



Kelsey Kresse (left) stands with Bishop Leila Ortiz, Metro DC Synod following her ordination. Photo credit: Karin Brown

ELCA Fund for Leaders Alumni

Kelsey Kresse

A lifelong Lutheran, Kelsey's faith was shaped by her participation in Lutheran outdoor ministries, Lutheran campus ministries, and her year volunteering with the ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) program.

"The time I spent in Madagascar [as a Young Adult in Global Mission] was transformative," Kelsey reflects. "I was introduced to a community of people that welcomed me into their homes, their church, and their lives. I learned to find peace and stillness in a society that does not value busyness as we do in the United States. I began to recognize just how important my home congregation, camp, and campus ministry experiences had been to me, and how much I felt called to make those spaces available to others." It was in Madagascar that Kelsey embraced her call to a life of public ministry.

Upon her return, Kelsey began to see systemic issues in the United States in a way that made America seem different than when she'd left. She decided to pursue a theological education to help gain a better understanding of the work still needed in our country regarding racism and civil rights and to be able discern how to love her neighbors in the ways truly needed.

Kelsey received a full-tuition scholarship and graduated in 2021 from the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. Recently ordained, Kelsey is now serving as Associate Pastor at Abiding Presence Lutheran Church in Abiding, VA focusing primarily on youth and college age ministries.

In the next decade, Kelsey believes "the church will not simply go on as it always has but will require us to work in new ways to ensure its relevance. We can no longer depend on a sense of duty or social obligation. It will require intentional nurturing and genuine investment in the lives of our neighbors. But the Good News is worth it."



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