



North/West Lower Michigan Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Synod Snapshot

This document provides an overview of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, including its purpose, structure, and current realities. Synod Members are encouraged to use this information to inform their conversations about their vision for the Synod and their expectations for our Bishop.



Mission Statement: “Proclaiming Christ and prayerfully participating in Christ’s own work of reconciling the world to God’s very Self by renewing congregations, empowering leaders, and strengthening connections.”

At this time in the life of both the church and the world, the Holy Spirit is entrusting to our synod the essential and foundational work of renewing congregations, empowering congregational and rostered leaders, and strengthening connections. These strategic directions—proclaiming Christ, renewing congregations, empowering leaders, and strengthening connections—emerge from prayer, are informed by guiding principles, and shape our priorities.

Guiding Principles: The Bishop establishes guiding principles through a listening process that takes place across the synod. In response to conversations in congregations and at synod events and gatherings, our Synod’s mission and direction are shaped by these guiding principles:

- We rejoice that Michigan is a place of promise where God is acting in new ways to fulfill old promises.
- We celebrate our God of abundance by being a generous people.
- We commit to the Lutheran proclamation of the good news of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection throughout the territory of our synod.
- We strive to become communities that welcome all people in the name of Christ and to establish Christian community among people in need of the gospel.
- We prayerfully approach matching pastors/deacons and congregations as key to mission.
- We provide opportunities to enrich and empower congregation leaders and rostered ministers.
- We collaborate with our partners both throughout the ELCA and ecumenical and interfaith partners on the territory of our synod.
- We faithfully steward our ministries that address world hunger, care of the creation, global mission, and outdoor ministry.

Priorities: The Bishop and Assistants to the Bishop proposed and the Synod Council approved these priorities for the work of our Synod for 2019-2022

- Revive congregations to engage their neighborhoods and communities in the name of Jesus Christ.
- Train congregational leaders in four tracks: (1) Lutheran bible study leader; (2) stewardship specialist; (3) community evangelist/catalyst; (4) assisting minister
- Identify, accompany, and support candidates for rostered ministry—pastors and deacons.
- Relieve rostered ministers of some measure of educational indebtedness.
- Develop additional “revenue streams” for our Synod, including appreciating congregations leading and growing in their mission support, and individuals committed to providing financial support of our Synod.
- Provide our youth, especially those in smaller congregations, and additional level of youth ministry that builds on the events provided by Living Water Ministries.
- Accompany and assist struggling congregations to realistically assess their sustainability and, where desirable, to partner with neighboring congregations, both ELCA and full communion partners.

The Office of the Bishop: Currently includes the Bishop, three assistants to the Bishop (including the Director for Evangelical Mission (ELCA Churchwide deployed staff)) and two administrative staff. Assistants to the Bishop are co-terminus with the Bishop. The configuration and responsibilities of staff members are determined primarily by the Bishop.

Governance: The North/West Lower Michigan Synod is governed by the annual Synod Assembly with the Synod Council serving as the North/West Lower Michigan Synod board of directors and as the interim legislative authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly. Synod Council members are nominated with an attempt to assure geographic representation.



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Synod Statistics

- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has about 3.6 million members in nearly 9,200 congregations across the U.S., Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- The North/West Lower Michigan Synod (NWLMS) is one of 65 synods in the ELCA, which are organized into 9 regions; the NWLMS is part of Region 6 (MI, OH, IN, & KY).
- About 34,577 baptized Christians, including 220 pastors and other professional leaders, comprise 113 congregations.
- There are 7 geographic conferences: Bay, Capital, Greater Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Stony Lake, Sunrise, and Traverse. Each conference is led by a Dean who serves as a liaison between the bishop's office and congregations in their area.
- Offerings from Congregations to the NWLMS were \$1.4 million in 2017. 50% supports the synod and 50% supports ELCA Churchwide ministries.
- The Office of the Bishop is located at St. Stephen Lutheran Church, 2900 N. Waverly Road, Lansing, MI 48906. The Synod uses a deployed model with "desks" in Acme, Grand Rapids, Herron, and Mount Pleasant.

We are Church

We are people whom God both created by grace to live in union with Jesus Christ and prepared to live faithful, fruitful lives by the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:8-10). In Jesus Christ, God reconciled us to God and to each other. As we gather around word and sacraments, this life in Christ defines, shapes and guides us as a community of faith, the church. By God's grace we can and do live confidently and generously in this community of faith and in service of others.

We are Lutheran

We are a church that trusts God's promise in the gospel and knows that we exist by and for the proclamation of the gospel. We proclaim Jesus Christ crucified and raised for the life of the world as God's power for saving all people who trust the God who makes these promises. God's promise in Jesus Christ creates faith. God gives the Holy Spirit to create and sustain this faith. To be Lutheran is to be committed to the oneness to which God calls the world in the saving gift of Jesus Christ, recognizing the brokenness of the church in history and the call of God to heal this disunity.

We are Church Together

Joined to Christ in baptism, we are also joined to others as congregations, synod, the entire ELCA, and all communities of Christian faith around the world. Christ is the source and bond of our unity since spiritual communion depends only on God's mercy that comes to us in word and sacrament. Because God gives us our unity in Christ, we are able to see and respect the diversity within Christ's body.

We are Church for the Sake of the World

Christ has freed us from sin and death, even from ourselves, so that we can live as ministers of reconciliation in loving and generous service of our neighbors (2 Corinthians 5:17-18). In Jesus Christ, every act of service, every daily calling, in every corner of life flows freely from a living, daring confidence in God's grace. As church together, we faithfully strive to participate in God's reconciling work, which prioritizes disenfranchised, vulnerable and displaced people in our communities and the world.

