



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

North/West Lower Michigan Synod

2900 N. Waverly Rd.

Lansing MI 48906

T 517-321-5066

F 517-321-2632

www.mittensynod.org

Bishop's Letter, November 2011

Richly Blessed

*To Bishop Schleicher
From Ilze Pildina*

Thank you for the wonderful opportunity to be here in the United States this summer as a counselor at Michi-Lu-Ca. Among the best things for me were learning new worship songs and leading campfire. During Abundant Life week campers with disabilities shared with us in dancing and singing. It was so much fun! It reminded me that God loves each of us, that he is a wonderful God. At the end of our summer together, Bass Lake, through the skillshops and discussions, gave us opportunity to grow in our faith.



This summer wasn't just an exchange program. I did tell my campers and fellow counselors about Latvia, my country, and learned more about the USA. But this was also a time for me to become more independent and to spend more time with God and with Christians here. I am thankful for my time here and hope that maybe someday I will get the opportunity to come back and see you again.

*In Jesus' love,
Ilze*

We did this! Through a \$2,300 grant from our Global Mission Committee and a stipend from Living Water Ministries, we collaborated to make it possible for Ilze, a young Latvian Lutheran, to bless us and to grow in her faith. You no doubt know that the Lutheran Church in Latvia is one of our companions. This use of your Mission Support dollars is one of the ways we walk together in Christ though we live thousands of miles apart.

From Bishop Schleicher

To the Beloved of God who are Members of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod,

Thank you for all your prayers before and after my recent surgery. A solid mass in the left lobe of my thyroid discovered, inadvertently, in a doctor's visit in July, was removed this past month. The pathology report was negative, news I learned the same day as my annual check-up, during which my doctor announced that my blood work was "boringly normal"! The waiting between July and the surgeon's good news about the "mass" in October put me newly in touch with the challenging "Do not worry about anything" word from scripture. After the synod staff encouraged me to be public about my forthcoming surgery, I also learned anew the peace-giving power of communal prayer... "but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." (Philippians 4:6) So I thank God, and I thank you for those prayers.

In so many ways we are richly blessed!



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Winter Leadership Event

North/West Lower Michigan Synod and Southeast Michigan Synod

"I Am About To Do a New Thing"

"I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not
perceive it?
I will make a way in the
wilderness
and rivers in the desert." Isaiah 43:19

Location: Trinity Lutheran Church

3701 Jefferson Avenue

Midland, MI, 48640

Sunday, Jan 22, (5:00 p.m.) – Tuesday, Jan 24 (noon)

For all active and retired rostered leaders, synodically authorized ministers,
lay ministers, and their spouses and partners

Please visit <http://www.mittensynod.org/news/index.html> to download the registration form
and a letter from Bishops Schleicher and Kreiss about the event.

(Registration details are also being emailed to all leaders.)

Registration Deadline: Monday, Jan 9, 2012.

Registration Fee per individual: \$50

Attention Pastors, Congregation Presidents, and Congregation Secretaries

Changes to the Model Constitution for Congregations, resulting from the 2011 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA, have been posted on the ELCA website. Just click on the Office of the Secretary link in the lower left corner. Then click on the box titled, "Information for Congregations." It is recommended that congregational constitutions be amended to incorporate these changes with such amendments ratified by the next legally called meeting of the congregation. Amendments to congregation constitutions limited to provisos passed by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly need not be sent to the Synod Constitution Committee for review. All other changes must be accompanied by the (*) paragraphs, which bring the congregation constitution into compliance with the latest (2011) Model Constitution for Congregations. Such modified constitutions should be sent to the Synod Constitution Committee for review prior to adoption by the congregation. Send as text (WORD or PDF) to: pastor@messiah-constantine.org

~ Rev. Dennis Smith - Chair, Constitution Committee



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Mission Support Consultations

Pastor Roger Hardy, Director for Evangelical Mission, Assistant to the Bishop

What I am hearing at our conference mission support consultations...

- the congregational members present at these meeting are deeply appreciative of hearing what God is doing beyond the life of their congregations through the ELCA—both synod and churchwide ministries. For some of them this is new information;
- many congregations are doing exciting missional activities, like reading the whole Bible through this year, reading the New Testament aloud on a weekly basis, asking how large and small churches in one conference can work together, and being excited about a new first call pastor in their midst;
- many participates are finding it meaningful to be together to listen and talk about the things that are central to the faith;
- congregations can model first fruit giving by giving 10% to mission from all special gifts that the congregation receives;
- acknowledging that we all play a part in keeping the stories alive with congregational members of where mission gifts give go and what our mission support gifts do for God's mission.

What a great learning time this is in the life of the church!! I think this is what it means to be CHURCH.



Please note:

The Boundaries workshop has been scheduled for Monday, Nov. 21 from 10 a.m. -3:30 p.m. at Christ United (1000 W Webb, DeWitt). This workshop is **STRONGLY** encouraged for all leaders who are new to our Synod (pastors from other synods as well as first call pastors, even if you've already received boundary training hours through your seminary). Lay Ministers, SAM candidates and youth leaders are also encouraged to attend.

Lunch will be provided and there is no fee. Please register by calling Regina at the Synod office (517-321-5066) by Wednesday, November 16 or email her at reginaroyal@mittensynod.org



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ELCA National Youth Gathering Bus Transportation

Ed Wosinski, Youth Director, First Lutheran Church, Muskegon

One bus is full and I've started to make a list for a second bus. There is room for about 35 more people. Cost will depend on how many are going. (We will split the fee.)

We'd leave on July 17 and return on July 23. We'll drive straight through and allow for regular food/stretching stops. The bus is a 55 passenger with reclining seats, DVD displays and bathroom. Overhead storage and suitcase storage under the bus are available. If you hear of other churches interested in joining us, please let me know: 231.744.1522

Exact times for departure and arrival have not been set.

Building a Team in Youth Ministry

Rev. Sue Hand, Zion Lutheran (Saginaw)

Would you like to build a team for your youth ministry? This training is for you and your team! Come and learn about the current landscape of youth ministry, plan for events, take these events to a deeper level, and prepare your group for these events. This is a free training that includes a lunch and snacks. Empower your laity as you build skills and understanding in youth ministry. Please RSVP to Sue Hand: 989.859.4491, hands@charter.net

Date: Saturday, Nov 5, Saturday, 9:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Location: Christ Lutheran Church

2350 44th St. SW, Wyoming, MI 49519

4 Additional Youth Ministry Network Trainings for your Team: On the Web!

Sundays starting at 3:00 pm, click "live" and watch or come back later and download the training to use on your own timeline:

<http://www.elcaymnet.org/webinars>

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Nov 20, 2011: | <i>Strategic Planning</i> |
| Dec 4, 2011: | <i>Leading a Small Group</i> |
| Dec 18, 2011: | <i>Faith Conversations</i> |
| Jan 8, 2012: | <i>Planning for the Unexpected</i> |

Questions? Please contact Sue Hand: 989.859.4491, hands@charter.net



2012 ELCA Youth Gathering

citizens with the saints

Ephesians 2:14-20



Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered and sent for the sake of the world.



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Matthew 25 Recognitions

Kathy Young Synod Hunger Team Member

The Synod Hunger Team continues to highlight the nominees for the 2011 Synod Assembly Matthew 25 Award. Meet "that church that runs the soup nite," aka **Immanuel Lutheran (Grand Ledge)**. The mission of the "The Soup Group" is to provide a weekly nutritious meal to families and individuals in financial distress. The meal is served restaurant style by church volunteers. Soup is provided by local restaurants, but the remainder of the menu is provided through efforts of those who serve at the meals and gifts of the congregation. The ministry began in Lent 2009 and has continued weekly. Over 5000 meals have been served in that time. For more information contact Rick McKenzie at rmckenzie@immanuel-gl.org.

St Stephen Lutheran (Rockford) is an agency of Feeding America and hosts a Mobile Food Pantry once a month. They are also an enrollment site for State of Michigan Bridge Cards. Their involvement requires not only a financial responsibility but also 25-35 volunteers each month. Other volunteer opportunities include Kids Hope USA: a one-on-one mentoring program for elementary school children. Volunteers also help prepare take-home sack suppers for nutritionally at-risk elementary students through the Kids Food Basket. Their youth group volunteers at North Kent Community Services, assisting with sorting donations of clothing and household goods. For more information contact Jerry Field, Director of Missional Life at ststephenlutheran@sselc.org.



Foundations of Christian Spirituality Program (Special Offering)

Date: Sat, December 17, 2011

Topic: St. Francis of Assisi, St. Clare and St. Bonaventure: A reflective study day on their life and spirituality

Time: 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (Lunch included)

Location: Christ United Church, 1000 W. Webb Rd., DeWitt, MI 48820

Cost: \$20

Presenter: Joseph Byrd, Director of Celebration Ministries at Zion Lutheran Church (Holland, M.I.), Spiritual Director and Team Facilitator for Spiritual Formation Program

+ **Please register by December 7, 2011.** The registration form may be found at:

http://www.mittensynod.org/news/pdfs/2011_10_Docs/Foundations_Registration_Dec-17-2011.pdf

This program is part of the yearlong Foundations of Christian Spirituality offered each year for the Synod. We welcome anyone who would like to participate in this formation opportunity. Questions? Contact Sister Nancy Brousseau, nancybrousseau@mittensynod.org

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Earthkeeping News & Updates

Kim Winchell, Diaconal Minister, Earthkeeping Ministries

On the caring for creation “platter” this month: some ideas and resource items related to food and giving thanks ...

“Can We Feed the World and Sustain the Planet?” asks Jonathon Foley, a professor and researcher, who began the University of Wisconsin at Madison’s *Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment* and now directs the Institute on the Environment (IonE) at the University of Minnesota. In October, he and his group of researchers published an article in *Scientific American*: <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=can-we-feed-the-world>

This short online article also summarizes some of Foley’s suggestions/conclusions:

<http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/12/deep-thinking-about-the-future-of-food/>

“Feeding nine billion people in a truly sustainable way will be one of the greatest challenges our civilization has ever faced,” Dr. Foley says in the *Scientific American* article, referring to the projected global population at mid-century. (He outlines some of the links between environmental problems and agriculture in [this talk](#), and his group produced a popular animated clip that gives a sense of the scale of the problems at:

<http://www.youtube.com/umnione#p/u/3/F1IWkbU0SG4>

In brief, Foley makes these observations/suggestions:

The world must solve three food problems simultaneously: end hunger, double food production by 2050, and do both while drastically reducing agriculture’s damage to the environment.

Five solutions, pursued together, can achieve these goals: stop agriculture from consuming more tropical land, boost the productivity of farms that have the lowest yields, raise the efficiency of water and fertilizer use worldwide, reduce per capita meat consumption and reduce waste in food production and distribution.

A system for certifying foods based on how well each one delivers nutrition and food security and limits environmental and social costs would help the public choose products that push agriculture in a more sustainable direction.

*Can we feed the world
and sustain the planet?*



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Finally, on giving thanks and Thanksgiving (*Earthkeeping news cont...*)

How might you incorporate gratitude for all of God's gifts to us, through all of creation, into your times of worship in and around Thanksgiving? Hymns? Prayers? Special offerings?

Consider using some of the prayers/litanies from our 2010 May Synod assembly, particularly from the Monday morning prayers on pages 14-16 of the worship booklet. Contact me, if you'd like a copy, kwinchellm@aol.com

Consider using or adapting the Iroquois "Thanksgiving Address" (also known as "The words before all else"). It's a wonderful, all encompassing offering of thanks to all aspects of God's creation, and God, too.

http://www.nmai.si.edu/education/files/thanksgiving_address.pdf

Here are some good, general guidelines on weaving creation care into various places and aspects of a worship service. Have fun, be creative, serve God and love the neighbor (two-legged, four-legged, and flying, creeping, swimming neighbors, too)! <http://greenfaith.org/resource-center/spirit/eco-themed-worship-services/guidelines-for-eco-services>

Peace to you, Peace to the Earth!

Churchwide ELCA News

"Torrential downpours have been affecting the countries of Central America, from southern Mexico to northern Panama. The heaviest hit countries have been El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. The heavy rains have brought a higher risk of flash, urban and river flooding. Added with the steep terrain and mainly dirt roads in the region there has been a heightened risk and occurrence of mudslides and completely impassible roadways. The situation has led to over 100 people killed in mudslides and hundreds of thousands displaced by flooding...

The ELCA has been kept abreast of the situation through our missionary personnel in the area, companion churches in the affected countries and our membership in the Lutheran World Federation, who works in the region.

The ELCA is supporting the responses being made in the four most affected countries through the LWF and the local churches in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua..."

For more information on the response of the ELCA through our companions and partners please visit:

http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Responding-to-the-World/Disaster-Response/Ongoing-Responses/Central-America-Flooding_October-2011.aspx



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ELCA NEWS SERVICE

October 7, 2011

Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Lutheran African peace activist

CHICAGO (ELCA) -- Leymah Roberta Gbowee, a Lutheran Liberian peace activist, has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The announcement came Oct. 7 from Oslo, Norway. Gbowee, a member of the Lutheran Church in Liberia, is responsible for organizing a non-violent women's movement that brought an end to a 14-year civil war in Liberia. Gbowee was awarded a scholarship from the International Leadership Development Program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 2006-2007 to support her study in peace building at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va.

The Liberian women's movement led to the ousting of ex-President Charles Taylor and to the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as president of Liberia –the first African nation with a female president. President Sirleaf also has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The war in Liberia began in 1989, but "the women's movement, our protest, didn't begin until 2003," Gbowee said in a Sept. 19 interview at the ELCA churchwide organization.

The starting point of the women's movement was war fatigue, said Gbowee, a mother of six children. She grew tired of watching children die from hunger and "waking up every morning and not knowing whether a tomorrow was possible. You can't plan for the future." Along with thousands of other women from across Liberia, Gbowee wanted to dream of a better community. She decided it was time to stop the war and called together women of all faiths –Christian, Muslim, indigenous and others –from across Liberia to "step out," recognizing that Liberian women can play a critical role in peace building...

Gbowee's story is chronicled in the documentary "**Pray the Devil Back to Hell.**" She has just completed her memoir, "Mighty Be Our Powers: How Sisterhood, Prayer, and Sex Changed a Nation at War" –a book that examines "the power of women and the power of faith in getting you (out) from the darkest place in your life," she said.

To read more about Gbowee, please visit <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Communication-Services/News/Releases.aspx?a=5170>

To learn more about "**Pray the Devil Back to Hell,**" the award-winning film that chronicles Gbowee's story, please visit <http://praythediabacktohell.com/>