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April 8, 2024

"We have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them" (1 John 4:16).

Dear friends in Christ,

Thank you for your faithful and continuing partnership as we work together to help people discover the difference God's grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation.

Because God's grace and love have made a difference in our daily lives, we want others to experience that same love and acceptance. There are many in our communities who feel alone and are searching for love and connection. Sometimes we feel at a loss to know how to make a difference — what do we say, what can we do, how do we share God's love?

You share this love every day. When you invite others to join in your faith community, to worship, to participate in service activities, to pray together, to share their story — these are all ways our neighbors experience the love of God in community.

There are examples of God's love throughout our church as we work for healing, peace and justice to make a difference in the lives of those around us.

The Spirit is calling us to move together as one church to share the grace and love we experience every day. May God bless your time together.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Report of the Bishop

North/West Lower Michigan Synod ELCA

2024 Synod Assembly
May 11, 2024



*THE REV. CRAIG ALAN SATTERLEE,
PH.D., BISHOP*

INTRODUCTION

Jesus names us “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world,” and compares the kingdom of heaven or reign of God to “leaven” (Matthew 5:13–16; 13:33). Apart from their use as images in Scripture, I do not give salt, light, and leaven much thought. When I sit down to enjoy a delicious meal, I do not praise the salt, though I may notice when salt is either overpowering or lacking. Although light is very important to me, it only commands my attention when there is either too much or too little, and I cannot see. When I bite into one of Cathy’s cinnamon rolls, I never compliment her on the yeast or leaven, though Cathy can tell you what will happen if leaven isn’t given time to do its work.

At its best, the Church functions as salt, light, and leaven that brings Jesus to the world and the world to Jesus. In practical terms, congregations flavor the sustaining meal of the gospel so it is particular and meaningful. Congregations reveal a vision of God’s reign worth beholding. Congregations treat their neighbors to a taste of the bread of life that is Jesus. Synods—and perhaps especially synod staffs—season, enlighten, and raise congregations (and leaders) to do this work. Like salt, light, and leaven, our efforts as a synod and staff may go unnoticed, at least until they are not there. While you may be aware of some of what the synod staff does, much of our work since our last assembly fell into the categories of salt, light, and leaven and best goes unnoticed. Jesus says this is how the kingdom of heaven or reign of God works. We thank you for supporting work we do that only a single rostered minister, congregation leader, or congregation needs and no one else notices. We also thank you for doing this kind of work yourself.

This report describes the efforts of people who are themselves salt, light, and leaven. They are hard-working, faithful servants of Jesus Christ. I find them inspiring. Much of what they do goes unnoticed until it’s not there. So I thank my partners in our efforts to season, enlighten, and raise. As I begin this report, I particularly thank Pastor Christina Bright (Assistant to the Bishop), Pastor David Sprang (Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission), Ms. Rebecca Bossenbroek (Director of Finance), Ms. Chelsey Satterlee (Director of Communications), Vice President Sandy Schlesinger, and Ms. Ann Stavros (Office Manager) for their collaboration in the writing of this report. Like the professor I once was, I assigned a draft of the report to them to review due when I returned from Hawaii. I am grateful that Ms. Chelsey Satterlee then put

the finishing touches on the report and Ms. Rebecca Bossenbroek included it in the “Assembly Book.”

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton reminds us that “The Synod” is not an impersonal, distant, uncaring entity. “The Synod” is more encompassing than either bishop or staff. “The Synod” is *people*. Most participate in the synod through congregations large and small as they share resources with, support, and benefit from the work of the synod. Some people entrust their time, talent, and treasure directly to the ministry of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. I thank all who have led, served, and shared their resources with our church, whether congregation, synod, or denomination, in these difficult and challenging times. I especially thank those who directly supported the work of our synod, including our Vice President Ms. Sandy Schlesinger, our Treasurer Mr. Dan Carter, who will complete his service after three terms, Synod Council, and the Conference Deans.

ASSEMBLY THEME: SALT, LIGHT, AND LEAVEN”

Our 2024 Synod Assembly theme is “Salt, Light, and Leaven.” We will celebrate ways our congregations are “salt of the earth,” “light of the world,” and “leaven” of the kingdom in ways large and small as together we prayerfully participate in Jesus’s own work of reconciling the world to God’s very self. We invited our synod’s congregations (or groups of congregations) to produce and submit a video showcasing one way they are salt, light, and leaven. At this writing, 15 congregations expressed their intent to submit a video. A distinguished panel of judges (not me!) will select four videos to show during the 2024 Synod Assembly. We will also elect a treasurer, members of Synod Council, and voting members to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. We will consider the 2025 compensation guidelines, the 2025–26 budget, and perhaps resolutions. Depending on how the agenda shapes up and the voting goes, perhaps we will get to watch more videos. We will share all the videos after the assembly. I pray that, in all these ways, we will be inspired to grow as salt, light, and leaven as we prayerfully participate in Jesus’s own work of reconciling the world to God.

“VISION”

I smiled when someone noted that my use of the word “vision” is ableist language. I genuinely appreciate the sensitivity because I’ve been advocating for it for years; the observation gives me hope. By “vision,” I do not intend “the faculty of being able to see,” something with which I am less familiar, but “a plan for the future that exhibits thought and imagination.” I find the word “vision” more rhetorically satisfying than “overarching purpose.”

“But we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:23–24). My operating vision or overarching purpose remains “Proclaiming Christ and prayerfully participating in Jesus’s own work of reconciling the world to God’s very Self by renewing congregations, empowering leaders, and strengthening connections.” This vision provides the “template” for all my reports. It also directs my ministry

and the work of the synod staff. We desire that everything we do proclaims Christ, is bathed in prayer, is part of Jesus's work of reconciliation, and contributes to either renewing congregations, empowering leaders, or strengthening connections.

LIVING STONES

"Like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). Living Stones provide the framework for our strategic initiatives for the three-year period of 2023-2025. You can find them here: <https://www.mittensynod.org/living-stones/>.

I find this framework helpful in directing and communicating synod mission and the work of the staff. The format reflects the Living Stone initiatives Synod Council adopted in December 2022. Most significant, sharing the story of Jesus comes first. This is our number one priority because it is the work to which Jesus has called us and it is the church's future. I have not included Living Stone initiatives for which there is not yet anything to report.

I acknowledge with genuine gratitude individuals and groups who financially support our synod and Living Stone initiatives beyond their gifts to their congregations and congregations who make special gifts to our synod beyond mission support. You can make a gift at our synod website: <https://mittensynod.org/donate>.

LIVING STONES INITIATIVE: SHARING THE STORY OF JESUS

Jesus said, "You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:48). By "these things," Jesus means his suffering, death, and resurrection, and that repentance and forgiveness (I wish Jesus had said "forgiveness and repentance" to make clear that God's action in Christ comes first) are to be proclaimed in his name to all nations. Jesus charges us and empowers us with the Holy Spirit to share this good news.

YOU ARE WITNESSES OF THESE THINGS: At last year's assembly, we introduced *You Are Witnesses of These Things: Sharing the Story of Jesus*, a resource to assist Christians to feel comfortable and competent sharing the story of Jesus. While there were a few concerns expressed regarding promotion of my book, most participants found the table conversation enjoyable and inspiring. Yes, sharing the story of Jesus expecting nothing in return can be fun!

Throughout our synod, and across the ELCA, there has been a positive response to *You Are Witnesses of These Things*. In our synod, Pastor Sprang, Pastor Bright, and I led an in-person retreat especially for lay people in September 2023. We continue to receive positive feedback from congregations, synods, and members of the churchwide organization who have read or are reading and using the book for discussion. I appreciate invitations to meet with these groups either virtually or in-person to answer questions, lead workshops, and have thoughtful and meaningful discussion. Moving forward, we will continue to offer both in-person and Zoom workshops to equip leaders to share the story of Jesus. We developed a single day format that I would be delighted to come and lead in your congregation or conference.

You can obtain this book primarily from Amazon (<https://bit.ly/3DXlk2e>). However, Pastor Sprang and our New and Renewing Mission Table are able to provide copies free of charge to congregations that agree to have a study and discussion.

CONNECT GRANTS: These grants assisted congregations in meeting, building relationships, and sharing the story of Jesus with their neighbors. Connect Grants were also awarded to help congregations reconnect with people who have not returned to church since the pandemic and moving people the congregation met online into greater relationship with Jesus and the church. I invite you to read Pastor Sprang's article in the August 2023 Bishop's Newsletter (<https://bit.ly/3sneWyY>) for some stories of how congregations have used these grants. While Connect Grants are no longer available, the New and Renewing Mission Table maintains an endowment fund with Mission Outreach Grants, which can be used in a similar way. Please contact Pastor Sprang when your congregation is ready to apply for a grant. The application is also available on the Synod's website: <https://bit.ly/4cfscrY>. These grants are provided to enable greater connections from within a congregation – these funds are not available to compensate for a congregation's budget deficit, to pay a congregation's mortgage, or to otherwise prevent a congregation from closing.

SYNODICALLY AUTHORIZED WORSHIPPING COMMUNITIES: In response to the times in which we live, "mission congregations" within the ELCA have become "synodically authorized worshipping communities." Our church no longer uses the model of surveying a community, calling a mission developer, gathering a core group, forming a congregation, and building a building, all financed largely by partner congregations, the synod, and the churchwide organization. This model has proven largely ineffective at producing long-term, sustainable congregations. The bishops were advised that, if our church's intent is to start new congregations, the results do not match the required financial, administrative, or personal effort. More plainly, our church started a lot of new ministries that never developed into long-term sustainable congregations and has reached the limit of our current financial ability to support ministries that are not self-sustainable.

Synodically Authorized Worshipping Communities are gatherings initially around the story of Jesus, fellowship, and perhaps service; in time, worship may become formalized and perhaps include the sacrament. Synodically Authorized Worshipping Communities cannot own property, including buildings, and may never become congregations. They do not need to meet predetermined benchmarks; when their mission ends, so do they. For this reason, Synodically Authorized Worshipping Communities are reviewed and renewed by Synod Council annually.

Currently, our synod has one Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community: United Campus Christian Fellowship. This community is our ecumenical campus ministry at Grand Valley State University (GVSU), Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC), and Kendall College of Art and Design. Since this worshipping community began in mid-2021, attendance at worship and meals has increased from 6-8 to an average of over 50 students. Pastor Kate Van Valkenburg was moved to a full-time call in August 2023. This ecumenical ministry shares the story of Jesus and

loves students for who they are. Three ELCA Lutherans serve on the executive board. We thank Pastor Kate Van Valkenburg for her leadership within this community.

The Sudanese Christ Lutheran Community, formerly a Synodically Authorized Worshiping Community, is currently in a time of discernment as they determine who will be their Servant Leader. In the meantime, they continue to gather for worship at Christ/Wyoming in partnership with Pastor Rob Schmidt. Supporting relatives and others in South Sudan is integral to their ministry. We thank Pastor Rob Schmidt and Christ/Wyoming for their ongoing care and accompaniment and look forward to reestablishing the Sudanese Christ Lutheran Community as a Synodically Authorized Worshiping Community following their time of discernment.

As we support these communities and we continue to remain vigilant to opportunities for other synodically authorized worshiping communities.

STRATEGIC CONGREGATIONS: As defined by the ELCA, “strategic congregations” cannot become self-sufficient and receive financial support because the congregations minister directly to people in poverty. They are strategic because their engagement is essential to the neighborhood and community in which they reside. In our synod, we have two Strategic Congregations: Zion/Saginaw and Trinity/Battle Creek.

This year, Zion/Saginaw voted to conclude their ministry and sell their building to a growing congregation that reflects the neighborhood and will continue ministries to the community. Zion designated some of the proceeds of their building to assist Trinity/Battle Creek and to pass forward grants they received from our synod’s outreach fund. We thank Pastor Sue Hand and Zion for their years of faithful and innovative service in the Saginaw area.

Pastor Kjersten Sullivan and the people of Trinity/Battle Creek partner with Women’s Co-Op and their neighbors to be a beacon of God’s love and the presence of Christ in their neighborhood by meeting people’s physical, practical, and spiritual needs. We invite you to read Pastor Sullivan’s report on the ministries of Trinity/Battle Creek: <https://bit.ly/49QdqGB>. We thank Pastor Sullivan and the people of Trinity/Battle Creek for ministering on our behalf. We also thank the congregations and members of our synod for making it possible for us to partner through your mission support.

MISSIONINSITE: We use MissionInsite, an analytics software, to assist congregations in discovering opportunities to share the story of Jesus in their neighborhood and community. MissionInsite provides detailed demographic analysis to congregations about the composition of their community that assists the congregation in making informed decisions about community outreach and evangelism opportunities. It is also a helpful resource for congregational call committees preparing their ministry site profiles. Pastor Sprang prepared and presented specific demographic reports for communities surrounding eight congregations and a single report for all six ELCA congregations in Saginaw County. He also prepared a report for our synod as a whole.

We learned, for example, that the North/West Lower Michigan Synod territory currently has approximately 4.4 million people. According to MissionInsite, this number is predicted to grow by about 4% in the next ten years to 4.6 million. Interestingly, other sources anticipate the population of the State of Michigan will decline. The ethnic makeup of the synod is: 83% white, 6% Black, 6% Latino, 3% American Indian and Pacific Islander, and 2% Other. The white population is expected to decrease by about half a percent over the next ten years.

We also learned that, from a mission perspective, some counties in our synod cannot support a plethora of congregations. For example, the data show that we need 2½ congregations in Saginaw County where we currently have six congregations (three full-time, one at 40%, and two sharing a supply pastor). We also learned that potential new congregants are not looking for either “contemporary” or online worship. Please contact Pastor Sprang directly if your congregation desires a consultation. Funds to cover the cost of MissionInsite came from the New and Renewing Mission Table and we thank them.

LIVING STONES INITIATIVE: WELCOME

Our synod has a renewed commitment to discuss ways to welcome all God’s people. I have really come to appreciate that Synod Council wisely modified this initiative from “a renewed commitment to welcome” to “a renewed commitment to discuss ways to welcome.” The amendment takes seriously that, as much as we love to sing, “All are welcome in this place,” the heart of Jesus and the reign of God are the only places where all people are truly welcome. Moreover, the real welcome comes from congregations, who are in different contexts and possess different abilities and perspectives. Some congregations share Jesus’s love through food pantries, homeless ministries, refugee assistance ministries, participation in Reconciling in Christ, and welcoming persons with disabilities, their caregivers, and families. The question changes from “How far we are behind those who are most in front in extending a particular welcome to?” to “How are we expanding our welcome and growing in our ability to share the story of Jesus with all people?”

RACIAL JUSTICE: We learned from our work with Justice Leaders Collaborative that many people in our synod would welcome and benefit from continuing education, which is the first step toward solidarity and advocacy. We are considering a synod trip to the U.S. Civil Rights Trail. The U.S. Civil Rights Trail is a collection of churches, courthouses, schools, museums and other landmarks across 15 states that played a pivotal role in advancing social justice in the 1950s and 1960s and shifted the course of history. You can learn more at <https://civilrightstrail.com/>. You can read Pastor Sprang’s Reflection on his visit in the February 2024 Bishop’s Newsletter (<https://bit.ly/3SN1xd6>). Closer to home, we are also considering exploring the Underground Railroad in Jackson, Michigan and visiting the Charles H. Wright, Museum of African-American History in Detroit. You can indicate your interest in participating in these trips here: <https://bit.ly/3uKQPfa>.

MINISTRY WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TASK FORCE: Our Ministry with Persons with Disabilities Task Force plans to hold a learning day for rostered ministers and lay people on May 18, 2024 at Peace Lutheran Church in Gaylord. The task force continues to be available for consultation

with congregations. We thank Pastor Clay Bates and the Task Force for their leadership in this effort.

YOUTH MINISTRY: We continue to support Living Water Ministries and their summer camps and other youth events as the foundation for youth ministry in our synod. We are grateful to Mr. CJ Clark for his leadership of this ministry and ask you to remember Living Waters in your prayers as they seek a new Executive Director. You can learn more about their programs at <http://www.elcalivingwater.com>.

We are excited that, as of this writing, 98 Youth, 48 Adults, and 1 MYLE Participant (147 people) are registered for the ELCA Youth Gathering to be held July 16-20, 2024 in New Orleans under the theme “Created to Be.” We thank Pastor Dan Schewe (Trinity/Grand Rapids) for serving as our synod’s Youth Gathering Champion. Pastor Schewe and other youth leaders across our synod partnered with Synod Council to establish scholarship funds for this and future ELCA Youth Gatherings. As of this writing, nine congregations applied and 38 registrants received \$250 scholarships from our synod for a total of \$9,500. We thank all who contributed to this fund. You can learn more about the Gathering here: <https://www.elca.org/gathering>.

A renewed Youth Table, to be convened by Pastor Jake Lehman (Trinity/Kalamazoo) later in 2024, has an ambitious agenda for 2025 that I am eager to see unfold. Thank you, Pastor Lehman.

The #1 FAQ I receive as bishop is how congregations can attract young families. I invite congregations to read and discuss a response I recently wrote on this topic: <https://craigasatterlee.com/2024/02/08/attracting-young-families/>

CAMPUS MINISTRY: Pastor Sprang convenes our campus ministers quarterly for continuing education, idea-sharing, and support. Campus Ministry Grants have again been awarded for 2024. With funds from an ELCA Grant and money from our synod budget, we support campus ministries at Michigan State, Central, Western, and Grand Valley State Universities. The churchwide organization is reimagining campus ministry grants and intends to offer fewer, but larger, grants each year. I expect our synod will become even more responsible for supporting our campus ministries in the future. We thank the pastors and leaders who carry out this ministry to young adults on our behalf. We thank the congregations and members of our synod who make this ministry possible through their mission support.

RENEWING CONGREGATIONS

CALL PROCESS: Lutherans believe the triune God works through the church to call and send deacons and pastors to congregations. The synod staff therefore considers the call process essential to congregations sharing the story of Jesus and experiencing renewal. You can read our revised call process manual here: <https://bit.ly/3kup99r>.

A pastoral vacancy brings uncertainty to a congregation, and increased responsibility to a church council. A call process requires prayer, openness, diligence, forbearance, confidentiality,

and perseverance from a call committee. We are grateful to congregational leaders for this essential work. We join the entire congregation in rejoicing when a call process concludes as a pastor or deacon is installed.

For the synod staff, the work of facilitating and supporting call processes is ongoing; the number of congregations beginning the call process frequently exceeds the number of congregations completing the call process. Only 18 congregations have the same pastor(s) they had in 2013 when I became bishop. The rest have been through the call process once, with 20 congregations having been through the call process at least twice. I am grateful that Pastor Bright has come alongside me and is gaining her footing as we work together on call processes.

We invite you to rejoice with us that we had 18 installations since our last Synod Assembly; an average of one every three weeks. We are currently completing full-time call processes faster than the ELCA average of 12 to 18 months from submitting the MSP to installation. Some congregations have expressed concerns that the process happened too fast so we now tell congregational leaders that they, not we, need to build time for congregational grief into their call process timeline and manage the reality that congregations are never all at the same place in terms of readiness to move forward with a new rostered minister.

We include a report of congregations in transition in the monthly Bishop's Newsletter for awareness and transparency. In recent months, congregations and call committees have been requesting a "national search" for a pastor. To be clear, every call process is a "national search" as each congregation's paperwork is available for pastors across the ELCA to review. Seven of the 18 pastors we installed this year came from outside our synod. For every call process, we consult the ELCA database, consider candidates whose names we receive from congregations, and track down every possibility and connection available.

While we who live in Michigan have a deep appreciation for our state, the North/West Lower Michigan Synod is not a "destination synod" like Metro New York, Metro Chicago, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Seattle, or even Columbus, OH. Candidates we attract either have a Michigan connection or are intrigued by what our bishop and synod is doing, including our approach to the call process. We've had many candidates express appreciation for our personal, hands-on approach to the call process. We continue to attempt to help congregations understand that their "choices" are limited, and that part-time ministry is really a blessing when it happens.

The Synod greatly assists in attracting candidates by maintaining competitive compensation guidelines. Thank you! Even in our synod, congregations are offering compensation packages above guidelines to secure pastors. Please be mindful of our need to be competitive in retaining and attracting pastors to our synod as we consider the 2025 Compensation Guidelines. Please remember that there are more full-time calls than available pastors across our synod and the broader ELCA and there is little we can do to find available candidates for part-time calls.

We send a birthday card to every rostered minister in our synod. From that data, we know that, in just a few years, we can expect a large number of retirements. Throughout the church, we're

finding that pastors' expectations for retirement are different than in the past. Pastors don't want to retire from their beloved congregation in order to become a part-time or interim pastor in another congregation. Most retiring pastors tell me that they are done, at least for a while, because they have other things they want to do. They especially don't want to manage conflict and receive criticism. In fact, these things tend to hasten retirement.

PASTORAL CARE OF CONGREGATIONS: Again this year, the synod staff provided enormous pastoral care to congregations and lay congregational leaders dealing with pastors' serious illness and exhaustion, escalating conflict and factions in the congregation, facing the reality that the congregation is not sustainable, and/or congregational leaders feeling unqualified for this work—potentially undermining their faith. Demoralized leaders describe their congregations in ways I would summarize as *neque vivus neque moriens*—neither living nor dying. Except for one or two leaders, the people in their congregations really don't want to do anything relative to leading or supporting ministry initiatives but they also do not want their congregations to close. These people are looking for someone else—new members, the Synod, the pastor—to enable their congregation to carry on “as is” indefinitely. This is not new. It is simply becoming more pronounced. I find myself praying with rostered and lay leaders more and more, even as I thank them for their service. I also find no clear way forward that will not involve some level of disappointment and heartache.

Obviously, we do not hear from every congregational leader. Therefore, we thank congregations that submitted the parochial reports (Forms A and C) congregations are required to complete annually. Submitting those reports has become more important because the ELCA Church Council decided *current* reports will be used to determine our voting members at Churchwide Assemblies. In reviewing these reports, we are not grading individual pastors/deacons or evaluating specific congregations. Rather, we are looking for trends in our synod that will assist us in identifying congregations where synod support and engagement might be helpful.

SUSTAINABILITY: Sustainability of struggling congregations is a growing focus of our synod staff's ministry and we expect the need will continue to increase. A number of congregations reviewing the sustainability materials we developed are realistically assessing their future. We are committed to accompanying these congregations and assisting them in realistically assessing their sustainability and, where appropriate, either partnering with neighboring congregations, both ELCA and full communion partners, or moving toward holy closure.

Some congregations cite money and the cost of pastoral leadership as the reason they struggle to remain sustainable. I find that money is really a symptom or the presenting issue, but not the actual cause. Frequently, congregations struggling with sustainability are tired: leadership wants to entrust the work of maintaining to someone else and there is no one to receive it. They desire new people to join and serve the congregation without bringing the needed changes to make this happen. Their purpose has become survival for survival's sake. Providing money and alternative forms of ministry will only postpone the inevitable. I increasingly find myself thinking about sustainability in terms of quality versus quantity of life.

Congregations that find themselves at-risk desire to explore the possibility of returning to “mission congregation status,” so that additional funding and support from the Synod and possibly other sources becomes available. While in mission development, congregations in “mission development” status benefitted from synod funding (within the synod budget, designated offerings at synod assemblies, etc.), ELCA funding (via grants), and support from other congregations across our synod as they moved through the mission development process. At the end of the process, the Synod rejoiced when the new congregations became established, independent, and active. “Returning to mission congregation status” is not an option as once a congregation completes the mission development process in the ELCA, they can’t go back. Additionally, as noted above, the ELCA restructured how new worshipping communities are developed and “mission congregation status” no longer exists.

PARTNERSHIP: Grace/East Tawas and Saint Paul/Au Gres (Pastor Max Miller) partnered with the Episcopal Church in East Tawas. So partnerships do happen! This was a grassroots initiative and effort that came from within the congregations themselves.

Partnerships that are imposed or are financially driven do not succeed. In various ways, our ecumenical partners shared with me a bit of wisdom that I find very helpful. When I reach out to them at a congregation’s request to pursue a partnership, they answer that they are very open to pursuing partnerships whose goal is either to enhance the ministry of Jesus Christ or to help our congregation to close. They are not interested in partnerships whose goal is enabling stasis and maintaining the status quo. So, the first question congregations desiring a partner need to ask is how partnership will enhance the ministry of Jesus Christ. The first decision congregations interested in partnership need to make is what they are willing to give up to have a partner. For example, in most instances, congregations will need to give up their worship time. If the partnering congregation is at a distance, they may need to give up Sunday as their primary day of worship.

COMPLETING THEIR MINISTRY: Jesus said, “Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor” (John 12:24-26).

As noted earlier, Zion Lutheran Church (Saginaw) completed its ministry since our last assembly. We commend this congregation to God’s care as we thank the people of Zion and their pastor, Susan Hand, for their faith, service, and witness that Jesus brings life out of death, even the death of their beloved congregation. People regularly tell me that they refuse to believe that God would ever allow their congregation to close. The witness of this congregation is that, indeed, God does. Then, Jesus brings life out of death.

ADULT THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION COURSES: This year, we offered two courses in our newly designed Adult Theological Education Program. Dr. Kit Kleinhans taught “Luther’s Small Catechism” in October 2023 and Dr. Joy Schroeder taught “Six Women from Church History That You Need to Know About” in January 2024. Both courses had 100+ people register, some from beyond our

synod. As Dean of the program, I recruit professors, review curriculum, and negotiate contracts. Ms. Chelsey Satterlee manages registration, leads the Zoom sessions, and produces the video recordings. Participating in the program comes at no cost to the participant.

I describe the program as things I want to learn about from people I want to learn from. So I am excited that Pastor Amy Reumann, Senior Director for Witness and Society ELCA, will teach a six-week course titled “Witnessing to Christ and Love for Neighbor in this Election Year” in September 2024. Dr. Amy Lindemann Allen, who teaches New Testament at Christian Theological Seminary, will lead a course titled “Jesus and the Little Children” in January 2025. As we look beyond these offerings, Dr. Kent Burreson, who teaches systematic theology at Concordia Seminary, will lead a course titled “Reassessing Death” in Fall 2025 and Dr. Rachel Wren, who teaches biblical studies at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, will lead a course on the Old Testament readings from the Easter Vigil in Winter 2026. We are excited about these upcoming learning opportunities and invite you to watch for more information in our synod communications and consider attending.

EMPOWERING LEADERS

CANDIDACY: Lutherans confess God instituted the Ministry of Word and Sacrament (pastors) and the Ministry of Word and Service (deacons) so the apostolic and prophetic word (the story of Jesus) might continue through the ages. Raising up pastors and deacons is essential to the Church sharing the story of Jesus. We give thanks to God that Ms. Kim O’Brien (Faith/Okemos) is approved for ordination as a Minister of Word and Service and serves as a chaplain at Saint Joseph Hospital in Ann Arbor. We give thanks to God that Ms. Bridget Whatley is approved for ordination as a Minister of Word and Sacrament and is available for call in our synod.

In this synod, the cost of theological education is no longer a hindrance to pursuing a vocation in rostered ministry; scholarships and financial aid from ELCA synods, seminaries, and congregations exceed the number of students. Seminary education is flexible, offering both residential and distance learning options. If they so desire, most graduates return to their home synod.

We must continue to grow in identifying candidates for rostered ministry and inviting them to consider this call. This work happens primarily in the congregation. Pastor Christina Bright, Assistant to the Bishop and Director of Candidacy, and I are available and eager to answer questions and provide support. One of my mentors described God’s call to be a pastor as “an itch you just can’t scratch.” If you are experiencing such an itch, or if you have been asked to consider this possibility, please reach out to either Pastor Bright or me for further conversation.

I describe the call to public ministry as a three-legged stool. A candidate needs all three legs or the stool collapses. The first leg is a personal or internal call: “I believe God is calling me to be a pastor/deacon.” The second leg is the church’s recognition and affirmation that someone possesses the gifts and skills, faith and commitment to serve: “We see in you with the gifts to be a pastor/deacon.” The third leg of the stool is a specific faith community that believes God is calling this person to be their pastor or deacon. The members of our Candidacy Committee help

candidates discern and clarify their sense of call, assess their giftedness and readiness to proceed to various stages in the candidacy process, and sometimes make difficult and painful decisions that a candidate is not ready to serve as a pastor or deacon. We thank Pastor Bright, and the members of the Candidacy Committee for their ministry on our behalf. You can learn more about the candidacy process at <https://www.elca.org/candidacy>

As of March 2024, there are ten people from our synod in the Candidacy process. This includes three applicants, one currently on internship, one beginning internship this summer/fall, two recently approved/assigned and two on leave from candidacy. We also have at least two people who are actively discerning a call to ministry who have not as of yet completed an application. Four of the candidates are/will be in the distributive learning programs. We are delighted that a diaconal student from another synod is serving an internship with us.

CONTINUING EDUCATION: We are reassessing continuing education for rostered ministers after a year of some experimentation. We offered the Autumn Leadership Event in a one-day format on sharing the story of Jesus with youth and young adults. We also held a three-day retreat for rostered ministers to discuss preaching Jesus.

Four of our pastors are expected to participate in First Call Theological Education. This year, we encouraged them to participate in the continuing education events we offered. Region 6 is partnering in a new approach for First Call Theological Education with a retreat format intended to help new pastors and deacons build resilience; synods will rotate planning and leading the retreat.

We are investigating a grant that would allow us to hold a retreat type event on reflective leadership. We are considering the best format and topic for the Autumn Leadership Event. I encourage rostered ministers to share their wisdom and preferences with their Conference Dean. We will provide more information as soon as decisions are made.

PASTORAL CARE OF ROSTERED MINISTERS: This year, the synod staff provided pastoral care to rostered ministers dealing with illness and death. I give thanks to God that Pastor Dana Hendershot (Immanuel/Mt. Pleasant) returned to work after treatment for cancer. I continue to pray for and with Pastor Sarah Samuelson (Trinity/New Era) as her treatment continues. From near and far, many joined me in keeping prayerful vigil for and with Pastor Joan Herbon (Lord of Life/Portage) who entered the Church Triumphant in February 2024. I thank Rachel Laughlin and Pastor Joan Oleson for visiting Pastor Herbon on our behalf and Pastor Martha Porter-Reid for her care of the people of Lord of Life/Portage. Several times a week, I miss my friend Pastor Betsy Kamphuis (Greenville/Gowan) and remember Bob in my prayers. The church lost a wise teacher in Pastor Larry Foster. Pastors, deacons, and their families also experienced illness and loss; it is a privilege and honor when they invite me in as a pastoral presence. Thank you.

The synod staff also provided pastoral care to rostered ministers dealing with exhaustion, conflict, discernment, and factions within their congregations seeking to end their calls. People continue to blame the pastor that the congregation has not returned to “normal” after the pandemic. Pastors feel powerless and, in their hearts, blame themselves.

Many dissatisfied parishioners seem to have the impression that congregations can change pastors as easily as people change their socks and that pastors will put up with any amount of abuse because they are called by God. Neither is the case. While some synods have more pastors than congregations, we do not, and those pastors would rather wait where they are than go anywhere else. Pastors, including recent seminary graduates, understand that there are many ways to serve God and proclaim the gospel so they do not necessarily need to be pastors of inward-looking congregations who do not want to change. After making a genuine, sometimes gallant, effort to inspire, rally, and even single-handedly save the congregation, pastors are looking elsewhere for congregations interested in sharing the good news of Jesus and not existing to exist. Or they are looking beyond the church for careers in which they feel they can make a difference.

DISCIPLINE: I thank Pastor Rosanne Anderson and Pastor David Sprang for providing boundary training this winter. I also thank the rostered ministers who attended. As a reminder, rostered ministers are expected to participate in boundary training every three years.

Our church continues to assist former and retired pastors and deacons embrace their new vocation and maintain healthy boundaries for the sake of the ministries they love—and to respond when former and retired pastors do not. I invite you to review an article from the October 2023 Bishop's Newsletter: <https://bit.ly/3T3Soyl>.

ROSTER: I thank those pastors and deacons who completed the required annual report to the bishop. I mention this here because, though the primary purpose of the annual report is to provide an update on pastors' and deacons' life and ministry, we always learn things that help us update our records and keep them accurate. The report on changes in the roster is appended to this report. I am grateful to Ms. Ann Stavros for assisting me in this work. As the person ultimately responsible for maintaining the roster for our synod, I am very concerned about inaccuracies and omissions. If you find any omissions or inaccuracies, please let us know. If you notify us prior to the assembly, I will amend the roster report as part of my oral report to the assembly.

SEMINARY DEBT REDUCTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: The Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Committee awarded grants twice since our last Synod Assembly. We thank all whose contributions made this possible, especially a generous gift from Lord of Life/Portage. We also thank Ms. Linda Wicander, Mr. Rich Weingartner, and Pastor Christina Bright for administering this program. Assisting rostered ministers to address educational debt attracts candidates to our synod and assists pastors and deacons serving smaller congregations. The churchwide organization is exploring how to establish a similar program throughout the church. You can read notes of thanks from rostered ministers who received grants this year in the January 2024 Bishop's Newsletter: <https://bit.ly/4bTX1m2>.

STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS

PREACHING THE WORD AND ADMINISTERING THE SACRAMENTS: Please see the attached visitation report. Pastor Bright, Pastor Sprang, and I are especially grateful to be invited to preach at our

congregations for no other reason than to have a synod minister with them. We are also happy to visit when a congregation has a concern or issue that we need to address or settle. But let's not let that overshadow worship, or, if the issue will overshadow worship, perhaps we should visit sometime other than Sunday morning.

During the pandemic, congregations adopted liturgical language, practices, and patterns that they continue to use. The effect for the synod staff is that many congregations now have a one-of-a-kind order of worship. I currently do not have the time necessary to memorize a unique liturgy every week. Even when I do, my liturgical "muscle memory" kicks in as I lead worship and I end up getting the congregation's way of worshipping wrong. When I shared this with Pastors Bright and Sprang, they affirmed this experience as well. At the request of several congregations, we developed a template for congregations to use when the synod staff is responsible for leading the liturgy. We appreciate the positive response we have received to this guidance and that so many congregations are using it when we visit. You can find it here along with other resources for our visits: <https://bit.ly/3s2ycBH>.

SYNOD CELEBRATION RIVER CRUISE: We will host a Synod Celebration River Cruise on Thursday, August 1, 2024. All are invited! We will board the Michigan Princess in Lansing for a lovely meal, a short presentation on the year in review, and celebrations and thanks for mission support and ministries. We will also observe significant anniversaries as we do at in-person synod assemblies. So that everyone who wants to may attend, we have established a three-tiered cost depending on ability to pay: \$30 full fare - \$15 half fare - \$5 reserve my place. If the cost is prohibitive, please contact Bishop Satterlee. Register for the cruise here: <https://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/8475444>.

DISASTER RESPONSE: Thank you for your generous response to natural disasters. Inspired by the Flint Water Crisis, we established a Disaster Relief Fund so we are ready to assist when natural disasters, such as the flood in the Bay Conference, occur in our synod and state. Thanks to your generosity, we have also been able to send support to other synods and to Lutheran Disaster Response and Lutheran World Relief to assist with national and global disasters. Thank you! Pastor Sprang attended an event on disaster response convened by the ELCA in November. The focus was on how we might be more proactive in the face of natural disasters.

COMMUNICATIONS: Some reading this report are voting members attending their first Synod Assembly, and perhaps are being "introduced" to synodical ministry. I therefore want to review some of the ways we communicate, many of which are maintained by Ms. Chelsey Satterlee, Director of Communications.

Our synod's website provides news, information, and resources for congregations and leaders: <http://www.mittensynod.org>. A Weekly Update is sent to our synod's email distribution list every Tuesday at 10 AM and contains news for the week. The Bishop's Newsletter is published on the 15th of each month and also sent to our synod's email distribution list. It includes longer articles, snapshots of upcoming events, call process updates, and an update on the Synod's finances. You can subscribe to receive both these resources using the sign-up form on the homepage of the Synod's website. Click the link included in this paragraph, scroll down on the

right side of the homepage to the box that says “Sign up to receive our Weekly Updates, Bishop’s Newsletter and more!” and enter your name and email address into the form.

The Synod is also active on X (formerly Twitter) (@mittensynod), Instagram (@mittensynod), YouTube (@NorthWestLowerMichiganSynod) and Facebook. On Facebook, we have both a page and a group. The page, North/West Lower Michigan Synod – Official (<https://www.facebook.com/MittenSynodELCA/>) is where the Synod Office posts news. The group, North/West Lower Michigan Synod Community (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/70174344761/>) is a place for conversation where anyone can post. Posts to this group are not approved or endorsed by the Synod. We reserve the right to remove any posts deemed to be inappropriate.

I maintain a personal webpage at <https://craigasatterlee.com>, which includes news and updates, information on my books, links to my published articles, and writings, and a public schedule. Many find the schedule and resources available on my website helpful when planning events that involve the bishop.

Most Mondays, I produce a short video called Take One, in which I review my weekly schedule, comment on happenings in the Church and the world, and offer reflections on the scripture readings from the Revised Common Lectionary for the coming Sunday. As its name suggests, Take One is recorded in one and only one take; there are no do-overs. I serve as both host and cameraman. You’ll find a link to each Take One segment in the Synod’s Weekly Update emails, my website, my Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/people/Craig-Alan-Satterlee/100082821280193/>), my X (formerly Twitter) profile (@CraigASatterlee) and my YouTube channel (@CraigASatterlee).

ADMINISTRATION

SYNOD OFFICE: The Synod Office is located at 240 S. Bridge St., Suite 120, Dewitt, MI 48820. If you need to mail something to the Synod Office, please use our mailing address: P.O. Box 517 Dewitt, MI 48820. The telephone number is 517-321-5066.

The synod staff primarily works from home with a weekly staff meeting via Zoom. Ms. Ann Stavros and Ms. Rebecca Bossenbroek both have “day jobs “and drop by the office for mail, filing, etc. I work from the office with unscheduled regularity or for scheduled appointments. Pastor Bright works primarily from Alpena and Pastor Sprang works primarily from Gladwin.

Consistent with the resolutions on climate change the Synod Assembly adopts every year, we adopted Zoom as our default way of meeting because it is both better for the planet and more efficient. By using Zoom, I have been able to attend three Church Council meetings in a single evening.

SYNOD STAFF: I recently received “bipartisan advice” about this year’s presidential election. Both a Republican and a Democrat said, “Look over the President, but don’t overlook the people surrounding the President.” The same is true of the Office of the Bishop. I, in particular, but all

of us in this synod, are blessed with an incredible synod staff. They are smart, faithful, committed, and loyal to this synod. They accomplish more than other synods with larger staffs. You can review the staff configuration document on the Synod's website (<https://bit.ly/3Tlv5ua>) to see how we "divide up" our work.

A reality of working in the church is that skills often exceed compensation, no matter what that compensation may be. Like so many in the church, our staff would do well if they worked outside of the church. So let's treat them as the treasures they are. Some of the criticism they receive is not only unwarranted; it borders on shameful; reread your emails to members of the staff before clicking send.

Recognizing that life is too fragile to take anyone for granted, I provide a couple of highlights here for each staff member to recognize their faithful ministry to our synod. I encourage you to use these as starting points to share your own thanks with them – I know they'd appreciate it!

Ms. Rebecca Bossenbroek has served our synod for many years in many capacities. She currently serves part-time as our Director of Finance. Our care of the treasures entrusted to us continue to evolve in a sound manner under Rebecca's leadership. Through Rebecca's efforts, our financial records are accurate, organized, and meet the high standards of our auditors, who commend her work every year.

Pastor Christina Bright has served as Assistant to the Bishop since July 2023. She is responsible for candidacy and first call pastors and we work together on our many call processes. A daughter of this synod, Pastor Bright brings a unique perspective that she does not hesitate to share. I find her insights both enlightening and refreshing and am excited to see what happens when Pastor Bright has been with us a year and hits full speed.

Ms. Lynn Kriser volunteers as our Synod Attorney. She brings a knowledge of the law, a deep faith, and recent experience as a church council president. Lynn is wise, thorough, and available. I know congregations would like us to share Lynn with them. Unfortunately, that is beyond the boundaries of Lynn's volunteering and might constitute a conflict of interest as our synod attorney.

Ms. Cathy Satterlee serves part-time as my driver and is also responsible for administrative support for travel logistics, pastoral care, and hospitality. Sandy Schlesinger was wise in asking Cathy to take on this role as she is uniquely able to assist me in ways another driver could not. She is available whenever I need her to drive and also saves the synod money when we travel because, as much as she might want one, she doesn't get her own hotel room during overnight trips.

Ms. Chelsey Satterlee serves as our synod's Director of Communications. The communications section of my report describes some of Chelsey's responsibilities. Chelsey also provides me with administrative support, is the administrator of the synod's Adult Theological Education Program, manages the synod's website, and has led the planning and execution of synod assemblies since 2020. Chelsey's work was highlighted as "exemplary" at a meeting of the

Conference of Bishops (not by me). If you attend Zoom meetings with Chelsey, you might also get to visit with her cat.

Pastor David Sprang has served as Director for Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop since January 2014. He serves our synod as an ELCA Churchwide employee. Increasingly, Pastor Sprang has the formidable task of interpreting for us what is happening and/or changing in the churchwide organization. He continues to take the lead in grant applications and disbursements and boundary training, and is also passionate about our global companionship with Papua New Guinea. Pastor Sprang is growing in his work with disaster response, where he is becoming recognized by our state leaders. What I appreciate most is Pastor Sprang's counsel, passion for the story of Jesus, and love of and concern for our congregations.

Ms. Ann Stavros serves part-time as our Office Manager. Ann was in the office the first day I showed up and we have experienced much together over the past 11 years. Some days, I really miss sitting across from Ann's desk. Ann has been a mail carrier since the pandemic and has no desire to get stuck behind a desk again. So we visit, text, email, call, and Ann gets everything done, usually early in the morning when I am asleep.

As for me, please do not tell anyone that I wrote this report while on sabbatical. It is too monumental of a task for me to undertake after I returned from sabbatical. During my time away, I am reading, writing, resting, and watching movies. By the time I return, I will have been to Hawaii. Thank you for this gift, opportunity, and time to recharge.

Concluding this report by writing about our staff and looking forward to a few more weeks of sabbatical fills me with gratitude. I am blessed with so many more people for whom I am grateful, who did not get mentioned in this report. I am also privileged with many experiences for which I give thanks. This year, the *My Burden is Light* preaching retreat was a highlight of my years as bishop because of both the vulnerable, insightful, curious conversation of participants and the worship led by my friend and colleague, Bishop Daniel Beaudoin. I am so grateful to all who attended. Thank you!

It continues to be my joy and honor to serve as your bishop. I find myself looking ahead with energy and excitement. I continue to believe that the North/West Lower Michigan Synod is a place where God is acting in new ways to fulfill long-standing promises. And we get to help! We will be disappointed if we expect miraculous, instantaneous, church-saving, world-changing things. Jesus names us "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world," and compares the kingdom of heaven or reign of God to "leaven" (Matthew 5:13-16; 13:33). Jesus says this is how the people of God work and the reign of God comes. So let's be content to be "salt, light, and leaven."

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

Indeed, Bishop Satterlee is Legally Blind

I assume that, for some, a bishop (teacher, scholar, administrator, ordained minister, someone who has power over you) who also manages a disability is a new experience. Over the years, students and colleagues have found the following “protocol,” which I originally developed for the permanent community of the Lutheran School of Theology, helpful. I share it in the hope that it will be helpful to you as well.

1. I am legally blind. I have less than 10 percent of normal vision with correction. I do not know what that means, since I have never seen “normally.” I am the expert on my vision and how it impacts my life and work. Bring all questions and concerns about my vision to me. Making assumptions and conclusions about my abilities and limitations without consulting me is inappropriate.
2. Since I cannot see faces, I know people by voice and appreciate being reminded of people’s names in order to match them with voices. When you greet me, tell me your name. My closest friends know and do this. When I know your voice, I will tell you. I only hold myself accountable to recognize my wife, daughter, and mother “on sight.”
3. Cluttered corridors and walkways can be hazardous for me, particularly when obstacles (chairs, dogs, furniture, construction) are placed unexpectedly. Please keep the hallways outside my office clear and do not rearrange or remove furniture from my office.
4. If you want to be certain that I receive information, use voice rather than email and provide hard copy rather than file attachment. I do not hold myself accountable for information posted on signs and bulletin boards.
5. Dr. Conrad Heyner, my first ophthalmologist, determined that it takes me 2 times longer than average to read and write. I am therefore very disciplined in managing time. Last-minute assignments, unexpected delays or interruption of services, and changes in schedule can be particularly burdensome for me.
6. I read English text in standard font, though 14 to 16 point is easier. I do not read cursive handwriting; someone reads it to me. Reading Latin, Greek, French and German are much more laborious undertakings
7. Tasks such as locating a library book on the shelves, working office machines, and filling out forms are difficult for me. I sometimes get frustrated that I cannot do these tasks. I may ask for help or suggest ways around these tasks. As far as possible, please be accommodating.
8. Pointing and giving directions such as. “That way,” are not helpful. Try to be descriptive and concrete.
9. I will address questions and concerns about my disability directly. It is inappropriate to do it for me.
10. I will be consulted in order to determine ways that are most helpful both to me and the synod and church. It is inappropriate to unilaterally decide for me what and how much I can and cannot do.
11. I applaud and am deeply committed to our church’s mission of bringing the power of the Gospel to bear on issues of diversity related to race, gender, culture, sexual orientation, and the environment. At times, I find this limited understanding of diversity painful because those most passionate about these issues are often

the most oblivious, insensitive, and intolerant when it comes to issues of disability. I hope and pray for that time when the ELCA naturally counts persons who live with disabilities among the diverse voices that the church is called to struggle with and by which the church is blessed. In the meantime, I need to be disciplined in spending time in communities more attuned to issues of disability so that I will thrive in our church.

12. I am sympathetic to the appropriate use of technology in learning and worship. Since I do not participate and learn visually, I often experience this kind of class and meeting as a waste of valuable time; I also experience much technology-driven worship as personally exclusive. Please do not equate my lack of personal participation with antagonism toward the endeavor.
13. Address questions and comments about this protocol to me or to the appropriate administrative officer. Do not make comments to my family.

The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D.
Bishop, North West Lower Michigan Synod ELCA

Event	Name	Name	Date	Location
Deaths				
Rev.	Larry	Foster	05/07/2023	Retired
Rev.	William	Nicholson	07/08/2023	Retired
Rev.	Betsy	Kamphuis	10/26/2023	St. Paul/Greenville Settlement/Gowen
Rev	Joan	Herbon	02/10/2024	Disability
Installations				
Rev.	Christina	Bright	05/09/2023	North/West Lower MI Synod
Rev.	Ellen	Schoepf	06/04/2023	Edgewood/Fruitport
Rev.	Christina	Schultz	06/17/2023	Faith/Saginaw
Rev.	Kevin	O'Bryan	06/25/2023	Zion/Freeland
Rev.	Kara	Shaw	07/09/2023	Trinity/Hillsdale
Rev.	Jeffrey	Gramza	10/21/2023	Trinity/Midland
Rev.	Bruce	Thorsen	10/22/2023	Faith/Okemos
Rev.	Bryan	Schneider-Thomas	10/15/2023	University/East Lansing
Rev.	Martha	Porter-Reid	11/26/2023	Lord of Life/Portage
Rev.	Kyle	Duff	11/19/2023	St. Luke's/Grand Rapids
Rev.	Diane	Sponheim	12/03/2023	St. Matthew/Bridgeport
Rev.	Haley Vay	Beaman	11/19/2023	Feast of Victory/Acme
Rev.	Nan	Dehnke	01/24/2024	St. Paul/Greenville
Rev.	Nan	Dehnke	01/24/2024	Settlement/Gowen
Rev.	Timothy	Jahn	01/28/2024	Messiah/Bay City
Rev.	Zachariah	Shipman	02/11/2024	University/East Lansing
Rev.	Emily	Shipman	02/11/2024	University/East Lansing
Rev.	John	Ferra	02/15/2024	Harbor of Grace/Muskegon

On Leave from Call				
Rev.	Joan	Herbon	05/21/2023	Disability
Rev.	Julie	Winklepleck	09/25/2023	On Leave from Call
Rev.	Sue	Hand	10/05/2023	On Leave from Call
Rev.	Bryan	Schneider-Thomas	02/05/2024	On Leave from Call
Rev.	Christin	Fawcett	02/23/2024	On Leave from Call
Ordinations/Clergy				
Rev.	Christina	Schultz	06/17/2023	Faith/Saginaw
Rev.	Kyle	Duff	11/11/2023	Augustana/Chicago
Resignations or Removed from Roster				
Rev.	David	Blank	11/01/2023	Received into the Episcopal Church
Rev.	Jay	Schrimpf	03/21/2024	Retired
Transfers In				
Rev.	Bruce	Thorsen	06/01/2023	North Great Lakes Synod
Rev.	Kevin	O'Bryan	06/05/2023	Lower Susquehanna Synod
Rev.	Jeffrey	Gramza	07/10/2023	Northwestern Ohio Synod
Rev.	Diane	Sponheim	12/01/2023	St. Paul Area Synod
Rev.	Zachariah	Shipman	01/01/2024	Western North Dakota Synod
Rev.	Emily	Shipman	01/01/2024	Western North Dakota Synod
Rev.	David	Beese	02/07/2024	Metropolitan Chicago Synod
Retirements				
Rev.	Gary	Bunge	10/01/2023	University/East Lansing
Rev.	Leslie	Nye	10/01/2023	Spruce/Spruce St. Matthew/Herron
Rev.	Robert	Linstrom	12/01/2023	Trinity/Grand Rapids
Rev.	John	Autio	01/01/2024	Faith/Sidney
Calls Accepted				
Rev.	David	Beese	01/28/2024	Bread of Life/Hudsonville
Rev.	Bryan	Schneider-Thomas	03/17/2024	Grace/Lansing

**Synod Ministers of Word and Sacrament
 Congregational Visitation Summary – Preaching/Presiding
 July 2013 – March 31, 2024**

# Preach	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	21	22	23	24	25
# Congs	2	2	9	8	10	13	9	15	7	3	4	5	9	3	2	4	2	3	1	0	2	2	1

LOCATION	CONGREGATION	CAS	DES	CMB	A2B
BAY CONFERENCE					
Au Gres	St. Paul (16)	3	6		7
Bay City	Messiah (9)	3	4	2	
Bridgeport	St. Matthew (18)	5	7		6
East Tawas	Grace (8)	1	6		1
Freeland	Zion (13)	5	8		
Gladwin	Christ the King (24)	4	13		7
Marlette	Hope (14)	4	3		7
Midland	St. Timothy (14)	3	7		4
Midland	Trinity (9)	3	5		1
Mt. Pleasant	Immanuel (25)	4	20	1	
Rhodes	Hope (5)	1	3		1
Rose City	Prince of Peace (19)	2	10	1	6
Saginaw	Ascension (13)	3	5		5
Saginaw	Faith (17)	3	8		6
Saginaw	Our Savior (17)	4	12		1
Saginaw	Resurrection (7)	3	4		
Saginaw	St John (14)	5	7		2
Saginaw	Zion (10)	1	8		1
Unionville	St. Peter (14)	4	9		1
Vassar	Grace (6)	2	4		

CAPITAL AREA CONFERENCE					
Charlotte	Peace (5)	4			1
Coldwater	Reformation (5)	2	1		2
Dewitt	Christ United (7)	6	1		
East Lansing	St. Paul (7)	2	2		3
East Lansing	University (23)	15	2	3	3
Grand Ledge	Immanuel (6)	3	1		2
Hillsdale	Trinity (14)	4	3	1	6
Jackson	Immanuel (6)	5	1		
Jackson	St. James (8)	5	1		2
Lansing	Bethlehem (6)	4	1		1
Lansing	Calvary (8)	4	2		2
Lansing	Grace (9)	4	3	1	1
Lansing	Redeemer (2)	2			
Lansing	St. Stephen (13)	9	2		2
Mason	All Saints (9)	4	1		4
Michigan Center	Christ (7)	3	2		2
Okemos	Faith (7)	4	2		1
GRAND RAPIDS CONFERENCE					
Big Rapids	Immanuel (14)	4	7		3
Comstock Park	Zion (7)	6	1		
Edmore	Our Savior's (6)	4	1		1
Gowen	Settlement (17)	12	1	2	2
Grand Rapids	Bethlehem (4)	2	1		1
Grand Rapids	Faith (4)	2	2		
Grand Rapids	St. Luke's (22)	13	4		5
Grand Rapids	Trinity (9)	7	1		1
Greenville	St. Paul (14)	10	1	2	1

Hastings	Grace (10)	3	3		4
Holland	Good Shepherd (5)	1	1		3
Holland	Peace (9)	5	2		2
Hudsonville	Bread of Life (7)	3	2	1	1
Kent City	Mamrelund (5)	3	1		1
Kentwood	Ascension/HC (4)	2	1		1
Rockford	Hope (6)	3	1		2
Sidney	Faith (8)	3	1		4
Sparta	Peace (7)	3	2	1	1
Woodland	Zion (9)	3	3	1	2
Wyoming	Christ (12)	4	3		5
Wyoming	Christ Sudanese (18)	4	14		
Wyoming	Gethsemane (5)	1	2		2
KALAMAZOO CONFERENCE					
Allegan	Immanuel (11)	6	1		4
Baroda	St. John (7)	3	1		3
Battle Creek	St. Peter (13)	9	1		3
Battle Creek	Trinity (23)	12	7		4
Constantine	Messiah (12)	6	2		4
Kalamazoo	Savior (13)	5	1		7
Kalamazoo	Trinity (9)	3	3		3
Niles	Holy Trinity (4)	2	1		1
Plainwell	Hope (12)	6	3		3
Portage	Lord of Life (9)	7	2		1
Portage	Prince of Peace (9)	4	2		3
South Haven	Peace (9)	6	1		2
St. Joseph	Saron (8)	5	1		2
Three Rivers	St. John/Trinity (9)	5	1		3

STONY LAKE CONFERENCE					
Fruitport	Edgewood (6)	2	3		1
Ludington	Bethany (7)	4	2		1
Ludington	Emanuel (5)	3	1		1
Ludington	Victory Trinity (9)	5	3		1
Muskegon	Harbor of Grace (9)	2	6		1
Muskegon	Immanuel (6)	2	3		1
Muskegon	Our Savior (12)	4	3		5
Muskegon	Samuel (7)	3	3		1
Muskegon	St. Luke (7)	2	4		1
New Era	Trinity (16)	5	8		3
North Muskegon	First (3)	1	1		1
Whitehall	Lebanon (8)	4	3		1
SUNRISE CONFERENCE					
Alpena	Grace (4)	1	2	1	
Alpena	St. Paul (8)	5	1		2
Barton City	Trinity (5)	3	1	1	
Cheboygan	St. Thomas (11)	2	3	1	5
Gaylord	Peace (11)	6	2		3
Hagensville	St. John (9)	4	1		4
Herron	St. Matthew (4)	2	1		1
Millersburg	St. James (15)	5	2	2	6
Ocqueoc	Trinity (15)	5	2	2	6
Oscoda	Hope St. John (4)	2	1		1
Posen	Leer (4)	1	3		
Spruce	New Life (11)	5	3	1	2
Spruce	Spruce (4)	2	1		1

TRAVERSE CONFERENCE					
Acme	Feast of Victory (10)	4	4		2
Cadillac	Zion (9)	2	3		4
East Jordan	Evangelical (6)	1	1		4
Elk Rapids	Calvary (19)	3	2		14
Frankfort	Trinity (3)	1			2
Grayling	St. John (8)	3	4		1
Kaleva	Bethany (10)	2	2		6
Lake Ann	Advent (19)	8	2	2	7
Lake City	St. John (15)	6	4		5
Le Roy	Zion (2)	1	1		
Manton	Trinity (15)	2	6	1	6
Northport	Bethany (14)	3	2		9
Petoskey	Cross Christ (12)	4	5		3
Reed City	St. Paul (10)	2	3	1	4
Roscommon	Messiah (6)	1	3		2
Suttons Bay	Immanuel (10)	6	1		3
Traverse City	Bethlehem (7)	4	1	1	1
Tustin	Augustana (17)	1	4		12

Report of the Synod Vice President Sandy Schlesinger



“For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.”

~~~ Ephesians 2:10

As I conclude my 13th year as Synod Vice President, I am blessed by the opportunity to serve with other lay leaders and rostered ministers as we partner together to make a meaningful difference through various areas of mission & ministry across our synod.

As per the constitution, my primary focus is to serve as chair of the Executive Committee and of Synod Council which serves as the synod’s “Board of Directors” between synod assemblies. In addition to Bishop Craig A. Satterlee (Class of 2025), the following leaders serve with me on Synod Council:

- **Class of 2024 (with terms concluding on 8/31/2024):** Mr. Dan Carter (Treasurer), Dr. Tim Lundgren, the Rev. Kate Van Valkenburg, Ms. Sandra Walker, and Mr. Rich Weingartner
- **Class of 2025:** The Rev. Dennis Smith (Secretary), the Rev. Neil Brady, Ms. Karla Chamberlain, the Rev. Sherry McGuffin, Ms. Linda Wicander, and Ms. Holly Wohlfert
- **Class of 2026:** Mr. Noah Parker, the Rev. Jake Lehman, Mr. Bill Trevarthen, and Ms. Phyllis Klingler

It is a joy to serve with these dedicated leaders who give their time & talents to further God’s mission across the synod. In particular, I would like to extend my thanks to the members of the **Class of 2024** who complete their current terms of service on August 31, 2024 – their leadership and dedication to the work of the synod is truly appreciated! I would also like to acknowledge the leadership of the Rev. Betsy Kamphuis who joined the saints triumphant in November 2023. She would have completed her second term on Synod Council this year – her wisdom, strength of character, and love for ministry are dearly missed.

NWLM Synod Council Terms			
Through 8/31/24	Through 8/31/25	Through 8/31/26	Through 8/31/27
Synod Officers			
CARTER Mr. Daniel, Treasurer (Third Term)	SATTERLEE Bishop Craig (Second Term)		SCHLESINGER Ms. Sandra, VP (Fourth Term)
	SMITH, Rev. Dennis, Secretary (First Term)		
	WICANDER Ms. Linda (First Term)		
Synod Council "At-Large" Members			
LUNDGREN Dr. Tim (Second Term)	BRADY Rev. Neil (First Term)	LEHMAN Rev. Jacob (First Term)	
VAN VALKENBURG Rev. Kate (Unexpired Term)	CHAMBERLAIN Ms. Karla (First Term)	KLINGLER, Ms. Phyllis (First Term)	
WALKER, Ms. Sandra (First Term)	MCGUFFIN Rev. Sherry (Unexpired Term)	PARKER Mr. Noah (First Term)	
WEINGARTNER Mr. Richard (Second Term)	WOHLFERT Ms. Holly (Second Term)	TREVARTHEN Mr. Bill (Second Term)	

Highlights of key activities managed by the Executive Committee and Synod Council since the last synod assembly include (not an inclusive list):

- Expressed thanks for the leadership, counsel, and strategic input provided by out-going Synod Council members from the Class of 2023: Mr. Connor Ashley and the Rev. Clayton Bates
- Welcomed and on-boarded new Synod Council members as the Class of 2026: Mr. Noah Parker and the Rev. Jake Lehman, along with members returning for a second term - Mr. Bill Trevarthen and Ms. Phyllis Klingler
- Appointed the Rev. Sherry McGuffin as an at-large Synod Council member to fill the unexpired term ending 8/31/2025 that was vacated by the Rev. Christina Bright upon her transition to Assistant to the Bishop
- Approved appointment of the Rev. Kara Shaw as chair of the New and Renewing Mission Table
- Formally received the audit report for the NWLM Synod 2022-23 financial records and completed review of the audit report for the NWLM Synod 2023-24 financial records – both audits were conducted by CPA firm Maner Costerisan
- Received a comprehensive update on Living Water Ministries from C. J. Clark, Executive Director
- Received a ELCA Church Council update from Pr. Kjersten Sullivan, ELCA Church Council Member
- Approved recommendations for synod fund description updates and strategic fund transfers from the Synod Treasurer and Endowment Committee
- Approved a new NWLM Synod Restricted Fund for ELCA Youth Gathering scholarships along with a proposal for an aligned ELCA Youth Gathering Scholarship Fundraiser
- Approved the following disbursements from the synod’s Disaster Relief Fund: \$5000 for use as matching funds in support of disaster relief following the Maui Wildfires and \$5,000 each to the Southern Ohio and Indiana-Kentucky synods in support of response to recent tornadoes
- Designated United Campus Christian Fellowship as a Synod Authorized Worshiping Community for 2024 and designated the Rev. Kate Van Valkenburg as servant leader (annual requirement for ELCA grant eligibility)
- Affirmed Trinity Lutheran Church – Battle Creek as a Strategic Congregation for 2024 (annual requirement for ELCA grant eligibility)
- Approved detailed plans for the remote 2024 Synod Assembly and initial high-level plans for the in-person 2025 Synod Assembly – including date(s), location (in-person or remote), theme, agenda, registration fees and other logistics, approval of the assembly Reference & Resolution, Nomination, Credentials and Election Committee chairpersons and related processes and deadlines, designation of Synod Assembly offerings, approval of documents and reports to move forward to the Synod Assembly, etc.
- Approved a new Continuing Resolution for the Synod Constitution which provides standard processes and logistics for conducting remote synod assemblies moving forward
- Approved the high-level process to be used for the Bishop Election during the 2025 Synod Assembly
- Finalized proposed 2025 Synod Compensation Guidelines for approval by the 2024 Synod Assembly
- Proposed a 2025-26 Fiscal Year Budget (for the next fiscal year) aligned with the expectations of incoming mission support & planned mission & ministry expenses – for approval at the 2024 Synod Assembly
- Supported strategic processes & programs led by the Bishop and staff – including the on-going “Living Stones” initiatives, support of call processes, Seminary Debt Reduction grants, Synod Disaster Fund management, Synod Trust Fund management (i.e., Grace and Wilson Trust, etc.), support of social justice initiatives, support of ELCA grant submissions, etc.
- Partnered with the Bishop and staff to communicate, clarify and/or implement constitutional policies and procedures, including chartering a Consultation Panel at the request of a congregation in mid-2023
- Supported and engaged in leadership training across the synod, including the on-going Adult Theological Education Program with the Bishop serving as Dean, periodic Synod Boundaries training, continuing Social Justice training and related activities, etc.
- Led all aspects of Human Resource management for the synod staff – including updates to the NWLM Synod Employee Handbook (including policies & procedures), performance reviews, compensation management for synod staff (called, support, and deployed), approval/oversight of sabbatical plans for called staff,

addressing resource needs as staffing changes take place, managing inquiries (confidential and otherwise) from synod members relative to synod staffing along with other issues or initiatives that arose

- Continued partnership with and support of Bp. Craig Satterlee, Asst. to the Bishop Pr. Christina Bright, and Asst. to the Bishop / Dir. of Evangelical Mission Pr. David Sprang as they carry out strategic/constitutional responsibilities across the synod and beyond on behalf of all congregations and synod members
- Fulfilled many other responsibilities as needed - including approval of roster/congregation changes, management of changes to synod and/or congregation constitutions, budget and fund management, fiduciary and strategic oversight of synod-led initiatives, appointment of members to synod committee/boards, synod assembly preparation and oversight, support for synod events as requested by the bishop and staff, and so on . . .

Recommendations for the 2025 NWLM Synod Compensation Guidelines

Specific to compensation of rostered ministers across our synod, the Bishop and Synod Council have led a multi-year strategy to ensure our compensation guidelines are fair and competitive with other synods in our region. To sustain the gains and ensure continued competitiveness, our process includes assessment of our current fiscal year compensation guidelines against those in the 5 other synods within ELCA Region 6. This year’s assessment was based on base salary levels in 2024 for Pastors at 0, 5, 10, 20, and 30 years of ordination/service – see below:

Synod	NWLM	SE MI	NW OH	NE OH	Southern OH	INDIANA/KY	NWLM - 2025 Proposal
Years of Service	2024 Minimum Base Salary - Pastors	2024 Minimum Base Salary - Pastors	2024 Minimum Base Salary - Pastors	2024 Minimum Base Salary - Pastors	2024 Minimum Base Salary - Pastors	2024 Minimum Base Salary - Pastors	+4.0% to Starting Base Salary - Pastors
% Increase within Models from Previous Year	+6%	+3%	+3%	(new model for 2023 - increase not stated)	+6.5%	(new model for 2023 - % increase not stated)	+4.0% PROPOSED
0 yrs of service (First Call)	44,770	44,607	39,475	42,700*	44,173	42,392*	46,391
5 yrs of service	46,770	47,147	42,490	44,100	46,844	44,405	48,391
10 yrs of service	49,270	50,000	45,549	45,500	49,515	46,154	50,891
20 yrs of service	55,070	55,044	51,686	48,300	54,751	48,856	56,691
30 yrs of service	62,070	58,000	57,798	51,100	58,490	50,976	63,691
NOTE: Minimum Defined Base Compensation = Base Salary + Housing or Housing Allowance (est. at 30% of Base Salary) + Social Security Offset (7.65% of Base Salary + Housing). This table lists minimum Base Salaries only - excluding other contributors to overall Defined Base Compensation such as add'l degrees, prior experience, higher than average responsibilities / congregation size(s), etc.							
Additional Input on Synod Models	+\$500/yr thru 16 yrs; +\$700/yr for 17+ yrs	not stated	+\$150/yr beyond 30 yrs	*Stated salaries are a "best estimate" based on a new model. Assumes a median housing price of \$100,000 with adjustments as needed within the model.	Not stated	*Stated salaries are a "best estimate" based on a new model. Assumes a median housing price of \$200,000 with adjustments as needed and "median" congregation size within the model.	
<p style="text-align: center;">For Reference: Recent Cost of Living (COLA) Increases 2020 - 1.6%; 2021 - 1.3%; 2022 - 5.9%; 2023 - 8.7%; 2024 - 3.2%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">For Reference: Recent Compensation Increases within the NWLM Synod Base Salary Model 2021 - 1.6%; 2022 - 2.0%; 2023 - 4.5%; 2024 - 6.0%; 2025 - 4.0% Proposed</p>							

Key “take-aways from the 2024 ELCA Region 6 assessment of Base Salaries for Pastors include:

- Compensation models are changing across some synods, making this type of comparison more challenging to conduct (i.e., we are moving from “apples to apples” to “apples to oranges” comparisons where assumptions made are a “best guess”)
- Our recommended starting base salaries (at 0 yrs of service) through 30 yrs of service continue to be in line and very competitive with the other synods in our region
- For the first time in many years, we are at the higher end of the range for most assessed years of service
 - Our recommended starting base salaries (at 0 yrs of service) is the highest of the 6 synods
 - Our recommended base salaries at 30+ yrs of service are the highest of the 6 synods
- Based on variability of the Social Security Cost-of-Living (COLA) increases over recent years due to global economic uncertainty (see table above – increases ranging from 1.3 to 8.7%), it is difficult to predict the likely increases planned within the other Region 6 synods in 2025.
- With the anticipation of 20+ congregations in the call process over the next year, we want to remain competitive from a compensation guideline perspective. Note that congregations who seek a new pastor may need to offer or negotiate a compensation package that provides more than the stated guidelines in one or more areas (base salary, retirement rate, housing allowance, etc.) in order to finalize an agreement with their preferred rostered minister.

Recommended changes to the NWLM Synod 2025 Compensation Guidelines are highlighted in red font in the draft document available on the [synod assembly website](#). Key changes recommended for adoption in 2025 include:

- **Lines 141-148:** A reminder on options for congregations who are unable to provide recommended compensation (or an agreed upon alternative) for their rostered staff.
- **Lines 268/295/879/903:** A 4% increase is recommended within our base salary compensation model for Clergy & Deacons to keep compensation packages competitive relative to other synods in our region.
- **Lines 419-422:** Optional compensation offerings if the medical and dental portion of the Portico plan is waived.
- **Appendix C, Line 50:** Increase of the recommended duration to save continuing education dollars for future use (from three to five years maximum).

Preparing for the 2025 Synod Assembly – Logistics for Awareness & Planning

Looking forward to 2025, Synod Council has the responsibility to partner with the Bishop and staff to finalize and communicate all key aspects of the Synod Assembly to our congregations and voting members.

In preparation for the **2025 Synod Assembly**, Synod Council has approved the following:

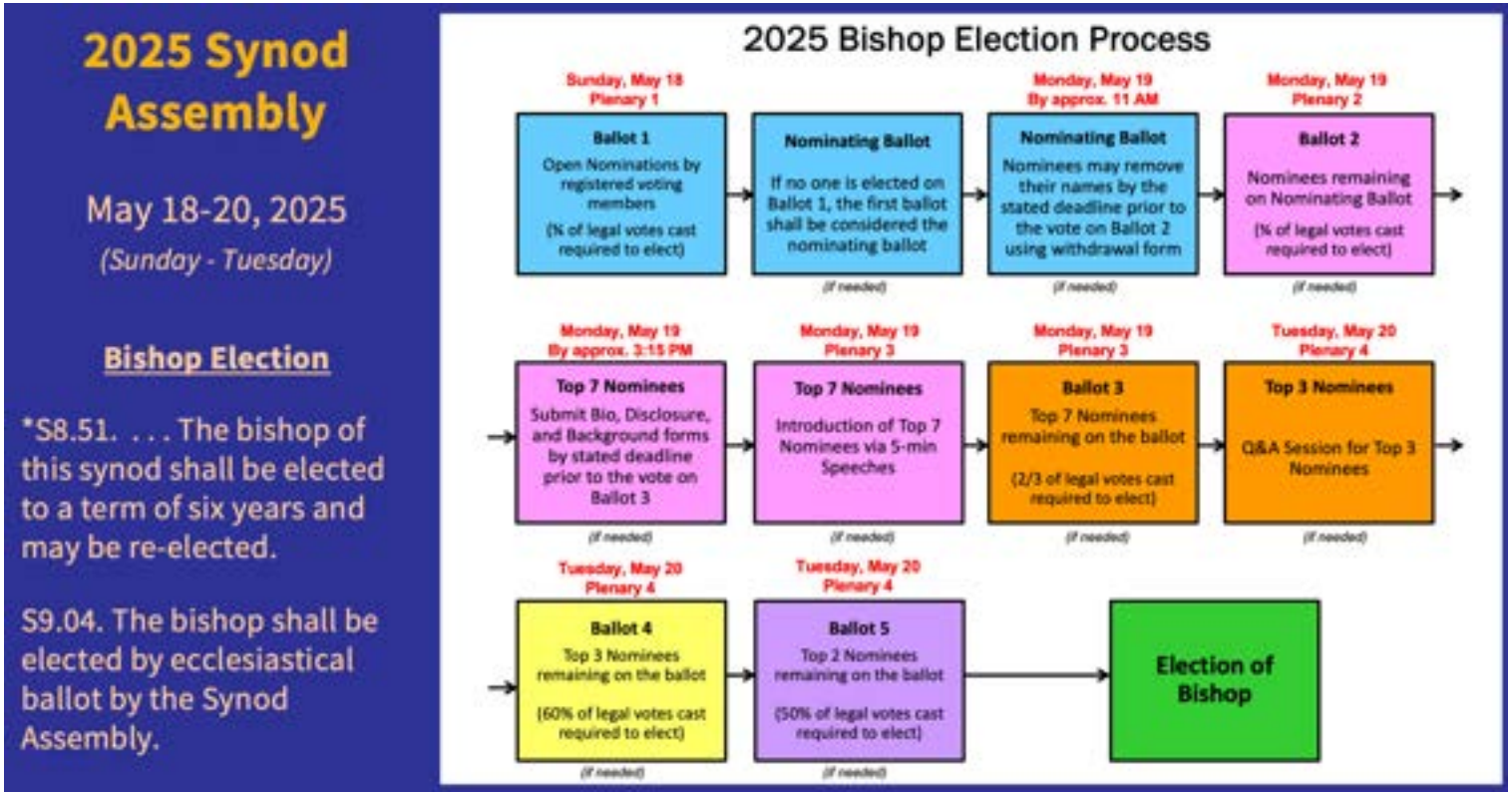
Date: May 18-20, 2025 (*Sun. evening – Tues. afternoon*)
Format: In-person
Location: Comfort Inn & Suites - Mt. Pleasant, MI
Theme: *“Living a Life Worthy of Our Calling”*

Registration Fees & Hotel Rates (for congregational budget planning):

- Early-Bird Registration - Voting Members & Visitors \$200
- Early-Bird Registration - Retired Rostered Ministers \$150
- Registration by the Deadline - Voting Members & Visitors \$225
- Registration by the Deadline - Retired Rostered Ministers \$165
- Standard Hotel Room (per night – excludes taxes, etc.) \$111

Preparing for the 2025 Synod Assembly – Bishop Election

Synod Council is also responsible for organizing and facilitating bishop elections within applicable Synod Assemblies. At the March 2024 meeting, Synod Council determined the 2025 bishop election will be conducted by ecclesiastical ballot without a “potential nominee” process in advance of the synod assembly – consistent with the process used in 2019 (as well as in 2007, 2001, 1995, and 1989). The process we will follow to conduct the bishop election during the assembly is illustrated below. The next focus for Synod Council will be the formation of a Bishop Election Committee.



Synod Assembly Format – In-Person vs. Remote Meetings

The Covid pandemic led to many “opportunities” in terms of how we do things within our congregations and across the synod. Thankfully, technology options such as Zoom and live streaming were available to use in worship and within our many other areas of mission & ministry (i.e., Synod Committee meetings, Council meetings, Call processes, etc.). Specific to the Synod Assembly, synod leadership developed a 1-day remote format using Zoom and VeVox (voting) technologies that was successfully utilized in 2021 and 2022 followed by a multi-day, in-person synod assembly in 2023. Moving forward, both formats are now available to assure meaningful, cost-effective synod assemblies are planned and carried out in accordance with the constitution to meet the required business and ministry needs of the synod.

For transparency, it is important to note the cost differentials between the two synod assembly formats – this includes costs covered by the synod budget as well as costs aligned to congregations / voting members. The graphic below highlights the actual cost comparison between the 2022 (remote) and 2023 (in-person) Synod Assemblies and also includes a 10+ year trend of Actual Revenue vs Expenses for synod assemblies from 2010-2023. Note that all synod assemblies prior to 2021 were conducted using the in-person format.

Based on the data shown below, the cost for registration and hotel rooms for congregational voting members totaled **\$75,694** for the 2023 in-person assembly vs. **\$4,250** for the 2022 remote assembly (registration only). In order to facilitate and lead the meeting, the cost to the synod was **\$54,655** for the 2023 meeting vs. **\$5,296** for the 2022 meeting. The registration fees from congregations / voting members are intended to off-set a portion of the synod expenses – resulting in overall (net) deficits of **\$14,105** and **\$1,046**, respectively. So while there are benefits in gathering together in community to conduct the business of the synod, it is simply costs more to do so at both congregational and synodical levels.

Synod Assemblies – Future Planning

FOR AWARENESS:

- *Synod Council plans to hold future in-person synod assemblies every three years (aligned to bishop elections) with virtual synod assemblies with a “business only” agenda possibly taking place in the years in between.*
- *The final decision on in-person vs. virtual assemblies will be made by Synod Council as appropriate based on the required business to be conducted.*

		Cost Comparison	2022 Remote <small>(142 registered)</small>	2023 In-Person <small>(135 registered)</small>
Congregations & Voting Members	Registration		4250	40550
	Hotel		0	35144
	Total		4250	75694
Synod	Meeting Rooms, Food, Technology, Worship, Guests, Childcare, etc.		5296	54655
Difference			(\$1,046)	(\$14,105)

For Reference: Actual Revenue vs. Expenses for Synod Assemblies - 2010 to 2023

NW Lower Michigan Synod Assembly	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 est
Income vs. Expense Overview	In-person	In-person	In-person	In-person	In-person	In-person	In-person	In-person	In-person	In-person	Cancelled	Remote	Remote**	In-person	Remote
REVENUE - Synod Assembly Registration	77,381	39,202	60,976	45,284	42,706	42,706	46,767	49,150	53,747	52,106	-	5,820	4,250	40,550	4,500
EXPENSE - Synod Assembly Expenses	82,952	49,123	64,076	49,857	53,568	55,942	47,119	43,364	62,464	45,205	-	6,646	20,296	54,655	5,845
DELTA - Gain or (Loss)	(5,571)	(9,921)	(3,100)	(4,573)	(10,862)	(13,236)	(332)	5,786	(8,717)	6,901	-	(826)	(16,046)	(14,105)	(1,345)

** 2022 Expense includes a \$15,000 hotel cancellation fee resulting from the Synod Council's decision to change to a remote meeting due to continued Covid concerns

With this in mind . . .

- Synod Council plans to hold future in-person synod assemblies at least every three years (aligned to bishop elections) with virtual synod assemblies with a “business only” agenda possibly taking place in other years.
- The final decision on in-person vs. virtual assemblies will be made by Synod Council as appropriate based on the required business to be conducted along with other strategic needs & opportunities.

It is clear from this update that we are an active synod led by extremely gifted leaders – and our work continues as we participate in Christ’s own work of reconciling the world to God’s very Self. We do this through our shared focus on vision and strategy as we use our collective gifts and talents to serve as God’s hands across the Mitten. Thanks be to God for all that we do in His (and in Jesus’) name!

Yours in Christ,

Sandy Schlesinger
NWLM Synod Vice President

2023-24 Synod Council

Executive Committee

SATTERLEE Rev. Dr. Craig A., Bishop
Home Church: Prince of Peace - Portage
6-yr term, exp. 8/31/25 (second term)
North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Physical Address: 240 South Bridge St., Suite 120
Dewitt, MI 48820
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 517, Dewitt, MI 48820
517-321-5066 (synod office)
bishopcraigsatterlee@mittsynod.org

SCHLESINGER Ms. Sandy, Vice President
Home Church: Trinity - Midland
4-yr term, exp. 8/31/27 (fourth term)
5804 Woodcliff Drive
Midland, MI 48640
989-859-7843 (cell)
sandyschlesinger@gmail.com

CARTER Mr. Daniel (Dan), Treasurer
Home Church: Faith - Grand Rapids
4-yr term, exp. 8/31/24 (third term)

SMITH Rev. Dennis, Secretary
Home Church: St. John's – Three Rivers
4-yr term, exp. 8/31/25 (first term)

WICANDER Ms. Linda, At-Large Representative
Home Church: Immanuel – Mt. Pleasant
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/25 (first term)

Synod Council At-Large Members

BRADY Rev. Neil
Home Church: Peace - Charlotte
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/25 (first term)

CHAMBERLAIN Ms. Karla
Home Church: Grace - Lansing
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/25 (first term)

KLINGLER Ms. Phyllis
Home Church: Trinity - Hillsdale
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/26 (first term)

LEHMAN Rev. Jacob (Jake)
Home Church: Trinity - Kalamazoo
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/26 (first term)

Synod Council At-Large Members (cont.)

LUNDGREN Dr. Tim
Home Church: Trinity – Grand Rapids
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/24 (second term)

MCGUFFIN Rev. Sherry
Home Church: Cross of Christ - Petoskey
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/25 (filling unexpired term)

PARKER Mr. Noah
Home Church: Hope - Rockford
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/26 (first term)

TREVARTHEN Mr. William (Bill)
Home Church: University – East Lansing
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/26 (second term)

VAN VALKENBURG Rev. Katherine (Kate)
Home Church: United Campus Christian Fellowship – Grand Rapids
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/24 (unexpired term)

WALKER Ms. Sandra
Home Church: Redeemer – Lansing
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/24 (first term)

WEINGARTNER Mr. Richard (Rich)
Home Church: Faith - Okemos
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/24 (second term)

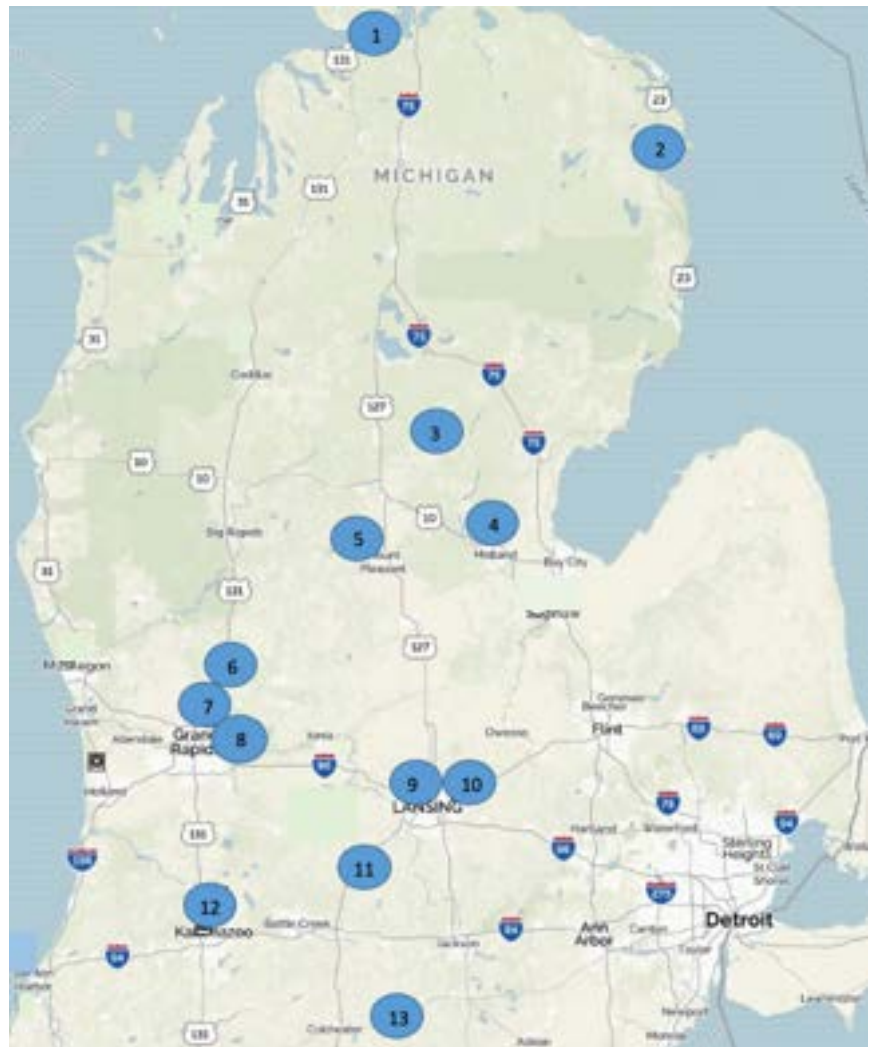
WOHLFERT Ms. Holly
Home Church: Trinity - Kalamazoo
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/25 (second term)

Synod Council: 2023-24 Term

NWLM Synod Council Terms			
Through 8/31/24	Through 8/31/25	Through 8/31/26	Through 8/31/27
Synod Officers			
CARTER Mr. Daniel, Treasurer (Third Term)	SATTERLEE Bishop Craig (Second Term)		SCHLESINGER Ms. Sandra, VP (Fourth Term)
	SMITH, Rev. Dennis, Secretary (First Term)		
Synod Council "At-Large" Members			
LUNDGREN Dr. Tim (Second Term)	BRADY Rev. Neil (First Term)	PARKER Mr. Noah (First Term)	
VAN VALKENBURG Rev. Kate (Unexpired Term)	CHAMBERLAIN Ms. Karla (First Term)	LEHMAN Rev. Jacob (First Term)	
WALKER, Ms. Sandra (First Term)	MCGUFFIN Rev. Sherry (Unexpired Term)	TREVARTHEN Mr. Bill (Second Term)	
WEINGARTNER Mr. Richard (Second Term)	WICANDER Ms. Linda (First Term)	KLINGLER, Ms. Phyllis (First Term)	
	WOHLFERT Ms. Holly (Second Term)		

2023-24 Synod Council & Synod Leaders

- 1 – Rev. Sherry McGuffin
- 2 – Asst. to the Bishop – Pr. Chrisy Bright
- 3 – Asst. to the Bishop – Pr. David Sprang
- 4 - Ms. Sandy Schlesinger
- 5 – Ms. Linda Wicander
- 6 – Mr. Noah Parker
- 7 - Mr. Daniel Carter
- 8 – Dr. Tim Lundgren
- 8 – Rev. Kate Van Valkenburg
- 9 – Ms. Karla Chamberlain
- 9 – Ms. Lynn Kriser
- 9 - Bishop Craig Satterlee (Synod Office)
- 9 – Mr. Bill Trevarthen
- 9 - Ms. Sandra Walker
- 10 – Mr. Richard Weingartner
- 11 – Rev. Neil Brady
- 12 – Rev. Dennis Smith
- 12 – Ms. Holly Wohlfert
- 12 – Pr. Jake Lehman
- 13 – Ms. Phyllis Klingler



Report of Synod Council Executive Committee Actions

September 2023 – March 2024

September 2023

Motion EC23.09.04.

Mr. Carter/Second Pr. Smith

Approve the updated Synod Disaster Relief Fund description to include the following: “As funds are available, this fund may also be used to provide disaster grants to other synods or international agencies of the church in responding to regional or international disasters. Disbursements are authorized by the Executive Committee based on recommendation from the Bishop and rostered Synod Staff.”

Adopted

Motion EC23.09.05.

Bp. Satterlee/Second Mr. Carter

Approve allocation of up to \$5000 from the Synod Disaster Relief Fund for use as matching funds for synod donations in support of disaster relief following the Maui Wildfires.

Adopted

Motion EC23.09.06.

Ms. Schlesinger/Second Ms. Wicander

Approve changes to the NWLM Synod Employee Handbook as presented.

Discussion: Updates include:

- Added Juneteenth as a paid holiday to align to ELCA Employee Guidelines
- Updated the EBHRA (Excepted Benefit Health Reimbursement Arrangement) benefit from \$1400 to \$1700 to align with the Gold+ Plan deductible and remain within IRS guidelines.
- Vacation time allotments for part-time benefit eligible employees are updated to align to the same # of workdays as full-time employees - with vacation hours based on % hours worked each week on an annual basis (i.e., 50%, etc.) to match ELCA Employee Guidelines
- Cleaned up formatting throughout the document (spacing, etc.)

Adopted (abstained, Bishop Satterlee)

December 2023

Motion EC23.12.03.

Mr. Carter / Second Pr. Smith

Approve changing the name of the Synod Staff Growth Fund (35070) to the Synod Staff Support Fund (35070). Re-designate the balance of \$1,835 in the Synod Staff Growth Fund (35070) as of December 2023 to the re-named Synod Staff Support Fund (35070).

Adopted

Motion EC23.12.04.

Ms. Schlesinger / Second Ms. Wicander

Transfer the unused portion of the former Assistant to the Bishop's Continuing Education balance as of 6/30/23 (\$5,416.63) to the Synod Staff Support Fund (35070).

Adopted

Motion EC23.12.05.

Ms. Schlesinger / Mr. Second Carter

Approve the 2024 Housing Allowance designation of \$45,000 for Bishop Craig Satterlee.

Adopted (Abstained: Bishop Satterlee)

Motion EC23.12.06.

Ms. Schlesinger / Second Ms. Wicander

Approve the 2024 Housing Allowance designation of \$15,500 for Assistant to the Bishop Pr. Christina Bright.

Adopted

February 2024

Synod Council Executive Committee – all motions were referrals to Synod Council for action.

March 2024

Motion:EC24.03.02.

Approve allocation of up to \$5000 from the NWLM Synod Disaster Relief Fund in support of tornado relief and recovery in the Southern Ohio Synod.

Discussion: The fund balance is \$31,968 as of Jan-24.

Ms. Schlesinger/ Second Pr. Smith

Adopted

Subsequent Motion, adopted via email after adjournment of the regular meeting. Final approval – March 23, 2024.

Motion: EC1.24.03.07.

Approve allocation of up to \$5000 from the Synod Disaster Relief Fund in support of tornado relief and recovery in the Indiana-Kentucky Synod.

Discussion: The current fund balance is \$26,968 as of March 19, 2024.

Ms. Schlesinger / Second Ms. Wicander

Adopted

Motion: SC.24.03.05.

Ms. Schlesinger / Ms. Wicander

With thanks, we lift up the leadership and engagement of NWLM Synod Council members who are coming to the end of their elected terms in August 2024: Mr. Dan Carter, Dr. Tim Lundgren, Pr. Kate Van Valkenburg, Ms. Sandra Walker, and Mr. Rich Weingartner. Their commitment and dedication to the ministry and other strategic initiatives conducted and led across this synod throughout their term(s) is much appreciated!

Adopted

Summary of Synod Council Actions

since North/West Lower Michigan May 7-9, 2023, Synod Assembly

Motion: SC23.09.01.

Pr. Smith/Second Ms. Klingler

To approve the May 31, 2023, minutes of the N/W Lower Michigan Synod Council meeting and receive the Executive Committee minutes of the March 21, 2023 meeting.

Adopted

Motion: SC23.09.02.

Pr. Smith/Second Ms. Chamberlain

Approve the minutes of the May 7-9, 2023, N/W Lower Michigan Synod Assembly.

Adopted

Motion: SC23.09.03.

Pr. Smith/Second Pr. Brady

To receive the updated constitution of Lebanon Lutheran Church – Whitehall, Michigan.

Adopted

Motion: SC23.09.04.

Bishop Satterlee/Second Pr. Van Valkenburg

To change roster status from “Active” to “Retired” for Pr. Gary Bunge, effective October 1, 2023.

Adopted

Motion: SC23.09.05.

Bishop Satterlee/Second Mr. Weingartner

To change roster status from “Active” to “On Leave from Call - Disability” for Pr. Joan Herbon, effective May 21, 2023.

Adopted

Motion: SC23.09.06.

Bishop Satterlee/Second Pr. Brady

To extend a one-year, renewable call to the Reverend Katherine Van Valkenburg to serve as campus pastor/mission developer for United Campus Christian Fellowship.

Discussion: Partnered with a young adult ministry in Grand Rapids – “Gather Grand Rapids” – part of the ELCA network. The previous United Campus Christian Fellowship ministry partner has resigned. This call may become full-time. The Synod has no financial obligations to Pastor Van Valkenburg within this call.

This will require a 2/3 majority vote.

Adopted

(Abstain: Pr. Kate Van Valkenburg)

Motion: SC23.09.07.

Exec. Committee / Second Not Required

Approve the theme “Salt, Light, and Leaven” along with the initial high-level agenda and other planning logistics as presented for the 2024 NWLM Synod Assembly which will take place via Zoom on May 11, 2024.

Adopted

Motion: SC23.09.08.

Exec. Committee / Second Not Needed

Approve the theme “Living a Life Worthy of Our Calling” along with the initial high-level agenda and other planning logistics as presented for the 2025 NWLM Synod Assembly which will take place in-person in Mt. Pleasant from May 18-20, 2025.

Discussion: This assembly will include a bishop election. Bishop Satterlee anticipates three addresses to the Assembly by one or more speakers. There is planned one workshop period. The contract with the Assembly venue has provision for cancellation in the event of exigent circumstances.

Adopted

Motion: SC23.09.09.

Ms. Schlesinger/Second Pr. Smith

To move into Executive Session – including Synod Council members and Synod Staff to serve as resource personnel as needed.

Adopted

Motion SC23.12.01.

Ms. Schlesinger / Second Ms. Chamberlain

Approve the Synod Council Minutes from September 9, 2023. Receive the Executive Committee Minutes from September 5, 2023.

Adopted

Motion SC23.12.02.

Ms. Schlesinger / Second Mr. Weingartner

Receive the updated constitution from Faith – Grand Rapids.

Adopted

Motion SC23.12.03.

Bishop Satterlee / Second Mr. Trevarthen

To change roster status from “Active” to “Retired” for Pr. Leslie Nye, effective October 1, 2023.

Adopted

Motion SC23.12.04.

Bishop Satterlee / Second Ms. Wicander

To change roster status from “Active” to “Retired” for Pr. Robert Linstrom, effective December 1, 2023.

Adopted

Motion SC23.12.05.

Bishop Satterlee / Second Ms. Walker

To change roster status from “Active” to “Retired” for Pr. John Autio, effective January 1, 2024.

Adopted

Motion SC23.12.06.

Bishop Satterlee / Second Ms. Chamberlain

To change roster status from “Active” to “On Leave from Call” for Pr. Julie Winklepleck, effective September 25, 2023.

Adopted

Motion SC23.12.07.

Bishop Satterlee / Second Mr. Parker

To change roster status from “Active” to “On Leave from Call” for Pr. Sue Hand, effective October 5, 2023.

Adopted

Motion SC23.12.08.

Schlesinger / Second Mr. Weingartner

Receive the report of the Treasurer as presented.

Adopted

Motion SC23.12.09.

Mr. Carter (on behalf of the Endowment Committee) / Second Pr. Brady

Transfer from the Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund balance \$169,093 (PPP loan forgiveness total) to the Synod Staff Support Fund (35070).

Adopted

Motion SC23.12.10.

Mr. Carter (on behalf of the Endowment Committee) / Second Pr. Lehman

Transfer from the Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund balance to the Cash Flow Reserve Fund the amount needed to increase the Cash Flow Reserve Fund balance to 15% of next year’s budgeted operating expenses as stated in article S15.24 of the Synod Constitution.

Adopted

Motion Adopted on 9/26/2023:

Approve the ELCA Youth Gathering Scholarship Fundraiser Proposal as presented with an initial donation from the synod of \$8000 and any balance of unused "Youth Expenses" budget amount for the 2023-24 fiscal year be transferred to this fund at year-end.

Pr. Van Valkenburg / Noah Parker

Adopted

Issue Identified Post-Adoption

After the meeting, additional follow-up took place to verify the actual Youth Budget values. As it turns out, **we acted on incorrect information** during our discussion - the wrong line item from the budget was cited during the discussion. Candidacy had a budget of \$11,200 with \$10,900 remaining (through July 2023) while the Youth Budget for this fiscal year is \$750 with all funds remaining as of the end of July.

Planned Resolution

Adjust the one-time synod "kick start" donation to this fund from \$8000 to \$5000 based on corrected budget information. A donor has approved use of \$5,000 from a larger synod donation for this new restricted fund. Pr. Dan Schewe – leader of the Synods Gathering Team – was notified of this change in the synod donation and has incorporated it into the team's plans.

2024 ELCA Youth Gathering Registration Update – as of the end of Nov 2023:

- 12 Congregations from across the NWLM synod have registered with a total of 43 adults and 79 youth
- 7 Congregations have applied for the new scholarships – 29 scholarships (\$7,250) have been awarded. The balance in the fund is \$3,750.
- Interestingly, one congregation from SEMI synod also requested scholarships – they were not approved for funding by the team

Motion SC23.12.11.

Ms. Schlesinger / Pr. McGuffin

Update the initial synod donation to the new ELCA Youth Gathering Scholarship Fund approved on September 26, 2023 from \$8000 to \$5000 based on corrected financial information.

Adopted

Motion SC23.12.12.

Executive Committee / Second not needed

Adopt the following Continuing Resolution related to remote Synod Assemblies moving forward: Synod Assemblies planned to be conducted remotely are to be limited to no more than 6 hours in duration with a prioritized focus on required business only. Due to the shorter duration, protocols for the presentation and consideration of resolutions and churchwide memorials presented to the Resolutions Committee are as follows:

1. All resolutions and churchwide memorials shall be submitted to the chair of the Resolutions Committee by the stated deadline set by the committee.
2. All resolutions and churchwide memorials shall be included in the pre-Assembly packet. No additional resolutions or churchwide memorials will be considered during remote Synod Assemblies.
3. Prior to each remote Synod Assembly, remote meetings shall be scheduled during which resolutions and churchwide memorials, correctly submitted for consideration by the stated deadline, will be presented to and discussed with interested Assembly voting members.

Discussion: Similar continuing resolutions were adopted for the remote 2021 and 2022 Synod Assemblies. This new CR will apply to any remote Synod Assembly moving forward, eliminating the need for annual updates to the Synod Constitution.

Adopted

Motion SC23.12.13.

Bp. Satterlee / Second Ms. Wicander

Appoint the Rev. Christina Bright as chair of the 2024 Synod Assembly Elections Committee. Within this position, Rev. Bright will assemble additional committee members as needed to facilitate the voting process using the VeVox voting software.

Adopted

Motion SC23.12.14.

Bp. Satterlee / Second Mr. Trevarthen

Appoint the Rev. Kjersten Sullivan as chair of the 2024 Synod Assembly Credentials Committee. Within this position, Rev. Sullivan will assemble additional committee members as needed to facilitate the registration and credential verification process for the assembly.

Adopted

Motion SC23.12.15.

Bp. Satterlee / Second Ms. Walker

Appoint the Rev. Jonathan Reid as chair of the 1) Synod Resolutions Committee and 2) 2024 Synod Assembly Reference & Resolution Committee. Within both positions, Rev. Reid will assemble additional committee members as needed to facilitate receipt of proposed Memorials and/or Resolutions by stated deadlines and partnership with submitters to appropriately prepare each for consideration at the Assembly.

Adopted

Motion SC23.12.16.

Ms. Chamberlain / Second Ms. Walker

Appoint Vice President Sandy Schlesinger as chair of the 2024 Synod Nominating Committee. Within this position, Ms. Schlesinger will assemble additional committee members to facilitate the nomination process.

Adopted (Abstain: Schlesinger)

Motion: SC24.02.01

Approve the Synod Council Minutes from December 9, 2023. Receive the Executive Committee Minutes from December 5, 2023.

Pr. Dennis Smith / Second Ms. Klingler

Adopted

Motion: SC24.02.02.

Upon the recommendation of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod New and Renewing Mission Table, the North/West Lower Michigan Synod Council at its meeting on February 10, 2024, officially designates United Campus Christian Fellowship as a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community (SAWC) for 2024 and designates Pastor Kate Van Valkenburg as their servant leader.

Schlesinger / Second Mr. Trevarthen

Discussion: This annual affirmation by Synod Council is a requirement for receiving ELCA funds in support of the Worshipping Community.

Adopted

(Abstained: Pr. Kate Van Valkenburg)

Motion: SC24.02.03.

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod Council at its meeting on February 10, 2024, affirms Trinity Lutheran Church – Battle Creek as a Strategic Congregation for 2024.

Exec. Committee / Second not needed

Discussion: This annual affirmation by Synod Council is a requirement for receiving ELCA grants/synod funds in support of ministry objectives.

Adopted

Motion: SC24.02.04.

Approve Rev. Kara Shaw to serve as chair of the New and Renewing Mission Table, effective immediately.

Exec. Committee/Second not needed

Adopted

Motion: SC24.02.05.

Approve the list of stated deadlines and a \$45 (\$30 per Amendment-1) registration fee for voting members for the remote 2024 Synod Assembly.

Exec. Committee / Second not needed

Discussion: Much discussion concerning the motion centered on the proposed registration cost increase from \$30 (2022) to \$40 (2024) for an online Assembly. It was noted that many congregations have already adopted budgets based on a \$30 registration fee. Cash strapped congregations may have difficulty with a 50% increase in registration costs. It was also noted that the treasurer's report indicated an increase in funds received versus the budget for FY 2023. Treasurer Carter reminded the Council that anticipated income from congregations for Synod Assemblies never covers the actual costs of assemblies. There is no provision at the synod level to subsidize congregational registration costs.

Motion: SC24.02.05.A1.

To change the proposed SA 2024 voting member registration fee from \$45 to \$30.

Pr. Van Valkenburg/Second Ms. Sandra Walker

Adopted (1 nay vote)

Adopted (Original motion as amended)

Motion: SC24.02.06.

Receive the report of the Treasurer as presented.

Schlesinger / Second Pr. McGuffin-Bays

Adopted

Motion: SC24.02.07.

Approve the proposed N/W Lower MI Synod budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year as amended per SC24.02.06. to move forward to the 2024 N/W Lower MI Synod Assembly for action and finalization.

Pr. Smith / Second Mr. Trevarthen

Discussion: Treasurer Carter explained how the proposed FY 2025 budget supplements the anticipated costs of the 2025 Synod Assembly by \$11,000. He also explained the difficulties involved in such estimations, primarily the uncertainty in how many voting members of the Synod Assembly will actually register. Again, deficit spending is built into the proposed FY 2025 synod budget. It was suggested that a "Narrative Budget" be prepared to aid in better understanding how a budget works.

Adopted (2 Nay votes)

Motion: SC24.02.08.

Approve the proposed 2025 NW Lower MI Synod Compensation Guidelines to move forward to the 2024 Synod Assembly with indicated updates, including a 4.0% increase to the Base Salary Model, as presented. Exec. Committee / Second not needed

Discussion: Several members of Synod Council wondered how well congregations are doing in meeting the guidelines. Pr. Bright noted that though no real data is available across the synod, anecdotally she knows that some congregations struggle to meet guidelines while some (fewer) exceed guidelines in order to obtain skills needed for their settings. Some members questioned the wording of "must" in line 143 of the proposed Guidelines. As the author, Ms. Schlesinger agreed to change "must" to "should" in line 143.

Adopted

Motion: SC24.03.01

Approve the Synod Council Minutes from February 10, 2024. Receive the Executive Committee Minutes from February 6, 2024.

Pr. Dennis Smith / Second Mr. Bill Trevarthen

Adopted

Motion: SC24.03.02.

Receive updated constitutions from the following congregations aligned to the N/W Lower MI Synod: St. Paul Lutheran– Au Gres, First Lutheran – Muskegon, Peace Lutheran – South Haven, and Faith – Grand Rapids.

Pr. Dennis Smith / Second Ms. Walker

Discussion: The “legal” constitution for a congregation is the one that is received and archived by the synod.

Adopted

Motion: sc24.03.03.

Change roster status from “Active” to “On Leave From Call” for Pr. Bryan Schneider-Thomas, effective Feb. 5, 2024.

Ms. Schlesinger / Second Pr. Smith

Adopted

Motion: SC24.03.04.

Change roster status from “Active” to “On Leave From Call” for Pr. Christin Fawcett, effective Feb. 23, 2024.

Ms. Schlesinger / Second Pr. Smith

Adopted

Motion: SC24.03.05.

Approve the proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure to move forward to the 2024 Synod Assembly as presented.

Ms. Schlesinger / Second Mr. Weingartner

Adopted

Motion: SC24.03.06.

Approve the 2024 Slate of Nominees for Synod Council and 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member positions to move forward to the 2024 Synod Assembly as presented.

Ms. Schlesinger / Second Pr. McGuffin

Discussion: There is one open position for an ELCA Churchwide Assembly voting member (Position N). There is a possible candidate who is discerning an invitation to serve – if he agrees to be a nominee for this position, an e-mail vote will be conducted to update the slate prior to the Synod Assembly.

Adopted (Abstain: McGuffin, Weingartner, Walker)

Motion: SC24.03.06.

Approve the following registration fee structure and display table charges for the 2025 Synod Assembly:

Registration Fees:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| • Voting Members and Visitors - Early Registration | \$200 |
| • Retired Rostered Leaders - Early Registration | \$150 |
| • Voting Members and Visitors | \$225 |
| • Retired Rostered Leaders | \$165 |

Other Fees:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------|
| • Display Table Charge: | \$50 |
|-------------------------|------|

Executive Committee / Second not needed

Discussion:

- The proposed fee structure is the same as was used for the 2023 Synod Assembly.
- Question – How many congregations do not send voting members to in-person Synod Assemblies because of the costs involved? Answer – In 2023 approximately 30 congregations (~30% of NWLM synod congregations) did not have voting members at the Synod Assembly. We do not ask congregations for a reason for their lack of attendance – in general discussions over the past 10 years or so, reasons for not attending the Synod Assembly have included: cost (failure to budget; unwillingness or inability to pay, etc.); time (unwillingness to take time away from work, family, etc.); value (do not see the value of an annual assembly); failure to identify voting members in advance of the registration deadline; cancellations due to illness, family issues, etc.
- It was noted that some congregations have their pastors attend without lay voting members (and vice versa).
- Suggestion – Ask the bishop to help ascertain why congregations do or do not attend Synod Assemblies.
- Question – What is the line-item synod budget for the 2025 Synod Assembly?. Answer - \$54,876 (proposed synod budget to be approved by the 2024 Synod Assembly). It was noted that deficit spending is part of the overall FY-2024 and FY-2025 (proposed) budgets in order to spend down cash surpluses – so deficit planning for the 2024 and 2025 Synod Assemblies is included in these overall budget plans.

Adopted (following call of the previous question, Motion SC24.03.07.)

Motion: SC24.03.07.

Call the previous question. (no debate on this motion)

Pr. Smith / Mr. Trevarthen

Adopted

Motion: SCC24.03.08.

Receive the report of the Treasurer as presented and discussed.

Pr. Smith / Second Pr. Lehman

Discussion: Any changes or corrections will be reviewed at future meetings.

Adopted

Motion: SC24.03.09.

The bishop election at the 2025 Synod Assembly shall be conducted solely by ecclesiastical ballot at the Synod Assembly, based on past precedent including the most recent Bishop Election in 2019, following the process outlined in S9.04. of the synod constitution.

Discussion: Concerns were raised with respect to very negative and threatening “conversations” that ensued during the previous bishop election. It was noted that “politicking” is possible, but discouraged during such proceedings. It was suggested that perhaps the Bishop Election Committee or Synod Council communicate discussion proprieties and expectations of behavior prior to the beginning of the election process.

Executive Committee / Second not needed

Adopted

Motion: SC24.03.10.

With thanks, we lift up the leadership and engagement of NWLM Synod Council members who are coming to the end of their elected terms in August 2024: Mr. Dan Carter (Treasurer), Dr. Tim Lundgren, Pr. Kate Van Valkenburg, Ms. Sandra Walker, and Mr. Rich Weingartner. Their commitment and dedication to the ministry and other strategic initiatives conducted and led across this synod throughout their term(s) is much appreciated!

Executive Committee / Second not needed

Adopted (Abstain: Weingartner, Carter, Walker)

2024 Anniversaries

Minister of Word and Sacrament

5 years

Alexander Aivars

Nicole Smith

15 years

Christina Bright

Megan Crouch

Kathryn Schroeder

Nanette Dehnke

25 years

Barbara Bender

Paulette Cummings

Julie Bailey

Timothy Bender

35 years

Kenneth Johnson

Richard Stieve

50 years

Erick Johnson

Richard McKenzie

George Madsen

Thomas Reinertson

55 years

David L Augenstein

Ray Dice

60 years

James Kocher

Kenneth Lein

Minister of Word and Service

15 years

Bernice Sorrels

35 years

Suzanne Lehto

Congregation Anniversaries

100 years

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Lansing MI

150 years

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Big Rapids, MI

Zion Lutheran Church, Cadillac, MI

Emanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, Ludington, MI

Augustana Lutheran Church, Tustin, MI