

Faith & Neighboring Practices

Participant Roles and Responsibilities



Faith & Neighboring Practices is a two-year learning community for congregations in the Minneapolis Area Synod. We believe that vital congregations authentically engage with their neighborhood, trusting that God is already active in the community beyond the church's walls.

Faith Practices & Neighboring Practices will guide cohorts of congregations (5-7 congregations in each cohort) as they discern their call to be faithful neighbors in the communities where they live and worship. We will explore practices related to asset-based community development, community engagement, and contemplative spirituality.

Learning Cohorts at a Glance

- 2.5-hour Learning Cohort meetings each month except during the summer and in December. Each meeting provides congregational teams with the opportunity to experiment with place-based and spiritual practices.
- 4 Weekend retreats over two-year program – Sep 2025, May & Sep 2026, and May 2027. These retreats provide an opportunity for shared learning across contexts and introducing keystone practices.

What are we expecting of congregational teams?

- ***We ask each congregational team to commit to a learning community covenant.*** This is a living promise we make to one another to ensure we can all show up fully in this community.
- ***We ask that the whole congregational team participate over the full two years.*** The learning we will do together is about consistent practice over time and we need you for this learning community to flourish. That means doing your very best to attend and participate in the monthly cohort meetings, large group retreats, and practices in between meetings.
- ***We ask each congregational team to find creative and engaging ways to tell the story of this learning community in your congregation.*** How will you keep the rest of your community connected to what you are learning and practicing? The Faith & Neighboring Practices team can help to develop a strategy and even provide some sample language or content for communication.
- ***We ask each congregational team to bring what you learn back to your council or leadership and teach them what you learned and practiced.*** These practices are for your whole community, and inviting others into the work ensures that they take root for the long term.
- ***We ask each congregational team to have fun, be open-minded, and willing to make a mess!***

What are we expecting of individual participants?

- ***We ask each individual participant to complete the full two-year program,*** including each of the 2.5-hour monthly learning gatherings and the 4 weekend retreats. Practices are things we do consistently over time, and the learning is most impactful for those who show up.
- ***We ask that each participant find their own unique way to experiment with new practices in their home congregation, their neighborhood or community, and in their personal lives.*** We will have suggested actions for individuals and congregations to experiment with between cohort meetings and will reflect together each month on those experiences.
- ***We ask that each participant plan on scheduling at least 1 intentional One-to-One conversation each month with a neighbor or community member.*** These conversations give us an opportunity to discover our neighbor's gifts and strengths, their sense of the community, and to build community. We will learn how to have a good One-to-One at our first retreat.
- ***We ask that each participant contribute to the planning and implementation of a Neighborhood Listening Project.*** In the summer months, each congregation will be invited to plan an intentional season of listening in the community where the church is located. This will include one-to-ones, showing up, neighborhood walks, block parties, and more.

What Learning Cohorts can expect from Synod Staff and Leadership

- Learning Community participants can expect regular and useful communication from the Faith & Neighboring Practices staff about upcoming meetings and retreats, and any tasks or projects to be completed prior to cohort meetings.
- Learning Community participants can expect Synod staff and leaders to engage respectfully and appropriately with each person in the learning community.
- Learning Community participants can expect Faith & Neighboring Practices staff to listen and respond to all appropriate feedback, and to change direction or strategy as needed. This is a learning community which means we all learn better when we learn together.
- Learning Community participants can expect Faith & Neighboring Practices staff to accompany all congregational teams and team members throughout the two-year learning community. We are in this process together!

Questions?

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