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Ministers of Word and Sacrament

Celebrating Anniversaries of Ordination in 2025

The Reverend Gerald Anderson— 25 years

I was born in Chicago, got degrees in Civil Engineering and Math at Valparaiso University, did youth ministry at an inner-city church for 9 months, then served in the Air Force almost 8 years. Feeling a call to ministry, I next attended Hamma School of Theology for few years, then went to Capital University Law School to prepare for a different way of helping people. Practiced law in a small town in Ohio for 25 years. Still feeling the call to serve God in the Church, I got my M. Div. from Payne Theological Seminary, Wilberforce, Ohio [an AME school], and took additional courses at Trinity Seminary. Then I did substitute teaching in local public schools while awaiting a call [the process was a little different back then!]. I was called to Covenant Lutheran Church in St. Paris, Ohio, and ordained in July, 2000, at the age of 59. After 6 years there, I accepted a call to Sharon Lutheran Church in Bessemer, Michigan, where I served until November, 2012, when I retired and moved South — to Rhinelander, Wisconsin, continuing to enjoy the Northwoods.

As you can see, I've been blessed with a variety of opportunities to serve God in various ways in this world. In spite of a few health issues, I'm thankful that God has given me a strong body so that I've been able to stay active. I especially enjoy backpacking on National Scenic Trails like the Appalachian, Pacific Crest, and Ice Age Trails and serving the hiking community by doing trail maintenance on the North Country and Ice Age Trails. I'm in my second term serving locally on the Rhinelander City Council, and I continue to preach once or twice a month, mostly at a small Episcopal church. Susan & I married in 1987, and she has been supportive of my ministries and my hiking, even to learning to play the pipe organ while I was in seminary. Between us, we have 4 children and 5 grandchildren, and we both like to read, write, and travel. Peace and Joy!

The Reverend Keith Kolstad— 40 years

Keith Kolstad was baptized, confirmed, and married at St. Luke's Lutheran in Waukesha, WI, participating in all the ministries that a typical congregation offered children and youth in that era. He experienced his first whispers to ordained ministry in Jr. High and High School, due in part to the activities offered by the youth ministry of St. Luke's. His wife, Karen (Jamieson), also grew up as a member of St. Luke's. As youth group sweethearts, they eventually graduated from Carthage College – Keith with a degree in music and Karen with a degree in elementary and special education – and were married in 1981. Keith attended seminary at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, graduating in 1985. His internship was spent at St. John's in Rock Island, IL. Both their children, Jacob and Jacqueline, were born while he attended seminary. Keith's ordination took place at the Synod Assembly for the Wisconsin Upper Michigan Synod of the LCA, at Carthage College on June 7, 1985. His first parish was Emanuel in Skandia, MI, and First in Trenary, MI. During this call, Karen began working in the Synod office. In January of 1996 Keith was called to be the associate pastor of Messiah in Marquette, MI. His call to Zion in Marinette, WI, began the fall of 1998. While at Zion, he received a D.Min. degree in 2007 from Luther Seminary in congregational mission and leadership. In 2010, he spent a three-month sabbatical in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, working with an English-speaking congregation that was part of the of Azania Front Lutheran Cathedral. He retired from Zion at the end of April 2022. Presently, Keith is employed as a part-time chaplain at Northland Lutheran Retirement Community in Marinette. He has been active in Kiwanis since his time in Marquette. With Kiwanis of Marinette, he has written, produced and performed in a local theater production every other year since 2009. Keith and Karen are blessed with two grandchildren, Morgan and Reid.

Pastor Peggy A. Rose - 40 years

Peggy Rose was born and grew up in Marquette, Michigan. Her parents, Joseph, and Lila Rose raised her with a deep love and respect for God's creation as lived on the south shore of Lake Superior: swimming, skiing, skating, riding horses (7 of them!). She has three siblings. She delights in her extended family: sister-in-law, brother-in-law, nephews, nieces, and a plethora of cousins. She has parented two foster children and a foreign exchange student from Sweden.

She is a graduate of Northern Michigan University (1976) and Luther Northwestern Seminary (1985).

Even though she was born and raised in Marquette, Michigan, she "grew up" as a pastor in rural Iowa: seminary internship in eastern Iowa in a rural two-point parish north of the Quad Cities. After graduating from Luther Northwestern Seminary in St. Paul, MN in 1985, she returned to Iowa serving for seven years at Augustana Lutheran Church in Manson.

She has also served parishes in the SE-MI Synod and NWL-MI Synod where she also served as an assistant to the bishop.

Reflecting on 40 years of ordained ministry: I have been privileged to get to know and explore and enhance and keep the ministry growing with eleven congregations in the role of intentional interim/transition pastor. This is my passion and true calling. I have been amazed each time that I move to step outside and look up into new and amazing, starlit skies, and exclaim *O Lord our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!* I wrote some of these ramblings in an essay that was included in the publication celebrating the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women in the ELCA. 40 years of being ordained into the ministry of word and sacrament has been amazingly different than I had imagined and more than I could ever have dreamed! WOW! Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Holy Spirit! Thank you, God!

Living in God's Amazing Grace,

Pastor Peggy Rose

The Reverend Nicholas Johannes – 55 years

I was born on D-Day, June 4, 1944, to Louis and Loretta Johannes in a small village in Manitowoc County, WI on the shoreline of Lake Michigan. My mother's heritage came from a folk group of German singers. My grandmother played a zither, and my grandfather was the leader of the group. This group eventually settled in Ozaukee County where my mother met and married my father.

At the time of my birth, the Catholic Church believed that babies needed to be baptized within two weeks of their birth. My uncle, who lived in Florida, was to be my sponsor. This caused nervousness from our parish priest for fear my uncle would be late for the baptism. Of course, he made it on time and the rest is history. After attending Catholic Grade School, I studied and lived at a Catholic seminary for 6 years. Then, on to philosophy and theology coursework at another Catholic seminary. I received my MDiv degree from Notre Dame University in New Orleans, LA. I was ordained in the Green Bay Diocese and served churches in north-eastern WI, including Fox Valley, DePere, and Antigo.

As a priest, I sought out ecumenical groups that included pastors from various denominations. One such pastor was Rev. Leroy Remmers who was serving at St. John's Lutheran Church in DePere, WI. We became close friends and ecumenical bible studies followed with members from both of our churches. Twenty years after meeting Pastor Remmers, having left the priesthood and marrying my wife, Judy, I renewed my friendship with him. Shortly thereafter, Pastor Remmers and I toured Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, IA and I enrolled as an alternate route student there.

Having completing studies at Wartburg, I was installed by the Bishop of the East Central Synod of WI. After installation as a minister in the ELCA, I served for 6 years at Emmanuel Lutheran in Seymour, WI and 6 more years as pastor of Porterfield Lutheran and Beaver American Lutheran Churches. Since retiring in 2010, I have continued providing pulpit supply at several churches of the ELCA and the Presbyterian tradition. I have two stepchildren, Jill and Neil, who, along with their spouses and children, live in Northern California. Whether flying or driving, we enjoy visiting there often.

In closing, I want to say how blessed I am to have these 55 years in service to God's word and sacrament throughout my journey.

The Reverend Douglas H. Buck—65 years

Douglas H. Buck was born in Menomonee Falls, WI to Harvey and Grace (Duehring) Buck. He was baptized at St. Paul Evangelical and Reformed Church in Menomonee Falls, WI and confirmed at St. Luke Lutheran Church in Waukesha, WI

He graduated from Carroll College (now University) at Waukesha, WI and then from Northwestern Lutheran Theological Seminary in Minneapolis, MN. Pastor Buck was ordained at St. Mark Lutheran Church in Grand Forkes, ND on May 18, 1960. He served two congregations: Holy Trinity in Marshall, WI for 14 years and at Zion Lutheran Church in Metropolitan, MI for 24 years.

He is married to Janet Lange and they have two children and four grandchildren. They have resided in Tennessee for the past 25 years.

The Reverend Wallace G. Leno - 65 years

I was born February 27, 1936 at my grandparents farm near Wing, North Dakota, the first child of Jake and Freda Leno. I grew up on a very diversified farm owned by my parents, attended a one room rural grade school for eight years in Richmond Township, graduated in 1953 from Wing High School. I heard God's call to Christian Ministry and attended Suomi College in Hancock from 1953 to 1955, and graduated from the University of Jamestown, Jamestown, North Dakota in 1957, attended Suomi Lutheran Seminary in Hancock, Mi from 1957 to 1958 and Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary, Maywood, Illinois, graduating in 1960.

I was ordained in 1960 as a clergy member of the Suomi Synod (Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America). I served as a Parish Pastor for 40 years in the following congregations. Hope Lutheran, Brule, WI, First Lutheran, Port Wing, WI, Immanuel Lutheran, Wakefield, MI, Maria Lutheran, Kennedy, MN, St. John Lutheran Church, Killdeer, ND, and Pioneer Lake Lutheran, Conover, WI. I retired in the year 2001 and presently live near the community of Ewen, Mi and am a member of First Lutheran Church.

In 1960 I married Alice Franti in Ewen, MI. She has been my helpmeet for 65 years serving often in our parish ministry as church organist, choir director and many other ways. Alice and I have three children, Peter, Lisa and Beth. We have 6 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. Together with the help of family and friends we built our home in the woods, near Ewen. Among the activities we enjoy in our retirement are gardening and raising apple trees.

I praise God every day for the blessings he has given me. I grew up in a wonderful family with loving parents. I have the best wife, great children and their families. I have been able to serve very good congregations where I met kind and caring people and made many good friends. Thanks be to God for a life filled with many blessings.

The Reverend Earl Bergh—65 Years

Born in L'Anse, Michigan on November 11, 1927, Earl Bergh is the son of Victor and Ebba Bergh. Baptized at Zion Lutheran Church, Skanee, MI and confirmed at Salem Lutheran Church of Hancock, MI, Earl spent two years in the U.S. Army. He attended Michigan Technological University for one year, but graduated from Augustana College, Rock Island, IL in 1951. He went on to seminary at Augustana Lutheran Seminary, also in Rock Island, IL. He graduated in 1955. He served from 1955-1957 in his first call at Holy Trinity in New Prague, Minnesota before accepting a call to serve as a missionary in Japan for forty years (1957-1996).

On February 6, 1961, Pastor Earl Bergh married Nijiko Mano in Ube, Japan. They have two adult children, Steve and Debora. The Bergs reside in Claremont, CA where they are members of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church.

The Reverend George A Olson - 70 years

Born in 1925 to Adolph and Emma Olson on a farm in Star Prairie, WI, the fifth of seven children. Graduated from Osceola High School and then tended the family farm while his brothers served in WWII. Encouraged in his calling to ministry by Pastor Almen, who baptized and confirmed him at First Lutheran Church in New Richmond, WI.

Graduated from Gustavus Adolphus College and attended Augustana Seminary. Was ordained with a class of 64 other pastors in St. Paul, MN, in June 1955. Married Ruth Holmstrom one week later and began a call to Sunne Lutheran (1955-62) in Wilton, ND. Had three children (Clark, Kathryn, and James) and, eventually, three grandchildren (Rachel, Connor, and Kaila). Was active in the Red River Valley Synod of the Augustana Lutheran Church and a founder of Camp of the Cross at Garrison Dam, ND, which began his active service to outdoor ministries, a connection to his rural roots.

Was called to Calvary and Trinity Lutheran in Rapid River and Stonington, MI, (1962-72) in the Wisconsin Upper Michigan Synod of the LCA. Continued his devotion to outdoor ministry, spending several years at Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp as both dean and pastor; his two sons served there as counselors (1978-81).

Was called as the first pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran in Peshtigo, WI, (1972-86), a merger of the Swedish and Norwegian Lutheran Churches that had existed for 100 years one block apart. Successfully launched a building program to create a new church structure (dedicated in 1980) situated next to the remaining parsonage. Completed his formal ministry in 1986, then trained as a floral designer and worked at a local florist (1987-2004) while also preaching frequently throughout the Northern Great Lakes Synod of the ELCA. Has been a member of Zion Lutheran, Marinette, WI, since his retirement. Continues to live independently with his wife and enjoys spending summers with his family at his cabin near Munising, MI.

Minister of Word and Sacrament Retiring Since Last Synod Assembly

Pastor Jim Duehring

Born in 1959 to Norman and Myrtle Duehring, I was baptized on October 4, 1959, at Grace Lutheran Church in Ripon, Wisconsin. I grew up on a farm outside of Ripon until my family moved into the “big city” of Ripon in 1967 when my father became a farm implement dealer. My older brother Dave gave me my first Bible on my 7th birthday, and I continued to be nurtured in the Christian faith under Pastor Stubenvoll and the loving saints at Grace Lutheran.

In 5th grade, my Sunday school teacher, Mrs. Ehr, wrote in my lesson book that I should be a pastor someday. Wow! How does a young boy process that kind of comment? It must have had an impact on me because I distinctly remember that word of encouragement.

I affirmed my baptismal covenant in 1974 and after high school graduation enrolled at Wartburg College in Waverly, IA, majoring in Religion. After graduation, I briefly served as a Lay Assistant at Glyndon Lutheran Church in Minnesota gaining valuable parish ministry experience prior to entering seminary.

Following in the footsteps of my home pastor, I enrolled at Wartburg Seminary and found the whole experience to be formative in broadening my theological perspectives and enhancing my pastoral confidence. I graduated seminary in May 1987.

While on internship at Good Shepherd Lutheran in Bismarck, North Dakota, I met Cindy Froeschle, and we would eventually be married in 1988. My first call was to large staff ministry at First Lutheran in Williston, North Dakota. I served there from 1987 through 1992. Cindy’s severe health decline necessitated my resignation from pastoral ministry and seeking training to become a teacher. My high school teaching career spanned from 1995 through 2007. In 1999 Cindy died, and I contemplated returning to pastoral ministry.

After serving a brief lay internship at Oslo Lutheran Church in Gruver, Texas, I began the process of reinstatement. With the support of my second wife, Gisele, whom I met on a Lutheran online dating site, I was reinstated to the ELCA roster and called to serve Prince of Peace Lutheran in Harvey, Michigan. I was blessed to serve among those great people from 2008 through 2017.

October 1, 2017, I began a call as Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission under Bishop Katherine Finegan. I enjoyed my tenure in this role meeting many faithful people throughout the Northern Great Lakes Synod. I particularly enjoyed working with the synod staff, preaching in the congregations of our synod, working with Faithful Innovations trainings, and helping to launch UP Wild in collaboration with our Episcopal siblings.

After turning 65 in August of 2024, I discerned it was time for me to retire from full-time ministry. Gisele and I look forward to spending more time with family in Texas and Louisiana. My stepdaughter, Ellie, and her husband, Brock, are proud parents to Bonnie. My stepson Jason, and his wife, Kim, are proud parents to Lucy.

Pastor Don Luedemann

God is good and faithful! Thanks be to God! I was born on Valentine’s Day, 1958, and baptized that April at my parents’ church, St. Jacobi, a German Lutheran church in Brooklyn, New York. My first few years were spent in College Park, Maryland, where my Dad was getting a doctorate in nuclear physics. My mom supported us by working as a nurse; I “helped” by looking after my younger sister. We moved to Oak Ridge, Tennessee, so that Dad could work at the national laboratory there, just as I was beginning school.

Our family was an integral part of Grace, the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) congregation in Oak Ridge, where future Bishop James Crumley was pastor. I was active in the Children and Youth Choirs and Luther League. The youth were asked to lead worship at least once a year; I ended up as “preacher” on more than one occasion.

But I fought the call to be a pastor for as long as I could! After a transformative year as a high school exchange student in Bangkok, Thailand, I attended Georgetown University to study international relations. I spent a year as an exchange student in Tokyo, Japan. After graduation, I went back to Japan as a Mombusho English Fellow for another year. There I met Iowa native, Gustavus Adolphus alum, Debra Ruchotzke, who was in Japan on the same program. I went to work at Georgetown, and we were married in 1982.

We moved to St. Paul, MN, where I received an M.Div. from Luther Northwestern Seminary, after interning at Bethlehem Lutheran in St. Cloud, MN. During seminary, I was chaplain at the Grand Marais, MN municipal campground for two glorious, but chilly, summers. My first call was to First Lutheran in St. Peter, MN, the “mother church” of Gustavus Adolphus College, where I was ordained on the Feast of St. Francis in 1987. The religion (and other) faculty of Gustavus became my harshest critics and dearest friends.

I took a leave from ministry to attend “Thunderbird,” a graduate business school housed at a decommissioned Air Force base west of Phoenix. I received a Master of International Management degree in 1992. I worked as a Strategic Development Analyst and Marketing Manager at the Pillsbury Company, and then as a consultant to small for- and non-profit organizations in the Twin Cities area. Deb and I purchased and ran a restaurant in Central Minnesota for a time.

During that time, I became trained as an interim pastor and served part-time at 4 rural congregations in the Brainerd Lakes area. I then returned to full-time ministry at a 2-point parish on the Iron Range of Minnesota. In 2018, Bishop Finegan asked me to consider coming to the Upper Peninsula, where I served as Interim Senior Pastor at Messiah in Marquette, MI, before retiring from Prince of Peace in Harvey, MI.

Being far too young to fully retire, I’ve joined the College of Business faculty at Northern Michigan University, teaching management, marketing, international business, organizational behavior, and business ethics. I also very much enjoy supply preaching at congregations across the Upper Peninsula. In my spare time, I enjoy gardening, cooking, and reading. I aspire to spend more time walking, hiking, and fly fishing.

Deacan Lori Ward:

Deacon Lori Ward retired in March from her call as a synod missionary, managing the Lifelong Faith Formation and working on administrative needs for Licensed Lay Ministers and their supervisors. Lori was born to Paul and Myrna Ward in L'Anse, where she was baptized. She was confirmed in Quinnesee and graduated from Kingsford High School. She served as a volunteer in Lutheran Church, working with a pastor and a doctor in the Appalachian Mountain Region during the summer before she attended Carthage College. Lori studied at Wartburg Seminary to meet the requirements for ordination as an ELCA Minister of Word and Service. For most of her life, Lori worked in communications and community relations for performing arts organizations, most recently the Tennessee Performing Arts Center in Nashville. Her husband Rob passed away 13 years ago. They met when she was the marketing director for a theatre in Virginia and he was the drummer for their production of "Always Patsy Cline." She returned to the U.P. five years ago to live closer to her parents. She has greatly appreciated the opportunity to serve the church and the Northern Great Lakes Synod. Lori's children, Molly and Adam, live in the Nashville area with their families, including her two granddaughters.

Deceased Ministers of Word and Sacrament Since Last Synod Assembly

The Reverend Duane Priebe

Duane was born on June 29th, 1934, in Rhinelander, WI, to Christlieb and Lila Priebe. Duane grew up in Rhinelander and St. Paul before his family finally settled in Seattle, WA. He attended the University of Washington where his passion for aviation motivated him to become a private pilot. His deep curiosity about the workings of the universe led him to earn his BS in physics and sparked a love for the natural world, hiking in the mountains of the Pacific Northwest and working as a fire lookout for the forest service. After a year working as an Aero Research Engineer for NASA, he felt called to serve in the church. A committed physicist, Duane chose to focus his study of the universe through theology, earning his B.D. in 1961 from Luther Seminary and his Doctor of Theology in 1965 from the School of Theology at Claremont. After a brief stint as pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Garrison, North Dakota, and Director of the Great Plains Institute of Theology, Western North Dakota District, American Lutheran Church, he began what would become a 47-year term of service to Wartburg Seminary, and the global Christian community.

Duane traveled to Germany where he studied under Wolfhart Pannenberg (later translating Pannenberg's Jesus: God and Man), making Pannenberg's work available to the English-speaking world. He ventured to Namibia, Asia, South America and his favorite, Papua New Guinea exploring the value of Christian theology in different cultural contexts. He developed a reputation among his colleagues as a Christ-centered mystic who taught by surgically querying his students. The light and love of God always shown through him, bringing grace to everyone he knew.

On August 7, 1960, Duane married his true love, Kathleen McKillop, who shared his adventures (sometimes more willingly than others) for 57 years. He was a caring father to Christopher and David, as well as their respective wives, Jerri, and Amy. He was a loving grandfather to Andrew, Christopher (Meghan), Kytana (Katie), and Alyssa (Craig). He even met his great-grandchildren, Sophie, and Avery. He died on January 22, 2025.

The Reverend Dean Peterson

Rev. Dean A. Peterson, age 84, died on July 15, 2024 from complications of cancer. A recent resident of Sunrise Assistive Living of Naperville North in Naperville, Illinois, Dean lived for 30 years in Escanaba, Michigan.

He was ordained in the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) in 1966. Known as "Pastor Pete" to the thousands of people he touched in his decades of ministry, Dean served congregations and communities in Nebraska (Bethany Lutheran in Axtell), Illinois (Faith Lutheran in Glen Ellyn), Wisconsin (Grace Lutheran in Ripon), and his longest term call at Bethany Lutheran in Escanaba, Michigan. Dean's final full-time call was as Campus Pastor and Director of Church Relations at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin where he mentored and supported young adults, some of whom discerned their own call to ordained ministry. After he retired and moved with Elaine back to Escanaba, he also served as Director of Bay Area Campus Ministry and interim pastor at Bethany Lutheran Church, where he was conferred the office of Pastor Emeritus.

Dean's ministry could be characterized by the quote from renowned theologian Karl Barth: "Take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible." Dean was a voracious reader of the news and sought ways to connect our lives of faith to what was happening in the world around us. H. Richard Niebuhr's 1951 book "Christ and Culture" was Dean's most formative theological influence.

Dean made a difference in his community and the broader world through his time on the Escanaba School Board, his support of Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp, and his time on the Alumni Board of Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. But his most enduring legacy may be the thousands of worship services he

led, sermons he preached, and people he connected with across his decades of ministry.

Dean is survived by his and Elaine's three children Scott, Dawn (Jonathan), and Joel (Carey); grandchildren Riley and Jace Peterson, Paavo and Svea Rundman, and Tyler and Eli Peterson; brother Gary Peterson and sister Connie Wisner; and many nieces, nephews, cousins, and in-laws.

The Reverend Devon Barrix

Rev. Devon William Barrix, age 81, passed away peacefully on July 21, 2024 in the Palliative Care Unit at Aspirus Hospital Wausau after suffering a massive hemorrhagic stroke. Devon grew up on a farm in Wisconsin and graduated from Mauston High School. He worked 39 years in the health care field both as a Lab Manager in Madison, as a Hospital Administrator at Columbus Community Hospital, and as CEO of the HMO of Wisconsin.

After he and his wife JoAnne joined Trinity Lutheran in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, Devon attended the Northern Great Lakes Synod Lay School and decided to go to Luther Seminary. Ordained on August 28, 2005, he accepted a call to serve the people of Bethany Lutheran, Perkins and Faith Lutheran, Rock in Michigan. Devon served as pastor in those two congregations until 2010 when health issues again forced him to retire.

He and JoAnne returned to northern Wisconsin where they joined Immanuel Lutheran in Rhinelander, and he served several months as interim pastor there. He also helped teach in the synod's Lay School, and remained an active member of Immanuel.

Devon enjoyed the corvette club, boating on Lake Winnebago and riding a Harley motorcycle. Throughout his lifetime, he demonstrated his love of God, family and friends, and his many career paths touched countless people.

The Reverend Micheal Victor Laakko

"For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." - Romans 8:38-39

We thank God and celebrate the life and ministry of Mike Laakko, who died April 11, 2025 following a courageous battle with lung cancer.

Pastor Micheal Laakko was born on November 13, 1948 in Hancock, MI to Emil and Vera Laakko, and raised in Mass City, MI. After graduating from high school in 1966, Pastor Laakko served in the United States Air Force for four years, including one year in the Republic of Vietnam. He went on to earn an Associates degree from Suomi College, a Bachelor of Arts degree from Carthage College, and a Master of Divinity degree from Luther-Northwestern Seminary. Pastor Laakko was ordained on June 15, 1980 upon receiving a call to serve as Associate Pastor at Bethel, Ishpeming. In 1986 he received a call to serve the Pelkie Parish (with the congregations of Faith, Pelkie; St. Henry's, Nisula; and Our Saviour's, Elo), which later became Mission United, Pelkie. He was then called to United, Crystal Falls in 2004, as well as Bethany, Amasa in 2013. Pastor Laakko retired in 2019, but remained active, serving as pastor at Trinity, Trout Creek until his death.

Pastor Laakko was united in marriage to Denise in 1974, and together they raised three children – Adam, Anna, and Allison. Pastor Laakko was a true "Yooper," enjoying deer hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, skiing – but most of all time with his wife, children and grandchildren.

Northern Great Lakes Synod

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Cindy Sjoquist Member, Synod Council
Rev. Diane Srutowski Member, Synod Council

The functions of the Synod Council shall be to:

(S10.03.)

- Exercise trusteeship responsibilities on behalf of the Synod.
- Recommend program goals and budgets to the regular meetings of the Synod Assembly.
- Carry out the resolutions of the Synod Assembly.
- Provide for an annual review of the roster of ordained ministers and the roster of associates in ministry and make appropriate recommendations to the Synod regarding those persons whose status is subject to reconsideration and action under the constitution and bylaws of the ELCA.
- Issue letters of call to ordained ministers and letters of appointment to associates in ministry, consecrated deacons and deaconesses, commissioned teachers, and certified or commissioned lay professionals as authorized by Chapter 10 of the constitution and bylaws of the ELCA.
- Fill vacancies until the next regular meeting of the Synod Assembly except as may otherwise be provided in the constitution or bylaws of the Synod, and determine the fact of the incapacity of an officer of the Synod.
- Reports its actions to the regular meeting of the Synod Assembly.
- Perform such other functions as are set forth in the bylaws of the Synod, or as may be delegated to it by the Synod Assembly.

Northern Great Lakes Synod Synod Council

Year = Year Term Ends (3 year terms)

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Year = Year Term Ends (3 year terms)

Synod Council continued

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2025**

Year = Year Term Ends (1 year terms)

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Report of the Candidacy Committee

This committee accompanies seminarians through traditional and nontraditional pathways toward serving God in ministries of Word and Sacrament (Pastoral) and Word and Service (Diaconal and Chaplaincy).

Current members of the Northern Great Lakes Synod Candidacy Committee include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marcie Kaven (Chair)• Andy Hill (Recording Secretary)• Linda Levine• Roland Jacobson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pastor Grant Van Lishout• Bishop Katherine Finegan• Reverend Ramie Bakkan (Region 5 Candidacy and Leadership Manager)
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*We compassionately received Pastor David Murphy's regret for withdrawal from our committee, as his professional obligations were calling him in many different directions. We have a growth mindset and hope to add a member or two, in our common desire to compassionately partner with a variety of persons discerning a call to ministry in the ELCA.

The NGLS Candidacy Committee met on June 25th at Bethany Lutheran Church in Escanaba, MI and the progress and needs of four candidates were individually considered. Also, one candidate was introduced for future Entrance consideration.

A second NGLS Candidacy Committee meeting was held on October 7th at Bethany Lutheran Church in Norway, MI. At this meeting panels were held for candidates in a variety of stages. One candidate was "Entered", one was interviewed as a Re-Engagement (of a prior "Endorsed" candidate), and two were "Approved."

Additionally, many of our NGLS Candidacy Committee members participated in a remote Candidacy Leadership Development Working Group Training in February. We also supported the Synod's Congregational Resource Fair at Bethel Lutheran in Ishpeming, MI, with a representative and display board reflecting the many pathways to Lay Ministry and Seminary tracks toward ordained ministry.

Our current ministry roster of candidates includes the following...

- Sarah Sleeter, member of Bethany Lutheran, Norway, MI
 - o Student Vicar serving Christ the King in Escanaba, MI and Faith Lutheran in Rock, MI
 - o Word and Sacrament Candidate, Wartburg
 - o Entered in August 2017 as MDiv Distance Learner
 - o Endorsed in October 2020
 - o Withdrew from Candidacy, July 2021
 - o Re-Engaged in October 2024
 - o Estimated Approval in 2026
- Robert Lake, member of Faith Lutheran in Ishpeming, MI.
 - o Word and Sacrament Candidate, Wartburg
 - o Entered in August 2023 as a Distance Learner (may switch to Collaborative)
 - o Estimated Approval in 2027
- Elaine Robbins, member of Eden Lutheran in Munising, MI.
 - o Student Vicar serving Eden Lutheran, Munising

- o Word and Sacrament Candidate, Wartburg
- o Entered in October 2024 as a TEEM Journey Together Learner
- o Estimated Approval in 2028
- Daniel Moschea, member of Porterfield Lutheran in Porterfield, WI
 - o Student Vicar serving Porterfield Lutheran and Beaver Lutheran
 - o Word and Sacrament Candidate, Wartburg
 - o Entered in August 2023 as a Distance Learner
 - o Estimated Approval in 2027
- Wade Crevier, from Good Shepherd in Peshtigo, WI
 - o Student Vicar serving Sugar Creek Lutheran Church, Elkhorn, WI
 - o Word and Sacrament Candidate, Wartburg
 - o Entered in April 2021 as MDiv Distance Learner
 - o Endorsed in Fall 2022
 - o APPROVED October 7, 2025.
 - o Wartburg graduation expected: May 2025 (at that point, First Call-ready).
- Lance Crevier, from Good Shepherd in Peshtigo, WI
 - o Student Vicar serving First Lutheran Church, Iron River, MI
 - o Word and Sacrament Candidate, Wartburg
 - o Entered in April 2021 as MDiv Collaborative Learner
 - o Endorsed in Summer 2023
 - o APPROVED October 7, 2025.
 - o Wartburg graduation expected: May 2025 (at that point, First Call-ready).

Our NGLS Candidacy Committee celebrates the ministerial paths of these six candidates. We also recognize that each candidate is unique, and we are committed to doing our best to meet each one where they are, in the hopes of benefiting the kingdom in mutual ministry.

Our NGLS Candidacy Committee requests the Northern Great Lakes Synod to partner with us:

1. Join our efforts to promote a mindfulness of recognizing ministry potential in our congregations.
2. Pray for the wellness of the NGLS Candidacy Committee. We are committed to our work in equipping and accompanying candidates for ministry and we appreciate being lifted in prayer for our resilience and enthusiasm.

Thank you for continuing to call us toward this important work of Candidacy and for your prayerful consideration as we move forward into new spaces for growth and bolstering of our dedication to mutual ministry and accompaniment with NGLS seminarians.

Blessings in Candidacy,

Marcie Kaven,

NGLS Candidacy Committee Chair

Report of the Companion Synod Committee

The Companion Synod Committee has continued to devote their time, energy and prayers to the people of the Eastern and Coastal Diocese (ECD) of Tanzania. The committee has become more active in traveling to the ECD. We remain dedicated to nurturing the relationship that has been going on for over 25 years.

In late 2023 a group traveled to the ECD to renew face to face relationships. During the trip many meetings occurred and the group was able to learn about the future goals and plans for the ECD as well as bring dental supplies and monies to facilitate a new dental chair for the Mtoni Clinic.

In 2024 a group from Immanuel Lutheran Church in Negaunee had a companion visit with their companion congregation Yombo. During this time they were able to strengthen their relationship with their companion congregation and enjoy the Tanzanian hospitality.

It is the committee's goal in 2025 is to continue to grow the relationships with the ECD. There are several projects that are continuing to bring much needed monies to the people of the ECD. We are happy to report the needed work has been completed at the Mtoni dental clinic. This means the clinic should be up and running once the necessary agreements are in place. The committee and NGLS have continued to raise funds for the Kisarawe Jr. Seminary. Monies collected will be distributed to the teaching staff. Support was also given for the following: Kisarawe Student Scholarships, Mkuza Girls School, Tanzania Health Care Fund, Tumaini University Scholarship, and the Mlandizi Vocational Center.

As we reflect on the past year, we are thankful for the call God has given us to return to Tanzania. The committee has worked hard to extend our love to our brothers and sisters in Christ in Tanzania and we look forward to continued and new projects in 2025.

-Brian and Danielle Anderson



Northern Great Lakes Synod Fund for Leaders (5G) 2025 Annual Report

Thank you to the people of the Northern Great Lakes Synod for making an investment in the future of the church through the ELCA Fund for Leaders. In the 2024-2025 academic year, the ELCA Fund for Leaders provided scholarship assistance of more than \$3 million in support of 350 future pastors and deacons, ensuring that these future leaders will be freed from the burden of student debt so that they can go and serve as the church needs and the Holy Spirit leads.

We are grateful for your partnership!

Students supported in 2024-2025:

- Lance Crevier \$5,000 Wartburg Theological Seminary
- Wade Crevier \$11,000 Wartburg Theological Seminary
- Robert Lake \$5,000 Wartburg Theological Seminary
- Daniel Moschea \$5,000 Wartburg Theological Seminary
- Elaine Robbins \$3,000 Wartburg Theological Seminary

Total \$29,000

Total awarded since inception: \$420,515.02

Synod fund(s):

Northern Great Lakes Synod -First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Iron Mountain-Fund for Leaders, E270902

Market value as of 12/31/2024: **\$34,721.17**

New gifts given to your fund in 2024: **\$0.**

Northern Great Lakes Synod Skogman Family - Fund for Leaders, E270903

Market value as of 12/31/2024: **\$228,721.35**

New gifts given to your fund in 2024: **\$13,013.26**

Northern Great Lakes Synod Kemppainen Family- Fund for Leaders, E270904

Market value as of 12/31/2024: **\$91,318.03**

New gifts given to your fund in 2024: **\$100.00**

Northern Great Lakes Synod Fund for Leaders, E271344

Market value as of 12/31/2024: **\$438,807.20**

New gifts given to your fund in 2024: **\$4,803.61**

Northern Great Lakes Synod-United Lutheran Church of Crystal Falls, E271444

Market value as of 12/31/2024: **\$6,936.46**

New gifts given to your fund in 2024: **\$0.**

Northern Great Lakes Synod -Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Menominee, MI –
Fund for Leaders, E271473
Market value as of 12/31/2024: **\$69,343.87**
New gifts given to your fund in 2024: **\$0.**

Northern Great Lakes Synod-Bethel Lutheran Church- Fund for Leaders, E271528
Market value as of 12/31/2024: **\$95,744.83**
New gifts given to your fund in 2024: **\$0.**

David V and Patricia A Hollis Fund for Leaders, E271758
Market value as of 12/31/2024: **\$103,676.66**
New gifts given to your fund in 2024: **\$0.**

The Klasner Family Seminary Scholarship Fund, E273313
Market value as of 12/31/2024: **\$18,075.00**
New gifts given to your fund in 2024: **\$0.**

Total market value as of 12/31/2024: **\$1,087,344.57**

Total amount available to award for 2025-2026: \$100,800*

*calculated with a 10% holdback to ensure scholarships can be paid, even if the market fluctuates. Please issue awards in whole dollars.

Documents

Process and Timeline

2025 Guidelines for Synods

This document contains eligibility criteria and notes on the selection process and timeline.

2025 FFL Synod nominations

Synods submit nominee information to FFL by May 1, 2025 using this Excel template.

2025 Instructions for Synod or
Congregation nominees

Synods send to each nominee by May 15. This document assists students registering & applying in ELCA GrantMaker.
Students register and apply: **May 15 - June 5.**
Students accept the grant agreement online early **July.**

For more information, please visit [Our Scholarships](#), email FundforLeaders@elca.org or call 800-638-3522, ext. 2936.



Report of the Endowment Fund Committee



Endowments Funds are a stable and lasting way to fund and grow ministry, both now and well into the future. Thanks to our faithful donors, the Northern Great Lakes Synod (NGLS) is very fortunate to have robust Endowment Funds. We thank all donors for their faithful stewardship and sharing their treasures to do God's work.

The Endowment Fund Committee is happy to report that in 2024 all the Endowment Funds of the NGLS showed a healthy investment growth of more than 10%, which mirrored the growth of most general market indexes. Additionally, the unrestricted Equipping the Saints Fund received a very generous estate donation of around \$346,000 from a family in our synod.

The value of the Equipping the Saints fund on December 31, 2024, was \$752,269 and the value of the combined restricted funds was \$2,410,503. To support a variety of ministries, \$27,000 was distributed from the Equipping the Saints fund and \$81,188 was distributed from six restricted funds in 2024. The following pages show how much was given to each ministry endeavor.

In 2024 the Endowment Fund Committee updated the Endowment Fund governance policy with language reflecting current standards, practices, and needs, which Synod Council subsequently approved during its January 2025 meeting. Included in that update was additional guidance language covering administration fees. The fees have become necessary due to rising costs associated with activities by synod staff and costs incurred from required annual audits. There will be a resolution at Synod Assembly on amendments to the Synod Constitution bylaws covering the Endowment Fund, which the Committee encourages that you support.

Another endeavor of the Endowment Fund Committee this past year was to plan for and accomplish a second "Seed Sowers" luncheon. This luncheon to celebrate past planned givers, donors who have established a planned estate gift, and donors who are considering setting up a planned gift will occur on Saturday of Synod Assembly. We have been blessed over the years by the seeds sown through our endowment ministries and we look forward to abundant blessings in the future.

Thank you for sharing your treasures and the love it represents, and thanks be to God.

Respectively submitted,

Chuck Thomas, Committee Chair and NGLS Vice President



Northern Great Lakes Synod Endowment Ministry Distribution 2025



**Unrestricted Assets to determine distribution:
Average Market Value 2021-2025 is \$486,325.36**

\$2,000 Website Development and Maintenance

This distribution will help support the additional financial burden on Mission Support dollars.

\$2,000 Lifelong Faith Formation

We look forward to another year of engagement unhampered by geography or weather. Funds support teachers, the administrator, and underwrites any required expenses.

\$3,000 Bay College Campus Ministry

All our Tri-County Conference congregations support this ecumenical ministry. A part-time campus pastor serves and receives very modest funding. This disbursement helps make a Christian presence on campus possible.

\$3,000 Synod Council Retreat

As the Synod Council seeks to lead our Synod into the future, a time of reflection, discernment, visioning, and prayer is appropriate. This disbursement makes this important work possible.

\$14,000 Leadership Support

This disbursement makes the following opportunities more affordable for congregations and leaders alike: Fall Theological Conference, Clergy Women's Retreat, Boundaries Education, and dedicated support for our Licensed Lay Ministers and Supervisors.

\$2,000 Synod Youth Coordinator

To support our synod's efforts toward collaborative youth ministry.

\$2,500 U.P. Wild Church – Mission Development

Begun in 2019, this ministry effort is in collaboration with the Episcopal Diocese and supported in part by a grant from the ELCA. Begun as a holy experiment in the Marquette County area, additional ministries now include five more communities.

\$2,000 Justice Advocacy

This disbursement will provide financial support for our synod's efforts around Racial Equity, Cultural Competency, Welcome and Inclusion, Darkness to Light training, and building relationships with our Tribal neighbors.

\$2,000 Endowment Ministry Project Expenses

This year will see a continuation of the Seed Sowers luncheon which celebrates people who have or who are interested in including an ELCA ministry in their estate plan or will.

\$1,500 Future Tanzania Visits by the Bishop's Assistant.

It is anticipated that the Assistant to the Bishop will visit our Companion Synod in Tanzania in the next few years. Putting a portion of Endowment distributions aside for this purpose reduces the impact of future expense.

**Total 2025 Distribution: \$34,000
(7% distribution of assets)**

**Thank you for your gifts to the Equipping the Saints
Endowment Ministry of the NGLS!**

Northern Great Lakes Synod Endowment Fund Distribution - Restricted 2024

Restricted Assets: \$2,410,503 (December 31, 2024 balance)
ELCA Endowment Fund Pooled Trust & Thrivent Financial

\$29,000 Seminarian Scholarships

Preparing the next generation of pastoral leaders is an important part of the Synod's work. Students from synod congregations benefit from our various endowments. Our synod stands as the most generous synod in the ELCA in the support of seminarians.

\$7,835 Tanzania Scholarships

Restricted giving by donors has made it possible to support members of the Church in Tanzania pursue their learning at the Kisarawe Lutheran Junior Seminary and higher education at Tumaini University in Tanzania.

\$15,852 Rural Ministry

Restricted giving by donors makes it possible to support our synod work. Programs throughout our synod benefit from this gift including seminary candidacy, outreach and leadership support.

\$11,870 St. Mark's, Marquette Legacy Endowment Fund

Distributions from this fund, which was created following the closure of the congregation, supports the ministries of Fortune Lake Camp, ELCA Seminaries/Seminarians, Synod Mission Support, and Room at the Inn/Warming Center.

\$10,855 Clergy Debt Relief Fund

This newest Endowment Fund was begun through the generous bequest of Norman Lamberg. Annual grants are made to rostered persons who have incurred debt while in seminary seeking their first theological degree.

\$5,776 Bishop Thomas and Luanne Skrenes Fund for Ministry

Annual distributions from this Endowment Fund support the clergy of our synod through debt retirement, as well as ministries with our Companion Synod, the Eastern & Coastal Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

2024 Total Distribution from Restricted Funds - \$81,188

2024 Total Distribution: \$108,188



2024 Report of the Synod Ministry Fund



The Synod Ministry Fund (SMF) was established in 2023 as a fund to assist the Northern Great Lakes Synod (NGLS) in living out Christ’s Great Commission in new and creative ways. The goal of the Synod Ministry Fund is to subsidize projects using quickly accessible monies – gathered in one year and sent out the next. Formal efforts to raise funds began on Giving Tuesday 2023, and at year end, the total given was \$6,928. According to policy, 90% was then made available for 2024 projects.

Grant applications became available in early 2024, inviting individuals and congregations to submit their ideas for projects that are innovative, collaborative, and evangelism focused.

Applications approved in 2024 included the following:

- 1. Community Good Friday Cantata:** A choral observance of Good Friday comprised of singers from the community and the four Ishpeming churches (Bethel, Faith, Trinity, Bethany). The grant supported a small orchestra, music, advertising, and honoraria for musicians and directors. \$850
- 2. U.P. Wild Church Convocation:** The U.P. Wild outdoor church initiative has grown to seven different locations: Central UP (Marquette), Eastern UP (The Bridge), Southern UP (Delta County), Keweenaw UP, Menominee & Northern Wisconsin, UP Wild West (Iron Mountain), and Northcoast UP. Mission Developer Lanni Lanto, gathered interested and participating leaders to Fortune Lake in August for conversation, discernment, and planning the next steps for this creative and out-of-the-building ministry. \$1000
- 3. Feed My Sheep Initiative:** A request was made for kitchen upgrades for Lutheran Campus Ministry at Michigan Tech in and through Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Houghton. A thriving weekly community meal with students required a kitchen that passed muster with the health department. In concert with an additional grant from the National Lutheran Campus Ministry body, support from partner congregations, and congregational support, the SMF grant offered the support of the NGLS for this worthy effort. \$1000
- 4. Dinner Church:** Trinity Church in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, launched Wednesday Evening Dinner Church in September 2024. All ages were invited to the weekly gathering, and the primary target audience was unchurched families with young children. Groups gathered around the table to share a meal and a “Jesus Story” in order to make connections and share Jesus’ impact on participants’ lives. \$1000
- 5. Extravaganza Youth Ministry Conference:** The grant request was for the adult registration fee to attend the Louisville event which provided four days of keynotes, workshops, music, worship, and network time. An energizing conference such as this helped keep Synod youth leaders connected and energized to lead youth and plan events to help young people grow in their faith. \$200

After distributing \$4,00 in SMF grants, at 2024 year end, approximately \$2,900 remained, and after a recommendation by the Finance Committee and approval by the Executive Committee, these funds will be proposed as restricted to the Youth Ministry Coordinator within the 2025 budget.

The amount of funds collected in 2024 was close to \$7,300. After setting aside approximately 10% for fees, the amount available for 2025 grant applicants is \$6,580. We’re excited at the prospect of seeing innovative, collaborative, and evangelism focused projects proposed in the coming year!

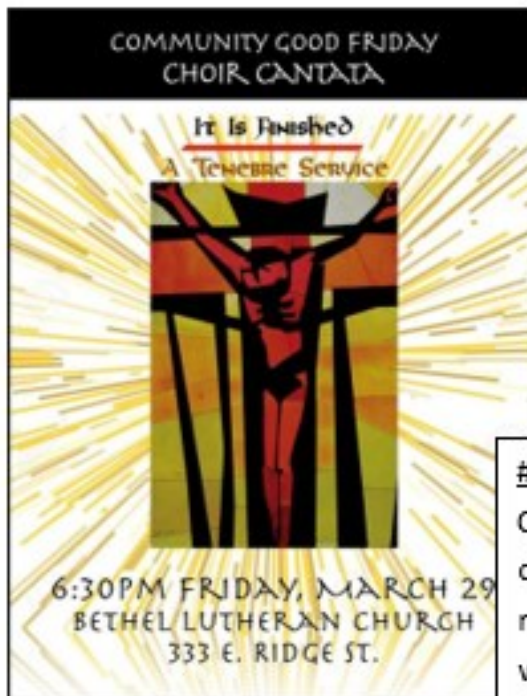
In Christ, Pr. Terry Frankenstein, Synod Treasurer

SYNOD MINISTRY FUND

Recipients say Thank you!



On Giving Tuesday, November 2023, the Northern Great Lakes Synod launched a campaign to invite financial gifts to the newly established "Synod Ministry Fund." This fund was created to support and make possible creative ministry efforts. Thanks to the generosity of donors, \$3850 has been disbursed to the following grateful recipients:



#1 - The Good Friday Cantata:

Offered in March of 2024, this collaborative effort of four congregations in Ishpeming, MI, along with community members proclaimed the old, old story of Jesus and his love with voice and orchestra.



#2 - Lutheran Campus Ministry Community Meals at Good Shepherd Lutheran, Houghton:

In order to continue this meal ministry to and by students, the health department required a kitchen upgrade. The work continues as does the ministry. Thank you Synod Ministry Fund and donors for your support!

Thank you to the NGLS Synod Ministry Fund!

We had an amazing gathering!
18 eager and faith-filled
people gathered from across
the U.P. and Wisconsin.
You helped make this
affordable and possible!

~Lanni Lanto,
Mission Developer for
U.P. Wild Church
and recipient of an
SMF Grant.



www.nglsynod.org/Synod-MinistryFund

U.P. WILD LEADERS RETREAT

A gathering for current & potential branch leaders & care teams to provide training, nurture capabilities, experience offerings, idea share more. To build stronger bonds among our U.P. Wild communities & to foster further growth into new areas across U.P.

Mon. Aug. 12 6pm
Tues. Aug. 13 6pm

REGISTER AT
WWW.UPWILD.ORG

Fortune Lake Bible Camp
138 Fortune Lake Camp
Crystal Falls, MI

For more information: lanni@upwild.org

SYNOD MINISTRY FUND

Current Creativity & Future Possibilities

#3 - The First U.P. Wild Church Convocation:

In August of 2024, 18
leaders gathered at
Fortune Lake Lutheran
Camp to think and
worship "outside the
box". Wild Church has
now grown in our synod
to include the
Marquette area,
Keweenaw, Northern
Wisconsin, Rapid River,
and Sault Saint Marie.

#4 - Dinner Church at Trinity, Rhinelander:

Begun in September of 2024, this ministry
is designed to build an all-ages
community, this effort gathers people new
to congregational life into conversation
around tables and a meal to share "Jesus
Stories" and make connections with one
another.



Go to www.nglsynod.org/Synod-Ministry-Fund for more information
or click on the "Give" link to make a donation using PayPal.

Put Synod Ministry Fund in the memo line.

Thank you for your generous support!



Report of the Justice Advocacy Committee: **Walking with Our Indigenous Neighbors Task Force**

Walking With Our Indigenous Neighbors Task Force

2024 Annual Report



Boozhoo! Indinawemaaganidog! Greetings all of my relatives!

It is said, “There will come a time when the Light-skinned Race will be given a choice between two roads.” The road to technology and the road to spiritualism. “If they choose the right road, then the Seventh Fire will light the Eighth and Final Fire – an eternal Fire of peace, love, brotherhood and sisterhood (*The Mishomis Book: The voice of the Ojibway*, Edward Benton-Banai, p. 93).” According to the Ojibwe prophecy, the road to spirituality represents the slower path that traditional Native people have traveled and are now seeking again. We are asked to walk alongside them for the common purpose of healing a damaged and seared earth. We do this by learning from them and practicing the ways that preserved this land long before white Europeans arrived.

We, the NGLS Walking With Our Indigenous Neighbors Task Force (WWOIN), are committed to two main goals: 1) providing awareness and education to the people of our synod about the Indigenous people who live beside us; 2) providing volunteer services and participation in tribal community projects. The task force recently welcomed some new members and is structured to form a group that focuses on synod-wide education and information, a group that focuses on local initiatives on the reservation of Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) in Baraga, MI and a group that participates in the ELCA’s Truth Seeking and Truth Telling Initiative. It is our hope that where other tribal communities thrive, synod folks and local churches will also walk alongside their Indigenous neighbors.

The year of 2024 unfolded with continued efforts in building tribal relationships.

- A four session study for the NGLS Lifelong Faith Formation was developed and entitled “Native America and the Stewardship of the Land: Land Acknowledgments and Beyond.”
- A task force member wrote a week of devotions on the Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers for the Synod's Prayfaithfully devotions.
- Three members of the WWOIN Task Force did a presentation at Immanuel, Negaunee, on The U.S. Indian Boarding School Era and the Role of the Christian Church
- Four WWOIN task force members researched and prepared eight initial reports on Lutheran involvement in non-Lutheran boarding schools for the ELCA’s Truth Seeking and Truth Telling Task Force, including boarding schools which operated in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Upper Michigan, and Lower Michigan. We continue to call attention to the ELCA’s Truth and Healing Movement. Please see www.elca.org/indigenous for more information!
- Two WWOIN task force members worked with the ELCA Churchwide Truth Seeking and Truth Telling task force to oversee student research into Lutheran involvement with boarding schools through Wartburg Seminary’s class “American Genocide” taught by Dr. Craig Nesson. These task force members also assumed responsibility to coach students and others who prepared initial reports on non-Lutheran boarding schools across the United States.
- One WWOIN task force member prepared and presented a report to members of the ELCA’s Truth and Healing initiative on the work of researching Lutheran involvement in non-Lutheran boarding schools.
- Two WWOIN task force members did an online workshop for the 2024 Synod Assembly.
- On behalf of the WWOIN task force, a member wrote prayer petitions for congregational use.

- The NGLS Native American Worship Liturgy was revised for synod congregations to use during National Native American Heritage Month.
- The summer months included participating in Children’s Remembrance Walk, KBIC PowWow, and 17 mile water walk from Pequaming to Baraga. Task force members provided sandwiches and transportation for the water walk. A member of the task force participated in the water ceremony for Lake Superior Water Day.
- Task force members helped build a lodge to host a community talking circle during the Annual Children’s Walk of Remembrance for boarding school victims. Located near the ruins of St. Joseph’s Orphanage (also called Baraga Chippewa Boarding and Day School) in Assinins, community members gathered to talk about the long-term impact the Indian boarding school experience has had on tribal communities. A member of the WWOIN task force was asked to participate in this talking circle. Representatives from the State of Michigan and Indian Country Today were also present. Individual survivor truth sharing sessions were held onsite in a different location.
- The 6th Annual People of the Heart Water Walk completed their annual 90 mile walk between Baraga and Copper Harbor. The Lutheran Churches of Bethany, Mohawk; Holy Cross, Baraga; and Trinity Episcopal, Houghton hosted meals in collaboration with the MTU “food chiefs” who fed and nourished the water walkers on their 3-day journey.
- February – April also brings our participation in the preparation and harvesting of maple sap at Dynamite Hill Farms, the home of Jerry Jondreau and Katy Bresette, Ojibwe traditional food growers.
- October through December entailed much work with the Baraga local task force under the guidance and direction of Coordinator Rodney Loonsfoot, of the Marine Corp Toys for Tots Campaign. Two and half months of collaboration included distributing donation boxes to local businesses, and picking up and distributing toys.
- One member of the task force continues to take classes and participate in the events of the Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College and regularly attends the Three Fires Midewiwin Lodge.

Let us know if you would like to serve on the WWOIN Task Force!

It is said, “There will come a time when the Light-skinned Race will be given a choice between two roads.” The road to technology and the road to spiritualism. (The Mishomis Book) The Northern Great Lakes Synod is blessed to share a home and land with many Indigenous People that are, among others, Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi. May it be our blessing and goal to walk our paths together toward healing relationships and healing Mother Earth. Our roads are merging, thanks be to God!

---Submitted by Pr Julie Belew and Pr Bucky Beach

Report of the Justice Advocacy Committee: **Christ's Kaleidoscope**

Christ's Kaleidoscope is a group of Northern Great Lakes Synod people who are passionate about leading our Synod's efforts to see others through the eyes of Jesus. Our focus these last few years has been providing educational opportunities to people of the synod to help us examine racial and economic tensions in our communities, our churches, ourselves, and the many systems in our world that often divide us.

In 2024 we developed a Lenten Challenge that used the ELCA's Social Statements and Messages (Social Statement "Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture," Message "Human Rights") to deepen our engagement of social justice issues through our distinct Lutheran Lens. We have been encouraged by the many individuals in our synod who have joined our efforts since 2022. This year, we used both a book resource and a resource from the ELCA, "Dismantle," and a book by Kathy Escobar that explores the way we use power both on a personal level as well as in the communities in which we live.

This year, 2025, we hope to grow our planning group as many of our members are in different seasons and leading in many other ways in our synod. We could use your help as we think about the future and our need to move toward advocacy. There are many different ways we can use our voices to bring much-needed change at this time in our history. Many of our siblings are hurting and it is not enough for us to only educate ourselves about the issues, we need to get involved and do the necessary work in ourselves and through our legislators to highlight injustice and bring change.

Peace be with you all during this challenging season,

Pastor Jared Howard



Life Long Faith Formation

In 2024, Lifelong Faith Formation celebrated its 5th year of providing synod-wide engagement centered around various topics that matter to members of the Northern Great Lakes Synod. We continue to carry tremendous momentum for this organic, Spirit-led ministry which connects students yearning to deepen their faith through learning alongside others across the synod. The scope and variety of topics, from scripture studies to spiritual practices, bible language to social/cultural concerns, is a testament to the energy and knowledge base of the many instructors (ordained or otherwise) in our synod. Lifelong Faith Formation helps us to be church together!

At the conclusion of 2024, this vital ministry has offered (since its inception): 60 classes involving 68 instructors, 41 guest speakers, and 756 students for a total of 925 participants, all learning from one another, forming relationships, and growing in their faith. Glory be to God for all their efforts!

2025 brings a transition period for our leadership. We give thanks and recognition to Deacon Lori Ward for her years of faithful service as Synod Missioner and program administrator. We offer a heartfelt blessing to Lori in her new role: retirement! At the same time, we welcome (with open arms) Sister Noreen Stevens, also a Deaconess in the ELCA. Sister Noreen comes to us with a wealth of experience to help shepherd the future of Lifelong Faith Formation.

Our goal, as always, is to continue to offer an avenue for learning and spiritual fellowship centered around pertinent and applicable topics to members of our synod.

We can only do this by the Grace of God, through the movement of the Spirit.

Thank you to all past participants, and welcome to future students and teachers!

“God is with us. The Spirit moves us. Christ teaches us. Amen.” -Deacon Lori Ward

Submitted with thanks and praise,

Matthew Johnson
LFF Committee Chair

Deacon Lori Ward
Synod Missioner
LFF Administrator

Report of the Leadership Support Committee

The Synod Leadership Support Committee is responsible for supporting Rostered Leaders, Licensed Lay Ministers, and their families as they engage in their specific ministries. We plan and provide opportunities and resources for wholeness of life and continuing education. We hope to encourage and enhance spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical health among our Synod's ministry leaders and their families.

We have continued to be appreciative of the variety of ministries and rostered leaders in our synod, including Intentional Interim Pastors, Administrative Interim Pastors, and Licensed Lay Ministers. In addition, we are grateful for the ministry of our Collaborative Seminary Students, as well as ordained leaders from Full Communion Partner denominations. As we work on collaborative efforts and continuing education opportunities throughout the year, we hope that our work can be a support for all leaders serving in the Northern Great Lakes Synod. We continue to support Bishop Finegan as she works with synod staff and churchwide in matching Rostered Leaders to congregations, and in efforts toward debt relief for Rostered Leaders in our synod.

As a member of this committee, Pr. Catie Ford serves as liaison to the First Call Theological Education (FCTE) planning team, who organize the First Call Theological Education Retreat for our Synod and the six synods of Wisconsin. Pr. Ford also, as part of the Clergy Compensation Subcommittee, submitted the recommendations of that subcommittee to the Synod Council.

As part of a Region 5 mandate for annual Boundaries Training for all rostered leaders, the Leadership Support team organized a hybrid Zoom/in-person training day on November 7, led by online leaders and local facilitators. Other events organized this past year, both in-person and online, included:

- Regular Zoom check-ins for Rostered Leaders with Bishop Finegan
- Lifelong Faith Formation opportunities
- In person gathering for Retired Rostered Leaders
- Fall Theological Event on Mackinac Island in September 2024
- Preaching Workshop for Licensed Lay Ministers
- Faithful Innovations Trainings led by DEM Pr. Jim Duehring
- Professional Leaders' Conference on Christian Nationalism in February 2025

Looking ahead to the year to come, the Leadership Support Committee is working on further events, including Lifelong Faith Formation, the Bishop's Convocation in September 2025, gatherings for Retired Rostered Leaders and spouses, and a Winter Theological Event in February 2026.

As part of her retirement, Deacon Lori Ward is stepping off of the Leadership Support team in early 2025, and Pr. Kay Richter will be stepping off the committee after Synod Assembly 2025. In February 2025, we welcomed Pr. Melinda VanderSys to our team as co-chair. Many thanks to them, and to the other current committee members: Bishop Finegan, Pr. Catie Ford, and Pr. Jack Busche (co-chair).

Respectfully Submitted,
Pr. Jack Busche
Leadership Support Committee Co-Chair

Report of Prayfaithfully



“Prayer is a way of life which allows you to find a stillness in the midst of the world where you open your hands to God’s promises and find hope for yourself, your neighbor, and the world.”

Henri J.M. Nouwen

Since 2004, people across our Synod, and indeed many from around the country, have been blessed by the devotions published each week on our Prayfaithfully website. Prayfaithfully continues to be the most accessed page on the Synod website, and we are deeply grateful for the continued positive response we receive for these daily devotions.

In 2024, 44 individuals as well as members of the Synodical Women’s Organization, summer staff at Fortune Lake Camp, and one Confirmation Class shared their talents by writing devotions for the website. Through them all, we were blessed! Thank you to all our writers for your faithfulness, creativity, and willingness to add something else to your schedule. Your contributions are invaluable!

It is true, however, that it is getting more difficult to find volunteers to write. For the ministry to continue, we need your help! As noted above, you can write as an individual, with a spouse or friend, as a group or class. Needed are seven devotions based on a Scripture passage(s) or topic of your choice, followed by a short devotion and closing prayer. Detailed guidelines can be found on the Synod website or by contacting me.

Many thanks to Christine Harkness for coordinating the monthly Prayfaithfully prayer calendars. Chris reminds us of many of the people and ministries that we often take for granted and don’t necessarily remember to keep in prayer. These daily prayer suggestions are a great way to expand our prayer life and increase our awareness of God’s activity all around us. We are most grateful for her excellent work!

Please prayerfully consider volunteering to write a week of devotions in 2025. Volunteers make my week! I try to schedule volunteers at least two months in advance of the date of publication to help alleviate any time stress. Please contact me at the Synod Office (906) 228-2300 or bakoski@nglsynod.org if you have any questions or would like to schedule a week to write.

Once again, thank you to all who wrote – and read – Prayfaithfully devotions. Your words provide inspiration and hope, and are a comfort, a challenge, and a blessing to all!

Respectfully Submitted,
Betsy Koski

www.prayfaithfully.org or www.nglsynod.org/prayfaithfully

Report of the Synod Campus Ministry Committee

February 2025

Accomplishments

Reports were received from Northern Michigan University LCM and Michigan Tech LCM. During the Fall and into the Winter of 2024, both campus ministries were actively serving the needs of their respective students. For both campus pastors, Pastor Alexis LaChapelle and Pastor Sarah Semmler Smith, the challenges and opportunities are great. In both cases, they found creative, innovative, and Spirit-led ways in to engage and nurture within their respective ministries.

At NMU, weekly ministry included Sunday Night Suppers followed by devotions, (Dinner and Devos). Alexis shares the responsibilities of Campus Ministry with two other colleagues, Priest Marna Franson and Deacon Erica Thomas – both of whom are campus ministers in their respective denominations. Together they all create Sacred Space and serve out of Common Grounds, the student coffee shop, and Alexis's office. The space is hosted by students Monday through Thursday and sometimes on Friday. They also have student leaders who help connect with students, lead events, and work alongside the campus pastors to serve the community.

In the spring of 2024, the LCM students participated in a mission trip to Sanibel, Florida to help with hurricane recovery. This year they are headed to North Carolina for hurricane recovery, working with an ELCA camp, Lutheridge and Lutheran Disaster Relief. Although it will be a smaller trip with only a few student, the greater focus of service to the community has become a central tenet of LCM at NMU. This year they participated in Northern's Make a Difference Day, worked with Yoopers United making cards, and volunteered at Film Fest, Trunk or Treat, Crop Walk, and Feeding America. The students recognize that mutual service is important and are making space to help others and walk alongside the greater community.

At Michigan Tech weekly ministry includes weekly meals followed by devotions. They have approximately 7-12 students for worship each week and the same for the LCM Gathers group. They have a group of seven students set to go on an alternative Spring Break to North Carolina to build houses with Habitat for Humanity. A newly formed LCM band has been leading worship once per month during the academic year. Students also teach Sunday School, greet, and assist in worship weekly.

As Winter Carnival with the “St. George & the Dragon “ theme approaches, they are making plans for a snow sculpture and their annual soup and pie meal.

The Kitchen program (Feed My Sheep initiative) continues to progress, after a pause to seek further funding in the fall. After receiving a 2nd Capital Improvement grant from NLCM, they are in the final phase, awaiting the delivery of the range hood. Upon completion of the kitchen project, their LCM committee will be planning a ribbon cutting ceremony and reception. Completion in March will hopefully result in the resumption of several community student meals.

Goals for 2025-26

Campus Ministries throughout the ELCA face many challenges. The challenge within the Northern Great Lakes Synod is to serve as many college age student as possible, within the current institutions of higher education. The values of Inclusivity, Hospitality, Inquiry, Justice, Gratitude, Joy, and Intentionality define our mission of responding to God's call. We recognize, value, and welcome all people, acknowledging the diversity with which we were created. Remembering how Christ welcomed and received us, we welcome all people regardless of religious or denominational background, personal faith or doubt, race, class, sexual orientation, or gender identity. We also recognize that God's perfect vision for the world is not reflected in our reality and seek to live out God's justice in all that we do.

Our goals for 2025 embody these values as we seek to support all Campus Ministries and their students, while mindful and grateful for the contributions of presence, time, skills, and financial resources that we receive.

Report of the World Hunger Committee

Cast out your bread upon the waters,
for after many days you will get it back.
Divide your means seven ways, or even eight,
for you do not know what disaster may happen on earth
-Ecclesiastes 11:1-2

Far from exhorting us to soggy bread, the teacher encourages us in Ecclesiastes to be so generous with our food and resources that it multiplies beyond the bounds of sense. When we cast our bread upon the waters, we are sharing food with one another without count of cost, and with a mindset of boundless grace. The way the bread returns to us, is by the peace of God, and the mutual love, support and up-building of God's kingdom. Why are we called to share food this way? Because, the teacher says, it will fortify our communities and strengthen them to face whatever disasters may come on earth. Sharing food gives us strength and endurance!

This year our Synod World Hunger committee has been challenging you to cast your bread upon your waters, and share abundantly with those in need. Thank you for your generous responses, and for bringing your offering to be collected at this assembly. If you didn't get an offering together in time for the Assembly this year, please remember to make a collection next year, as it is our Synod's tradition to take up an offering to combat world hunger at every synod assembly. Each year, your World Hunger committee works hard to come up with a creative and biblically rich theme to inspire you in your fundraising efforts. Each congregation then takes up a collection either in a concentrated drive or throughout the year, depending on what suits your giving style best, and then you bring the resulting collection to the Synod assembly for a final tally in our efforts to combat world hunger. So thank you for taking part in this collection and for making world hunger a part of your agenda this next year.

In addition to inspiring our annual synod assembly collection, your Hunger Committee also gives out annual awards to hunger ministries in our synod that go above and beyond the call of duty in combating world hunger. These awards are the Big Bear Award, and the Bread Basket Award, which we also distribute every year at the assembly. If you know of a vibrant food sharing ministry in your community that deserves some recognition, please consider filling out a nomination form so that they can be considered for one of these awards! Thank you again for all that you do to combat world hunger, and we hope you enjoy our video at the assembly and we will continue to work until all are fed.

-World Hunger Committee

Report of the Worship Committee

The Worship Committee meets quarterly to assist in planning worship for Synod Assembly and other synod events as well as providing opportunities such as workshops and events that equip, educate and deepen worship and worship leaders in the synod.

2024 Synod Assembly was a hybrid assembly once again with worship being hybrid and on-line. Once again, the Synod had a broadcast worship service on WLUC and our YouTube page. We had a recording session at Faith Lutheran in Ishpeming with the 4-Ish congregations to record some Christmas carols that are not currently in our mp3 library of hymns. Thank you to Gary Sunblad of Bethany Lutheran in Ishpeming for his work with the recordings.

We have begun planning workshops for our Assembly. The opening worship will be at Bethel Lutheran in Ishpeming with the installation of our new Assistant to the Bishop Sharolyn Swenson. Closing worship will be Saturday morning in the assembly space and will feature our Pastor Band leading music.

We held an All Creation Sings workshop in October 2024 at Bethel in Ishpeming in conjunction with several other workshops.

Thank you to all the worship committee members for their hard work. They are Bishop Katherine Finegan, Shirley Norquist, Pauline Kiltinen, Barb Rice, Tonya Perry, Pastor Soren Schmidt, Lucas Wickstrom, SuAnn Ambuehl and Kristine Ebert.

Respectfully submitted,

Lucas C. Wickstrom, Committee Chair

Report of the Youth Ministries Support Team

Greetings members of the Northern Great Lakes Synod!

Our Synod Youth Committee is a group of volunteers who work alongside our Synod Youth Coordinator, Stefanie Ehle, to help foster youth ministry within our synod. Our young people are the future, and much of what we do is dedicated to creating faith-forming experiences for our youth and supporting pre-existing opportunities for them to engage in their faith communities. We have been hard at work this year! Read on to find out more about what we've been up to.

Here are some of the highlights:

- The committee is continually working to support the youth ministry efforts of the diligent youth leaders throughout the synod. We've encouraged conference-wide youth events, in which multiple congregations/leaders work together to offer an event to all those within a conference, or occasionally the whole synod. This promotes resource sharing and collaboration amongst congregations and makes more opportunities available to young people.
- The Synod Youth Committee approved and distributed 8 grants for Collaborative Youth Ministry in the Synod, one for each of our conferences. The events sponsored by these grants were widely varied, but each of them featured collaboration between two or more congregations and centered youth as their main demographic.
- The ELCA Youth Gathering took place in New Orleans, Louisiana, July 13-20. There were 97 youth and chaperones in attendance from the Northern Great Lakes Synod.
- After years of meeting entirely on Zoom, our committee met in person for a retreat at Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp. During our weekend together, we spent time dreaming about what the future holds for this committee, set goals, and went over our mission statement, included at the start of this report.
- An updated Volunteer Description, intended to more clearly define the expectations of our committee members, has been written and approved.
- Members of our team created a Youth & Family Resource Calendar, which includes ideas for youth engagement in a congregational setting throughout the year. This resource will have been shared for the first time on April 5th and is free and available to all those interested.
- The Synod Youth Committee worked together to teach the Growing Younger class through NGLS's Lifelong Faith Formation program. The class is a book study of *Growing Young: Six Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* by Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin.
- In an effort to bring a special presenter to our synod and support Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp's adult training component of their youth retreats, the committee, guided by Stefanie, pursued bringing in Rachel Kurtz, for the In The Body Jr/Sr High Retreat April 4-5, 2025. Rachel is a talented musician and storyteller and will facilitate Bible Studies, lead the adult training component, and provide a free concert open to the public. At the time this report is being written, this event has not taken place, but we are excited about this opportunity for those in our area.
- Dungeons & Dragons Club is now available through the synod for all 6th through 12th graders. This club is a unique opportunity for youth to learn how to play this popular table-top roleplaying game and connect it to their faith. The group had their first retreat at Fortune Lake in February and is excited to see what the future holds.

Our work is an ongoing effort! Are you looking for a way to get involved? We're always looking for new voices and perspectives as we continue our endeavor to support the young people in our synod. My contact information is listed below for those interested in joining our team. If you have questions about anything in this report, I am happy to talk with you.

Blessings,

Charlotte Strom

Synod Youth Committee Chair

Northern Great Lakes Synod

E: cmstrom78@gmail.com

Report of Conference 1—Iron-Gogebic-Ontonagon

2024 Gathering

Report from Conference President, Pastor Doug Norquist

Conference 1 is named “IGO Conference” for the three counties (Iron County, WI; Gogebic County, MI; and Ontonagon County, MI) in which most of our members live. Besides whatever business may be in order, in relation to the synod or conference’s own inner workings, or any special items the group may choose to take on, the conference gathering is a chance to worship, pray, and fellowship with brothers and sisters from the various congregations.

Our 2024 gathering took place on September 29, 2024 at First Lutheran Church, Ewen. Members were present from several of our congregations. Some highlights follow.

As Pastor of the host congregation, Pastor Kay Richter led us in worship, using liturgical material from *Eggs and Ashes*, a book from the Iona community in Scotland (Wild Goose Press), adapted for the occasion. The hymns were ““He Comes to Us as One Unknown” and “Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song”.

In his capacity as Conference president, Pastor Doug Norquist chaired the meeting.

The Conference re-elected Chris Wirtanen as vice president, and Gabriel Lannet as Synod Council Representative.

Gabriel Lannet brought a report on behalf of the Northern Great Lakes Synod.

The gathering enjoyed food and hospitality from members of First Lutheran Church.

Copper Country Conference (Conference 2) President's Report

*Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
~1 Thessalonians 5:8*

We give thanks for those persons who have served as worship leaders, clergy (including retirees) and lay alike, and interim pastors for our various congregations and worship services during the past year, especially in times of clergy transition. Each of these persons has been integral in the continued ministry of our conference.

The conference text study strives to meet weekly, both in-person and via Zoom, and continues to be enriched by ecumenical partners and fellowship, conference-wide collaborative work, and a wide array of community outreach efforts.

Our conference continues to share thoughts and ideas about collaborations, events, and activities for all ages. In 2024, people from across the Copper Country participated in:

- highway clean-ups
- blood drives
- curling
- disaster relief efforts
- VBS programs
- community meal programs
- Let's Rebuild
- social outings
- Thrivent action team events
- Feeding America partnerships
- confirmation
- youth events
- food pantry sponsorships
- service projects
- interfaith luncheons and dialogs
- Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp programs & retreats
- Phoenix House – local recovery home
- clothing drives/collections
- ELCA good gifts
- Christmas toy/gift drives
- Keweenaw Wild
- Jacobsville Chapel

At our fall conference meeting, held on Sunday, October 20, 2024, those gathered shared ongoing concerns and conversation around the topic of dwindling congregation membership and resources and entertained ideas for possible collaborations and partnerships which would further relationships within our conference, synod, and the broader church. We aired concerns about our future as church in this place as we face and navigate these changing demographics, financial struggles, and other challenges, but we are not without hope.

We wondered what the future might hold, not only in terms of sustaining ministry in our rural area but additionally in light of our current political climate. How might we continue to be faithful and bold in our proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, identify and call out sin and systems that harm all of God's creation, repent, and live, forgiven and freed, into the reality of God's Kingdom and grace? We are trusting that God will continue to work in and through us in various, creative ways even as we pray and discern.

We give thanks for the people and ministry of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Baraga, who have recently voted to end their ministry. We celebrate their many years of following and serving our Lord and neighbors. We surround them with our prayers and love as they journey through the days of holy closure ahead.

In all things, we continue to give thanks for the many blessings, promises, and hope found in our Lord Jesus Christ. We strive to do God's work in this beautiful and amazing place and throughout the world. We pray that we may be a faithful people, fully committed to the work of the gospel. And we ask God to help us.

Grace and Peace,
Rev. Kelly J. Ylitalo, Conference 2 President

Report of Conference 3—Headwaters

Greetings from Wisconsin, your sister congregations to the West. It must have been a busy year for we have a bit of a struggle all getting together at the same time. The pastoral leadership tries to maintain contact and support our congregations in mutual ministry. Still each of us have separate leadership challenges with still vacancies to fill. But our retired pastors stay busy with interims and substitute preaching. Ascension in Minocqua has had a particularly active year with their well-liked interim, Rev. Philip Johnson taking off to travel to family and reestablish a home in the U.P. Then a call was accepted and Rev. Pete Warmanen moved to Minocqua from Chicago land, returning to his roots in the NGLS. We continue to have the searching for permanent pastoral leadership for Immanuel in Rhinelander and Pioneer Lake in Conover. They are being served by Rev. John Kuziej and Rev. Peggy Rose respectively. We also support and gather with our other Rev. 'retirees' in Tammy Barthels, Gerald Anderson, Norm Peterson, and Paul Heykes, who serve in presiding in worship for many congregations in this and neighboring synods and churches.

Our pastors do gather every couple of months for worship, support, and fellowship. We often gather at Prince of Peace because Eagle River is our most central location. We met there in January, April and in July we had a picnic outside, as the River flowed by. Many of us participated in the Chrism Mass held in Florence in March. At the end of June, we had representation at the farewell celebration for Pastor Phil, with a wonderful meal highlighting Lutheran Jello's! Faith in Three Lakes hosted our Headwater's Conference on October 20 where Rev. Catie Ford hosted us with assistance from her congregation. Each of our congregations were represented at this gathering. Then the next week Pastor Pete was installed in an uplifting service in Minocqua. In November we gathered with Pastors Tim & Kari Vadis at Trinity, for our Boundaries Training event.

A few highlights from our Conference meeting: Our fine representatives to Synod Council are Randi Danner and Matt Johnson, so we did not need to get new volunteers this year. Elected to serve as Vice President of the Conference is Pastor Catie Ford and our Nomination's Committee will be Andy Anderson, Jim Moravec, and Pastor Tim Vadis.

Pioneer Lake continues with their Lutefisk Dinners which was on December 8. Calvary has had great success with a Scandinavian Bake Sale in the fall. So those roots continue to be highlighted with fondness in our congregations. We have been trying a new endeavor with Worship in the Wild following the lead of UP Wild. Hikes have taken us around the area which has many fine trails and people have worshipped together in nature. The weather does not always cooperate, but the group is hardy. It will forge on with our capable leader, Pastor Catie. Attendance at a Youth Quake is being encouraged for February. Connections for youth ministry events are available with Pastor Kari Vadis and Pastor Sherry VanLishout. Pastor Kari also continues to lead those who want to make sure our children and youth are protected with appropriate boundaries and can be secure in our churches. Faith Lutheran sponsored a fish fry raising funds for NATH, a shelter in Rhinelander.

Our Officers for this year are Nancy Heykes, secretary, Rev. Catie Ford, v.p., and Rev. Maxine Gray as president, who has submitted this report.

Report of Conference 5—Menominee Valley

Dear Northern Great Lakes Synod,

Hello from the banana belt of the synod! The last year has been a wonderful, challenging, and wonderfully challenging time to be in ministry together. On October 20th, we resumed our Fall conference meeting at the Wickman Family farms, hosted by Northland Chaplain Karen Anne Hanson. We met in the hay mow of the renovated barn and had opportunity to worship and reconnect. This is a wonderful part of God's creation that Chaplain Karen Anne has shared with the conference for last year's synod wide hike. In addition to the barn, there are hiking trails, a prayer hut, labyrinth, and an abundance of wildlife.

In worship that day, we used Communion ware from St. James Lutheran in Marinette, who made the faithful decision to conclude their ministry in a Holy Closure in the Spring of 2024. While sorrow was present, so were many who were touched by the ministry of St. James. We give thanks for the seeds that were planted there and walk with those members seeking a new worshipping community in the body of Christ.

This year I took over as Conference President and give thanks that Pastor Brenda Greenwald agreed to step up as Vice President. Leaders have began meeting every other month for worship, fellowship, and colleague support.

Congregational Notes and Highlights

+Vicar Dan Moschea, began serving Porterfield and Beaver American Lutheran Churches through the Collaborative learning program through Wartburg Seminary.

+Rev. Amanda Kossow was called by Zion, Marinette and began serving on January 1st. She was installed by Bp. Finegan on February 18th.

+Good Shepherd, Peshtigo gifted \$3000 from the proceeds of their chicken Booyah meal to No Girl Without-To End Period Poverty.

+Our Savior's, Marinette served 400 community members at their annual free Thanksgiving Meal.

+Bethel, Menominee has also been active in supplying area schools with food and hygiene products, and had a successful book study of "Ask, Thank, Tell" which was accompanied by stories of generosity that were shared in worship and the newsletter.

+ Emmanuel, Menominee has continued to be blessed with the leadership of Rev. Christine Olson who is accompanying them as their intentional interim. She is an asset not only to Menominee, but other congregations as we navigate the changing landscape of ministry.

+Gethsemane, Wallace and St. Stephens, Stephenson were blessed with memorial gifts that allowed upgrades to the audio/ visual capabilities in both congregations.

All the Menominee Valley Conference congregations appreciate the work of the Synod youth team and their focus on having our youth have fun together. We've met in fellowship and service at a pottery studio in Peshtigo, volunteered at the local homeless shelter, had a campfire for Fortune Lake, made Christmas ornaments at a glass shop, an escape room, movies, and more.

The efforts of retired colleagues and those who serve in specialized settings like Northland Lutheran Retirement Community and Aurora Medical Center Bay Area are valued in this conference.

From the cluttered desk of,

Rev. Scott Ehle

Menominee Valley conference president

Pastor, Bethel Lutheran Church, Menominee

Reigning conference clergy lawn dart champion

Report of Conference 6—Tri-County

Greetings and peace to you,

The Tri-County Conference continues to be active in our conference wide projects, inter-congregation collaborations, and supporting our local communities by uniting in ministry we could not do alone.

We once again worked together as a conference in running a water tent at the UP State. During the UP State Fair in August, we come together to provide a booth at the fair that provides affordable water and snacks as well as a communal place to sit and eat. All day fair goers and fair workers alike come to our tent to find some shade, escape the rain, or sit down and eat together. In addition to the ministry of providing space, we sell water and homemade baked goods. The proceeds we raise through the sales are donated to ELCA Good Gifts. This year we donated \$2,681.46 to ELCA Good Gifts. This project is made possible by over 100 volunteers from 10 churches and over 300 hours of volunteer labor, planning, and set up!

Our congregations work in unity to do ministry together that we would not be able to do on our own. The churches in the conference often work together to bring Vacation Bible School or similar programs to our communities. In 2024, Cavalry in Rapid River, Bethany in Perkins, Christ the King in Escanaba, and Trinity Stonington worked together to facilitate a Vacation Bible School at Trinity in Stonington. First in Gladstone partnered with Memorial Methodist in Gladstone and Fortune Lake to bring Vacation Bible Camp to Gladstone. Immanuel Lutheran in Escanaba and Bethany Lutheran in Escanaba worked in partnership with Fortune Lake to bring an Evening Bible Camp to Escanaba. Faith Lutheran in Rock continues to provide a VBS for the youth of their community and Zion in Manistique continues to pioneer Vacation Bible School for adults in their community!

Conversations amongst congregations are already taking place for joint ministry opportunities this year. The hope is to provide a conference wide participation in Fortune Lake's Light the Fire event. Planning has begun for a summer conference youth event. Our winter conference meeting is just around the corner, and we look forward to gathering for worship, planning of our joint ministry, and dreaming about being the future church together!

Respectfully Submitted,

Pastor Mike Markwell

Tri-County Conference President

Report of Conference 8—Superior Central

The Superior Central Conference (Conference 8) has continued to build on our collaborative confirmation program, in which our various member churches took turns hosting once-a-month confirmation classes throughout the school year, ending with a Saturday program at Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp. This year, we have continued to share in this work, with continued collaboration with Fortune Lake – in April 2025, we encouraged our students to attend the Fortune Lake “In the Body” retreat for 7th-12th graders, which we counted as part of their confirmation curriculum. We currently have over 35 youth involved in this shared confirmation program. In the school year to come, we will continue to expand and improve upon this collaborative project, which not only shares the work among our working pastors, but also connects our confirmation-age youth with their fellow young Lutherans, growing community and relationships as they grow in faith.

There has also been a continuation of Sunday night youth events, led in particular by Pastor Alex LaChapelle, Pastor Tim Johnston, and Stacy McEachern, who have hosted these once-a-month events for middle and high school youth at various churches in our conference. Activities have included pumpkin carving in October, a movie night in December, and a game night in February. Beyond these evening gatherings, there has also been increased youth connections between several of our conference churches in organizing youth attendance at the Quake Conference in February (with youth mainly from Prince of Peace-Harvey, Immanuel-Negaunee, Bethel-Ishpeming, and Grace-Gwinn attending). In addition, a mission trip is being organized for this summer of 2025 to do hurricane recovery in North Carolina, with youth mainly from Bethel-Ishpeming, Prince of Peace-Harvey, and Immanuel-Negaunee. In the future, our conference also hopes to encourage more inter-conference family events, such as attendance at Light the Fire at Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp in May.

At our regular business meeting, we accomplished the standard duties required of the Synod Constitution. Our newly elected and re-elected officers include:

Secretary – Pr. Alex LaChapelle, Prince of Peace, Harvey

Treasurer – Pr. Bre Kinnunen, Immanuel, Negaunee

Vice President – Pr. Alex Ross, Bethany, Republic

President – Pr. Jack Busche, Grace, Gwinn

Finally, in service to all these ongoing inter-conference projects, and to enjoy fellowship together as colleagues, our conference pastors continue to gather at a local coffee shop on a weekly basis.

Respectfully submitted,
Pr. Jack Busche
Conference 8 President