

# Making Christ Known

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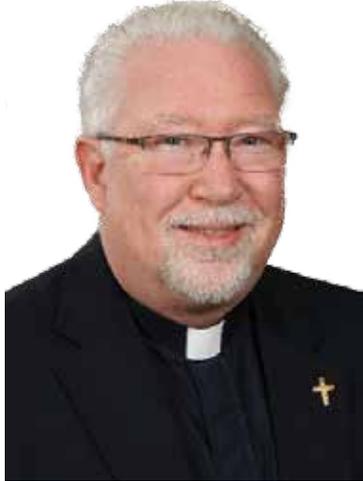


**Northern Illinois Synod**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

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## Stories Are Powerful

*Bishop Jeffrey Clements*



If you have been around the church for a while, you may have noticed that there have been fads in preaching. When I was in seminary, we did some talking about narrative sermons and story sermons. The story was the sermon. Just as Jesus sometimes taught using stories, I practiced a bit with telling a single story that made the same point as if I had used a didactic or some other method. In parish ministry, I did not use a lot of story sermons. Believe it or not, they took more work to craft than a traditional sermon. To write an original story took a great deal of creativity. In the days before the internet, it took lots of time to find appropriate stories from other

preachers or storytellers. But, stories are powerful conveyers of a message.

Every Christmas Eve, for many years, I wrote two sermons because the people of my parish tended to come to both the early and the late services. (They really liked Christmas!) We celebrated Holy Communion and had a children's message at the earlier service and lit candles and sang all the traditional carols at the later service, and because of the lateness of the hour, I chose to preach a story sermon. Detailed theological points are not wise as one approaches midnight.

I will never forget the impact that one of those Christmas Eve stories made on the life of a certain young man. Perhaps for the first time ever, he heard something in church that truly connected with his life. For months,



he begged me for another sermon just like that one. Stories are powerful.

Stories. You have a personal faith story to tell. Someone near you needs to hear about your walk with Jesus. Your congregation has a story to tell too. A story of faithfulness. We all need to hear the stories what your congregation is doing to faithfully fulfill its mission! May God bless our storytelling!

Walking with you,

*Bishop Jeffrey Clements*

Bishop Jeff Clements

## Telling Our Story

*By Pastor Kurt Nordby, Assistant to the Bishop for Stewardship and Development*

All around the territory of the Northern Illinois Synod exciting and meaningful ministries are taking place. From Scales Mound to Streator, from the Quad Cities to Joliet, congregations of the Northern Illinois Synod are making a difference in people's lives through ministry in their congregation and community. The untold story is in the collective ministries of our



congregations and how we can be inspired in ministry by what others are doing.

We are designing a series to get the ministry stories of our congregations to us so that we might celebrate the ways we are sharing the love of Christ and that we might be inspired to try learnings we glean from what other

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## Piece Corps Quilts go to Texas!

Pastor Miho Yasukawa of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Lena is proud of her congregation's talented and dedicated group of volunteers named the Piece Corps who make quilts, towels, and bath mats for those in need. In September, when they heard that their local grocery store, Sullivans Foods, was collecting donations to send a semi-truck of food and supplies to Texas for Hurricane Harvey victims, they asked Sullivans Manager Randy if they could include some quilts on the truck.

Two pallets were filled with 209 quilts, 13 large bath towels, and 25 hand towels and bath mats. Donations from customers and local businesses provided over \$50,000 to fill the semi with food, diapers, toiletries, and other supplies. All the items reached Catholic Charities in Texas on September 10 where they were distributed to victims. Good Shepherd is thankful for all the wonderful people in their community and being able to share God's love with those who lost so much in Texas. †



Telling Our Story... continued  
congregations are doing.

To do this, we need of your congregation's help. One way we would like to tell the story is through a video vignette from your congregation which shares a ministry or two that you are excited about. Your video could be about a program taking place in your congregation or a ministry your congregation shares in the community. Another way to share

the story is to accompany the videos with the congregational ministry stories received by way of the Every Council Visits taking place this fall. The plan is to highlight congregational ministries in one conference per issue beginning the first of the year.

So, get those phones or cameras ready. Think of a few ministries that you would like to share. Upload them to your congregation's YouTube channel or Facebook page and

send the link to Karin Graddy, NIS Communication Director at [karin@nisynod.org](mailto:karin@nisynod.org). Remember, we need every congregation's assistance and input. Let's tell the stories, learn from each other, and celebrate the ways we are making a difference and touching lives with God's transforming love in Jesus Christ.

Find out about a congregation already telling their stories with videos on page 4. †

# One Peanut Butter and Jelly at a Time

First Lutheran Church in DeKalb sits just a few blocks from the edge of the Northern Illinois University campus and exactly one mile from Grace Place Campus ministry. Wanting to help the over 35% of NIU students who face food insecurity during the school year, Pastor Janet Hunt, Vicar Preston Fields, and First Lutheran members started spending Sunday mornings after worship making sandwiches and packing brown bag lunches with small notes of encouragement from First Lutheran and Grace Place Campus Ministry. Volunteers hand them out on Mondays at the busy corner in front of Grace Place. Now in the program's second year, First Lutheran has been a consistent presence on NIU campus through sunny days, cold days, rainy and snowy days, distributing thousands of individual lunches and exam survival packs.

Beyond the students, they also discovered that many of the staff at NIU struggle to make ends meet, especially as their jobs ebb and flow with the NIU academic calendar. Vicar Preston started handing a lunch to a particular bus driver between red lights on the corner. After a few

weeks she handed him a note, thanking them for their ministry and sharing that she was currently going through cancer treatments and trying to make ends meet. The Monday lunch was one meal a week she could count on. "You all are truly acting in Jesus' name and an answer to a prayer," she said. Now they routinely have visitors from the transportation staff on campus. Vicar Preston noted, "Sometimes the Resurrection of Christ is proclaimed in choir anthems and altar flowers; sometimes it is proclaimed one peanut butter and jelly at a time." †



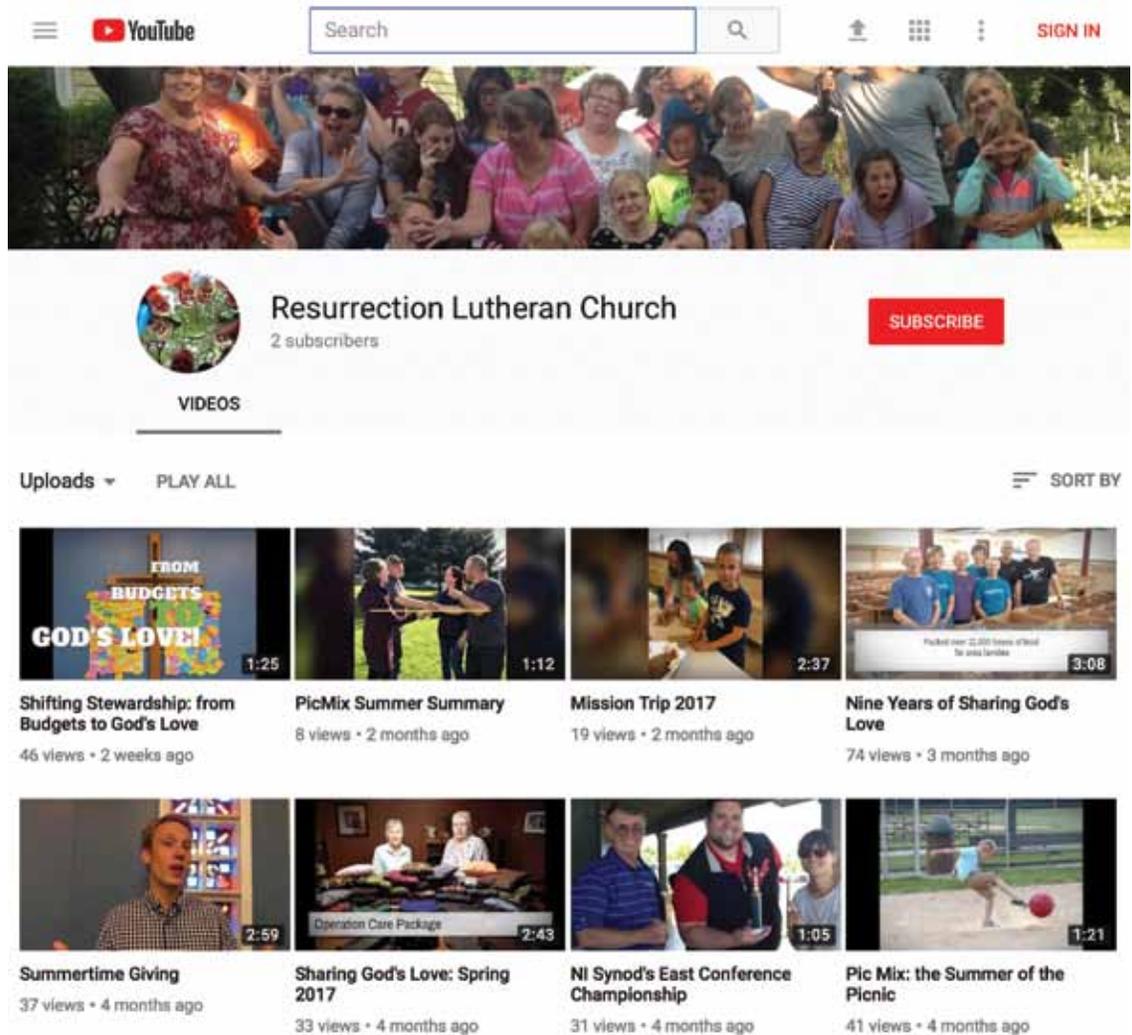
# Videos Tell the Story

Resurrection Lutheran Church in Channahon has made more than 40 videos to tell the stories of their ministries. Pastor Ben Ingelson regularly sends emails to congregation members and friends with links to videos on their YouTube channel.

Visit their channel at <https://is.gd/RLCyoutube>.

The short videos, most fewer than 4 minutes long, are able to tell the stories in a more vibrant way than words alone.

Videos are made to advertise upcoming events, share messages from Pastor Ben, tell stories of specific events, or highlight events from the past year. Some are funny, some are serious, but all share a sense of strong community that encourages the viewer to want to be a part. †



## Making Christ Known

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Congregations are encouraged to reprint articles for congregational use.

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