

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

Volume 37, Issue 2 | March - April 2025

*"What then shall we say to this?  
If God is for us, who is against us?"*

~Romans 8:31

Dear People of the Northern Great Lakes Synod,

As I write this article, we are still in a flurry of executive orders and declarations that give rise to a host of emotions. While some are cheering campaign promises kept, others fear for those most impacted and question the constitutional integrity of actions and orders. My own heart feels heavy as funds have been paused for humanitarian aid. I know the work of Lutheran Social Services makes a compassionate difference in the world and frankly, US AID funds make America look good. (It was through USAID grants that the NGLS was able to help build Kisarawe Junior Theological Seminary in Tanzania.) As we consider our theme of Seeds Sowers and planting seeds of faith, the seeds that are now being sown by these actions are unclear. Within that space of planting and growth is the tension between border security and a compassionate immigration system that works, between excessive spending and effective stewardship of federal resources, between legal processes and getting things done. What then shall we say to this?

There is much that I disagree with, and much that provokes concern. But my understanding of the example and call of Jesus to be his disciple brings me back to what I can do, what I should do, and what lies beyond my reach (although not beyond my grief and disquiet.)



I can call my congressional representatives to work to restore funds, and in the meantime, I can encourage congregations to gather in their Synod Assembly offering for World Hunger. I can support local and global efforts to address issues of poverty. I can participate with the efforts of our synod to make a difference with the people who are in our reach and continue to educate around international issues even as we pray for peaceful resolutions and just action.

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And I can remember, and remind you and myself, that the God we proclaim is one who promises new life from death. The Savior we serve is one who bids us to “go and do likewise,” not seeking to condemn but inviting us into a deeper understanding of how it is that the least are the greatest. God is for us and working through us to be the presence of Christ. What that means for us in these days, we figure out together. I find that the words of ELW Hymn #705 speak to me with new resonance:

*God of grace, and God of glory  
On your people pour your power.  
Crown your ancient church's story.  
Bring its bud to glorious flower.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
for the facing of this hour.*

*Lo! The hosts of evil round us  
scorn the Christ, assail his ways.  
From the fears that long have bound us  
free our hearts to faith and praise.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
for the living of these days.*

*Cure your children's warring madness;  
Bend our pride to your control;  
Shame our wanton, selfish gladness,  
rich in things and poor in soul.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
lest we miss your Kingdom's goal.*

*Save us from weak resignation  
to the evils we deplore;  
Let the gift of your salvation  
be our glory evermore.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
serving you whom we adore.*

Grant us wisdom.  
Grant us courage.

In Christ,  
Bishop Katherine Finegan



*“Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God  
as a little child will never enter it.”*

*Luke 18:17  
(Matthew 18:3, Mark 10:15)*

I am in a moment of life where my guiding words and my moving feet are synching up. I have long imagined Jesus' many passages on children and childhood to form a Theology of Childhood, that illumines our path as disciples. Much to the dismay to the named disciples, Jesus speaks to and about children a lot...eight unique times across the Gospels. This particular passage in Luke is simple...to receive the fullness of the kingdom you must approach it like a child. And let's be clear, the Greek points to a real-life child (παιδιον), like the child in the manger, or presented in the Temple...not a new-comer to the Way of Jesus. Real-life children are full of kinetic mischievousness, curiosity, and wonder about the world they live in, so they can learn and grow safely in their context. The ability to adapt to change and approach life with curious wonder is a survival instinct that we tend to replace with more respectable skills in adulthood. And yet it is how Jesus invites us to enter the kingdom of God, the interconnect relationship of all things divine and ordinary, in sacred wonder.

Finding myself at a stage in life and ministry to take a risk, and follow a playful Spirit, I have found my way to be in ministry with you, as your new Assistant to the Bishop and Director of Evangelical Mission. Folks have asked: “What do you think of the snow? Or the cold? Or pasties? Or the lake? Or us...what do you think of us?” And God provides this child with delighted wonder, even with older eyes and bones, to see God's world brand new. And everything I have encountered: the snow, the egg-bakes, the roadways, dog-sleds, the diverse patterns of worship, snow-shoes, the pronunciation of names, the unity and diversity of life, the names of new trees, new stories, new relationships. New. All beautifully new. And all

God's love and loveliness.

And then there is the new that terrifies me: the change in climate that is experienced here too; the mis-trust of neighbor in polarized civic life; the impulse to protect self or family first and then neighbor, before the other way around. Give me new eyes to see with wonder...so that the way of Jesus is clear.



Jesus tells his disciples to receive God's empire like children...with playful wonder...that doesn't jump to judgement, conclusions, or cynicism, but questions all things, even our own biases and beliefs. We are to reflect in the place of the inquisitive question and act from the location of the bold courage of a child who trusts the parent. I'm trying. And parts of it are easy...when I see the snow catch on the boughs of a tree or wonder how the waves froze in such strange contortions or triangle chicken salad sandwiches. The rest of my angst of the gasping earth, imperiled immigrants, de-humanized beloveds, de-valued webs of care...I crave more definition, certainty, and answers. Now, please. And even that expediency is the empire of consumption and production talking, not God's Empire. Lord, let me trust God's empire is most evident in the incomplete and open-ended story...the place of mystery and wonder that is the unfolding story of God's kingdom.

In Christ,

Pr. Sharolyn



## **CELEBRATING SEED SOWERS**

By: Chuck Thomas, NGLS Vice President

Religious nonprofits like the Northern Great Lakes Synod (NGLS) are completely dependent on the generosity of donors to accomplish their ministries. The NGLS is in the second year of a three-year theme centered on Seed Sowers. The scripture basis for the theme is 1 Corinthians 3:6. ***"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."*** In her recent Bishop's Report to congregations, Bishop Finegan aptly articulated what Paul says in chapter 3, verses 6 to 9 of his letter to the Corinthians. "Paul says that all believers are part of the life cycle of ministry; one planting seeds for the next one to nurture and for the following one to enjoy the growth that is given by God."



We are all Seed Sowers; we are planting seeds that grow into ministries throughout the NGLS and beyond. The seeds we plant need to be watered. One way to water and encourage growth is to acknowledge the generosity of those who have made a planned gift, also called a legacy gift. The NGLS did just that at Synod Assembly in 2023 with an inaugural Seed Sowers Luncheon. And based on the success of that first luncheon, we plan to celebrate legacy givers again at this year's Assembly with a second Seed Sowers Luncheon. In addition to those who have already made a legacy gift, this second luncheon also celebrates potential givers who have planned a legacy gift or are in the initial stages of considering a legacy gift.

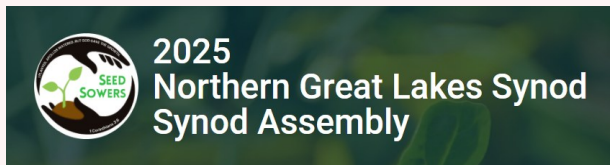
You may ask, "What is a legacy gift?" According to *nonprofithub.org*, "a legacy gift is a donation made by an individual through their will or other formal estate planning designation and bequests are the



most common type of legacy gift.” The appeal of making a legacy gift is it provides a means for the receiving organization to have a sustainable resource supporting its mission for many years after the gift has been donated. As is evidenced by some of the existing NGLS designated endowment funds, legacy gifts are often made during a donor’s lifetime, not just after they have passed on.

**You are invited:** If you have made a legacy gift, are planning to make a legacy gift, or are thinking about making one and want to learn more about it, you are invited to this year’s Seed Sowers Luncheon at 12:30 PM eastern time, Saturday, May 17, 2025, at Northern Michigan University. However, **this is important:** you must call the synod office at 906-228-2300 to reserve a spot at the luncheon by **APRIL 21, 2025.**

I sincerely thank all who have made a legacy gift to the NGLS or have made plans to do so and I look forward to meeting many of you at the upcoming Seed Sowers Luncheon.



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.

As the synod gathers, we invite you to consider how your church, your congregation, and the Synod together, nurtures seeds of faith. 1 Corinthians 3:6, **“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth”**, speaks to an arc of growth where the Apostle Paul planted seeds of faith and that is all. It was Apollos who watered them, nurtured those seeds, and witnessed some growth, and of course, he only witnessed the growth, he did not cause the growth. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. We invite you to find ways to nurture and provide opportunities, space, and encouragement for faith to grow.

## THEME:

Apollos Watered

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Rev. Jon Anderson

Head of Rural Ministry at Luther Seminary  
and Retired Bishop of the Southwest  
Minnesota Synod

## ELCA REPRESENTATIVE:

Deacon John Weit

Executive for Worship

Register online beginning **March 1**  
at **[www.nglsynod.org/assembly](http://www.nglsynod.org/assembly)**

## Save the Date!



## 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.

- ♦ Luncheon served at 12:30 PM ET
- ♦ Program begins at 1:00 PM ET
- ♦ Located in the Peninsula One Room at Northern Michigan University, Marquette, Michigan.

**RSVP by April 21 by calling the  
Synod office at 906/228-2300**

## Important Reminders

Being a few months into 2025, please note these important dates and documents that need to be sent to the Synod Office:



- ◇ Treasurers, be sure to update your **pastor's compensation with Portico**.
- ◇ **Congregational Leadership Information Form**
- ◇ **Congregation Annual Reports**
- ◇ A copy of a **congregation's Form A's** must be sent to the Synod office via mail or email once submitted online.
  - **Form A's are due MARCH 1**.
- ◇ **Pastoral Reports are due MARCH 31**.
- ◇ **Bread Basket and Big Bear Award Nominations are due APRIL 1**.
- ◇ For Synod Assembly this year, our World Hunger Committee is putting together a slideshow of all the different ways folks in our synod work to feed the hungry. Our theme is cast your bread upon the waters from Ecclesiastes 11:1-2. **Please send us photos of your food ministry for inclusion in the report.** Submissions can be sent to [pastor.tommyrichter@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.tommyrichter@gmail.com) for consideration.
- ◇ Please be sure to **note the month** on your remittance form so that mission support giving can be properly credited.

## Announcements

- ◇ We continue to rejoice with PSALM ministries of All Saints, (Wakefield) and Sharon, (Bessemer) at the installation of their new pastor, Rev. Brittany Barkus on Sunday, January 12 at Sharon, Bessemer.
- ◇ Prayers of Thanksgiving for the life and ministry of Pastor Duane Priebe. Peace to his memory.

## Transitions

◇ We give thanks for the efforts of Deacon Lori Ward who will retire from public ministry as of March 1, 2025. Deacon Lori joined the staff of the Northern Great Lakes Synod in February of 2021. Called as the administrator of our new Lifelong Faith Formation ministry, Deacon Lori recruited educators, arranged schedules, created promotional and registration information, and communicated with all involved. She also administered the evaluations for our Licensed Lay Ministers, meeting with council leaders and touching base with them on their partnerships. Deacon Lori has been a positive and enthusiastic partner, often providing pulpit supply and contributing her time to her home congregation and attending many Lifelong Faith Formation classes.

**Thank you, Deacon Lori! We thank God for you and all you have contributed to our work as a Synod together.**

◇ We give thanks for Naomi Mattson who is resigning from the position of Office Administrator as of February 21. In her brief time with the Synod staff, Naomi has served well and already leaves big shoes to fill. We have appreciated her attention to detail, her positive presence in the office, her efficiency, and her abilities that made her a quick study of the demands of the position. We are sad to see her go but wish her only the very best as she moves downstate toward a new adventure. God bless Naomi and her future endeavors!

◇ We welcome Pastor Amanda Kossow as she was installed at Zion, Marinette, Sunday February 16 at 3pmCT. God bless their new partnership!

◇ We welcome Eva Hautamaki to the Synod Staff starting February 17! Eva will share more about herself in the upcoming E-Notes.

# 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

Bethel, Ishpeming

### Disaster Relief

Trinity, Ishpeming  
Emanuel, Skandia  
Robert Knivila  
Salem, Ironwood  
Zion, Manistique  
-Joy Circle  
Bethany, Norway  
Mission United, Pelkie  
First, Ewen  
Bethel, Menominee  
Ascension, Minocqua  
Bethel, Ishpeming  
St. Paul's, Mass City  
Zion, Marinette

### Lutheran World Relief

Messiah, Marquette  
Zion, Marinette  
Prince of Peace, Marquette  
Calvary, Rapid River  
Bethlehem, Florence  
Trinity, Stonington  
Immanuel, Escanaba

### ELCA Good Gifts

Tri-County Conference

### Lutheran Campus Ministry

Good Shepherd, Peshtigo  
Prince of Peace, Marquette  
Calvary, Rapid River  
Bethel, Ishpeming

### Synod Ministry Fund

Pastor Melinda VanderSys  
Cindy Sjoquist  
Ruth Warmanen  
Robert Knivila

### Equipping the Saints

Pastor Elisabeth & Wes Daniels

### Mission Outreach

Pastor Elisabeth & Wes Daniels  
Immanuel, Escanaba

### MKUZA Girls School

NGLS Women's Organization

### Seminarian Support

Bethel, Ishpeming  
Trinity, Ishpeming  
Pastor Norm & Mary Peterson

### Skrenes Fund for Ministry

Mike and Sandee Strahan

### Prison Ministries

Bethel, Ishpeming

### Youth Ministries

Kaaren E. Ness  
David & Arlene Van Kley

### Companion Synod Support

St. Pauls, Mass City  
Pastor Norm & Mary Peterson  
Deloris Langseth

### Leadership Support

Sharon, Bessemer

### Restricted General

Gloria Dei, Hancock

## • Synod Calendar •

### MARCH 2025

4—Licensed Lay Minister  
Committee Meeting

6—Tri-County Conference 6  
Meeting at Bethany, Perkins

6— Northern Great Lakes Synod  
Staff Meeting

12 – Synod Assembly Planning  
Committee meeting at Synod Office

17—Northern Great Lakes Synod  
Staff Meeting

18—Endowment Committee  
Meeting via Zoom

25—Zoom Orientation for  
CWA Voting Members

28-29—Synod Council Meeting via  
Zoom

### APRIL 2025

2—Northern Great Lakes Synod Staff  
Meeting

4-5—Youth Retreat at Fortune Lake

5—EcoFaith Summit in Duluth, MN

7—Northern Light articles Due

11-12—Youth Retreat at Fortune Lake

16—Northern Great Lakes Synod Staff  
Meeting

23—World Hunger Committee  
Meeting via Zoom

29—Candidacy Meeting



## **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  
 First, Iron River – Student Vicar Lance Crevier

### **In Discernment Regarding Next Steps**

Faith & Trinity, Ishpeming – Rev. Jim Duehring  
 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. Brenda Greenwald

### **Not Actively in Call Process**

Christ the King, Escanaba and Faith, Rock – Student Vicar Sarah Sleeter  
 Porterfield, Porterfield & Beaver American, Pound – Student Vicar Dan Moschea  
 Eden, Munising – Student Vicar Elaine Robbins  
 Bethany, Ishpeming—Rev. J. Mills

Thanks to the generosity of so many of our congregations in meeting and exceeding their pledge, we ended 2024 with only a 1% decrease in mission support as opposed to the anticipated decrease of 4%. We thank God for God's Goodness!

The fiscal year, however, ended 3% or \$22,669 below FY2023. As pledges continue to decrease, we place our trust in the Lord who provides for every need. May our giving in 2025 reflect our gratitude for the many ways God has blessed us.

-Betsy Koski, Bookkeeper

<b>As of 12/31/24</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>\$ Change</b>	<b>% Change</b>
<b>Pledged Amount</b>	759,513	729,507	-30,006	-4%
<b>Amount</b>	773,859	776,879	-6,980	-1%



## **Northern Great Lakes Synod**

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# **Prayfaithfully**

## **NGLS Daily Devotions Schedule March & April 2025**

<b>February 24 - March 2</b>	<b>Ruth Warmanen</b>
<b>March 3 - 9</b>	<b>Pastor Elisabeth Daniels</b>
<b>March 10 - 16</b>	<b>Christine Ebert</b>
<b>March 17 - 23</b>	<b>Sister Noreen Stevens</b>
<b>March 24 - 30</b>	<b>Pastor Linda Forray</b>
<b>March 31 - April 6</b>	<b>Pastor John Kuziej</b>
<b>April 7 - 13</b>	<b>Sister Noreen Stevens</b>
<b>April 14 - 20</b>	<b>Pastor Jim Duehring</b>
<b>April 21 - 27</b>	<b>Pastor Julie Belew</b>
<b>April 28 - May 4</b>	<b>SWO Board</b>