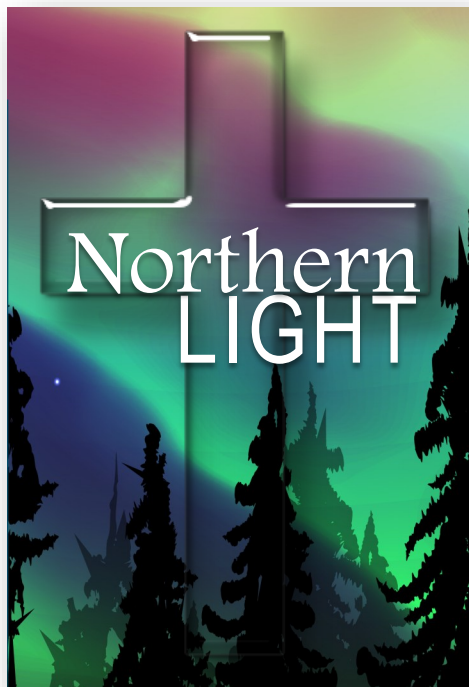




Shining with the Light of Christ in the Northern Great Lakes Synod

Volume 38, Issue 5 | September October 2026

Dear People of the Northern Great Lakes Synod,

One thing that you may not know about me is that when I was 16 going on 17, before Dave was my husband, he and I would “hang out” with friends at the Bel Rae Ballroom. Often there would be more than one wedding reception going on and we would get the chance to waltz, schottische, polka, foxtrot, chicken dance, and swing. We were both still learning. Dave was learning to lead, and I was learning to follow. So it was with an adventurous spirit that in the middle of a galloping polka, Dave and I would dance near another couple who looked like they knew what they were doing and we would yell “SWITCH!” Often, this other couple was on the far side of 60 years old or so, (or maybe they were 50, I was only 16 so everyone looked old). Dave would dance away with the woman, and I would be welcomed as the man’s new dance partner. This was such a gift, because often the older gentleman really knew how to lead with practiced ease. He knew the dance steps, he knew how to guide his partner, even a dance novice, with a slight but perceptible pressure of his palm on my back, a lean here and a pull there and we would be gliding across the floor.



My job was to pay attention, to tune my movements to the slight pressure on my back and notice the push and pull through hands and arms. Paying close attention, (and sometimes counting in my head) I could follow the movements of one who had been leading the dance for years. In this way, my own dancing improved. I learned the foxtrot and variations on the waltz and the polka...and some dances that I’m sure I don’t remember but were glad to dance in that moment.

Fast forward some 40+ years later. In early August of this year, I attended a retreat that offered reflection and discussion on the term “Perichoresis” (perry-core-ee-sis), which means, “mutual indwelling of the three persons of the Trinity.”

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This relationship between and among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is often described as a dance, as a circular fluidity of the one- in- three and the three- in- one of love, harmony, and the eternal movement of Creator, Beloved Son, and Holy Spirit.

Maybe the Church has always understood itself to be invited into the dance of Trinity. If so, it is only in the last few years that I have been more acutely aware of how much this swirling motion is at work among and through us. With our current challenges, with future uncertainties, with our adjustments to circumstances that may not be new to the Church but are certainly painfully new to us, we are blessed to hold the future we would pray for loosely.

What I mean by that is, we would be blessed to depend upon our eternal and divine partners in the dance, to pay close attention to the direction in which we are led, which may not be towards some past iteration of the church which we may hold dear, but instead, the dance moves us toward the unfamiliar and new. This new dance is no less graceful and engaging than the old way we moved, but we are still learning the steps as the Spirit still counts the rhythm in our ears that strain to hear. Our dance partner of the Trinity continues to include us, our communities of faith. It is our job to pay attention to the one who leads us, who applies pressure here and a tug there, who leans in one direction and gently guide our steps into new choreography. Come join the dance of Trinity... and learn what God would teach us.

In Christ,

Bishop Katherine Finegan



Planes, Trains, and Imagine More.

The first time I flew on a plane was with my youth group traveling to Denver, Colorado for the American Lutheran Church National Youth Gathering in the summer of 1985. It was the last of its kind, as 1988 began the new history of Youth Gatherings with the formation of the ELCA. My mother had sewn “JAM” shorts for our whole youth group to match our brightly colored t-shirts. In the exhibit hall, there was an inner tent...a kind of make-shift chapel where I first heard angelic chanting of Taize music. It may have been the first time I saw a pastor who was also a woman. The speakers were inspiring...a name I can't remember from South Africa speaking about Apartheid; and a name we all remember, former President Jimmy Carter telling us about a new project called Habitat for Humanity. I had no idea there were so many high schoolers who were Lutheran. And could not figure out why it seemed most of them were from Minnesota. I could not imagine I would grow up to be a pastor and live in Upper Michigan at that time, but that event likely had a lot to do with it. It changed my life. I went on to volunteer or chaperone at six more Gatherings, even naming a daughter Hope after the 1997 theme.

I recently visited with Mary Heinzman who shared with me her own experience of the Youth Gathering. Mary is a member of Trinity Lutheran in Ishpeming, and recalled fondly her trip with continuing friends Randi Holmgren and Peter Johnson, along with chaperones Pastor and Betsy Michalson. They boarded a train in the summer of 1961, making a stop in Green Bay and other spots along the way until the train was filled with Lutheran high-schoolers. They stopped for site-seeing and a leg stretch in Washington D.C. and then onward to their destination: Miami, Florida. She knew

this trip was a big expense for her parents, but it was worth the stretch. It, too, was life-changing. The keynote speaker was Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mary observed he was perhaps the first black person she had encountered at that time in her life. She loved what he said. Great World House. Kingdom of God. She recalls Holy Communion with thousands in the Miami Convention Center and a scrapbook she laments has been lost in the years since. I hear the lilt in her voice of being a part of something bigger when together. It changed Mary's life.

On October 21, 2026, registration will open for Lutheran Youth to gather in Minneapolis for the 2027 "Imagine More" Youth Gathering. Youth from the Northern Great Lakes Synod will meet people and see sites that will only expand and multiply the love they have found here among us. The church is both big and small and it is for them. It will change their lives. I cannot wait to hear their stories when they get home.

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Sharolyn Swenson +
NGLS Assistant to the
Bishop and Director of Evangelical Mission



Explore New Stewardship Possibilities with Fundamentals of Space Sharing: An ELCA-Sponsored Course

By: Chuck Thomas, NGLS Vice President

Does your congregation have a church building that is used primarily on Sundays while other organizations in your community are seeking affordable, welcoming spaces to gather? Consider the stewardship words of 1 Peter 4:10.

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of

God's grace in its various forms." (NIV)
Are you sharing God's gift of property to its fullest extent?

The ELCA's Fundamentals of Space Sharing: A Course is designed to help congregations thoughtfully explore how their facilities can become a greater asset to both the church and the surrounding community. A link to the course is found at the ELCA Church Property Resource Hub at <https://www.elca.org/publications/022026-cprh-fundamentals-of-space-sharing>.

The online course walks participants through the basics of sharing church space, including discerning whether space sharing fits your congregation's mission. It also helps a congregation identify potential community partners and understand legal and insurance considerations, allowing you to create sustainable relationships that benefit everyone involved. It includes practical examples, worksheets, and discussion questions to help church leaders move from ideas to action.

This resource is ideal for church councils, property committees, pastors, and other congregational leaders. Whether your congregation is considering hosting a preschool, recovery group, nonprofit organization, arts program, or another community partner, Fundamentals of Space Sharing provides a practical framework for making informed, mission-focused decisions. Even if your church ultimately decides that space sharing is not the right fit, the course offers valuable guidance for evaluating your facilities and envisioning new ways your congregation can serve its community.

If your congregation is looking for ways to expand its ministry beyond Sunday morning or is considering renting out some of your excess space, this course is an excellent place to begin.

Introducing our new Northern Great Lakes Synod Gift Planner

After serving Zion Lutheran Church in Manistique and Bethany Lutheran Church in Escanaba, Rev. Terry Frankenstein retired from



NGLS called ministry in 2022. Wanting to continue serving after retiring, she filled the role of Synod Treasurer for four years, stepping down in May 2026 to begin work as the new Northern Great Lakes Synod Gift Planner. Terry's background in the financial realm includes her MBA degree and many years working in her family's business.

Pr. Terry's new role is to help individuals, families, and congregations explore meaningful ways to support the ministries they care about most. She notes, "Whether you're thinking about leaving a legacy gift in your will, optimizing your annual giving, structuring a tax-smart gift (like a direct IRA rollover), or helping your congregation manage an endowment, I'm here as a free, confidential resource. I look forward to walking alongside you to align your financial stewardship with your faith and values." Pr. Terry can be contacted at 906-241-3311 or terry.frankenstein@nglsynod.org.

Transitions:

- We rejoice with Christ the King, Escanaba and Faith, Rock as we celebrated the installation of Rev. Sarah Sleeter on August 9. May God bless their ministry together.
- Rev. Sarah Semmler Smith has been called to serve as Associate Chaplain at St. Olaf College. Her last day at Good Shepherd,

Houghton and Lutheran Campus Ministry at Michigan Tech was August 9.

-Rev. Brahm Semmler Smith's last day at Gloridia Dei, Hancock was August 9.

-We give thanks to God for their many years of ministry in the Copper Country, and pray God will bless their new ventures. We hold the people of Good Shepherd, Gloria Dei, and MTU LCM in prayer during this time of transition

- We thank God and celebrate the life and ministry of Rev. Kenneth Michaelis, as he has passed to life eternal on August 9, 2026. A Funeral service was held on August 22 at Our Savior's, Marinette. Peace to his memory.
- On August 2, Our Redeemer, Newberry held their final worship service. We give thanks for their many years of ministry.
- On September 20, 2026 the congregations of Our Saviour's Paynesville and First of Winona, Mass City will hold their final worship. As they faithfully bring their ministries to an end, we give thanks to God for the love and service they have shared within their communities.

Do you enjoy the weekly Prayfaithfully devotion?

We are always looking for more Prayfaithfully writers. If you are interested, please contact Betsy: (906) 228-2300 or bakoski@nglsynod.org



Preaching on the Gospel of Mark: A Lutheran Perspective

Join us for our Quarterly Lay Education –

If you are a worship leader, serve as an assisting minister, read lessons, are looking to learn or help more, in an interim, this opportunity is for you! Rev. Peter Vorhes will provide resources and an overview as he invites us to explore a Lutheran perspective for Preaching on the Gospel of Mark.

All are welcome!

We will gather via Zoom

10-11:30 am ET/ 9-

10:30 am CT

Saturday, October 24

Register using the QR Code. Contact Sister Noreen Stevens with questions: nstevens@nglsynod.org or (651)815-1145



Autumn Leadership Event (ALE)

OCTOBER 18 - 21
MACKINAW CITY, MI

With Kristin Kobes Du Mez

Put on by Northern Great Lakes, North/West Michigan, and Southeast Michigan Synods

Learn more at
<https://nglsynod.org/autumn-leadership-event-2026/>

2027 ELCA Youth Gathering

June 28 – July 2, 2027 in Minneapolis, MN

The Northern Great Lakes Synod is

coordinating group

transportation for 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering participants. At this time, we anticipate leaving Saturday, June 26 and returning Friday, July 2.

We are also setting a goal of having registrants confirm their participation by October 1 so we can register together when Priority Registration opens and stay in the same hotel. Please contact Stefanie Ehle at youthcoordinator@nglsynod.org for more information and to stay connected as a Synod! Additional details about the Gathering, getting ready materials, and informational webinars are available at <https://www.elca.org/>



CIVIL RIGHTS TOUR

June 9-15, 2027

Join Bishop Anne Edison-Albright & Bishop Katherine Finegan on a Civil Rights Tour starting at \$2,898* from Milwaukee, on June 9, 2027. You will see the Freedom Riders National Monument, Birmingham Civil Rights District, Bethel Baptist Church, Edmund Pettus Bridge, 3 Legacy Sites, and much more!

Learn more at:
<https://www.eo.travelwithus.com/tours/dt27060927w64031>

Thank You

FOR YOUR SUPPORT

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

Lutheran World Relief:

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

Mission Outreach:

Immanuel, Escanaba
Rev. Elisabeth & Wes Daniels

Campus Ministry:

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

ELCA Disaster Relief:

St. Paul, Ironwood
Ascension, Minocqua
Zion, Marinette

Youth Ministry:

Bethany, Ishpeming
Zion, Marinette

Seminarian Support:

Faith, Sault Ste. Marie

Lutheran Social Services:

Emanuel, Skandia

Kisarawe Staff Gifts:

Rev. Jim & Gisele Duehring

Answer the Call:

Immanuel, Negaunee

Equipping the Saints:

Rev. Elisabeth & Wes Daniels

Companion Synod:

St. Paul's, Mass City
Zion, Manistique

Synod Ministry Fund:

Immanuel, Escanaba
Grace, Gwinn
United, Crystal Falls

• Synod Calendar •

September 2026

- 7 - NGLS Office Closed
- 8 - NGLS Staff Meeting
- 9 - Lay Ministry Support Team Meeting
- 9 - Candidacy Committee Meeting
- 11-12 - Synod Council meeting
- 14 - E-Notes submission deadline
- 15 - Campus Ministry Committee Meeting
- 16 - Worship Committee Meeting
- 17 - Equipping the Council for Ministry workshop
- 18-20 - WELCA Retreat
- 20 - Companion Synod Co. Meeting
- 29 - E-Notes submission deadline

October 2026

- 2 - NGLS Staff Meeting
- 3 - Fortune Lake Fall Fest
- 5 - Northern Light Nov.-Dec. submission deadline
- 14 - E-Notes submission deadline
- 18-21 - Autumn Leaders Retreat (ALE)
- 29 - E-Notes submission deadline

Pastoral Vacancies and Interims

Ready to Receive Potential Candidates

Bethlehem, Florence - Rev. David Johnson
 Pioneer Lake, Conover – Rev. Kari Vadis
 United, L’Anse – Rev. Julie Belew
 Grace, Pembine – Deacon Lori Ward
 Zion, Manistique - Rev. Jim Duehring
 Grace, Gwinn - Rev. David Van Kley

Not Actively in Call Process

Porterfield, Porterfield & Beaver American, Pound –
 Student Vicar Dan Moschea
 Eden, Munising – Student Vicar Elaine Robbins
 Faith, Sault Ste. Marie - Rev. Elise Hynek
 Calvary, Rapid River - Student Vicar Robert Lake

Exploring Partnerships

Bethany & Faith, Ishpeming - Rev. J. Mills

Engaged in Transitional Process

Emanuel, Skandia & Bethany, Negaunee –
 Rev. Lloyd Luedeman
 Messiah, Marquette - Rev. Steve Solberg
 Gloria Dei, Hancock
 Good Shepherd, Houghton

In Discernment

Mission United, Pelkie - Rev. Soren Schmit
 Grace, South Range - Rev. Bonny Kinnunen
 Northern Lights Parish - Rev. Bill Jacobson
 Zion, Allenville & Bethel, Cedarville -
 Rev. Paul Raappana

*“In the just reward of labor, God’s will is done.
 In the help we give our neighbor, God’s will is done.
 In our worldwide task of caring for the hungry and despairing,
 in the harvests we are sharing, God’s will is done.” (ELW 3679)*

As we share the time, talents and treasures that we are blessed with within our congregations, we are in turn sharing with the Synod and the world. Thank you for your partnership! Your generous gifts bring God’s hope to a weary world. Moving into the final quarter of the year, may we work together to keep the mission of Christ vital as we strive to ensure that God’s will is done.

- Betsy Koski, Bookkeeper

As of 7/31/26	2025	2026	\$ Change	% Change
Annual Pledged Amount	695,080	709,773	+14,693	+2.1%
Amount Received Year to Date	393,204	377,088	-16,116	-4.1%



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God's work. Our hands.

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Prayfaithfully

NGLS Daily Devotions Schedule September - October 2026

August 31 - September 6	Pastor Sarah Sleeter
September 7 - 13	
September 14 - 20	Pastor Sharolyn Swenson
September 21 - 27	Hayley Smith
September 28 - October 4	
October 5 - 11	Susan Anderson
October 12 - 18	Phoebe Pettingell
October 19 - 25	
October 26 - November 1	Pastor Christine Olson