



North/ West Lower Michigan Synod

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500 Years of Reformation – 500 Trees for Wittenberg

"Even if I knew that the world were to collapse tomorrow, I would still plant my apple tree today" (ascribed to Martin Luther).



As the opening paragraph on the Luthergarten webpage (www.luthergarten.de) explains:

In 2017, Lutheran churches will commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation (Jubilee) that had its beginnings in Lutherstadt Wittenberg,

Germany. As a means of giving expression to commemoration, the Luthergarten has been established in Wittenberg on the grounds of the former town fortifications. In connection with this project, 500 trees will be planted at different places in the city region, giving a concrete sign of the optimism so clearly expressed in Luther's apple tree quote. Churches from all over the world and from all confessions are being invited to sponsor one of the 500 trees to be planted in Wittenberg.

When the ELCA bishops traveled to Germany in January of 2015, they were introduced to the Lutheran World Federation Luthergarten and invited to join in the celebration. Bishop Craig Satterlee agreed and the funds were raised to join in the commemoration by planting a tree.

Trees are planted in the Luthergarten by the Castle Church, along the drive, and by the new town hall. The main garden is fashioned in the shape of the Luther Rose. The center trees, or the foundational trees of the garden were planted by The Roman Catholic Church – Pontifical Council Promoting Christian Unity; The Orthodox Church; The Anglican Communion; World Alliance of Reformed Churches; World Methodist Council; and The Lutheran World Federation.

On May 31, as part of a sabbatical trip to Germany, I was privileged to "officially" plan our synod tree. As the sign indicates, our tree is # 282 and is located along Hallesche Strasse, the southern boundary of the garden. Our synod verse is John 12:32 "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."



I am very grateful and humbled to have participated in this historic event. Many are traveling to Germany next year for the 500 anniversary. Check out our tree!!

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

Youth and Faith Formation Tables

By Sarah Friesen-Carper

This summer brings the inaugural meetings of two new Synod Tables, the Youth Table and the Faith Formation Table. The Faith Formation Table will gather July 18th at St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Lansing and the Youth Table will gather August 20th at Stony Lake Camp. Please watch for more details on each.

What is a table? And why tables instead of committees? Well, a table is a gathering of people around a topic for conversation, networking and shared projects. It is not a committee. There is no "joining" or long-term membership. Instead, we gather around a table for fellowship and discussion and partnership around issues we hold dear. Rather than focusing on regular meetings, a table can be more project-oriented as well as a network of folks to support and uplift one another.

I am excited to work with Rev. Travis Wilson as the Youth Table Convener and Rev. Jessica Hahn as the Faith Formation Table Convener. At our first gathering of the Youth table we will hear about what is already happening in the synod with Living Water Ministries, Practice Discipleship and Peer Ministry as well as receive the data from last summer's youth ministry survey. Then we will spend time discussing what the needs of the youth in our synod are and how we might be able meet some of those needs. We welcome youth and youth workers alike to join us.

Very soon you will receive via the weekly e-blast and other media a short survey on Faith Formation in the congregation. That data will be used at the first gathering of the Faith Formation Table as well to discuss what congregations are needing and how we might be able to help connect congregations to resources and to one another. Again, all are welcome to attend.

We trust that the Holy Spirit is present when we gather round the table with bread and wine in worship. And we trust that the same Spirit is present with us when we gather around the table in conversation and relationship. May he Spirit bless the work we do together as a synod around these new tables!

Photos from Latvia



Grace Gathering

The Grace Gathering will be held in partnership with the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in New Orleans Aug. 10-13. The gathering will bring people together from across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Participants will see the church in action, worship with Churchwide Assembly voting members, engage in experiential learning, and attend a variety of workshops that will equip congregations and synods with tools to prepare for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

The partnership of the Grace Gathering and the 2016 Churchwide Assembly will provide a place for all members to prepare for the Reformation anniversary – which is an opportunity to rejoice in the life-giving, liberating power of the gospel – by connecting, reflecting on and discovering ways the Reformation continues to guide us today.

Learn more and register: www.ELCA.org/GraceGathering.

You Matter Event

Rostered leaders and their families are invited to a day for refreshment and renewal on June 21 at the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and Traverse City. Enjoy a walk through the historic village of Glen Haven, then have a free afternoon exploring one of the most beautiful places in the nation. The day will conclude with worship on the beach and dinner. Our synod will cover the cost of admission to the lakeshore, lunch, and dinner. A limited number of hotel rooms will also be made available for one night (either Monday or Tuesday). Registration is now open and forms must be mailed by June 3.

Learn more and register: <http://mittensynod.org/docs/YouMatterRegistration2016.pdf>

Upcoming Events

June		
June 21	You Matter Event	Traverse City
June 23	Environmental Stewardship Team Meeting	Trinity Lutheran Church, Grand Rapids

July		
July 4	Independence 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	
Trinity/Midland	Carol Bjork, Interim Pastoral Assistant/CALL ACCEPTED: Danielle Sheally (NC)		
Faith/Saginaw	Paul Neuchterlein, Interim		
Our Savior/Saginaw	Ann Grady (ECUSA), Intentional Interim		
Resurrection/Saginaw	Barbara and Tim Bender, Interim		
Capital Area Conference		Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean	
All Saints/Mason	John Schleicher, Interim/CALL ACCEPTED: Christin Fawcett (Good Shepherd, Holland)		
Christ/Michigan Center	Erick Johnson, Stated Supply/CALL ACCEPTED: Ryan Prondzinski (Luther Seminary Graduate)		
University/East Lansing	Fred Fritz last Sunday 6/5		
Greater Grand Rapids Conference		Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean	
Faith/Sidney	Betsy Kamphuis, Administrative Pastor/Interviewing		
Good Shepherd/Holland	Supply Pastors after 6/19		
Grace/Hastings	Paul Kuhlman, Intentional Interim		
Zion/Woodland	Polly Standley, Intentional Interim		
Jack Pine Conference		Rev. Bill Huether, Dean	
Kalamazoo Conference		Rev. Kari Fast, Dean	
St. Peter/Battle Creek	Cheryl Johnson, Stated Supply/Awaiting Candidates		
Immanuel/Allegan	Paul Kehnle, Stated Supply. Dean Beckwith, Pastoral Care		
Prince of Peace/Portage	Jim Foster, Interim/Interviewing		
Stony Lake Conference		Rev. Doug Ogden, Dean	
Immanuel/Muskegon	Jack Ferra, Interim		
St. Luke/Muskegon	Jack Ferra, Interim		
Sunrise Conference		Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean	
St. Thomas/Cheboygan	Mike Kemper, Intentional Interim/CALL ACCEPTED: David Heuther (Northern Great Lakes)		
Spruce	Chrisy Bright, Administrative Pastor/Interviewing		
St. James/Millersburg and Trinity/Ocqueoc	Supply Pastors/CALL ACCEPTED: Jeff Bonn		
Traverse Conference		Rev. Kent Lee, Dean	
Feast of Victory/Acme	Matt Deames, Intentional Interim/Interviewing		
Calvary/Elk Rapids	Supply Pastors/Preparing to receive candidates		
Bethany/Kaleva	Fred and Ruth Overdier, Interim/CALL ACCEPTED: Zachary Nelson		
Advent/Lake Ann	Chrysanne Timm, Transitional Pastor		
Bethany/Northport	Supply Pastors/Interviewing		
Immanuel/Suttons Bay	Supply Pastors after 7/10		