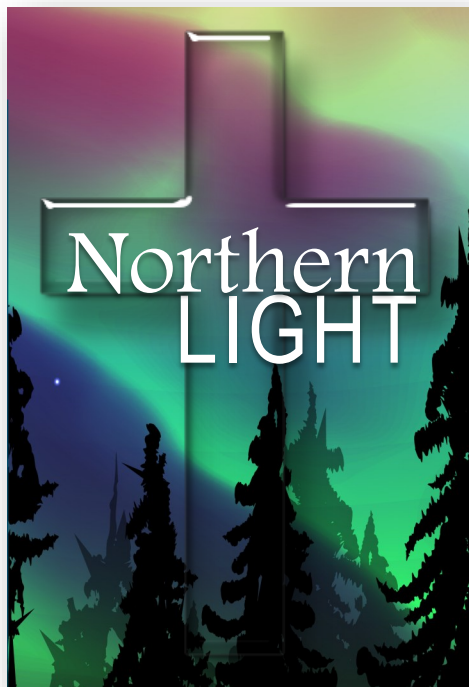


# Shining with the Light of Christ in the Northern Great Lakes Synod

Volume 37, Issue 5 | September - October 2025



## In This Issue

<b>Bishop Finegan</b>	<b>1-2</b>
<b>Assistant to the Bishop</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Vice President</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Announcements/Transitions</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Thank You/Calendar</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Vacancies/Synod Finance</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Prayfaithfully Devotions</b>	<b>8</b>



**Northern Great Lakes Synod**  
**1029 N. Third St., Ste. A**  
**Marquette, MI 49855**

Office: (906) 228-2300 | Fax: (906) 228-2527  
[www.nglsynod.org](http://www.nglsynod.org)

Bishop Katherine Finegan  
[kfinegan@nglsynod.org](mailto:kfinegan@nglsynod.org)

Pastor Sharolyn Swenson  
[sswenson@nglsynod.org](mailto:sswenson@nglsynod.org)

NGLS | [ngls@nglsynod.org](mailto:ngls@nglsynod.org)

Dear People of the Northern Great Lakes Synod,

Before my sabbatical begins, I have a host of annual medical check-ups that I want to get out of the way before boarding a plane to the other side of the world. While the tests are all routine, they are always accompanied by the question, “How are you today? Any complaints?” And I have to think about it. How AM I? How aware am I of what my body might be trying to tell me? Sure, there are the usual complaints. When I sit for awhile, as in a long car ride, I feel stiff and I might groan a little as I get out of the car. On my morning walk, I might feel a point of pain in a knee or hip, telling me to slow down or change my stride. If I’m tired already at 9 pm, I hear my body telling me to rest, even though I haven’t watched the news yet.

What does your body say to you?

And when we apply this kind of communication to the body of Christ, what might that look like? I have at least one answer; it looks like the Churchwide Assembly.

For one whole week at the end of July and into August, the body of Christ that is the voting members of all of our ELCA synods gathered in Phoenix, Arizona and we communicated. One body communicated with another, “I don’t care if it’s dry heat, it’s still HOT!” and in turn, different parts of the body of Christ communicated to the whole a host of concerns and joys with calls for solidarity, accompaniment, and reconciliation.

Paul writes in I Corinthians 12, “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ...If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.”

While gathered in assembly, we listened to points of pain...from the newly elected bishop of the Lutheran church in Jordan and the Holy Land, from our Jewish siblings, from our Young Adults, from our Indigenous members. And the

body responded by adopting a Memorial on Indian Boarding School Remembrance and wearing red to raise awareness of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls. The body responded by adopting a Memorial that calls for the End of Occupation of Palestine. The body responded by moving the goal for young adult participation on Churchwide committees from 10% to 20%.

The body celebrated the strides taken toward greater clarity as we adopted our newest Social Statement: Faith and Civic Life which will be featured among the offerings of our Winter Lifelong Faith Formation classes.

We stood in solidarity with AMMPARO at a candlelit vigil and as one body, prayed for peace and welcome for so many fleeing violence and looking for a place of safety.

And the body rejoiced at the election of our new presiding bishop, Rev. Yehiel Curry and a new Churchwide secretary, Rev. Cecee Mills. I have known Bishop Curry as a colleague in Region 5 for several years. He most recently also served as the Chair of the Conference of Bishops. Bishop Curry is financially astute, has gifts for leadership, is blessed with a pastor's heart, is a powerful preacher, and I have every hope and confidence that he will be a blessing to the body of Christ that is the ELCA. I encourage you to watch the interviews that have been posted on the NGLS and ELCA Facebook pages.

Listening to the whole body takes intention. Responding to the needs of the body takes communication. There may well be actions taken at the churchwide assembly that for you, are too quick a pace or too slow for your stride. There may still be points of pain that you are experiencing that have not yet

been addressed. For your own body, and for the body of Christ that is our ELCA Church, I believe we are all doing the best that we can, to work towards health and wholeness.

I am so very glad to be a part of the body of Christ that is the Northern Great Lakes Synod. I returned home from Phoenix all the more grateful for trees and grass, for dewy mornings and evening rain. And I am grateful for who we are in relationship with each other, whatever your pace, whatever the length of your stride, as we walk together in faith.



Yours in Christ,  
Bishop Katherine Finegan

### Thimbleberry Generosity

A couple of Sundays ago I experienced yet another congregational potluck following worship that continues to confirm I have discovered a low-key treasure in our synod. Yes, this sounds cliché. It even may wreak of Lutheran potluck stereotypes. But there is something wondrous about generosity spread out on six-foot tables across the UP of Michigan and northern Wisconsin around 11:30am on a Sunday morning.

Theological reflection becomes clearer when discussed with friends and colleagues. On this particular Sunday, I had the blessing to be worshipping with two congregations, kicking-off together their shared Summer Camp at the downtown pavilion of their town. As most folks were loading their empty Pyrex dishes back into the car and driving away, the pastors of the two congregations and I stood in a kind of huddle and reflecting on the morning. Off-handedly I mentioned my discovery of the most divine

food labeled “freshly caught and smoked salmon”. Now since moving here from Texas, I have delighted in trying new things. But this bite was the most delicious thing...among ridiculously delicious things. My colleagues both looked surprised at its mention... “What? Smoked salmon? Here? Today?” One lamenting they had missed it, but the lament gave way to story and wonder.

The three of us stood in our huddle. The one missing the divine fish opportunity said, “These people are amazing. When we first moved here, and were out on a neighborhood walk, a neighbor came out to the curb to give us a freshly caught and frozen salmon.” The other pastor had a similar exclamation, “During Ice fishing season one of our members leaned into my ear when he came up for communion, and said ‘I left some walleye in the fridge in the kitchen’.” And not to let their exuberance stand alone, I told them of just the week prior, members of a church in the Keweenaw showed me how to recognize thimbleberries, their favorite patch, and I left with a jar of Thimbleberry jam. Ridiculous generosity. To the giver, it likely feels like a tiny thing...just barely filling a thimble...but receivers know...it is overflowing abundance. Because it is love...for a newcomer, for the hope of connection, for the delight of what God has given us in creation, for investing in our relationships together. It is not a transaction, but a celebration.

It is easy to see God’s abundant generosity in the wild gifts of land and water: salmon, whitefish, wild rice, berries, moss, ferns, agates, sunsets. We delight like children and share out of our celebratory exuberance, so others may experience it too. And if we widen our lens, we might see our whole economic

community life is based on gathering God’s gifts through the earth, the trees above the ground and the ore below, mixing in our own time and care, to give back to community and God.

We are in a season of the Gospel of Luke in which Jesus paints the picture of a kingdom that is a place you could go to your friend’s house in the middle of the night and receive bread, a master and servant preparing the meal for one another together, banqueting with all, finding the lost coin in the dirt floor...our hearts and treasure, bound-up together.

The spiritual practice of generosity is something you already know. It delights and celebrates what God has done and is doing, and lets us be a part of its re-creation toward something new that looks like community, justice, and love. The offertory is not a song of transaction and receipt, but a song of joy for thimbleberries and smoked salmon and God’s gifts shared in love and hope.



Shalom+  
Pastor Sharolyn

### Experiences at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly

**By: Chuck Thomas, NGLS Vice President**

I was privileged to be one of the seven NGLS voting members at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly in Phoenix. The week was exhilarating, inspirational, and exhausting! We experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit, especially in the music and messages provided during daily worship services. I personally found it very rewarding to network in-person with other synod vice presidents and to connect

with a cadre of people from other synods working on or considering “Caring for Creation” projects.

The over 800 voting members at the assembly respectfully debated and voted on multiple issues that will give direction for the ELCA, its member synods, and its congregations for the next three years and beyond. Through the ecclesiastic ballot process, we as the Assembled Church, elected Rev. Yehiel Curry, Bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod as the next ELCA Presiding Bishop and Lucille (CeCee) Mills as the next ELCA Secretary. The Holy Spirit was indeed at work during the elections as neither one of the elected persons were pre-identified candidates.

In addition to attending marvelous and inspirational daily worship services, and enjoying great camaraderie at mealtimes, voting members:

- Approved 84 Memorials, including the Indian Boarding School Remembrance Memorial, which the NGLS was one of the twenty-two sponsoring synods,
- Saw three additional Memorials be referred to the Churchwide Council for consideration after the times allotted for debate ended with no action on the three,
- Approved a new social statement: Faith and Civic Life,
- Approved editorial updates to the social statement: Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust,
- Heard an inspiring Keynote Speaker, Rev. Chad Rimmer, who gave a theological presentation on the Assembly’s theme, “For the Life of the World”,
- Approved the budget for the next three years,

- Heard in the Secretary’s report that the ELCA has 2.7 million baptized members in 8,357 congregations,
- Approved the “en bloc” suite of amendments to the constitutions of the ELCA,
- Debated and voted on individual constitution amendments that were removed from “en bloc” in either their original form or in a further amended form, and
- Referred some proposed amendments to Churchwide Council for further consideration and action.

A summary of all the actions taken at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly should be available soon at ELCA.org. The next Churchwide Assembly will be in Des Moines, Iowa in early August 2028.



**July 28 – August 2**  
PHOENIX, ARIZONA

### **Rev. Yehiel Curry**

#### **Elected Presiding Bishop of the ELCA**

PHOENIX (July 30, 2025) - The Rev. Yehiel Curry was elected July 30 to serve a six-year term as presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The election took place during the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly held July 28–Aug. 2 at the Phoenix (Ariz.) Convention Center.

Curry was elected on the fifth ballot. There were 799 votes cast, with 400 votes needed for an election. Curry received 562 votes, and the Rev. Kevin Strickland, bishop of the ELCA Southeastern Synod, received 237 votes. Curry is the first Black presiding bishop of the ELCA.

Speaking to the assembly after his election, Curry reflected on his membership at Shekinah



Chapel in Riverdale, Ill., where he eventually became a lay mission developer while he participated in the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries program, which prepares individuals for ordained ministry in the ELCA, with a focus on emerging ministry contexts like ethnic-specific, multicultural, rural and inner-city settings. He spoke to the assembly about his initial hesitation in accepting that first ministry role.

“Perhaps I’m out there in one of you,” Curry said. “I never saw myself as good enough, so for two years, I said no. I finally said yes. When I said yes, your support, this church’s support, of that ministry meant everything. So if you want to know what your benevolence dollars look like, it looks like me, and I want to say thank you. Thank you for your investment.”

Curry has served as bishop of the ELCA Metropolitan Chicago Synod since 2019. He previously served as mission developer (2009-2012) and pastor (2012-2019) of Shekinah.

He received a Bachelor of Arts from Lewis University in Romeoville, Ill., in 1995 and a Master of Divinity from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) in 2013. LSTC is one of seven ELCA seminaries.

### **Rev. Lucille "CeCee" Mills**

#### **Elected Secretary of the ELCA**

PHOENIX (Aug. 1, 2025) – The Rev.

Lucille “CeCee” Mills was elected Aug. 1 to serve a six-year term as secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The election took place during the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly being held July 28–Aug. 2 at the Phoenix (Ariz.) Convention Center.

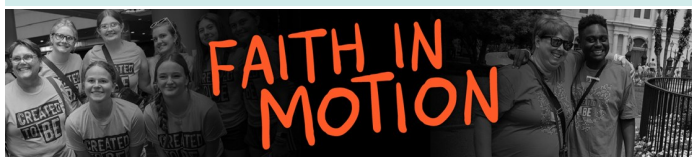
Mills was elected on the fifth ballot. There were 782 ballots cast, with 392 votes needed for an election. Mills received 404 votes to 378 votes for the Rev. Matthew Riegel, bishop of the ELCA West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod.

“I have to echo our newly elected presiding

bishop (Yehiel Curry) - I’m the product of you. I’m also a TEEM candidate,” Mills said to the assembly following her election. The Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) program prepares individuals for ordained ministry in the ELCA, with a focus on emerging ministry contexts such as ethnic-specific, multicultural, rural and inner-city settings.

“I do believe it’s a new season for our church,” Mills said. “I do believe that the reason why I, an African American woman who stands before you with no degrees in a church that cares so much about education ... is because you saw the gifts and potential in me. I celebrate with you that we listen to God’s call and that we will become God’s beloved community.”

Mills has served as an assistant to the bishop in the ELCA North Carolina Synod since 2019. Previously she served as an interim pastor, as program associate for African Descent Ministries with the ELCA churchwide organization in Chicago; and as pastor of Rejoice Lutheran Church, Chesapeake, Va. She received a TEEM certification from Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, S.C., in 2002.



The ELCA is hosting ELCA Gathering Expeditions throughout the country to help keep momentum going in-between Youth Gathering years. Expeditions are for 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade youth and the adults who walk beside them, and are designed to create sacred space to step away from everyday life and dive into questions of faith, purpose, identity, and calling.

The closest event for Northern Great Lakes Synod participants will take place October 31–November 2, 2025 in Elkhorn, WI. Additional details and registration information can be found on the ELCA’s website. Please contact Stefanie at [youth-coordinator@nglsynod.org](mailto:youth-coordinator@nglsynod.org) if you have youth in your congregations who would like to participate.

# 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.

### Lutheran World Relief

Messiah, Marquette  
Prince of Peace, Marquette  
Calvary, Rapid River  
Zion, Marinette

### Global Refuge

Messiah, Marquette  
First, Ewen

### Lutheran Campus Ministry

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

### Missionary Support

Immanuel, Negaunee

### Disaster Relief

Mission United, Pelkie  
Siloa, Ontonagon  
Zion, Marinette  
Good Shepherd, Peshtigo  
Calvary, Minocqua  
Immanuel, Rhinelander  
Immanuel, Escanaba

### Mission Outreach

Immanuel, Escanaba  
Rev. Elisabeth & Wes Daniels

### Answer the Call

Immanuel, Negaunee

### Companion Synod

First, Gladstone

### Sangwe Well Project

St. Paul, Mass City

### Lutheran Social Service

Emanuel, Skandia

### Equipping the Saints

Rev. Elisabeth & Wes Daniels

### Seminarian Support

St. James, Marinette

### Youth Ministries

St. James Marinette

Seed Sower Devotional Booklet for September  
2025 - May 2026 available at [nglsynd.org](http://nglsynd.org)



## • Synod Calendar •

### September 2025

- 4- NGLS Staff meeting
- 8- Registration for Bishop's Convocation closes
- 12-13- Synod Council meeting
- 15- Registration for Lifelong Faith Formation fall classes closes
- 15- E-Notes deadline
- 18- NGLS Staff meeting
- 21-23- Bishop's Convocation
- 29- E-Notes deadline

### October 2025

- 1- NGLS Staff meeting
- 8- November-December Northern Light deadline
- 14- NGLS Staff meeting
- 15- Bishop Finegan leaves for sabbatical
- 15- Registration for Faithful Finances closes
- 15- E-Notes deadline
- 22- Faithful Finances workshop
- 30- NGLS Staff meeting
- 30- E-Notes deadline

## ELCA Day of Remembrance Sunday Indian Boarding Schools



## Sunday, September 28, 2025

Day of Remembrance is September 30th



## **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**

Zion, St. Ignace & Trinity, Brevort – Rev. Melinda VanderSys

### **Engaged in Transitional Process**

Bethlehem, Florence - Rev. David Johnson  
 Pioneer Lake, Conover – Rev. Kari Vadis  
 Emmanuel, Menominee – Rev. Christine Olson  
 Emanuel, Skandia & Bethany, Negaunee – Rev. Lloyd Luedeman  
 Grace, Pembine – Rev. Gene Wickman  
 Zion, Manistique - Rev. Jim Duehring  
 Calvary, Rapid River - Mr. Chuck Thomas

### **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  
 Faith & Trinity, Ishpeming – Student Vicar Robert Lake

*“May we thy bounties thus as stewards true receive,  
 and gladly, as thou blessest us, to thee our first fruits give.” (ELW #686)*

Deepest thanks to our congregations for their timely remittance of mission support in the summer months. Through July, receipts are \$10,944 less than last year, due in part to a generous gift from a congregation who has concluded their ministry. Fall is a time when we are reminded of God's bountiful gifts through creation. May our gratefulness for all God's blessings lead us to share abundantly so that Synod ministries remain vibrant and strong.

- Betsy Koski, Bookkeeper

<b>As of 7/31/25</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>\$ Change</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Annual Pledged Amount	729,507	695,080	-34,427	-4.7%
Amount Received Year to Date	404,147	393,203	-10,944	-2.7%



## **Northern Great Lakes Synod**

1029 N. Third Street, Suite A  
Marquette, MI 49855

Phone: (906) 228-2300  
Fax: (906) 228-2527  
Email: [ngls@nglsynod.org](mailto:ngls@nglsynod.org)

Synod Website:  
[www.nglsynod.org](http://www.nglsynod.org)

Find us on Facebook & YouTube



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

Non Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Marquette, MI 49855  
Permit No. 22

Mail Label

# **Prayfaithfully**

## **NGLS Daily Devotions Schedule September & October 2025**

<b>September 1 - 7</b>	<b>Mathew Johnson</b>
<b>September 8 - 14</b>	<b>Fortune Lake Staff</b>
<b>September 15 - 21</b>	<b>Project Starling Participants</b>
<b>September 22 - 28</b>	<b>Pastor Melissa Salminen</b>
<b>September 29 - October 5</b>	<b>Virginia Paulson</b>
<b>October 6 - 12</b>	<b>First, Gladstone Bible Study</b>
<b>October 13 - 19</b>	<b>Chris Ebert</b>
<b>October 20 - 26</b>	<b>SWO Board</b>
<b>October 27 - November 2</b>	<b>Pastor Doug Norquist</b>