



# 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)

## Bishop's Letter, December 2011

### The Scandal

Lately, as I worship at Calvary, Lansing, where Phylis and I are members, or more frequently, in other congregations throughout the Synod, I have been seeing our liturgies with new eyes. As members of the ELCA we highly value both inter-religious and ecumenical dialog and partnerships. So, without fear, we engage sisters and brothers who are, for example, Jewish or Muslim, as well those of other Christian traditions. An especially new world for me has been the rich dialog with Muslim leaders. While Jesus is highly honored in the Islamic tradition, he is not for Muslims, nor for people of Jewish faith, the incarnation of God. But we, in our liturgies, proclaim the incarnation in virtually every prayer and hymn.



As you and I now fully engage Advent and Christmas, I invite you to think about the great scandal of being a Christian: God comes in human flesh to dwell among us. F.E. Peters in his book, **The Children of Abraham**, lifts up this scandal: "Islam's calendar is fixed in God's eternal present, and its liturgical mode on the great exaltation of God and, as its very name suggests, the humble submission of the believer. Christian liturgy, in contrast, is cosmic and yet professedly literal. 'This is my body' seeks at the same time to draw God down from heaven and exalt matter to a supernatural plane in a manner alien to Muslim and Jew alike. Both of the latter know how to be literal – all prayer is literal – but do not endeavor either to ground God or to sanctify matter. *God will intervene in history when and where he will; but he will not dwell among us.*"

Since we profess this conviction so frequently and surely, especially in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, it is easy to miss the scandalous nature of our faith. For us, that the Holy One dwells in our midst, in our gathering at the Lord's Table, in the guise of our neighbors, even in ourselves (Luther: we are Christ to our neighbor) changes everything. Our conviction that the Word, which was God, became flesh (John 1) means every moment of every day, every encounter, every action we take, is to be regarded as sacred, as holy.

This is our supreme challenge, and our great hope: In all that we are and do, Jesus is

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among us. Therefore you and I are called continually to live exemplary lives, with love and respect for all, thus "making Christ known." You and I are called to trust every day that we are embraced by the One who forgives sins (and who entrusts us to proclaim that forgiveness to one another). Our great hope lies not in our own goodness or piety, but in the heart of the Advent and Christmas message: Jesus has come, is coming, will come to dwell among us to redeem and make new every aspect of our lives, every relationship however profoundly broken and sin-filled.

So sing those Advent and Christmas hymns with awe and joy. Sing and pray and listen to the scandal. God dwells among us!

~ 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.

**Registration Deadline:** Jan 9, 2012

**Cut-off date for discounted room rates:** Dec 21, 2011

Registration fee per individual: \$50

*Below is an excerpt from the letter by Bishops Schleicher and Kreiss about the event...*

*We see a chance to pray for faithful brothers and sisters whose joys and struggles can be shared among us. We pray that you will make your attendance a high priority as we see our way through the wilderness and discover, drink from, and safely cross the rivers God is creating in the desert.*

*We'll be blessed by the presence of these guests:*

- *Bishop Todd Ousley of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan,*
- *Pastor Karl Reko, former missionary to Papua New Guinea, researcher and primary writer for the Living into the Future Together (LIFT) project of the ELCA, and now the facilitator of our discernment process toward the formulation of a "plan for mutual missional action."*
- *Pastor Beth Ann L. Stone, assistant to the bishop in the Upper Susquehanna Synod, and specialist in young adult ministry*
- *James Hamilton, Rector at Trinity Episcopal Church in Farmington Hills. The liturgy Rev. Hamilton has developed, "Lex Orandi," has been very successful at reaching the generation missing from most of our congregations: the 25-40 year olds.*



Please visit <http://www.mittensynod.org/news/index.html> to download the registration form and the Bishops' letter.



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First Call Theological Education Region 6 Event: **Who you *are* is how you'll lead.**

**Dates:** April 22-24, 2012

**Location:** Potawatomi Inn, Angola, IN

**Registration deadline:** Fri, March 8

This event includes all rostered leaders in their first three years following ordination, consecration or commissioning who are serving in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana or Kentucky. Further information and registration can be found at [http://www.mittensynod.org/news/pdfs/2011\\_11\\_Docs/registration\\_2012.pdf](http://www.mittensynod.org/news/pdfs/2011_11_Docs/registration_2012.pdf)

First Call Theological Education is a process in which first call leaders along with an experienced colleague discuss ministerial identity, ministry skill, and how the history, values and commitments shape the ministry in that place. Small groups meet throughout our Synod. Current colleague leaders are Pastor Rebecca Ebb-Speece, Pastor Colleen Nelson, Pastor Mike Hahn, and Pastor Sarah Friesen-Carper.

Thank you to the congregations, colleagues, and participants who help to make ministry vital for all. For further information about First Call Theological Education, check out the ELCA website at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Education/Life-Long-Learning/First-Call.aspx>.

Your congregation's plan for mission support for 2012 has been mailed to each treasurer/pastor/council president. Please give prayerful consideration to your level of mission support for God's mission that takes shape through the ministry of the ELCA, complete the form, and return it to the Synod office on or before Feb 15.

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

### **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)



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## Seeking and Finding the Church

*Pastor Jim Foster, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church*

To its delight, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Holland was recently established as a geocache site. As a relatively new congregation with a permanent church home just two years old, foot traffic is essential to outreach, teaching neighbors the church is an accessible, essential, welcoming member of the neighborhood. Geocaching offers active individuals and families a simple, non-threatening way to become a little better acquainted with the church.

Geocaching is a real-world, outdoor treasure hunting game using GPS-enabled devices. Participants navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates and then attempt to find the geocache (container) hidden at that location. Geocaches can be found all over the world. It is common for geocachers to hide caches in locations that are important to them, reflecting a special interest or skill of the cache owner. These locations can be quite diverse. They may be at your local park, at the end of a long hike, underwater or on the side of a city street.

The rules of the game are quite simple:

1. If you take something from the geocache (or "cache"), leave something of equal or greater value.
2. Write about your find in the cache logbook.
3. Log your experience at <http://www.geocaching.com>

All you need to geocache are a GPS device or a GPS-enabled mobile phone so that you can navigate to the cache, and a free, basic Geocaching.com Membership. For more information on this interesting pursuit, visit the game's website at <http://www.geocaching.com>



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## Ventures in Growing Stewards

John Jeffrey, Facilitator (Advent Lutheran Church, Lake Ann)

[johnjeffrey@charter.net](mailto:johnjeffrey@charter.net)

At our recent Conference meetings this fall, I had the opportunity to discuss the **Ventures in Growing Stewards** program with many of you. The first Introduction meetings to be offered in the Synod will be held on January 15 in Gaylord and on January 29 in Bay City.

**What:** This will be a one and a half hour meeting to discuss the Ventures in Growing Stewards objectives, the reasons for congregations to participate, and how the workshops are structured.

**Why:** Ventures in Growing Stewards is designed to assist congregations in building strong foundations for growing good stewards of all ages, ignite spiritual growth and enthusiasm for being an evangelizing congregation, develop a vision and plan for year round ministry including invitation for financial response and planned giving, and to foster relationships among faith communities

**Who:** This first meeting will be for interested and decision-making members of your congregation. Pastors, stewardship leaders, and key lay Leaders are especially encouraged to participate. A part of our discussion will be to provide you with tools to help decide if your congregation is ready.

**When/Where:** January 15, 2012, 3P, Peace Lutheran Church (Gaylord)

January 29, 2012, 3P, Messiah Lutheran Church (Bay City)

*Future meetings will be planned with the locations of the participating congregations in mind.*

## Church Position Openings

Calvary Lutheran Church (Lansing) has job openings for an Administrative Assistant and a Youth Ministry Coordinator.

The **Administrative Assistant** is responsible for general office support; developing and maintaining written communications; and providing assistance to the Pastor and Church Council President as needed, while demonstrating support of the mission and vision of Calvary Lutheran Church. Qualified applicants must have the ability to communicate both verbally and in writing; possess excellent grammar and punctuation skills; and be proficient in Microsoft Office including Word, basic Excel, PowerPoint and Publisher, along with email and the Internet. Demonstrated creativity in formatting written communications is a plus. This is a part time position, with work hours from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm Tuesday thru Friday. Pay rate starts at \$12 per hour.

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The **Youth Ministry Coordinator** will provide leadership for developing and implementing a Christ-centered, congregation-based, year-round ministry with youth ages 3 years through 12th grade (and their parents.) This ministry will provide for spiritual growth and nurturing, involving them in the ministry of Christ and promoting Christian fellowship. Qualified applicants must have the ability and desire to work with children of all ages; be a committed Christian able to teach the Lutheran/Christian faith to young people in a way that is lively and relevant; knowledge of youth and adolescent spiritual and personal development, and youth culture; and have an understanding of the safety and protection of all children. Musical ability is a plus. This is a part time position, working 10 hours per week, which could fluctuate depending on activities. Pay rate starts at \$10 per hour.

To apply, send your resume to Pastor Laura Gerstl, Calvary Lutheran Church, 6301 West St. Joseph Highway, Lansing, MI 48917.

**Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church (Saginaw)** is looking for a **Director of Music**. This part-time position, 12-15 hours per week, involves supervising the congregation's music program and directing the Vocal Choir and Praise Team. For a job description and application, please contact Faith, 989-799-0162.

## December 2011 – March 2012 Prayer Partners List

Dec 4: Our Saviour Lutheran, Rev. Jeff Bonn, Saginaw  
Dec 11: Resurrection Lutheran, Rev. Kathleen Basner, Saginaw  
Dec 18: St. John Lutheran, Rev. Paulette Cummings, Saginaw  
Dec 25: Zion Lutheran, Rev. Sue Hand, Saginaw  
Jan 1: Faith Lutheran, Bernice (Deno) Sorrels, AIM, Sidney  
Jan 8: Peace Lutheran, Rev. Robert Linstrom, South Haven  
Jan 15: Peace Lutheran, Rev. Bryan Schneider-Thomas, Sparta  
Jan 22: New Life Lutheran, Rev. Christina Bright, Spruce  
Jan 29: Spruce Lutheran, Rev. Laraine Sundin, Spruce  
Feb 5: Saron Lutheran, Rev. Joan Oleson, St. Joseph  
Feb 12: Immanuel Lutheran, Rev. Paul Kuhlman, Suttons Bay  
Feb 19: St. John's Lutheran, Rev. Karleen Kinker, Three Rivers  
Feb 26: Bethlehem Lutheran, Rev. Paul Busekist, Traverse City  
Mar 4: St. Thomas Lutheran, Rev. Aaron Sorrels, Trufant  
Mar 11: Augustana Lutheran, Michael Holman, SAM, Tustin  
March 18: St. Peter Lutheran, Rev. Cliff Randall, Unionville  
Mar 25: Grace Lutheran, Paul Werner, SAM, Vassar



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## **Earthkeeping News & Updates**

*Kim Winchell, Diaconal Minister, Earthkeeping Ministries (kwinchellm@aol.com)*

Advent Blessings! Here is a collection of ideas and resources as you observe Advent and prepare for your Christmas celebrations and gift-giving. May our Lord Jesus Christ surprise you anew with the gift of his presence as this season unfolds.

## **Resources and Gift ideas**

*The Green Bible (NRSV)* [www.greenletterbible.com](http://www.greenletterbible.com)

*The Season of Creation: A Preaching Commentary* – Edited by Norman Habel, David Rhoads, and H. Paul Santmire

*A Watered Garden: Christian Worship and Earth's Ecology*, by Ben Stewart

“A Watered Garden: Christian Worship and Earth's Ecology,” by Benjamin M. Stewart, explores a deep connection between Christian worship and ecology, the interdependence of every living organism on Earth and throughout the universe. The book draws upon a heightened environmental consciousness among Christians and explores ways this awareness can come alive in worship. Stewart's book includes many affirmations of God's promise to cleanse us from sin, to renew and restore us — so that we might help renew and restore an ailing planet. He reminds us of the fragile and wondrous nature of our home, steadily beckoning us to respect and protect it, beginning with the very nature of worship and how we consider Earth and creation.” <http://www.livinglutheran.com/seeds/a-watered-garden-christian-worship-and-earths-ecology.html>

## **Alternative gift giving**

[www.elca.org/goodgifts](http://www.elca.org/goodgifts)

[www.heifer.org](http://www.heifer.org)

[www.lwr.org/handcrafts](http://www.lwr.org/handcrafts)

## **Advent Calendars and Ideas for a Simpler Christmas**

<http://www.livinglutheran.com/seeds/im-dreaming-of-a-green-christmas.html>

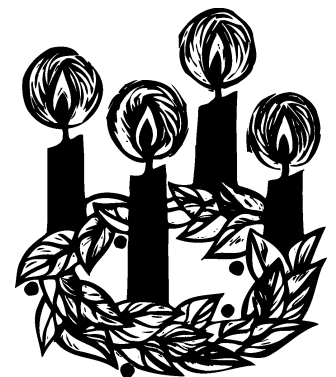
For a variety of free Advent/Christmas Calendars

[http://simpleliving.startlogic.com/indexoth.php?place=archives/XB/xb\\_calindex.php](http://simpleliving.startlogic.com/indexoth.php?place=archives/XB/xb_calindex.php)

The Center for a New American Dream has produced a piece titled “Beyond Consumerism: Simplify the Holidays” at

<http://www.newdream.org/programs/beyond-consumerism/consuming-consciously/simplify-the-holidays>

Peace to you, Peace to the Earth!



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