



**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

CONGREGATIONAL NEWSLETTER INSERT: FEBRUARY 2012

YOUR CONGREGATION AS GIFT

During the period January 30 through February 22 every congregation in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod and the Southeast Michigan Synod is asked put in writing their best thinking about the gift God has made them to be. The discernment of this giftedness may come in a variety of ways: through small groups that gather during that time period, a special congregational forum, a representative ad hoc group meeting to discuss the missional forte of your congregation, or some other creative way you can express how you are living what God is calling you to be and do together.

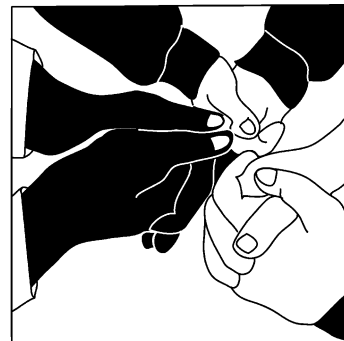
Since living our mission potential to the fullest is an ongoing privilege and calling you are also asked to imagine what your congregation would be like in three years if it did indeed come closer to a full expression of its giftedness. We are also asking each congregation to think about what it might look like in three years if its relationship with other congregations in the synod and with the bishop was as mutually sensitized and strengthened as possible for our witness to the liberating power of the Gospel.

Just as you are individually (and in some ways) very uniquely gifted, so is your congregation. You and your congregation are loved by God. That love, recognized and embraced, means that you are free to be the significant gift to your community and to the world God created you especially to be.

Leaders in your congregation, normally the pastor, the congregational president, or another officer, will have a response form to complete (and to return before February 27) citing the giftedness and mission potential of your congregation. From the information received the research and evaluation staff of our ELCA churchwide office will help us to create a portrait of our gifted potential. Our aim is to share this portrait with you first at the May Synod Assembly, then more widely soon thereafter. We want to see not only what God has gifted us to be and do, but what might happen if in all sorts of interesting ways yet to be discovered, we combined/shared our various gifts and thereby enriched our witness to the power of God's love in Jesus in our own communities and throughout the lower peninsula.

A resolution passed at our last Assembly charged us to formulate a plan for mutual missional action. This work that you do in February will be a huge step in helping us fulfill that charge.

~ Bishop John





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News From Pastor Roger Hardy, *Director for Evangelical Mission*

+ AN ISSUE OF STEWARDSHIP

All congregations in our synod will earn a 2% discount on 2012 ELCA health contributions if 65% of the eligible ELCA-primary plan members and spouses in our Synod take the simple online Mayo Clinic Health Assessment by **April 30, 2012**. To take the Assessment, please visit www.elcaforwellness.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.

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YOUTH IN MISSION'S 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.

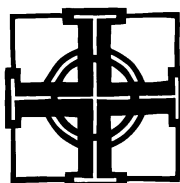
Participants will spend one week at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and will travel to Mexico for a six-day multicultural immersion. Youth will discover their leadership skills and explore their gifts for service and ministry during workshops, class sessions, worship, small group discussions,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

STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION

Stories of Faith in Action is a free resource full of dynamic stories of how God is changing lives around the world through the mission and ministry of the ELCA. You'll also find information on [Mission Support](#) (the financial contributions given by synods and congregations to fund churchwide ministries), including [budget](#) numbers, and more. This is a very useful resource for the Epiphany season and for congregational meetings. To order your free copy of Stories of Faith in Action, call 800-638-3522 or order online at www.elca.org/resources. [Ask for ELCAMA1008](#). The resource is free; you only pay for shipping.

Rev. Lanny Westphal, Program Director, Relationships
ELCA Global Mission





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