



North/ West Lower Michigan Synod

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Shout from the Rooftops!

As the most recent example of a pattern of inappropriate discourse, President Trump's reported Oval Office comments about Haiti, El Salvador, and countries in Africa—comments confirmed by others who were present—in the context of a discussion of immigration render impossible Christians and especially Christian leaders “staying out” of politics. As Presiding Bishop Eaton said, “Regardless of the context, references of that kind have no place in our civil discourse and, if true, reflect racist attitudes unbecoming any of us, but especially a president of the United States.”

From Moses before Pharaoh to Nathan before King David to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego before King Nebuchadnezzar to Jesus before Pilate, we have a biblical witness of religious leaders speaking into political realities when those realities conflict with God's will, purpose, and vision for the world. Bishop Eaton describes God's purpose and our participation in it this way:

...a world where each of us sees every person—regardless of race, origin, ethnicity, gender or economic status [and I would add disability]—in the image of God and, therefore, worthy of dignity and respect. Our church has relationships and partnerships with Christians and others on six continents. These are our sisters and brothers. We strive to accompany them and they us, across boundaries and cognizant of our diversity, yet all seeking the common good. (<http://bit.ly/2D3silo>)

When public policy and political reality blatantly conflict with God's intent for the world and its people, Christians and Christian leaders are not only obligated to speak God's will, purpose, and vision—what we might call gospel—into these realities, they are compelled to shout it from the rooftops. The question is not whether bishops and pastors and people of faith will speak about the realities of our society and nation. The question is how bishops and pastors and people of faith will do it.

Every year on this Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend, I make time to read Dr. King's “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (<http://bit.ly/1PzYolh>). It speaks differently to me every year. This year, Dr. King guides me on how to shout the gospel from the rooftops into public policy and political reality in four ways.

First, Dr. King writes from jail in response to criticism from other clergy of his work and ideas. Dr. King knows firsthand that we pay a personal cost when we speak the gospel into political reality. In Michigan, 10,704 votes separated President Trump from Secretary Clinton. We live in a divided church in a divided state.

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Jesus cautions us to count the cost (Luke 14:26-28). Whatever we say will offend someone and some will express their offense in ways that are heated, personal, and consequential. We need to be prepared to suffer and dare not be surprised by these reactions. As we count the cost, we do so in the awareness that remaining silent is a privilege of being white and Lutheran; some communities and Christian traditions expect and even demand that their pastors utter a word from the Lord that speaks directly to contemporary political reality. For us who are white and Lutheran, there comes a point when exercising the privilege of remaining silent makes us complicit with the political realities.

Dr. King reminds us that opposition is not only to be expected but welcomed when he writes, "I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth." And so, Dr. King reminds us of "the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire."

Second, Dr. King writes a letter. I find letter-writing to be slow, deliberate, and even laborious. Letter-writing takes time. It's so very different from almost instantaneously posting something on Facebook, tweeting, or writing an email and pressing send. Letter-writing takes work. I believe we need to consider not only what we say, but the best way of communicating it—a letter, a tweet, a Facebook post, an email, a sermon, a forum where people can talk back. Even when we choose to say something online, I have found it helpful to compose in a word processing program and then paste it in because writing when I cannot immediately push send slows me down, turns down my emotions, and leads me to edit myself and ask someone else to look it over.

Third, deciding what we will say and how to communicate depends on our intended audience. Dr. King writes to "Fellow Clergymen," whom he describes as "men of genuine good will... [whose] criticisms are sincerely set forth." Dr. King invites us both to name our intended audience and, in the language of Luther's Small Catechism, to endeavor

to put an Eighth-Commandment-construction on others' words and actions. So, who is our intended audience, really? If it truly is President Trump or a member of Congress, is Facebook really the best way to communicate? If our audience really is ourselves, venting and releasing our emotions, do we need to do that in a public way? If our audience is the church and world, our Christian witness compels us to communicate in ways that proclaim God's love in Jesus Christ for all people, including those we oppose.

Fourth, every year when I read Dr. King's letter, I am impressed that he does not ground his words and actions in his own convictions or moral standing. Dr. King grounds his words and actions in the work of God's people as recorded in Scripture—the eighth century prophets, the Apostle Paul, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. And Dr. King describes his work using a biblical image: "the Macedonian call for aid." I cannot overstate the importance of grounding and clothing our convictions and proclamations in Scripture in ways that are undeniable so that they become statements of the faith and teaching of Lutheran and Christian theology. Our church's social statements are a great resource and I encourage you to turn to them: <http://bit.ly/2DfiCrq>.

My friend, Bishop Tracie Bartholomew of New Jersey, reminds us that our hymnbook includes this prayer which seems appropriate these days:

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son. Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred that infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and, through our struggle and confusion, work to accomplish your purposes on earth; so that, in your good time, every people and nation may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.
(Evangelical Lutheran Worship).

As you say amen, please join me in shouting it from the rooftops.

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

We Are Church Together

It is always good to remember how much we are church together. I cannot imagine an "independent" church. We are an interdependent church. We do things together that we could not do apart. We are stronger together than when we are apart. Constitutionally we are a multi-level church. We are three expressions of the church: local congregation, synod, and churchwide. We are the church when we are together in any one of those forms. Even the federal government recognizes us as one church. The ELCA has one Federal Tax Exemption that applies to all congregations. We are a church together.

When a congregation has a constitution question, an evangelism question, a safety question, or any question about mission and ministry, they can call the synod office and we will have an answer. If we don't have the answer, we have a wealth of people at the churchwide office that can help us answer. The Bishops, Directors for Evangelical Mission, and Assistants to the Bishops all have networks across the country where we can put the question out there for response.

Our synod has committed 50% of our undesignated gifts to the work of the wider church. Those funds go for a variety of missions and ministries we cannot do alone; like missionaries, seminaries, disaster relief, domestic and international hunger programs, and support to congregations. We receive back well over \$200,000 from the ELCA in the form of grants to congregations, programs, and professional services.

Within the synod, we are an interdependent church. One of the major responsibilities of the synod office is the call process. More than half of the congregations in the synod have been in some call process in the last 4 years. We also give synod administers grants to congregations for outreach, hunger, and poverty programs. The synod staff members have a variety of gifts that are available

to congregations and ministries to enhance their mission.

We connect congregations together. Our Rostered Ministers meet together in conferences. Congregations share ideas and best practices. Together we support one another in mission and ministry in such programs as Mission Partners.

Please read the following article as an example of how we are church together.

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

A letter from Pastor Kjersten Priddy

It's a VERY cold Tuesday morning, my first day in the office in 2018. I'm sitting in my desk after shoveling off the walk, absent-mindedly going through the mail while planning out my list of things to do for the day.

I have what I consider to be the best job in the world. I am the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Battle Creek, Michigan. Trinity is a congregation that is committed to being a sign of God's presence in the Post Addition neighborhood of Battle Creek, a community that has been plagued by poverty. Trinity partners with an organization called the Woman's Co-op, which is a network of women working together to lift themselves out of poverty. My congregation's commitment to our neighborhood and this organization means every day I get to walk alongside people who are working together to improve their lives, the lives of their families, and of our whole community. It is an incredible privilege to see God's kingdom being unveiled through the work of the women of the Co-op

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But the harsh catch-22 of this amazing ministry is it is unsurprisingly not very financially lucrative. The people of Trinity and of the Co-op are incredibly generous with what little they have, and we strive to be very responsible stewards of the gifts we've been given, but money is tight. And on this particular morning, the realities of that tightness are weighing on me. We're in the middle of a roofing project that we took on by necessity; it was unclear if the roof would survive another winter. We just finished installing new furnaces for the same reason. Being a missional congregation to a neighborhood in poverty requires creativity, dedication, and a LOT of trust that if God wants you to be there, God will find a way. And on this particular morning, my doubt is outweighing my trust.

And as I'm flipping through the mail, I come across a letter from Grace in Alpena. My first thought is it must be our turn on the synod congregational prayer list again, though there's just this one letter, which is unusual. I open it, and a check falls out. Along with the check is a letter. Grace heard my congregation's story and wanted to share their gifts with us in our redevelopment work.

I cannot express what this check and letter meant to me. It was more than just money, though don't get me wrong, the money is incredibly appreciated and will be used for the roof, snow plowing, electricity, gas, and all the other things that keep our building open and functioning six days a week as a gathering space for our neighborhood. But what really mattered is this feeling that someone else believes in the work we are doing and wants to support us. Ministry can be lonely. This check and letter reminded me that I am but one small part of this larger thing called the Church. We at Trinity are an expression of the Church—the only ELCA expression, and one of the only expressions at all in this neighborhood—but we are just one small part of a larger body. I am so grateful and honored to be a part of a synod and a denomination that recognizes our interconnectedness. So thank you, to Grace in Alpena, and to all the congregations in the synod who support other congregations in our joint work together. Your faith in our work matters more than you know.

Peace,
Pastor Kjersten Priddy
Trinity Lutheran Church, Battle Creek, Michigan

Flint Water Crisis Relief Updates

Salem Lutheran Church is thankful to the many congregations in NWLM Synod, SEMI Synod, and people of faith across the country who have given of time, talent, and resources to bring relief for Flint residents. The State of Michigan has stated that Flint's water is as safe as any other municipality but with the caveat that residents continue to use faucet filters until all lead service lines are replaced by 2020.

Salem continues to play a strategic role in the relief efforts on many levels. Pastor Monica Villarreal is chair of the HELP Center Advisory Board which is the largest coordinated relief effort to provide food, water, filters, mental health care and physical health care at three designated church sites.



Salem regularly hosts volunteer groups monthly to assist with USDA food packaging and distribution. Selected by the State to offer this program, Salem serves about 400 households monthly which on occasion includes door-to-door delivery with a bus purchased from Samaritas. In September, as the State reduced staffing and resources in preparation for turning operations over to the City and local agencies, the Flint water sites were reduced from 100+ to 15. The Food Bank of Eastern Michigan contracted to take over the warehousing and logistics of the water crisis relief. Salem was selected as 1 of 8 sites to receive 9 pallets of bottled water weekly for community distribution. Salem had been receiving 36 pallets weekly. In addition, Salem partnered with Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church to take over the State's door-to-door bottled water distribution. We service Ward 2 with about 260 households per month. Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Livonia helped with the purchase of a used U-Haul truck to make this program possible. The crisis is not over; the relief work continues.

The generosity of many makes 2017 a remarkable year not only for the Flint community but also for Salem as a congregation. We are pleased to share that three huge building projects were completed as part of the water crisis relief. In August, the asbestos was removed from the water pipes in preparation for replacement. All the galvanized iron water pipe which had rusted beyond repair (do you remember Salem's brown water) were replaced. Our water quality is much better but we'll stick to baptisms with bottled water for awhile. And finally, the main parking lot was resurfaced. The lot was damaged heavily by the many semi-truck loads of water and food over the past few years.



Salem water pipe

Thank you to everyone who continues to support Salem's ministry and mission. Our greatest needs moving forward are mission partners (annual financial support) and gas cards (Speedway preferably) to help with gas costs for our distribution fleet.

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 T-Shirt Contest

We want you to design a synod shirt for the ELCA Youth Gathering!

Submissions are due January 20, 2018 and will be posted on Facebook for voting.

Learn more:
<http://bit.ly/2D0G1tl>

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

January

January 29	Youth Gathering T-Shirt Designs Due
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February

February 2-3	ELMM Retreat: The Gospel of John	Gaylord, MI
February 17	R&M Holle Speaker Series	Faith, Okemos

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	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 2/4
Grace/Lansing	Dan Johnson retiring 2/1	Trinity/Ocqueoc (part-time)	CALL ACCEPTED: F. Laraine Sundin. Installation 2/4
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	Gary Greiger, stated supply/ Discerning future
Christ/Wyoming	Polly Standley, Interim/ Interviewing	Augustana/Tustin	Supply Pastors/ Discerning future