



North/ West Lower Michigan Synod

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Holy Saturday

There is something eerie about our newsletter arriving in your inbox on Holy Saturday (April 15). Holy Saturday, as opposed to the Easter Vigil, is a time of waiting between Jesus' death on the cross and his glorious resurrection. Like Scripture's teaching on death itself, the readings appointed for this day provide different, even conflicting, perspectives on what happened to Jesus during the time that he lay bound by death in the tomb. With so much of what is happening in the world—hate crimes, chemical warfare, and another school shooting—so far removed from sunrise and lilies and, "Christ is risen indeed," perhaps we would do well to take some time this Holy Saturday and intentionally reflect on Christ lying dead in the tomb.

On Holy Saturday, we can almost hear Jesus say, "God has made me sit in darkness like the dead of long ago. God has walled me about so that I cannot escape" (Lamentations 3:6-7). Yet, this is surprising since the speaker in Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24 offers a first-person description of his own horrendous suffering and a litany of God's deliberate destructive actions, specifically against this man himself. The speaker's suffering is intimate, personal, and anguished. If we imagine the speaker to be Jesus, the good news is that Jesus knows what it is to be so isolated, abandoned, and encircled so that there is no way out except by being set free. Even more, the speaker knows what it is to suffer at the hands of a God who lashes out, besieges with bitterness, isolates and imprisons, and refuses to hear prayer. Words that we heard on Palm Sunday resound: "And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli,

Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" (Matthew 27:46). This is a God that too many too often encounter and experience. Imprisoned by death in the tomb, the speaker nonetheless dares to hope in this God, expecting this God to save him. This Jesus, who knows personal affliction and experiences God as his enemy, hopes in God's promise, which is sometimes all that we have.

Almost as an answer to Job's question and ours—"If mortals die, will they live again?" (14:14)—First Peter 4:1-8 proclaims the good news that not even the dead are beyond salvation in Jesus Christ. Paraphrasing John's Gospel, the dead are among those Jesus draws to himself when he is lifted up from the earth on the cross. According to First Peter, the gospel was proclaimed even to the dead, "so that... they might live in the Spirit as God does" (4:6). While scholars may debate what First Peter really means by "the dead," the good news on Holy Saturday is the hope that, in Christ, those who have died will receive new life through the gospel. The gospel is Christ's suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension as the motivation for the lives of faithful Christians. As is true for the rest of Holy Week, the emphasis here is on "since ... Christ suffered in the flesh" (v. 1), rather than "arm yourselves ... to live" (vv. 1-2). More than suffering physically, Christ suffered in the world dominated by human desire, to triumph over human desire, live by the will of God, and battle against the forces of human desire. "The end of all things is near" (v. 7), for the dead as well as the living.

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The gospel reading appointed for this day— either Matthew 27:57-66 or John 19:38-42—narrate Jesus' burial by Joseph of Arimathea. The Matthean account was read on Passion Sunday and the Johannine account on Good Friday. On those days, Jesus' burial is rightly overshadowed by the Crucifixion. Or, with hints of Jesus' resurrection included in both accounts, Jesus' burial might be reduced to a necessary stop on the journey from cross to empty tomb. Holy Saturday invites the Church to consider the significance of Jesus' burial.

Joseph of Arimathea makes an important declaration by requesting Jesus' body from Pilate, preparing it for burial, and laying it in a new tomb. Jesus had just been condemned and executed as an enemy of both God and the Empire. Joseph's gesture might be interpreted as both blasphemy and treason. Joseph buries Jesus honorably, lavishly, royally. In Matthew's account, a "rich" disciple wraps Jesus in a "clean" linen cloth and lays it "in his own new tomb" that is sealed with a "large" stone. In John's account, Jesus is buried as a king. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus anoint Jesus' body with a very large amount of myrrh and aloes, wrap it in linen cloths, and place Jesus in a new tomb. The manner in which Jesus is buried points beyond shame and humiliation to Jesus' glorification and victory on the cross.

Now, perhaps we are a bit more prepared to keep the Great Vigil and to celebrate the resurrection dawn.

For the gifted and dedicated saints who serve the North West Lower Michigan Synod, happy Easter!

The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop

Lutherans Always Reforming: A Day of Social Change Conversation

The Publicly Engaged Church Committee of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod will be hosting a day-long educational event on Saturday, June 17 at University Lutheran Church in East Lansing. Keynote speaker will be Dr. Craig L. Nesson, Academic Dean and Professor of Contextual Theology at Warburg Seminary. A variety of workshops will also be offered throughout the day on topics including, immigration, criminal justice, advocacy, Open Hearts, Open Church, climate change, hunger, human trafficking, anti-racism, and more!

Registration is now open!

Learn more: <http://bit.ly/2n6A3lZ>

You Matter

Save the Date for You Matter 2017! We invite rostered leaders to save the date for our annual You Matter Day on Tuesday, July 18, 2017 at Faith Lutheran Church in Saginaw. Our special guest, Bishop Michael Rinehart of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod will share some work and wisdom on the gift and challenge of prayer.

Synod Assembly 2017



The North/West Lower Michigan Synod Assembly will convene May 21-23, 2017 at Immanuel Lutheran Church and Comfort Inn and Suites Hotel and Conference Center in Mt. Pleasant.

Our Assembly theme is "Freed by God's Grace," from the verse "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

We will welcome the Reverend Dr. R. Guy Erwin, Bishop of the Southwest California Synod, as our keynote speaker. Bishop Erwin, a member of the Osage Nation, is the first Native American bishop elected to office in the ELCA. He is a noted church historian who has frequently taught courses on Martin Luther and the Lutheran Reformation. Bishop Erwin will address both of these topics during his time with the assembly. Ms. Prairie Rose Seminole will be our Churchwide Representative. She is the ELCA's Program Director for American Indian Alaska Native Ministries.

The opening Eucharist and first plenary session will be hosted at Immanuel Lutheran Church at 320 S. Bradley Street, in Mt. Pleasant. Check-in and packet pick-up will take place at the Comfort Inn and Suites Conference Center from 3:00-6:00pm. No check-in will be available at Immanuel, so assembly voting members are urged to arrive in Mt. Pleasant early enough to check-in prior to the 6:30pm start of the Assembly at Immanuel.

Registration information is now available on the Assembly page of the Synod Website. The final day to register is May 11, 2017. **If you are paying online, you must still submit a registration form to the Synod Office.**

All print materials intended for use by 2017 Synod Assembly members (reports, etc.) are due to Rebecca Bossenbroek (rebeccabossenbroek@comcast.net) or Ann Stavros (annstavros@mittensynod.org) **no later than April 21, 2017.**

Learn More: <http://mittensynod.server303.com/events/assembly/>

Pedal for a Purpose & Fitness Bike Ride

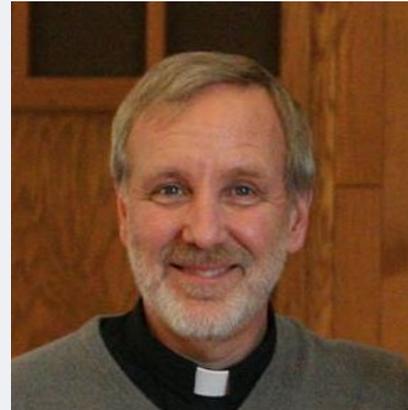
Pedal for a Purpose: A Hunger Ride in the Mitten Synod Join us May 18-21 for a 3.5 day cycling tour to deepen awareness of World Hunger, challenge giving to ELCA World Hunger, and enhance physical fitness. The ride will end at the Synod Assembly in Mt. Pleasant. Contact Rev. Erick Johnson for more information (erickj74@gmail.com)

Pedal for a Purpose Fitness Bike Ride Join us at 3:30pm on May 21 as we meet up with participants of Pedal for a Purpose: A Hunger Ride for a seven mile bike ride. The ride will start at the Comfort Inn in Mt. Pleasant. Participants will be given a t-shirt. For more information and to register, contact Rev. Bill Ueticht (bill@firstlutheranmuskegon.com)

Easter Marketing

I just received a direct mail solicitation from the United Methodist Church that is around the corner from my house. It is a beautiful color picture of the church with an invitation to come for Easter Services. It was a good idea. And maybe direct mail still works some places. I give them "A" for effort, but the appeal would have been better if there were actually people in the pictures of the church.

This solicitation in the mail follows a comment I made recently on the synod Facebook page. I asked: "Have you done your Easter advertising yet?" Easter Sunday has the highest attendance possibilities of any Sunday in the year, unless Christmas Eve falls on Sunday. Easter Sunday is the heart of who we are. It is the Sunday with the greatest possibility for advertising.



As I ponder Easter advertising, it makes me think about marketing in general. Many people think that marketing is a dirty word in church. But think about it, why can't we, who has the greatest message/Good News for the world? Why not use the best marketing ideas to get the Good News out to others? Marketing is not the only Evangelism tool, but one of many used to let the community know we are there and that our congregations are welcoming, inviting, and open.

There is an article on Facebook about how a congregation spent a small amount, less than \$100 to advertise on Facebook and generated great results. Digital and all its aspects are where the action is these days. Gone are the days (I hope) where congregation are paying upwards of \$40 a month for Yellow Pages ads. Have the congregation's Facebook administrator go to the church Facebook page and click on "create ad" and take it from there.

Of course, before a congregation begins a marketing campaign, there needs to be vibrant, culturally relevant worship, which is welcoming, uplifting, and reflective of the community. Then a marketing plan can include a quality webpage with current information, pictures of people (pictures of children from a distance so they cannot be identified or exploited), the pastor's name and contact information, worship times, and location information. A Facebook page can be a place of contact and invitation, but it needs someone to monitor if everyone is permitted to post. Otherwise a Facebook page can be created where people can only "like" but not post.

Marketing can also involve name recognition. Shirts, hats, bumper stickers with the church's name and a recognizable logo. God's Work Our Hands is recognizable in many communities. The orange shirts at the 2015 Youth Gathering in Detroit were immediately recognizable as people who cared about working in the community. A good marketing plan can be another tool to draw attention to the things your congregation is doing to touch the lives of people in the community and around the world as you strive to be God's presence in your community.

Rev. David Sprang, Assistant to the Bishop and Director of Evangelical Mission

Synod Finances as of March 31, 2017

**March
Income**

Mission Support \$ 120,499
 All Other Income \$ 15,411
 Total Income \$ 135,910

**Year to Date
Income**

Mission Support \$ 242,266
 All Other Income \$ 28,316
 Total Income \$ 270,582

Expenses

Support to ELCA \$ 60,249
 All Other Expenses \$ 65,946
 Total Expenses \$ 126,195

Support to ELCA \$ 121,133
 All Other Expenses \$ 118,968
 Total Expenses \$ 240,101

Plus Net Assets Released
 From Restricted Funds

Balance +/- + \$ 9,715

Balance +/- + \$ 30,481



**Synod Office Closed
Monday, April 17**

The Synod Office will be closed on Monday, April 17. We wish everyone a blessed Easter!



*Have a blessed
Easter!*

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."
--John 11:25-26

Upcoming Events

| April | | |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| April 22-25 | Women's Retreat | Omena House, Omena |

| May | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| May 1-12 | Reformation 500: A Pilgrimage | Germany and Italy |
| May 18-21 | Pedal for a Purpose Bike Ride | |
| May 21-23 | Synod Assembly | Mt. Pleasant |

For information on these events and more, be sure to read our weekly update emails and visit the events section on our website.

Congregations in Transition

Note: We include congregations on the public list when the called pastor or rostered leader completes her or his ministry in the congregation. Thus, congregations in which the pastor has resigned but is still serving are not listed here. We also do not post calls that are accepted until Bishop Satterlee signs the Letter of Call.

| | | | |
|--|--|------------------------------|---|
| Bay Conference | Rev. Dan Stoneback, Dean | Kalamazoo Conference | Rev. Kari Fast, Dean |
| Prince of Peace/Rose City | Dan Stoneback retiring June 2017 | St. Peter/Battle Creek | Cheryl Johnson, Stated Supply/Identified candidate |
| Faith/Saginaw | Nancy Steele (ECUSA), Interim/Identified candidate | Immanuel/Allegan | Paul Kehnle, Stated Supply. Dean Beckwith, Pastoral Care |
| Our Savior/Saginaw | Ann Grady (ECUSA), Intentional Interim | Prince of Peace/Portage | Jim Morgan (UMC), Stated Supply/Identified candidate |
| Resurrection/Saginaw | Barbara and Tim Bender, Interim/Reviewing MSP | St. John's/Baroda | Interviewing |
| St. John/Saginaw | Kathleen Basner, stated supply/Discerning Future | Stony Lake Conference | Rev. Doug Ogden, Dean |
| St. Peter/Unionville | Paulette Cummings retiring June 2017 | Immanuel/Muskegon | Jack Ferra, Interim |
| Grace/Vassar | Jackie Ahearn retiring June 2017 | St. Luke/Muskegon | Jack Ferra, Interim |
| Capital Area Conference | Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean | Samuel/Muskegon | Jonathan Reid, Stated Supply |
| University/East Lansing | John Schleicher, Interim/Interviewing | Sunrise Conference | Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean |
| Greater Grand Rapids Conference | Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean | Traverse Conference | Rev. Rosanne Anderson, Dean |
| Faith/Sidney | Betsy Kamphuis, Administrative Pastor/ CALL ACCEPTED: John Autio (Northern Great Lakes). Installation 5/7 | Calvary/Elk Rapids | Supply Pastors/Discerning Future |
| St. Luke's/Grand Rapids | Associate Pastor/CALL ACCEPTED: Marcy Miller. Installation 4/30 | Advent/Lake Ann | Chrysanne Timm, Interim Pastor/Interviewing |
| Grace/Hastings | Paul Kuhlman, Intentional Interim/Preparing MSP | St. John/Lake City | Roseanne Anderson retiring June 2017/Voted to share pastor with UMC Congregation in Lake City |
| Mamrelund/Kent City | Matt Deames, Intentional Interim | Bethany/Northport | Supply Pastors/Interviewing |
| Zion/Woodland | Polly Standley, Intentional Interim/Interviewing | Immanuel/Suttons Bay | Supply Pastors/Interviewing |