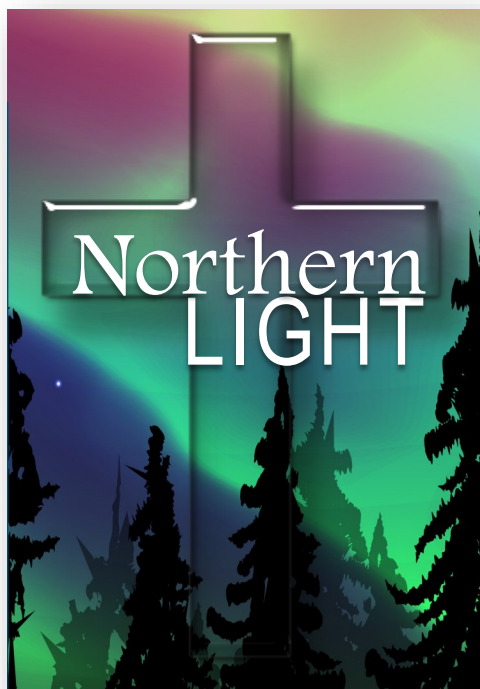


Shining with the Light of Christ in the Northern Great Lakes Synod

Volume 37, Issue 1 | January-February 2025



Northern LIGHT

“So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.”

~Galatians 6:9-10

Dear People of the Northern Great Lakes Synod,

Grace and peace to you in this new year of our Lord 2025. I remember as a senior in high school, we were asked to write an essay describing ourselves ten years in the future. I imagined myself as a single woman working as an English teacher, living in some small town in Wisconsin or Minnesota.



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Bishop Katherine Finegan
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My real life-ten years out of high school-looked very different. By then I had moved away from any aspirations that involved teaching high school English. I was living in East St. Paul and going to seminary while serving as a Youth Director at a church. I was married, with a new baby, and considering where a seminary education might lead.

My high school essay was not meant to be a future plan or an exercise in goal setting. I was not striving to make what I had imagined into a reality. However, considering that my real life unfolded so differently than my imaginings makes me wonder about our imaginings, and even our future goal setting, as a church.

I think it used to be that the church of my youth thought that church was always going to be the way we were experiencing church then. Church councils developed five, ten, even twenty year plans with no imaginings that culture would shift, that worship attendance would decline, that the classroom and fellowship additions to their buildings would not always be full of Sunday school children and adults in Bible study.

We know better now. Our current reality is not something we imagined. Plans and goals are well and good, but I think we have learned that being able to adapt to what is, rather than holding out hope for what was, is a far more realistic approach to the changes we are experiencing.

The emerging model for some of our congregations is Lay-led and Pastor-supported ministry. Effective adaptation would then include:



- Equipping lay people, not only for ministry, but for leadership. This includes education, support, and accountability.
- Encouraging attendance at Lay School. Both the East Central Wisconsin Synod and the Northwest Wisconsin Synod offer in-person and online education opportunities. In addition, Faith+Lead through Luther Seminary and our ecumenical partners. NGLS scholarship funds are available.
- Some adjustment of congregational expectations. In many of our congregations, small teams of people are being trained to bring communion to shut-ins, offer hospital visits, provide crisis care, lead Bible studies, and more. What was considered the sole realm of the pastor is being shared among the priesthood of all believers, that is, people willing to contribute in new ways.



As our three-year theme of Seed Sowers continues, we focus this year on “Apollos watered.” We not only water seeds of faith in people, but we water talent for ministry, nurturing spiritual gifts that give glory to God and further the work of Christ.

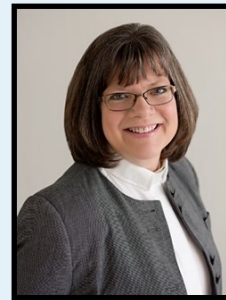
And as so often happens when the Spirit gets involved, we find ourselves doing something we never thought we would do, beyond our previous imaginings. From reading the lessons in worship to preaching, from having conversations of faith

to leading Bible Study, from greeting someone at church to holding their hand before surgery, God is at work in you, and through you, the Spirit moves in your congregation, and through your congregation, God is present in your community and the world.

I pray God’s blessings upon your efforts as together we meet the challenges of our time and adapt to being Church for the future.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Katherine Finegan



Synod Ministry Fund

The Northern Great Lakes Synod team truly thanks you all for the contributions to our #GivingTuesday Synod Ministry Fund! Your generosity and kindness contributes to the needed financial support for current congregational and Synod ministry efforts.

But the year is not over yet! Donations for disbursement in 2025 will be accepted through December 31, 2024.

Find more information on our website at: [Synod Ministry Fund – Northern Great Lakes Synod](#)



A Welcome Letter from
Rev. Sharolyn Swenson



Dear Ones in the Northern Great Lakes Synod,

Grace and peace be with you, through Christ, our Lord. Greetings! I am Pastor Sharolyn Swenson, and it is with joy and hope I look forward to being your new Director of Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop for the Northern Great Lakes Synod of the ELCA.

I have lived in Austin, Texas, most of my life and my whole time in ministry, serving God with congregations growing through seasons of transitions. Through this work, I have come to recognize we all are experiencing God's radical love, by being made new. I have walked with many congregations through seasons of unknown, exciting, and life-giving change. It is in this spirit of adventure and trust, I take this leap of faith, to come, serve with and live among you, for the sake of Christ, in a hopeful and changing world.

I have a Bachelor of Science in Architecture from the University of Texas at Arlington. (Thus really excited about the abundance of Frank Lloyd Wright buildings in the Great Lakes area.) My call to ministry grew through my work as a Godly Play storyteller and Trainer (a model of faith nurture and spiritual guidance with children) that led to a graduate Certificate in the Spiritual Guidance of Children from General Seminary (Episcopal) in New York City, and ultimately a call to ordained ministry. My Master of Divinity degree is from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and while I'm a lifelong Lutheran, and spent a year in residency at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago for further Lutheran formation.

I have served my synod on the Candidacy and Congregational Vitality committees, as well as a Austin Seminary Pastoral Leadership in Public Life fellow.

My heart is full for family and nature. I have three daughters in my life and heart: Navy, lived near Kilimanjaro, Tanzania as a director of a school, and now lives and goes to school in Austin. Summer, also lives in Austin, attends college, and is a dance teacher. Hope lived and died with leukemia, at the age of three, in 2000. Spending time in nature is a passion of mine, and I can't wait to see what the U.P. has in store. It seems absolutely beautiful. I enjoy gardening, hiking, kayaking, and camping. I'm eager to learn about new trees, growing seasons, and ecosystems.

I have found myself reflecting quite a lot on the imagery of bees, as I discern the activity of [Director of Evangelical Mission](#) and Assistant to the Bishop. The work of one bee is to go out and see God's gifts of the soil, the flowering fruit, and help pollinate other plants and return to the hive, in a centripetal loop of life in an ecosystem. The work is both solitary and interconnected, in hope and trust of God's abundant flourishing life for all. It works in seasons of birth, growth, and death...in the field, in the hive. It is the work of connecting many diverse expressions of life, for the common good. It is how I imagine our work together will be, through our love for God, one another, and creation.

Practically speaking, I will move to the Marquette area in late December, so that I can begin our work together in early January. I like to be called "Pastor Sharolyn" (it rhymes with Carolyn) and I use she/her pronouns. I hear it gets pretty cold up there...so I got a coat. I trust we will figure out the rest together.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Sharolyn

EFFECTIVE MISSION **ENDOWMENT MINISTRY**

By: Chuck Thomas, NGLS Vice President

According to the ELCA Guide for Congregations “How to Create a Mission Endowment Fund”, ELCA MEF Guidance, the purpose of a mission endowment fund (MEF) is to fund mission work at home and around the world, above and beyond what is funded by regular offerings. Typically viewed as a “perpetual” fund, a MEF is designed to sustain ongoing and future ministry efforts for generations to come.

Is your congregation considering a MEF and are you looking for assistance or need an example to follow? While the ELCA MEF Guidance document contains useful information, you may also find it helpful to model your MEF from one of the congregations within the Northern Great Lakes Synod (NGLS) that have well-established MEFs. A well-managed MEF provides a way for people to make planned gifts to your congregation that continue to fund ministry in your local area and throughout the world.

When my congregation, First Lutheran in Gladstone, decided to create a MEF in the mid 1990s, a task force was formed to explore the options and set the necessary guidelines. First Lutheran’s MEF was initiated at the January 1998 annual congregation meeting with a comprehensive Continuing Resolution. The MEF started with \$42,700. This seed money came from 50% of the proceeds from the sale of the parsonage. The MEF was also fortunate to receive within the first year an estate gift that tripled its initial value. With bequests, small donations, and investment gains, First Lutheran’s MEF has grown since its inception from \$42,700 to \$521,000.

Mission Endowment Funds that encourage prospective donors will have good governance documents. Governance documents should be in your congregation’s constitution either as bylaws or continuing resolutions, and should at a minimum include:

- The process for accepting gifts and donor acknowledgement.
- How the MEF is maintained and by whom and how they are chosen.
- The operation and purpose of the MEF.

- The investment strategy.
- How investments are managed and reviewed.
- Distribution decisions; how much, at what frequency, and the approval process.
- Oversight: by a board, the council, or the treasurer.
- An audit process.

First Lutheran’s Continuing Resolution addresses these points and includes language specific to the congregation’s wishes and needs. Each year, First Lutheran distributes 6% of the fund’s October 31 value. Grant requests must be received by September 30 each year and must be submitted by a congregation member. Over the years, First Lutheran’s MEF has provided grants to 84 worthy recipients, including annual undesignated grants to both Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp (FLLC) and the NGLS, as well as designated grants to specific ELCA, NGLS, and FLLC funding needs, campus ministries, Lutheran college scholarships, a large variety of local and regional social welfare endeavors, food pantries, Christian Radio support, and support of specific ministries in Tanzania. Through the foresight of establishing a MEF, First Lutheran has been blessed to provide over \$499,000 in the last 26 years to ministries and social needs outside the church building.

If your congregation is interested in starting a Mission Endowment Fund, learning more about First Lutheran’s experience, or if you’d like a copy of the governance documents, please contact me at nnglsynodvp@nnglsynod.org.

NGLS Dungeons & Dragons Retreat **February 21-22, 2025**



The NGLS Dungeons & Dragons Club, for youth between 6th-12th grade, will hold a retreat February 21-22, 2025. Please email Stefanie at youthcoordinator@nnglsynod.org for more information about the retreat or if you would like to be part of this new club!

Important Reminders

As 2025 begins, please note these important dates and documents that need to be sent to the Synod Office:



- * Congregation Statement of Intents for 2025
- * Congregation Annual Reports
- * Calendar Year Closing Date—January 14, 2025—Last day for checks to arrive in the Synod Office so that 2024 mission support (benevolence) gifts can be credited to 2024 giving.
- * Please be sure to note the month on your remittance form so that mission support giving can be properly credited.
- * Fiscal year closing date—February 12, 2025—last day for checks to arrive in the Synod office so that January 2025 giving can be credited to Synod Fiscal year.



Save the Date!

The Northern Great Lakes Synod Assembly will be held Thursday-Saturday, **May 15-17, 2025**. Opening worship will take place at Bethel Lutheran Church in Ishpeming, beginning at 7:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday sessions will be held at Northern Michigan University in Marquette. Congregations are encouraged to elect their voting members to Synod Assembly at their Annual Meeting.



Seed Sowers Luncheon

Following the conclusion of Assembly on Saturday, a Seed Sowers Luncheon will be held at NMU for those who have made, or are interested in making, a legacy gift to the Synod. More information on both events will be coming in early 2025.

Transitions

Mark your calendars:

- ◇ For the Installation of Rev. Brittany Barkus at All Saints, Wakefield and Sharon, Bessemer on Sunday January 12 in the afternoon. (TBD).
- ◇ And the Installation of Rev. Amanda Kossow at Zion, Marinette on Sunday February 16 in the afternoon.

Clergy and Licensed Lay Ministers are invited to vest and process. The color of the day is red.

- ◆ Congratulations and best wishes to Pastor Cathy Morris whose last Sunday at Bethlehem, Florence and First, Presbyterian was November 24, 2024. Pastor Morris joins the ranks of retired clergy. We pray God's blessings on her new rhythms.

Thank You

FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Thank you to the following donors for their generous support of the work of Christ in and through our Synod.

Missionary Sponsorship

Messiah, Marquette
Mission United, Pelkie

Disaster Relief

Salem, Ironwood
Messiah, Marquette
Mission United, Pelkie
First, Ewen
St. James, Rudyard
Ascension, Minocqua
Zion, Manistique
Immanuel, Rhinelander
Good Shepherd, Peshtigo
Bethany, Norway
St. Paul's, Mass City
Siloa, Ontonagon
Immanuel, Negaunee

Lutheran World Relief

Salem, Ironwood
Zion, Ironwood
St. Paul, Ironwood
Prince of Peace, Marquette
Zion, Marinette
Bethany, Mohawk
Calvary, Rapid River
Messiah, Marquette

ELCA Good Gifts

Emmanuel, Menominee

Lutheran Campus Ministry

Good Shepherd, Peshtigo
Prince of Peace, Marquette
Calvary, Rapid River
William Verrette

Synod Ministry Fund

Matthew and Allison Johnson
James and Eleanor Russey
John and Terry Frankenstein
Charles and Lynn Thomas
Donald and Audrey Anderson Foundation
Paul and Nancy Heykes

David and Katherine Finegan
Lori Ward
Chris White
Linda Nicholls
Jim Duehring

Companion Synod Projects

St. Paul, Mass City
First, Gladstone
St. Paul, Ironwood
Immanuel, Negaunee
Immanuel, Rhinelander

Answer the Call

Immanuel, Negaunee
Immanuel, Rhinelander
Bethany, Ishpeming

Equipping the Saints

Elisabeth & Wes Daniels
Salem, Ironwood
Zion, Ironwood
St. Paul, Ironwood

Mission Outreach

Immanuel, Escanaba

Lutheran Social Services

Emanuel, Skandia
Immanuel, Rhinelander

American Indian + Alaska Native Ministries

Immanuel, Negaunee

MKUZA Girls School

First Lutheran, Gladstone
NGLS Women's Organization

Seminarian Support

Jennifer Wrege Estate

• Synod Calendar •

January 2025

7– Synod Assembly
Planning Committee
meeting at Synod Office

10-11– Synod council
meeting by Zoom

13– Endowment
Committee meeting by
Zoom

22– World Hunger
Committee meeting by
Zoom

28– Finance committee
meeting at Synod Office

29– Worship Committee
at Synod Office

February 2025

23-24– Professional Leaders
Conference

- * **Current and retired pastors, licensed lay ministers, and seminarians are welcome!**
- * Registration deadline for conference is February 1, 2025



Location: Terrace Bay Inn,
Gladstone

Pastoral Vacancies and Interims

Ready to Receive Potential Candidates

Immanuel, Rhinelander – Rev. John Kuziej
 United, L’Anse – Rev. Julie Belew
 Northern Lights Parish – Rev. Bill Jacobson

In Discernment Regarding Next Steps

Faith & Trinity, Ishpeming – Rev. Jim Duehring
 Calvary, Rapid River & First, Trenary – Rev. Tommy Richter
 First, Iron River – Vicar Lance Crevier
 Zion, St. Ignace & Trinity, Brevort – Rev. Melinda VanderSys

Engaged in Transitional Process

Bethlehem, Florence—Rev. David Johnson
 Pioneer Lake, Conover – Rev. Peggy Rose
 Emmanuel, Menominee – Rev. Christine Olson
 Emanuel, Skandia & Bethany, Negaunee – Rev. Lloyd Luedeman
 Grace, Pembine – Rev. D.J. Rasner

Not Actively in Call Process

Christ the King, Escanaba and Faith, Rock – Student Vicar Sarah Sleeter
 Porterfield, Porterfield & Beaver American, Pound – Vicar Dan Moschea
 Grace, South Range – Rev. Kelly Ylitalo
 Eden, Munising – Student Vicar Elaine Robbins

“O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come...” (ELW #632)

As 2024 comes to a close and a new year dawns, we offer our deepest thanks to the individuals and congregations of our Synod who have supported Christ’s mission so generously throughout the year. As Synod, we walk together, sharing in a partnership that can do so much more than any single congregation alone. God has blessed us with each other and we are grateful. May we walk into the new year with hearts filled with hope, trusting God to provide for all our needs.

-Betsy Koski, Bookkeeper

As of 11/30/24	2023	2024	\$ Change	% Change
Pledged Amount	759,513	729,507	-30,006	-4%
Amount Received	653,081	637,456	-15,625	-2.4%



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Prayfaithfully

NGLS Daily Devotions Schedule

December 30—January 5	Various Writers
January 6—12	Pastor Catie Ford
January 13—19	Pastor Nicole Hanson-Lynn
January 20—26	Melzee Jacobson
January 27—February 2	Pastor Maxine Gray
February 3—9	Roland Jacobson
February 10—16	Pastor Keith Kolstad
February 17—23	Pastor Christine Olson
February 24—March 2	Ruth Warmanen