



## North/ West Lower Michigan Synod

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## In this Issue:

Bishop's Letter

South Sudan

Sabbatical

Upcoming Events

Congregations in Transition

## Why Come to Synod Assembly?

A week from now, we will be in Mount Pleasant for the 2017 Synod Assembly. In April, a pastor asked me why he should come to Synod Assembly and why he should also send voting members from his congregation. The question behind the question is whether what we have planned is worthy of his and his people's time. My initial reaction, which I resisted, was to defend what we have planned—worship, enrichment opportunities, two fine keynote addresses, necessary business...

Upon reflection, I realized that the question of why come to the assembly is the same question that many people ask about coming to worship, sending their children to confirmation camp, and being part of a congregation at all. In the 90s, we learned and even taught our people that church and the gospel are one more commodity to be consumed. And now, people ask about church what this pastor asked about the assembly, "What am I going to get out of it? What's in it for me?"

Making everything all about me is a dandy definition of sin. And making the gospel, faith, and the church consumable commodities lead the church to miss the boat. When people can't identify a need for the church or for God, when they're getting nothing out of the congregation, they stay away.

Perhaps the best thing that we will get out of the assembly is a moment of grace—an experience and appreciation that everything is not about me, my ministry, my congregation, and even the church. Perhaps we will appreciate that Christ's own work of

reconciling the world to God's very Self is bigger than us. Perhaps we will find that God's love in Jesus Christ is wider and deeper than we imagined. Perhaps we will experience the work of the church in Michigan and the world as so much more than what our congregation is doing.

I am not certain I can tell you why you should come to Synod Assembly. If you want to maintain the illusion that it's all about you, I can tell you that you might want to stay away.

See you in Mount Pleasant!

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

P.S.—Please remember that the Synod Office will be closed on the Wednesday after the Assembly and that, except for emergencies, we will not be responding to messages and emails from those not at the assembly.

## South Sudan

During the last week of April, I had the unique experience of joining with the leaders of South Sudanese churches and worshipping communities across the ELCA. Close to 50 South Sudanese church members, Directors of Evangelical Mission, and churchwide staff gathered in Chicago for two days to discuss how best to work for unity here, and how best to address the crisis brought on by a lengthy civil war in South Sudan.

The country of South Sudan was officially established in 2011 by a referendum vote when it broke off from Sudan. Soon after, power struggles began to plague the country and a new civil war broke out. Since that time, an estimated 300,000 people have been killed and about 1/3 of the population of the country has been displaced. Hunger is widespread because farmers are prevented from getting to the fields because of the war. As many as 64 different tribes have struggled with how to unify as a country. Many who fear for

their lives have fled to refugee camps in South Sudan and in Kenya. Sponsored by existing South Sudanese communities already established in the U.S., many have sought asylum here. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and Samaritas have assisted in this resettlement. Our own South Sudanese Christ Lutheran Community in Wyoming, Michigan as helped to resettle many families and reunite families separated by the war. We give thanks to Christ Lutheran Church in Wyoming for their support of this community, and their many mission partners around the synod.

The ELCA is spearheading a response to the disaster in South Sudan. We began in November of 2016 to build a community/worship center with adjoining health clinic in Juba the capital city. Lutheran Disaster Relief is providing humanitarian relief including food, water, and sanitation. The Lutheran World Federation is working to provide food security and long term solutions for development.

**YOU CAN HELP.** You can join our ELCA South Sudanese congregations in **praying for South Sudan on June 4, Pentecost Sunday**. In addition, you can make contributions to this ongoing effort by donating through to the Synod Office or online.

Visit <https://community.elca.org/southsudannow> to donate and download a South Sudanese Tool Kit.

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



## Sabbatical

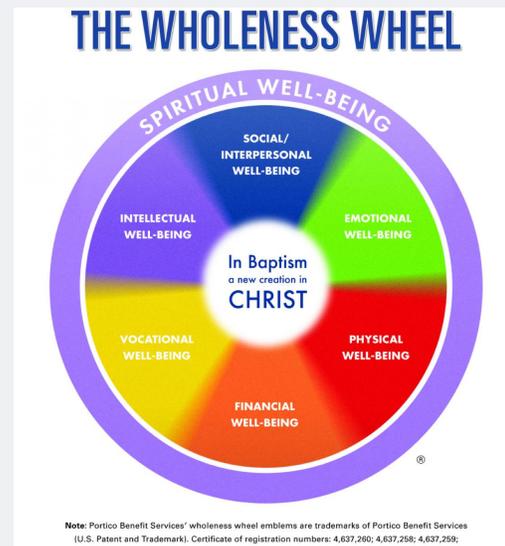
In an age of 24/7 connection, fast-paced communication, innumerable personal and familial issues and global crises, it is easy to become exhausted. It is especially likely for those in a service profession where individuals are called to help others shoulder their burdens. Most who answer the call to this kind of servanthood do so with humility and feel honored to accompany people in "the valley of the shadow of death." Yet there is no denying that it is exhausting. Statistically, pastors and deacons in this and other mainline denominations tend to forfeit care of themselves in order to care for others, in many cases at the cost of their own health and wellbeing. According to statistics collected by Portico Benefits Services, rostered ministers in the ELCA are at significantly greater risk than the average American of things like poor nutrition, high blood pressure, poor emotional health, and being overweight and the acute and chronic illnesses those can lead to. (Consider reading "A Call to Wellness" the October 2015 report by Rev. Jeff Thiemann, President and CEO of Portico Benefit Services).

In this synod, we encourage our rostered leaders to be renewed by taking a sabbatical, and we encourage congregations to commit to giving their leaders time for sabbatical. Among our called synod staff we have a plan for sabbatical with Pastor David Sprang having had sabbatical last year and the Bishop taking a sabbatical next summer.

On May 24<sup>th</sup> I will embark on a sabbatical - which is entirely new to me. A sabbatical is explained in our Synod's Compensation Guidelines as, "An extended block of time for study, personal growth, and reflection apart from usual...responsibilities." In the three months set aside for my sabbatical I have two major foci, the Wholeness Wheel (see below) and a project in Spiritual Leadership.

Portico Benefits Services, the benefits ministry for the ELCA, has long used the Wholeness Wheel to talk about the whole health and wellbeing of people, especially those in rostered ministry. The seven wellbeing components of the Wholeness Wheel are: Social/ Interpersonal, Emotional, Physical, Financial,

Vocational, Intellectual, and surrounding all these is Spiritual. During my sabbatical I will address each of these aspects of my life in various ways including spending time with friends and family, going to the gym, working on a will, attending the ELCA's Rostered Minister's Gathering, reading some of the stack of books that always seem to pile up, and taking some time for spiritual retreat.



In addition, I will be working on a project titled: "Leading in the Power of the Spirit" A retreat for Congregational Leaders in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod. The purpose is twofold: 1) to equip congregational leaders to balance organizational and administrative work with solid grounding in guidance of the Holy Spirit; and 2) to provide a one day retreat experience that can be conducted in one congregation or with a group of congregations. I look forward to sharing more with you about this retreat opportunity after I return and I hope to be able to bring it to your conference or congregation.

Continued on page 4

**Continued from page 3**

In the meantime, I would like to invite you to join me in my sabbatical by focusing on one or more elements of the Wholeness Wheel or by reading a book with me. The Wholeness Wheel is pictured below. Please consider choosing an aspect of wellbeing to strengthen over the summer months. Or join me in reading one of the following books:

**Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church** by Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini

The Congregational LEADER Series from Augsburg Fortress

**Executive Values: A Christian Approach to organizational Leadership** by Kurt Senske

**Leading Leaders: Empowering Church Boards for Ministry Excellence** by Aubrey Malphurs  
**Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading** by Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky

**Spiritual leadership for Church Officers** by Joan S. Gray

**The Wolf Shall Lie Down with the Lamb: Spirituality for Leadership in a Multi-Cultural Church** by Eric Law

If you do choose to join me in well-being or study, please let me know in an email or on facebook. I'll be glad to check in with you for conversation after I return from sabbatical! In the meantime, God be with you!

## Luthergarten in Wittenberg

In 2015, Bishop Satterlee became involved with Luthergarten, a project created to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation by planting 500 trees around the city of Wittenberg as visible signs of the significance of the Reformation and Luther's optimism. While visiting Wittenberg as part of the Conference of Bishops, Bishop Satterlee sponsored a tree in the name of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod. This past week, as part of the Reformation 500 Pilgrimage to Germany and Italy, Bishop Satterlee had the opportunity to visit Luthergarten. Below are pictures of the tree and the accompanying plaque.



**Synod Finances**  
as of March 31, 2017

<b>March Income</b>		<b>Year to Date Income</b>	
Mission Support	\$ 120,499	Mission Support	\$ 242,266
<u>All Other Income</u>	<u>\$ 15,411</u>	<u>All Other Income</u>	<u>\$ 28,316</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 135,910</b>	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 270,582</b>
 <b>Expenses</b>		 <b>Expenses</b>	
Support to ELCA	\$ 60,249	Support to ELCA	\$ 121,133
<u>All Other Expenses</u>	<u>\$ 65,946</u>	<u>All Other Expenses</u>	<u>\$ 118,968</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 126,195</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 240,101</b>
 Plus Net Assets Released From Restricted Funds			
Balance +/-	+ \$ 9,715	Balance +/-	+ \$ 30,481

**Synod Office Closed  
Wednesday, May 24**

The Synod Office will be closed on Wednesday, May 24 following Synod Assembly.

We look forward to seeing everyone in Mt. Pleasant for Synod Assembly!

**Lutherans Always Reforming**

The Publicly Engaged Church Committee of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod will be hosting a day-long educational event on Saturday, June 17 at University Lutheran Church in East Lansing. Keynote speaker will be Dr. Craig L. Nesson, Academic Dean and Professor of Contextual Theology at Warburg Seminary. A variety of workshops will also be offered throughout the day on topics including, immigration, criminal justice, advocacy, Open Hearts, Open Church, climate change, hunger, human trafficking, anti-racism, and more!

Registration is now open!

Learn more: <http://bit.ly/2n6A3lZ>

**You Matter**

Save the Date for You Matter 2017! We invite rostered leaders to save the date for our annual You Matter Day on Tuesday, July 18, 2017 at Faith Lutheran Church in Saginaw. Our special guest, Bishop Michael Rinehart of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod will share some work and wisdom on the gift and challenge of prayer.

**Upcoming Events**

**May**

May 18-21	Pedal for a Purpose Bike Ride	
May 21-23	Synod Assembly	Mt. Pleasant

**June**

June 17	Lutherans Always Reforming	East Lansing
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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.

<b>Bay Conference</b>	<b>Rev. Dan Stoneback, Dean</b>
Hope/Marlette	Chris Laughlin mobilized for Army Chaplaincy, Fort Leonard Wood, MO
St. Matthew/Bridgeport	Rachel Laughlin accepted new call
Prince of Peace/Rose City	Dan Stoneback retiring June 2017
Faith/Saginaw	Nancy Steele (ECUSA), Interim/CALL ACCEPTED: Kristina Truhan. Ordination 5/21
Our Savior/Saginaw	Ann Grady (ECUSA), Intentional Interim through May 2017
Resurrection/Saginaw	Barbara and Tim Bender, Interim/MSP Received
St. John/Saginaw	Supply pastors/Discerning Future
Grace/Vassar	Supply Pastors/Preparing MSP

<b>Capital Area Conference</b>	<b>Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean</b>
University/East Lansing	John Schleicher, Interim/Interviewing

<b>Greater Grand Rapids Conference</b>	<b>Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean</b>
Grace/Hastings	Paul Kuhlman, Intentional Interim/Preparing MSP
Mamrelund/Kent City	Matt Deames, Intentional Interim
Zion/Woodland	Polly Standley, Intentional Interim/Candidate identified

<b>Kalamazoo Conference</b>	<b>Rev. Kari Fast, Dean</b>
St. Peter/Battle Creek	Cheryl Johnson, Stated Supply/Identified candidate
Immanuel/Allegan	Paul Kehnle, Stated Supply. Dean Beckwith, Pastoral Care
Prince of Peace/Portage	Jim Morgan (UMC), Stated Supply/CALL ACCEPTED: Rachel Laughlin
St. John's/Baroda	Supply Pastors/Interviewing

<b>Stony Lake Conference</b>	<b>Rev. Doug Ogden, Dean</b>
Immanuel/Muskegon	Jack Ferra, Interim
St. Luke/Muskegon	Jack Ferra, Interim
Samuel/Muskegon	Jonathan Reid, Stated Supply

<b>Sunrise Conference</b>	<b>Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean</b>
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<b>Traverse Conference</b>	<b>Rev. Rosanne Anderson, Dean</b>
Calvary/Elk Rapids	Supply Pastors/Discerning Future
Advent/Lake Ann	Chrysanne Timm, Interim Pastor/Candidate identified
Bethany/Northport	Supply Pastors/Interviewing
Immanuel/Suttons Bay	Supply Pastors/Interviewing