

# EQUIPPING THE **SAINTS** 2019



Saturday, February 2

## *"We Are The Church Together"*

Sponsored by  
Bluebonnet Conference  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Hosted by

Christ the Victor Lutheran Church

Located at 202 Stanly Street, Victoria (behind Uncle Mutt's)  
Workshops for Laity & Clergy to Equip for Ministry  
and Personal and Spiritual Growth, Worship,  
Catered Luncheon and Staffed Nursery

For registration material, speak with the pastor of  
any Lutheran congregation in the  
Bluebonnet Conference of ELCA Congregations or

### **For information contact:**

Christ the Victor Lutheran Church Offices at  
361-575-4363

E-mail: [christthevictor@suddenlinkmail.com](mailto:christthevictor@suddenlinkmail.com)

Pr. Herb Beyer, ETS Coordinator at 361-798-0155 or  
E-mail: [beyerfam@hughes.net](mailto:beyerfam@hughes.net)

Tri-County Cooperative Ministries  
P.O. Box 216  
Weimar, Texas 78962

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## Equipping the Saints

Saturday, Feb. 2, 2019  
Registration Materials Enclosed  
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# EQUIPPING THE SAINTS 2019

Saturday, February 2

Hosted by Christ the Victor Lutheran Church

Located at 202 Stanly Street, Victoria (behind Uncle Mutt's)

Sponsored by

The Bluebonnet Conference of Churches - Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## ***"WE ARE THE CHURCH TOGETHER"***

How can we be the Church in the world? How can our congregations better "make disciples"? Our God is calling us to love and serve all our diverse neighbors. We are called to love one another, pray for one another, forgive one another, encourage one another, and put up with one another. Our work extends to persons within our congregations, but also to our communities and beyond.

Rural, suburban and urban congregations experience struggles to be sustainable and vital communities of faith. But our God who creates something out of nothing and who brings life from death is making all things new, and empowers our work together as the Church. We must be able to adapt to changing circumstances; develop more effective strategies in ministering to and connecting with our communities; increase the vitality and sustainability of congregations in rural, small town and metropolitan contexts; and identify ways we can cooperate and collaborate in doing Christ's work.

This is the 37<sup>th</sup> anniversary for the annual Equipping the Saints (ETS) with its many workshops that provide important insights and Biblically-based practical tools to equip persons to do congregation and community ministry and mission. Workshop offerings also include opportunities for personal and spiritual growth, table fellowship (catered meal) with Christians of area congregations, child care for young children of attendees, and the experience of worship as the body of Christ. While the event is sponsored by ELCA (Lutheran) congregations, it is open to persons of all denominations. ETS is known for both the variety of workshop offerings and the quality of the speakers.

Pastor Herb Beyer, ETS Coordinator  
361-798-0155 or [beyerfam@hughes.net](mailto:beyerfam@hughes.net)

# REGISTRATION FORM - ETS 2019

Return registration form to Christ the Victor Lutheran Church, 202 Stanly Street, Victoria, Texas 77904. Preferred registration deadline is Wednesday, January 30, 2019. Please register as soon as possible. (This helps with adequate preparations and meal count). **Register NOW!**

While the ETS event is hosted by ELCA congregations of the Bluebonnet Conference, other persons and congregations are welcome to attend. **There is no charge to ELCA members of the Bluebonnet Conference and only a \$10 charge per person to non-members. Non-members make check payable to Bluebonnet Conference—ETS 2019.**

Name of Registrant: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Spouse Attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City & Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregational Name & City \_\_\_\_\_ Denomination: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Workshop Session A (10:30 a.m.): \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Workshop Session B (1:00 p.m.): \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Workshop Session C (2:30 p.m.): \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

## Staffed Nursery for Infants to Young Children (up to age 5)

List names and ages of each child or infant requiring Nursery Care:

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

Noon Meal: Indicate number of adults \_\_\_\_\_, and children \_\_\_\_\_ eating the noon meal.

Registration by E-mail: [christthevictor@suddenlinkmail.com](mailto:christthevictor@suddenlinkmail.com)

Registration by Phone: 361-575-4363, Church Office

Registration by Fax: 361-575-4368

If you register by phone, fax, or e-mail, it is important to indicate registrants' names, mailing address, phone number, names of workshops, church affiliation, child care needs and meals as requested.

## Schedule for ETS 2019

8:30 a.m. Registration  
Hospitality Hour

12:00 -12:45 p.m. Luncheon for Participants  
1:00 p.m. Session B Workshops

9:15 a.m. Opening Communion Service

2:30 p.m. Session C Workshops

10:30 a.m. Session A Workshops

4:00 p.m. Closing Worship Service

# ETS 2019 – Workshop Descriptions

## Session A Workshops

- 1. Leadership from the Margins.** The church and the world have changed significantly in the last few years. As Christian leaders, we often find ourselves wondering, how can we lead faithfully and effectively in the future, when what has worked for us in the past is no longer working today. This is a time of what is called adaptive change, where the answers are not clear, but doing nothing is not an option, because the gospel of Jesus Christ is needed now more than ever before. How can leaders learn new practices that enable us to navigate the uncertain times we find ourselves in and help our congregations to thrive in this changed and changing world? **Presenter: Rev. Sue Briner, Bishop.**
- 2. Caring Enough to Confront—Speaking Up While Avoiding Confrontation.** What does caring have to do with confronting? Am I really my brother's keeper? Do I really have to remove the log from my own eye before I can say anything about the most annoying speck in my sister's eye? What does the Bible say about confronting others? When should I speak up and when should I stay quiet? Could I just forgive and forget and let it go? Putting first things first. Some ideas and techniques, including circles of caring and guided meditation, for having tough conversations without raising your blood pressure. **Presenter: Rev. Sharon Wiggins.**
- 3. Discussion of Lawrence Kohlberg's Research on Stages of Moral Development.** The stage within Lawrence Kohlberg's Six Stages of Moral Development that is most desirable for us and for our own spiritual and political leaders. How Lawrence Kohlberg's Research on Stages of Moral Development is helpful to us in our understanding of human behavior. Why all of us benefit when persons move to higher stages of moral development. What we can do to assist persons to move to higher stages of moral development. **Presenter: Rev. Dr. Norm Beck.**
- 4. Rethinking the Mission of the Church.** Why should young people, or anyone for that fact consider Church as an important part of their lives? So many drift away from the faith, or have never had any connection with the Church, or have chosen from any number of other options available. Some have been hurt by the Church. In what ways can we draw persons to a life in Christ that means a life within Christian community? Do people really understand the blessings, purpose, and nature of the Church today and how can this best be conveyed to persons in our time? **Presenter: Rev. Eric Miletti.**
- 5. Don't Make Me Unfriend You – Reclaiming Civility.** How have we become so divided? There is an increasing polarization between people, especially evident in politics and differing points of view. Instead of listening and cooperating, we shut-out and try to discredit those who disagree. Do you find it difficult to have conversations with family, friends, and fellow church members? Learn how the church can lead the way toward a return to civility and grace. **Presenter: Lane Johnson.**
- 6. Medicines from God's Pharmacy.** God's creation provides medicine for our bodies that works more harmoniously with our system than many pharmaceuticals. Come and explore different herbs, teas, tinctures and essential oils, as well as books and resources. **Presenter: Rev. Ildikó Rigney.**
- 7. Tips to Prepare, Plant and Grow a Garden.** What is required to have a spring and fall garden, when you should start preparing for your garden, soil preparation, and what to plant in the Spring and Fall. Debbie will also talk briefly about greenhouses and how she uses them in our area. Planning my garden for maximum positive impact. **Presenter: Debbie Hopper, Master Gardener.**
- 8. Facing Life's Challenges – When We Suffer – A Biblical Perspective on Pain and Illness –** If God loves us, why do we suffer? Christian or not, it's a question that comes up repeatedly during times of grief and tragedy. In times of distress, we want to know that our suffering matters to God and that God cares about our pain, and that the religious community also cares. While Scripture addresses some reasons for the pain, illness and suffering that we and others experience, there may also be some mystery to the answer. How can we medically deal with pain and suffering? And what are the limits? Depression, loneliness, anger, and potential suicide are important issues in caring for and ministering to people in pain. How, as the body of Christ, can we understand those who have to manage their pain on a day-to-day basis, and how can we meet their needs? How can we be "present" for such persons and look to the example of how Jesus was present for people in their times of need? **Presenter: Dr. M.G. Wilkinson.**
- 9. The Ministry of Evangelism—For Millennials and Generation Z—Moving into the Future.** What is evangelism? Evangelism is bringing people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, or deepening their relationship. Evangelism is both inward and outward from the church. What inhibits congregations from evangelizing? Fear and complacency. We need to develop a passion for evangelism within the church as we witness happening in 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries. I witnessed such a passion on my missionary trip to Brazil. This can happen if we understand the challenge we face in the church today.

Understanding this challenge begins with understanding the various generations of people we serve today. I learned about the various generations we serve through my work with Lutheran Marriage Encounter. The challenge we face today with Millennials and Generation Z is formidable, but not impossible. We just need to learn what they seek, what they need,

and how we in the church can best address those needs. Two ways we can best address their needs: First through authentic worship, second through the use of small group ministry. The early church had both of these. We need to employ them today. There are specific ways in which this can happen. **Presenter: Rev. Laird Engle.**

10. **Islam 101** – An introduction to the core beliefs of the Islamic religion including an explanation of the five pillars of faith. **Presenters: Abe and Heidi Ajrami (Session A Workshop)**

## **Session B Workshops**

1. **Lutheran Civic Engagement 101.** This workshop will use what I have learned from Lutheran graduate study, ecumenical and interfaith work, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, Southwestern Texas Synod Congregational Involvement in Community Based Advocacy training (CICBA), and various community organizing trainings and work in San Antonio to give a rationale for Lutheran involvement in public life. **Presenter: Rev. Dr. Paul Ziese.**
2. **Zionism, Christian Zionism and the Bible.** What does it mean to be Chosen by God? Does God keep his promises? How many Covenants are there in the Bible? What is the difference between a Covenant and a Promise? Is there a difference? When we prepare for Holy Communion and hear the words, *This cup is the new covenant in my blood..*, what does *new covenant* mean? St. Paul asks these questions in his letters and people are still asking these questions. How do we, as faithful, Bible believing, Christians, wrestle with these questions? Let's talk about it and see if a Christian theologian, a Jewish psychologist, and a retired Lutheran pastor can shed any light on the subject. I know that sounds like the beginning of a joke: A rabbi, a priest and a pastor walked into a classroom. Come and hear the punch line. **Presenter: Rev. Sharon Wiggins.**
3. **Discussion of Biblical Expressions of Our Love and of God's Love.** According to our biblical texts, how and why our love for God and only our love for God should be unconditional. How and why our love for all people should always be appropriate for each of our relationships. How and why our love for things should always be responsible, individually and corporately. What our biblical texts indicate about God's love for us. **Presenter: Rev. Dr. Norm Beck.**
4. **A Bible Study: The Book of Acts & First Corinthians** as guide to the Church in recognizing the importance and blessing of the diversity in our nation, state and communities (even small town and rural), and planning a strategy. Also looking at the importance of reclaiming the basic disciplines of Christianity for ourselves in carrying out this endeavor. For example, how can the Church and its leaders make decisions that impact members and the larger community if they are unfamiliar or out of touch with the Scriptures? How can we become open to the Holy Spirit given to us in baptism, the Holy Spirit present at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit that drives us to reach beyond ourselves? How can we be encouragers to others in using the gifts bestowed upon them in baptism for building up the body of Christ and helping the Church carry out its mission? How can we deal with our changed reality—diversity of persons of color, culture, orientation, and experiences of the religious life? **Presenter: Rev. Eric Miletta.**
5. **Give and It Will Be Given to You (Luke 6:38).** Experience the joy of a five week mission trip in Alaska. Renew your spirit. Enjoy the beauty of God's creation. Make new friends as you serve the church, students and the community. Mary Ann and Sharon spent five weeks as volunteers at the Sitka Lutheran Church in Sitka, Alaska. They have a wonderful story to tell. **Presenters: Mary Anne Parker and Sharon Allen Bednorz.**
6. **A Visual Interpretation of Sacred Space.** A two-part presentation: 1) defining Sacred Space and the Liturgical artist; 2) an artistic journey through the Church Year. The workshop will conclude with a simple hands-on Liturgical applique project using paper-backed fusible web. Additional kits are available for \$5 each. **Presenter: Jenna Bruns.**
7. **Promoting the Presence of Beneficial Insects, Identifying & Getting Rid of Harmful Insects.** For vegetable and flower gardens, for home, church and farm environments. **Presenter: Barbara Heinold, Master Gardener.**
8. **The Art of Neighboring: Connecting with Those God has Put in Your Midst** – There are lots of folks that surround us, our churches, and persons in our communities. Can we see them and the opportunities that cross our path, the opportunity for building relationships, and ministering to persons? **Presenters: Rev. Diana K. Phillips and Rev. Dr. Marcus A.L. Freemann, III.**
9. **Cancer and Christ** – The fact is, you or someone you know in your circle of family, friends, co-workers or church, will be touched by one or more forms of cancer in their lifetime. As one physician commented, if you live long enough you're going to get something. What are the symptoms or warning signs of the disease in its many forms? The pros and cons of various treatments, and any good news on the horizon regarding treatment? The importance of your annual physical and lifestyle choices. While a person may have a greater likelihood to have cancer because of heredity factors, are there practical things we can do to minimize our chances of experiencing the disease? How can religious and spiritual factors help the person cope with such illness? What is the importance of the religious community in terms of support and care for the person diagnosed with cancer and their family? **Presenter: Dr. M.G. Wilkinson.**
11. **Islam and Violence** – An examination of why Islam is sometimes misperceived as condoning violence. Discussion will address terrorism, media misrepresentations, and explanation of Quranic verses. **Presenters: Abe and Heidi Ajrami.**

## Session C Workshops

- 1. What Is Happening Along the Mexican Border?** This workshop will discuss what I am learning as chair of the Southwestern Texas Synod Immigration and Refugee Task Force and transitional pastor of First Lutheran Church of Edinburg about this complex political, social, economic, and religious issue. **Presenter: Rev. Dr. Paul Ziese.**
- 2. Just for Fun—The Song of Solomon—**Is it R-rated? X-rated? Or plain old G-rated? Is it: 1. An allegory of God’s affection for his people? 2. A drama between lovers? 3. Related to pagan “sacred marriage” rituals? 4. A secular collection of love poems that accidentally got into the Bible? Let’s take a look at this most intriguing Book of the Bible and decide: Should we allow our teenagers to read it? **Presenter: Rev. Sharon Wiggins.**
- 3. Discussion of Expectations of Human Existence After This Life Ends.** During recorded history and within a variety of religious communities, from the perspectives of reason and of faith, there have been a great variety of different expectations of human existence after this life ends. Why these expectations are so important. When and how these expectations developed. The most important of these expectations within Christianity. How these expectations help us to face our own death. **Presenter: Rev. Dr. Norm Beck.**
- 4. A Moral Compass.** Distinguishing between right and wrong, and the struggles, impact and decision to do the right thing. We see in in our society, how responsible parties are irresponsible, show poor judgment, and inflict great harm by losing their way. We see it in the athletics of the Olympics, scandals involving the Church, the realm of our political leaders, the entertainment industry, institutions of learning, and others. What is our moral compass? Theologically and biblically, why are we witnessing and experiencing these difficulties in simply doing the “right thing”? How shall we conduct ourselves and consider the witness it makes to the world? How can our (Lutheran) theology and understanding of Scripture point us the way? Individually and as a nation, we face the task of making major decisions that impact us, our families, the nation and our neighbors. How are we going to find our way in doing the right thing among competing voices? Affirming this truth, we are saved not because of how good we are, but how good God is. How shall we understand in such a discussion salvation and sanctification? **Presenter: Rev. Eric Miletti.**
- 5. Facing Fear with Faith.** From the first bite of the forbidden fruit, humans have struggled with fear. Fear is inevitable, especially in the face of change. However, the problem is not with fear itself, but with our misunderstanding of the role it plays in our life. There is a way to make fear work for you instead of against you. Instead of perceiving fear as a sign of inadequacy, cowardice, or danger and becoming frozen, we can understand our fear as natural and even essential to growth. Learn how to face fear, become energized, trust your visions, get excited about your hopes, and proceed in faith. **Presenter: Lane Johnson.**
- 6. Essential oils—Their Uses in Biblical Times & Today.** All of us remember the three magi and their gifts of frankincense, myrrh and gold. But there is more. Let us look at some Biblical uses of essential oils and how some of the ancient oils of the Bible are still being used today. Many people use essential oils nowadays. Learn what EOs are and how to use them. Come and smell, learn some of their healing properties, consider the sourcing, explore books and electronic resources. **Presenter: Rev. Ildikó Rigney.**
- 7. Strategically Small Churches** – Knowing yourself to be the best you can be! Often times small churches can only see what they are not...not enough people, not enough money, not enough (you fill in the blank). The book *Strategically Small Churches* helps us look at the strengths of a small church and how to be the most effective, nimble, and relational church in the community. Have the courage to see yourself as you are and become all that God calls you to be! **Presenters: Rev. Diana K. Phillips and Rev. Dr. Marcus A.L. Freemann, III.**
- 8. Church as Compassionate Community** – Getting involved in peoples’ lives can be messy. People are afflicted with mental health issues, sickness of the body, emotional ups and downs, conflict and chaos in their relationships, spiritual struggles, and life and death decisions. It is important for people to experience love, forgiveness, grace, and compassion. It is our task to do good and to be involved with the healing, affirming and compassionate care of others. This is also an opportunity where we can voice the needs of persons who find their journey difficult and challenging, and offer suggestions for providing that compassionate care in a truly holistic way. The Church has numerous resources or spiritual tools for care—prayer, the Sacraments, Confession and Absolution, the Scriptures, Community, Christ. **Presenter: Dr. M.G. Wilkinson.**
- 9. Discernment for Self & the Congregation.** In order to discern what God wants us to do with and in our lives, we need to withdraw from the frenetic or frantic pace of our lives and pray with God. To discern God’s will, we must patiently allow God to speak to us? Discernment is a deliberate and intentional process of allowing God to speak with us through a series of seven discernment steps (based on St. Ignatius principles for spiritual discernment). Looking at the process of and importance for the individual, governing boards and the congregation. What does God desire for a congregation to do? How can we and the congregation be “on fire for the Lord”? Who is in control of the congregation? **Presenter: Rev. Laird Engle.**

# ETS 2019 – Workshop Leaders

**Rev. Dr. Norm Beck** is Professor of Theology and Classical Languages at Texas Lutheran University and the pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Stockdale (Denhawken). He has a Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary, a B.D. and an honorary D.D. from Trinity Lutheran Seminary, and a B.A. from Capital University. He teaches Introduction to Theology, Old Testament Studies, New Testament Studies, History of Religions, Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Greek, and other courses at Texas Lutheran University, and is the author of ten books and of a movie script titled "Jesus, the Man."

**Rev. Sue Briner** is Bishop of the Southwestern Texas Synod, ELCA (elected 2018) and previously served as Bishop's Associate for the Synod. She served as a pastor and senior pastor of St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Summerville, S.C., from 2003 to 2012. Prior to serving as a pastor, she worked in the telecommunications industry for 15 years. Briner earned a Bachelor of Science degree in computer science from Duke University in Durham, N.C., in 1984, and a Master of Divinity degree from Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, S.C., in 2003. Briner is a member of Peace Lutheran Church, New Braunfels, and serves on the boards of LEAD: Living Everyday As Disciples and Cross Trails Ministry, Kerrville.

**Rev. Diana K. Phillips**, an Ordained Elder, serves as Director of Connectional Ministries for the Rio Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. In this cabinet-level position, she works closely with the Bishop of the Rio Texas Conference and cabinet in linking local churches and districts, addressing priority issues within the conference through alignment of resources, leading transformation, strategic planning, development and design of ministries and conference events. She previously served as Lead Pastor at Colonial Hills United Methodist Church, San Antonio, Associate Pastor of Bulverde UMC, and Associate and Church Planter, First UMC, Seguin. She graduated with an M.Div. from Perkins School of Theology and a Master's degree in Counseling from Southern Methodist University.

**Rev. Dr. Marcus A.L. Freemann, III** is District Superintendent of the Crossroads District of the Rio Texas Conference, The United Methodist Church. He previously served as Director of Leadership Vitality on staff with the Rio Texas Conference. He previously served congregations in Seguin, Austin and San Antonio, and a three-point charge in Columbus, Altair and Garwood. He holds Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees from Perkins School of Theology.

**Lane Johnson, M.Div., LPC**, has been practicing as a Licensed Professional Counselor since 1983. He has been in private practice for over 30 years. Currently Lane is the Chief Clinical Officer at Gulf Bend Center in Victoria Texas. Lane is Board Certified in Professional Counseling, a Diplomate member of the American Psychotherapy Association, a Diplomate and Certified Sports Counselor with the National Institute of Sports, and is licensed by the Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors. Lane is a critical incident consultant for municipalities and private industry. He is certified in crisis response and recovery through the Austin Office of Emergency Management, Austin, Texas. Lane is also an ordained pastor and has served congregations in the United Methodist and Presbyterian Church. As a performance consultant, Lane works with professional groups and athletes specializing in team building, skills and performance enhancement, and executive coaching. He is the founder and owner of The Head Coach®, a life coaching business dedicated to improving performance through mental attitude and mental preparedness. Lane presents on topics including stress management, anger, fitness, humor, motivation, relationships, self-esteem, and ethics. He also writes a column, "From the Head Coach", which has appeared in the Victoria Advocate Newspaper. With an eclectic background as a therapist, theologian, and athlete, Lane's presentations and work demonstrate a unique blend and balance of the body, mind, and soul.

**Jenna Bruns**, owner of Cottonpatch Designs, is a renowned Liturgical Artist whose custom work lives in Africa, India, Nigeria, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, the UK, Canada, and in countless churches throughout the United States. "My artwork is intended to enhance the beauty of the worship space (being created specifically for that space) and to provide a visual message for the worship experience. Broadly stated, the design elements and colors offer a visual interpretation of God's love for all of us, although every individual connects with my art in their own way; through their own faith experiences."

**Rev. Sharon Wiggins**, a Lutheran pastor, wears many hats: retired, supply pastor, transitional pastor, grandmother, sometime lobbyist, and advocate of many pet theories. Her background includes living in Okinawa, England, Saudi Arabia, three months in Bethlehem, Appalachia, and of course Texas. Her first ambition in life was to be a gunner on a Destroyer. She never accomplished that but has been a teacher of emotionally disturbed children, an accountant, and a pastor. She is currently working on what her children refer to as "Mom's Theory of Everything". She resides in Coletoville with her books, stray cats, and library card. And, she welcomes invitations to speak about our faith and its place in our lives.

**Dr. M. G. Wilkinson** graduated from Texas Tech Medical School in 1976 with high honors and was recognized as a distinguished alumna from medical school in 1993. She received the National Rural Health Practitioner of Year 1995. Dr. Wilkinson is a Family Practitioner for 41 years and the Chief of Staff at the Lavaca Medical Center. She is an active member of United Dr. Martin Luther Lutheran Church, Shiner, and is currently working on a Master's degree at the Seminary of the Southwest in Austin with the intent to serve the community in a dual role as hospital chaplain and physician.

**Rev. Eric M. Milette** is the ELCA Mission Director for the Southwestern Texas Synod, and previously served as pastor of Gethsemane Lutheran Church, San Antonio, as well as having served Lutheran congregations in the ELCA Caribbean Lutheran Synod and a Methodist congregation in Puerto Rico. He served as the Joint Task Force Command Chaplain in Honduras (US Army), Staff Chaplain and Deputy Command Chaplain in Puerto Rico, Professor at Universidad del Este in Puerto Rico, Radio Program Host ("Rites & Beliefs"), and as Technical Controller for GC & E System Group, Inc. at Ft. Buchanan, PR. He is a graduate of Interamerican University (PhD Christian Education), Evangelic Seminary of Puerto Rico (MA Religious, MA Divinities), University of Puerto Rico (BA Philosophy), and State University of Puerto Rico (BA Business Administration and MA Economy). His areas of expertise include World and Caribbean Religions, education and computer technologies.

**Mary Anne Parker (B.A., J.S., M.Ed., SAM)** is a retired high school math teacher. She is an active member of Trinity Lutheran Church, Victoria. She has served as Sunday School superintendent, on church council, and on a variety of teams.

**Sharon Allen Bednorz** is a retired high school teacher of 35 years. She stayed active in education working as a substitute teacher and being a member of Delta Kappa Gamma. Sharon is an active member of Christ the Victor, Victoria. She is currently involved in Sunday School, supervises Vacation Bible School, and serves on the church council.

**Rev. Ildikó Rigney** has been a Lutheran pastor since 1997. One of her passions is healing and wholeness. She grew up in Croatia, Europe, where she finished elementary and high school, and earned a Bachelor's degree in English language and literature and Ethnology (Anthropology) at the University of Zagreb. She has an M.Div. from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Where she comes from, even doctors prescribe herbal medicines, and every household uses the gifts of nature to heal. Since 2016, she has spent a lot of time learning about essential oils, and that is now her hobby and passion.

**Rev. Laird Engle** is a graduate of Texas A & M with a B.S. in Chemistry and a M.Div. from Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. He served 48 years as pastor of seven different congregations with a primary emphasis on community outreach and growing congregations. While serving in Hempstead, he received his teacher certification from Prairie View A & M. Laird has taught 18 years in public high schools -- primarily Chemistry and Mathematics. While serving Abiding Savior Lutheran in Houston, in a changing neighborhood, he participated in The Metropolitan Organization -- a coalition of people from various congregations to address various community issues in Houston through the mayor's office. He also worked with Al-Anon in Houston. While teaching in Dayton High School, he helped organize and served as manager of a small group Student Assistance program which gave troubled students the support they needed. While serving the congregation in Danevang, he helped them reach out to and minister to the Latino population. While teaching in Victoria, he worked with troubled youth who had gotten behind in their education so they could graduate. He and his wife Winnie have worked with Lutheran Marriage Encounter since 1995 and have presented on almost 60 weekends across the country, and are now helping develop a Lutheran Marriage Encounter program which can be conducted in individual congregations. He is currently assisting two congregations develop plans for ministry as they move into the future.

**Debbie Hopper** is a Master Gardener with a Bachelor of Science degree from Sam Houston State University. She is also a member of CoCoRAHS (Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network), a Realtor, and a member of Zion Lutheran Church, Moulton.

**Barbara Heinold** is a Master Gardener and lifelong gardener. She is a retired attorney and member of St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Schroder.

**Rev. Dr. Paul Ziese** was appointed to lead the new synod task force on immigration and refugee issues. The primary purpose of this task force will be to assist interested persons and congregations in the Southwestern Texas Synod and across the ELCA to engage in service and advocacy with and for marginalized neighbors. Paul retired from MacArthur Park Lutheran Church in San Antonio after 22 years of ministry. He brings with a wide range of ecumenical and organizational contacts in the area as well as a passion for advocacy and service.

**Abe Ajrami** is the owner of a nursing staffing agency. He is also the treasurer of the Victoria Islamic Center.

**Heidi Ajrami** is an English Professor at Victoria College and a member of the Victoria Islamic Center.

# EQUIPPING THE **SAINTS** 2019

**Equipping the Saints – Saturday, February 2, 2019 hosted  
by Christ the Victor Lutheran Church,  
202 Stanly Street, Victoria  
Sponsored by Bluebonnet Conference, ELCA**

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How can we be the Church in the world? How can our congregations better “make disciples”? Our God is calling us to love and serve all our diverse neighbors. It is important to engage our neighbors within our various communities. We are called to love one another, pray for one another, forgive one another, encourage one another, and put up with one another. Our work extends to persons within our congregations, but also to our communities and beyond.

Rural, suburban and urban congregations experience struggles to be sustainable and vital communities of faith. But our God who creates something out of nothing and who brings life from death is making all things new, and empowers our work together as the Church. We must be able to adapt to changing circumstances; develop more effective strategies in ministering to and connecting with our communities; increase the vitality and sustainability of congregations in rural, small town and metropolitan contexts; and identify ways we can cooperate and collaborate in doing Christ’s work.

Equipping the Saints with its many workshops provides important insights and Biblically-based practical tools to equip persons to do congregation and community ministry and mission. Workshop offerings also include opportunities for personal and spiritual growth, table fellowship (catered meal) with Christians of area congregations, child care for young children of attendees, and the experience of worship as the body of Christ.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR – SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2 for all day event! Contact information – Pr. Herb Beyer, ETS Coordinator 361-798-0155 or E-mail: [beyerfam@hughes.net](mailto:beyerfam@hughes.net) or Christ the Victor office 361-575-4363 or E-mail: [christthevictor@suddenlinkmail.com](mailto:christthevictor@suddenlinkmail.com) or local ELCA churches for registration materials and information. All are welcome to attend. Register early!**