



Section C – Synod Ministry Reports

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**North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Candidacy Committee Report
Synod Assembly 2025**

The committee accompanies candidates in their journey toward becoming Rostered Ministers. A Pastor is a Minister of Word and Sacrament. A Deacon is a minister of Word and Service. People who have discerned a call to rostered ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America enter into the candidacy process and work to develop an understanding of four basic principles:

1. We are church;
2. We are Lutheran;
3. We are church together; and
4. We are church for the sake of the world.

The path to rostered leadership in the ELCA is a partnership between candidates, congregations, synods, seminaries and the Churchwide expression of the church. The Candidacy Committee encourages all members of the synod to identify, nurture, support, and encourage persons who possess gifts for rostered ministry in the ELCA. Please send names and contact information to Pr. Beaman or Pr. Bright.

Candidates

The various stages of Candidacy continue to ebb and flow as is the norm. As of March 2025, there are eight people in the Candidacy process. This includes three people in the application process (filling out the candidacy application), an additional one applicant (paperwork in but not yet officially entranced), one continuing to discern which path God is calling them to follow, and two on leave from candidacy for various reasons. At least four of the candidates are/will be in the distributive learning programs. We celebrate the approvals and recent ordinations of Rev. Bridget Whately, and Rev Megan Floyd!

Committee Members

Rev. Rosanne Anderson	Rev. Jonathan Reid (Secretary)
Rev. Haley Vay Beaman (Chair)	Bishop Craig Satterlee
Rev. Christina Bright (Director)	Rev. Dr. Joy Schroeder (Seminary Representative)
Mr. Kirk Hoffman	Rev. Denise Russell (Candidacy and Leadership Manager, Region 6)
Ms. Mary Sue Kamens	Rev. Travis Wilson.
Mr. Robert Kamphuis	

Please continue to keep our candidates and committee members in prayer as future leaders are preparing for ministry in the church.

Peace be with you,

Rev. Christina Bright, Director of Candidacy

Global Missions Report 2024

The Northwest Lower Michigan Synod Global Missions Table was busy in 2024! As a synod we are blessed to have meaningful and ongoing relationships with two vibrant Lutheran Church bodies. We partner with The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua-New Guinea (ELCPNG) and The Iglesia Cristiana Luterana De Honduras (ICLH). The synod global missions table takes on the task of nurturing these relationships following the ELCA's principles of accompaniment. Our goal is to help lift up these relationships and help congregations in our synod learn about and get connected to our international partners.

2024 was an awesome year for this as we were able to make in person visits to both our companion synods for the first time since 2020. 6 volunteers from our synod visited our partners in Honduras in April of 2024 to see ministry sites, worship, connect with the people there, and help lead a 3-day training for over 30 health volunteers from the ICLH. The goal of the training was to prepare health volunteers to monitor blood pressure and glucose levels and recognize the signs of hypertension and diabetes in their communities. We also spent time helping them process the stress of volunteering with limited resources and growing needs.

In 2024 the Health For Life Ministry provided health and dental screenings and treatments for over 30 children every 6 months, over 40 people received education on cancer screenings, and over 80 people found community and support as they live with HIV / Aids. The church also provides resources and education to raise awareness about domestic violence and mental health.

In August, 2 volunteers from our synod traveled to Papua New Guinea for two weeks to attend a consultation between the ELCPNG and the ELCA. They explored options for expanding our partnership, worshiped, and learned about how the church in Papua New Guinea is growing. They were blessed to worship in both urban and rural congregations, visit new mission sites, and spend time with local pastors, seminary students, and more. 42 people graduated from the seminary in Papua New Guinea last year and the church hosted its 19th annual women's conference in fall of 2024. The church in Papua New Guinea also celebrated its 130th anniversary last year. Our partners are busy!

The Global Missions Table also hosted a zoom training for the health volunteers in Honduras about kidney disease, participated in quarterly meetings between the ICLH and it's two other ELCA partners, and helped facilitate the exchange of holiday greetings between our synod and theirs in 2024.

We plan to keep this ministry growing in 2025. We are hoping to deepen our relationship with the ELCPNG through prayer and using online communication. We are also planning to

host 3-4 zoom workshops to continue training health volunteers in Honduras. We are planning several *Taste of Honduras* events that will take place throughout the synod this summer and fall. These will be opportunities for people to taste some traditional Honduran food, learn more about the *Health for Life* ministry being done by the ICLH, and get more connected to the ministry. Finally, we are planning our next trip to Honduras for the Winter or Spring of 2026.

There are several ways that you and your churches can walk with our international companions in faith! The first is to include them in your weekly prayers. Add a line to your prayers of the people lifting up the people and ministry of our companion synods in Honduras and Papua New Guinea. You can also add Andrew and Meredith Ronnevik to your congregations' prayers as they continue to serve as ELCA missionaries in Papua New Guinea. This weekly addition to your congregation's prayers is a powerful reminder that God is at work around the world.

You can also stay up to date with our companion synods by following them on. Go to facebook.com/ELCPNG to follow the church in Papua New Guinea, and facebook.com/IglesiaCristianaLuterananDeHondurasl. You can join our global mission table or email list to stay up to date with everything that's happening. Simply reach out to Pastor Megan Crouch at gaylordpeace@gmail.com or talk to any of our team members!

Thank you for your ongoing support for these amazing partnerships!

Gratefully Submitted

The Global Missions Table

Pastor Megan Crouch – Chair.

Paul E. Trapp Memorial Endowment Fund
Synod Assembly 2025 Report

The Paul E. Trapp Memorial Endowment Fund was established for people orientated ministry in the northern parts of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod. The Sunrise and Traverse conferences as well as the northern part (north of M-61 approximately) of the Bay Conference make up the service area for the Trapp Grant.

Each year the committee reviews grant applications and uses fund distribution earnings to fulfill grant requests. Typically grant requests are funded for \$1500 with \$2000 being the very highest we can fund depending on how many applications are received and how much money we have to disburse.

This year the Trapp Grant Committee Awarded a total of \$24,880 to various northern ministry projects

- VBS Camp at Advent Lutheran, Lake Ann, MI
- Food Pantry at Bethany Lutheran, Kaleva, MI
- Kid's Club and Pride at Christ the King Lutheran, Gladwin, MI
- Paper Pantry at Cross of Christ Lutheran, Petoskey, MI
- Coats for Kids and Feeding the Hungry at Grace Lutheran, East Tawas, MI
- Little Free Food Pantry and Library at New Life Lutheran, Spruce, MI
- Community Meals at Peace Lutheran, Gaylord, MI
- Little Coat Closet at Prince of Peace Lutheran, Rose City, MI
- Dinner on a Doorknob and Gratitude Lunches at St. Paul Lutheran, Alpena, MI
- Supporting Families in need at Trinity Lutheran, Ocqueoc, MI
- Stronghold Grants for the Synod particularly ones in the Trapp Grant service areas

Grant Applications for the following year are typically available in November/December, and funds are disbursed by the end of January for use in that calendar year. In other words, applications for Trapp Grants for 2026 will be available in November/December of 2025, and disbursed in January of 2026.

Committee Members

Rev. Christina Bright, Rev. Paul Busekist, Rev. Emily Olsen, Ms. Denise Palmer, Bishop Craig Satterlee

The committee extends thanks to Ms. Rebecca Bossenbroek for providing fund updates, answering all of our questions, and processing disbursements. The committee also would like to thank Ms. Ann Stavros for sending out grant applications, and routing questions, concerns, and information where they need to go! Thank you both!!

Respectfully, and on behalf of the committee,
Rev. Christina Bright

Youth and Young Adult Table

With the continued desire to bridge the continuum of youth/young adult age groups, the Table renamed itself the Youth and Young Adult table with the intention to bridge young people throughout the significant life stages. People at the table included those who work with youth and young adults.

This year we worked on reestablishing ourselves, working directly with Living Water Ministries, supporting the ministry they provide.

In the summer of 2024, the North/West Lower Michigan Synod sent 15 groups (some of which consisted of multiple congregations) which included 52 adults and 105 youth to New Orleans for the ELCA Youth Gathering. This Table worked together to bring smaller congregations in partnership with each other and others to help with transportation, housing and fellowship. Pastor Dan Schewe served as the ELCA Gathering Team Leader and disseminated information to those who had people attending.

We raised \$19,197 for our Synod Gathering Scholarship Fund. This fund awarded forty-four \$250 scholarships to twelve congregations for a total of \$11,000 to help make the Gathering accessible to all. The goal of the fund is to eventually offer complete scholarships to the Gathering for all who wish to go.

The Y/YA Table supports the ministry of the ELCA Youth Ministry Network, and provided subsidy for the attendance of Pastor Kate Van Valkenburg, a member of our table and campus pastor with United Campus Christian Fellowship in the Grand Rapids area.

We prepared an opportunity for a small group Peer Ministry training event to take place at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Lansing, a partnership between the North/West Lower and the Southeast Michigan Synod, to be held in February 2025.

As we move forward into 2025, we plan to focus on Youth and Young Adult training opportunities, including building and raising leaders for the church among these age groups. We hope this is evidenced by an increase in the number of youth and young adults in attendance at Synod Assembly and by preparing them to understand what ministry happens in this Assembly.

We look at the possibility of synod-wide mission trips, promotion of conference level activities to include those congregations with only a few youth that would benefit from community with other congregational youth, and gather ideas from synod youth, young adults and leaders to determine what is needed and helpful.

Team members include: Pastor Dan Schewe (chair, Trinity/Grand Rapids), Pastor Megan Floyd (Faith/Okemos), Pastor Julie Bailey (Ascension/Saginaw) Thomas Strandskov (Immanuel/Mount Pleasant), Beth Mundwiler (Immanuel/Mount Pleasant), Pastor Matt Smith (Bethlehem/Lansing), Pastor Tim Jahn (Messiah/Bay City), Pastor Jake Lehman (Trinity/Kalamazoo), Pastor Kate Van Valkenburg (United Campus Christian Fellowship/Grand Rapids) , and Pastor Danielle Sheally (on leave from call).

Submitted by Pastor Dan Schewe, Chair