



NORTHEASTERN OHIO SYNOD  
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E-MAIL [office@neos-elca.org](mailto:office@neos-elca.org)  
[www.neos-elca.org](http://www.neos-elca.org)

**UNIFIED MAILING**

**November 17, 2016**

**Volume 29 — Issue 6**

**Published 6 Times a Year**

**Next Unified Publication: January 12**

**Deadline for articles: January 2**

**Unified Newsletter Changes.** To manage resources more effectively, we are moving to an all-electronic version of the Unified newsletter, beginning with the January 2017 issue. If you would like to continue receiving the newsletter in paper format, please call or email the Synod office before January 2017 to let us know. We will continue to publish the Unified six times/year; submission deadlines will be announced in each issue. The new e-Unified will be sent to all email subscribers, and published on the Synod's web site, [www.neos-elca.org](http://www.neos-elca.org). The weekly E-news will keep you updated with all the news, events and pertinent information in between Unifieds. If you would like to begin receiving the E-news and our other electronic mailings you may sign-up on our website. Simply go to [www.neos-elca.org](http://www.neos-elca.org) and click on Unified Newsletter; from there click on Join Our Electronic Mailings to sign-up. If you have articles or notices to publish in the Unified, please contact Marilyn Matevia at the Synod office, [mmatevia@neos-elca.org](mailto:mmatevia@neos-elca.org)

*Please remember to let the Synod office know if your Unified job postings, equipment offers or requests, etc., have been filled!*

**\*\*IMPORTANT: Keep track of your Call, Candidacy, and Congregational Call Process Deadlines.\*\*** From **December 15, 2016 through January 17, 2017**, no Rostered Leader Profiles (RLPs) or Ministry Site Profiles (MSPs) can be submitted or updated through the ELCA website, which will be in "read only" mode while updates are made to the Word and Service roster.

**Catholic-Lutheran Advent 2016 Scripture Reflections.** The Lutheran-Catholic Covenant Commission invites Catholics and Lutherans to use Advent Reflections 2016 for personal or group discussion and reflection. This ecumenical resource for prayerful reflection on the Sunday Readings Advent Year A is included as an attachment to this newsletter. Reprint permission is granted. See the insert in this issue of the *Unified* newsletter.

**Advent Procession of Lessons and Carols.** In preparation for the Advent and Christmas seasons, Holy Trinity, Akron, 50 N. Prospect St. will host, "Advent Procession of Lessons and Carols," Friday, Dec. 2, 7:30 p.m. This meditative service interweaves a collection of lessons from scripture with the music of the Advent season. It will alternate lessons from the Bible with both choral and congregational music in telling the Advent to Christmas story. This service is free and open to the public; however, a freewill offering will be accepted. For more information call (330) 376-5154.

**2017 NEOS LYO Winter Gathering.** The 2017 Winter Gathering will be held January 6 - 8, 2017 at the Holiday Inn in Independence, Ohio. This gathering will concentrate on "FAITH: For All I Trust Him" both in our own spiritual lives and as a community. The musical talent this year includes Brad & Rebekah. Registration and T-shirt deadline is December 1, 2016. Questions? Please contact Natalie Zielinski at 440-334-8711 or [nataliealaina98@gmail.com](mailto:nataliealaina98@gmail.com) | [2017 LYO Winter Gathering Letter](#) | [2017 LYO Winter Gathering Registration](#)

*Continued...*

**2017 Professional Leaders Retreat. REGISTER NOW!** Rostered leaders and full-time church professionals from all three Ohio synods are invited to the Professional Leaders Retreat at Sawmill Creek Resort; 400 Sawmill Creek Dr., Huron, OH 44839; January 17-19, 2017. The early, discounted registration deadline has ended. [The final registration deadline is December 6, 2016](#). The theme is "Freed and Renewed in Christ: 500 Years of God's Grace in Action." The Rev. Dr. Joy Schroeder, professor of church history at Trinity Seminary and professor of theology and religion at Capital University; and Dr. Kenneth W. Innskeep, director for Research and Evaluation in the Office of the Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; will serve as guest presenters. Rev. Dr. Schroeder will share her Reformation history research, and Dr. Innskeep will offer his insights on the impact of the Reformation today. See below for additional information and a registration form. For additional registration information, please contact Deacon Patti Jabre, (330) 425-7377, or [pjabre@ctktwinsburg.com](mailto:pjabre@ctktwinsburg.com) | [2017 PLR Invitation Letter](#) | [2017 PLR Brochure](#) | [2017 PLR Registration Form](#)

**Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2017.** The Lutheran-Catholic Covenant Commission invites Catholics and Lutherans to commemorate together the 2017 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 18-25, 2017: *Reconciliation – The Love of Christ Compels Us* (*2 Corinthians 5:14-20*). For celebration resources, visit the Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute website, [www.geii.org](http://www.geii.org). For more information about ecumenical dialogue, visit the USCCB Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs website, [www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/](http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/) or the ELCA Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations website, [www.elca.org/ecumenical/](http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/).

**Floor Scrubbers/Polishers.** The property committee at Good Shepherd, Conneaut, has 2 floor scrubbers/polishers for sale. One uses a 21" disc and has 5 spare discs. The other one is a Power-Flite, 17-175 rpm, a 30 ft. power cord and 3 spare discs. For more information please contact the church office at 440-599-8908.

**Wanted:** Someone to donate a commercial or riding mower to Euclid, Euclid (431 East 260th Street, Euclid OH 44132). Contact Bob at either 216 731-4874 and leave a message or [koskosek1@gmail.com](mailto:koskosek1@gmail.com). Will pick up!



## *Advent Blessings from the Lutheran Center of the Northeastern Ohio Synod*

*Deb Deen*

*Kal K. Biernann* *Serena Ajaal*

*Suzanne Statera* *Suz Gibay* *Karen Kaufman*

# BISHOP'S NEWSLETTER

November 17, 2016

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*“Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” [Philippians 4:6]*

Dear People of God in the Northeastern Ohio Synod,

The Rev. Margaret Marcuson has written a book for church leaders entitled *Leaders Who Last: Sustaining Yourself and Your Ministry*. I refer to it on occasion, mostly when I am facing an anxiety filled situation that requires me to manage my stress. I don't consider writing a newsletter article particularly stressful, but I checked back to the previous two years and it seemed quite uncanny that both November letters had to do with money.

At our October Synod Council meeting, we had a long and distressing discussion on the steadily decreasing trend in our congregations' giving to mission support. The council requested that I write a letter to our congregations, appealing to your generosity, especially as we enter the fourth quarter of our fiscal year. I will use this space to alert you that the letter is not quite in the mail, but it is coming.

In her book, however, Marcuson maintains that when a congregation says, “It's about the money,” it's not really about the money. Rather, money becomes the focus for anxiety in a congregation. That anxiety stems from, among other things, a lack of clear vision of the future ministry of the congregation. In other words, we start saving, dare I say, hoarding for that rainy day that never comes. I would also add that it's not about the money, it's about our attitude towards the money and those around us.

The ELCA, in partnership with you, does a lot to support ministries worldwide and in our local communities. What you give is shared to expand your local ministry beyond your walls and do God's work in the world. There's a wonderfully informative video presentation on this topic, “Where Does Your Offering Go?,” that is accessible through the ELCA website [or by clicking [HERE](#), if you're reading this electronically].

We continue to seek ways to educate our pastors and congregations on the idea of mission support. Our Director for Evangelical Mission, the Rev. Terrance Jacob, along with several others, has been working on these efforts for the past year. He shares his thoughts in the following paragraphs:

## **Exploring Mission Support and Stewardship for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

There are ongoing discussions in the church on how different generations approach giving (or mission support, as we call it in the ELCA) in each cultural or generational

*Continued...*

shift. In the mainline church, like the ELCA, our average member's age is 63. Therefore, some argue that the giving culture of the Baby Boomers (people aged 52 to 70 in 2016) should still be the order of the day. However, another interesting statistic is that sixty five percent of mainline church congregations are experiencing significant decline in membership. One contributing factor to this decline is the diminishing number of younger people in the church, that is, Generation Xs (aged 36-51) and Millennials (aged 19-35).

Is it this decline in younger membership that leaves us still committed to the Baby Boomer subculture – of giving, worship style, church government, language...? We wonder: have we decided that the Baby Boomer subculture is the way to go, since we want to fulfill the interests of our members? Then, we also wonder whether it is our Baby Boomer subculture that *keeps the younger people out*? These "wonderings" can lead us to analyze our church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through various lenses, like: worship style, language, liturgy, race, age and gender. In the Northeastern Ohio Synod, one of our lenses, amongst others, is mission support (financial giving) and stewardship.

Our NEOS Stewardship Think Tank has been meeting for nearly a year. We have shared homegrown ideas that are working for our congregations. At our 2016 Synod Assembly, the Think Tank hosted two well-attended workshops on Stewardship. We are blessed to have a significant number of younger leaders in our synod, many of whom are first-call or second-call pastors. It is hoped that these younger pastors and leaders would attract younger members to our churches. However, the churches they serve are mostly older-member churches. Therefore, we need to provide learning opportunities on Mission Support and Stewardship that cover both the existing Baby Boomer subculture and the changing Gen X and Millennial subcultures.

Therefore, for at least a year, we will be convening a table for first and second-call pastors to engage in conversations on mission support and stewardship. We begin on February 1, 2017, with a 1-day seminar facilitated by a stewardship specialist from Pennsylvania, Rev. Katie Brantner, who is also a younger ELCA pastor. We anticipate that this table will not only be a training opportunity for younger pastors but a resource to the wider synod as we all consider what mission support and stewardship practice might look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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In closing, please bear in mind that we serve a God of abundance. As the apostle Paul reminded the church at Philippi, "*I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*" [Philippians 4:12-13]

Thanksgiving blessings,



+Bishop Abraham D. Allende

## POSITIONS AVAILABLE

*Important reminder about background checks: Congregations are called to be safe places for all members, and every ELCA congregation is responsible to have established guidelines and policies protecting all members. When hiring church workers, please remember the importance of background checks. Your congregation should have official guidelines in place to safeguard members against abuse. For more information about background checks and guidelines: [www.elca.org/backgroundchecks/](http://www.elca.org/backgroundchecks/)*

*Please remember to tell the Synod office if your posted position has been filled!  
Contact Marilyn Matevia, [mmatevia@neos-elca.org](mailto:mmatevia@neos-elca.org), or 330-929-9022, ext. 22*

**Choir Director.** Zion Lutheran Church in Youngstown is searching for a choir director. Contact Zion for a detailed job description: [office@zionohio.org](mailto:office@zionohio.org)

**Worship Accompanist.** Celebration, Chardon is seeking a Worship Accompanist with the following: High level of proficiency with keyboard instruments, including willingness to become acclimated to the specific functions of the available instrument; strong sight reading ability; comfortable with eclectic musical styles; experience with solo and ensemble accompanying, as well as full congregational singing. Compensation \$10,000-\$12,000, commensurate with education and experience. For more information, visit <http://celebration-lutheran.org/about/employment-opportunities.html>.

**Organist.** Emmanuel, New Philadelphia is seeking an experienced organist. This is a part-time exempt/salaried position; extra fees for weddings and funerals are to be worked out with parties involved prior to the events. Four-vacation-with-pay-Sundays are available. Continuing Education funding is available by request. If interested, please contact the church office at 330-364-7571.

**Executive Director of Camp Fredrick.** Camp Fredrick is seeking an Executive Director for the camp. This person is responsible for overseeing the office administration activities such as: Finances, communication, marketing and record keeping. They will work with the program committee to develop and implement programs for summer and year round retreating. This is for youth, families and adults. They will be responsible for overseeing property/facility concerns of 100 acres and several buildings and equipment, while working with a board of directors and subcommittees to establish guidelines and policies in each of these areas. Interested persons should contact Dick Iverson, Interim Director by phone (608-792-6875) or email ([iver29@frontiernet.net](mailto:iver29@frontiernet.net)). Resumes will be received until the end of January 2017.

**Part-time Secretary.** St. Mark, Tallmadge is looking for a part-time secretary with flexible hours for 10-15 hour per week. Primary job responsibilities will be weekly bulletin and monthly newsletter, other general office duties. Applicant should be proficient using Windows 7 and Microsoft Office products. Please send resume to St. Mark Lutheran Church, Attention Office, 158 North Ave, Tallmadge, OH 44278, or email to [office@stmark-lutheran.org](mailto:office@stmark-lutheran.org)

**Youth and Education Director.** Parma Lutheran is looking for an energetic, resourceful person to lead youth and education ministries. Youth responsibilities are for the youth ministry of 6th-12th grade students. Planning and resourcing service projects as well as fun activities as we learn more about God's amazing grace and love for us, working with the Pastor on confirmation and high school education needs. Education duties of the job are to resource and train teachers for Sunday school, empower volunteers for VBS and other family activities within the framework of pre-school to 5th grade. This position will require 25-30 hours a week, weekends, and some evenings with a flexible schedule. Compensation will be discussed with qualified candidates. A degree in education and/or youth ministry is a real plus, but not a prerequisite. See Pastor Don or a member of the Executive Committee with any questions. Resumes may be submitted through the church office or online at [pastor@plcparma.org](mailto:pastor@plcparma.org). Visit our website [www.plcparma.org](http://www.plcparma.org) for the full job description.

**Choir Director.** Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Conneaut, OH is searching for a choir director. This position includes an evening practice and Sunday morning worship service. Choir season runs from September through May. Contact the church at 440 599-8908 or e-mail [goodshepherd@suite224.net](mailto:goodshepherd@suite224.net) ASAP!

**Full time Youth and Family Ministry, Christian Education and Campus Outreach.** Trinity, Kent is searching for a full time position for youth and family ministry, Christian education and campus outreach. This person will provide mentoring and leadership for current youth programs and help redevelop Christian education into a multi-spectrum approach for youth and families. We're looking for someone who is passionate about their faith, is a team player, wants to link youth and families in the process of Christian education and connect youth to the life of the congregation. For a complete job description go to [www.trinitykent.org](http://www.trinitykent.org) or call Pastor Doug Fidler at 330-673-5445.

**Music Coordinator & Bell Choir Director.** St. Paul, Smithville, is searching for a music coordinator and bell choir director. Both positions include a Wednesday evening practice and Sunday morning worship when the individual choirs perform. Choir season runs from mid-September through late May. Anyone interested may contact St. Paul at (330) 669-2111 or [stplc@sssnet.com](mailto:stplc@sssnet.com)

**Youth Leader.** St. Paul, Berea, is searching for a youth leader to help with their high school ministry program. This person should be present with the youth in worship at least twice a month and lead two youth events and a fellowship activity each month. The position will consist of approximately six to seven hours per week. The congregation's desire is for those who apply to be willing to become part of a church family, not just have a job. For more details, please go to [www.stpaulberea.org](http://www.stpaulberea.org)

*Updated 11/14/2016*

**If you are aware of any changes to the “Recently Ill” or “On-going Prayers” lists, please contact the synod office to let us know: 330-929-9022, or [office@neos-elca.org](mailto:office@neos-elca.org). Unless otherwise requested, individuals will be shown on these lists for two editions of the Unified.**

***Congregations in the Call Process***

- Akron, Holy Trinity, called Ruth E. Anderson (deacon, director of music ministries, accepted); called Marla Wood Kay (deacon, director of congregational ministries, accepted)
- Alliance, Abiding Savior, called Angela Storer, accepted
- Ashland, Stone, Rebecca Rossow, interim
- Austintown, Grace, called Pamela Kelly, accepted
- Bay Village, Bethesda-on-the-Bay, Robin Craig, interim (PCUSA)
- Berea, St. Paul: term-call associate pastor (18 months)
- Broadview Heights, Triune, supply pastors & Maple Heights, Covenant, George Hrbek, ongoing supply, two-point call
- Cuyahoga Falls, St. Luke’s, Larry Mackey, interim
- Fairview Park, Messiah (associate)
- Lakewood, Trinity, Angela Freeman-Riley, Interim
- Lorain, First
- Massillon, Holy Trinity, Mark Sherwindt, interim
- Massillon, St. Paul’s, Dan Cammarn, interim
- North Canton, Zion, Hal Robarge, interim
- Sharon Center, St. Paul, Elizabeth Hadler, interim (UMC)

- Pastor Gerald Keller
- Pastor Jim Kennell
- Ron Kilgore, husband of Pastor Carol Kilgore
- JD Kuzmik, son of Pastor Rhonda Gallagher
- Pastor Dean Lewis
- Pastor Diane Lundgren
- Pastor Victor Myers
- Pastor Alan Nathan
- Ruth Ann Paynter, mother of Pastor Ann Paynter
- Pastor Dan Rossbach
- Pastor Richard Shibley
- Pastor Bob Springer
- Pastor Rick Warger
- Louise White, wife of Pastor Robert White
- Jil Williams
- Pastor Jim Zingale

***Recently Ill or Hospitalized***

- Judith Camp, wife of Pastor Paul Camp
- Pastor Bobbie Davis-Newhouse
- Pastor Fred Grosse
- Lou Raymond, husband of Pastor Aimee Raymond
- Ruth Sander, mother of Pastor Bob Sander
- Pastor Blanche Tyree
- Pastor Lynn Williamson’s daughter, Megan

***On-going Prayers***

- Pastor Béla Bernhardt
- Pastor Sharon Brown’s sister, Ann
- Mary Collins, wife of Pastor Lang Collins
- Pastor Duane Culler
- Pastor John Furno
- Pastor Jaclyn Gasior
- Pastor Ted Grotjohn
- Pastor David Hammel
- Pastor Walter Heber
- Pastor George Keeler
- Pastor Tim Keeler

# NORTHEASTERN OHIO SYNOD CALENDAR

## NOVEMBER

- 19 10:00 am, Fall Bishop's Gathering (alternate date), St Jacob, North Canton  
20 4:30 pm, Installation of Ruth Anderson, Director of Music Ministries, & Marla Kay, Director of Congregational Ministries, Holy Trinity, Akron  
22 Congregational Resource Team, NEOS Resource Center  
24-25 Synod Office & Resource Center Closed – Thanksgiving Holiday  
29 Conference Deans Meeting, NEOS Conference Room  
30 10:30 am, Retirees Advent Service & Luncheon, Faith, Akron

## DECEMBER

- 1 2:30 pm, Nominating Committee Orientation, NEOS Resource Center  
4 4:30 pm, Installation of Rev. Pam Kelly, Grace, Austintown  
13 9:00 am, Richland-Ashland Conference Meeting  
5:30 pm, Executive Committee, NEOS Conference Room  
18 4:30 pm, Installation of Rev. Angela Storer, Abiding Savior, Alliance  
23-31 Synod Office & Resource Center Closed – Christmas Holiday (also closed January 2, 2017)

## JANUARY

- 7 LYO Winter Gathering, Holiday Inn, Independence  
15 Synod Martin Luther King, Jr. Service, Messiah, Lyndhurst  
16 Synod Office & Resource Center Closed – observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday  
17-19 Professional Leaders Retreat, Sawmill Creek Resort, Huron  
21 8:30 am, Synod Council, Grace, Wadsworth  
25 Congregational Resource Team, NEOS Resource Center

## STAFF VISITS FOR THE COMING WEEKS

<i>Bishop Abraham Allende</i>	<i>Pastor Karl Biermann</i>	<i>Pastor Terrance Jacob</i>
Nov 19 St Jacob, N. Canton (Fall Bishop's Gathering)	Nov 20 Holy Trinity, Akron St John's, Canal Fulton	Jan 15 Messiah, Lyndhurst
Nov 20 Prince of Peace, Poland Holy Trinity, Akron	Nov 30 Faith, Fairlawn Dec 4 Bethany, Akron; Grace, Austintown	
Nov 27 St Matthew, Medina		
Nov 30 Faith, Fairlawn (Retirees Advent Luncheon)	Dec 11 St Paul's, Massillon Dec 18 Abiding Savior, Alliance	
Dec 4 Bethlehem, Cleve. Hts. Grace, Austintown	Jan 15 Messiah, Lyndhurst Jan 22 New Horizons, Homerville	
Dec 10 Grace, Wadsworth		
Dec 11 Zion, Loudonville		
Dec 12 Iglesia Luterana la Trinidad, Canton		
Dec 18 Peace, Ashland Abiding Savior, Alliance		
Dec 24 First, Canton; St Luke's, Cuyahoga Falls		
Jan 15 Abiding Savior, Alliance; Messiah, Lyndhurst		
Jan 29 Faith, Massillon		

## **NORTHEASTERN OHIO SYNOD PULPIT SUPPLY LIST**

**The 2016 NEOS Compensation Guidelines state:** Those asked to serve as pulpit supply should be contacted well in advance of the date needed and, upon acceptance, be provided with a copy of the worship bulletin and pertinent information about the service. A member familiar with congregational worship practices should be on hand to welcome the pastor prior to the service. The recommended honorarium for one worship service is \$150 plus mileage at the current IRS mileage reimbursement rate- beginning January 1, 2016, 54 cents/mile). Travel reimbursement should also include turnpike tolls. For additional services, scheduled within three hours of the conclusion of the initial worship service, whether at the same congregation or at another, as in two-point parishes, an additional \$50 per service should be paid plus any additional mileage. If additional services are scheduled during the week that are similar in nature e.g., Sunday evening, Wednesday, Saturday, etc., an additional honorarium of \$85 for each additional service plus mileage at the current IRS mileage reimbursement rate (see above) should be paid. For additional responsibilities, appropriate compensation should be provided. Expenses for lodging and meals, if necessary, are to be paid by the congregation. (Contractual interim pastors are reminded that they are responsible for obtaining supply in their absence.)

**The following persons have indicated their availability for pulpit supply (additional supply pastors from denominations in full communion with the ELCA can be found on page 3):**

**The Rev Shari Ayers**  
207 Diller St.  
Pandora, OH 45877  
614-460-0186  
[shari.ayers@gmail.com](mailto:shari.ayers@gmail.com)

**The Rev Loranell Breyley**  
80 High Point Dr. Unit 66  
Medina, OH 44256  
248-850-6357  
[sunshinedancer2@gmail.com](mailto:sunshinedancer2@gmail.com)

**The Rev William Burkett**  
1951 Fowl Rd Apt B-3  
Elyria, OH 44035  
440-567-9062  
[weensue@yahoo.com](mailto:weensue@yahoo.com)

**The Rev Langley Collins**  
1310 Fifth Ave Apt 605  
Youngtown, OH 44504  
(H) 330-286-5409  
(cell) 330-720-9872  
[lmcollins@zoominternet.net](mailto:lmcollins@zoominternet.net)

**The Rev David Craig**  
3119 Driftwood Rd.  
Norton, OH 44203  
330-825-0291  
[davebevcraig@sbcglobal.net](mailto:davebevcraig@sbcglobal.net)

**The Rev Barbara Essex**  
(UCC)  
11205 Euclid Ave  
Cleveland, OH 44106  
(O) 216-421-9614 ext. 301  
(H) 216-772-2325  
[barbara.upcam@gmail.com](mailto:barbara.upcam@gmail.com)

**The Rev George Gaiser**  
944 Dussel Rd.  
Kent, OH 44240-6524  
330-678-9287  
[gigaiser@att.net](mailto:gigaiser@att.net)

**The Rev Frank Gross**  
1020 Federal Ave.  
Alliance, OH 44601  
330-823-8943  
[pastorgross@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pastorgross@sbcglobal.net)

**The Rev Elizabeth Hazelton**  
9396 Brandywine Rd  
Sagamore Hills, OH 44067-  
2480  
330-468-0412  
[pastorbetti@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pastorbetti@sbcglobal.net)

**The Rev Kermit Lauterbach**  
32844 Woodspring Cr.  
North Ridgeville, OH 44039  
440-748-3490  
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*Single services only*

**The Rev Clyde McGee**  
1751 Cedar Chase Dr.  
Akron, OH 44312-4880  
330-784-5361  
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**The Rev James Metzger**  
1681 Raywood Rd.  
Alliance, OH 44601-3670  
330-823-8384

**The Rev Dr Deborah Michaels**  
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[revdeb51@yahoo.com](mailto:revdeb51@yahoo.com)

**The Rev George Murphy**  
538 Cynthia Lane  
Tallmadge, OH 44278-2884  
330-524-4090  
[g murphy10@neo.rr.com](mailto:g murphy10@neo.rr.com)

**The Rev Gail Patton**  
5256 Spencer Rd.  
Lyndhurst, OH 44124-1251  
440-442-5256

**The Rev Robert Pindell**  
925 Barkston Dr.  
Highland Hts., OH 44143-  
3218  
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**The Rev H Dixon Slingerland**  
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**The Rev Edward Wahl (NWOS)**  
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419-864-0850  
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**The Rev Richard Weaver (NWOS)**  
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**The Rev Daniel Wenger**  
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**The Rev Gail Zackrison (NW PA Synod)**  
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*Continued...*

*The current Pulpit Supply list is also available on the NEOS website under the "Resources" tab.*

## NORTHEASTERN OHIO SYNOD SUPPLY PREACHERS – LAY (NON-COMMUNION SERVICES)

**Marilyn Matevia**  
4201 W 49<sup>th</sup> St.  
Cleveland, OH 44144  
415-412-8246  
[mmatevia@gmail.com](mailto:mmatevia@gmail.com)

**David Rebeck**  
244 Fairpark Dr.  
Berea, OH 44017-2405  
440-891-9793  
[djrebeck@roadrunner.com](mailto:djrebeck@roadrunner.com)

**Ken Reinoehl**  
407 Ninth St. NW  
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## Hymns for the Church Year

by Thomas H. Boreman  
[boreman4@yahoo.com](mailto:boreman4@yahoo.com)

### FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT—TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

Year A

Hymn suggestions are from four Augsburg Fortress publications. *E* refers to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, *L* refers to *Lutheran Book of Worship*, *W* refers to *With One Voice*, and *WP* refers to *Worship and Praise*. *H* is Hymn of the Day, *G* is Gathering Hymn, and *S* is Sending Hymn. *I*, *Ps*, *II*, and *HG* are hymns relating to the Revised Common Lectionary, and refer to the First Lesson, Psalm, Second Lesson, and Holy Gospel

#### November 27, 2016

H	E439/W744/WP128	<b>FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b>
H	E259/L32	Soon and Very Soon
I	E711/W762	Fling Wide the Door
I	E749/L414	O Day of Peace
Ps	E784/L471	O God of Love, O King of Peace
II	E246/L37	Grant Peace, We Pray, in Mercy, Lord
II	E436/L31	Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding!
II	E657	Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying
HG	E241/L23	Rise, O Sun of Righteousness
HG	E254/L30	O Lord, How Shall I Meet You
HG	E260/L33	Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus
	E244/L25	The King Shall Come
G	E730/L244	Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers
S	E438/W627	Lord Our God, with Praise We Come
	E252/W628	My Lord, What a Morning
		Each Winter as the Year Grows Older

#### December 4, 2016

H	E255	<b>SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b>
H	E249/L36	There's a Voice in the Wilderness
I	E239/L35	On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry
I	E577-8/L284	Hark, the Glad Sound!
I	E248/W626	Creator Spirit, Heavenly Dove
Ps	E311/L87	People, Look East
Ps	E689/L409	Hail to the Lord's Anointed
Ps	E434/L530	Praise and Thanksgiving
II	E299/L53	Jesus Shall Reign
II	E765/L469	Cold December Flies Away
HG	E266/W629	Lord of All Hopefulness
G	E631/L315	All Earth Is Hopeful
S	E890L332	Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
S	E250,552/W725	Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory
G	E264/L26	Blessed Be the God of Israel
		Prepare the Royal Highway

#### December 11, 2016

II	E266/W629	<b>THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b>
H	E710	All Earth Is Hopeful
I	E244/L25	Let Streams of Living Justice
I	E260/L33	Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers
I	E893/L401	The King Shall Come
I	E781/L474	Before You, Lord, We Bow
Ps	E877/L539	Children of the Heavenly Father
Ps	E251	Praise the Almighty
II	E262	My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness
HG	E256/L29	Wait for the Lord
S	E873-4/L553	Comfort, Comfort Now My People
G	E248/W626	Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart
G	E252/W628	People, Look East
S	E551/W723	Each Winter as the Year Grows Older
	E254/L30	The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve
		Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

#### December 18, 2016

H	E257/L34	<b>FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b>
H	E263/L28	O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
I	E295/L42	Savior of the Nations, Come
I	WP36	Of the Father's Love Begotten
Ps	E264/L26	Emmanuel
Ps	E240/W630	Prepare the Royal Highway
II	E298/L62	Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah
HG	E293	The Bells of Christmas
HG	E573/L180	That Boy-Child of Mary
G	E254/L30	My Soul Now Magnifies the Lord
S	E267/L39	Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus
G	E490/L198	Joy to the World
S	W634	Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence
G	E248/W626	Sing of Mary, Pure and Lowly
		People Look East

#### December 24, 2016

H	E268/L51
H	E267/L39
I	E282/L54
I	E252/W628
I	WP80
Ps	E856/L532
II	E309/L86
HG	E275/L50
HG	E289/L71
HG	W636
G	E270/L60
	E271/L69
S	E273/L46
	E285/W641
S	E274

#### CHRISTMAS EVE

From Heaven Above
Joy to the World
It Came upon the Midnight Clear
Each Winter as the Year Grows Older
King of Kings
How Great Thou Art
The Only Son from Heaven
Angels, from the Realms of Glory
Angels We Have Heard on High
Before the Marvel of This Night
Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
I Am So Glad Each Christmas Eve
All My Heart Again Rejoices
Peace Came to Earth
On Christmas Night

#### December 25, 2016

H	E295/L42
H	E290/L70
Ps	E430/L171
Ps	E267/L39
II	L387
HG	L46
HG	E300/L56
HG	E289/L71
HG	L74
G	E292
G	E297
S	E288/L55
	E291/L57
	E298/L62
	E275/L50

#### CHRISTMAS DAY

Of the Father's Love Begotten
Go Tell It on the Mountain
Rejoice, for Christ Is King!
Joy to the World
Spirit of God, Unleashed on Earth
Once Again My Heart Rejoices
The First Noel
Angels We Have Heard on High
A Stable Lamp Is Lighted
Love Has Come
Jesus, what a Wonderful Child
Good Christian Friends, Rejoice
Let Our Gladness Have No End
The Bells of Christmas
Angels, from the Realms of Glory

#### January 1, 2017

H	E416/L179
H	E292
HG	E268/L51
HG	E293
G	E273/L46
S	E634/L328-9
G	E297
S	E299/L53
S	E288/L55
	E291/L57
G	E797
S	E620/L345
	E745/L316
G	E269/W643

#### January 1, 2017

H	E284/L72
H	E286/L52
I	E267/L39
Ps	E823
II	E271/L69
II	E781/L474
HG	E718/L417
G	E275/L50
G	E288/L55
S	E551/W723
E293	
S	E299/L53
S	E290/L70
	E300/L56
G	E269/W643

#### FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime
Your Little Ones, Dear Lord
Joy to the World
Praise the Lord! O Heavens
I Am So Glad Each Christmas Eve
Children of the Heavenly Father
In a Lowly Manger Born
Angels from the Realms of Glory
Good Christian Friends, Rejoice
The Spirit Sends Us forth to Serve
That Boy-Child of Mary
Cold December Flies Away
Go Tell It on the Mountain
The First Noel
Once in Royal David's City

**January 6, 2017**

H	E308/L76	<b>EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD</b>
H	E296/L40	O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright!
I	E242/W633	What Child Is This
I	E671/W651/WP123	Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn
I	E665/L393	Shine, Jesus, Shine
Ps	E311/L87	Rise, Shine, You People!
Ps	E434/L530	Hail to the Lord's Anointed
II	E582/L523	Jesus Shall Reign
HG	E300/L56	Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling
HG	E301/L75	The First Noel
HG	W646	Bright and Glorious Is the Sky
HG	WP57	We Three Kings of Orient Are
S	E314/W652	Hear the Angels
S	E275/L50	Arise, Your Light Has Come!
H	E815/W649	Angels, from the Realms of Glory
		I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

**January 8, 2017**

H	E450/L188	<b>BAPTISM OF OUR LORD</b>
H	E305/W647	I Bind unto Myself Today
I	E673/L400	When Jesus Came to Jordan
I	E314/W652	God, Whose Almighty Word
II	E718/L417	Arise, Your Light Has Come!
HG	E322/L88	In a Lowly Manger Born
HG	E310/L90	Oh, Love, How Deep
HG	E800/L486	Songs of Thankfulness and Praise
G	E459	Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart
S	E449/L189	Wade in the Water
	E448/L195	We Know that Christ Is Raised
G	E453	This Is the Spirit's Entry Now
	E455	Baptized and Set Free
S	E309/L86	Crashing Waters at Creation
G	E445/W697	The Only Son from Heaven
		Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters

**January 15, 2017**

H	E341	<b>SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY</b>
H	E309/L86	Now Behold the Lamb
I	E866/W650	The Only Son from Heaven
I	E507/L237	We Are Marching in the Light
I	E677	O God of Light
Ps	E871/L542	This Little Light of Mine
HG	E369/L128	Sing Praise to God, the Highest Good
HG	E759/L479	Christ the Lord Is Risen Today; Alleluia!
HG	WP140	My Faith Looks Up to Thee
S	E547/L221	There Is a Redeemer
	E520/L248	Sent Forth by God's Blessing
G	E553/L265	Dearest Jesus, at Your Word
	E655/L364	Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies
S	E576/W755	Son of God, Eternal Savior
S	E665/L393	We All Are One in Mission
		Rise, Shine, You People!

**January 22, 2017**

H	E817/W784	<b>THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY</b>
H	E584/L434	You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore
I	E282/L54	The Son of God, Our Christ
I	E314/W652	It Came upon the Midnight Clear
I	E307	Arise, Your Light Has Come!
I	E511/L233	Light Shone in Darkness
I	E866	Thy Strong Word
Ps	E834/L526	We Are Marching in the Light
II	E359/L126	Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise
II	E654/L369	Where Charity and Love Prevail
HG	E798	The Church's One Foundation
G	E825/L252	Will You Come and Follow Me
S	E661/L390	You Servants of God
S	E836/L551	I Love to Tell the Story
	E715	Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee
		Christ, Be Our Light

**January 29, 2017**

H	E725	<b>FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY</b>
H	E728/W764	When the Poor Ones
I	E720/WP147	Blest Are They
I	E669/L383	We Are Called
I	E710	Rise up, O Saints of God
I	E651	Let Streams of Living Justice
II	E637	Oh, Praise the Gracious Power
		Holy God, Holy and Glorious

II E476

II E803/L482

HG E719/L429

HG E754/L316

S E551/W723

S E546

E714/L425

G E520/L248

**February 5, 2017**

H	E677
H	E532/W718
I	E715
I	E720
I	E717/W763
I	E712/L423
I	E665/L393
HG	E673/L400
HG	E815/W649
G	E553/L265
G	E688/L405
	E507/L237
G	E866/W650
S	E540/WP47
	E307

**February 12, 2017**

H	E604/L300
H	E615/W739
I	E404/L475
I	E715
II	E550/L261
II	E654/L369
II	E582/L523
II	E508
HG	WP156
HG	E612/W738
HG	E804/L508
HG	E544/L196
G	E806/L504
S	E310/L90
	E778/L451
G	E836/L551

**February 19, 2017**

H	E716/L419
H	E729/L433
II	E652/L365
II	E651
II	E828
II	E645/L367
II	WP117
HG	E711/W762
HG	E757/W782
S	E631/L315
	E535/W722
S	E707/L424
	E721
	E358/W666
	E525

**February 26, 2017**

H	E316/L80
H	E306
I	E511/L233
I	E553/L265
I	E834/L526
II	E252/W628
HG	E315/L89
HG	E719/L429
HG	WP32
HG	E317
G	E853/L545-6
G	E671/W651/WP123
G	E665/L393
S	E631/L315
S	E318/W654
	E593

Thee We Adore, O Savior

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life

Jesus the Very Thought of You

The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve

To Be Your Presence

O God of Mercy, God of Light

Dearest Jesus, at Your Word

**FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**

This Little Light of Mine
Gather Us In
Christ, Be Our Light
We Are Called
Let Justice Flow Like Streams
Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service
Rise, Shine, You People
God, Whose Almighty Word
I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light
Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies
Lord of Light
O God of Light
We Are Marching in the Light
Go, Make Disciples
Light Shown in Darkness

**SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**

O Christ, Our Hope
In All Our Grief
Come Gracious Spirit, Heavenly Dove
Christ, Be Our Light
On What Has Now Been Sown
The Church's One Foundation
Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling
As Rain from the Clouds
What Have We to Offer
Healer of Our Every Ill
Come Down, O Love Divine
Praise the Lord, Rise up Rejoicing
O God, My Faithful God
Songs of Thankfulness and Praise
The Lord's My Shepherd
Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee

**SEVENTH SUNDAY after EPIPHANY**

Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace
The Church of Christ, in Every Age
Built on a Rock
Oh, Praise the Gracious Power
Alleluia! Voices Raise
Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation
Praise the Name of Jesus
O Day of Peace
All My Hope on God is Founded
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
Hallelujah! We Sing Your Praises
Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us
Goodness Is Stronger than Evil
Great God, Your Love Has Called Us
You Are Holy

**TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD**

Oh, Wondrous Image, Vision Fair
Come, Beloved of the Maker
Thy Strong Word
Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise
Each Winter As the Year Grows Older
How Good, Lord, to Be Here!
Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life
Come to the Mountain
Jesus on the Mountain Peak
When Morning Gilds the Skies
Shine, Jesus, Shine
Rise, Shine, You People!
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
Alleluia, Song of Gladness
Drawn to the Light



# Advent 2016

## Resources for Discussion and Reflection



Prepared by the Lutheran-Catholic Covenant Commission of the  
Northeastern Ohio Lutheran Synod of the ELCA &  
Roman Catholic Diocese of Youngstown

With joy and the spirit of Advent expectation, we hope this resource  
Helps you in waiting and longing for Christ. Whether you use it  
For personal devotion or with a combined group of Lutherans and Catholics,  
We wish you a blessed Advent.

### Advent I: Longing for Peace

Isaiah 2:1-5

Psalm 122

Romans 13:11-14

Matthew 24:37-44

Take a moment to read Isaiah 2:1-5 and Psalm 122. Taken together, these readings are rich in the symbolism of peace. These are images of God's kingdom that we do not see this Advent on the evening news. The first days of Advent find children waiting and longing for the baby Jesus, festive celebrations, and gifts. Yet this season, as in every day of faith-filled living, we wait and long for God's kingdom to fully break into our world with its promise of peace.

- \* What do you think inhibits peace today?
- \* Where do you experience God's gift of peace?
- \* In the Isaiah and Psalm passages, what symbols stand out to you?
- \* How can you be an instrument of peace?

### Advent II: Longing for Justice

Isaiah 11:1-10

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

Romans 15:4-13

Matthew 3:1-12

John the Baptist calls out of the wilderness for the people to prepare the way of the Lord, to make straight his paths, and to bear fruit in their lives. God's way of making "a straight path" is often different from our usual concepts of justice. This week's readings speak in terms of liberating the oppressed, hearing the cries of the poor, and reconciling opponents. The prophets proclaim that God's kingdom will need justice, not just charity.

- \* Where do you hear the cry of the poor and oppressed?
- \* Who are the opponents in your life or in the life of your congregation/parish that need to be reconciled?
- \* In what justice-focused ministries does your congregation/parish participate?

### Advent III: Longing for Joy

Isaiah 35:1-10

Psalm 146:4-9

James 5:7-11

Matthew 11:2-11

Buried within every newscast is a human-interest story grounded in hope and joy. The negative always seems to get more attention. We can lose heart if we only look in the direction of what is wrong and what is missing. When we look at our church at large or our congregation/parish through dark glasses, we miss the virtues James suggests of patience, strength of heart, and endurance. With these gifts, we can renew a sense of joy. Joy yesterday: Jesus came into our world and forever changed it. Joy tomorrow: Jesus will come again and usher in the fullness of the kingdom. Joy today: Jesus comes in brief and holy moments.

- \* Where do you experience joy in your congregation/parish?
- \* In what ways are you a joy to others?
- \* How can the gifts of patience, strength of heart, and endurance help you focus on the joy of Jesus?

### Advent IV: Longing for Jesus

Isaiah 7:10-16

Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:18-25

As children, the longing of Advent ends on Christmas day with manger, carols, celebrations, and gifts. We experience great joy until a few days pass and we sense a long wait ahead of us once again. This is the way of Advent, the joy of Jesus among us, yet not fully. Joy gives way to more longing. But we remember God *is* Emmanuel - God with us. The greater celebrations help us see God breaking into our lives and our joy is deep. But so is our longing. We wait for peace. We wait for justice. We wait for joy. We wait for Jesus.

- \* When do you have the most difficulty waiting? When is waiting a joy?
- \* What names for God are most helpful to you in times of struggle? In times of joy?
- \* What does the name Emmanuel (God with us) mean for you today?

For more information,  
Visit us on the web:  
[www.lccovenant.weebly.com](http://www.lccovenant.weebly.com)  
[www.neos-elca.org](http://www.neos-elca.org)  
[www.doy.org](http://www.doy.org)

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# Pastoral Mentoring Groups

led by Pastor Paul E. Hoffman

Six sessions of collegial Bible study,  
worship, prayer, conversation, and teaching.  
9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (One day each month for 6 months)  
beginning Tuesday, 24 January 2017  
at St. John, Cardington  
\$400 for 6 sessions (2 via Skype)

Inquiries/Registration via e-mail: [paulhoffman56@gmail.com](mailto:paulhoffman56@gmail.com)



Sometimes ministry can be a lonely vocation...  
Sometimes it feels as if some fresh ideas could be helpful...  
Sometimes you wonder when *you* will have a place to study the  
Scriptures and to pray with those who share your life-story...

If any of these sound familiar to you, then perhaps a Pastoral  
Mentoring Group could be helpful and uplifting for you.

Some of the topics for the direct teaching include, but are not limited  
to, those listed below. We'll let the group choose our monthly topics  
as interest emerges.

- SERMON SEMINAR
- MAKING THE MOST OF TIME
- WHAT'S AT THE CENTER?
- LEADING FROM A BAPTISMAL CENTER
- A PRIMER ON PARISH OUTREACH AND MISSION
- DOING MORE WITH LESS
- TRAINING LAY LEADERS
- THE WONDER OF LITURGICAL PLANNING

## about Paul...

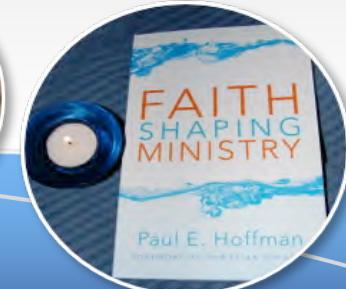
Currently called by the Northwest  
Washington Synod, ELCA, as "*a  
writer and teacher for the larger  
Church.*"

Former Lead Pastor of Phinney Ridge  
Lutheran Church in Seattle,  
1996-2013

Nationally recognized keynoter,  
workshop leader, preacher, mentor,  
and teacher

Learn more about Paul:

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



Paul is the author of two books that detail his parish  
experience of bringing new adult Christians to faith through a  
yearlong mentorship process begun by the ancient Church:  
*Faith Forming Faith* and *Faith Shaping Ministry*.

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## Your *Link* to the Ministry Resources of NE Ohio

Volume 20  
Issue 10

November 2016

Staffed Hours  
Monday, Tuesday &  
Thursday 8-4

Call or email ahead and  
recommended resources will  
be pulled for you to preview.

NE Ohio Synod  
Resource Center

1890 Bailey Road  
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio  
44221-5259

Phone: 330-929-9020  
Fax: 330-929-9018  
Email: [rc@neos-elca.org](mailto:rc@neos-elca.org)

Karen Kaufman,  
Resource Specialist

### Week of Prayer for Christian Unity— January 18-25

The theme for 2017 is **Reconciliation – The Love of Christ Compels Us** (*2 Corinthians 5:14-20*). Materials to support this week are available at [www.geii.org](http://www.geii.org)

Another source for prayers is ***So We Believe, So We Pray*** a publication of the World Council of Churches.

Other resources available to support ecumenical conversations are:

***From Conflict to Communion*** provides a history of the differences between Lutherans and Catholics as well as a basis for communion. A study guide facilitates reflection and group discussion. Both are available as a pdf.

<https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/From%20Conflict%20to%20Communion.pdf>

Martin Marty has written an easy to read book that helps individuals in understanding the conflict ***October 31, 1517: Martin Luther and the Day That Changed the World***.

***Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist*** helps Lutheran and Catholics see where both are in agreement as well as better understand the points in which we differ. By reviewing this document together local leaders can find ways in which to serve in ministry together. This document is also available as a pdf at [http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical/lutheran/upload/Declaration\\_on\\_the\\_Way-for-Website.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical/lutheran/upload/Declaration_on_the_Way-for-Website.pdf)

***Talking Points*** with Jews and Muslims can be found at Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations under [www.elca.org/Resources](http://www.elca.org/Resources). On this same page can also be found other documents related to our relationship with our full communion partners, the African Episcopal Methodist Zion Church, the Orthodox and the Mennonites.

Groups interested in interfaith activities will appreciate ***Embracing Interfaith Cooperation***. This five-session dvd series explores the challenges with author Eboo Patel and a panel with diverse religious backgrounds.

***One Body, Many Members*** encourages individuals to share faith and hospitality in diverse cultural settings.

***A Multitude of Blessings*** by Cynthia Campbell helps Christians examine and live with present day religious diversity.

The dvd series ***Christianity's Family Tree: What Other Christians Believe and Why*** helps adults understand the differences between eight denominations.

## New Arrivals

**Best Practices for Ministry to and by Senior Adults** is an excellent guide for reviewing and broadening in your congregation this valuable ministry opportunity. You can request your own copy from Prince of Peace, Carrollton, TX 972-447-9887

**Faith at Home: A Handbook for Cautiously Christian Parents** is an easy to read book that suggests ways to make faith connections in the home through daily routines as well as special events. Use this book to engage all ages in sharing what activities or rituals nurture our faith lives.

**Preaching Stewardship** is a video presentation by Bishop Craig Satterlee to accompany his book by the same title. A discussion guide for group conversation is also available.

## ACT 2DAY 4 TOMORROW

Winter is a popular time for youth lock-ins. Themes can vary but lock-ins related to a cause have become popular. ACT2DAY 4 TOMORROW focuses on the issues of food and hunger in this country and beyond. The curriculum for this event can also be easily adapted into a 4-6 session study that includes other age levels and culminates in a service project. Details for this curriculum can be downloaded from the tab "Hunger Ed" at [www.elca.org/hunger/resources](http://www.elca.org/hunger/resources). There you will also find *Taking Root In: Lock-in*. This downloadable guide provides instructions for conducting a lock-in that focuses on hunger but does not have the fasting component. **Taking Root: Hunger Causes, Hunger Hope** curriculum kits for grades 7-9 and 10-12 may be borrowed from the resource center. Additional hunger and poverty education resources are available through the resource center.

## OLDER ADULTS

Not all older adults are snowbirds. Some older adults do not travel far from their favorite chair and look forward to visits or phone calls. **No Wrinkles on the Soul** provides brief devotions that are perfect for sharing with individuals or in small groups as a way of providing spiritual nourishment. Congregations sign cards, children draw pictures and create other gifts of love to leave with those visited. For extended conversation **10 Gospel Promises for Later Life** [large print] and **Soul Unfinished: Finding Happiness, Taking Risks & Trusting God as We Grow Older** are excellent resources for small group settings. And for those who desire deeper conversations **A Very Present Help: Psalm Studies for Older Adults** offers different perspectives and reflective talking points for groups. Older adults can often offer support as prayer partners and faith friends for members of all ages. With encouragement they can also be a part of discussions on Facebook groups. Share the unique ways in which your congregation shares and supports the ministry of older adults in your community.



The **Luther Study Bible** contained articles on How Luther Read the Bible, the Small Catechism and Lutheran Insights. Those articles are now available as a free download in pdf form at [www.bookoffaith.org/anniversary.html](http://www.bookoffaith.org/anniversary.html)

November 2016—Volume 24, Number 11

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## DOES YOUR CONGREGATION SUFFER FROM ANXIETY?

The church governing board gathered with a consultant for their much-publicized first meeting. They knew the consultant's reputation and were eager to hear his advice. However, the consultant did not begin with recommendations. Rather he introduced a planning method known as SWOT analysis—acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Several church members were familiar with the approach but could not imagine how it applied to their church problems. No one had given much thought to how the congregation's internal dynamics and their external context related to their current crisis.

He first asked: "What are some of the church's strengths?" The room went silent. Finally, one member offered: "Well, we know we need help." After the nervous laughter subsided, the consultant tried again. "What are some of the church's weaknesses?" Many hands went up and he struggled to capture all their answers in his notes. The same response problem came with the next set of questions. The church leaders offered few insights about the congregation's opportunities but a full set of complaints about the threats they faced as a church. Knowing that the SWOT method only worked if members could give meaningful answers, he knew he was dealing with deeper issues. The consultant suspected a collective anxiety that caused the leaders to focus on preventing bad things from happening instead of a "promotion focus"—the tendency to reach for new opportunities and rewards.<sup>1</sup>

### What Does Church Anxiety Look Like?

We think of anxiety as an emotional state that individuals experience—like feelings of worry and unease. But non-anxious individuals participating in a church organization can produce a collective nervousness—an unhealthy group emotion entirely different from their own. An anxious church tends to:

- Over think any decision before taking action
- Imagine and expect negative outcomes
- Worry about the very worst that could happen

- Respond poorly to any negative feedback from nonmembers
- Be extremely self-critical

### Church Anxiety Risk Factors

Anxiety levels can never be reduced to zero but alarms can fire too frequently, disabling a church with paralysis. High anxiety gets churches stuck in unproductive loops that, over time, actually increase anxiety. For both individuals and organizations, this anxiety manifests itself in a variety of symptoms: it shows up in how we *act* (the behavioral component), how we *feel* (the emotional component), and how we *think* (the cognitive component). And when a church gets caught in an anxiety trap, leaders fail to see the big picture and do not take advantage of opportunities for more effective ministries. When faced with these anxiety bottlenecks, leaders must address all three dimensions where anxiety surfaces.

**Behavioral traps.** The default mode of operation for anxiety-prone congregations is postponing decisions, conducting more research and gathering more information



"...AND YET...  
 IT SORT OF MAKES ME WANT TO TAKE A LOOK."

than necessary, and waiting for attitudes or opinions to change. This approach often means that congregations are working harder using outdated or failed strategies. The old proverb, “If all you ever do is all you’ve ever done, than all you’ll get is all you ever got” summarizes this truth. This blend of postponing action mixed with all-or-nothing approaches are warning signs that indicate congregations have persisted too long in certain behaviors.

One of the fastest ways to reduce anxiety is to change behavioral patterns first, without waiting for thoughts and attitudes to shift. To get out of no action mode, set deadlines for action and make those deadlines public. Research shows that deciding when and where actions are to be taken increases the odds of follow through. Hold leaders accountable by delivering decisions and actions on time, no matter how difficult. Consistently review plans and keep moving forward on implementation. Do not let the behavior of a few highjack the congregation’s ability to boldly act on core mission goals.

Our church goals are like a mirror that should reflect who we are. If a church fails to act on its mission goals, the church is not who it says it is. Rediscovering our goals and committing to them increases our resilience to anxiety.

**Cognitive traps.** While behavior in churches reveals *unconscious* intent—we do what we are motivated to do—our *conscious* intent reflects what we *think* we want to do and that intent clearly lines up with our goals. Still, our thinking can be bogged down in cognitive traps. For instance, information and knowledge are essential ingredients for making decisions, but these two alone are insufficient in an imperfect world. To move forward in mission requires faith, the willingness to focus on both the positive and negative, and some ability to tolerate ambiguities.

As noted in the story with the consultant, anxiety-prone congregations, and leaders in particular, are wired to consider any potential negative outcomes. However, with practice, church leaders can routinely put on the table for discussion all the potential positive outcomes and give them an equal hearing. In addition, leaders can recognize the potential harm arising from inaction. Even when the congregation recognizes that a negative outcome is possible, leaders can still believe taking action is worth the risk and that there is value in acting with uncertainty.

**Emotional traps.** The overall emotional temperature of the congregation determines the likelihood of tsunami-level anxiety. Alice Boyes describes an anxiety-prone individual as someone whose answers start as no and might move to yes. A congregation whose default response is “no” to any proposed action is a church

that uses a lot of emotional energy to process change or even the idea of change. When reducing anxiety becomes the goal, rather than the goals themselves, leaders have taken the bait for an emotional trap. Apprehension and pessimism suggest the congregation does not believe it has the capacity to cope with things that do not go according to plan. Similar to navigating the cognitive traps, members and leaders must make a concerted effort to dig out of the emotional traps. Try starting with a “yes” on a mission goal, setting behavior deadlines for decisions, and making sure to consider as many positive implications as negative ones.

## Tackling Anxiety with Better Habits

Church anxiety can cost you in terms of missed opportunities. Fortunately, church anxiety is not genetic. When congregations tackle anxiety with self-knowledge and a conscious intent to change habits, they often achieve dramatically different results.

The ways a church thinks, feels, and acts grow into deep-seated habits. In some congregations, these behavioral, emotional, and cognitive patterns solidify into obsessions. Two acres of undeveloped land went on the market next to a suburban church. Leaders began discussing whether the congregation should purchase the additional acreage. Differences of opinion became arguments and arguments led to warring camps—about whether funds could be used more wisely elsewhere, uncertainty about whether the church would grow enough to ever need the extra space, and others who wanted control over the types of development likely to be adjacent to church property. After six months of debate and delay, they realized that their anxiety and uncertainties had generated familiar bad habits. With renewed commitment to their goals, the church sought out several community partners—a preschool and a local Habitat for Humanity chapter. After purchasing the property, the congregation helped these two nonprofits obtain grants to build a school and new family housing. By consciously moving past their negative thinking, they played a critical role in shaping community resources that fostered their neighbors’ quality of life.

What opportunities has your congregation missed? When has inaction interfered with meeting the church’s mission goals?

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1. Material drawn from the analysis of individual anxiety by Alice Boyes, *The Anxiety Toolkit: Strategies for Fine-Tuning Your Mind and Moving Past Your Stuck Points* (New York: Penguin, 2015).

December 2016—Volume 24, Number 12

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## CAN WE WAIT FOR GOD'S SPARK?

God sparks innovations, but only on God's terms, and those terms usually involve disruption. From burning bushes to wood that burns even when soaked, God's sparks manifest themselves in unusual ways. We can choose to ignore the spark or even squelch the spark. But, if we take notice of it, the spark soon becomes a roaring fire. What are the conditions for God's spark? And, does the spark look different if people rather than God initiate the encounter?

### How Business Views Disruption

The average life of a shopping mall or center built today is fifteen years. And if the shopping venue does not make a radical change at least half-way through their expected fifteen-year tenure, it may not even last that long! Geoff Colvin recently wrote that the most innovative companies today, "see their business as disrupters would see it." They never stop self-disrupting their own companies.<sup>1</sup> For example, Amazon disrupted bookstores twenty years ago with their online selling model. Then disrupted itself with Kindle e-readers, replacing its own books-by-mail model.<sup>2</sup> They have continued this disruption by opening and successfully operating brick-and-mortar bookstores, even while the traditional bookstore model continues to fail.<sup>3</sup>

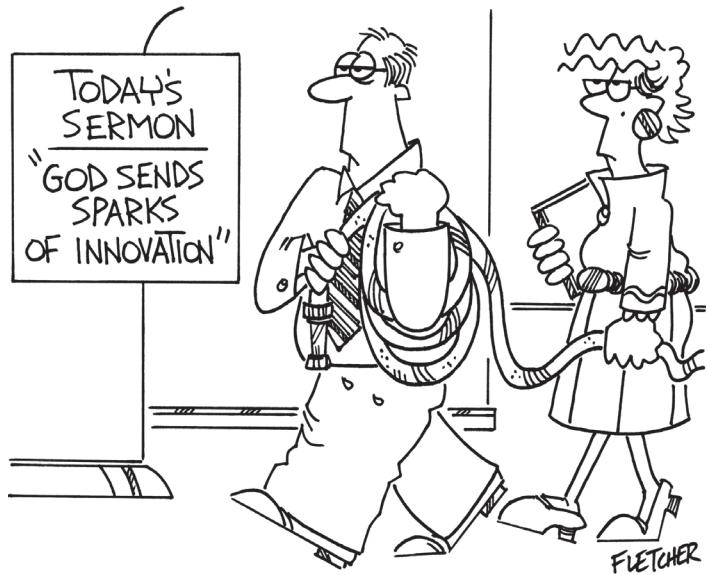
Fortunately, congregations do not have to self-disrupt. God is here to do that for us! Sometimes congregations forget how often they have had to respond to disruptions in order to faithfully minister in their present location. A church that has existed for one hundred years has probably had six or seven makeovers resulting from neighborhood swivels and societal swings. Congregations are indeed resilient. But, God must sponsor their transformations.

For instance, through a discernment process, a Milwaukee congregation challenges its members to draw from three equal sources whenever the church

launches a new ministry. Equal shares of the start-up cost must come from: (1) those launching the ministry; (2) other congregational members; and (3) nonmembers or community partners. Asking non-members to support new ministry ideas can be disruptive and involving community stakeholders can make the ministry launch much more messy and problematic. However, this church believes the community's involvement confirms that this is the direction in which God has encouraged them to go and have accepted the disruption proposed by God.

### God's Disruptive Spark in the Bible

Sparks from God are indications that God has heard us or wants to reveal something to us. What happens when God initiates the contact? The book of Matthew reminds us that God's initiative contact is usually disruptive. God's encounter with the mother of Jesus was certainly disruptive. When God visited the shepherds and asked them to go to King Herod to inquire about a new king, that news was not received warmly by



the current king. Jesus rocks John the Baptist's world by asking John to baptize Jesus and presenting standards for an utterly new lifestyle in the Sermon on the Mount. The disruptions continue and become more personal as Jesus eats at a sinner's home and shatters Sabbath protocols. Walking with Jesus means living a constantly unsettled life.

### **Can We Seek God's Spark?**

The book of Matthew also reveals instances in which humans initiate contact with God, and we quickly discover the importance of faith in such encounters. When Jesus calmed the storm, he asked his disciples, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" (Matthew 8:26). However, when a man brought his daughter to Jesus for healing, the man openly expressed his faith, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live" (Matthew 9:18). Likewise, when two blind men came to Jesus, he asked, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" (Matthew 9:28).

No matter who initiates the contact, it is clear that God must sponsor the change in order for the spark to grow into a fire. We see this communication breakdown with God in a community where the owner of a local diner purposely hires and trains former prison inmates and other persons who have difficulty finding work. When the owner was asked if he had contacted local clergy to invite them to be part of his community ministry, his response was surprising. "Yes," he said, "And it was a disaster. The clergy kept asking the employees uncomfortable questions about their background. They made it clear that they would want them to attend their congregations if they helped." The clergy wanted to be a part of the spark, but could not handle the flame.

What if today's burning bushes are far away from the Sunday morning crowds? What if God is sending us sparks of innovation on a regular basis, but they are more dangerous and disruptive than they are comforting and successful by our standards? A congregation in Nebraska recently witnessed God's spark by walking their neighborhood. Some nearby apartment dwellers became concerned about these strangers who were regularly walking their neighborhood and asked what they were doing. The neighborhood inquirers were quite surprised to

learn that church members were simply trying to better understand their neighborhood and the people in it.

As it turned out, the apartment residents welcomed their intruders, as they had spiritual questions that they were too intimidated to ask anyone else. The entire group explored these spiritual questions together. The people in the apartments have not come to the church but the church members have learned as much about God as the apartment residents. God's spark is being fanned, but not in ways that we could predict.

Perhaps many of our requests for sparks from God are seemingly ignored because we are seeking a specific outcome, such as congregational growth, our own comfort and safety, or retaining our leadership status. Congregational change does not happen unless God sparks it, and not only must we have enough faith to oxygenate the spark once it appears, but we must also be prepared to accept God's end result.

### **Are You Ready for Congregational Change?**

"A small green apple cannot ripen one night by tightening all its muscles, squinting its eyes and tightening its jaw in order to find itself the next morning miraculously large, red, ripe, and juicy beside its small green counterparts. . . . We must wait for God."<sup>4</sup>

Look for God's pre-emptive spark and once you find it, block it from distractions, and fan it with flames of trust.

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1. *Fortune*, August 1, 2016, 22.

2. Ibid.

3. Ryan Bort, "Amazon Is Opening More Brick-and-Mortar Bookstores," [www.newsweek.com/amazon-opening-brick-and-mortar-bookstores-494216](http://www.newsweek.com/amazon-opening-brick-and-mortar-bookstores-494216).

4. James Finley, *Merton's Palace of Nowhere* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2003), 114.