Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are back at the beginning.

In fact, we are so far to the beginning, that only the hope of a future promise is present.

We are at that place of waiting and anticipation as we look for signs of what we know is coming.

Advent marks the very beginning of a new church year, when signs are not yet visible but still we anticipate what we know will be.

It is a season pregnant with promise, like a tree bare of leaves that waits for spring, or a field harvested and already frozen that will one day be planted.

The color for Advent is blue. The same deep blue of the sky before the sun rises on a winter morning.

The word *Advent* is derived from the Latin phrase *adventus Domini*, meaning “the coming of the Lord.”

But Advent is more than just remembering the Christ-child’s coming.

It is the hope we bear for Christ’s coming to us now, in our present, staying with us into our future, and finally coming on that last great and glorious day when everyone will know that Jesus Christ is Lord.
In our worship, most congregations will observe Advent by the lighting of candles on an Advent wreath. Many congregations will sing an Advent song such as “Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah”, or a verse from another Advent Hymn. Whatever your church traditions, we all together as the gathered faithful will watch, and wait for signs of Christ’s coming.

As Christ comes to us in the manger…  
As Christ comes to us on the cross…

As Christ comes to us in the faces of others, in the Holy Meal, in the needs of strangers, in the quietness of our hearts, in the cries for justice in the streets……..

as Christ comes to us at the end of time.

Advent also marks a change in our Gospel readings for worship. We now enter Year C and focus on the Gospel according to St. Luke. Luke says he wrote this gospel, “so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed,”

Luke 1: 4

In Luke, we hear a proclamation that Jesus is turning the world upside down, realigning priorities, transforming people. We hear a word of healing and wholeness, of salvation and welcome. Luke gives us the Christmas story, the walk to Emmaus, and in the book of Acts, Luke gives us the rest of the story, what happened after the Resurrection, after the Ascension, after Pentecost. Luke shares with us the birth of the church, and gives us pointers for how to be church now.

As Luke begins again in this season of Advent, I invite you to worship, where together we wait for Christ with the gathered faithful. Christmas will be here soon and very soon. But during Advent, we will take time to pause, to wait, to prepare, to draw nearer to Christ, and wait for his coming even to us.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Katherine Finegan
Every January, each church in the ELCA is asked to complete their “Parochial Report”. Pastors and Secretaries are very familiar with the requirement. While filling out the report might feel like a New Year’s chore, it is an important and necessary document as it provides a great deal of information concerning worship attendance, programming, and the statistics that reflect the health of your congregation.

However, numbers do not tell the whole story. Worship attendance may be lower, but discipleship and a sense of mission can still be deep. There may be a trend of fewer programs offered, but the ministry efforts that are happening may be having a huge impact on the community. Declining numbers, or a smaller congregation, does not necessarily mean that the congregation is less vital.

So as of January 2016, the parochial report will have some new questions, 15 new questions, so that the report is more accurate, and also more helpful, as congregations assess what they can work on even as they celebrate how the Spirit is at work among them.

You will find inserted into this Notes and Quotes, a page with the title “Congregational Vitality and Sustainability Quick Check”. This is a resource, a tool, meant to help pastors and secretaries receive more information so that their answers to the new 15 questions are not only their own assessment, but reflects the view of more congregation members.

Test market synods have had congregation members fill it out at worship. A small team then has collated the responses, plotted the averaged answers on the grid, and shared the results in the newsletter. Other synods have given this quick check to the council, to various committees, to a representative few, and at annual congregational meetings.

Eventually, the hope is that congregations across the ELCA will be able to take the Quick Check online, and results will be automatically collated for your use. The website is up and running, but that part of it is still under construction.

www.congregationalvitalitysurvey.com has additional resources, including a discussion guide to prepare people to take the survey, and also to process the results. Pastors and leaders are encouraged to check this out in preparation for gathering information for January’s report.

While the initial intent of this Quick Check was to equip people with more information for the January report, taking the Quick Check has had other benefits.

Congregations that have participated find that their ministry efforts become more effective as more people become aware of the mission of the church. People become more invested, more intentional in their efforts, more conscious of their purpose as the Body of Christ in the world.

I commend this resource to you, in the hopes that you will find it useful, and it will focus your efforts in Jesus’ name.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Katherine Finegan
WHAT IS A SYNOD?
(Or an answer to the question, “What has the Synod ever done for me?)

“We are a church that believes God is calling us into the world – together.

“The ELCA's 65 synods vary greatly in size, geography, membership, staffing and program. Our smallest synod has 30 congregations — the largest nearly 300. The synods are grouped into nine regions, which are points of connection for them and the churchwide organization. Synods unite the work of congregations within their areas, serve as regional support, and guide pastoral and other staff candidates. In order to strengthen the relationship between synod leaders and the churchwide office, many churchwide teams relate to and support the work of the synods.”

~ELCA Website

WHAT DOES OUR SYNOD DO?
LEADERSHIP
Participating with congregations and the churchwide expression to maintain the unity of the church:

Facilitating the Call Process: In calling pastors, congregations work with the wider church. Synod staff are responsible for the initial legwork, looking at every pastor's Rostered Leader Profile, every congregation's profile, and trying to find potential candidates for each.

Congregational Crisis Management: Sometimes, tensions and crises break out in congregations. Synod staff meet with congregations and leaders to find resolutions to these situations.

Discipline: When no other resolution is available, it is the responsibility of the synod to enforce discipline.

Candidacy: Helps to shepherd our own candidates for pastoral ministry through the process.

SYNOD MINISTRIES
Organized in and by our synod:

Lay Schools for Mission: Our synod's lay schools offer classes taught by local pastors for lay people who are interested in delving more deeply into the faith and practices of our church (and it's free of charge!). About 80 students at 6 campuses take advantage of this opportunity every year.

Prayer and Stewardship ministries: There are entire websites through our synod dedicated to prayer and stewardship practices and resources.
Prison Ministries: The Synod supports the dedicated people who visit, lead Bible studies, and Keryx events in some prisons.

“Lutheran Men in Mission” Ministry

Synod Women's Organization

Endowment: Helps congregations establish a fund that provides ongoing financial support for ministry.

CONFERENCES AND RETREATS

An incomplete list of the conference, retreats, and events our synod is organizing and sponsoring:

Annual Professional Leaders Events: Conferences for rostered leaders to gather and further their formation and education.

Council Retreat: A time for congregation council members to get away and renew their leadership focus.

Clergy Spouse Retreat – In Appleton, WI. usually the first weekend of February.

The Festival of Congregational Renewal: Plan on meaningful worship, workshops, and riveting discussions to bring back to the congregation.

Marked! Confirmation Events: A chance for confirmation students from all around our synod to meet, get to know each other, worship, and learn together.

Transformational Ministry Conference: Many congregations are in need of renewal and transformation. The Synod Transformational Ministry Team has organized a conference to help congregational leader tackle this reality.

Faithful Finances: A workshop designed to equip bookkeepers, treasurers, pastors, and audit committees to efficiently and faithfully steward and record congregational finances.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Worship, Witness, Welcome Grants: In 2015, our synod provided grants in amounts from $100 to $2000 for just about anything that will help a congregation in its mission and ministry.

Clergy Debt Relief: New rostered leaders come out of seminary with an enormous debt burden, and our synod uses some of its endowment money to help pay down that debt.

Seminarian Support: Our synod is a leader in the ELCA for providing financial support to students in seminary who have come from our synod.

Campus Ministry: Some funding is provided to the Bay College campus ministry, Michigan Tech University and Northern Michigan University.

Tanzania Ministry-Mkuza Girls Secondary School: A portion of the endowment fund went to supporting this school for our partners in the Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

Lay Schools for Mission: The lay schools are free to students because our synod funds them itself.

National Youth Gathering: Grants were given to support the 150 participants from our synod, including a Synod bus, and grants to defray congregational expenses.

World Hunger: Every year, our synod collects a substantial offering that goes directly to helping combat the epidemic that is hunger in our world.

Worship Jubilee: Through our synod and ELCA resources, two Northern Great Lakes Syn-
od people were able to attend the Worship Ju-
bilee event in Houston this last July, Deb Ra-
os and Dave Dagenais.

**Other financial assistance:** Our synod offers financial assistance at times for those attending different events.

**PARTNERSHIPS**

*Our synod partners with the following institutions to support and expand their ministries:*

- **Finlandia University**, an ELCA university in Hancock, MI.
- **Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp** in Crystal Falls, MI, where many of our conferences and retreats are held.
- **Lutheran Social Services**
- **Lutheran Campus Ministry**
- **Northland Lutheran Retirement Community**

*IN ADDITION, 51% OF ALL MONEY RECEIVED BY OUR SYNOD THROUGH MISSION SUPPORT IS PASSED ON TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE WIDER CHURCH.*

That means our synod accomplishes all of this with only half of the money congregations make available for regional ministry and support, in addition to any grants it receives.

**HOW CAN WE FIND AND RECEIVE ASSISTANCE OR OTHER RESOURCES?**

Ask.

Resources and assistance are available to everyone, but unless we ask for it, our synod staff doesn't know we need it.

All of the information presented in this article was acquired from the synod website, the monthly newsletter, bi-weekly emails, and fliers sent to our congregation.

In addition, synod staff are always willing to come and offer resources and assistance in person.

**HOW CAN WE GET IN CONTACT WITH OUR SYNOD STAFF?**

**Mailing Address:**

Northern Great Lakes Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
1029 North Third Street, Suite A
Marquette, MI 49855

**Phone:** 906-228-2300

**Fax:** 906-228-2527

**Emails:**

- General email: ngls@nglsynod.org
- Bishop Tom Skrenes: tskrenes@nglsynod.org
- Pastor Katherine Finegan, Assistant to the Bishop: kfinegan@nglsynod.org
- Louise Ingalls, Office Secretary: louise@nglsynod.org
- Betsy Koski, Bookkeeper / Secretary: bakoski@nglsynod.org

*This article was originally written by Pastor Ken Ranos and printed in the Faith, Three Lakes newsletter. It has been edited and updated for this edition of Notes and Quotes.*
Pastoral Vacancies and Interims

**Full-time**
First, Ewen; Our Saviour, Paynesville; Trinity, Trout Creek - Pastor Bill Jacobson
Siloa, Ontonagon; First of Winona & St. Paul’s, Mass City - Pastor John Autio
Porterfield, Porterfield; Beaver American, Pound—Rev. Ken Michaelis
United, L’Anse—Pastor John Autio
Faith, Sault Ste. Marie—Pastor Matthew Lamb
Our Redeemer, Newberry—Pastor David Hueter

**Part-time**
Faith, Rock & First, Trenary - Pastor Rell Spickerman

As we enter into the “season” of thankfulness and joy, it is our prayer that mission support giving evokes an attitude of gratitude in both individuals and congregations as we respond to the abundance of good gifts God has given us. Through these dollars, God’s work is done across our synod and we are privileged to be the face and hands of Christ to many. As we approach year’s end, giving is down slightly from 2014 and we strongly encourage congregations to make every effort to meet or exceed their pledge and to consider an increase in 2016. Thank you for your generosity!

- Betsy Koski, Bookkeeper

### Please note these dates:

**JANUARY 11, 2016**
**Last Day for Checks to Arrive in Synod Office** so that 2015 benevolence gifts can be credited to 2015 giving.

**FEBRUARY 9, 2015**
**Last Day for Checks to Arrive in Synod Office** so that January 2016 giving can be credited to Synod fiscal year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>As of 10/31</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>$ Change</th>
<th>% Change</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pledged Amount</td>
<td></td>
<td>834,355</td>
<td>829,089</td>
<td>-5,266</td>
<td>-0.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amount Received</td>
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<td>646,388</td>
<td>638,921</td>
<td>-7,467</td>
<td>-1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designated Gifts</td>
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<td>133,290</td>
<td>137,578</td>
<td>+4,288</td>
<td>+3.2%</td>
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</table>
## Pray Faithfully: Devotion Schedule for December & January

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Devotion Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 29-December 5</td>
<td>Pastor Andrea Fluegel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 6-12</td>
<td>Jill Fries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 13-19</td>
<td>Pastor Bob Langseth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 20-26</td>
<td>Pastor John Kuziej</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 27-January 2</td>
<td>Sally Weingartner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 3-9</td>
<td>Confirmation Students of Pastor Cori Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 10-16</td>
<td>Susan Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 17-23</td>
<td>Pastor Steve Solberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 24-30</td>
<td>Elaine Hendrickson, LLM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 31-February 6</td>
<td>Pastor Amanda Kossow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SYNOD CALENDAR

December 2015

1 World Hunger Committee Meeting at Bethlehem, Florence, 1 p.m. CT
11-12 Bi-Synodical Candidacy Meeting in Appleton, WI
14 NGLS Staff Meeting at the Synod Office, 11 a.m. ET
15 Judicatory Heads Meeting at the Synod Office, 12:30 p.m. ET
16 Synod Office closed for the afternoon.
24-25 Synod Office is closed for Christmas

January 2016

1 Synod Office closed for New Year’s day.
15 NGLS Staff Meeting at the Synod Office, 11 a.m. ET
16 Nurturing Faith that Sticks at Bethany, Escanaba, 8;30 a.m. - Noon
22-23 Synod Council Meeting at Finlandia University

transitions

+ We celebrate with Grace, Gwinn as Pastor Andrew Plocher was installed on Sunday, November 22, 2015.
+ We celebrate with First, Trenary and Faith, Rock as they welcome Rev. Rell Spickerman to serve as their pastor.
+ We celebrate with First and Trinity, Iron River as they have called Rev. LaVonne Stephenson to serve as their pastor.

May God bless their partnerships!
Thank You for Your Gifts!

**ELCA Global Barnyard**
Trinity Ev., Rhinelander

**ELCA Disaster Funds**
Salem, Ironwood
Bethany Ev., Ishpeming
Holy Trinity, Chassell
Zion, Marinette
Bethany, Amasa
Mission United, Pelkie
Bethel, Cedarville

**Endowment /Answer the Call**
Rev. Kevin Kaiser

**Kemppainen Scholarship**
Rev. Wally & Alice Leno

**Lutheran Campus Ministry**
Prince of Peace, Marquette
Zion, Marinette
Trinity, Ishpeming
Calvary, Rapid River
Grace, Gwinn
Immanuel, Negaunee
Good Shepherd, Peshtigo

**Lutheran World Relief**
Calvary Ev., Minocqua
Prince of Peace, Marquette
Bethany, Norway
Calvary, Rapid River
IGO Conference 1
Our Redeemer, Newberry
Bethel, Ishpeming
Zion, Manistique

**Maternity/Malaria Project**
St. Paul, Mass City

**NGLS Mission Outreach**
Immanuel, Escanaba

**Seminarian Support**
Donald Schutt
Barbara Hammerberg

**Skogman Scholarship**
Rev. James & Laura Wendt

**Tanzanian Projects:**
**Kisarawe Student Scholarships**
First, Gladstone

**Mkuza Girls School**
Synodical Women’s Organization
Our Saviour’s, Atlantic Mine
First, Gladstone

**World Missionary Support**
Trinity Ev., Rhinelander
Bethel, Ishpeming

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**Thank You for Your Gifts!**
There is no more celebrated living Christian theologian and New Testament scholar than the former Anglican Bishop of Durham in England, N.T. (Tom) Wright. This praise is well deserved since the churchman has generated dozens of fascinating books and journal articles since he began writing for publication in the 1980's. Two representative books are "How God Became King," and "Surprised By Hope," wherein Wright builds a brilliant apologetic (now there is an old fashioned word) for the Christian Church's loyalty to the Jesus of the Gospels and for the centrality of the Resurrection as doctrine and fact.

In "How God Became King", Bishop Wright tells us there are four themes or voices in the Gospels. He says the Gospels are: the climax of history detailed, the story of Jesus as the story of Israel's God, the story of God's renewed people both vision and constitution and the Kingdom of God versus the Kingdom of this world. Wright sees the Gospels as the forgotten message of the Kingdom. He tells us that the great Christian creeds focus on incarnation, passion, death and resurrection, St. Paul focuses on justification, atonement and ethics. But the Gospels tell us of Jesus and allow us to know of his life, ministry and teaching. The Gospels are biographies but more they have become foundational documents for the Church.

Wright is not sympathetic to the skeptics of all times including our modern age that have down played or ignored the miracles of Jesus. "Those who accept things (the Bible) at face value...are scorned as naive, uncritical or perhaps fundamentalist...Many New Testament scholars still insist on the skeptical reading as a mark of intellectual maturity or academic credibility." (King, p. 106-7) Not Wright, who in his neo-orthodox style reminds the reader of the early church's unanimous belief in the validity of the Scriptural miracles. Interestingly enough, Wright lays blame to some of this at the feet of "radical Lutheranism" particularly Rudolf Bultmann and his intellectual descendents. The Jesus that Wright finds in the Gospels is an earthy God-man in pursuit of God's Kingdom who dies on behalf of the whole world. But before dying, "When Jesus wanted to explain to his followers the meaning of his death, he didn't give them a theory; he gave them a meal." (King, p. 238) His book ends with a plea. He writes, "part of the tragedy of the modern church, I have been arguing, is that the 'orthodox' have preferred creed to kingdom, and the "unorthodox" have tried to get a kingdom without a creed. It's time to put together what never should have been separated." (King, p. 276)

In these years as I continue my work as bishop in the Northern Great Lakes Synod, I have been thinking about what seems to me to be the center of Christian theology. My understanding of God centers on two pillars. The power of humans to destroy (original sin-that is law) and the power of God to redeem (the resurrection-that is Gospel) would be the eyeglasses I would look through at everything in life.
In his book "Surprised By Hope," N.T. Wright lays out the case for understanding God and God's world through the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Wright believes that modern Western culture has lost its sense of the resurrection. Wright thinks a type of creeping Hinduism (nature worship) and Buddhism (reincarnation) has affected our Western spiritualities. Indeed our culture so denies death that the idea of Resurrection has lost meaning. Wright reminds us that the early Christian communities were unanimous in their understanding of the power of God to defeat death in the Easter message. Wright contends that in spite of all other explanations for the events of Easter, the physical resurrection of Jesus makes the most sense. Indeed, he contends with the myth theory of the Resurrection and comes to this conclusion.

"Far and away the best historical explanation is that Jesus of Nazareth, having been thoroughly dead and buried, really was raised to life on the third day with a renewed body (not a mere resuscitated corpse' as people sometimes dismissively say), a new kind of physical body, which left an empty tomb behind it because it had used up the material of Jesus' original body and which possessed new properties that nobody had expected or imagined but that generated significant mutations in the thinking of those who encountered it. If something like this happened, it would perfectly explain why Christianity began and why it took the shape it did." (Hope, p. 64)

Indeed, N.T. Wright says, the resurrection caused faith and God's people will be together at the end of time. Many ideas about the Christian rapture and the end time, he believes are nothing but modern Gnostic heresies with roots in Plato and not in the Bible. He also believes the entire saint worship, saint intervention system (including purgatory) practiced by many Christians is just another form of paganism.

Wright discusses universalism, defines it and lays out systematically the various theories and rationalizations for the belief that all will eventually be saved. He is modest in his statements knowing that he cannot himself know the mind of God. However, uncertainty does not stop him from offering his opinions. He believes the justified will be with God at the end of time and the un-righteous will cease to exist. Wright also sees eternal life as a two stage process, more like "life after life after death." (Hope, p. 169) Heaven is not our final destination. Instead we are destined to a new earth. We shall live in the presence of God for "heaven and earth are made for each other. They are the twin interlocking spheres of God's single created reality." (Hope, p. 250-51)

In a modern Christianity that so often is reduced to "God and Me," N.T. Wright presents a communal mystical understanding of the mission of God and God's people. His words are poetic.

"What you do in the Lord is not done in vain. You are not oiling the wheels of a machine that's about to roll over a cliff. You are not restoring a great painting that shortly going to be thrown on the fire. You are not planting roses in a garden that's about to be dug up for a building site. You are--strange as it might seem, almost as hard to believe as the resurrection itself--accomplishing something that will become in due course--part of God's new world. Every act of love, gratitude, and kindness; every work of art or music inspired by the love of God and delight in the beauty of his creation; every minute spent teaching a severely handicapped child to teach or to walk; every act of care and nurture, of comfort and support, for one's fellow human beings and for that matter one's fellow non-human creatures; and of course every prayer, all Spirit-led teaching, every deed that spreads the gospel, builds up the church, embraces and embodies holiness rather than corruption, and makes the name of Jesus honored in the world--all of this will find its way, through the resurrecting power of god, into the new creation that God will one day make. This is the logic of the mission of God.”

+Thomas A. Skrenes, Bishop
All congregations want to thrive. A congregation (or any organization) is thriving when it achieves missional goals (vitality) and is likely to continue doing so into the future (sustainability). This checklist helps you quickly see how you rate your congregations’ vitality and sustainability.

**Vitality**

A vital congregation is one that lives out God’s mission through strong relationships with God, each other and the world. The following questions can help your congregation determine its current vitality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How well do these phrases describe your congregation?</th>
<th>Poorly or</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Great or</th>
<th>Copy number from column</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship nurtures people’s faith</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deepens people’s relationship with God</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A clear sense mission</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Excitement about the congregation’s future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always ready to try something new</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A positive force in the community</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works for social justice/advocacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How well does your congregation...</th>
<th>Hardly at all</th>
<th>Well</th>
<th>Very Well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incorporate new members into congregational life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek out and use the gifts of members of all ages</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build strong, healthy relationships among members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Manage disagreements in a healthy respectful manner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address social concerns (helping those in need)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Equip members to share their faith with others</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interact with the local community</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Help members live out their faith in daily lives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total all rows

**Vitality Score: (Divide total by 15)**
**Sustainability**

Congregations need resources to sustain ministry. The two primary resources include money (to pay staff, fund ministries and maintain facilities) and people power (to engage in ministries). Use the following questions to estimate your sustainability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you have what you need to maintain or expand ministry?</th>
<th>Declined to not sustainable</th>
<th>Declining but still sustainable</th>
<th>Maintaining</th>
<th>Growing or Increasing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People Power</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Resources</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since both people and financial resources are necessary for sustainability, the lower number represents the "weakest link" in your congregation’s sustainability chain.

**Balancing Vitality and Sustainability**

Use the following chart to mark where your congregation falls in the matrix. Find your sustainability at the bottom and draw a line up. Find your vitality score from the first page and draw a line to the right. Look at where the two lines cross. This intersection estimates your congregation’s most likely vitality/sustainability balance. This is not a perfect measure because these categories overlap some in real life. **Talk about how this estimate fits or doesn’t fit with your experience and why.**

A congregation needs to be both vital and sustainable in order to be thriving. Vital congregations that aren’t sustainable can’t continue God’s mission in their setting. Sustainable congregations that are not vital may have lost touch with God’s mission for them in this time and place. **What are your congregation’s strengths and challenges? What is God calling your congregation toward now?**

**Now What?**

Visit [www.congregationalvitalitysurvey.com](http://www.congregationalvitalitysurvey.com) to have your entire congregation take this survey online. Talk with your synod’s Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM) to learn more about vitality and to take a longer congregation-wide survey.

v.11.2.15 Connecting congregations with God, each other and the world.
Faith Journeys

Presents:

A 10-day Tour to

Germany

In the Footsteps of Martin Luther

September 19 - 28, 2016

Especially designed for

Northern Great Lakes Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

With:

Rev. Katherine and David Finegan

For more Information please call:
The NGLS Office at (906)-228-2300
Or contact Faith Journeys at 1-877-732-4845 Option 1

For full brochure please visit www.nglsynod.org
Or visit www.myfaithjourneys.com/login and enter Group Number 16044

Deposit $200 by October 31, 2015 and SAVE $100!
In the Footsteps of Martin Luther

10 days / 8 nights

Day 1: Monday, September 19: Departure from the USA
Our journey begins with an overnight flight to Berlin, Germany.

Day 2: Tuesday, September 20: Berlin (D)
Welcome to Das Land der Dichter und Denker (the land of poets and thinkers)! Transfer to our hotel for check-in, dinner and an overnight stay in Berlin.

Day 3: Wednesday, September 21: Berlin (B,D)
Unter den Linden Strasse, Russian War Memorial, Brandenburg Gate, Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, Olympic Stadium. Afternoon at leisure before dinner and overnight stay.

Day 4: Thursday, September 22: Juterbog & Wittenberg (B,D)
All Saints’ Church, City Church, Luther’s House, dinner and overnight in Wittenberg.

Day 5: Friday, September 23: Torgau & Leipzig (B,D)
Hartenfels castle, St. Mary’s Church, Altes Rathaus, St. Nicholas Church, St. Thomas Church, and Bach Museum before enjoying a leisurely dinner and overnight stay.

Day 6: Saturday, September 24: Eiselen (B,D)
Guided tour of Luther sites in Eiselen, birth and death house, Church of St. Peter and Paul, St. Andrew’s Church, return to Leipzig for dinner and another overnight stay.

Day 7: Sunday, September 25: Erfurt (B,D)
Walking tour of Erfurt, Augustinian Monastery, St. Mary’s Cathedral, dinner & overnight.

Day 8: Monday, September 26: Eisenach & Wartburg Castle (B,D)
Wartburg Castle, Bachhaus, Lutherhaus, & Georgenkirche. Mainz for dinner & overnight.

Day 9: Tuesday, September 27: Mainz & Worms (B,D)
Gutenberg Museum, Cathedral of Mainz, St. Peter’s Cathedral, and Church of the Holy Trinity. Return to Mainz for farewell dinner and last overnight stay in Germany.

Day 10: Wednesday, September 28: Frankfurt & Depart for Home (B)
We leave our hotel and head for the airport to return to the US.

Tour price with self-arranged airfare (Land-Only): $3,329

Tour price including airfare from Marquette, MI: $4,695
(U.S. government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges up to $600 included – pricing is based on a minimum 20 people)

Deposit $200 by October 31, 2015 and Receive an Early Registration Discount of $100!
**Prayer Calendar – December 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pray for those attending the <strong>World Hunger Committee meeting</strong> at <em>Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Florence</em> today at 1:00 p.m. CT.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pray for <strong>pastors both active and retired celebrating birthdays</strong> this month: Rudy Kemppainen 12/03 and David Johnson, 12/18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pray for <strong>church choirs and musicians</strong> who share their gifts of music as they welcome the Christ Child this season.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pray for those attending <strong>A Long December: Room to Grieve Retreat</strong> at <em>Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp</em> Dec 4 &amp; 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pray for members of <strong>Jerusalem Lutheran Church Whiteford, MD (Rev Hugo Schroeder)</strong>, <strong>Community of St. Dysmas, Baltimore MD (Rev Gerry Rickel)</strong>, and <strong>Harmony Lutheran Church, Myersville MD (Rev W. Fogarty)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Advent II</strong> – Walk in hope, as you move toward the manger, keeping your eyes on the child, the child who will fulfill that hope on the cross of Good Friday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pray for <strong>Pastors LaVonne Stephenson and Bucky Beach</strong> as they celebrate <strong>anniversaries of ordination this month</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Pray for the <strong>members of Maneromango Lutheran Church, Kisarawe, Tanzania</strong> and their <strong>NGLS Companion Congregations, First Lutheran Church in Ewen (Rev William Jacobson, interim pastors.)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Pray for our <strong>Synod Council</strong> and the members of our <strong>Synod committees</strong> as they work tirelessly for all of us across the Northern Great Lakes Synod and the whole church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pray for <strong>Bishop Thomas Skrenes</strong> as he returns from the second part of his sabbatical at this busy time of year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>For the <strong>Bi-Synodical Candidacy Committee</strong> meeting Dec 11-12 in Appleton WI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Pray for our <strong>retired pastors and their spouses</strong> – Rev. Allan and Sara Johnson and Rev. Margaret and James Johnson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><strong>Advent III</strong> – as you come closer to the manger at Bethlehem get ready to come face to face with the ultimate gift of love – the presence of God in Immanuel, “God with us!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Pray for our <strong>Synod Staff</strong> as they meet today at 11:00 at the synod office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>For <strong>those addicted to drugs, alcohol and other substances</strong> who may find this season of family celebration particularly troublesome. We pray that <strong>the light of Christ Jesus may shine into their darkness</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Pray for the <strong>spouses of our deceased pastors</strong> – Kaaren Ness and Valdora Otto.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Pray for <strong>pastors both active and retired celebrating birthdays</strong> this month: John Kuziej 12/20 and Dave Hueter 12/21.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Pray for our <strong>Sunday School children</strong> who learn about God’s word each week and who anticipate the birth of baby Jesus in these next days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>For <strong>all of those celebrating the holidays with their co-workers, friends and relatives at Christmas parties</strong> in our synod this month. May they all have loads of fun, drink responsibly, and drive safely so they can take time to celebrate the coming of the Christ child together on Christmas Day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Advent IV – as you take the final steps to the manger joyfully lift up prayers of thanks for the fulfillment of all of God’s promises in the Christ Child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Pray for all of the <strong>victims of terrorism and their families as well as all of those in law enforcement agencies around the world</strong> trying to stop these senseless acts of violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Pray for members of <strong>All Saints Lutheran Church, Baltimore MD (Rev Churchill Wortherly)</strong>, <strong>Spirit of Life Lutheran Church, Wilmington DE (Rev Clarence Pettit)</strong>, and <strong>Community Lutheran Church, Omar, Frankford DE (Rev Elizabeth Wolinski)</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>For <strong>those in prisons</strong>. Keep them from harm and help them to see the light of Christ in their lives during this season.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Pray that this evening <strong>the light that shines in the darkness may shine again in and through you</strong> as you carry the wonder of this evening with you this day – and throughout the coming year. Synod office closed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Pray this day that the Prince of Peace may stir the hearts of men and women the world over, that throughout the world, in our own country, our communities and our own homes love and care for each other may rule. <strong>May Peace on Earth become a reality.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Pray for all the <strong>children on school vacation</strong>, may they have a chance to renew, recreate, and enjoy their family, friends and toys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>For blessings on all those <strong>men and women in the armed forces</strong> defending our country who are away from their families this holiday season.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Pray for the members of <strong>Faith, Sault Ste. Marie and their interim pastor, Rev. Matt Lamb</strong> as they continue in the call process during a <strong>pastoral vacancy</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Pray for the ministries of <strong>Lutheran Social Services</strong> in our synod – especially for those parents and children who become families through the adoption services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Pray for <strong>all of our seminary students</strong>, especially <strong>Terry Frankenstein</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Offer a <strong>prayer of thanks</strong> for the opportunities and gifts of the past year – and a <strong>prayer of hope</strong> that the coming year will bring us courage and insight to deal with its challenges and the grace, mercy, and peace of Our Savior throughout the year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“We pray for congregations in the Delaware-Maryland Synod as part of our domestic partner synod relationship.”
Prayer Calendar – January 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Prayers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pray that this <strong>new year</strong> may find you to be a faithful disciple of Jesus in all that you do. Ask for God’s gifts, guidance, and grace as you walk your path of life and faith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>For those who have <strong>physical limitations</strong> that prevent them from enjoying winter recreation and are <strong>lonely and long for companionship and conversation</strong> especially as winter weather keeps them indoors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pray for members of <strong>Amazing Grace Lutheran Church, Baltimore MD (Rev Gary Dittman)</strong>, <strong>Light of Christ Lutheran Church, New Market MD (Rev Roger Rinker)</strong> and <strong>Living Water Lutheran Church, Stevensville MD (Rev F. Walters.)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>For the <strong>Lay School campuses and all of the busy pastors</strong> who give their time and efforts to teach folks eager to learn more about our theology and scripture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pray for <strong>pastors both active and retired celebrating birthdays</strong> this month: Greg Mileski 1/05, Doug Johnson 1/13, and David Jensen 1/16.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pray that as the Magi brought gifts of great value to the newborn king, you too would be willing to give not what’s left over, but your tithe and your time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pray for our <strong>retired pastors and their spouses</strong> – Rev Jennifer Johnson and Marvin Wrege &amp; Rev George Kaiser.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>For <strong>continued strength for peace makers and aid workers</strong> across this globe already working to stem the tide of war, violence, and disease.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>For pastors Margaret Johnson, and Jesse Brown as they celebrate <strong>anniversaries of ordination this month.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>As we celebrate the <strong>Baptism of our Lord</strong> remember that in your baptism, you are a child of God. You are claimed, held, nurtured and blessed by a loving God who sends you into the world to witness the love of Jesus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Pray for the <strong>members of Kimara Lutheran Church, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and their NGLS Companion Congregation, Calvary in Minoqua (Rev Maxine Gray, pastor.)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Also pray for <strong>all of our seminary students</strong>, especially those future students who are trying to discern if this is the path God is calling them to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>As we consider those individuals running for elected office in our regions, states and in our country’s government, <strong>pray that all leaders will take their responsibility seriously and vow to be knowledgeable and fair to all citizens.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>For <strong>all refugees</strong> forced from their homeland by violence. <strong>May they find a new country with kind and loving people</strong> who will welcome them and accept them into new communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Pray for the members of <strong>Northern Lights Parish: Siloa, Ontonagon, St. Paul’s, Mass City and First, Winona and their interim pastor, John Autio</strong>, as they continue in the call process during a <strong>pastoral vacancy.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>For those enjoying the <strong>Winter Wonderland weekend at FLLC</strong> Jan 15-17. Play hard, warm up, and sleep soundly!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Pray for those <strong>who are struggling with gender orientation and identity issues</strong>. Show them your love and acceptance so they can live safely in our communities and congregations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>The <strong>Confession of St. Peter</strong> – this day <strong>begins the week of prayer for Christian unity</strong>. Pray that all who confess that which Peter confessed, that Jesus is the Messiah may come together as partners in the work of the gospel! May the Lutheran- Roman Catholic churches truly be “on their way” to unity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>As we observe <strong>Martin Luther King Jr’s birthday on January 18</strong>, pray for our nation – and our world – that <strong>divisions of race, culture, and faith that still exist in this day may be overcome</strong>, not by power and violence, but by love and care for all of God’s children!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Pray for the <strong>unemployed and underemployed</strong> keep them and their families warm and well-fed this winter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Say a prayer of thanks for <strong>police officers and fire fighters</strong> who risk their lives to keep us safe. And thank them in person when you see them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>For those traveling to and attending the <strong>Synod Council meeting at Finlandia University in Hancock</strong> today and tomorrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Pray for those in Africa and the rest of the world <strong>suffering with Malaria, HIV/AIDS and polio</strong>. May we set aside some of our plenty to send them skilled doctors and nurses and the resources to treat and prevent these diseases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Pray for <strong>pastors both active and retired celebrating birthdays</strong> this month: Margaret Johnson 1/24 and Fran Strong 1/30.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>The <strong>Conversion of St. Paul</strong> – this day as the <strong>week of prayer for Christian unity ends</strong>, pray that as Paul heard Jesus call him to faithful service, all of us may hear that call too and respond to God’s call for love and care for each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td><strong>Keep us safe and warm</strong> as ice and snow envelope all places in our synod.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>For continued <strong>love and strength for caregivers everywhere who grow weary</strong> from carrying burdens for loved ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>For those women, men, and children who are <strong>victims of domestic violence</strong>. Keep them safe and heal their physical and emotional wounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Pray for members of <strong>Tree of Life Lutheran Church, Odessa DE (Rev Timothy Leitzke)</strong>, <strong>Epiphany Lutheran Church, Elicott MD (Rev John Trautwein)</strong>, and <strong>Joy Reigns Lutheran Church, Edgewater MD (Rev Barbara Parrish.)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Pray for <strong>men’s ministries</strong> in our synod – that they may take root in prayer and bible study and grow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Pray for the <strong>spouses of our deceased pastors</strong> – Judy Piel and Helen Rankinen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*“We pray for congregations in the Delaware-Maryland Synod as part of our domestic partner synod relationship.”*