



# 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](http://www.mittensynod.org)

*Congregational Newsletter Insert: December 2011*

***“Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2***

## Seeking to be Faithful

I just completed a conference call with the rest of the Synod Council Executive Committee (Sandy Schlesinger, V.P.; Gena Hyde, treasurer; Chris Allen, secretary; and Iris Boettcher, at-large). We prayed at the beginning and at the end; in between we thought together how best to allocate your Mission Support gifts received between now and the end of next January, the end of our fiscal year. Our contingency planning, necessitated in recent years by shortfalls in income, is always a test of our priorities. I left this call with gratitude for these fine lay leaders you have elected to serve the Synod.

All are blessed with finely disciplined and missional minds and hearts. In the face of ongoing financial challenges, all of them seek to be faithful, responsible stewards of your gifts. Together we decided to honor to the best of our ability the budgeted commitments to our campus ministries, Living Water Ministries, LSSM, Trinity Seminary, Capital and Wittenberg Universities. We will continue to send 50% of your Mission Support gifts for ELCA churchwide ministries. We will compensate our staff as justly as possible. Our Synod committees and teams, to their great credit, have almost all underspent their budgets, knowing that these are tough times. Still a multitude of old and new ministries have been strengthened already this year through their work. (See our website, [www.mittensynod.org](http://www.mittensynod.org), and the December issue of the *Lutheran* magazine for examples of these ministries.)

In these last two months of our fiscal year, I do plead with you to give as generously as you are able to fund the work of your Synod and of the broad ministries of the whole Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Give through your congregation so that it can meet its 2011 intent or pledge to carry out its share of the burden for our ministries in Michigan and throughout the world. (If your congregational leaders have not yet crafted a “letter of intent” for 2012, urge them to do so over the next two months.) Additionally, specially earmarked gifts from you personally or from congregations receiving unexpected financial blessings can be given directly to the Synod and/or to the churchwide ELCA. These gifts make a huge difference in our ability to provide critical scholarships to seminarians, to respond to emergencies, to support the programs of the Center for Mission and Ministry, and to fund new initiatives like the ELCA Malaria Campaign.

I pray that in these next two months (December and January), you will in your tithes and offerings to the Synod give full sway to the law of love. In the phone call tonight I was reminded that you and I are truly blessed with solid, thoughtful leaders, seeking to be faithful, seeking to be good stewards of all that you give for the work of the whole church.



~ Bishop John



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## Winter Leadership Event: "I Am About To Do a New Thing."

**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

**Registration Deadline:** Mon, Jan 9, 2012 / **Cut-off date for discounted room rates:** Dec 21, 2011

**Registration Fee Per Individual: \$50**

### The Giving and Receiving of Gifts

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

Whose birthday do we celebrate on December 25? We honor the birth of Jesus, the King who comes to serve, not be served. We sing carols that tell of God appearing in human flesh, reconciling God and sinners. We give gifts because the great gift of new life in Jesus has first been given to us.

Remember those who are in need and those who need your presence and presents. Remember that neither the size nor the number of gifts is important. What *is* important is the giving and the receiving that reflects God's unconditional love for the whole world. It is about giving what you can and what you are able to do.



I encourage you to give and to receive gifts this Holy Season in the Spirit of the One whose birthday we celebrate: Jesus.

### Center for Mission and Ministry Spiritual Formation Program

Facilitating Contemplative Groups: **Training for Small Group Leadership:** January – May, 2012

- Would your church have one or two persons you would recommend and send for this formation program?
- Would you like to learn a contemplative approach to small group facilitation that is adaptable for use with any kind of group and will enhance and deepen a group's experience?

**Location:** St. Paul Lutheran Church (9844 SW Greenville Rd, Greenville, MI, 48838)

**Date:** 1/16; 2/6 and 2/27; 3/19; 4/23; 5/7; 5/21, 2012

**Time:** 1-4P / **Cost:** \$115 per person for eight 3 hour sessions or two participants from the same church: \$175 total (Participants can share the cost with the church.)

**Leader:** Nancy Brousseau, OP, Center for Mission and Ministry Facilitator

To register, please contact [nancybrousseau@mittensynod.org](mailto:nancybrousseau@mittensynod.org)