



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

North/West Lower Michigan Synod
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Congregational Newsletter Insert: January 2012

Just Like Me

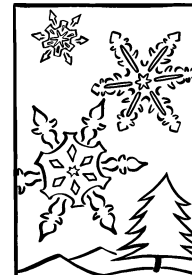
December 12, 2011 – Yesterday was our second home visit Pastor Cliff Randall since he had been diagnosed with cancer, had major surgeries, and was now receiving chemotherapy. Because his illness is so severe, so life-threatening, on the first visit he began to formulate with Phylis and me his funeral service, the hymns he'd want sung, the texts to be read. Before we left that day, I asked him to think about the kind of pastor St. Peter would need if he couldn't continue to serve or if, by the grace of God, he was renewed in health and could look forward to the retirement he'd planned beginning in the summer of the new year. Yesterday he was ready with his "list." In his characteristic disarmingly honest way Cliff said he hoped the next pastor would be "just like me."

Just like me – that might be heard as vain and arrogant. But it was not. A gift God often gives and has surely given Pastor Cliff is the ability to "cut to the chase," to give others a clear window into one's soul, especially when one is looking at the real possibility of an imminent death. What he was saying was undeniably from a humble heart. Here is the list he shared. His successor would:

- + Love Jesus
- + Have an unwavering commitment to the ELCA.
- + Be wide open to everyone who comes through the door of the church
- + Have a total commitment to kids...going to camp with them and participating with them in Sunday School and VBS
- + Proclaim that the Lord's table is open to all...because it is the Lord's table.

As I say goodbye to 2011 and embrace the new year, as I think about the reality that our synod will elect a new

bishop in 2013, I have a list forming too. It is not too different from the one spoken by this beloved pastor at St. Peter, Unionville.



On January 22-24 your pastor, together with our other rostered leaders, lay ministers, and synodically authorized ministers and our counterparts in the SE Michigan Synod, has been urged by me to spend time praying, thinking and talking with his or her colleagues about his or her "lists." Coincidentally these days are in the midst of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Especially mindful of our baptismal unity with sisters and brothers in Christ in every community, the Winter Leadership Event at Trinity, Midland, will be a time to discern and commit to what matters most to us as followers of Jesus and servant leaders. Your pastor with the help of some committed key lay leaders will then invite your whole congregation in February to develop your congregation's "list." We'll gather these lists before the next Synod Assembly and work to see the big picture, the emerging portrait, of what God is calling us to be and do as ELCA congregations in the lower peninsula of Michigan.

On some level, Pastor Cliff's fragile life, not knowing whether or not he might soon die, is a metaphor for all of our lives in Christ. It is the reality of our congregations. What do we hope for those who succeed us? What are the deepest values we'd want them to embrace? Though it could be construed as arrogant, the best future for our congregations and our synods, might well come forth from our own honest wrestling and disclosure of what, in and by God's grace, matters more than anything else.

~ Bishop John



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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

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, email youthinmission@lstc.edu, or call (773) 256-0725.

CONGREGATIONS, ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SAVING MONEY?

If your pastor(s), their spouses, and other staff are ELCA primary health plan members, **AND IF** they take a simple online Mayo Clinic Health Assessment by April 30, 2012, **AND IF** we have 65% of eligible participants do this in our Synod, THE RESULT IS THAT ALL CONGREGATIONS IN THE SYNOD WILL RECEIVE A 2% DISCOUNT ON ELCA BENEFITS CONTRIBUTIONS. Now how about that? Let us all work together for the benefit of everyone. Contact me for more information. ~ Pastor Roger Hardy, rogerhardy@mittensynod.org

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.