

Dear People of the Northern Great Lakes Synod,

Our theme of “God gives the growth” becomes visible in all its glory in these lovely summer days of greenness, blooming flowers, and growing gardens.

At our Synod Assembly of 2026, we met under that theme in a hybrid format, meeting in person by conference connected to each other through zoom, common worship, and shared reports. Every year we have done this, the technology and our ability to use it have improved. This year’s assembly was largely glitch free, except for some connectivity and bandwidth issues at some of our sites.

Huge thanks to the many people needed to pull off what amounts to eight mini-assemblies. When we are in one place, the lion’s share of the details is managed by the synod staff with help from the venue. With eight host sites, we needed volunteers for all of it. Recruiting volunteers and communicating with everyone regarding their roles and expectations remains the greatest challenge.

The evaluations reflected the following responses:

1. Worship was appreciated. It worked well to move into Holy Communion at each host site during the Sharing of the Peace.
2. People enjoyed the videos: meeting the Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry, learning more about LSS, the ELCA, the Youth Gathering, and more.

3. While the business portion is less than riveting by its very nature, we accomplished what was needed.
4. People both lamented not being in person with everyone and were appreciative of the shorter drive and one day schedule.
5. Problems with freezing, glitching, and hearing still happened in at least two of our conferences due to the lack of quality wifi/internet available in their context. This presents the challenge of equal access for the whole synod.
6. Some evaluations reflected frustration in what they experienced as a lack of instruction. Given that ample instruction was provided through copious emails, it may be that the voting member’s personal email was not provided by the registrant but perhaps used the church’s email instead. Always provide your personal email.
7. Things to know for the future:
 - a. The Pre-Assembly Report (PAR) is always posted on the Synod website under the “Synod Assembly” tab 30 days prior to assembly.
 - b. Sign up for E Notes.
 - c. If a voting member wishes to have a hard copy of the PAR, it is up to them to print it. Another option would be to download it to laptop or tablet ahead of time.

Next year, Synod Assembly will be earlier. We will meet at Messiah Lutheran for opening worship on Thursday April 22, 2027, and then

gather at Northern Michigan University in Marquette Friday and Saturday April 23 and 24. I encourage congregations to do the following:

1. Elect/identify your voting members at or by your Annual Meeting.
2. If the same voting members have been the ones to attend every year, let someone else have a turn. The best way for us to experience who we are as church together is to take a turn attending Synod Assembly.
3. After Synod Assembly, share your experience with the congregation during announcements the following Sunday and write a brief article for your congregation newsletter.
4. Congregations should plan to cover the registration fee and expense of their voting members in their 2027 budget.
5. Register on time. 😊

The things that people most appreciate about Synod Assembly happen when we meet in person. The worship, the fellowship, the energy, the learning, and so much more. I look forward to being with you and us together as a synod April 22 – 24, 2027. Plans are already in the works!

In Christ,

Bishop Katherine Finegan