



North/ West Lower Michigan Synod

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Christ the King and Our Kids

I won't be preaching on Christ the King Sunday; Cathy and I get to visit our daughter. Nevertheless, confronted by the gun violence, natural disasters, political division, and racial hate that seems to be reigning in our world, I've been thinking a lot about Christ the King. Inspired by our Synod's Youth Summit and grateful to see our daughter, I've also been thinking a lot about our kids.

The Gospel reading for Christ the King is John's account of Christ on trial, of Jesus and Pilate staring each other down, of the Kingdom of God going head to head with the kingdoms of the world. I remember when I approached this story as something that happened long ago, because my hearers and I thought or pretended we were privileged enough to believe Jesus and Pilate, Church and Society, were buddies. The world was Christian. Families worshiped together. Churches were regarded as centers of the community. Schools respected an afternoon or an evening each week as time for religious instruction. In the neighborhood, some kids were Roman Catholic, and some were Protestant, but everyone was some sort of Christian, and the big issue was whether Lutherans would really go to hell if they dared step foot in a Catholic Church. Back then, it seemed that society helped the Church raise her kids. Everybody knew the story of Jesus, and so the Church could expect that children presented at the baptismal font would show up for Sunday School or at least for Confirmation Class. We could assume that, when Christ stood before Pilate and said, "My kingdom is not of this world," he was not so much concerned with this life but with the promise of heaven, with the promise of life to come.

Today, it's a different story. In many of our children's homes, schools, and neighborhoods, Christ **is** on trial. Jesus and Pilate **are** staring each other down as the Kingdom of God goes head to head with the kingdoms of the world. Not only don't a lot of families worship together, a lot of families don't stay together. Churches have been pushed to the periphery as other things claim even Sunday mornings. For many people, belief in God has become such a personal matter that they wouldn't think of practicing their faith publicly because they're not sure it has anything to do with real life, which just goes to show that people don't know the story of

Jesus. And now, when children are presented at the font, I no longer expect, I pray, that parents will take their promises to Christ and his Church seriously because, in this day and age, if children don't have the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ working actively in their lives, I am afraid for them.

Jesus stands before Pilate and says, "My kingdom is not of this world," and Jesus is right. For in Pilate we find a frightening representative of the world in which our children are growing up. For Pilate represents the Roman Empire: greed, status, ruthlessness, hate, rule by intimidation, power, and the willingness to use it violently. The cross that looms over this courtroom where Jesus stands before Pilate was just one of many. Tens of thousands had died of crucifixion before Jesus was ever nailed to the tree. Every school-age kid knew what it was like to walk outside and see the form of a cross standing out against the sky, just as every school-age kid today knows what to do if someone brings a gun to school. We can all list the evils that our kids have to watch out for as they leave the house each morning. And what values is the world teaching our kids? Greed, status, ruthlessness, hate, rule by intimidation, power, and the willingness to use it violently.

"My kingdom is not of this world," Jesus says. And he's not talking about heaven. Jesus is saying that, in the midst of the kingdoms of this world—the kingdoms of greed, status, ruthlessness, hate, intimidation, and power—there stands a kingdom of justice, truth, goodness, love, and peace. To the rule of intimidation, to the street sense of dishonesty and deceit, to the pursuit of power and possessions, to the way of life that does what is desirable and expedient, there is an alternative—the rule of grace and truth, God's kingdom, revealed to us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the deepest sense this kingdom is **not** of this world. But we can authentically teach our children that this kingdom is **here**. We can authentically teach our kids this kingdom is definitely at work **in this world**. It's at work in their lives. And we find out how it's at work through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

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In Christ, we learn that God is in control but not as a ruthless tyrant ruling by force and intimidation. God loves us so much that God gave up all control and allowed us to nail Jesus to the cross. But God raised Jesus from the dead. And we learned that, though God's kingdom is resistible, God's kingdom is invincible. God raised Jesus from the dead. And we learned that, though we can do things to diminish ourselves, we cannot dethrone God. God raised Jesus from the dead. And we learned that, though God lets us do it our way—greed, status, ruthlessness, intimidation, power, violence, and hate—in the end it will be God's way. And what is God's way? God's way is to never give up on any of us, even when what we do breaks God's heart. God's way is to have a purpose for each and every one of us and for our life together. For the one thing God cannot bear is to give us up.

Our children need to know that God will never give them up. Whether they're four or five or forty-five, our kids need to know that God will never give them up. So, part of our mission is not to give up on our kids—no matter how old they are. In practical terms, not giving up on our kids means calling and inviting and bringing them to church. But more important, not giving up on our kids means taking a risk and sharing with them how and why our faith is important to our real life and asking nothing in return. Most important, not giving up on our kids means listening to them and being willing to change, even to change the church.

Expect a strange mixture of admiration and contempt and an uneasiness that borders on fear—for this is how people always respond to pure goodness. And then, if we finally get our kids to come to church, worship needs to be an experience of God's kingdom of justice, truth, goodness, love, and peace. And that means that the Christian community is different from the world.

In the Christian community, we admit our faults and failings, and the response is forgiveness and acceptance rather than ridicule and revenge. In the Christian community, we tell the stories of how God never gave up on Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Miriam, Mary Magdalene and Peter, you and me. In the Christian community, we pray for those whom the world would just assume give up, and our prayer leads us not to give up on them. In the Christian community, we offer ourselves, not to get something back, but in gratitude for all that we have. In the Christian community, we come to a table where everyone is equal, where all who have been baptized into God's family have a place; a table where we take the King into ourselves and know that he is ours and we are his.

Our children need this experience. They need to be the Church, not tomorrow but today. They need to give and to receive forgiveness, to hear and to tell the Story, to pray for others and to be prayed for, to have the gifts they offer received and used. Our children need to be welcome at the King's table, to receive Christ's presence into the very marrow of their bones, and to know that this is the one place in all the world where they are valued just as they are, where they are valued no matter what they do, where they are valued so much that neither Christ nor his Church will ever give up on them.

Sometime in the next few years or the next few minutes or the next few seconds, our children are going to be out in the world and come face to face with Pilate. And he is going to ask them, "Who is your king?" And if they know the Jesus who never gives up on them, our children will belong to the truth, and hear his voice, and have his strength to stare Pilate down and to recognize the greed, status, ruthlessness, intimidation, power, violence, and hate that he offers for the deceit, devastation, and death that they are. For our children will have something better: our children will have the best. Having Jesus, our children have life.

No matter how old they are or how you defined them, talk to your children about Jesus and how much he loves them.

Blessed Christ the King!

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

Synod Finances as of October 31, 2018

October Revenue and Support		Year to Date Revenue and Support	
Mission Support	\$ 131,064	Mission Support	\$1,006,717
Other	\$ 10,399	Other	\$ 106,701
Total	\$ 141,463	Total	\$ 1,113,418
October Expenses		Year to Date Expenses	
Support to ELCA	\$ 65,532	Support to ELCA	\$ 5 03,359
Other	\$ 95,357	Other	\$ 712,615
Total	\$ 160,889	Total	\$1,215,974
Net Assets Released from Restriction	\$ 0	Net Assets Released from Restriction	\$ 1,156
Net Change in Fund Balance	\$ (19,426)	Net Change in Fund Balance	\$ (101,400)

Finance Matters

Many congregations are preparing their annual stewardship focus and planning discussions about funding their ministries in 2019. An important element of stewardship that may be overlooked is the safe and appropriate handling of funds. Now is a good time to review your financial policies and procedures.

Separation of financial responsibilities is a key factor in a congregation's financial health and well-being. Explore helpful resources on the ELCA website: <https://bit.ly/2Nz2Ngz>

Lutheran Disaster Response California Wildfires

Multiple fires are currently raging across California, destroying thousands of homes. Already, more than 30 people have died and more than 200 are missing, while thousands have fled their homes under evacuation orders.

Lutheran Disaster Response has already begun addressing immediate needs, including providing food and other necessities to survivors. They are also preparing to address long-term needs, which might include rebuilding structures and emotional and spiritual care. Please consider supporting Lutheran Disaster Response in their work and help those affected by donating today.

Donate now: <https://bit.ly/2TfoxBS>

Rostered Leaders Christmas Worship & Lunch

We invite all rostered leaders to join the Synod staff for worship and lunch on December 19 at the Synod Office in Lansing. Worship will begin at 11:30am and will be followed by lunch.

Please RSVP if you plan to attend: <https://bit.ly/2Q4az7u>

Synod Assembly & Environmental Stewardship Surveys

In order to assess how Synod Assembly should be structured in the future, we invite you to share your feedback through a brief 2-minute survey. The survey is open to all members of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod and will close on November 26. Take the Survey: <https://bit.ly/2DFd4qT>

The Synod Environmental Stewardship Task Force has developed a congregational survey to assess the level of awareness of and response to the crisis of climate change and other engagement in environmental stewardship. If your congregation has not completed the survey, please complete it by November 30. Take the Survey: <https://bit.ly/2Ps322P>

Upcoming Events

November	
22-23	Synod Office Closure, Thanksgiving
December	
19	Rostered Leaders Christmas Lunch, Lansing
24-25	Synod Office Closure, Christmas



"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever" (Psalm 107:1).

Wishing you a blessed Thanksgiving!

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/Voting on partnership with Trinity, Brown City (SEMI)	Savior/Kalamazoo	Paul Neuchterlein, Interim/Interviewing
Prince of Peace/Rose City	Jeff Bonn, Intentional Interim/Preparing MSP	St. John and Trinity Episcopal/Three Rivers	Dennis Smith, Stated Supply/Interviewing
Grace/Vassar (part-time)	Supply Pastors/Awaiting a candidate	Stony Lake Conference Rev. Doug Ogden, Dean	
St. Paul/Au Gres	Partnering with Grace, East Tawas/Amanda Carpenter, Contracted Pastor	Samuel/Muskegon	Chris Anderson, Interim/Preparing MSP
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
Grace/Lansing	John Schleicher, Contracted Pastor/Preparing MSP	St. Paul/Alpena	Supply Pastors/Requesting additional candidates
Calvary/Lansing	David Augenstein, Stated Supply/Preparing MSP	Traverse Conference Rev. Rosanne Anderson, Dean	
Greater Grand Rapids Conference Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean		St. Paul/Reed City	Matt Deames, Interim/Partnering with Augustana, Tustin in pastoral internship beginning January 2019
Peace/Holland	Supply Pastors/Discerning Future	Augustana/Tustin	Supply Pastors/Partnering with St Paul, Reed City in pastoral internship beginning January 2019
Immanuel/Big Rapids	Supply Pastors/Discerning Future		