



## North/ West Lower Michigan Synod

2900 N. Waverly Rd.  
Lansing, MI 48906

517-321-5066

## In this Issue:

Rostered Minister  
Indebtedness

Partners in Mission

Upcoming Events

Congregations in Transition

## Rostered Minister Indebtedness

At its December 8 meeting, Synod Council approved a plan to begin to address the burden of seminary education debt born by many of our rostered ministers—pastors and deacons. Our plan is to annually award as many \$2000 grants as possible directly to lending institutions for educational debt to be applied to the principal of a rostered minister's seminary student loans. We are advised that \$2000 is the minimum amount that will have a lasting impact. A link to the full plan is at the end of this letter.

To qualify to receive a grant, pastors and deacons will be in their first 10 years of ministry (since student loans are theoretically paid off in that time), commit to serving full-time in our synod for the three years following receipt of a grant, agree to participate in personal financial literacy education and/or counseling, and complete the application process on time. In the coming days, I will reach out via email to synod pastors and deacons in their first 10 years of service and invite them to apply.

Rostered minister indebtedness is an issue very near to my heart. In my experience—as a graduate student myself and then as a seminary professor—seminarians take on student loans not so much to pay tuition as to be able to live as students. Cathy and I took out student loans while I was a doctoral student at Notre Dame to pay for health insurance for our family. I will never get over the day when, as Dean of the Chapel at LSTC, I realized that, in addition to maintaining a food bank for our neighbors in the Hyde Park community, our chapel offerings needed to fund a food pantry for our students because some of them were going without regular meals.

When I visited Luther Seminary a month ago, I learned that, at Luther, average student indebtedness is \$62,000. Unlike other professions, it is more challenging for pastors and deacons to repay their student loans because of the compensation pastors and deacons receive.

Indebtedness impacts pastors and deacons in several ways. Again, from Luther Seminary:

- 52% of pastors surveyed say loans negatively impacted their standard of living.
- 30% of pastors surveyed are bi-vocational.
- 26% of pastors surveyed left ministry due to financial pressure.
- 25% of pastors surveyed pursue higher paying ministry opportunities.
- 24% of pastors surveyed postpone healthcare.

As bishop, I experience the impact of rostered minister indebtedness in pastors who are open to serving in our Synod and intrigued by some of our smaller congregations but determine they cannot enter into the call process because of the burden of indebtedness. I am grateful that this is happening less as we adjust our compensation guidelines upward. I am even more grateful that our Synod Council decided to join many other synods in addressing rostered minister indebtedness.

I am excited that we have already raised \$2600 for this effort, so we know we will be able to award at least one \$2000 grant this year. \$1200 of this money is from a grant. Christ Lutheran in Wyoming did as Synod Council and I requested and designated the offering from Pastor Justin Walker's installation to this purpose and donated \$900. Cathy and I are committing \$500 above our regular giving to the Synod. I would love to raise \$4000 and award two grants this year. If you are looking to make an unexpected gift this Christmas season, I invite you to send a gift to our Synod designated for rostered minister debt reduction.

I know that some of you expected to find a Christmas message in this space. I will be preaching a Christmas message for rostered ministers at worship and luncheon in our Lansing office on December 19 and again at St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Lansing on Christmas Eve. I don't want to give it away too early, especially as I am intentionally observing Advent. Here, I will simply say that you are in my heart and prayers this Christmas season. I pray that you experience Christ born anew in a tradition you cherish as surely as Jesus comes to us in Word, water, bread, and wine. For Christ was born for you!

Felix Dies Nativitatis!

The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, PhD, Bishop

The complete Seminary Debt Assistance Plan and application can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2LfGlcA>

## Partners in Mission

Rev. David E. Sprang

God works in partnership. God doesn't need to work that way, but chooses to work in partnership with us and created us to work in partnership with each other. From the early pages of the scripture, we hear; "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner'". (Genesis 2:18 NRSV) God made the world and calls us together to be partners to tend and keep it.

Throughout scripture, God called partners. God called Abraham and Sarah to be partners in this new family God was calling into being. God calls Moses to be a partner to lead the people from Egypt, back home. God calls Esther to use her power as queen to protect God's people. Jesus called disciples to be partners in the mission of proclaiming God's kingdom.

God keeps calling us to be partners, even when we turn away, God keeps calling us back to be in partnership with God and one another. Jesus instituted a meal that shows the depth of partnership when Jesus speaks of his life given for us. When we eat the bread and drink the cup we partner with all those who have gone before us and will come after us in mission with God.

The work of the church is based on partnerships. It is very near impossible to be a church alone. Churches work in partnership with one another. It happens in communities, it happens in the synod, it happens in the ELCA, and it happens in our ecumenical partnerships across the country and world.

We partner together as a denomination to do things together that we would have difficulty doing alone, like seminaries, colleges, missionaries, issues of hunger – poverty – justice, and many more. We partner as a synod to care for each other, oversee the calling of new pastors, support missions and ministries in our region, foster collegial relationships with rostered ministers, provide outdoor ministry programs, support new mission, and support ministries where the church needs to be.

Mission Partners is a particular way we are church together. Through Mission Partners, congregations share support to congregations that need financial help in new ministries, renewing vitality, or ministries in poverty settings. In addition to financial support, many Mission Partner congregations also support one another by sharing visits, trading pulpits, doing service together, and praying for each other regularly.

We currently have 9 congregations in our synod that give Mission Partner support to the 6 congregations listed below. I think we can do better than that. I would propose a goal of having at least 20 congregations in 2019 who have a mission partnership with one of the Mission Partner congregations on our list. Who can you be a partner with?

**Here are the congregations for 2019 that are being recommended to receive Mission Partner support:**

Trinity, Battle Creek – Trinity is one of the two congregations left in the eastside Post neighborhood. They serve an area of poverty in Battle Creek. Through Redevelopment and support from the ELCA and the North/West Lower Michigan Synod they participate in community connections through Day Camp, Kids Programs, support of a Woman's Co-Op in their facility, worship, Bible Study, and cooperation with St. Peter Lutheran Church.

Our Savior's, Muskegon – Our Savior's is located a short distance from downtown in a changing neighborhood. A major incident of pastoral misconduct in the past greatly hindered their community engagement. In 2014, with great work by the interim pastor, they moved into Redevelopment. Since that time they have worked on several initiatives to re-engage their context including a Wednesday service for transit bus users, a community garden, neighborhood association, and neighborhood walks.

Zion, Saginaw – A congregation established by German immigrants in the late 1800's, Zion has transformed to be multi-cultural primarily 20% Latino, and 10% African-American. They host a boxing league for teens, support and ice cream cart, host a community revival, connect with students at Saginaw Valley State University, sent a mission group to Honduras, and worship in a conversational style that connects with the neighborhood. Most recently they have facilitated a renewal of the neighborhood association.

Sudanese Christ Lutheran, Wyoming – Many "lost boys of Sudan" were resettled in Michigan when the civil war broke out there many years ago. They have grown, married, completed school, and have families of their own. It is still not considered "safe" to return to South Sudan. They gather at Christ Lutheran Church in Wyoming, a suburb of Grand Rapids. We give thanks for the gracious partnership of Christ Lutheran for the space for them to gather. They worship in Dinka under the leadership of 2 of their lay folks. They support new refugees who come from South Sudan and support family members still in refugee camps in South Sudan and Kenya.

St. Peter, Unionville – Through the synod Step-Up Program St. Peter is working towards returning to full-time ministry after a season of part-time pastoral ministry. They have gone through training on vitality and evangelism. They are seeking to rebuild Sunday School, youth programs, ecumenical partnerships, community engagement, and family support.

St. Matthew, Bridgeport – Through the synod Step-Up Program St. Matthew is working to maintain full-time ministry after a season of part-time pastoral ministry. They have participated in training in vitality and evangelism and are working on ways to connect with the larger community. They have plans for developing the grounds around the building a prayer labyrinth and other resources to invite the community on to the site where they can engage in conversation and relationship building.

**Synod Finances**  
as of November 30, 2018

**November Revenue and Support**

Mission Support	\$ 113,852
Other	\$ 9,180
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 123,032</b>

**Year to Date Revenue and Support**

Mission Support	\$1,120,695
Other	\$ 115,880
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,236,575</b>

**November Expenses**

Support to ELCA	\$ 56,909
Other	\$ 75,014
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 131,923</b>

**Year to Date Expenses**

Support to ELCA	\$ 560,347
Other	\$ 787,646
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,347,993</b>

Net Assets Released from Restriction	\$ 341
--------------------------------------	--------

Net Assets Released from Restriction	\$ 1,497
--------------------------------------	----------

Net Change in Fund Balance	\$ (8,550)
----------------------------	------------

Net Change in Fund Balance	\$ (109,921)
----------------------------	--------------

**Rostered Minister Annual Reports**

2018 Annual Rostered Minister Report Forms are now available!

All rostered ministers are expected to complete and return a report to Bishop Satterlee by February 15, 2019.

Remember to save the form to your computer before completing it. Once completed, forms should be emailed to Bishop Satterlee.

Download Forms: <https://bit.ly/2ElhjHx>

**Rostered Leaders Christmas Worship & Lunch**

We invite all rostered leaders to join the Synod staff for worship and lunch on December 19 at the Synod Office in Lansing. Worship will begin at 11:30am and will be followed by lunch.

Please RSVP if you plan to attend: <https://bit.ly/2Q4az7u>.

**Thank You from the Lower Susquehanna Synod**

Bishop James Dunlop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod shares this message:

Over the last week or so I have been receiving beautiful letters signed by the members of your churches that held our ministry, in the Lower Susquehanna Synod, in prayer. I know that we do hold each other in prayer but the letters from your congregations signed by so many people were very touching. I just wanted to let you know how much they are appreciated here. Thank you, to your synod, for their faithfulness in prayer. Have a blessed Advent and a joyous Christmas.

**Upcoming Events**

December	
19	<b>Rostered Leaders Christmas Lunch, Lansing</b>
24-25	<b>Synod Office Closure, Christmas</b>

January	
1	<b>Synod Office Closure, New Year's Day</b>
13-14	<b>Preaching Stewardship, St. Francis, Dewitt</b>
21	<b>Synod Office Closure, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</b>

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



**“And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth” (Luke 1:14).**

**Wishing you a joyous Christmas and a happy New Year!**

## 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.

<b>Bay Conference</b> <b>Rev. Emily Olsen, Dean</b>		<b>Kalamazoo Conference</b> <b>Rev. Kjersten Priddy, Dean</b>	
Hope/Marlette (part-time)	Supply Pastors/Awaiting a candidate/Voting on partnership with Trinity, Brown City (SEMI)	Savior/Kalamazoo	Paul Neuchterlein, Interim/Interviewing
Prince of Peace/Rose City	Jeff Bonn, Intentional Interim/Preparing MSP	St. John and Trinity Episcopal/Three Rivers	Dennis Smith, Stated Supply/Interviewing
Grace/Vassar (part-time)	Supply Pastors/Awaiting a candidate	<b>Stony Lake Conference</b> <b>Rev. Doug Ogden, Dean</b>	
St. Paul/Au Gres	Partnering with Grace, East Tawas/Amanda Carpenter, Contracted Pastor	Samuel/Muskegon	Chris Anderson, Interim/Interviewing
<b>Capital Area Conference</b> <b>Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean</b>		<b>Sunrise Conference</b> <b>Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean</b>	
St. Stephen/Lansing	Erick Johnson, Interim/Updating MSP	Peace/Gaylord	Gary Grieger, Interim/Requesting additional candidates
Grace/Lansing	John Schleicher, Contracted Pastor/Discerning Future	St. Paul/Alpena	Supply Pastors/Requesting additional candidates
Calvary/Lansing	David Augenstein, Stated Supply/Preparing MSP	<b>Traverse Conference</b> <b>Rev. Rosanne Anderson, Dean</b>	
<b>Greater Grand Rapids Conference</b> <b>Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean</b>		St. Paul/Reed City	Matt Deames, Interim/Partnering with Augustana, Tustin in pastoral internship beginning January 2019
Peace/Holland	Supply Pastors/Preparing MSP	Augustana/Tustin	Supply Pastors/Partnering with St Paul, Reed City in pastoral internship beginning January 2019
Immanuel/Big Rapids	Supply Pastors/Discerning Future		