

# I-K Synod Assembly Keynote Speakers



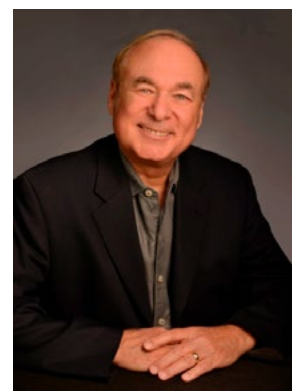
Rabbi Dennis Sasso



Rabbi Sandy Sasso



Beth Lewis



Rev. Rick Rouse

## Dr. Dennis C. Sasso

Rabbi Sasso has been Senior Rabbi of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck since 1977. Rabbi Sasso obtained his B.A. from Brandeis University, in Near Eastern and Judaic studies; his M.A. in Religion from Temple University and was ordained at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in 1974. He holds a Doctor of Ministry in Theology from Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana and is the recipient of various Doctor of Divinity Honorary degrees.

Rabbi Sasso is a native of Panama and a descendent of Caribbean Sephardic families. He lectures nationally and internationally on Caribbean and Central American Sephardic Jewry and teaches about Reconstructionism and on interfaith relations. Rabbi Sasso serves on the Board of Directors for United Way of Central Indiana, the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee and the Advisory Boards of the Lake Family Institute for Faith and Giving of the IUPUI Center on Philanthropy and of the Center for Interfaith Cooperation. Rabbi Sasso is Affiliate Professor of Jewish studies at Christian Theological Seminary (Disciples of Christ) where he teaches Judaism and Jewish-Christian relations.

He is married to Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, the first woman ordained by the Reconstructionist Movement. They are the first rabbinical couple in world Jewish history.

In October, 2016 Rabbi Sasso, along with his wife, Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, were among the inaugural recipients of the Hoosier Jewish Legends Award presented by the Indiana Jewish Historical Society.

## Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

Rabbi Sandy Sasso has served, along with her husband Rabbi Dennis C. Sasso, as spiritual leader of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck since 1977. In June 2013 she became Rabbi Emerita and is the Director of the Religion, Spirituality and the Arts Initiative at Butler University and Christian Theological Seminary. After receiving her B.A. and M.A. from Temple University, in 1974 she was the first woman ordained from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. In addition to being the first woman to serve a Conservative congregation, she and her husband are the first practicing rabbinical couple in world Jewish history. Rabbi Sandy earned her Doctorate of Ministry from Christian Theological Seminary. The recipient of several honorary doctorates (Reconstructionist Rabbinical College; DePauw University; Butler University; Franklin College; and Christian Theological Seminary), in June 2013 she received a Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa, from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

In addition to her extensive contributions to the needs of her congregation, Rabbi Sandy has been active in the arts, civic and interfaith communities of Indianapolis and beyond. She is a past President of Gleaners Food Bank, and serves on the boards of the Indiana Humanities Council, the Julian Center (domestic violence shelter), Lake Institute of Faith and Giving and the Board of Advisors of IUPUI (Indiana University/Purdue University at Indianapolis). She is Past Chair of the Spirit and Place Advisory Board, the annual festival celebrating the Arts, Religion and Humanities.



## 2017 Indiana-Kentucky Synod Assembly

She and Dennis write a monthly column in The Indianapolis Star on religious and spirituality issues.

Rabbi Sasso received the Heritage Keepers Award from the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites and the Spirit of the Prairie Award from Conner Prairie Interactive History Park.

Rabbi Sasso is co-founder of Women4Change Indiana and the author of 14 award winning children's books and two books for adults.

### Beth Lewis

Beth Lewis is the President & CEO of 1517 Media, the ministry of publishing of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). 1517 Media is the parent organization for Augsburg Fortress, Fortress Press and Sparkhouse.

Originally from Lexington, KY, Beth is a lifelong Lutheran. She attended the University of Kentucky and completed her undergraduate degree at Maryville University in St. Louis. She is also a graduate of the Advanced Management Program of the Harvard Business School. In May 2008, she received the Doctor of Divinity honorary degree from the Wartburg Theological Seminary. In 2015, she was recognized with the Women in Business Award by the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal. Beth is an active member of Calvary Lutheran Church in south Minneapolis.

Beth is married to the Rev. Dr. Richard (Rick) Rouse, who consults with congregations on becoming missionally oriented and on implementing the catechumenate. Beth & Rick are often invited together as speakers on a wide variety of topics for church leaders. They have three adult children and five grandchildren.

Beth spent 22 years working for three Fortune 500 publishing companies, Time Warner, McGraw-Hill, and Times Mirror. In 1998, Beth decided to pursue a more entrepreneurial venture and acquired a privately owned computer training school, Computer Coach, Inc. in Boca Raton, FL.

In August 2002, Beth was called to her current role as President & CEO of 1517 Media. In this role, she has led the staff in turning around this ministry of publishing and moving from a traditional ink-on-paper publishing company to a media company creating web-based subscription content, video-based curricula, over 2000 eBooks and mobile apps in addition to print content. In 2009, they launched a new ecumenical publishing division, Sparkhouse. Their highly regarded and popular curricula for children, youth and adults include Spark, Holy Moly, Connect, Whirl, re:form, CoLABorate, and animate. In 2015, Sparkhouse Family was launched to provide faith formation resources for the home including books, story bibles, and videos. In 2016, Sparkhouse launched Frolic, a faith formation resource for use in both church and home with children ages birth to three years old.

Beth is a popular keynote speaker and teacher in both Lutheran and ecumenical gatherings on a wide variety of topics to assist church and not-for-profit organization leaders: from turnaround strategies for faith-based organizations to strategic thinking to effective use of technology to congregational hospitality. In June 2015, this publishing ministry was named one of the Top Workplaces in Minnesota by the Minneapolis Star Tribune. Beth is the immediate past-President of the PCPA (Protestant Church-Owned Publishers Association). She also serves on the Luther Seminary Board of Directors executive committee.

## Rev. Dr. Richard W. Rouse

Pastor Rouse is recently retired from the Grand Canyon Synod staff where he served as Director of the synod's Missional Leadership Academy. Prior to coming to Arizona in January 2006, Rouse was the Executive Director for Church Relations and Continuing Theological Education at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, WA for over ten years (1994-2005). He has served as adjunct faculty at Luther Seminary and at the Lutheran Seminary Program of the Southwest (LSPS in Austin, TX). Rouse is a member of the Board of Directors for Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and is immediate past President of the North American Association for the Catechumenate.

He is a parish consultant working with ELCA congregations across the country in the areas of strategic planning, spiritual discernment, stewardship, and missional leadership. A certified Spiritual Director and ordained Lutheran pastor for 42 years, he has served congregations in Arizona, California, Oregon, and Washington. Rouse is the author of numerous publications including the 2016 Fortress Press book for pastors and church leaders, *Beyond Church Walls: Cultivating a Culture of Care*. Other titles include *A Field Guide for the Missional Congregation*, *Go Make Disciples*, and *Fire of Grace: The Healing Power of Forgiveness*.

Pastor Rouse was featured along with arsonist Paul Keller in a film by Seraphim, "Forgiveness: A Miracle of Love," a video resource for congregations. He was Senior Pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lynwood, WA whose facility was destroyed in an arson spree of 1992. He subsequently appeared on NBC Dateline, the Oprah Winfrey Show, and on BBC and Dutch television. Convinced of the transforming nature of the gospel, he has led seminars across the country on the healing power of forgiveness.

He is married to Beth Lewis, President and CEO of Augsburg Fortress. They have three grown children, one who serves as an ELCA pastor in Wisconsin.

## Churchwide Representative



MIKKA McCracken lives in Chicago and serves with ELCA World Hunger as Director for Planning and Engagement. A South Korean adoptee, she grew up in northern Minnesota and is a life-long Lutheran. Mikka graduated in political science and peace studies from Gustavus Adolphus College and completed her certificate

in nonprofit management from the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Continuing Studies. She believes it is possible to end poverty and hunger and that the church has an important role to play so that all are fed.

In her seven years at the ELCA churchwide offices, Mikka has also worked with the ELCA Justice for Women program and ELCA Washington Office on gender justice advocacy and ELCA Global Mission on "glocal" learning events. She currently serves on the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) international council as one of five members from the North American region and the Vorstand (board) of the ELCA Wittenberg Center in Germany.

Mikka enjoys recreational running, original movie music scores, the great outdoors and good vegetarian food.