



North/ West Lower Michigan Synod

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More Than a Political Issue

I spent the summer of 1985 completing my first unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor. Like everyone who prepares for rostered ministry in the ELCA, I did a stint as a student chaplain. As part of my training, I was privileged to serve several evening and night shifts in the emergency room under the supervision of a very wise social worker.

One night this social worker asked me to join her in meeting with a woman brought in after being beaten by her husband. Her face was bruised and her eyes black and swollen. When I was introduced as the chaplain, this woman immediately quoted Scripture to me, explaining that she'd not done as 1 Peter directs to "accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct" (3:1) and so "deserved" what happened to her.

Another night, the social worker asked me to accompany her to visit an elementary school age girl who came in after being sexually assaulted. The girl explained to the social worker that, like women in the Bible, she tempted the man and so that this happened was her own fault. When she looked up at me for confirmation, I vigorously shook my head no.

I have not thought about this woman and girl for more than 30 years. In the last few days, both stepped out of my subconscious to remind me that they're still there. Even now I am shocked at the way

Scripture was used to justify domestic violence and sexual assault. And so, I feel compelled to say that domestic violence and the exploitation of children are contrary to God's will as it is revealed in Jesus who "reached out to heal the sick and suffering, to preach good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to us all." In Christ we know that all lives are precious to God. No one deserves to be beaten or assaulted. The church and its leaders need to stand up and say so because this is more than a political issue. This is a moral issue.

I never imagined writing this letter. I'd hoped to devote this space to Lent or the elimination of term limits for synod officers. But in recent days, there seems to be some ambiguity or lack of clarity in our culture surrounding these issues. So, I will talk about Lent on this week's video and save term limits for March.

Here and now, I feel compelled to say that our church takes allegations of domestic violence, sexual misconduct, and any form of abuse extremely seriously and our church investigates such allegations with deliberation, intention, and rigor. We provide boundary training and clear expectations for rostered ministers of our church and expect them to renew their training every three years. I am pleased that our rostered ministers take this expectation seriously. The next boundaries training will be April 26.

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The ELCA is preparing a statement on women and justice. You can read more about this initiative, including the latest draft of the social statement at <http://www.elca.org/womenandjustice>.

A group in our synod is working with the deans to schedule hearings on the women and justice social statement. Contact your dean to find out when and where the hearing is scheduled in your conference.

May the peace of Christ surround and sustain you as we celebrate our Lenten season in a societal season of conflict and division.

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

Lenten Reading Group

[Blessed to Follow: The Beatitudes as a Compass for Discipleship](#)

The Publicly Engaged Church Table invites you to read and discuss Dr. Martha Stortz's book on the Beatitudes during the weeks of Lent. Together we will explore what Jesus means when he says, "Blessed are..." And how our lives are changed by being blessed. This book is for anyone who would like to grow in living a faithful life and who would like to connect with fellow sojourners across the synod. The discussion will happen in a Facebook group titled Blessed To Follow. You can connect through our synod's Facebook page, North/West Lower Michigan Synod. Discussion will begin on February 15th, but you may join in anytime throughout Lent. I look forward to reading and discussing with you!

Pastor Sarah Friesen-Carper

Below is the book description from the Augsburg Fortress website:

In Matthew's Gospel, the Sermon on the Mount inaugurates Jesus' public ministry, and the first word out of Jesus' mouth is "blessed." He repeats this word throughout his first sermon. Jesus calls his disciples by blessing them, and as he speaks, Jesus introduces himself to us but also introduces disciples to themselves, for the Beatitudes offer a character sketch of who disciples will become if they follow him.

The Beatitudes, says Martha Stortz, function as a compass for the journey of Christian discipleship. The first group of Beatitudes target people in situations of suffering. The second group of Beatitudes target people who help those who suffer. Each chapter in Blessed to Follow is structured around a similar pattern: appeal to experience; biblical stories; Jesus: the one blessing and the one blessed; disciples: blessed to be a blessing; practice: the blessing made real. Includes questions for discussion and additional resources.

You can purchase the book from Augsburg Fortress (<http://bit.ly/2GeSUkB>) or Amazon.

Scarcity to Abundance

When the financial crisis of 2008 and 2009 hit in Michigan, many of us panicked. Even if we were not directly affected, we hunkered down, kept money in reserve, and curbed our generosity. Since then, the population in the state has stabilized, the economy has grown, and new businesses and jobs have come to Michigan. In congregations and the synod, we felt that hunker down feeling. Synod budgets were cut, staff reduced, and congregations held back money in anticipation of worse trends. It felt like wandering in a wilderness of scarcity. Our synod is on a comeback!

For some the economic down turn had some consequences, for others the effects were short lived. We have come from the mindset of wilderness to remembering that God is a God of abundance. When God does something it is always "A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over" (Luke 6:38). In the past few years to show our generosity in the midst of scarcity thinking, our synod has continued our commitment to send 50% of unrestricted mission support received to the ELCA and its varied ministries. In addition, we are learning to talk in the language of abundance instead of scarcity. We are sharing the Good News of what God is doing in our churches and our communities. That has been demonstrated in the assembly approval of budget increases for mission support and the adding back of a third rostered staff person.



Your dedication to God's abundance and generosity, and commitment to the greater church is evident. We are now waiting for the results of the close of our 2017 fiscal year. The projection is that unrestricted mission support giving to the synod will be about \$60,000 more than last year. Thanks Be To God!! And that will reflect in an increase in giving to the work of the ELCA of about \$30,000. That looks like giving levels that the synod was seeing before the 2009 downturn. Even better news, if all the figures come in as projected, we will be at a 5% increase in giving to mission support over all. That could put us in the top 5 synods in the ELCA for highest percentage giving increases 2017 over 2016. That is news to be celebrated! We are celebrating God's abundance and generosity. God has blessed us with hope and gifts. It reminds me of the conclusion to the prayer of St. Francis: "For it is in giving that we receive" When we are generous we reflect God's generosity to us.

Thank you for your strong generosity and the support of the mission of the church.

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

Justice Learning and Action Opportunities

In the week and months following Easter there are several opportunities for you to put your resurrection faith into action! Join the Anti-Racism Team of the synod at one of these events!

The 19th Annual White Privilege Conference (WPC 19) is happening in Grand Rapids April 4th – 7th. This conference brings together people from a wide variety of disciplines - academic, corporate, religious, non-profit, governmental - to examine privilege and how it shapes our institutions and our society. This year's theme, Super People & Superpowers: Prepare to be the Future of Social Justice Work, draws on the popularity of superhero movies (do you have your tickets to Black Panther yet?) to show how we are the heroes we need to create racial justice. In recent years our Synod Anti-Racism Team has hosted annual introductory trainings to teach about racism. WPC 19 is a unique opportunity to develop a much deeper and broader analysis of racism, the way racism functions in our communities and churches, and how we can organize to limit the power of racism and build racial justice into our institutions and lives. The Anti-Racism Team will subsidize the cost of registration for this event. Please contact Rev. Laura Gerstl-Beaukema to get signed up, laura.gerstl@gmail.com

Rally to End Racism April 4th at the National Mall in Washington D.C.

In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., the Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), will join ecumenical and inter-religious partners for Act Now: Unite to End Racism April 3-5 in Washington, D.C. The focus of the three-day event will be a rally April 4 on the National Mall.

The event, organized by the National Council of Churches in Christ in the USA, will bring together many ELCA members from across the country. The ELCA is a founding member of the council.

The rally's call to action emphasizes three key points: awaken to the truth that racism is evil and hurts us all; confront racism through truth-telling and action to right the wrong; and transform the hearts, minds, and behaviors of people and institutions.

Events begin April 3 with an ecumenical worship service at St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral and will be capped off by a lobby day on Capitol Hill April 5. (Above from the ELCA's press release of February 6, 2018)

Assistant to the Bishop, Rev. Sarah Friesen-Carper will be at the event. Please contact her if you plan to attend, sarahfriesencarper@mittensynod.org. For more information visit www.rally2endracism.org/.

Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance (LEDA) Summit of Race and Inclusion May 15th at Hope College in Holland, MI

The Diversity Alliance Summit on Race and Inclusion is an annual event that examines the effects of racial disparities and strategies for their elimination at a day-long conference involving hundreds of participants from across the state of Michigan. It's designed to engage community members and key stakeholders in eliminating racial barriers in the lakeshore region.

Participants come to learn: How discrimination affects communities economically and socially, understand how racial inclusion benefits everyone, learn tools to make a positive difference in our community, and join others to develop concrete plans for shaping a prosperous, inclusive future (From the website www.ethnicdiversity.org)

Please stay tuned for more information. If you are interested in attending, please contact Rev. Christin Fawcett, pastor@allsaintsmason.org

Synod Finances
as of November 30, 2017

October Income		Year to Date Income	
Mission Support	\$ 118,179	Mission Support	\$ 1,135,721
All Other Income	\$ 7,552	All Other Income	\$ 110,373
Total Income	\$ 125,731	Total Income	\$ 1,246,094
Expenses		Expenses	
Support to ELCA	\$ 59,090	Support to ELCA	\$ 567,861
All Other Expenses	\$ 69,508	All Other Expenses	\$ 715,014
Total Expenses	\$ 128,598	Total Expenses	\$ 1,282,875
Plus Net Assets Released			
From Restricted Funds	\$ 0		\$ 7,546
Balance +/-	- \$ 2,867	Balance +/-	- \$ 29,235

Synod Boundaries Workshop

Register Now: April 26!

All rostered ministers who have not attended a Boundaries Training in three years are strongly encouraged to attend. Lay Leaders may also attend.

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

Synod Assembly 2018

Save the Date for this year's Synod Assembly!

The Assembly will be held May 20-22, 2018 at the Lansing Center and the Radisson Hotel. Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton will be the guest speaker.

More information to come!

Annual Reports to the Bishop

The Annual Report to the Bishop forms are now available on the Office of the Secretary page of the ELCA website. Please download and save a copy on your computer before completing the form. Once completed, please return to the Synod Office.

Download form: <http://bit.ly/2o59Beo>

Upcoming Events

February

February 17	R&M Holle Speaker Series	Faith, Okemos
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March

March 2-3	Region 6 Discernment Retreats	
March 4-7	Silent Lenten Retreat	St. Francis Retreat Center, Dewitt

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. Emily Olsen, Dean	Kalamazoo Conference	Rev. Kjersten Priddy, Dean
Hope/Marlette (part-time)	Supply Pastors/Awaiting a candidate	Messiah/Constantine	Tom Pederson, Interim/ Awaiting a candidate
Prince of Peace/Rose City	CALL ACCEPTED: Jeff Bonn, Intentional Interim. Installation 2/18	St. John's/Baroda	Jim Morgan, Interim/ Interviewing
Grace/Vassar (part-time)	Supply Pastors/Awaiting a candidate	Stony Lake Conference	Rev. Doug Ogden, Dean
St. Paul's/Au Gres	Supply Pastors/Exploring Cooperative Ministry with Grace/East Tawas	Immanuel/Muskegon	Jack Ferra, Interim
St. Timothy/Midland (part-time)	Gerald Ferguson, administrative pastor/ Awaiting a candidate; exploring cooperative ministry with Trinity/Midland	St. Luke/Muskegon	Jack Ferra, Interim
		Samuel/Muskegon	Chris Anderson, interim/ Discerning Future
Capital Area Conference	Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean	Sunrise Conference	Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean
University/East Lansing (associate pastor)	Haley Vay Beaman, interim associate pastor	St. James/Millersburg (part-time)	CALL ACCEPTED: F. Laraine Sundin. Installation 2/25
Grace/Lansing	John Schleicher, contract pastor, began 2/14	Trinity/Ocqueoc (part-time)	CALL ACCEPTED: F. Laraine Sundin. Installation 2/25
St. Stephen/Lansing	Erick Johnson, Interim/ Preparing MSP	Traverse Conference	Rev. Rosanne Anderson, Dean
Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean	St. Paul's/Reed City	Dawn Pooley retiring June 2018/Preparing MSP
Mamrelund/Kent City	Matt Deames, Intentional Interim/Preparing MSP	Messiah/Roscommon	Supply Pastors/Discerning future
Christ/Wyoming	Polly Standley, Interim/ Interviewing	Augustana/Tustin	Supply Pastors/ Discerning future