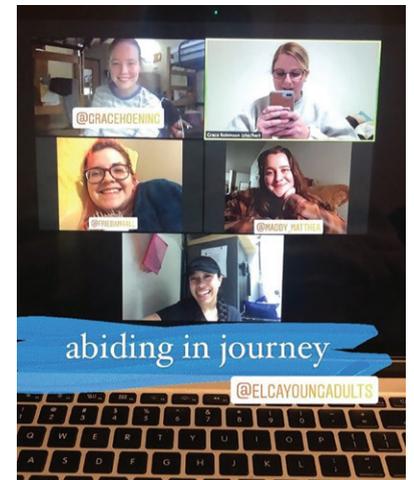
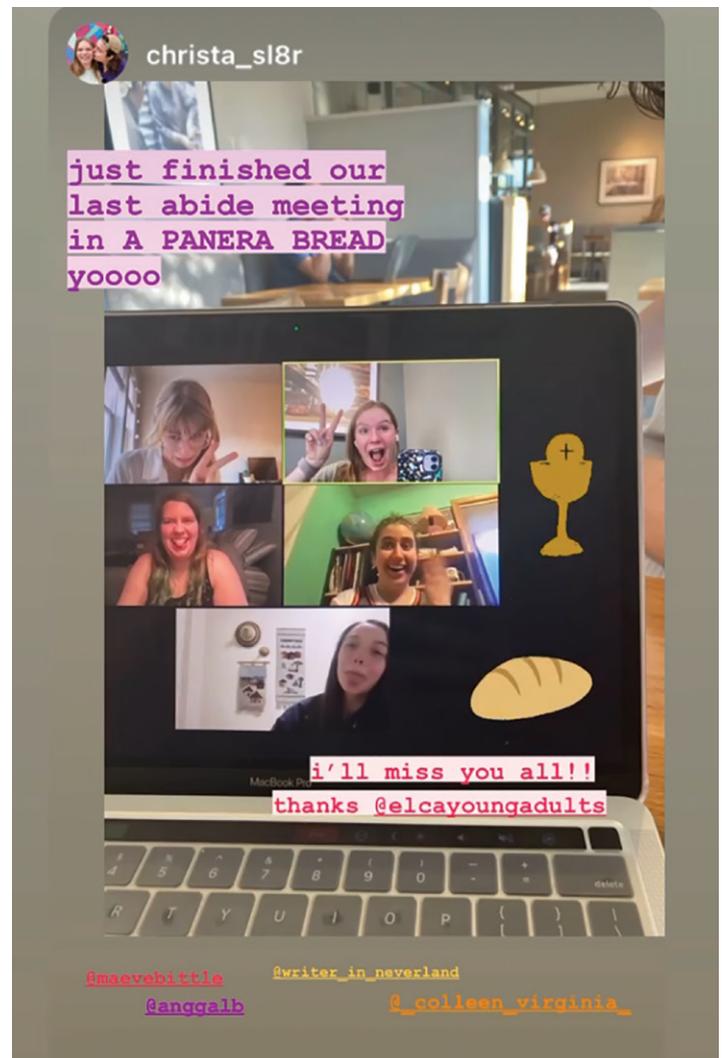


@heidig143's abide group making time to abide in rest last week!! Thanks for sharing!!



In the first Abide season, more than 400 participants met in over 50 virtual small groups for nine weeks.



Space to Abide

Where are all the young adults in the ELCA?

Daniel Kirshbaum, program director for ELCA Young Adult Ministry, hears this question often. "They're here," he said. "We just need to figure out a way to meet them where they're at."

Meeting young adults where they're at is a goal of Abide, a small-group ministry for ELCA members between 18 and 35. The program started in early 2020, shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic began. Hoping to connect isolated young people from across the country, Kirshbaum, former Young Adult Ministry program director Savanna Sullivan, and ELCA young adult leaders decided to facilitate a series of weekly, virtual small groups.

In the first Abide season, more than 400 participants met in over 50 virtual small groups for nine weeks. In the following two seasons, over 500 more participants joined. There have been groups of teachers, nurses, Young Adults in Global Mission alums, LGBTQIA+ people, and people of color. Weekly video and discussion topics so far have included "Abide in Hope," "Abide in Grief" and "Abide in Failure." *Mission Support makes this program possible by funding Kirshbaum's leadership position.*

Claire Embril, social media coordinator for Abide, served as a group leader for the spring and fall seasons in 2020. "No matter what the topic was, I always left my group better than I

came into it," she said, adding that even though her group members had different political views, they were ready to listen to and support each other through challenging experiences.

One challenge in particular? "As a Black woman, watching the intense, violent racism [over the summer of 2020] was extremely difficult," Embril said. "Having an Abide group to process that with was really important."

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This past summer, Abide partnered with Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp to organize a backpacking trip. Embril dreams of organizing a national Abide gathering. For now, she's glad that Abide is giving young adults the space to just be together. "Abide shows that young people really want to participate in the church," she said. "When space is made, they come."

