



Northern Great Lakes Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Marquette, Michigan
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E-Notes for December 14, 2022



The Season of Advent

A Christmas Message from Bishop Finegan

Have you ever gone camping? I remember as a kid, all five of us children and my parents would pack into a dank smelling canvas tent...for fun. Whenever we reached our campsite, we were sent to go play while my father struggled with poles, stakes, and rope lines to erect the cumbersome thing. I suspect now we were sent away so we wouldn't hear any expletives my father might utter while he grappled to connect pole to pole and canvas to structure. As we piled in with sleeping bags and pillows, we were always sternly warned not to touch the sides of the tent as this would beckon outside moisture to seep through the fabric. Just a slight touch, and the membrane of canvas that protected us from rain and dew would become permeable, porous even, creating a conduit from the outside wet to the inside walls of our smelly but cozy little camping nest.

It seems to me that the season of Christmas does the same kind of thing to our emotions. It doesn't take much and our eyes well with tears. I haven't been able to sing all four verses of "Silent Night" without crying for years. What is that about? Is it the closeness of the divine? The emotions of memory? And this year feels all the more...well...emotional. Is it because we feel the hopes and fears more acutely these days? Is it an adrenaline let down from being in pandemic crisis for the last two+ years? Is it that we are so anxious to "get back to normal" that expectations run high? Maybe we feel an urgent need to reach an ideal Christmas that has been denied us? Maybe it is all of that, and more.

At Christmas, I more deeply feel the absence of loved ones no longer with us, I miss the way things used to be (cast in rosy glow, not stark reality), I grieve the suffering of the world now. This emotion, this threat of moisture, it gathers like dew drops behind my eyes, within my heart, and it only takes a touch, a thought, a memory, a hope, a disappointment, and it comes through.

I do believe it is for this pain, for all the grief and loss in our lives, for all our hopes and fears, that Jesus is given. Whatever it is that divides heaven from earth and the divine from humanity, God finds a way through. Jesus is born, seeping into the world through Mary's yes. Whatever has divided us from God is now permeable, porous even. God's love flows into the world through Jesus, and all around his birth we see the whole range of human emotion – fear of angels, joy of shepherds, and Mary pondering it all in heart.

I invite you to ponder with me on these things. We celebrate the gift of Jesus, and that might mean that we cry a little...or a lot. A few tears only means that Christmas matters to you, that this touch of the divine on your life releases something that has been held too tightly and needs to be let go.

May you feel the presence of God in your Christmas celebrations this year and always.

Yours in Christ,
Bishop Katherine Finegan



Please join us!

Christmas Worship

The Northern Great Lakes Synod will broadcast a special Christmas worship on WLUC TV6 and FOX U.P. December 24 & 25. Gather your household and enjoy this special event!

CHRISTMAS EVE
WLUC TV6 AT 2 PM ET

CHRISTMAS DAY
FOX U.P. AT 11 AM ET
WLUC TV6 AT 5 PM ET

The service will be available on the WLUC TV6 and NGLS websites as well as the NGLS YouTube channel throughout the Christmas season.

[News & Information](#)



Bishop Finegan's Annual Report Letter

Check out [Bishop Finegan's reflections and thoughts for 2023!](#) The letter is available in 2 different formats [here on our website](#) for inclusion in your congregation's annual report.



Annual Report Cover Now Available

The 2022 ELCA Annual Report cover is ready and available for use [here on the ELCA website](#). You may recognize some familiar faces - the cover images are from our very own U.P. Wild gatherings!



Annual Meetings are Coming Up!

As congregations prepare for annual meetings, keep in mind the following:

- Electing/appointing voting members to Synod Assembly, **May 18-20, 2023** in Marquette, MI.
 - This in-person assembly includes a Bishop's election. Bishop Finegan is available to serve another term.
 - Registration will be online. Materials and information will be available beginning in March.
 - Plan to cover the expense of travel, registration, and lodging for your voting members.
 - The theme is "Love."



Important Dates and Information

As 2022 comes to a close and our fiscal year ends in January, please note two important dates and documents that need to be sent to the Synod Office:

January 10, 2023

Last day for checks to arrive in the Synod office so that 2022 benevolence gifts can be credited to 2022 giving.

February 10, 2023

Last day for checks to arrive in the Synod office so that January 2023 giving can be credited to the Synod fiscal year.

Please do NOT combine December/January or January/February giving on your benevolence form.

Congregation Statement of Intent

Please send to the Synod Office by **January 24, 2023**.

Congregation Annual Report

Please send to the Synod Office as soon as possible.



Trip to Tanzania in 2023

The NGLS is planning a visit to the Eastern and Coastal Diocese of Tanzania companion congregations and dental clinic. The trip will take place in July of 2023 and is open to pastors and lay people. To learn more about the purpose of the trip and to express interest in going, [please visit our website](#).



Sign-up Now to Join the Conversations and Enjoy the Fellowship

The Life of Martin Luther, Innovations in Stewardship, and Meeting Christ in Prayer are among the topics to be discussed this winter through the diverse schedule of our synod's Lifelong Formation program. Other studies include **A Spirituality of Death and Dying, Family Systems Thinking/Friedman's Fables, The Big Picture Bible Study, Biblical Hebrew II, and Beyond Policy: Empowering the Faith Community to Recognize and Respond to Child Abuse and Sexual Assault.**

For more information and to register, visit the [synod website](#). To receive e-mail announcements on the class schedule and to ask any questions contact Deacon Lori Ward at (615) 519-1969 or lori.ward@nclsynod.org.



Young Adults in Global Mission: Applications Now Open!

The ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission program invites ELCA young adults ages 21-29 into a transformative, year-long journey in international service. As they offer themselves in service, ELCA young adults are shaped by the witness of our global neighbors. They share in the journeys of companion churches and organizations in one of nine countries around the world. Applications for the 2023-2024 YAGM service year are open through February 1, 2023. Priority will be given to those who apply before January 15. [More information is available here](#) and visit the [YAGM website here](#).



An Advent Reflection from Daudi Msseemmaa, Regional Representative to East Africa

December in Tanzania is many things to the country's many cultures and faiths. Not all Tanzanians are Christian, but everyone enjoys the month of Advent celebrations. In town you'll see convoys of decorated cars passing on Thursdays (sendoffs), Saturdays (weddings) and Sundays (baptisms and confirmations), and sometimes stopping so people can take photos of the landscaped roundabouts and gardens.

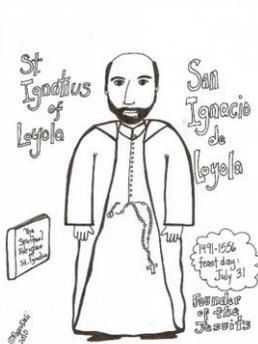
I remember my last Christmas in my father's serene, dusty home village in the Rift Valley, when about 25 youth were confirmed at Engaruka Juu Lutheran Church. After the service we went confirmation-party hopping, partaking in a plate of meat and pilau rice at each home. By evening we were stuffed. In a place where hunger is rife and meat is a luxury for many, this was a very satisfying feeling. [Read the full reflection on Facebook](#).

Upcoming Events



U.P. Wild

Check out upcoming U.P. Wild events like Nature Prayer Services and Evening Centering Prayer by visiting their [website](http://UPWild.org).



Meeting Christ in Prayer Clergy Group

In **January and February 2023**, we will offer an eight-week group prayer experience via Zoom for clergy. *Meeting Christ in Prayer* is modeled on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, with participants guided through daily prayer based on scripture. Full details are available [here](#) on our website.

Meetings will be facilitated by Pastor Terry Frankenstein who has received certification in spiritual direction from Franciscan University. Registration information and questions may be directed to Terry by phone, (906) 241-3311, or email, terry.frankenstein@gmail.com.



Winter Theological Conference for Active & Retired Clergy, Deacons & Licensed Lay Ministers

Registration deadline is Wednesday, January 4, 2023.

Join us in Escanaba **February 5-6, 2023** to discuss the basics of natural systems theory: how societal, family, and organizational stressors affect our emotional fields, and ways in which the theory's application and influence on ministry provide a new lens for response and relationship. Please [visit our website](#) for registration and details.



Faithful Innovations Cohort #5

Gain training in listening skills and discerning God's movement in your congregation and neighborhood. There are 17 congregations that have participated in the first 4 cohort groups. The next cohort is Zoom only starting in **January 2023 and going through May 2023**. [Visit our website for more details.](#)



Fall Theological Conference

Active and Retired Clergy, Deacons and Licensed Lay Ministers are invited to join us for a Fall Theological Conference **September 17-19, 2023**. More information will be available in the coming months, but be sure to save the dates!

NGLS Youth Ministry Updates



NGLS Sends Delegates to ELCA Youth Leadership Summit

The ELCA Youth Leadership Summit is an annual gathering for high school students who have been identified as leaders in their synod to grow in their faith and develop peer ministry skills. A few weeks ago, Johanna Dellenbach of Immanuel, Rhinelander and Jacob Ulvila of Immanuel, Negaunee, along with youth leader, Stacy McEachern of Immanuel, Negaunee attended the 2022 ELCA Youth Leadership Summit in Ashland, Nebraska for 4 days of workshops, speakers, music, worship, and time to connect with other leaders within the ELCA. The 2022 theme of "Beloved! No Matter What" encouraged attendees to share God's love and grace through daily connections and living out the Samaritan story.

After returning from the conference, NGLS delegate, Johanna Dellenbach said, ***"I think it was a huge learning experience. I learned a lot about my faith and I also learned how so many things are different in different areas of the United States — especially with schools. It was an amazing experience and I just want more youth and adults to know***

more about the summit and the opportunities it can give you.” [Read more about Johanna’s experience here.](#)

If you would like to nominate a high school youth to attend next year’s ELCA Youth Leadership Summit, please email Stefanie Ehle at youthcoordinator@nglsynod.org with their name and a brief explanation of what makes them an emerging leader in our synod.



Tri-Synodical Youth Gathering Returning in July

The Northern Great Lakes Synod is once again partnering with the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin and the LaCrosse Area Synod of Wisconsin to plan a Tri-Synodical Youth Gathering at UW-River Falls this summer. Encourage high schoolers you know to join us **July 24-27** for creative ministry, challenging conversation, inspiring guest speakers, service learning, and uplifting worship. Stay tuned for additional details and registration information!



Save the Date Youth in Advocacy Retreat April 14-16, 2023

High School Youth from across the U.P. and Wisconsin are invited to gather in Madison for a weekend in April to learn what it means to be an advocate and how advocacy relates to our Lutheran faith. Contact Stefanie (youthcoordinator@nglsynod.org) if you would like to be part of the NGLS delegation. Additional information and details about how to register will be coming soon!

Be sure to connect with NGLS Youth Ministry online to receive the latest updates!



[Facebook](#)



[Instagram](#)



[Website](#)

Keeping in Prayer

[December Prayfaithfully Calendar](#)

Prayfaithfully Devotions

Check out upcoming [Prayfaithfully](#) on our Synod website!

December 11-17 by Pastor Terry Frankenstein

December 18-24 by Pastor Nick Johannes

December 25-31 by Susan Anderson

If you are interested in writing a week's worth of devotions, contact Betsy Koski at (906) 228-2300 or bakoski@nglsynod.org.

Transitions

- We celebrate the partnership of **Pastor Diane Srutowski, Bethany in Perkins and Trinity in Stonington** as Pastor Diane retires from active ministry. Her last Sunday will be New Year's Day, January 1, 2023. God bless their goodbyes and the new rhythms of life that Pastor Diane will enjoy.
- Thanks to **Pastor Terry Frankenstein** for serving as Administrative Interim to **Bethany, Perkins and Trinity, Stonington**.

Lifting Up to God in Prayer

- For all those experiencing mental or physical pain. May God grant comfort and relief.
- For all those who are unhoused, fleeing violence, looking for safety, waiting for welcome.
- For generosity, that as we share what has first been given to us, our wealth will further the purposes of God.
- For our NGLS Pastors, Deacons and Licensed Lay Ministers, and our NGLS congregations in transition.

May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ Child.

Quick Links

-  [Check out resources on the NGLS website](#)
-  [COVID-19 Event Risk Assessment Tool](#)
-  [Stewardship Toolkit](#)
-  [UP Wild Events](#)



E-Notes is a twice monthly electronic newsletter from the Northern Great Lakes Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

+ Bishop Katherine Finegan

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E-Notes from Northern Great Lakes Synod

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