



North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

The peace of Christ be with you!

In these last three years, we have come to know and to name Michigan and our synod as a “promised land,” where God is acting in new ways to fulfill old promises. I have come to know you as a generous people who work hard to love and trust our God of abundance—we are beginning to see a trend of increasing mission support. At the 2013 synod assembly where I was called to be bishop, I named as a vision, “prayerfully participating in Christ’s own work of reconciling the world to God’s very self.” I am more convinced than ever that all these things are true and right.

We see God making this vision real in congregations’ food banks, quilt rooms, and water collections. We hear Christ proclaim life and love as ministers—not only those rostered but especially those living out their baptismal vocation—speak the gospel in the language of scripture and proclaim God’s justice, peace, and love for all. We sense the Spirit’s presence as Lutheran Christians and congregations reach toward one another in order to better reach out to their communities and the world. It is small and subtle, and you will miss it if you are not watchful, since this seems to be God’s way of bringing life out of death.

At this time, the Holy Spirit is entrusting to our synod the essential, foundational, and not-so-glamorous work of renewing congregations, empowering congregational and rostered leaders, and strengthening connections; this is the table that God has set before us; the table at which God invites us to sit. Claiming our seat at this table, I am both grateful for and impressed by the progress we are making as we carry out our mission of “prayerfully participating in Christ’s own work of reconciling the world to God’s very Self by renewing congregations empowering leaders, and strengthening connections.”

As congregations and leaders find themselves caught up in the Holy Spirit’s work, they want help in making the vision more and more real—and we want to help them. “After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:1-2). Since the harvest is so plentiful, we, like Jesus, have found that our mission of renewing congregations, empowering leaders, and strengthening connections will be more proactive and our synod more vibrant with another laborer—a full-time assistant to the bishop for synod life—joining us in the field. Our 2016 synod assembly approved a budget that makes this vision a reality. The Synod Council created the plan that makes this vision achievable. I ask you as congregations to increase your mission support so that you may participate in his vision. Cathy and I are so excited by this possibility that we will be giving personally and directly.

Please review the materials that accompany this letter and watch for additional information to follow.

Peace,

The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, PhD, Bishop