

Ordination and Installation

Rodney Rivera was ordained and installed as pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in Kissimmee, Florida on Sunday, August 2, 2026.



(L to R): Pastors Steven Blumer (WELS), Caleb Strutz, Brad Kerkow, Herb Huhnerkoch, Kurtis Freimuth, Charles Keeler, Jonathan Madson, Jesse Jacobsen. Front: Pastor Rodney

Bethany Lutheran College National Auxiliary Day

As we begin our 99th school year at Bethany Lutheran College we look forward to hosting the **National Auxiliary Day on Monday, September 28, 2026**. During the event, attendees will have the opportunity to hear from Bethany faculty and students about the exciting things happening in their programs. The group will also take part in the annual business meeting where auxiliary members vote on projects to support. Lunch will include updates from new ELS Synod President Michael Smith and Seminary President Timothy Hartwig. Looking forward to having our auxiliary members at Bethany!

ELS in Action

This video series highlights unique outreach programs from our congregations and our work together as a synod. The videos are available at els.org/elsinaction and on our social media accounts.

Upcoming Events

August 5 – Installation Service of ELS President & Vice President
August 6 – Board of Trustees
August 17 – Board of Regents
August 19 – Doctrine Committee
September 10–11 – Circuit Visitors Conference
September 24 – Committee on Archives and History
September 28 – Bethany Lutheran College National Auxiliary Day
September 30–October 2 – General Pastoral Conference

ELS Newsletter



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August 2026

Where has the summer gone? Yes, August is upon us. That means school will be starting in a few weeks. That means we're running short on time to get done all the things we hoped to accomplish during the summer. That means we *might* be looking forward to September and some cooler weather. For me, August means something brand new.

Even though I've already been doing some "presidential" work since I was elected at convention, my term officially started August 1. I didn't wake up that day feeling radically different, but as of that day I have different duties to which I have been called by the synod. Preaching every Sunday? Nope. Preparing three or more Bible studies per week? Not anymore. Getting ready for confirmation class? Sorry to disappoint you, students.

So what will I be doing as president? I will *preside*. That's the etymology of "president"—one who presides. That means being at a lot of meetings since the president is supposed to "supervise the work of the synod and of its elected boards and committees" (Bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Chapter 7). That means presiding over our annual synod conventions. That means making sure we have pastors and teachers available to serve our congregations, as well as many other duties.

But what does all that have to do with you? You, my fellow members of the ELS, *are* the synod. While I may sit in an office in Mankato and watch over things in my vocation as president, that's just one of my vocations. I'm also a husband, father, grandfather, church member, friend ... and more. We all faithfully serve our Savior by constantly carrying out all our vocations in our everyday lives. Keep being a faithful spouse. Keep training up your children in the way of the Lord. Keep encouraging your

fellow church members by attending worship regularly. Keep telling your neighbor about Jesus.

Summer may be coming to a close, but by God's grace, our work as a synod continues.

Michael K. Smith

If you want to learn more about President Smith, see:
<https://els.org/elsinaction/els-in-action-meet-the-president/>.



**ELS President & Vice President
Installation Service**

Wednesday, August 5 at 6:30pm

All congregation members are invited to attend.

President Michael Smith
Vice President Peter Faugstad

Trinity Chapel, Bethany Lutheran College
Mankato, Minnesota

A cake reception will follow in the BLC Dining Center.

Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Livestream:
els.org/streams

All congregation members are invited to attend the Installation Service of the ELS President and Vice President on Wednesday, August 5 at 6:30 pm in Trinity Chapel on the campus of Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota. A cake reception will follow in the BLC Dining Center.

Ordination and Installation



The ordination and installation of Candidate Peter Estrem, Jr. was held at Oak Park Lutheran Church near Oklee, Minnesota on July 12 at 4:30 p.m. Pastors present were Rev. Mark DeGarmeaux (lector), Rev. John E. Merseth Sr. (officiant), Rev. Daniel Ruiz (preacher), Rev. Gene Lilienthal (liturgist), and the Rev. Noah Thompson. Lunch and fellowship following the service.

LYA Convention

Youth from around the country gathered in Cincinnati, Ohio for the 2026 LYA convention. The 185 youth attendees visited the Creation Museum and the Ark Encounter, attended presentations from Bethany Lutheran College professors Doyle Holbird and Chad Heins, and participated in many different fun activities. Thank you to the Board for Youth Outreach for the work with our synod's youth!

