

Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin
Lay Ministry Conference at ECCO
May 30 – May 31
2025

Friday, May 30

4.00pm Registration Opens

5.30pm Evening Prayer

6.00pm Dinner

7.00pm The Lay Vocation and Discernment (Fr. Luis Rodriguez)

8.30pm Social Time

Saturday, May 31

7.30am Morning Prayer

8.00am Breakfast

9.00am-10.20am

- The Spirituality of the Laity
(Ms. Andrea Dee)
- The Nature of Spiritual Direction
(Dr. Barbara Vassell)
- Building Bridges from the Parish
to the Neighborhood (Ms. Natalie Lockard)

12.00noon Lunch

1.00-2.15pm

- The Bible in Episcopal/Anglican Worship
(Fr. Luke Martinez)
- The Daily Office – History and Practice
(Mr. Michael Cava)

2.30-3.30pm

- Episcopal Polity, Government, and the Laity
(Ms. Cindy Smith and Ms. Jan Dunlap)

9.00am-10.20am

- Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training –
Theology and Practice (Fr. Luis Rodriguez)
- 10.30am-12.00pm
- Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training –
Pastoral Care and Ethical Considerations
(Dr. Nancy Silva)

EDSJ Lay Ministry Conference

Sessions and Presenters

Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training: Theology and Practice – The Rev'd Luis Rodriguez

This presentation is required for all those recommended by their clergyperson-in-charge for licensing as Eucharistic Visitors. The ministry of taking the Eucharist to the sick and housebound is ancient. We find detailed instructions for its exercise already set out by the 2nd century. This presentation will consider the history and theology of this ministry, but also consider more practical aspects, including making appointments, how often to visit, and the form and order of service to use.

Fr. Luis Rodriguez is the Priest-in-Charge at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Bakersfield. He has a passion for Christian education and formation, but also for walking with people as they discern their calling and ministry, lay and ordained. He served on the Commission on Ministry for many years, most lately as its chair, and has led numerous trainings and retreats, particularly for Eucharistic Ministers.

Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training: Pastoral Care and Ethical Considerations –

Dr. Nancy Neufeld Silva

This presentation is required for all those recommended by their clergyperson-in-charge for licensing as Eucharistic Visitors. The ministry of the Eucharistic Visitor is distinctive in the nature of its intimacy, as its work is often among the elderly, ill, and vulnerable. As such, it also calls for specific training in pastoral care, as well an awareness of crucial ethical considerations. Using the insights of conventional counseling and best ethical practices, this presentation will consider issues and skills key to the exercise of this ministry and will feature “practice sessions” to hone those skills.

Dr. Nancy Neufeld Silva, PhD, is co-chair of the Diocesan Commission on Ministry. She has been an Episcopalian since 1975, mostly in the San Joaquin Valley. She has a Masters Degree in Social (MSW) from the University of Utah and a PhD in Clinical Social Work. She is a psychotherapist in private practice in Modesto, California. She has taught stress management, communication, and counseling skills. She serves as an acolyte, a eucharistic minister, a lector, a worship leader, and a vestry member at St. Paul's, Modesto.

Spirituality of the Laity – Ms. Andrea Dee

The ministry of the laity is to bear witness to Christ and to carry on his work of reconciliation in the world. The laity lives out Christ's call in the real world, in the every-day, in the moments of life. Sometimes that work is big, dramatic, and consequential. Other times, it is quiet, ordinary, and largely unknown. We will explore our lives, where the ministry of love and reconciliation invites us, and build awareness of conforming our lives to Christ in the everyday world.

Ms. Andrea Dee is a member of Trinity Episcopal Church, Escondido. She has worked as a lay person in a variety of areas of ministry including music, children's chapel, lay education, vestry, creative worship planning, retreat leadership, vestry, finance, and stewardship. In addition to her calling as a lay person, she is also a Companion of the Holy Cross.

The Nature of Spiritual Direction in Lay Ministry – Dr. Barbara Vassell

Spiritual direction is a sacred practice that fosters deeper awareness of God's presence and guidance in one's life. The presentation will explore the nature and purpose of spiritual direction, its role in nurturing spiritual growth, and how it supports individuals in lay ministry. We will discuss the key elements of spiritual direction, the distinctions between mentorship, counseling, and direction, and the qualities of an effective spiritual director. Participants will leave with a greater understanding of how spiritual direction can be a vital tool in lay ministry, helping individuals discern their call and deepen their faith journey.

Dr. Barbara Vassell is a dedicated spiritual director with a passion for guiding individuals in their faith journeys, and also a certified Life Coach, committed to empowering others through personal and spiritual development. Currently, Barbara serves as the co-chair for the Commission on Ministry (COM), as well as co-chair the Anti-Racism Commission in EDSJ. Beyond these roles, Barbara is also the Co-Chair for the Northern California Chapter of the Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE), working to uplift and support Black Episcopalians in their faith and leadership. A cradle Anglican, Barbara brings a lifelong perspective to her work in the Church. She currently worships at St. Paul's in Modesto.

Building Bridges from the Parish to the Neighborhood – Ms. Natalie Lockard

Building Bridges was an idea created to connect those of us who feel different, isolated, or torn from pieces of ourselves or our community and the land. By inviting diverse, open-hearted panelists to share their stories and spiritual lives, we have created events that connect us in a deeper way to ourselves, each other (i.e. those in our congregation), and those outside our church walls. We invite you to learn how you can help us build bridges up and down the San Joaquin Valley.

Natalie Lockard (she, her, hers) is a teacher, writer, poet, creative and bridge builder. She loves stories! Jesus stories, people's stories and sitting in a sharing circle with her students or friends. She believes we really aren't that different from each other once we open and show each other our hearts. After bridging the divide within herself (her queer and Christian identity), she has the desire to bring spiritual people together across religious and cultural divides.

The Bible in Episcopal/Anglican Worship – The Rev'd Luke Martinez

The Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer says that the Holy Scriptures are the "Word of God because God inspired their human authors and because God still speaks to us through the Bible" and they are central to our worship. This presentation is geared to lectors and will explore what this means, as well as how these this is reflected the broader Anglican ideas of how the Bible is understood, particularly as part of the liturgy. It will also examine and explain the nature and construction of the lectionary for the Eucharist and the Daily Office.

The Rev'd Luke Martinez is the Priest at the Church of the Saviour in Hanford. He holds a BA and MA in History from Fresno State, and MA in Theology from Fuller Theological seminary, and an MDiv from CDSP. He is also works as a high school teacher and has spent time as a hospital chaplain as well.

The Daily Office: History and Practice – Mr. Michael Cava

Have you ever wondered about the Daily Office? And no, it's not where clergy go to work! This session will explore this cherished prayer tradition's origins, structure, and contemporary practice. While the Eucharist has long been the Church's primary worship service, the Daily Office has been essential in grounding the Church in a daily rhythm of worship, scripture reading, and prayer. We'll discuss the significance of the Daily Office and provide practical insights and resources for personal and communal worship. Attendees will learn how the Daily Office can enrich their faith journey, deepen engagement with scripture, and strengthen their relationship with God and the Christian community through daily common prayer.

Michael Cava has been a Christian for 25 years. His love for the Episcopal/Anglican tradition began when he unexpectedly discovered the Daily Office Lectionary while searching for a Bible reading plan. After attending his first sung mass in 2018, he realized he found his spiritual home. Since moving to Bakersfield with his partner, Garrett, in 2020, he has actively participated in ministries at St. Paul's and is licensed as a Lay Worship Leader, Eucharistic Minister, and Preacher. There he is deepening his understanding of the tradition and discerning his path to ordination. When not at St. Paul's or at work, he enjoys reading, watching anime, playing video games, visiting his family near Paso Robles, and taking trips to the beach.

Episcopal, Polity, Governance, and the Laity – Ms. Jan Dunlap & Ms. Cindy Smith

Join our presenters as they lead us through a review of the polity, structure and governance of our Episcopal Church at all levels – congregational, diocesan, provincial, and the wider church. Our journey will discuss the possibilities available to lay persons at each level and will speak to the wide variety of talents and gifts that individuals can bring to these roles. There are amazing opportunities open to the laity which can have a positive and meaningful impact on the mission and ministry of your congregation, diocese, and The Episcopal Church as a whole.

Jan Dunlap and Cindy Smith, both individually, and as a couple, have been involved in church ministries and governance at all levels – congregational, diocesan, provincial, and with The Episcopal Church. At St. Paul's, Bakersfield, Jan has served on the Bishop's Committee, as Junior Warden, Altar Guild Lead, and Food Pantry Lead, and Cindy has served on the Bishop's Committee, as Senior Warden, Treasurer, and Chair of Stewardship; each has been a Delegate to Diocesan Convention. They were the creators and co-conveners of the EDSJ Winter Integrity LGBTQ+ Retreat at ECCO for 6 years. Within the diocesan structure, Jan has served in the governance and ministry of EDSJ for 4 terms on Diocesan Council and as the Chair of the Nominations Committee, and Cindy has served on the Commission on Equality, as Chair of Sustainability Committee, 3 terms on Standing Committee and currently is the Secretary of Convention for EDSJ. Each has been a Deputy to six General Conventions (2009 to 2024) and has been appointed to numerous Standing Commissions and Legislative Committees. They are thrilled to share information and their insights on the myriad possibilities for governance and ministry that exist for the laity in our wonderful Episcopal Church.