



North/ West Lower Michigan Synod

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In this Issue:

We are Living Stones!

Synod Assembly 2019

Upcoming Events

Congregations in Transition

We are Living Stones!

We are the living stones of Christ's Church. In the words of St. Paul, "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:20-21). For the period 2020–2022, our synod is proposing, undertaking, and leading "living stone initiatives" that equip us as Christians, congregations, and a synod to participate in what St. Paul describes as living stones joined together and rising as a holy temple in the Lord. In the limited space of this column, I'd like to tell you a little bit more about these initiatives.

18 congregations participating in REVIVE, a 2 year-long vitality program developed specifically for our synod by Pastor David Sprang and our synod's vitality team. This program of workshops and retreats is for congregations that are very serious about reviving their zeal for sharing the gospel, engaging their neighborhood and community, and helping people to know Jesus through the congregation's words and deeds. Topics include worship, evangelism, stewardship, leadership development, community engagement, and cross-cultural conversation.

Celebrating the priesthood of all believers and the ways lay leaders exercise essential roles in the congregation, 75 congregational leaders over the three-year period will complete a retooled Equipping Leaders for Mission and Ministry (ELMM) program in four tracks: (1) Lutheran Bible study leader; (2) stewardship specialist; (3) community evangelist/catalyst; (4) assisting minister. This initiative has been so enthusiastically received that we hope to add tracks in congregational administration and pastoral care assistance.

20 candidates for rostered ministry are identified, accompanied, and supported. At our 2016 assembly, I asked you to join me in prayer that God would raise up rostered ministers –pastors and deacons–from our synod. God answered our prayer. We currently have 15 people from our synod in the candidacy process. Our goal is 20.

Rostered ministers are relieved of some measure of educational indebtedness. Thank you! We received \$5400 for debt reduction and so will be able to award two \$2000 grants at our assembly. We pray that this ministry will grow.

Congregations leading and growing in their mission support of our synod, together with individuals committed to the Living Stone financial initiative, are honored and thanked at Mission Support Dinners. Every expression of the church, including this synod, can do a better job of saying thank you. We hope to launch these thank you dinners this year and the plans are currently under way!

Continued on Page 2

Continued from Page 1

Rostered and congregational leaders receive increased opportunities for inspiration and continuing education. We offer lots of quality continuing education, from Bonhoeffer and the Environment and Walking Together in March to a preaching seminar in May. We want to maintain and expand our educational offerings for both rostered and congregational leaders.

Our synod makes a renewed commitment to discuss ways to welcome all God's people. We know that welcoming takes place on the congregational level. The synod can coach and equip congregations to be welcome. Hospitality, antiracism training, and Open Hearts, Open Church are all ways congregations can choose to refine and expand their welcome.

Our youth, especially those in smaller congregations, are afforded an additional level of youth ministry, to build on the excellent events provided by Living Water Ministries. The initial effort of this initiative is to encourage young people to attend our synod assembly in May. We are also looking into retreats at the conference level.

Struggling congregations receive accompaniment and assistance to realistically assess their sustainability and, where desirable, to partner with neighboring congregations, both ELCA and full communion partners. We are currently having these conversations with congregations throughout our synod and they will only increase in the coming years. The synod has no decision-making power. The synod does have a responsibility to actively accompany congregations through the slow, tedious, and often painful process of discerning their future.

People outside the church are invited to "come to [Jesus], a living stone rejected by mortals but in the sight of God chosen and precious" because we remain vigilant to opportunities for synodically authorized worshiping communities. This is not about gaining resources for our congregations—new people to do the work and pay the bills. This isn't even about starting new churches. This is about helping people to know God's love for them in Jesus Christ.

Latino and Native American communities on the territory of our Synod experience the love of Jesus through our listening to and learning from them. We long for and pray for opportunities to listen to and learn from people who live in our state but are not part of our congregations. Our goal here is to behold the face of God in new ways.

Raise up 100 Living Stone Givers. We are seeking 100 people (or combinations of people) of our synod to make a three-year commitment (2020-2022) of an annual designated "Living Stone" gift of \$500 to our synod for the Living Stone ministry initiatives. We are asking people appreciative of and committed to synodical ministry to give directly to the North/ West Lower Michigan Synod in the same way they give to Samaritas, Living Water Ministries, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, and the ELCA's Always Being Made New campaign. We have welcomed our first seven Living Stone Givers!

My invitation this month is the same as last. Prayerfully consider where are you and your congregation fit into these initiatives. What really excites you? Prayerfully consider making a three-year \$500 annual commitment (\$1500) to our Synod. And pray that God will smile upon and bless this effort as we seek to be living stones in a changing church and world.

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



Called to Be Living Stones in a Changing World

North/West Lower Michigan Synod Assembly 2019

May 16-18, 2019

Comfort Inn & Suites, Mt. Pleasant

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will meet in Assembly May 16-18, 2019 at the Comfort Inn and Suites and Conference Center in Mt. Pleasant, MI.

The Assembly is scheduled to begin at 6:30 pm Thursday evening with the opening eucharist at the Conference Center. Our guest from Churchwide is the Rev. Chris Boerger, Secretary of the ELCA.

The theme for this year's Assembly is "Called to be Living Stones in a Changing World", deriving from the Apostle Peter's words to Christians in 1

Peter 2:5: "You yourselves like living stones are being built as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

Registration for voting members selected by their congregations, as well as all rostered leaders, and guests is now open. Congregations are encouraged to send youth members as part of their voting representation. Please note that lodging is to be arranged separately. Early Bird registration has begun and will conclude on April 24th. The final day to register for the Assembly is May 1st.

Register Now: <https://bit.ly/2tmZCAH>

On the Assembly section of the Synod website, you will find the documents guiding the work of the Assembly's Nominating Committee. This year there are ten positions to be elected: 4 Synod Council positions, 2 Consultation Committee positions and 4 Discipline Committee positions. There are documents describing the responsibilities of each position on the Assembly page. If you would like to nominate a person (including yourself) for one or more of these positions, please get their approval and use the Nomination Bio form available on the Assembly page. The nominee's signature must be included on the Bio form.

Nomination Forms: <https://bit.ly/2If29Ho>

For more information about Synod Assembly, visit the Assembly page of the Synod website:

<https://bit.ly/2If29Ho>

Synod Finances

as of January 31, 2019

January**Revenue and Support**

Mission Support	\$ 107,636
Other	\$ 32,159
Total	\$ 139,795

January**Expenses**

Support to ELCA	\$ 53,818
Other	\$ 80,571
Total	\$ 134,389

Net Assets Released

from Restriction \$ 0

Net Change

in Fund Balance \$ 5,406

Year to Date**Revenue and Support**

Mission Support	\$ 1,370,371
Other	\$ 160,194
Total	\$1,530,565

Year to Date**Expenses**

Support to ELCA	\$ 684,664
Other	\$ 928,305
Total	\$1,612,969

Net Assets Released

from Restriction \$ 1,497

Net Change

in Fund Balance \$ (80,907)

**Living Water Ministries
Summer Camp**

Register by February 28 to save \$35! Make memories, make friends, and make a difference in the life of your child by registering them for a week of camp with Living Water Ministries.

Register Now: <https://bit.ly/2N4zDXM>**Spring ELMM Retreats**

Genesis 1-11 with Dr. Carol Bechtel
March 15-16

Genesis 12-50 with Dr. Joy Schroeder
April 12-13

Register Now: elmm.org**Spring Discernment Retreat**

March 1-2, Mansfield, OH

Are you sensing that God may be calling you to minister as a deacon or pastor in the ELCA? Participation in a Discernment Retreat is an excellent way to explore that question.

Register: <https://bit.ly/2RhyTE2>**Synod Boundaries Workshop**

March 7, Resurrection, Saginaw

All rostered ministers who have not attended a boundaries workshop in the past 3 years are strongly encouraged to attend. Lay leaders may also attend.

Register: <https://bit.ly/2FkvEFB>**Silent Directed Retreat**

March 17-20, St. Francis, Dewitt

Take time during Lent to rest, reflect, and deepen your relationship with God. Join us for an ecumenical lenten retreat sponsored by Living Fire Ministries.

Register: <https://bit.ly/2ACXZTK>**For the Life of the World:
Bonhoeffer & Ecology**

March 23, University Lutheran, East Lansing

The Publicly Engaged Church Table, in cooperation with the Holle Speaker Series, will be presenting a seminar by Rev. Dr. Lisa E. Dahill, Associated Professor of Religion at California Lutheran University.

Register Now: <https://bit.ly/2SzWxMV>**Walking Together**

March 30, Calvary, Lansing

Congregational Lay Leaders are invited to a day of worship, learning, and encouragement, centered on the theme of Your Congregation/Our Synod: A Spiritual House Made of Living Stones.

Register: <https://bit.ly/2FkwulJ>**Learning from the Bishop**

May 3, Christ the King, Gladwin

Join Bishop Satterlee for a day of sermon preparation and conversation that will equip you to preach through the summer and fall. Focusing on the Gospel texts for the season after Pentecost (June 23-November 24). Anyone preaching in the coming months is welcome

Register: <https://bit.ly/2BzUQo8>

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/Discerning Future	Savior/Kalamazoo	Paul Neuchterlein, Interim/ CALL ACCEPTED: Nicole Smith (ULS). Ordination 2/17. Installation 3/24.
Prince of Peace/Rose City	Jeff Bonn, Intentional Interim/Requesting additional candidates	St. John and Trinity Episcopal/Three Rivers	Jim Morgan, Stated Supply/ CALL ACCEPTED: James Smith (I-K) Installation 4/7.
Grace/Vassar (part-time)	Supply Pastors/Interviewing	Stony Lake Conference	Rev. Doug Ogden, Dean
St. Paul/Au Gres (part-time)	Amanda Carpenter, Contracted/Discerning Future	Samuel/Muskegon	Chris Anderson, Interim/ Requesting additional candidates
Capital Area Conference	Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean	Sunrise Conference	Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean
St. Stephen/Lansing	Erick Johnson, Interim/ Updating MSP	Peace/Gaylord	Gary Grieger, Interim/ Requesting additional candidates
Calvary/Lansing	David Augenstein, Stated Supply/Discerning Future	St. Paul/Alpena	Supply Pastors/Interviewing
Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean	Traverse Conference	Rev. Rosanne Anderson, Dean
Peace/Holland	Clay Bates, Contracted through December/Preparing MSP		
Immanuel/Big Rapids	Dennis Smith, contracted through June/Discerning Future		