



# 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, January 2012

### BEING TOGETHER

Earl Boyea, the bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Lansing, and I met just before Christmas to prepare for "A Conversation on the Word" to take place the morning of January 19 at our Center for Mission and Ministry at Christ United, DeWitt. Mostly it will be for our Capital Conference pastors, a few outliers who've expressed interest, and 20 or so priests and professors from the Diocese. Bishop Boyea, priest/ former professor/historian, noted more than once, "just being together will be good." Beyond our selected commentaries on Pope Benedict's recent writings on the Word of the Lord ("Verbum Domini"), the ELCA Confession of Faith, and Martin Luther's treatise on Moses (the use of the Law) and a dialog on the texts for the following Sunday, just being together will be good.

The following Saturday, January 21, a number of lay leaders mostly identified by our conference deans, will gather at Trinity, Midland, to be trained to coach congregational leaders in fulfilling a part of the Discernment Process, Jan 30 – Feb 22. This Discernment Process—a time during which every congregation in both the North/West Lower Michigan and the Southeast Michigan Synods is asked to come together to lift up and report its best assessment of its

particular strengths and calling from God—is a living out of the resolution from our last Synod assemblies, to formulate a plan for mutual missional action. A report of our discoveries will be presented at our joint synod assembly in May.



The next three days, January 22-24, every pastor, diaconal minister, associate in ministry, lay minister and synodically authorized minister from both Synods is urged to also come to Trinity for the Winter Leadership Event, this year another part of the Discernment Process. Beyond the formal content, beyond the liturgies, just being together, getting to know one another better, will be good.

All of the above gatherings will be infused with the Word, the Word made flesh in Jesus, proclaimed in law and gospel, heard in its written form in the Old and New Testaments in his body, the church. In all of the above we expect the Holy Spirit to be blowing, advocating, comforting, chastening, inspiring. Word and Spirit, God making us new, refreshing our sense of calling, always in communion, in our being with brothers and sisters who belong to Christ.

As 2012 begins, think deeply about and pray for the congregation, conference, synod, and denomination to which you belong. Centered in continuous engagement with the Word and trusting in the life-giving presence of the Spirit, these ways in which we will gather as church will heighten the possibilities for what Martin Luther expressed as the greatest gifts: forgiveness, life, and salvation. During this first month of the new year commit anew to "just being together" which in Christ that will surely be good. As Bishop Boyea and I ended our planning session, we both expressed a delightful wonder about what God might do with and beyond the 19th of January, 2012. With you, I wonder about this whole year ahead of us, not without some apprehension, but mostly knowing it will be good.

~ Bishop John



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## WINTER LEADERSHIP EVENT "I Am About To Do a New Thing."

@ 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 (Registration fee: \$50)

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

### Agenda

**Sunday** "I am about to do a new thing...do you not perceive it?"

4:00-5:30 Deans' Meeting re: Discernment Process - Feedback from Key Lay Leader Training

5:00-6:00 Registering and Visiting

6:00 Dinner and Introductions

7:30 Worship – Bishop Todd Ousley preaching, Bishop Kreiss presiding

9:00 Reception

**Monday** "A Way in the Wilderness"

8:00 Continental Breakfast (for those commuting)

8:30 Morning Welcome and Prayers

9:00 Discerning the Gifts and Passions We Bring – Pastor Reko

10:30 The Great Unknown - Living Into the Future - Together?!

11:15 Questions, Doubts, Dreams, and Visions

Noon – Lunch

#### Electives

A: 1:30-3:00 Walking with Young Adults: Part I-Pr. Beth Ann L. Stone

3:30-4:30 Walking with Young Adults: Part II-Pr. Stone

B: 1:30 Christ and Change: The Interplay of Place and Identity-Pastor Martin Zimmann

6:00 Dinner

7:30 Emerging Worship – Rev. James Hamilton, Rector at Trinity Episcopal Church (Farmington Hills)

**Tuesday** "Rivers in the Desert"

8:00 Continental Breakfast (for those commuting)

8:30 Morning Song, Word and Prayers

9:00 Building Bridges – Panel and Open Forum

10:30 "Now it springs forth" – Engaging Our Congregations – Pastor Reko

11:15 Worship – Pastor Stone preaching, Bishop Schleicher presiding

Noon – Farewells



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PREPARING FOR CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS: CONSTITUTIONAL UPDATES

*Pastor Julie Bailey, Assistant to the Bishop for Vocation and Education*

Many congregations are preparing for congregational meetings. We have added the 2011 updates to the Model Constitution for Congregations on our website under Resources: <http://www.mittensynod.org/resources/index.html> We have also added a link to the Model Constitution in full if it has been several years since you updated your constitution. Please note the following from the instructions on Congregational Constitutions:

Required provisions: Sections of this constitution marked by an asterisk [\*] are required when a congregation amends its governing documents. These sections must be used without alteration or amendment of the text in any manner (neither additions nor deletions). This is in keeping with provision 9.52. in the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This provision stipulates that when a congregation of this church “wishes to amend any provision of its governing documents, the governing documents of that congregation shall be so amended to conform to 9.25.b” in the churchwide constitution. The provisions herein marked by an asterisk are those that are indicated as required in ELCA constitutional provision 9.25.b.

Review by synod: In keeping with provisions that apply to all congregations of this church, each congregation is to provide a copy of its governing documents to the synod, as specified by ELCA bylaw 9.53.03. (Numbering as listed in the 1991 and subsequent editions): All proposed changes in the constitution or incorporation documents of a congregation shall be referred to the synod with which the congregation is affiliated. The synod shall approve or disapprove the proposed changes within 120 days of receipt thereof, and shall notify the congregation of its decision; in the absence of a decision, the changes shall go into effect.

The chair of our Constitution Committee is Pastor Dennis Smith: [pastor@messiah-constantine.org](mailto:pastor@messiah-constantine.org). You can provide him directly with the constitution or get a copy to us and we will provide him a copy to review.

## DISCERNMENT RETREAT—MARCH 2-3, 2012

Are you or is someone in your congregation considering public rostered ministry? If you have ever thought about it, this retreat is for you. Come to discern with others who are thinking similarly, learn the process, and ask questions. Cost is \$100 for a double room, \$160 for a single. Spouses are encouraged to attend. We will begin Friday at 5:00P and end Saturday at 5:30P. This is jointly sponsored by Region 6 which includes Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky. This retreat will be held at Camp Mowana in Mansfield, OH. If you are thinking this may be in your future, I hope to see you there. The registration flyer will be available on the synod website under Leadership/Candidacy... <http://www.mittensynod.org/leadership/candidacy.html>





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**Please note:**

2012 IRS mileage rate has been announced: \$0.555/mile business, \$0.23/mile for moving and medical, and \$0.14 for charitable organizations.

## SAVE THE DATES

As 2012 approaches, many things are in the works. If you are like me, you are already making plans. Do the congregation and pastor have the goals and focuses determined for the coming year? Have each of you made your resolutions? Have you updated your 2012 calendar with the happenings? Please make note of the following activities and add to your calendar if appropriate. Hope to see you there! ~ Pastor Julie Bailey

**January 22-24, 2012:** Winter Leadership Retreat in Midland

**February 15, 2012:** Parochial and Bishop Reports due

**March 2-3, 2012:** Discernment Retreat, Camp Mowana, Mansfield, Ohio

**April 22-23, 2012:** First Call Retreat, Potawatamee, IN

**April 27-28, 2012:** Candidacy Retreat, Dewitt (Committee members meet April 26)

**May 17-19, 2012:** Joint Synod Assembly, Lansing, MI

**July 28, 2012:** How to Grow Faith (for teachers, pastors, parents, etc.), Grand Rapids, MI

**July 29-August 3, 2012:** Leadership and Advanced Leadership Training School, Michi-lu-ca

**August 3-6, 2012:** Bass Lake Festival, Michi-lu-ca

**December 27-30, 2012:** The Gathering, TBD

## SYNOD BIBLE STUDY OPPORTUNITY

Interested in a Bible Study that you can chime in on when you are available? Consider joining our Synod Bible Study at <http://nwlmsbible.blogspot.com>. We are currently utilizing a resource from Augsburg as our guide with an updated study posted on Sundays. Join the conversation!





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## **YOUTH IN MISSION'S NEXT *SERVING CHRIST IN THE WORLD* PROGRAM: JUNE 16-30, 2012**

Sunday school teacher. Youth group member. Acolyte. Crucifer. Lector. Church choir member. Do you know a high school sophomore or junior who has served in these roles or perhaps other leadership roles in your congregation? Is there a young leader in your church or community who is asking tough questions about his or her faith and the world around them? If so, please encourage him or her to apply for Youth in Mission's *Serving Christ in the World* program.

Participants will spend one week at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and will travel to Mexico for a six-day multicultural immersion. Youth will discover their leadership skills and explore their gifts for service and ministry during workshops, class sessions, worship, small group discussions, and site visits.

Applications are currently being accepted on a rolling basis. All application materials must be received no later than February 24, 2012. For more information about this life-changing experience visit [www.lstc.edu/yim](http://www.lstc.edu/yim), email [youthinmission@lstc.edu](mailto:youthinmission@lstc.edu), or call (773) 256-0725.

## **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 Saginaw.

**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). To RSVP, call 989-732-1991  
January 29, 2012, 3P, St. John Lutheran (Saginaw). To RSVP, call Messiah Lutheran Church (Bay City), (989) 893-4444

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



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## 2012 LETTERS OF INTENT

Your congregation's plan for mission support (letter of intent) 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.

### IT'S EASY TO EARN YOUR WELLNESS DOLLARS!

*Pastor Gary Bunge, St. Stephen Lutheran Church (Lansing)*

I had just read an update from the ELCA's Board of Pensions about taking the Mayo Clinic's health assessment in 2012 and I was pleased to read that beginning in 2012 there is an increase in how much we can earn by taking the health assessment and doing simple activities to earn personal wellness account dollars. (\$500 for each member and eligible spouse up from \$450 in 2011.) So when I saw Bishop Schleicher one day, I asked him if as a synod we reach the required 65% of people earning their wellness dollars to get the synod discount. I was surprised to hear that we don't, which means there are many rostered leaders and spouses who aren't earning their wellness dollars! In the five or six years this program has been in place, my wife and I have earned nearly \$5000 of free money to help pay for health care costs! It's been a real gift.

Taking the health assessment and doing the follow-up activities to earn the personal wellness dollars is so easy. And what's even better, is that if you take the assessment and do the activities early in the year, the money is available at the time when deductibles haven't been reached and there are more out of pocket expenses. When this plan was first put into place, I thought it would be a hassle to actually receive the wellness account dollars, but what I found is that when there is an eligible expense, I automatically receive a check in the mail...no forms to fill out or on-line requests; the check just automatically arrives. So, if you haven't taken the Mayo Health Assessment and done the activities to earn the extra wellness account dollars, January would be a great time to begin.

Why leave \$500 or \$1000 in free money just sitting there unclaimed?



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## **CARL BJORK NAMED TRINITY PROJECT DIRECTOR**

*January 29th Installation Ceremony Planned in Saginaw*

Carl Bjork begins his ministry in Saginaw on January 1, 2012, serving as Project Director for the Trinity Project. A native of Midland, where he was a member of Trinity Lutheran, Carl completed his AIM training at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus. He was selected from a list of applicants to direct the Trinity Project, which plans to use the residual assets of Trinity Lutheran Church of Saginaw to foster community development in the East Side Saginaw neighborhood around the former congregation.

**Everyone from the Synod is invited to Carl's installation ceremony on Sunday, January 29, 2012 at 5P.** A soup and bread supper will follow the ceremony, along with time to greet Carl and enjoy fellowship. These events will be at **St. John Lutheran Church, 915 Federal (at 2nd Street) in Saginaw.** A special service is planned to initiate Carl and celebrate his arrival. Bishop Schleicher will speak and lead the worship. **Please RSVP via email ([ptwerner@charter.net](mailto:ptwerner@charter.net)) with name, phone number and number of guests planning to attend by January 23, 2012.**

Trinity Lutheran Church served the needs of parishioners on the East Side of Saginaw for over 120 years. The congregation formally closed in December 2010. The remaining property and financial assets are potential resources for ministry in the same community. A planning team has been meeting, under Synod Council approval, for nearly two years, exploring possibilities. Planning has reached the point where a full-time director to lead the efforts and interact with the surrounding community is the next step. Please pray for the project, the Team and Carl.

After the first of the year, Mr. Bjork may be reached at:

Carl Bjork, Director, Trinity Project

c/o St. John Lutheran Church

915 Federal

Saginaw, Michigan 48607

[trinproj@gmail.com](mailto:trinproj@gmail.com)

***Traditionally during the season of Epiphany, there is an emphasis on Global Missions. Order the new 2012 Global Mission Map Brochure now! Perfect for Epiphany, annual meetings, and more!***

+ Filled with a panorama of photos and stories from across the globe, an overview of mission rooted in relationship. (See the attachment.)

+ Learn how your gifts and offerings are turned into effective ministry around the world.

To order 10 or fewer copies, call 800/638-3522 or email [ris@elca.org](mailto:ris@elca.org). To order more than 10, see

[http://resources.elca.org/Products-Global\\_Mission.html](http://resources.elca.org/Products-Global_Mission.html).



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## 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)

## NEWS FROM THE SYNOD HUNGER TEAM

The Synod Hunger team is accepting nominations for the Matthew 25 award for the 2012 Synod Assembly. The award is given to the congregation whose efforts best represent the spirit of the biblical passage, Matthew 25:34-46, in their local efforts to alleviate hunger. The winning congregation will be presented with a plaque and a banner at the Synod Assembly. The banner can be displayed at their location for the next year. In previous years there have been multiple winners of the Matthew 25 award. The Synod Hunger team will accept nominees for this award from now until April 15, 2012. Please send your letter of nomination to Lois Neves, 1747 Mirabeau, Okemos, MI 48864.

We encourage congregations to nominate themselves and keep the spirit of Matthew 25: 34-46. For example, the passage covers other areas than hunger in its message; we are looking for unique and creative ways congregations demonstrate the spirit of Matthew 25. The biblical word justice is very relevant to the discussion here. What does the congregation focus on to do justice on behalf of the poor and the hungry? Lastly, the size of your congregation does not matter when we consider who wins the award. The purpose of the Matthew 25 award is honor what people are doing to live out the meaning of the passage and to inspire other people to go and do likewise. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Michael Anderson at [mikevicki.anderson@gmail.com](mailto:mikevicki.anderson@gmail.com).

Thank you.





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### **EARTHKEEPING NEWS AND UPDATES**

*Kim Winchell, Diaconal Minister, Earthkeeping Ministries*

Blessings of this New Year to you! Several short items this month – some old, some new.

#### **Synod website:**

I hope to add some new / additional Earthkeeping resource material to the synod pages, soon – stay tuned.

#### **Book recommendation:**

*Jesus Today: A Spirituality of Radical Freedom* by Albert Nolan (bestselling author of *Jesus Before Christianity*). I just started reading this book and see lots of food for thought and further discussion ...for pastors and laity. I wonder if Chapter Two on “The Crisis of Individualism” (in Part One on “Signs of the Times”) would have you ready to jump up and down, shouting “Yes! Yes!” as much as it did me?

Let's talk (or email) about it – see below.

#### **Winter Leadership Retreat:**

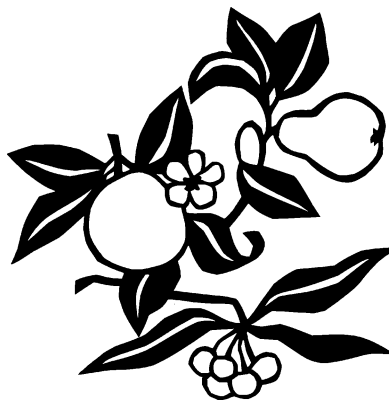
I will be there – come find me, if we haven't met yet (I know we have a number of new pastors in our synod). And, if we've talked in the past, connect with me again. Let's discuss what “new things” the Spirit may be calling you / your congregation to do, to incorporate a more intentional caring for creation ethic throughout the ministry and practices of your congregation.

#### **Ready, willing and able:**

Let me know how I can help, in terms of advice, consultation, workshops, retreats, worship, or preaching on Earthkeeping topics.

989.326.1960 / [kwinchellm@aol.com](mailto:kwinchellm@aol.com)

***PEACE TO YOU, PEACE TO THE EARTH!***



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