

WE ARE CHURCH TOGETHER

2024



STORYTELLING ENGAGEMENT

Experiments in Ministry

A story from the Central States Synod

**As you read this story, what connects with you?
What experiments are occurring in your synod and congregation?**

How often have you heard folks in congregations lament that they just don't have the resources or learning opportunities they need to be strong leaders and vital congregations? The [Central States Synod](#) wondered how it could help address those needs and make access easy. That led to the beginning of the [Ministry Lab](#). The synod envisions the lab as a place to ask questions, learn, work with different "tools" or resources, and experiment to see what works. A lab is not just a depository for resources; it's an active place where one can gather and engage with others.

When visiting congregations, attending conferences or meeting partners, staff and leaders in the Central States Synod diligently listen to folks to identify common needs and areas of growth so that they can equip and support ministry. The goal of the Ministry Lab is to provide ***"resources and tools so that we may live out God's purpose, united with Christ, as we walk the way of Jesus."***



The lab has three areas of focus: *good order*, meaning leadership, policies, building use, stewardship and meeting protocol; *means of grace*, including biblical interpretation, worship, communication and welcoming; and *living faith*, such as community engagement, social statements, collaboration and technology. Since the Ministry Lab began in fall 2023, it has offered opportunities focused on Scripture interpretation, ideas for worship and preaching during Advent, and leadership development. People learn through active engagement, not passive observation, so the Learning Lab is always lively. Some opportunities are "one and done" whereas others consist of multiple sessions.

Moving forward, the Ministry Lab is excited to offer an open conversation with the Rev. Susan Candea, bishop of the Central States Synod, about the upcoming ELCA social statement *Civic Life and Faith*, a Collaboration Lab in May and a Communications Lab in the fall. Anyone anywhere can check out and learn from the Central States Synod Ministry Lab. [See what's available now!](#)

Remember that a portion of offerings given to Central States congregations becomes Mission Support for the synod and allows staff and leaders to address congregations' needs and interests through the Ministry Lab, today and into the future.