

NORTHERN GREAT LAKES SYNOD

# NOTES & QUOTES

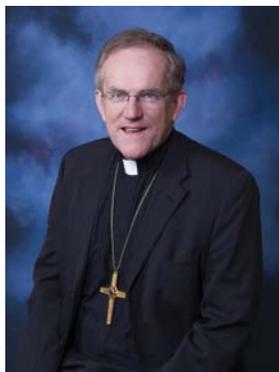
Volume 21, Issue 2

FEBRUARY 2008

## RENEW

Bishop Thomas A. Skrenes

tskrenes@nglsynod.org



The ice would crunch under my feet as I walked across the alfalfa field. As I look out my office window this morning and see the snow banks in the parking lot, I remember those days long ago when I walked across the fields of our southern Wisconsin farm. It was February, and I was ten or eleven years old. It was the middle of winter. The days were getting longer, and I looked over the snowy scenery where, a few months ago, corn and alfalfa hay were growing. Now it was quiet and cold, and there was no sign of life at all from under the icy and snowy farm fields.

My mother had told me that a “cold winter means a warm spring.” Perhaps she was right, but then I only saw some dried up corn stocks and dead tree branches littering my path. I drudged along pondering if spring would come and when it would show up.

As I drive around this Synod, I wonder aloud to myself or to God if renewal is coming to the Church. I see the “numbers”, and know that in three-fourths of our churches, attendance is down over a twenty-year period. When I visit the congregations on Sunday - still my favorite day of the week - I see an army of graying Christians populating the pews. In many places, I find only a couple of people in their twenties or thirties. Leaders tell me that, “Money is an issue and the energy of the lay leadership is flagging. Pastors are hard to get and keep, youth are not around much. Costs are up.” Well - you know the litany. The smallest congregations in our midst worry about their survival.

When I was in college in the 70's, I remember a debate we had one day in a Political Science class. The question that we struggled with during the session was “Will the Berlin Wall fall in our lifetimes?” It was a good, serious and even at



1029 N. Third St., Ste. A

Marquette, MI 49855

906/ 228-2300

906/ 228-2527 fax

ngls@nglsynod.org

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

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

BISHOP'S PAGES 1-4

TRANSITIONS 4

PASTOR JENNIE JOHNSON WREGE 6

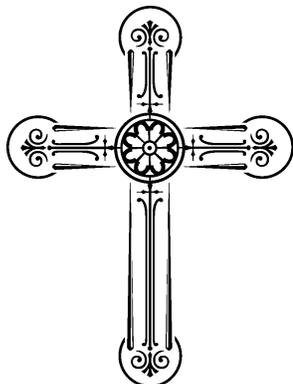
SYNOD FINANCIALS 7

**THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)**

times, feisty, conversation. We struggled with the question for two hours, and then the class voted. Twenty-five of us said “No”, and only one – a soft spoken daughter of Latvian immigrants said “Yes.” Her only “argument” was that she and her family were praying for a free Latvia. I was a realist and voted with the majority. I was wrong. I had forgotten that God was in charge of God’s world.

I am praying for the renewal of our congregations, our Synod and the whole Church of Jesus Christ. Are you? I am convinced that renewal will only happen in God’s time. Renewal of our congregations and renewal in our personal lives only happens when we trust God to be the actor in this drama called life. When we focus on others and worry less about our future, our budgets and our building - God will, in God’s own time, renew the Church. After all, the Church belongs to the Lord. The comfort to me is that Jesus Christ loves His Church and loves me, a part of it.

Spring came to southern Wisconsin that and every year. The ice melted and the corn and hay fields soon did what they do in that part of the world - produce abundantly. Renewal is coming to the Church. Ultimately, renewal will not be our work because it comes first from God. Please pray that renewal may come soon. I am looking forward to Spring!



*“I am praying  
for the renewal  
of our congregations, our  
Synod and the  
whole Church  
of Jesus Christ.  
Are you?”*

## **Retired Pastors Called to Serve Tanzania?**

Our Companion Synod in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania will soon be starting an English language worship service using the Lutheran Book of Worship. The weekly afternoon service in the cathedral of the diocese will, it is thought, be very popular for the hundreds of English speaking European, American and Africans who live in Tanzania’s largest city.

Our Companion Synod would like to invite several of our pastors to come to Tanzania and to lead worship in English on a weekly basis for three months at a time. The diocese will provide living accommodations, and our pastors will become part of the pastoral team at the cathedral church in Dar. It will be a very exciting experience!

If any of our retired pastors are interested - see me! This could be a wonderful sabbatical experience also for clergy under call. Your life will be changed by serving three

THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)

months in Africa!

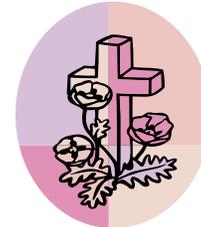
## Stewardship 2008

### New Consecration Sunday

Our Synod Stewardship Committee is eager to help any congregation work with your stewardship ministry. One important program that we can assist you with is "New Consecration Sunday," the worship based response ministry. It is proven to be an effective faith building and growth giving model in congregations throughout the Church. Interested in learning more about it?

Our Committee Chair, Ralph B.K. Peterson, would welcome your telephone inquiries. You can reach him at 906.786.9661. Someone from our Synod Committee would be happy to visit your stewardship committee or congregation council and explain this program.

In 2008, the Synod will continue the "We Thank God" stewardship series. If you would like any information on our stewardship work together, please communicate with me or Ralph Peterson.



## In Memory of

### PASTOR KENNETH NELSON

We give thanks to God for the life and ministry of Pastor Kenneth Nelson who died in retirement on January 8, 2008, in San Antonio, Texas.

Pastor Nelson was born in Crookston, Minnesota. As a youth in California, he met Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, who influenced his life and encouraged Pastor Nelson to seek ordained ministry. After service in the U.S. Navy, he graduated from Long Beach City College and the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. He was ordained in 1967 in the Lutheran Church in America.

Pastor Nelson served parishes in central Alberta, Canada, and in 1971, became a United States Air Force Chaplain. He served on many USAF bases and also in Danang, Vietnam where he assisted in the building of four churches and eight chapels in refugee areas. After Vietnam, he served a number of Air Force communities in Europe and the United States, including K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base in the Gwinn area, where I first came to know him. After retirement from the Air Force, he also served a congregation in Oklahoma. His retirement home was in San Antonio, Texas.

Pastor Nelson is survived by his wife, Darlene, and four adult children. Condolences may be sent to his son, John Nelson, at 1484 Love Lane, Gentry, AR 72734.

## TRANSITIONS

+Congratulations to **Pastor Gerald Wittmus** who was ordained into the Holy Ministry of Word and Sacrament on Sunday, January 20, 2008. It was my privilege to ordain him in Algona, Iowa. Pastor Wittmus is now **servicing Bethel in Cedarville and Zion in Allen-ville, Michigan**. We welcome him and his wife, Nancy, and family to our Synod.

+Congratulations to **Pastor Michael Langlais** as he begins his work at **Bethany in Norway, Michigan**. Pastor Langlais comes to us from the Northeast Minnesota Synod. We welcome Pastor Langlais and his wife, Mary, to our Synod.

+Congratulations to **Pastor John Kuziej (First, Ewen, and Our Saviour's Paynesville)** upon his acceptance of the Pastoral Call at **Pioneer Lake in Conover**. Pastor Kuziej has served in our Synod since 1993. God bless Pastor Kuziej and his wife, Jeannette, as they move to the northern Wisconsin part of our Synod.

+Hospitalized recently include Pastor **Dave Christenson (Gethsemane, Wallace and St. Stephen's, Stephenson)** with knee surgery and **Pastor Marlin Snyder (recent Interim at Trinity, Trout Creek and Bethany, Covington)** with medical tests.

+Congratulations to **Pastor Chad Christen-**

**sen (Emanuel, Skandia) and Anne Gibson of Whitewater, Wisconsin** on their **engagement**. The happy couple will marry in August of 2008.

+Thomas A. Skrenes, Bishop

[tskrenes@nglsynod.org](mailto:tskrenes@nglsynod.org)

*In 1860, Scandinavians in America founded the Augustana Lutheran Church. In 2008, nearly 150 years later, the "Children of Augustana" are gathering from across America to celebrate this heritage. You are invited to join this celebration and enjoy the stories and inspiration of this family of faith. June 19-22, 2008 are the dates, and Lindsborg, Kansas is the place. The event will be held in conjunction with the long-standing traditional Lindsborg Midsummer's Day celebration. For more information, see the website [augustanaheritage.org](http://augustanaheritage.org) or contact Pastor Richard Monson at 620/ 241-6003.*



# Thank You

## Lutheran World Relief

Messiah, Marquette  
 Immanuel, Negaunee  
 Holy Trinity, Chassell  
 Zion, Marinette  
 St. Mark's, Marquette  
 Calvary, Rapid River  
 Bethany, Escanaba

## Seminarian Support

Messiah, Marquette  
 Bethany, Amasa  
 Immanuel, Rhinelander  
 Faith WELCA, Rock  
 Gethsemane, Wallace  
 Bethel, Ishpeming  
 Sharon, Bessemer  
 Rev. Devon & JoAnne Barrix  
 Zion, Ironwood

## ELCA Disaster Funds

Zion, St. Ignace  
 Mission United, Pelkie  
 Mass Lutheran Parish, Mass City  
 Bethany, Negaunee  
 Grace, South Range

## World Missionary Support

St. James, Rudyard  
 Trinity, Stambaugh  
 Bethel, Ishpeming  
 Mission United, Pelkie  
 Calvary, Rapid River  
 Rock-Perkins Parish  
 Pioneer Lake, Conover

## Kisarawe

Rev. Robert & Deloris Langseth  
 Trinity, Rhinelander  
 Faith, Calumet

## Skogman Scholarship Fund

James & Laura Wendt  
 Richard & Evelyn Bjorklund  
 Steven & Joni Peffers

## Lutheran Campus Ministry

Faith, Ishpeming  
 Emanuel, Skandia  
 Bethany, Amasa  
 Mission United, Pelkie  
 Richard & Evelyn Bjorklund  
 Bethel, Ishpeming  
 Grace, Gwinn

## Lay School for Mission

Trinity, Rapid River

## Endowment Fund

Bethany, Ishpeming  
 James & Judith Quirk  
 Rev. Peter Vorhes & Liz Siivola  
 Rev. LaVonne & George Stephenson  
 Bishop Thomas & Luanne Skrenes

## Tanzania Teacher's Gift

June Schaefer

## Kemppainen Scholarship Fund

Anne & John Todia  
 Ted Swanson  
 Duane & Lisa Nelson

## Mwangaza

Bethel, Ishpeming

## Tanzania

Joyce Dupras

## MISSION SUPPORT IN 2007 - \$1,061,964

Thanks be to God and thanks be to the generous 94 congregations of our Synod who provided in Calendar Year 2007 a record amount of financial resources for the work of Christ's Church. The Synod received in unrestricted mission support, 101.6% of the 2007 congregational pledges, or \$1,061,964.

Of the amount in 2007 sent to the Synod Office, 54% of it will be shared with the world-wide work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. These resources will support missionaries around the world and start new congregations in this country. Other important churchwide ministries will be accomplished because of the people of the Northern Great Lakes Synod. Another 12% of the total amount received will be used to assist our seminaries in Dubuque, Iowa and Chicago, Illinois, and for the work of Lutheran Campus Ministry on the Northern Michigan University Campus in Marquette and the Michigan Technological University Campus in Hancock. The rest of the mission support (34%) provides a Synod Office, staff and programs for our work together across the Northern Great Lakes Synod.

Seventy of our congregations met, or exceeded, their financial support goals. Another twelve came very close! It was an excellent year! And while we in 2007 have much to be thankful for, the actual amount of dollars received by the Synod was only 5% more than what it was in 1999! Inflation has eaten about 30% of that dollar away!

Your Synod does not have a huge endowment to subsidize our ministry. Our grants and restricted giving only pay a small portion of our ministry costs. Instead, the Church relies on the generosity of our people in the pew and we rely on the mature judgment of the congregational leaders. We are called by God to share! It is a privilege to give to God's work through the Northern Great Lakes Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. I am proud to be a part of our Church and to be your Bishop.

Thomas A. Skrenes



## Pastoral Vacancies and Interim Pastors

Bethel, Ishpeming - Associate Pastor Vacancy  
 Prince of Peace, Marquette - Pastor Rell Spickerman  
 Trinity, Stambaugh & Bethany, Amasa - Pastor Doug Johnson  
 Central, Menominee - Pastor Ken Michaelis  
 Bethany, Covington & Trinity, Trout Creek - Pastor Scott Williams  
 Holy Cross, Baraga - Pastor Ted Koehl  
 Bethany, Mohawk - Pastor Peter Vorhes  
 Our Redeemer, Newberry - Pastor LaVonne Stephenson  
 Messiah, Marquette - Senior Pastor Vacancy  
 Immanuel, Escanaba - Pastor Jonathan Schmidt  
 Grace, Gwinn - Pastor Chad Christensen  
 First, Ewen & Our Saviour's, Ewen

Mission support giving from the congregations of the Northern Great Lakes Synod reached an all-time high in 2007. Seventy-six congregations gave near or over 100% of their pledge, and we give special thanks to those who exceeded their pledge. The Synod received 101.6% of the amount pledged; the first time we have been at 100% or above since 2000.

Thanks be to God for the faithfulness and generosity of the congregations of the Northern Great Lakes Synod!!

As of 12/31/07	2006	2007	\$ Change	% Change
Pledged Amount	1,033,577	1,045,301	+11,724	+1.1%
Amount Received	1,027,024	1,061,964	+34,940	+3.4%
Designated Gifts	211,571	224,327	+12,756	+6%



**NORTHERN GREAT LAKES  
SYNOD**

1029 N. Third Street, Ste. A  
Marquette, MI 49855

Phone: 906-228-2300  
Fax: 906-228-2527  
E-mail: [ngls@nglsynod.org](mailto:ngls@nglsynod.org)

---

**WE'RE ON THE WEB**

[WWW.NGLSYNOD.ORG](http://WWW.NGLSYNOD.ORG)

---

**Volume 21, Issue 2  
FEBRUARY 2008**



Non Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Marquette, MI 49855  
Permit No. 22

Label

**ON-LINE DEVOTIONS FOR FEBRUARY**  
**2008**

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

**February 3-5 / Pastor Jennie Johnson Wrege, Assistant to the  
Bishop**

Lenten devotions are once again written jointly by clergy and laity from our Northern Great Lakes Synod and our partner Synod of Delaware/Maryland. Delaware/Maryland Bishop Jerry Knoche begins our journey to the cross on Ash Wednesday, and we will greet our risen Lord on Easter morning with reflections from Northern Great Lakes Synod Bishop Tom Skrenes. You can access these devotions through the [prayfaithfully.org](http://prayfaithfully.org) website, as well as through [lentdevotions.org](http://lentdevotions.org)