

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

Volume 36, Issue 2 | March—April 2024



*⁶I planted,
Apollos watered,
but God gave the growth.
⁷So neither the one who plants
nor the one who waters is anything,
but only God who gives the growth.
⁸The one who plants and the one who
waters have a common purpose,
⁹For we are God's servants,
working together;...*

~I Corinthians 3: 6-9

Dear People of the Northern Great Lakes Synod,

At the risk of getting too personal, I share with you that my mother joined the Saints Triumphant on February 11. As the deadline for this article is February 12, I cannot help but approach this task with thoughts of my mother at the forefront.

In this year, as together we as a synod consider what it means to be a Seed Sower and what it means to plant, and as I make plans with my siblings to celebrate the life of my mother, I can think of no better example of one who planted seeds and one who witnessed the yield of seeds planted by others long ago.

My mother was born in India in July 1932, the daughter of missionaries. She, along with her four siblings, was brought up in the faith. She was taught the love of Jesus, the value of compassion, and the expectation of sharing the love of God in a way that makes a difference.

The seeds of faith planted in her bore fruit as she became a nurse, the wife of a seminary professor, the mother of five children, and a generous giver of time, talents, and treasure. She sang in choirs, kissed scraped knees, worked church funerals and became a matriarch of her community of faith. She was a parish nurse at Luther Seminary and her church library was named after her in honor of the hours invested in cataloging, arranging, and gathering literature.

I could go on. But of course, it is the rare mother that doesn't inspire the accolades of her children. My mother was no exception. But in this season of Seed Sowers, I am grateful for the seeds of faith, and the example of generosity, that my mother gave me and all who knew her.

She not only planted seeds but enjoyed the fruit of seeds planted by others. She witnessed the seeds planted by missionaries when years later, she returned to India to visit the church and seminary founded by my grandfather and others. She saw how many pastors, native to India, had graduated from that seminary and students that are attending.

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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

We give thanks for the churches that were planted and the people who came to know Jesus through their efforts.

And now? I invite you to consider what seeds of faith you are planting. Whether you are working to pass on the faith to the next generation, or enjoying the fruit of seeds planted long ago, I invite you to intentionally plant seeds for future faith, future ministry. This can happen in many ways:

- Volunteer
- Share your story of faith with a stranger, doubts and all
- Support a ministry effort with your financial gift.
- Share your story of faith with a loved one.
- Remember THE Church or Your church in your will.
- Work on your own discipleship. Take a class, go to church, invite a friend.

In this time of great change, I am grateful for the seeds of faith planted long ago, and the seeds of faith planted now which will bear fruit in the future. We are part of a great cycle of life, this shape of the Christian life that involves dying and rising, Good Friday and Easter, death and resurrection, planting and harvesting.

The spirit of my mother lives on in those who remember her, and the Spirit of the Living Christ lives as only the son of God can - to call, enlighten and sanctify those who gather and are sent in his name, to plant seeds that someone else will water, and someone else will harvest.

I give thanks for the blessing of my mother, and for all who have planted seeds of faith.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Katherine Finegan



“We’ve Been Here Before”

Rev. Jim Duchring,
Assistant to the Bishop and
Director for Evangelical Mission

“
WE HAVE
BEEN HERE
BEFORE ...”

While it’s certainly true that we are dealing with new realities in society and church—realities that didn’t exist a generation ago—there is value in recognizing that previous generations have dealt with similar challenges of changing times. Reading the book of Acts and the challenges and amazing fluidity of the early church, we can find strength and hope in truly understanding that God’s people have been here before—both through the good and the bad. The players may have changed, but the basic patterns of life and humanity are amazingly similar.

I believe that there is value in reflecting on the past to gain perspective for our present reality. There is a dangerous pride in thinking our lives are totally unique and new and have no connection to the past. It is dangerous to believe that those who have gone before us have nothing to teach us.

While I’m certainly not a scholarly historian, I do enjoy reading about the past. I find that the past can challenge me, inform me, and ultimately give me perspective and hope. It’s in this spirit of reflecting on the past, that I want to share some perspectives from past synod bishops of the Northern Great Lakes Synod. For this article, I’m sharing some perspectives from the first bishop of the Northern Great Lakes Synod, Harry Andersen (bishop 1987-1991). The ELCA and the Northern Great Lakes Synod officially began January 1, 1988.

In the December 30, 1988, edition of “Northern Lights-Notes and Quotes”, Bishop Andersen wrote the following:

Let us learn from our mistakes. Yes, and let us avoid as many mistakes as possible. But if fear of mistakes immobilizes us, if uncharted courses dismay us, then I say, let’s forge ahead. Run the risk of trying new approaches. Think new thoughts...



Dare new faith journeys. Take what God gives us and call it opportunity. Count it treasure for the journey. As His faith pilgrims, travel light. Leave baggage behind. Say “yes and thousand times yes” to His call to His mission.

I suspect that those of you who knew this man, can see and hear him in your minds speaking these words. Bishop Andersen’s words from 1988 are just as powerful and relevant today. I never had the privilege of meeting Bishop Andersen. Even only one year into the existence of the Northern Great Lakes Synod, Bishop Andersen quipped:

“We have the beginning of new traditions. Already I’ve heard someone say, ‘That isn’t the way we did it last year.’”

Even more important than recognizing that “we’ve been here before,” is proclaiming in faith, “God has been here before!” The ancient Hebrews would often build altars of stone to remember God’s special action at a particular time in history. “To remember” God’s faithfulness in the past is to be encouraged to trust God’s faithfulness for the present moment and for the future. Those who have gone before me, like Bishop Andersen, remind me that it is on Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.



SOCIAL MEDIA CONSIDERATIONS for CONGREGATIONS

By: Chuck Thomas, NGLS Vice President

Does your congregation use any of the common social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly called Twitter), YouTube, Snapchat, WhatsApp, or other platforms, to post messages and pictures, live-stream worship services, or disseminate information about upcoming events? If so, your congregation should have a strategy (policy) for social media communications and monitoring.

To help congregations utilize social media in a positive, beneficial, and safe manner, the ELCA has two resource documents: “Social Media Planning and Procedures” and “Social Media Platforms and Content.” The documents contain valuable information to help congregations develop a social media strategy. They can be downloaded from <https://www.elca.org/Resources/Congregational-Communications-Tools>.

Another good resource is a website from *Churchfluence*, <https://www.churchfluence.com/learn/your-church-social-media-strategy-for-2022>. They identify several key strategies for a successful Church Social Media presence. Three of their recommendations include: consistent posting, use of varying content, and proactive engagement.

Consistency in both content quality and posting frequency is key to a successful social media presence. It doesn’t matter how often you post but posting inconsistently may cause readers to become disengaged and stop looking for your messages. Also, there may be a diminishing rate of return if you are not consistent in the quality of posted content. Experts contend that maintaining good quality is more important than having more quantity.

If your congregation only uses social media to advertise the church and to provide notice of upcoming events, then you may be missing out on a great ministry opportunity. Consider the ministry possibilities if you engage in a strategy of rotating the content of your posts. One post may be about upcoming events, pictures, or comments about a celebration or special worship service. The next post may be a short scripture reading, devotion, or prayer. A third post may be a good news story about a person within your community or a story about a successful outreach endeavor. A fourth post may focus on youth activities or other groups within your church. Content rotation keeps people engaged and willing to come back and view your posts.

A third important strategy is to positively engage with commenters. Engaging shows that you care, you **are** listening, and you welcome community dialogue. Acknowledge every comment and initiate contact with people who like and comment on your posts. This is another way of showing that all are welcome in your church.



soulshop

Youth Leader Training Opportunity part of FLLC Jr./Sr. High Retreat April 20, 2024 * 9:00 a.m. – noon CT

Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp is hosting its annual Jr./Sr. High Youth Retreat April 19-20 for 7th-12th graders. In recent years, the NGLS and FLLC have collaborated to provide an adult component at this retreat to provide training opportunities and help youth leaders in our synod network and share resources. This spring, our adult time together will focus on suicide awareness and prevention for youth.

Adults from across the NGLS are invited to bring a carload of kids to the retreat and stay for the weekend, or just attend the Saturday morning workshop. SoulShop is a training designed for youth leaders, pastors, community members, parents, lay professionals, and volunteers who are interested in learning about how faith communities can address suicide. The workshop explores the broad topic of suicidal desperation, identifies specific topics related to youth suicide, and sends participants home with skills that help build a safer community. This training will take place **Saturday, April 20 from 9:00 a.m. – noon (Central Time) at Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp**, followed by lunch in the dining hall. There is **no fee** to attend this training thanks to a generous grant provided by the Northern Great Lakes Synod.

Adults who are not attending the retreat should **RSVP to Stefanie at youthcoordinator@nglsynod.org by Friday, April 12**. This will ensure that we have enough materials and lunch prepared. Additional details about registering yourself and/or youth for the entire retreat are at [Year-Round Retreats – Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp](#).



Grant Money Available for Youth Ministry Collaborative Events

The NGLS Youth Ministry Team invites you to find ways to collaborate with congregations to provide faith building programs and events for youth in our synod. Funds may be used for Conference-Wide Youth Events or other programs that meet the grant requirements.

Each Conference may apply for grants totaling up to \$500 per calendar year from an Equipping the Saints Endowment distribution. Proposals that meet the following criteria will be considered by the NGLS Youth Ministry Team.

Visit <https://nglsynod.org/youth/> to download proposal requirements.

Synod Assembly Registration Details

Registration deadlines and fees:

\$50 voting members registration by April 12

\$70 voting members late registration April 12—29

\$10 registered visitors registration by April 12

\$15 registered visitors late registration April 12—29

Visitors are welcome but must be registered in advance for an accurate lunch count at each host site.

Time of Synod Assembly:

Tech Check: 8am CT/ 9am ET – Voters and visitors arrive at host site.

8:30amCT/ 9:30am ET – Opening of the Assembly

Lunch at each host site

2:30pm CT/ 3:30pm ET – Closing of the Assembly

Your Synod Nominating Committee invites interested synod members to nominate themselves for the election of Churchwide Assembly Voting Members. **For the Churchwide Assembly voter nomination form:** please visit the NGLS home page at www.nglsynod.org

Host Site by conference:**Iron-Gogebic-Ontonagon Conference 1**

McMillan Township Offices building, 109 S. Cedar Street, Ewen, MI 49925

Copper Country Conference 2

Gloria Dei Lutheran in Hancock

Headwaters Conference 3

Ascension Lutheran Church in Minocqua

Four Rivers Conference 4

Bethany Lutheran Church in Norway

Menominee Valley Conference 5

TBD

Tri-County Conference 6

Immanuel Lutheran Church in Escanaba

Three Lakes Conference 7

Faith Lutheran Church in Sault Ste. Marie

Superior Central Conference 8

Messiah Lutheran Church in Marquette

Workshops:

- **Faithful Innovations:** Pr. Jim Duehring
- **NGLS Budget:** Synod Treasurer Rev. Terry Frankenstein
- **Equipping the Saints for Ministry:** Resources and more for lay leadership
- **Synod-wide Conference Hike:** Planting seeds for the future faith and butterflies
- **It's Greek to Me – the art of translating scripture:** Pr. Nicole Hanson Lynn
- **The Spirituality of Giving:** Pr. Mike Markwell

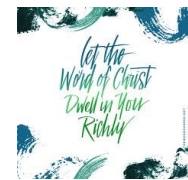
**Synod Calendar**

- 6—Synod Assembly Planning Meeting via Zoom
10 a.m. ET
- 7—Synod Staff Meeting 10:00 a.m.
- 7—Dwelling in the Word via Zoom 7:30 p.m. ET
- 12—Chrism Mass for Conf. 1&2 at Holy Trinity
Chassell 11:00 a.m.
- 17—Companion Synod Committee meeting
- 19—Chrism Mass for Conf. 3,4,5 at Bethlehem
Florence at 11:00 a.m.
- 20—Synod Staff Meeting 10:00 a.m.
- 20—Lutheran Campus Ministry hybrid meeting
- 21—Worship Committee Meeting



- 4—Dwelling in the Word via Zoom 7:30 p.m. ET
- 10—Executive Meeting 10 a.m. via Zoom
- 17—Synod Staff Meeting 10:00 a.m.
- 26—Synod Council at Bethany Norway

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**

Bethany, Ishpeming
Good Shepherd, Peshtigo

**ELCA Disaster Funds/
Lutheran World Relief**

Prince of Peace, Marquette
Salem, Ironwood
United, Crystal Falls
St. James, Rudyard
Bethany, Mohawk
Sharon, Bessemer
Ascension, Minocqua
Bethany, Ishpeming
Good Shepherd, Peshtigo
Bethel, Menominee
Trinity, Marquette
Messiah, Marquette
Faith, Ishpeming
Calvary, Rapid River
First, Ewen

Equipping the Saints

Pastor Elisabeth
& Wes Daniels

Lutheran Campus Ministry

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

NGLS Mission Outreach

Virginia Paulson
Immanuel, Escanaba
Pastor Elisabeth
& Wes Daniels

Synod Ministry Fund

Pastor Grant & Sherry
Van Lishout
Pastor Peggy Rose
Mike & Joan Hill
Wendy Simcoe

Companion Synod Projects

St. Paul's, Mass City
Women of the ELCA

Synod Council

Pastor Thomas Skrenes

Lifelong Faith Formation

Karen Nurmi

Clergy Debt Relief

Trinity, Ishpeming

Immigration Services

First, Ewen

TV 6 Christmas Service

Diane L. Poirier

Seminarian Support

Trinity, Ishpeming

Global Barn Yard

Ascension, Minocqua

General Fund

Ruth Warmanen

Transitions

Our condolences to loved ones of **Orice May Walters**. Orice May (Theisen) Walters, age 89, died on January 18, after battling cancer. Orice's funeral was held January 26 at Bethany Lutheran, Norway, Michigan. May God bless her memory in our midst.

May God be with the loved ones of **Pastor Leslie Niemi**. Rev. Leslie Niemi, age 92, died in Lake Havasu City, Arizona on January 22. His funeral was held at Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Lake Havasu on January 26. Tentative plans are for a summer memorial service in the U.P.

We remember and celebrate the life of **Lenora ("Nora") Tahtinen**, age 83, died tragically in a car accident in Minnesota on January 24. Lenora's funeral service was held at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Bayport, Minnesota on February 3.

Rev. Lon Hider retired from pastoral ministry at the end of January. He was serving at Christ the King, Escanaba and Faith, Rock. We thank God for Pastor Lon's ministry and wish him well in his future.

We pray for God's blessing as **Rev. Jack Busche** begins to serve as Administrative Interim for Faith, Rock.

Rev. Dave Johnson and **Sarah Sleeter** will serve as Co-Interims for Christ the King, Escanaba. God bless these congregations during this time of transition.



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

Calvary, Rapid River & First, Trenary—Rev. Terry Frankenstein

Christ the King, Escanaba—Rev. David Johnson and Sarah Sleeter

Faith, Rock—Rev. Jack Busche

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.” - Proverbs 3:5-6*

Our Synod closed fiscal year 2023 slightly below the previous fiscal year, but also slightly better than anticipated. Thank you to everyone who gave generously, consistently and even sacrificially to support the ministry of the Synod and wider Church. You are a blessing to many!

Fiscal year 2024 presents additional challenges as pledges have been reduced by over \$33,000. We encourage everyone to strive to meet their pledge and even exceed it as possible, always placing your trust in the Lord who provides for every need, even though we may not know how it will happen.

- Betsy Koski, Bookkeeper

As of 1/31	2023	2024	\$ Change	% Change
Pledged Amount	759,513	726,307	-33,206	-4.4%
Amount Received	64,320	63,399	-921	-1.4%



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

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Prayfaithfully

NGLS Daily Devotions Schedule March & April 2024

February 26—March 3	Pastor Sarah Semmler Smith
March 4—10	Pastor Kelly Ylitalo
March 11—17	Pastor Doug Johnson
March 18—24	Chris Ebert
March 25—31	Pastor Allan Johnson
April 1—7	Pastor Bre Kinnunen
April 8—14	Pastor Lily Brondyke
April 15—21	Pastor Elise Hynek
April 22—28	Pastor Kari Vadis