

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

Volume 36, Issue 1 | January—February 2024



*I PLANTED
Apollos WATERED
But God gave the GROWTH.
~I Corinthians 3:6*

Dear People of the Northern Great Lakes
Synod,

Happy New Year!

Welcome to the Year of our Lord 2024!

In this new year, I announce our Synod
themes for the next three years,

Seed Sowers:

2024: I Planted

2025: Apollos Watered

2026: God gave the Growth



In This Issue

Bishop Finegan	1-2
Assistant to the Bishop	3-4
Vice President	5
Synod Calendar	5
Thank You & Transitions	6
Vacancies/Synod Finance	7
Prayfaithfully Devotions	8



Northern Great Lakes Synod
1029 N. Third St., Ste. A
Marquette, MI 49855

Office: (906) 228-2300 | Fax: (906) 228-2527
www.nglsynod.org

Bishop Finegan | kfinegan@nglsynod.org
Pastor Duehring | jduehring@nglsynod.org
NGLS | ngls@nglsynod.org

Last year at Synod Assembly, Seed Sowers was the theme for our inaugural Seed Sowers Luncheon that thanked people who had made a planned gift (meaning that they remembered NGLS/ELCA in their will) or were considering doing so. In essence, they were a “Seed Sower,” planting seeds for future ministry, seeds that they knew they would not see grow and bear fruit.

However, being a Seed Sower is not limited to those who have planned a legacy gift. After all, are we not all Seed Sowers? Do we not, all of us, plant seeds for future ministry, even as we enjoy the growth from seeds that were planted generations ago?

We plant seeds as we try and pass the faith on to the next generation. We want our children and grandchildren to be blessed by the community of faith in the same way we have been. We stretch our financial capacity to ensure sustainability for years to come. We build a reputation in our communities that we care, and we’re ready to serve those in need. We raise up leaders for future generations by nurturing their gifts for ministry. We are every day, Seed Sowers.

At this time of great transformation and change in the Church, it is good to be reminded that the Church is about more than what we experience in the here and now. And there are many ways that a congregation can plant seeds for future ministry.

I think of the faithfulness of St. James in Marinette, WI. Founded in 1918,

this community of faith has been hard at work for the sake of Christ for 106 years. This past autumn, the people of St. James discerned that their last worship service will be Sunday April 14, 2024.

While this decision is difficult for all who love St. James, it also witnesses to their faithfulness. As people who believe in a God who brings new life from death and light from darkness, the work of St. James has not been in vain. This community of faith has accomplished that for which it was created and has completed that for which it was purposed. God will bring new life and growth from the seeds that St. James will plant. In the weeks to come, the people of St. James will consider how best to use their assets to support the work of Christ through ministry partners. Their legacy will provide resources to further the purposes of God long after the doors of St. James are closed.



As we focus on Planting this year, we celebrate the history of each and every one of our Northern Great Lakes congregations and the foresight of founding mothers and fathers who by the grace of God, planted our churches. We give thanks for adults who noticed gifts for ministry and planted the idea of future pastoral leadership in young hearts and minds. And we look to see what seeds we can plant today that will bear fruit in a future church, that for now, we can only imagine.

*The church of Christ,
in every age beset by change, but Spirit led,
must claim and test its heritage
and keep on rising from the dead.*

~ELW #729, vs. 1

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Katherine Finegan



Renewing Relationships and Making New Friends in Tanzania

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

I was privileged to accompany Dr. Danielle Anderson, Rev. Brahm Semmler Smith, and Stephanie Smith (no relationship to Pastor Brahm) on a visit to our companion diocese in Tanzania—the Eastern and Coastal Diocese. This past October, we spent about two weeks in Tanzania renewing relationships and making new friends. We saw many of the ministries of the Eastern and Coastal Diocese.

The Northern Great Lakes Synod has an over 30-year companionship relationship with the Eastern and Coastal Diocese which is part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. Many people from our synod have traveled to Tanzania in various capacities—work crews, teacher exchanges, church companionship. The ELCT is now larger than the ELCA in membership. The church is growing in Tanzania, but is not without its own challenges. We have much to learn from each other.

Hospitality is probably the first word that comes to mind when thinking of our experience in Tanzania. We were well-cared for and were welcomed to witness their lives. We were welcomed in the name of Christ. We experienced great music and worship and passion for their faith and tangible efforts to serve others in Jesus' name.

I offer in this article some highlights along with pictures of this experience in Tanzania. If your congregation already has a companion congregation in Tanzania, I encourage you to keep that relationship up through regular correspondence. And, you may even choose to visit Tanzania or host visitors from Tanzania! If you don't have a companion congregation in Tanzania, please contact me in the synod office to learn more about the possibilities!

Kisarawe Lutheran Jr. Seminary—A Boarding School for Teenagers

Headmaster Maxon is a young man who is passionate to make improvements both in the infrastructure and the quality of



instruction. They strive to offer physical, mental and spiritual growth for all students. Mr Maxon gave us a strategic plan for improvements. He showed me pictures of how over the years our synod has supported this place through work crews. The library is named after former Bishop Skogman, one dormitory named after former Bishop Skrenes, and one dormitory named after Rev. Bob Langseth. We also were blessed to witness and participate in graduation ceremonies. The pride of the students and families was on display!

A picture of Pastor Bob Langseth and his wife Deloris stands in the library which he and many others from the Northern Great Lakes Synod help build. The headmaster of Kisarawe offered condolences as Pastor Langseth’s funeral was ironically the same day as my visit. Pastor Langseth was affectionately known by many in Tanzania as “Pastor Tembo” (Swahili word for “elephant”—a nod to his booming voice and playful portrayal of an elephant).



A Maasai Worship Service



The Maasai are the traditional hunters and herders of Tanzania. Some of them are moving from rural areas to the capital city of Dar es Salaam. The Lutheran church is helping with literacy training. We celebrated the “graduates” of that training! We experienced traditional Maasai dancing and music during the worship service!

A Growing Church

I was honored to preach and be with Bishop Malasusa and the people of Gide parish. The 4 hour celebration included many choirs, brass band, prayers and offerings. Even a goat was presented to Bishop Malasusa. God bless the Gide parish and Pastor Elisabeth as they complete their roof!!



Interfaith and Peace Efforts on Zanzibar



The Lutheran Church is small in numbers on the island of Zanzibar, but it’s Upendo House and Inter-faith peace efforts include a vocational training school for girls to learn sewing and business skills. Most of the students are Muslim.

Mtoni Health Dispensary, Maternity and Dental Clinic

The Eastern and Coastal Diocese supports medical facilities like that at Mtoni. This health dispensary provides basic medical care. There is also a new maternity ward. The dental clinic welcomed a new modern dental chair, and there are hopes for a sustainable model of dental care for people who often don’t have a chance to receive dental care.



Mkuza Girls School



Mkuza is a boarding school for girls sponsored by the Eastern and Coastal Diocese with a current enrollment of about 200. Plans are to expand to 400. The Women of the Northern Great Lakes Synod have a long history of supporting Mkuza. The headmistress, Mercy Nyka, gave us a tour and thanked us for our support.



Mlandizi Vocational Center for Adults

The diocese has built a vocational training center for adults with special needs. Carolina Shedafa showed us this amazing facility that should open in January. Adults will be housed here and learn a skill that matches their abilities and offers them a sense of dignity. Endowment Funds from the Skrenes Ministry Fund have helped this effort.

Bishop Alex Malasusa is a longtime friend of the Northern Great Lakes Synod. Bishop Malasusa was elected as bishop of the whole Lutheran Church in Tanzania.



May God bless Bishop Malasusa and all our friends in the Eastern and Coastal Diocese of Tanzania!

Bwana Asifiwe! Praise the Lord!

2023 Youth Leadership Summit in Chicago

By: Mylee Tusa

Over the summer, I was asked by Pastor Kelly Ylitalo if I would be willing to be a nominee to go to the Youth Leadership Summit in Chicago. I said that I would like to go, and it would be fun. I was one of a few nominees.

One day, I got an email from Stefanie Ehle saying that I was voted to go on the trip. I was so excited to go on the trip. So, on Thursday, November 2, Stefanie, Josh, and I drove down to Chicago, Illinois.

When we got to the hotel, we settled in and met our roommates. Then we got shuttled over to the ELCA building. We had an opening worship service and we also got to know each other in small groups. When we got back to the hotel, we had devotions with our family groups.

On Friday, when we got to the ELCA building, we had a main session with the whole group of people. We sang songs and learned about all the different advocacy workshops that we could go to. All the advocacy workshops were interesting, and they had a lot of

workshops we could go to.

After the advocacy workshops, we went back into mass gathering and heard a faith formation story. When the mass gathering was done, we went with our small groups and talked about anything and everything; we talked about our questions and our feelings about different things. After small groups, we played glow in the dark hide and seek, which was extremely fun and chaotic. When the night was over, we went back to the hotel for devotions.

On Saturday, we all got to wear our shirts for the group picture that we were going to take later that day. In the morning, we had another main session and another block of advocacy workshops. After lunch, we had another main session and heard another faith formation story. Then we had to get ready for the talent show with our small groups. My group did a song about your neighbor not wearing any socks. All the other groups had funny acts. After the talent show was done, we heard another faith formation story.

When dinner was over, we had candle time. During candle time, we did different activities to learn more about worship and our faith. We also made affirmations for each other. After candle time, we went downstairs and had a dance. The dance was so much fun, and we all were so tired when it was over.

Sunday morning, we all had to pack up to go home. When we got to the ELCA building, we had closing worship and said goodbye to everyone. I was sad to leave all my roommates, who I grew to love over the weekend. I had an amazing weekend, and I would do it all again if I had the chance. I made so many new friends and met so many new people. It was an unforgettable experience, and I am so grateful that I got to go.

I would like to thank Pastor Kelly for nominating me to go on the trip, Stefanie for being the adult leader, the Northern Great Lakes Synod, and the ELCA for putting on this whole event.



CARING for CREATION

By: Chuck Thomas, NGLS Vice President

The land region of the Northern Great Lakes Synod is plentiful in trees, streams, lakes, wildlife, and gorgeous scenery; all providing countless opportunities for outdoor recreation and enjoyment. This wondrous gift from God needs our care. Indeed, it seems that today it is critical that we embrace the challenge to protect and restore God's creation. A recent response to this challenge is a small step taken by Milwaukee County, Wisconsin. This past October, they passed a "Rights of Nature" resolution supporting the movement to protect nature.

Protecting creation is foundational to our existence. It states in Genesis 2:15 (NIV): *"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it."* The study note in my NIV study bible says by this action man has been charged to responsibly govern the earth under God's sovereignty. So how does Genesis 2:15 apply to us as Christians today?

There is an ELCA advocacy study guide titled "Why Lutherans Care for Creation" that speaks directly to the question posed above. I encourage everyone to read the study guide and learn about key aspects of Lutheran theology and practice regarding "creation-justice."

As you read, you will explore the concepts of God the Creator, how humans fit in God's creation, and how worship, sacraments, justification, and vocation all tie together with God's creation. The study guide also explores how the Church is caring for creation through our various justice advocacy and worldwide ministry endeavors. The guide closes with a challenge for all of us to renew and re-form our church to embrace "the care and redemption of all that God has made."

As we begin the new year, 2024, let's think about the wonders of God's creation and all the enjoyment it provides.



Synod Calendar

January

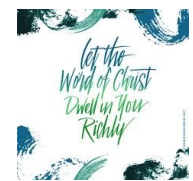
- 3—Synod Staff Meeting 10 a.m. CT
- 4—Dwelling in the Word via Zoom
7:30 a.m. CT
- 7-9—Women's Clergy Gathering
- 11—Synod Assembly Planning Meeting via Zoom
10 a.m. CT
- 12—13 Synod Council via Zoom
- 16—Synod Staff Meeting 10 a.m. CT

FEBRUARY



- 1—Dwelling in the Word via Zoom 7:30 a.m. CT
- 6—Finance Committee Meeting at 11 a.m. CT
- 8—Synod Staff Meeting 10 a.m. CT
- 13—Volunteer Lunch
- 22—Synod Staff Meeting 10 a.m. CT

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!

Zoom Link available on the Northern Great Lakes Synod Facebook page.



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

Answer the Call/Endowment

St. Paul, Ironwood

ELCA Disaster Funds/Lutheran World Relief

Immanuel, Negaunee
Emanuel, Skandia
Grace, Pembine
Zion, Manistique
Prince of Peace, Marquette
Good Shepard, Peshtigo
First Lutheran, Ewen
St. James, Rudyard

Equipping the Saints

Pastor Elisabeth
& Wes Daniels

Lutheran Campus Ministry

Good Shepherd, Peshtigo
Prince of Peace, Marquette

NGLS Mission Outreach

Larry G Pagel

Synod Ministry Fund

Bishop Katherine Finegan
Rev. Jim Duehring
Stefanie Ehle
Lori Ward
Pastor Grant & Sherry
Van Lishout
Rev. David Van Kley
Wendy Hanson
Ruth Warmanen
Betsy Koski

Companion Synod Projects

Rev. Thomas A. Skrenes
Larry G Pagel
David and Mary Blomquist
Jo Skogman

Website

Larry G Pagel

Lifelong Faith Formation

Larry G Pagel

Clergy Debt Relief

Rev. John Ansell



Transitions

Our condolences to loved ones of Pastor Bob Langseth. Pastor Bob joined the Saints Triumphant on Tuesday October 17. His funeral was held at Faith Lutheran, Calumet on October 21. May God bless his memory in our midst.

May God be with the loved ones of Pastor Jennie Johnson Wrege. Pastor Jennie passed away peacefully Saturday, Nov. 1. Her funeral was held at Zion, Woodville, WI on Nov. 7th. Peace to her memory

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.**
- **Congregation Annual Reports**

Congregation Treasurers please be sure to **note the month** on your remittance form so that mission support giving can be properly credited. Please **DO NOT** combine December/January or January/February giving!

Remember to update your Pastor's and lay employee compensation with Portico!

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

We offer our deepest thanks for the generosity shown in 2023 by the people of the Northern Great Lakes Synod for their support of Synod and Churchwide ministries. With one month remaining in the year, giving is slightly below last year. We encourage everyone to prioritize their pledge to Synod Mission Support, knowing that it's not a bill to be paid but an opportunity to be Christ's light in a world that very much needs to know the Prince of Peace.

- Betsy Koski, Bookkeeper

- **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.
- **Fiscal Year Closing Date**—February 12, 2024—Last day for checks to arrive in the Synod Office so that January 2024 giving can be credited to the Synod fiscal year.

As of 11/30	2022	2023	\$ Change	% Change
Pledged Amount	779,995	759,513	-20,482	-2.6%
Amount Received	654,195	653,081	-1,114	-.1%



Northern Great Lakes Synod

1029 N. Third Street, Suite A
Marquette, MI 49855

Phone: (906) 228-2300
Fax: (906) 228-2527
Email: ngls@nglsynod.org

Synod Website:
www.nglsynod.org

Find us on Facebook & YouTube



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Marquette, MI 49855
Permit No. 22

Mail Label

Prayfaithfully

NGLS Daily Devotions Schedule January & February 2024

December 27—January 7	Pastor John Kuziej
January 8—January 14	Pastor Lee Goodwin
January 15—January 21	Pastor Keith Kolstad
January 22—January 28	Melzee Jacobson
January 29—February 4	Pastor Lily Brondyke
February 5—February 11	Pastor Diane Srutowski
February 12—February 18	Ken Raisanen
February 19—February 25	Pastor Tom Otis
February 26—March 3	Pastor Sarah Semmler Smith