world. (This class was previously offered to high school students. Colin found this class to be such an eye-opening experience that he wanted to offer it to everyone.) Come, prepared to have deep meaningful conversations about controversial topics in a spirit of friendship and peace.

*Colin Giles participated in Joel Morien's deep meaningful conversation class throughout high school at Synod School. It helped him in significant ways and invites others to join and have conversations with each other to grow and have an open mindset for everyone's view points. Joel Morien is Director of Youth at First Presbyterian Church in Green Bay, WI.*

## PM2-72 The Power of Song

This class will explore the use of song as a form of protest in United States history. We will explore the Biblical roots of protest songs, how protest songs have shaped movements, the role hymns have played in protest, and the current state of protest songs. We will accomplish our goals by listening to the songs and unpacking the lyrics and our history.

*Matt Sauer is a husband, father, and community activist for justice. Matt is the pastor of Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry (an innovative PCUSA/UCC ministry) specializing in community engagement and transformation. He is a Mr. Rogers style Christian, a Star Trek geek, a collector of U.S. coins, and a history lover.*

## PM2-73 The Theology of Pixar

Watch snippets of your favorite Pixar movies as we explore theological concepts found therein. We'll especially focus on some of the lesser known movies like "The Good Dinosaur" and "Onward!" However, "Inside Out" 1 and 2 will make appearances! Come for laughter and good discussion! Parts of this class can be replicated for adult education, children's movie nights, or confirmation class! A list of movies we'll explore will be sent out in advance if you want to watch the full-length movies before you come (optional!).

*Doodle Harris is the Chaplain and Director of Service Learning at Hastings College! There, she teaches classes on the Bible, Pop Culture, and Theater and Religion. When not at work, she is hanging out with her family, reading voraciously, playing cooperative board games, and - obviously - at the movie theater!*

## PM2-74 Ultimate Sports 2

Volleyball, Ultimate Frisbee, Basketball, Soccer and other sports will be played in a friendly, but competitive atmosphere.

*Tim Maxa is a SW Iowa Pastor, who has led the Ultimate Sports class for many years. Jazzy Group is a former Ultimate Sports participant who now assists with the class.*

## PM2-75 Knit a Feather and Fan Scarf

In this class, we will learn the Feather and Fan pattern to make a scarf or washcloth. Feather and Fan is a great introduction to lace knitting, suitable for advanced beginners as well as those who are more experienced knitters. This pattern creates elegant, undulating waves and is good for making scarves, shawls, throws, and blankets. New knitters are welcome to join us to learn to knit. Class is limited to 18. Participants will bring their own materials.

*This class is taught by mother-daughter team of Barb Straus and Julia Norman. Barb lives in Lincoln, NE, and Julia in Livonia, MI.*

## PM2-76 Believing in God...and Ourselves/Others: The Gospel of Ted Lasso

What does success mean when we look beyond “wins” and “losses?” What is rom-communism? What does staying curious and not judgmental look like? How does Ted make his morning biscuits so delicious?! Using episodes of the beloved Apple TV show “Ted Lasso,” we will look at how we can find hope in community, how the world and people around us can teach us something about God that we might not otherwise know, and how each of us matter, no matter who we are or what we’ve done. And maybe, just maybe, we might cultivate more belief in ourselves and belief in each other. Limited to those over 16 years old.

*Brendan McLean is the associate pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Tyler, TX (and was youth convocation speaker in 2024). In his call, Brendan often works with children and youth, who teach him a great deal about looking at the world with wonder, curiosity, and joy. Many who know him and love him would describe him as “essentially a golden retriever.”*

## PM2-77 My Ancestor Was Who?

The goal of this class is to help you find out who your great-great ancestors were. We will talk about genealogy programs to store your information, and the importance of documenting the facts and not believing everything you read. Please plan to bring your computer for this class so you can explore different websites that you can trust. You can learn what is needed if you want to apply for your DAR or SAR. We will help you answer all those questions that everyone has when searching for family members. You should plan to bring your information with you on who you want to find. Class is limited to 10.

*Linda Stovall is the moderator of the Mission Team at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Dubuque, IA. She is a board member for the Dubuque Rescue Mission. She is the genealogist for the National Stovall Family Association. She has been doing genealogy since college and is in charge of a database of over 200,000+ people related to the Stovall Family. She was the Ruling Elder Commissioner for the General Assembly in 2020 and 2022 for John Knox Presbytery.*

## PM2-78 Color Your World—Sharing Tie-Dye with Others

This class will share the secrets of tie-dyeing on your own or in a group so you can share the magic and fun we have at Synod School. We’ll cover the basics of supplies, mixing dyes, fun and funky designs and patterns, and the tips and tricks we’ve learned over the years to make tie-dyeing in a group go smoothly. Class participants will have the opportunity to participate in our Monday & Tuesday night all-school tie dye and to have access to more colors and time to really create some dye masterpieces. Bring lots of 100% natural fiber garments and/or fabric to use in class. Class is limited to 20. The cost is \$15. Open to youth and adults.

*Synod School’s Tie Dye Queen, Sue Rutford, has been splashing dye around for many years! She lives in White Bear Lake, MN and is Clerk of Session at First Presbyterian in Stillwater, MN.*

## PM2-79 Foraging: Finding Eden Everywhere

A class for adults who want to learn more about the common, everyday harvest of food available almost anywhere. We'll also talk about basic external medicinal applications of specific plants. Recommended reading: *Edible and Medicinal Wild Plants of the Midwest*, by Matthew Alfs (\$30 <https://www.midwesterbalstudies.com/product-page/edible-medicinal-wild-plants-of-the-midwest>). Also recommended: a reliable plant identification app, such as "PictureThis." Class is limited to 16. Open to those who are willing to trust the instructor (and her books) enough to eat plants in the wild. High school youth are welcome!

*Christine Kaplunas finds joy in the weird and everyday miracles that make up our (extra)ordinary life together. Partnering with homeless women in Waterloo, Iowa for a decade, she humbly offers indigenous-informed, science-based processes for empowering people to live well under some of the crazy circumstances life might present.*

## PM2-80 Improvisation

In this class, we will explore the joyful art of making something out of nothing. We will gather together to play games, create scenes and learn the basics of comedy improvisation in a creative, safe environment. Whether you are an experienced improviser or a beginner, this class will help deepen your knowledge of the fundamentals of improvisation – agreement, active listening, playing characters and playing truthfully. Most importantly, we will have fun! Limited to 25 participants.

*Heather Anderson has spent many years exploring the art of improvisation, in classes and on stage, with such groups as Theater A Go Go, The Groundlings, LA Connection and the Frayed Knots. She currently works for the Los Angeles Unified School District.*

## PM2-81 Introduction to Line and Wash

Line and wash has nothing to do with hanging clothes out to dry but rather is a watercolor technique that combines line drawing with watercolor paint. Much of the structure of the painting is established by the drawing itself, with washes of color added—hence the name, line and wash. This course will take you through some simple projects covering the basics of this technique, hopefully creating some impressive artwork. No previous experience or artistic skill is required. This is a repeat of the class that has been offered for the last two years (2023 and 2024). Class fee is \$10. Class is limited to 22.

*Howard Chapman is a retired pastor who has been working in watercolors for many years. He has attended watercolor classes and workshops in places like Tuscany Italy, Ghost Ranch NM, Door County WI and Chautauqua Institute NY. He has taught watercolor classes in previous years and was the Synod School Artist in Residence in 2014.*

## PM2-82 Lewis in Love; Lewis On Love: Longing, Learning and Loving according to C.S. Lewis

Imagine a summer afternoon of reading where you've lost all track of time and have fallen into another world where you feel totally at home and wish you could stay forever. That's the experience that the instructor has had on numerous occasions while reading C.S. Lewis, and it will be our aim to explore the areas in Lewis's own life and writings which make his work—his novels especially—so magical and memorable. From his early life to his death in 1963, we will observe how Love came into Lewis's life and made all things new for him.

*Kevin Bushnell has been enjoying reading C.S. Lewis for nearly 50 years and has only just begun! Having both studied and taught 'Lewisiana' (the works of Lewis), he has also had the privilege of listening to people around the world tell how Lewis has opened their hearts and minds to wonder and imagination. He is a member of Dundee Presbyterian Church in Omaha.*

## PM2-83 The Great Re-Encounter

In the Great Re-Encounter we will discuss the initial encounters of Presbyterians, peoples of African descent, and Indigenous nations and peoples, taking the occasion to explore what a contemporary re-encounter might look like as well as what developments are already underway in the PC(USA) and beyond. What if the initial encounter was based on mutual exchange? What would our relationships look like today? What transformative theological and spiritual developments would be well underway by now? We will name the repairs that historic communities are calling for and practice how you can share the good news of repair and Reparations. We will discuss the current Reparations ecosystem across the US and around the world—inside and beyond the church—and how you can engage in highly functional and targeted solidarities right now.

*Jermaine Ross-Allam serves as the inaugural director of the Center for the Repair of Historic Harms at the Presbyterian Mission Agency, PC(USA), a Ph.D candidate in Social Ethics at Union Theological Seminary in Manhattan, a theology co-lead for Restorative Actions, and trustee of Restorative Actions for Afro-American individuals and communities. Milissa Carter is a Ruling Elder and an administrative volunteer and program advocate for Restorative Actions.*

### **PM2-84 From Baby Boomers to Gen Alpha: Engaging Your Entire Congregation in Giving**

Utilizing teaching, conversation, engagement, and media, join us to explore the giving trends and engagement points of every person in your congregation from the most seasoned saint to the youngest child. Participants will leave Synod School with tangible tools to take to their session, stewardship committee, and congregation so that every person gives generously and with a grateful heart that sparks their passion points in service to Christ and the Church!

*Wilson Kennedy serves as Associate Director for Special Offerings and Appeals for the Presbyterian Church. He has served in congregation and mid-council leadership roles. Lauren Rogers is Ministry Engagement Advisor (Central Region) for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) She has served in development roles in church and non-profit settings.*

### **PM2-85 Equipping the Saints for Ministry**

Presbyterians find great strength through development of faithful and committed lay leadership. The first step in equipping the saints for ministry, Ephesians 4:11-13 comes from getting the correct people, in the appropriate role, at the right time. An effective Nominating Process begins with a process of spiritual discernment not just finding people to fill slots. Then those called by God and elected by the congregation need to be trained to be effective leaders. Each day will explore the four themes of Servant Leadership, Spiritual Leadership, Shepherd Leadership, and Shared Leadership. With practical examples and exercises, CREs, Ruling Elders and Teaching Elders will be equipped to provide leadership development for the local congregation.

*Bruce Jones currently serves Rock Prairie Presbyterian Church. He has served churches, mostly in Wisconsin for 28 years. Bruce developed a curriculum for Elder Training when he discovered many on Session did not understand their role as leaders of the congregation. The focus on training elders has become a passion as a called pastor and honed over the years.*

### **PM2-86 Introduction to (touch) Rugby**

Rugby is really fun to watch and even more fun to play! Rugby has positions for any body type. Learn the basics and play a little touch in the afternoon. Bring athletic shoes or cleats.

*Peter Johnson started playing in college and plays with the Rochester Rogues Rugby club. His day job is teaching Innovative Arts to middle school kids. He is married to Lisa and father to three.*



# Registration Form for Adults

Have you attended Synod School before?  Yes  No

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name you want on nametag \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation & Location \_\_\_\_\_

## Housing

Name of preferred roommate(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Commuter  Dorm resident  Apartment  Single room  
 Suite resident  Double room

Check age range:  18-25  26-40  41-55  56-70  Over 70

Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Special needs \_\_\_\_\_

## Course Registration

Indicate 1st and 2nd choices for each period using the course number:

Period	1st Choice	2nd Choice
<b>All Morning OR</b>		
AM1 +		
AM2		
<b>All Afternoon OR</b>		
PM1 +		
PM2		

I give permission for my information to be included in the printed roster

Yes  No

Make checks payable to: Synod of Lakes and Prairies

Mail with completed form to: Synod School, 2115 Cliff Drive, Eagan, MN 55122

Scan and E-mail form to: gmilloy@lakesandprairies.org with "Synod School" as the subject.

# Registration for Children and Youth

CHILD/YOUTH REGISTRATION & HEALTH INFORMATION

Commuter  Dorm resident  Camper

Suite resident  Bed

Have you attended Synod School before?  Yes  No

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Nickname \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Entering \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday \_\_\_\_\_ Age on 7/23/24 \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' names \_\_\_\_\_

Who is the responsible adult at Synod School? \_\_\_\_\_

What is that person's cell phone? \_\_\_\_\_

**Health Concerns** Food/Other Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

Other health concerns? \_\_\_\_\_

Anything else you would like to share about your child or would like us to know?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**MS Youth Afternoon Classes** Please complete based on pages 12-15

MS PM	Mon PM1	Mon PM2	Tues PM1	Tues PM2	Wed PM1	Wed PM2
1st Choice						
2nd Choice						

**HS Youth Afternoon Classes** Please choose afternoon classes and indicate the course number of your first and second choices.

Period	Afternoon 1	Afternoon 2	OR All Afternoon Class
1st Choice			
2nd Choice			

Permissions on back side/next page

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**Permissions**

Yes No

- I give permission for my child to participate in field trips away from the campus. (N/A for infant – Grade 5) For Middle Schoolers, this includes permission to go to the Water Park on Thursday afternoon.
- I give my permission for my child to have emergency medical treatment.
- I give permission for photos to be taken of my child as they participate in Synod School (may be used on website/social media but without your child's name).

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Parent/Guardian*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*



**Administrative Staff**

Dean: Lisa Tarbell  
Associate Dean: Phil Anthony  
Housing Coordinator: Sue Medsker  
Synod Staff: Deb DeMeester

**Synod School Committee**

Phil Anthony  
Jeff Dickinson  
Brian Entz  
Sarah Hegar  
Erica MacCreaigh  
Sara Penn  
Meredith Sauer  
Lisa Tarbell

**Contact information while at Synod School**

Buena Vista University  
Attn: Event Services/Synod School  
610 W 4th St  
Storm Lake, IA 50588

Campus Information (8:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m.) ..... 712-749-2400  
Campus Security (11:00 p.m. – 8:00 a.m.) ..... 712-749-2500





**Synod**  
*of* **Lakes &**  
**Prairies**

**Synod School is a leadership development ministry of:**

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

with sponsorship from the New Covenant Trust

2115 Cliff Drive

Eagan, MN 55122-3327

651.357.1140 or 800.328.1880

[www.lakesandprairies.org](http://www.lakesandprairies.org)

Facebook Group: "Synod School: Is this heaven? No, it's Iowa!"

**Cover Art: Metanoia by Bilhenry Walker.**

**This piece was created from another sculpture by Charlie Girsh**