



North/ West Lower Michigan Synod

2900 N. Waverly Rd.
Lansing, MI 48906

517-321-5066

In this Issue:

Bishop's Letter

A Season for Giving

Upcoming Events

Congregations in
Transition

Joyous Incarnation!

"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel' which means, 'God is with us'" (Matthew 1:23). John, my favorite gospel, declares that "the Word through which all things came into being, became flesh and lived among us, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). And Luke gets fleshy: "And she gave birth to her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7).

We call it incarnation—God, in one of the modes of God's triune being and without in any way ceasing to be God, reveals Godself to humanity for our salvation by coming among us as a human being. Taken into God's eternity and glorified at the resurrection, the incarnate One remains forever the ultimate focus of the relationship between God and humanity. Jesus not only mediates God to us but also in his perfect humanity representing us to God. In Jesus, God reveals Godself to us as love and God experiences us at our most fully human best.

While I would never preach it as a doctrinal formula, this year, I find myself truly receiving this concise expression of the mystery of Christmas as a "tiding of comfort and joy." I learned long ago that Christmas sermons do not need to name all the reasons why we need God

to be with us, reveal Godself to us as love, and see us through Jesus rather than as we are on our own. I have my reasons and you have yours, and everyone who lights a candle and sings Silent Night has theirs. We bring those reasons with us to Christmas Eve worship in the same way we bring presents when we visit family and friends on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Even as we repress them, even as we suppress them, those reasons are right there, under the surface. So why not express them?

If I was leading Christmas Eve worship this year, I might invite worshipers to literally wrap their reason as a small Christmas gift and lay it outside the crèche, since these are the presents the Christ child desires most. The Christ child was born to save us. Trusting the love Jesus reveals, we can give him the reasons we need to be saved.

Come and hear the good news of great joy with your synod staff on December 21 at 11 AM at St. Stephen in Lansing. And have a Merry Christmas—a joyful celebration of the incarnation!

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

A Season for Giving

This is the time of year when we think most about giving gifts. It may also be the time of year that congregations think about their outreach/benevolent giving for the end of the year or for the coming year 2017. There are many options, which include the local community, the synod, the whole church, and our global community.



Local giving could include food pantries, homeless shelters, partner organizations, and more, that touch the lives of those in need in your community. When selecting recipients, it is prudent to evaluate the organization's effectiveness and accountability. Assess the needs of the community and determine the one best suited to reach those in need.

At the synod or state level, there are many options for gifts. It is expected that your congregation is giving Mission Support to the synod and through the synod for the work of the ELCA. In addition, within the synod we have Mission Partners, which are congregations in partnership to develop new worshiping communities or renew existing congregations. For 2017, we are suggesting: Trinity (Battle Creek), Sudanese Christ Lutheran (Wyoming), Advent (Lake Ann), Our Savior's (Muskegon), North Ottawa SWAC, Zion (Saginaw), and 4 Corners Partnership (Ludington) as Mission Partners. Within our synod there are also opportunities to support: The Staff Growth Fund, Bishop's Discretionary Fund, The Bishop's Teaching Fund, Living Water Ministries (Camps), Samaritas (Lutheran Social Services), Salem Lutheran - Flint, just to name a few.

The ELCA has a wealth of opportunities to give both individually and as a congregation. Many of those options are available through the ELCA Good Gifts Catalog. In addition to farm animals, the Good Gifts Catalog lists items from the Malaria Project, The Hunger Fund, and Global Missions. Gifts to the ELCA Hunger Fund are used both within the USA and around the world.



Internationally the ELCA has missionaries in 75 countries, and we participate with Lutheran World Relief and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service in addition to the international work of the ELCA Hunger Fund.

Our church is touching the lives of people in communities, in our country, and around the world daily. Your individual gifts, one time gifts by the congregation, or monthly gifts to or through the synod are some of the most effective ways to efficiently provide help to those in need and reflect the gift of life that Jesus brings.

Rev. David. E, Sprang, Assistant to the Bishop, Director for Evangelical Mission

Annual Reports to the Bishop

The 2017 Annual Report to the Bishop forms for rostered ministers have been posted on ELCA website. The forms have been modified slightly from previous years. You must download and save the form to your computer before filling it out and sending it to the Synod Office.

Download Forms: <http://www.elca.org/About/Churchwide/Office-of-the-Secretary/Rostered-Leaders>

Synod Called Staff Synopsis

As our synod moves toward a staff of three full-time Assistants to the Bishop, congregations have asked what this configuration might look like. The synopsis linked below is the result of prayer, reflection, and conversation. We are grateful to congregations and individuals who have increased their mission support and made special gifts to help make this vision become a reality.

Read More: <http://mittensynod.org/docs/SynodCalledStaffResponsibilities.pdf>

Ongoing Spiritual Formation Program

Register now for a four-part series offered for the Sunrise Ecumenical Community, sponsored by Living Fire Ministries of the ELCA and facilitated by Nancy Brousseau, OP.

A Spirituality of Slowing Down: From the Microwave to the Slow Cooker will be held January 28, February 25, March 18, April 8, 2017 from 10:30am-3:30pm at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Alpena, MI.

More Information: www.livingfire.info

Upcoming Events

December		
December 21	Synod Christmas Worship	St. Stephen, Lansing
December 25	Christmas Day	
December 23- January 1	Synod Office Closed	

January		
December 23 - January 1	Synod Office Closed	
January 1	New Year's Day	

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
Faith/Saginaw	Interviewing	St. Peter/Battle Creek	Cheryl Johnson, Stated Supply/Awaiting Candidate
Our Savior/Saginaw	Ann Grady (ECUSA), Intentional Interim	Immanuel/Allegan	Paul Kehnle, Stated Supply. Dean Beckwith, Pastoral Care
Resurrection/Saginaw	Barbara and Tim Bender, Interim/Call Committee Training	Prince of Peace/Portage	Jim Foster, Interim/ Requesting additional candidates
Capital Area Conference	Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean	Stony Lake Conference	Rev. Doug Ogden, Dean
University/East Lansing	John Schleicher, Interim/ Preparing MSP	Immanuel/Muskegon	Jack Ferra, Interim
Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean	St. Luke/Muskegon	Jack Ferra, Interim
Faith/Sidney	Betsy Kamphuis, Administrative Pastor/ Interviewing	Zion/Fruitport	Supply Pastors/ Interviewing
Immanuel/Big Rapids	Peggy Rose (SEMI), transitional pastor	Sunrise Conference	Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean
Trinity/Grand Rapids	Part-time third assistant/ Interviewing	Traverse Conference	Rev. Rosanne Anderson, Dean
St. Luke's/Grand Rapids	Associate Pastor/ Interviewing	Feast of Victory/Acme	Supply Pastors/Call Accepted: Carolyn Heider (I-K). Installation 12/17, 3pm
Good Shepherd/Holland	Call Accepted: Jessica Rivera Walker	Calvary/Elk Rapids	Supply Pastors/Discerning future
Grace/Hastings	Paul Kuhlman, Intentional Interim	Advent/Lake Ann	Chrysanne Timm, Transitional Pastor/ Preparing MSP
Mamrelund/Kent City	Matt Deames, Intentional Interim	Bethany/Northport	Supply Pastors/Awaiting candidate
Zion/Woodland	Polly Standley, Intentional Interim	Immanuel/Suttons Bay	Supply Pastors/Preparing MSP