

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

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Dear Northern Great Lakes Synod,
By the time you read this, I will have completed leading a book study through our Lifelong Faith Formation classes on “Embracing God’s Future without Forgetting the Past: A Conversation about Loss, Grief, and Nostalgia in Congregational Life.” It is a sobering read, full of truth about what many of our congregations are facing and how grief is being experienced.

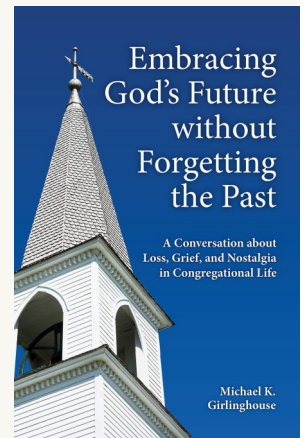
The author, former bishop Michael Girlinghouse, advises that this grief must be processed before a congregation can move forward, and he offers some ideas, workshops, and methods of how to address this grief, not just as individuals, but as communities of faith that are collectively experiencing loss and change.

I agree with him that naming the points of pain regarding loss is important. And I believe that we are only just beginning to understand what those points of pain are, as our congregations are at different places in the arc of their lifecycles and facing these challenges at different times.

I did suspect when I accepted this call to a second term that the church was going to change more in the next six years than it had in the past twenty. Changes in the last 20 - 30 years have sort of snuck up on us. But the challenges we thought of then as “some day maybe” have now arrived.

With shifts in culture, with the acceleration of institutional decline pushed by Covid, with anxiety increasing, there is gathering momentum to do more to equip lay leaders for the work of ministry.

Of course, the work of ministry has always rested on lay leaders who more often than not are working in



partnership with a pastoral leader or keeping ministry in motion during pastoral transition. However, increasingly fewer people are entering seminary. And while it is true that fewer congregations can afford a full-time pastor, even the ones that have the financial capacity must compete with each other for a shrinking pool of pastoral leaders.

Yet, our synod is a great place to serve in ministry! I have observed a respect for the pastoral office and a deep appreciation for that partnership. I see people who love their church and the ministry accomplished through their combined efforts, and all of it in communities that have a sense of what it means to be neighbor. There is pride in self-sufficiency: the garden, the homemade, the do-it-yourself kind of attitude. Add to that the beauty of God's creation and we want to ask who wouldn't want to live here?

Unfortunately, as I seek to recruit pastoral leaders, we are an unknown entity. Much as I try to educate, it is the exceptional pastoral candidate that is willing to move to the northern top of the U.S. possibly away from family.

So...what is the answer to this current challenge?

I appeal to your own sense of pride in the homemade. Look around your congregations. Who has gifts for ministry? Who is already leading? We have several Lay Schools (with NGLS scholarship funds available) ready to equip people for the work they are already doing. Between the Lay school offered at Luther Seminary to the Lay schools in our neighboring synods of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin and the East Central Synod of Wisconsin, the tools needed to equip lay leaders for ministry are within reach. I suggest we raise up our own leaders who can then discern if they have a call to ordained ministry (we have scholarship funds for seminary

too) or wish to be equipped, educated, and supported for a larger role as a lay leader.

I am grateful to our currently serving Licensed Lay Ministers, and to our lay leaders and congregation members who are such an asset and blessing to the work of Christ. As I continue to recruit pastoral leaders TO our synod, I ask you to do the same IN our synod. Whatever the future brings, I know that the work of Christ will continue.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Katherine Finegan



For more information about Lay School opportunities go to:

<https://faithlead.org/>

<https://nwswi.org/lay-school-of-ministry>

<https://www.ecsw.org/lay-school>

For more information about seminary programs:

<https://www.wartburgseminary.edu/>

<https://www.luthersem.edu/>

For information about Candidacy and the path to ordination:

<https://nglsynod.org/candidacy/>

Native American Sunday A Liturgy for Worship

Northern Great Lakes Synod
Marquette, Michigan



Now on NGLSYOND.ORG is a resource put together by our synod's Walking With Our Indigenous Neighbors Task Force to better equip your congregation to observe a Native American Sunday.

“Got Hope?”

Several years ago, a very wise and competent person said to me, “Hope is not a strategy.”

The context was not about church matters, but about a significant project involving lots of money and many, many action steps. Barriers to the goal were multitude, yet the vision of the project remained. The key people on the project were not wanting or willing to give up.

I think really what he meant to say was that “wishful thinking” or “magical thinking” is not a strategy to help us move forward to achieve the outcome we want.

The Bible says a lot about HOPE.



Probably the most famous passage about HOPE is from Jeremiah 29:11:

“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” (NRSV)

Romans 8:25 is helpful:

“But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” (NRSV)

Pastor Eugene Peterson, author of The Message version of the Bible, wrote the following in his book, [A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society](#):

Hope defined Hoping does not mean doing nothing. It means going about our assigned tasks, confident that God will provide the meaning and the conclusions. It is not compelled to work away at keeping up appearances with a bogus spirituality. It is the opposite of desperate and panicky manipulations, of scurrying and worrying. And hoping is not dreaming. It is not spinning an illusion or fantasy to protect us from our boredom or our pain. It means a confident, alert expectation that God will do what he said he will do. It is imagination put in the harness of faith. It is a willingness to let God do it his way and in his time. It is the opposite of making plans that we demand that God put into effect, telling him both how and when to do it.

I really like what Peterson says about hope. There’s a lot of solid wisdom and perspective contained in those words above.

I’m glad we have many churches with HOPE in their name. Here in Marquette, we have Marquette Hope—a shared ministry of four Methodist ministries. I’ve never run across a church named, “No Hope Here”.

There are a lot of things and institutions that we have lost hope in. Most people have no hope that Congress can run efficiently. I still don’t want to give up hope in that matter because we need good leadership and decision making in Congress. I will try to stay informed. I will vote. Most importantly, I will pray for our nation’s leaders no matter my personal feelings about them.

I don’t have hope that I will get back to my weight at age 17. But, I’m still trying to lose some weight and exercise.

I don't have hope that I will become an astronaut. That was my dream as a young boy, but I will keep looking up at the stars and stand in amazement of it all.

I don't have hope that all our churches will see a grand influx of youth coming back to our churches, or all our adults engaging in bible study, or all our budget projections being perfectly met, or all of our pastors/LLMs and council leaders always agreeing with each other and never experiencing challenges and conflicts. But I have hope in the power of God to look at the "Dry Bones" of our lives and church institutions and declare to us, "You are my Beloved. I can still breathe my Spirit in you. I'm not going to abandon you even though you may have abandoned me."

I have hope not because I have a crystal ball for the future, but because I have seen and felt God and God's people come through many a storm in the past. I also read throughout the scriptures that God is a God of HOPE.

Without a sense of HOPE, we can lapse into nihilistic, chaotic, self-fulfilling doom and gloom. I don't want to live like that. I don't want to see the people and the world around me like that.

I will continue to cling to HOPE, not as a magical dream, but as my faith in a God who loves this world. And I sure HOPE that God will help me and you live out the vision of God's loving and just purposes for all. God give us HOPE!!

*Jim Duehring, Assistant to the Bishop
and Director for Evangelical Mission*



THANKSGIVING:

WHY ARE WE THANKFUL

Chuck Thomas, NGLS Vice President

From Psalm 136:1: *"O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever."*

These next two months, November and December are often referred to as the holiday season. In November there is Thanksgiving where families traditionally get together and celebrate generational thankfulness with a big meal and good company. There is also the ubiquitous "Black Friday" where folks become crazy consumers looking for the best deals to buy presents for Christmastime. What about December? In December there is the penultimate holiday, Christmas! But let's not forget the weeks of Advent leading up to the celebration of the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Advent is a time of preparation for the coming of Jesus, a lead-in for the Christmas celebration. The holidays are a time when we remember to be thankful.

What are you thankful for? While you ponder that, here are some reasons I think we should give thanks. First and foremost, we are thankful for a loving and forgiving God. We give thanks for the marvelous creation that God has given us to exist in and to steward for those that follow us. We especially give thanks for the forests, streams, lakes, hills, and wildlife God has provided for our enjoyment in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and in Northern Wisconsin. I certainly take advantage of this gift and get out and enjoy the wonderful outdoors as often as I can.

We are thankful for our families and friends. And we are thankful for our community of faith. Having people in our lives that we can rely on in times of need, stress, sadness, or joy is a blessing and cannot be taken for granted.

While we are considering why we are thankful, let's not forget about those suffering from conflicts around the globe, especially in Ukraine and in Israel and Palestine. Continue to keep those areas in your prayers and thank God for our life of freedom, a life without oppression or undue duress.

As the Psalmist writes, "we give thanks to God, for he is good, his steadfast love endures forever." God's love will always be the foundation we can rely on, through both the good times and the not so good times.

Embrace the Fire A Retreat for Clergy Women

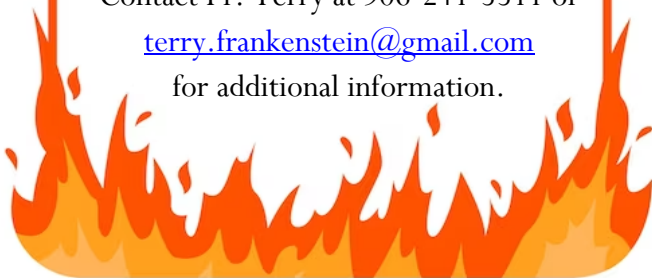
Join with other clergy women of the Northern Great Lakes Synod at a Fortune Lake Camp Retreat

Beginning Sunday Evening, January 7, 2024
Concluding Tuesday Afternoon, January 9, 2024

In the October 2023 issue of *Living Lutheran*, Rev. Angela Khabeb reminds us, “We serve the God who speaks from the midst of the fire. And it’s this fire that burns in our hearts and in our souls that empowers us to refuse to let this world corrupt us. This fire strengthens us when we grow weary in ministry. Not only does this fire act as a cleansing agent to help purify us, God speaks from this fire and gives clarity of thought – a spirit of discernment. This fire can embolden us to speak truth to power and work for justice. This fire can make us be doers of God’s word and not hearers only. This fire can equip us to take risks and move beyond comfort zones. This fire enables us to live into God’s promise: ‘Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint’ (Isaiah 40:31).”

Registration information will be available soon.

Contact Pr. Terry at 906-241-3311 or terry.frankenstein@gmail.com for additional information.



Synod Calendar

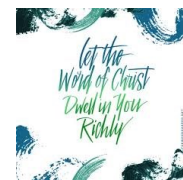


- 1—Synod Assembly Planning Committee via Zoom
- 2—Dwelling in the Word, 7:30 ET via Zoom
- 4—Faithful Innovations-Fortune Lake Camp
- 5— Installation of Pastor Melissa Salminen at Trinity, Stonington—3:00 ET
- 8—Walking with Indigenous Neighbors Co., 10:00am ET via Zoom
- 12—14 — First Call Theological Education
- 15—NGLS Staff Meeting, 10:00 ET



- 23—24 —Synod Office Closed
- 1—Bi Synodical Candidacy Co., Appleton
- 7—Dwelling in the Word, 7:30 ET via Zoom
- 25—Synod Office Closed
- 29—NGLS Staff Meeting, 10:00 ET

Dwelling
In the
Word



You are invited to join the whole Northern Great Lakes Synod in Dwelling in the Word. Please use the resource that has been sent to each congregation (also available on our website), at each meeting of the congregation, in your home, at your Council meetings. You are also welcome to join a Zoom Dwelling in the Word the first Thursday evening of every month at 7:30 pm ET/6:30 pm CT. Let us Dwell in the Word together!



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

Answer the Call/Endowment

Salem, Ironwood
Zion, Ironwood
Immanuel, Rhinelander
Pastor Elisabeth & Wes Daniels
Immanuel, Negaunee

ELCA Disaster Funds/Lutheran World Relief

Grace, Pembine
Mission United, Pelkie
Zion, Manistique
Salem, Ironwood
Immanuel, Negaunee
Zion, Marinette
First, Ewen
Salem, Ironwood
St. James, Rudyard

Equipping the Saints

Pastor Elisabeth & Wes Daniels

Leadership Support

Our Saviors Lutheran Churchwomen, Marinette

Lutheran Campus Ministry

Good Shepherd, Peshtigo
Prince of Peace, Marquette

NGLS Mission Outreach

Immanuel, Escanaba

Lutheran Social Services

Immanuel, Rhinelander

Clergy Debt Relief Fund

James Koldos
Trinity, Ishpeming

Synod Ministry Fund

Pastor Grant & Sherry
Van Lishout

Companion Synod Projects

St. Paul, Ironwood
St. Paul, Mass City



Transitions

May God be with the loved ones of Pastor Ingmar Levin. Pastor Levin passed away peacefully Saturday, Aug. 19. His funeral was held as Zion, Manistique on Aug. 24. May God bless his memory in our midst.

God's blessings to Melissa Salminen who will be ordained at Trinity, Ishpeming on October 22.

Pastor Melissa Salminen will be installed as Pastor of Trinity, Stonington and Bethany Lutheran Perkins on Nov. 5th—3:00 pm at Trinity.

Clergy and LLM's are invited to vest and color of the day is red.

Important Reminders

As 2023 comes to a close, please note these important dates and documents that need to be sent to the Synod Office:

- **Congregation Statements of Intent** for 2024 (coming your way soon!)
- **Congregation Annual Reports**
- **Calendar Year Closing Date** – January 11, 2024 – Last day for checks to arrive in the Synod office so that 2023 mission support (benevolence) gifts can be credited to 2023 giving.

Congregation Treasurers please be sure to **note the month** on your remittance form so that mission support giving can be properly credited.

Pastoral Vacancies and Interims

All Saints, Wakefield & Sharon, Bessemer—Rev. Lauri Maki

First, Iron River—Vicar Lance Crevier, Student

Bethany, Ishpeming—Rev. Dave Echelbarger and Rev. Christine
Thomas Echelbarger

Faith & Trinity, Ishpeming—Rev. Thomas Skrenes

Zion, Marinette—Rev. Doug Schoen

Immanuel, Rhineland—Rev. John Kuziej

Porterfield, Porterfield & Beaver American, Pound—Rev. Ken Michaelis

United, L'Anse—Rev. Julie Belew

Ascension, Minocqua—Rev. Philip Johnson

Pioneer Lake, Conover—Rev. Peggy Rose

Emmanuel, Menominee—Rev. Christine Olson

Grace, South Range—Rev. Bucky Beach

Northern Lights Parish—Rev. Bill Jacobson

“Have you thanked the Lord? Have you praised God’s name?

Have you thanked the Lord today?” (ELW #829)

Our hearts are filled with gratitude for the faithful people of the Northern Great Lakes Synod! Mission support gifts to date have increased by almost 2% over 2022. As the year comes to a close, we encourage all our congregations to make every effort to meet or exceed their pledged mission support.

Your generous and consistent support allows Christ’s ministry to thrive both at home and in the wider Church. Today and every day we offer our thanks and praise to God for all God’s wonderful gifts.

- Betsy Koski, Bookkeeper

As of 9/30	2022	2023	\$ Change	% Change
Pledged Amount	779,995	759,513	-20,482	-2.6%
Amount Received	519,628	528,871	+9,243	+1.8%



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Prayfaithfully

NGLS Daily Devotions Schedule November & December 2023

October 9—November 4	Pauline Kiltinen
November 5—11	Sarah Sleeter
November 12—18	Pastor Nicole Hanson-Lynn
November 19—25	Mary Lou Blomquist
November 26—December 2	Pastor Mike & Denise Laakko
December 3—9	Pastor Terry Frankenstein
December 10—16	Pastor Kelly Ylitalo
December 17—23	Virginia Paulson
December 24—30	