



*"I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to live in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:1-6).*

## **Call and Notice of Synod Assembly**

In accordance with Section S7.13 of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod Constitution, I hereby call and give notice of the 2025 Synod Assembly which will be held May 18-20, 2025, at the Comfort Inn & Suites in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

Rev. Dennis Smith, Secretary

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# Live a Life Worthy of Our Calling

EPHESIANS 4:1-6

**NORTH/WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD ELCA**

**2025 SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

As part of the order for the Opening of a Synod Assembly, we say: “Live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, making every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” These words are taken from Ephesians:

“I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to live in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:1-6).

The calling of a bishop—or renewing the call of a bishop—at the 2025 Synod Assembly affords the Synod the opportunity to once again renew our conviction that none other than God through Christ Jesus calls us not merely to a specific activity or occupation but to a life lived entirely in God’s grace. We also renew our commitment to live a life worthy of this calling. Both our conviction and our commitment come as God’s gift and are grounded in God’s grace.

Under the theme “Living a Life Worthy of Our Calling,” voting members and visitors at the 2025 Synod Assembly will consider three aspects of God’s gracious gift of life lived entirely in God’s grace: (1) called by God, (2) united in Christ, and (3) given to one another by the Spirit.

## **CALLED BY GOD**

None other than God called us to live in God’s grace as God’s holy people. In Christ Jesus, God chose us not only before we did anything to deserve or even desire it, but before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). The life that we are to live in response is “worthy” (Ephesians 4:1) of this calling not because we can ever deserve God’s overflowing grace, but because God’s grace both calls for and calls forth a life that is in line with God’s intent for all creation. More than an aspect, activity, or occupation of our lives, God desires and claims the entirety of our life in Christ, individually and especially as the church. This life within God’s grace has always been God’s plan.

To live a life worthy of our calling is to trust God’s gift and promise that, both individually and as the church, we will “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:15-16). Growing up in every way into Christ is not a passive process. In response to God’s gift and promise, we spend the entirety of our lives striving to “come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Ephesians, 4:13). To live a life worthy of our calling is to celebrate that we are held by God’s call and will grow into Christ.

## UNITED IN CHRIST

Since God intends to bring everything to unity in Christ (Ephesians 1:9-10), a life worthy of our calling nurtures the unity of the church, which is Jesus Christ. We are to “maintain” (or “guard”) the unity given by the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3) because the unity that is ours in Christ is a gift from God and not something we produce. As signs of God’s gift of unity, Ephesians names seven (the biblical number of completion) things that are “one”: “one body of the church, called and sanctified by one Spirit; one hope which flows from God’s calling; one Lord Jesus whom we all confess and into whom we are growing up; one faith and one baptism that bind us to Christ and to each other.”[1] All this is from the one God and Father of all, whose saving activity fills the cosmos. The unity of the church is rooted in the eternal unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We do not create this unity, but to live a life worthy of our calling is to nurture and care for it in the way that we treat one another, with humility and gentleness, patience and love (Ephesians 4:2). To live a life worthy of our calling is to celebrate that we are united in the Lord who is head of the whole body.

[1] Brian Peterson, “Commentary on Ephesians 4:1-16,” Working Preacher, August 5, 2018.

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revision-common-lectionary/ordinary-18-2/commentary-on-ephesians-41-16-4>

## GIVEN TO ONE ANOTHER BY THE SPIRIT

In Jesus, God has broken down the “wall” between Jew and Gentile, now offering through the blood of the new covenant, salvation and *koinonia* [true community] to all persons. Within the church, “bearing with one another” (Ephesians 4:2) is necessary because God has not only given the church its fundamental unity, but has also given the church a rich diversity of members. Each is a recipient of God’s grace (Ephesians 4:7) as the Spirit calls, equips, and gives people to the church. God’s intent is not uniformity; God intends a unity that reflects and serves God’s reconciliation of the whole creation in Christ. “If we aren’t encountering and learning to love people who differ from us within the church, then something is wrong; this is not the healthy community that God desires.”[2]

Differences are not divisions. Especially Spirit-given differences within the church are not a problem but are God’s gift so that together we can learn how to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) in a manner that is not “abusive speech used to push down others and gain power for ourselves, all under the self-justifying banner of ‘truth-teller.’”[3] To live a life worthy of our calling is to celebrate that we are given to one another by the Spirit as a gift.

[2] Peterson, “Commentary on Ephesians 4:1-16.”

[3] Peterson, “Commentary on Ephesians 4:1-16.”

# Building Up

## *A Reflection on our 2025 Synod Assembly Theme*

In 1988-1989 my family and I lived in Heidelberg, West Germany, while I was a Fulbright Professor at the University of Heidelberg. We split our family worship time between our neighborhood German congregation and the U.S. Army base's Lutheran chapel, where the chaplain spoke to us one Sunday about the civilian congregation he had served before entering the Army.

The congregation was in a small, Midwestern town (not in Michigan, but it easily could have been!). The town was like many small towns: every person in the community was assigned a certain role—including the man who served as the town's scoundrel. He was the person few people would talk to but everyone talked about.

When the pastor began his ministry, he noticed that the man never showed up at church but regularly entered the town bar. On occasion, the pastor would stop at the bar and talk with the man. After a year of such discussions the pastor invited the man to worship. Nothing happened, but in a few weeks on a bright, sunny spring day the man walked into the sanctuary for worship. The first person who saw him hissed, "And what are *you* doing here?" Out the door he went, never to return.

It took over a year for the pastor and the Spirit to build up the man enough that he felt he could enter the church in search of grace. It took six words to tear down all that care-filled and loving building.

I am profoundly concerned about the language of tearing down that is so prevalent in our country right now, including in the church. My major uneasiness in these reflections is the church, because I fear we at times have forgotten how to talk with each other, how to disagree with each other, how to be in the same congregation or synod with each other.

When I search for guidance, I often turn to the Apostle Paul, in part because I find him to be very much down-to-earth, very practical, and very realistic while at the same time operating with a larger vision of what God is doing in the world.

When writing to the early congregation in Corinth, Paul is addressing believers who disagree over many issues, both in terms of practice and in terms of what they believe. We have twenty centuries of lived Christian experience to draw upon in such disagreements, but they had only a few years. Part of Paul's genius is providing them—and us—with guidelines. In a discussion of whether believers could participate in the many non-Christian festivals around them while still believing in Jesus, Paul writes,

***"All things are permitted," but not all things are beneficial.***

***"All things are permitted," but not all things build up.***

***(1 Corinthians 10:23)***

“Build up,” of course, is a construction term. It is formed around the word *oikos*, which means *house* or *household*. The verbal form means to construct a building. In 3:9 he uses the noun from the same family:

**For we are God’s coworkers, working together;  
you are God’s field, God’s building.  
(1 Corinthians 3:9)**

Paul is about body-building: namely, building the body of Christ, which is the church, as well as building the individual bodies of those who believe in Jesus as the Christ. And so he can compliment and exhort believers in the northern Greek city of Thessalonica:

**Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.  
(1 Thessalonians 5:11)**

And a fundamental way that such building up occurs is through love.

**Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.  
(1 Corinthians 8:1)**

Knowledge, in this case, refers not so much to formal study or academic ability, but the kind of knowledge that may at one level be correct, but that is used to gain an advantage over another. So rather than building up, this kind of knowledge is interested in “one-upping” the other, using intellectual abilities, including theological abilities, to tear someone else down. But love, says Paul, builds up. The word for love here is the Greek word *agapē*, which is the kind of love that is directed to the other and the needs of the other rather than toward one’s self. It is the sort of love we see in Jesus.

Paul develops similar themes in Romans 14-15, where he is dealing with divisions between Judean believers and Gentile believers over which holy days to celebrate, which food to eat or not eat, and which liquids to drink or not drink. In admonishing the Romans how to negotiate those differences he tells them that

**Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor.  
(Romans 15:2)**

And why should they do that?

**For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written,  
“The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.”  
(Romans 15:3; the quotation is from Psalm 68:10 in the Greek Old Testament)**

The basis for not pleasing ourselves and for building up the other is Christ. He is the model of the one who bears insults and punishment, not to please himself but to serve others. In his ministry, therefore, Paul can affirm that

**Everything we do, beloved, is for the sake of building you up.  
(2 Corinthians 12:19)**

Practically speaking, that means for Paul:

**Do not seek your own advantage but that of the other.  
(1 Corinthians 10:24)<sup>1</sup>**

As we continue to live our lives as followers of Jesus in our families, in our work relationships, in our congregational life; and as we look toward our upcoming synod assembly and, later in the year, our churchwide assembly, how does God call us to live our lives in building up each other individually and in that way building up the church? Based on Paul, here are several suggestions for gifts we might ask God to grant us. I am sure you will have others.

**a) Ask for the ability to be constructive, not destructive.**

When writing on the Eighth Commandment In *The Large Catechism*, Luther states that “It is a particularly fine, noble virtue to put the best construction on all we may hear about our neighbors (as long as it is not an evil that is publicly known), ...”<sup>2</sup>

Over against that, as we have seen, it is much easier to tear down than to build up.

**b) Ask for the ability to seek the advantage (or good) of other people rather than of ourselves.**

In his discussion of the Ninth and Tenth Commandments, Luther observes “that God does not want you to deprive your neighbors of anything that is theirs, so that they suffer loss while you satisfy your greed.”<sup>3</sup> The same observation holds, of course, for what we say about others with our tongues or our keyboard strokes.

**c) Ask for the ability to please others.**

We need to be careful with this language, borrowed from Paul. The apostle is not directing us to be “people-pleasers” in the negative sense of the term. The Greek term for *please* (*areskō*) signals meeting the needs of others in a way that gives them worth and dignity.<sup>4</sup> To do that requires that those who are giving, who are “pleasing” others, have their own self-worth as baptized children of God.

**d) Ask for the strength to pray for others.**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, twentieth century German theologian and martyr, identifies the centrality of prayer in our life together as believers. “A Christian fellowship lives and exists by the intercession of its members for one another, or it collapses. I can no longer condemn or hate a brother [or sister] for whom I pray, no matter how much trouble he [or she] causes me. ... Intercession is also a daily service we owe to God and our brother [and sister].”<sup>5</sup>

**e) Ask for the spiritual depth to carry the burdens of others.**

“Bear one another’s burdens,” Paul counsels believers (Galatians 6:2)—and not in order to secretly thrill at their struggles or failures, not to judge them, but to share the load of guilt, regret, and sorrow that dogs every halting step of our lives. And the way we can do that is to be strengthened by what God has already done for us. Bonhoeffer explores the heavy burden we carry, but reminds us that in the cross of Jesus, “God took men [humankind] upon Himself [God’s Self] and they weighted Him [God] to the ground, but God remained with them and they with God.”<sup>6</sup> In light of that we pray for the spiritual muscle-tone to remain with others.

My father was a plumbing, heating, and air-conditioning estimator. I grew up in the construction industry and worked holidays and summers at the shop. Building, I learned, requires constant planning, careful attention to detail, and ongoing maintenance. So does building up people and thus building up the church. That is our call in a world of conflict, gaslighting, backbiting, and falsehood, as God calls us into our next conversation, our next meeting, our next discussion about synodical matters and personnel, our next exchange regarding the Churchwide assembly and officers, that we build up rather than tear down. Or, as Paul concludes,

**Let us then pursue what makes for peace, and for mutual upbuilding.  
(Romans 14:19)**

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<sup>1</sup>For other passages on *building up*, please see 1 Corinthians 8:10 (NRSVue: *encouraged*), 14:3-5, 14:12, 14:17, 14:26; 2 Corinthians 10:8, 13:10; Ephesians 4:12, 16, 29.

<sup>2</sup> *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 424.

<sup>3</sup> *The Book of Concord*, 427.

<sup>4</sup> “ἀρεσκῶ,” (*areskō*), in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 129.

<sup>5</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 86.

<sup>6</sup> Bonhoeffer, 100.



**Deacon MaryAnn Schwabe** is the ELCA Executive for Synod Relations. From 2005 to 2014 she served as an Assistant to the Bishop in the Northeastern Ohio Synod.

Prior to her calls to the synod and churchwide staff, she served congregations as a deacon with a focus in church music, religious education, and family ministry.

MaryAnn has a Bachelor of Music degree from Houghton College and a Master of Arts in Religion from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg.

A student of Bowen theory since 1993, she coordinates the ELCA Systems Academy which focuses on the application of Bowen theory in synods and congregational settings.

Mary Ann and her husband Rick have five adult children, corresponding spouses, and nine grandchildren.





**Laura Barbins** was elected bishop of the Northeastern Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) on September 11, 2020 and took office December 1, 2020. Prior to her call to the Office of Bishop, she was the pastor of Celebration Lutheran, Chardon, Ohio for 19 years, Interim Pastor at Messiah Lutheran, Fairview Park, Ohio for 1 year, and Associate Pastor for Youth at Holy Trinity, Nashville, Tennessee for 2 years. Holding a PhD in Homiletics and New Testament, Bishop Barbins also taught at Trinity Seminary from 2018-2020.

Bishop Barbins lives in Mentor, Ohio with her husband and four daughters. When able, she enjoys gardening and travel.

**Bishop Daniel G. Beaudoin** was re-elected June 4, 2022, to a six-year term as the bishop of the Northwestern Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). He was installed on July 23, 2016, at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Bowling Green, Ohio.

Daniel is married to Rachel, and they are blessed with three children: Joshua, Elijah, and Hannah. 2 daughters-in-law: Michelle and Chelsie. They are smitten with their grandchildren, George, Homer, Evelyn, and Mabel.

Bishop Beaudoin served as the pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Stony Ridge from 2004-2016. He served as the pastor of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Edon, Ohio, from 1996 to 2004. From 2013-2015, he served as the Dean of the North Central Conference.

Bishop Beaudoin earned a Bachelor of Arts in History from Oakland University in Rochester, Mich., a Master of Divinity from Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, and a Master of Arts in Medieval History from the University of Toledo in Toledo, Ohio.

Bishop Beaudoin enjoys running with the Toledo Roadrunner's Club, reading good books, studying Scripture, and eating Mediterranean food.

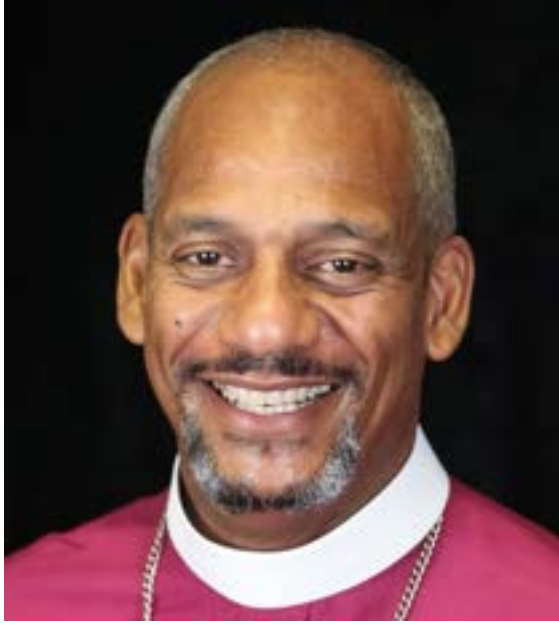




**Bishop Suzanne Darcy Dillahunt** is a prominent leader within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), known for her deep commitment to the church's mission, her exceptional gifts in administration, and her dedication to pastoral care. Her journey as a bishop of the Southern Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Church in America (ELCA) reflects her lifelong passion for ministry, inclusivity, and equipping congregations for faithful engagement in an ever-changing world.

Born and raised in a nurturing Christian household, Bishop Dillahunt discovered her calling to ministry at an early age. Encouraged by her family and community, she pursued her undergraduate studies at the University of Arizona before entering Trinity Lutheran Seminary, where she earned her Master of Divinity degree. Her education not only equipped her with theological knowledge but also instilled in her a strong sense of social responsibility and a desire to serve individuals and communities in need.

Bishop Dillahunt began her ministry in local congregations, where she quickly earned a reputation for her passionate preaching rooted in the transformative message of the Gospel. She emphasizes the teachings of Jesus Christ, inspiring her congregations to embody His love, grace, and compassion in their daily lives. Over the years, she served in various roles, including associate pastor and lead pastor in several churches, where her emphasis on inclusivity and engagement drew congregational growth and revitalization. Her ability to connect with diverse groups helped foster a welcoming environment, reflecting her belief that the church should be a place for all people to encounter the love of Christ.



**The Reverend Timothy Mark Graham** was elected to serve as Bishop of the Indiana—Kentucky Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in June 2024.

Before his election, Bishop Graham served at Messiah Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne for seventeen years. He was initially called to Messiah in 2007 under a dual parish arrangement with Grace Lutheran Church/Light of the Cross, where he served as the redevelopment pastor. Grace/LOTC celebrated its closure in 2009. In 2010, Bishop Graham was called as Associate Pastor for Youth and Family Ministry at Messiah, eventually becoming Senior Pastor in 2015.

Bishop Graham obtained his undergraduate degree in Organizational Leadership from Purdue University and a Master of Divinity from Wartburg Theological Seminary. He was ordained at Trinity English Lutheran Church, his home congregation. Before entering the ministry, Bishop Graham dedicated 14 years to working as a forklift driver at Supervalu. Bishop Graham's key achievement is his sobriety since June 9, 2000, which he attributes to God's grace through Christ. Other accomplishments are merely byproducts of this journey.

Bishop Graham and his wife, Meme, are proud parents of four adult children in Fort Wayne: Sashelle Rose (fiancé Alex Knight), Timothy Graham Jr., Larraine Graham (husband Cody), and Robert Graham. They also have seven grandchildren: Jaylen, twins Maleyah and Michelle, Noelle, Elias, Graham, and Greyson.



**Bishop Don Kreiss** serves as bishop of the Southeast Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), having been elected to the role in 2011. Born in Milwaukee, Bishop Kreiss earned a bachelor's degree from Northwestern University, a master's degree from the University of Edinburgh, and both a Master of Divinity degree and a Doctor of Ministry from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Bishop Kreiss serves as chair of the Conference of Bishops' Ecumenical and Inter-religious Relations Committee, and as the Lutheran co-chair of the Lutheran Episcopal Coordinating Committee. Bishop Kreiss and his wife, Kristin, are parents of two children, Katherine and Perry.



# Live a Life Worthy of Our Calling

EPHESIANS 4:1-6

**NORTH/WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD ELCA**

**2025 SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

## BISHOP ELECTION PROCESS

The business of the 2025 Synod Assembly will include a bishop election. Synod Council is responsible for organizing and facilitating bishop elections within applicable Synod Assemblies. At their 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).

An overview of the 2025 Bishop Election Process is included below:





# North/West Lower Michigan Synod

## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

### Bishop Profile

This document provides an overview of the Office and Ministry of the Bishop of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

#### The Office and Ministry of the Bishop

The role of the bishop in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is defined theologically in the Lutheran Confessions and given institutional shape in the constitution of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod, Chapter 8 (various citations from the constitution are referenced below).

The responsibilities listed in the synod constitution are quite extensive, yet are the “minimum requirements” for the bishop’s call. Key aspects of the bishop’s role within our synod include:

**1. Preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church. (S8.12.a.)**

*The bishop preaches the Word, administers the Sacraments, and teaches the faith in the Synod and its congregations as an expression of the unity of the Church. The bishop also fosters dialogue and leads conversation about what it means to be Christian (and Lutheran) in this time and place, in relation to the witness of the history and theology of the church’s tradition.*

**2. Have primary responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament in this synod and its congregations, providing pastoral care and leadership for this synod, its congregations, its ordained ministers, and its other rostered leaders. (S8.12.b and S8.12.h.1).**

*Timothy Wengert in Priesthood, Pastors, Bishops (pp. 65, 75, 100) points out that the Confessions consider the ministry of the bishop to be equivalent to that of a “head pastor” in a community with leadership and oversight of all policies and procedures related to Word and Sacrament for the synod. Pastoral care involves both admonition and support (law and gospel) – the bishop provides good order while practicing mercy and forgiveness in consideration for the health of the whole church.*

**3. Ordain approved candidates for various ministries (or provide for these actions in accordance with the constitution), attest letters of call, and install ordained rostered ministers. (S8.12.c.-f.)**

*The bishop ordains pastors and deacons, as these rites are entrusted to the Synod on behalf of the whole Church. The bishop establishes processes for and oversees all call processes within the synod.*

**4. Lead and oversee the mission of the church within the North/West Lower Michigan Synod. (S8.12.g).**

*The bishop leads and oversees planning for the overall mission of the synod, publicly interpreting this mission both internally and externally, and gathering and coordinating the necessary resources for our mission as a synod. The bishop empowers the people of the synod – baptized Christians, congregation leaders, deacons, and pastors – to participate in God’s mission in an ever-changing culture and world.*

**5. Lead and administer constitutionally established processes for the resolution of controversies and for the discipline of rostered ministers and congregations of this synod. (S.8.12.h.2).**

*In accordance with constitutional and other provisions of our church, the bishop uses personal gifts and skills of facilitation, listening and discernment which are critical to carrying out this constitutional responsibility. The bishop oversees boundary training for both rostered ministers and congregational leaders.*





## North/West Lower Michigan Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

### Bishop Profile



## The Office and Ministry of the Bishop—Continued

### 6. Be the chief ecumenical officer of the synod and serve as a sign of the unity of the church in the world. (S.8.12.h.3).

*The ELCA has formal relationships with ecumenical partners and companion synods. The bishop leads and fosters these connections.*

### 7. Serve as a liaison and link to the wider church across the ELCA and around the world. (S.8.12.h.3-7).

*The bishop relates to various ministries, including campus ministry, social service ministries and agencies, outdoor ministries, global missions, and maintains relationships with other Region 6 synods. Approximately 4 to 8 weeks of the bishop's time each year is involved in working directly with the ELCA and its regions. As a member of the Conference of Bishops, the bishop of our synod covenants with other bishops and church leaders to foster collegial and accountable relationships. The bishop also sets priorities for managing the demands of the role, especially in light of the travel required across the 33,820 square miles of our synod.*

### 8. Lead and administer the work of the synod. (S.8.12.i).

*The Office of Bishop involves many administrative duties, including exercising appropriate legal authority; preparing for synod assemblies, synod council and other synod-led meetings or gatherings; acting in conformity with the constitution; supervising other synod officers and synod staff; appointing and serving on committees; and maintaining rosters. The Office of Bishop involves a great deal of collaboration, supervision, discernment and leadership.*

### 9. Cultivate communion in faith and mission with appropriate Christian judicatory leaders functioning within the territory of this synod. (S.8.12.h.6).

*The bishop fosters collaboration, advocacy, and public witness in accordance with the church's social statements and Scriptural foundations. The bishop's "public witness" reflects God's mission across the North/West Lower Michigan Synod.*

## The Bishop's Term of Office

The bishop is elected to a term of six years and may be re-elected. (S.8.51.)

## The Election of a Bishop

The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly by ecclesiastical ballot. Three-fourths of legal votes cast are necessary for election on the first ballot. If no one is elected, the first ballot is the nominating ballot. Three-fourths of the legal votes cast on the second ballot are necessary for election. The third ballot is limited to the seven persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the second ballot, and two-thirds of the legal votes cast are necessary for election. The fourth ballot is limited to the three persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the third ballot, and 60% of the legal votes cast are necessary for election. On subsequent ballots a majority of the legal votes cast is necessary for election. These ballots are to the two persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the previous ballot. (S.9.04.)

## The Ecclesiastical Ballot

On the first ballot the name of any eligible individual (on the ELCA clergy roster) is submitted by each synod assembly voting member. The possibility of election exists on any ballot by achieving the required number of votes cast by voting members of the assembly applicable to a particular ballot based on constitutional requirements. The first ballot is the nominating ballot if no election occurs on the first ballot.





## North/West Lower Michigan Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

### Synod Snapshot

This document provides an overview of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, including its purpose, structure, and current realities.



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

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

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

- We rejoice that Michigan is a place of promise where God is acting in new ways to fulfill old promises.
- We celebrate our God of abundance by being a generous people.
- We commit to the Lutheran proclamation of the good news of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection throughout the territory of our synod.
- We strive to become communities that welcome all people in the name of Christ and to establish Christian community among people in need of the gospel.
- We commit to empowering all members of our synod to share the story of Jesus for no other reason than that it is such life-giving Good News!
- We prayerfully approach matching pastors/deacons with congregations as key to mission and ministry.
- We provide opportunities to enrich and empower rostered ministers and congregation leaders.
- We collaborate with partners throughout the ELCA and with ecumenical and interfaith partners on the territory of our synod.
- We faithfully steward ministries that address world hunger, care of the creation, global mission, and outdoor ministry.

**Priorities:** The Bishop and Assistants to the Bishop proposed and Synod Council approved the following priorities for 2023-2025:

- Revive congregations to engage their communities by sharing the story of Jesus.
- Identify, accompany, and support candidates for rostered ministry—pastors and deacons.
- Attract rostered minister candidates to our synod and help congregations re-calibrate their expectations to attract a pastor.
- Provide theological education for both rostered ministers and lay leaders through six-week Zoom courses each fall and winter academic semester.
- Relieve rostered ministers of some measure of educational indebtedness.
- Make a renewed commitment to discuss ways to welcome all God’s people in our synod.
- Support youth ministry in our synod through Living Water Ministries and their summer camps and other events.
- Accompany and assist struggling congregations to realistically assess their sustainability and, where desirable, to partner with neighboring congregations, both ELCA and full communion partners.

**The Office of the Bishop:** Currently includes the Bishop, two assistants to the Bishop including the Director for Evangelical Mission (ELCA Churchwide deployed staff), Director of Finance, Director of Communications, Office Manager and Driver to the Bishop. All staff members are co-terminus with the Bishop. The configuration and responsibilities of staff members are determined by the Bishop.

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



## North/West Lower Michigan Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

### Synod Snapshot

#### Synod Statistics

- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with nearly 3.3 million members in more than 8,900 worshipping communities across the 50 states and in the Caribbean region.
- The North/West Lower Michigan Synod is one of 65 synods in the ELCA, which are organized into 9 regions; our synod is part of Region 6 (MI, OH, IN & KY).
- As of the end of 2022, our synod includes 28,283 baptized Christians, including approximately 220 rostered ministers within 103 congregations.
- Congregations within our synod are aligned to one of seven geographic conferences: Bay, Capital, Greater Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Stony Lake, Sunrise, and Traverse. Each conference is led by a Dean who serves as a liaison between the Bishop's Office and congregations in their area.
- Mission Support offerings from congregations to the synod were \$1.2 million in 2022. 50% supports the synod and 50% supports ELCA Churchwide ministries.
- The Office of the Bishop is located at 240 South Bridge St., Suite 120 in Dewitt, MI. The Synod uses a deployed model with most staff members working remotely.

#### We are Church

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

#### We are Lutheran

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

#### We are Church Together

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

#### We are Church for the Sake of the World

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



## **Rules of Organization and Procedure** **for the 2025 North/West Lower Michigan Synod Assembly**

The Synod Council recommends adoption of the following Rules of Organization and Procedure for the 2025 North/West Lower Michigan Synod Assembly:

### **General Elections / Voting**

A. All elections will conform to S9.08. in the Synod Constitution.

[**Synod Constitution Reference – S9.08.:** “In all elections, except for the bishop, the names of the persons receiving the highest number of legal votes, but not elected by a majority of the legal votes cast on a preceding ballot, shall be entered on the next ballot to the number of two for each vacancy unfilled. On any ballot, when only two names appear, a majority of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election.”]

B. All voting shall be by voice vote, voting cards, or paper ballot.

C. Voting for positions in the general election where there is a single nominee shall be by voice vote.

### **Debate**

D. Debate is limited to two minutes per speaker. When coming to the microphone to speak on an issue, all speakers shall bring the appropriate voting card (green in support of the motion; red – against the motion; white – question or point of order) and identify themselves by name and congregation/ministry/retired, etc.

### **Code of Conduct Task Force**

E. As part of the registration process, voting members agreed to adhere to the North/West Lower Michigan Synod’s new “Code of Conduct” policy for synod-led events. In accordance with this policy (approved by Synod Council in February 2025), any issues or concerns during the assembly are to be promptly forwarded to the chair of the Code of Conduct Task Force, the Rev. Rosanne Anderson. The Task Force will address the matter, and if necessary, take appropriate action to resolve the issue, up to and including a person's removal from the event.

## **Synod Officer Elections**

- F. Background checks and screening will be completed for persons elected as synod officers either upon nomination or as soon as practical after election using procedures and forms established by Synod Council as per \*S9.12. The process and forms to be used will be posted on the synod assembly website.

[**Synod Constitution – \*S9.12.:** “Background checks and screening shall be required and completed for persons nominated as synod officers prior to their election, if possible, or as soon as practical after their election. The specific procedures and timing of background checks and screening shall be determined by the Synod Council.”]

## **Synod Bishop Election**

- G. The representative of the churchwide organization shall preside over the assembly whenever the assembly is in session and considering business related to the election of the Synod Bishop, or when the assembly is casting ballots in the Synod Bishop election. Upon conclusion of balloting or of specific business related to the Synod Bishop election, the current Synod Bishop shall resume presiding over the assembly.

- H. All voting related to the Synod Bishop election shall be by paper ballot.

In accordance with guidance provided by the NWLM Synod Council, the following Rules of Organization and Procedure related to the 2025 NWLM Synod Bishop Election have been established by the 2025 NWLM Synod Bishop Election Committee:

- I. Biographical information for the seven persons (plus ties) who received the greatest number of votes on the second ballot for synod bishop, submitted on a form determined by the Bishop Election Committee, shall be made available to voting members prior to the casting of the third ballot for bishop. In line with “Care for Creation” principles, biographical forms for the top seven nominees (plus ties) for Synod Bishop will be made available for review on the synod website.

- J. Prior to the third ballot for bishop, the seven persons (plus ties) who received the greatest number of votes on the second ballot for synod bishop will be invited to address the assembly, with each speech limited to five minutes. If any such person is not present at the assembly, the individual may address the assembly via phone conference or video conference (if available) or may designate an alternate person to speak on his/her/their behalf. A timekeeper shall indicate to the speaker when 30 seconds remain of the allocated time and when the allocated time has elapsed. The sequence of the speeches shall be determined by random draw.
- K. Prior to the fourth ballot for synod bishop, the three persons (plus ties) who received the greatest number of votes on the third ballot for synod bishop will be invited to participate in a question-and-answer period moderated by the Synod Vice President. The questions (including sequence) to be asked shall be established by the Bishop Election Committee. The questions shall be asked in rotating order of the nominees, and the same questions will be asked to each nominee who shall have a maximum of two minutes to respond to each question. A timekeeper shall indicate to the speaker when 30 seconds remain of the allotted time and when the allotted time has ended. If any such person is not present at the assembly, the individual may address the assembly via phone conference or video conference (if available). The time for the question-and-answer period shall not exceed 60 minutes.

## **North/West Lower Michigan Synod ELCA Code of Conduct for Synod Events**

*Synod Council created and approved this Code of Conduct in February 2025. It includes Synod Council meetings, Synod Assemblies, Synod Conference gatherings, Synod Training Events, and other meetings and events organized or co-hosted by the Synod or its representatives*

### **The ELCA Mission and Vision Values states:**

*“Each person is created in God’s image. We respect this God-given right to dignity and, inspired by the life of Jesus, show love and compassion for all people. Through proclamation of the gospel, through worship and as servants of God working for healing and justice in the world, we uphold and seek to protect the dignity and human rights of all people.”*

### **Expected Behaviors by Participants of In-Person or Virtual Events Organized by the NWLM Synod:**

- Treat all persons – synod leaders, rostered ministers, lay leaders, visitors, vendors, hotel staff, etc. - fairly, with respect, courtesy, and dignity during events, including break and mealtimes.
- Speak and act with honesty, truth, and integrity.
- Be fair, respectful and courteous in any comments made verbally or in written form related to synod members or synod activities, including video or other postings made over social media platforms, emails or other technologies.
- Behave respectfully toward others and do not misuse personal or professional relationships.
- Be sensitive to cultural and social differences and practices, and careful in use of language / gestures / body language that may be considered or perceived as disrespectful or demeaning.
- Respect personal boundaries set by others. If someone indicates “No,” even without words, acknowledge / accept it.
- Be transparent when endorsing an activity / motion / opportunity through public disclosure of any real or perceived conflicts of interest.

### **Inappropriate Behaviors:**

- Following in the steps of our Savior, we seek to care for all among us. Any behavior which harms the well-being of another is not of Christ and is considered inappropriate and will not be tolerated. More specifically, this includes but is not limited to potentially hurtful behaviors such as spreading rumors or gossip, badgering, bullying, assault, harassment, discrimination, sexual harassment or abuse, etc.
- Leaders across the Synod are expected to maintain appropriate confidentiality of synod business or privileged conversations as required. Failure to do so erodes trust and can negatively impact relationships, alignment within strategic initiatives, etc.

If you see or hear something that is inappropriate or causes concern during the meeting, you are asked to contact a member of the Code of Conduct Task Force promptly. The Task Force will address the matter, and if necessary, take appropriate action to resolve the issue, up to and including a person's removal from the event. Additional information about the Task Force will be provided at the 2025 Synod Assembly.

“Living a Life Worthy of Our Calling”  
 North/West Lower Michigan Synod ELCA  
 2025 Synod Assembly  
 May 18-20, 2025

Public Agenda

\*Denotes Order of the Day

**This agenda is subject to change.**

May 13, 6-8pm	Resolutions Discussion Session via Zoom
May 14, 6-8pm	Budget & Compensation Guidelines Discussion Session via Zoom
May 15, 6-8pm	Parliamentary Procedure/Voting/Bishop Election via Zoom

<b>SUNDAY, MAY 18— COMFORT INN &amp; SUITES CONFERENCE CENTER</b>	
3:00 PM	Display Table Set-Up (Rooms FG)
3:00 PM	Assembly Committee Meetings (Stadium Room) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3:00 PM: Credentials Committee</li> <li>• 3:30 PM: General Elections Committee</li> <li>• 4:00 PM: Bishop Election Committee</li> <li>• 4:30 PM: Reference and Resolutions Committee</li> </ul>
4:00 PM	<b>ASSEMBLY DESK OPENS (FOYER)</b>
5:00 PM	<b>DINNER (ON YOUR OWN)</b>
6:30 PM	<b>OPENING EUCHARIST AND OPENING OF THE ASSEMBLY – CONF ABCD</b> <i>Bishop Daniel Beaudoin, Pastor Chrisy Bright</i>
7:15 PM	<b>ASSEMBLY DESK CLOSES (FOYER)</b>
8:00 - 9:45 PM	<b>ASSEMBLY MEETING 1 - CONF ABCD</b>
	*Adoption of Assembly Rules and Procedures
	*Adoption of Agenda
	*Introduction of the Election Process for Office of the Bishop of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod

	*First Ballot for the Office of Bishop of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod
	Greeting: Global Mission
9:45 PM	Assembly in Recess
11:30 PM	Results of First Ballot for Bishop posted at Registration Table and Online
<b>MONDAY, MAY 19 – COMFORT INN &amp; SUITES CONFERENCE CENTER</b>	
7:00 AM	<b>ASSEMBLY DESK OPENS (FOYER)</b>
7:15 – 8:15 AM	<b>BREAKFAST - Hotel Dining Areas (for those staying in hotel)</b>
8:00 AM	<b>MORNING PRAYER – CONF ABCD</b> Including Remembrance of Those Who Died Since Last In-Person Assembly <i>Pastor Rachel Laughlin, Bishop Craig Satterlee</i>
8:30 AM	<b>ASSEMBLY DESK CLOSES (FOYER)</b>
8:45 AM - 12:15 PM	<b>ASSEMBLY MEETING 2 (Part 1) – CONF ABCD</b>
	Greeting: ELCA Federal Chaplains
	*Report of Elections Committee on First Ballot for Bishop
	Presentation: “Called by God” <i>Bishop Laura Barbins, Northeastern Ohio Synod</i>
9:30 AM	All nominees for Bishop seeking to withdraw their names must do so by 9:30 AM.
	*Report of the Nominations Committee
	Greeting: Portico
	*Second Ballot for the Office of Bishop of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod (If necessary)



10:20 AM	<b>ASSEMBLY DESK OPEN (FOYER)</b>
10:25 AM	<b>BREAK</b>
	*First Ballot for General Elections
	*Report of the Vice President
10:35 AM	<b>ASSEMBLY DESK CLOSSES (FOYER)</b>
11:00 AM	All nominees from the floor for general elections must turn in their bio forms by 11:00 AM.
	Greeting: Living Water Ministries
11:35 AM	*Report of the Elections Committee on the Second Ballot for Bishop (if necessary)
	*Report of the Elections Committee on the First Ballot for General Elections
	*Second Ballot for General Elections
	Greeting: Trinity Lutheran Seminary
12:00	<b>Noon Prayer (Sung Prayer)</b>
12:15 PM	<b>LUNCH – CONF ABCD</b>
12:15 PM	<b>ASSEMBLY DESK OPENS (FOYER)</b>
12:30 PM	<b>CHOIR REHEARSAL FOR CLOSING EUCHARIST</b>
1:00 PM	<b>ASSEMBLY DESK CLOSSES (FOYER)</b>
1:15-4:30 PM	<b>ASSEMBLY MEETING 2 (Part 2) - CONF ABCD</b>
	*ELCA Churchwide Report <i>Deacon MaryAnn Schwabe</i>
	*Report of Elections Committee on the Second Ballot for General Elections
	Greeting: ELCA World Hunger

2:05 PM	<b>BREAK</b> <b>ASSEMBLY DESK OPENS (FOYER)</b>
2:20 PM	<b>ASSEMBLY DESK CLOSES (FOYER)</b>
	*Report of the Treasurer *Presentation of the 2026-27 Budget
	*Seven Nominees for Bishop (five-minute speeches) (If necessary)
	Or Table Conversation
	*Third Ballot for the Office of Bishop of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod (If necessary)
4:30 PM	Assembly in recess
4:45-5:45 PM	<b>Workshops (Immanuel Lutheran Church)</b>
6:00 PM – 7:00 PM	<b>DINNER AVAILABLE – CONF ABCD</b>
7:15-9:45 PM	<b>ASSEMBLY MEETING 2 (Part 3) - CONF ABCD</b>
	*Report of Elections Committee on the Third Ballot for Bishop (If necessary)
	Presentation: “United in Christ” <i>Bishop Suzanne Darcy Dillahunt, Southern Ohio Synod</i>
	Table Conversation
	<b>RECOGNITIONS – CONF ABCD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition of Anniversaries</li> <li>• Recognition of Mission Support Partners</li> <li>• Recognition of Conference Deans</li> </ul>
	Greeting: Youth and Young Adult Ministry Table
9:45 PM	<b>SERVICE OF PRAYERS FOR THE CLOSE OF THE DAY</b> <i>Pastor Rachel Laughlin</i>
<b>TUESDAY, MAY 20 – COMFORT INN &amp; SUITES CONFERENCE CENTER</b>	

7:00 AM	<b>ASSEMBLY DESK OPENS (FOYER)</b>
7:15-8:15 AM	<b>BREAKFAST - Hotel Dining areas (for those staying in hotel)</b>
8:00 AM	<b>ASSEMBLY DESK CLOSSES (FOYER)</b>
8:15 AM-12:15 PM	<b>ASSEMBLY MEETING 3 - CONF ABCD</b>
	*Q&A for Top Three Nominees for Bishop who will be on Fourth Ballot for Election of Bishop (If necessary)
	Or Table Conversation
	*Fourth Ballot for the Office of Bishop of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod (If necessary)
	Presentation: "Gifted by the Spirit" <i>Bishop Don Kreiss, Southeast Michigan Synod</i>
	*Adoption of the 2026-27 Budget *Adoption of the 2026 Synod Compensation Guidelines
	Greeting: Samaritas
	*Report of Elections Committee on the Fourth Ballot for Bishop (If necessary) *Fifth Ballot for the Office of Bishop of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod (If necessary)
	*Report of the Reference and Resolution Committee
	*Report of the Bishop
	*Report of Elections Committee on the Fifth Ballot for Bishop (If necessary)
	Unfinished Business
12:15 PM	Assembly in Recess
12:30 PM	<b>CLOSING EUCHARIST</b> <i>Bishop Tim Graham, Pastor Kjersten Sullivan</i>

**MEMORIAL A**  
**IN SUPPORT OF ADDRESSING THE LEGACY**  
**OF AMERICAN INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES**

WHEREAS from 1819 to 1969, countless American Indian Day Schools and over 520 American Indian Boarding Schools operated in the United States; and

WHEREAS religious organizations and denominations (including the predecessor bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) operated over half of these schools; and

WHEREAS the ELCA has committed to work against injustice and toward healing as stated in “The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” (2016) and the “Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People” (2021), therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the 2025 North/West Lower Michigan Synod Assembly memorialize the 2025 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to continue to address the legacies of our church’s role in Indian Boarding Schools through the following actions:

1. Actively invite and equip all congregations, synods, and affiliate ministries to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near September 30;
2. Broaden and deepen awareness at congregation, synod, and churchwide levels of Christian and Lutheran roles in Indian boarding schools, through the creation of adult, children, and youth educational programs and materials, and through consistent publishing of articles in the church’s publications;
3. Provide on-going recognition of and support for the growing network of lay people and clergy volunteering their time in the work of the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative on Indian boarding schools to locate all known records related to the ELCA’s predecessor bodies’ involvement with Indian boarding and day schools and to educate others about Indian boarding schools;
4. Encourage ELCA affiliate ministries to commit to learning the truth of their involvement with Indian boarding schools in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative; and to responsibly create paths to healing and repair;
5. Organize and care for all information in the ELCA’s possession that was recorded about Indian boarding and day schools and the students who attended them; carry out this work in partnership with the ELCA Truth-Seeking & Truth-Telling Initiative and the ELCA Archives; recognize that this information belongs to and is a source of healing for student survivors, their descendants, communities, and Tribal Nations; and ensure that the records and research are made accessible to Indian boarding school survivors and their families in a responsible manner; and
6. Identify sources of funding to sufficiently support research and organization efforts, and to sufficiently support the digitization and labeling of all ELCA Indian boarding school archival records.

Submitted by:

Deanna Reid, Immanuel/Suttons Bay, Michigan

Presented by,

Peggy Burns, Bethlehem/Traverse City, Michigan

Supported by:

Chris Altemann, Immanuel/Suttons Bay, Michigan

Jackie Anderson, Immanuel/Suttons Bay, Michigan

Connie Barclay, Immanuel/Suttons Bay, Michigan

Jud Barclay, Immanuel/Suttons Bay, Michigan

Dorothy Bergman, Immanuel/Suttons Bay, Michigan

Tony Bero, Immanuel/Suttons Bay, Michigan

Kristin Bradley, Trinity/Grand Rapids, Michigan

Peggy Burns, Bethlehem/Traverse City, Michigan

Diane Cunningham, Bethlehem/Traverse City, Michigan

Doug Cunningham, Bethlehem/Traverse City, Michigan

Kim Domke, Grace/Hastings, Michigan

Gail Goldsmith, Bethlehem/Traverse City, Michigan

Doreen Hill, Immanuel/Suttons Bay, Michigan

Mike Hill, Immanuel/Suttons Bay, Michigan

Laura Laubhan, Immanuel/Suttons Bay, Michigan

Jeanette Markwart, Grace/Hastings, Michigan

Rev. Sherry McGuffin, Cross of Christ/Petoskey, Michigan

Emily Miezio, Immanuel/Suttons Bay, Michigan

Mark Miezio, Immanuel/Suttons Bay, Michigan

Cindy Olson, Grace/Hastings, Michigan

Rev. Ruth Overdier (retired), Bethlehem/Traverse City, Michigan

Deanna Reid, Immanuel/Suttons Bay, Michigan

Ethan Reid, Immanuel/Suttons Bay, Michigan

Pam Reid, Bethlehem/Traverse City, Michigan

Chas Shaner, Trinity/Grand Rapids, Michigan

Marcia Shaner, Trinity/Grand Rapids, Michigan

Chimera Smith, Immanuel/Suttons Bay, Michigan

Bethany Uhl, Bethlehem/Traverse City, Michigan

Juanita Weber, Advent/Lake Ann, Michigan

Michelle Wolner, Trinity/Grand Rapids, Michigan

Rick Wolner, Trinity/Grand Rapids, Michigan

## **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

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## **2025 Synod Assembly Offering**

Synod Council has designated two areas of support for the 2025 Synod Assembly Offering, with 50% of the offerings designated toward each area.

**ELCA World Hunger:** For 50 years, we have joined together as Lutherans to address the root causes of hunger and poverty around the world through ELCA World Hunger. Part of our church's long tradition of meeting human needs, ELCA World Hunger testifies to our hope for and commitment to God's promise of a time when we will hunger and thirst no more.

**NWLM Synod Disaster Relief Fund:** This fund was established in 2016 to provide disaster relief to communities within our synod. 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.

**We request you bring your offerings in the form of a check from your congregation or give online at [mittensynod.org/donate](https://mittensynod.org/donate).**

## **2025 Synod Assembly Committees**

### **Pre-Assembly Manager**

Ms. Chelsey Satterlee (Director of Communications)

### **On-Site Assembly Manager**

Pastor Christina Bright, Lead (Assistant to the Bishop)

Pastor Jennifer Hartweg-Brown, Assistant (Holy Cross, Decatur, IL)

### **Assembly Book Editor**

Ms. Rebecca Bossenbroek, Director of Finance

### **Bishop Election Committee**

Ms. Denise Palmer, Co-Chair (New Life, Alcona County)

Pastor Dan Stoneback, Co-Chair (Messiah, Bay City)

Pastor Haley Vay Beaman (Feast of Victory, Acme)

Pastor Neil Brady (Peace, Charlotte)

Mr. Brian Dalke (Advent, Lake Ann)

Mr. Dan Eversole (Immanuel, Mt. Pleasant)

Ms. Barbara Marquette (St. Peter, Battle Creek)

Ms. Rachael Nelson (Immanuel, Mt. Pleasant)

Pastor Ed Ruble (St. Peter, Battle Creek)

Ms. Dawn Smith (Trinity, Midland)

### **Code of Conduct Task Force**

Pastor Rosanne Anderson, Chair (Advent, Lake Ann and Trinity, Manton)

Others as assigned

### **Credentials Committee**

Pastor Kjersten Sullivan, Chair (Assistant to the Bishop and Interim Director for Evangelical Mission)

Others as assigned

### **General Elections Committee**

Mr. Dave Marquette, Chair (St. Peter, Battle Creek)

Ms. Lorelle Dalke (Advent, Lake Ann)

Ms. Phyllis Klinger (Trinity, Hillsdale)

Mr. Noah Parker (University, East Lansing)

### **Musician**

Ms. Carol Meier (Eagle Lake, Willmar, MN)

### **Nominations Committee**

Ms. Sandy Schlesinger, Chair (Trinity, Midland)



Others as assigned

**Parliamentarian**

Mr. Bill Trevarthen (University, East Lansing)

**Resolutions Committee**

Pastor Jonathan Reid, Chair (Immanuel, Suttons Bay)

Ms. Christine Allen (Trinity, Kalamazoo)

Pastor Dennis Smith (St. John, Three River)

Ms. Linda Wicander (Immanuel, Mt. Pleasant)

**Reference and Resolutions Committee**

Pastor Jonathan Reid, Chair (Immanuel, Suttons Bay)

Others as assigned

**Worship Team**

Pastor Rachel Laughlin, Chair (Prince of Peace, Portage)

Others as assigned

## **Synod Assembly Scavenger Hunt**

Voting members and visitors will be able to participate in a digital scavenger hunt during Synod Assembly! Similar to one at the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering, voting members and visitors will have a new way to connect with each other and engage with aspects of the Synod Assembly.

The scavenger hunt will be available through Eventzee, a free mobile application. Eventzee is available on App Store (iPhone) and Google Play (Android). We encourage voting members and visitors to download the application and set up an account prior to Synod Assembly.

We recommend playing on a team! This could be a congregation team or other group. Only one account is needed for a team so if you're playing on a team with other members of your congregation, just have one person create an account.

Scavenger Hunt tasks will go live on May 16!



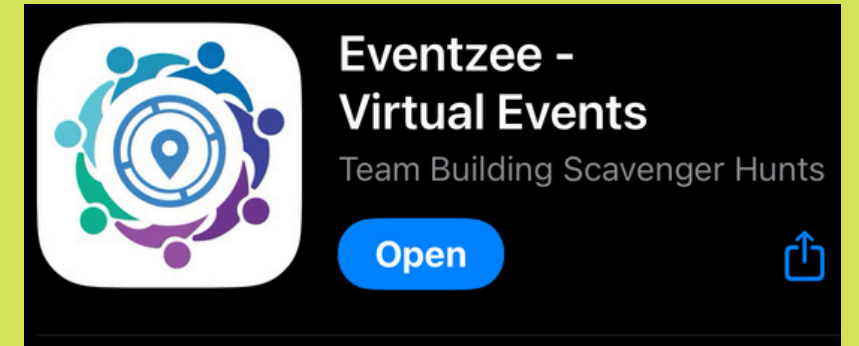
# 2025 SYNOD ASSEMBLY SCAVENGER HUNT

Featuring Eventzee

## HOW TO PLAY

# 1

### DOWNLOAD THE EVENTZEE APP



On your smartphone, go to the App Store (iOS) or Google Play store (Android) and search for "Eventzee." Download the free App.

# 2

### CREATE AN ACCOUNT

Fill in the fields to create an Eventzee account.

We recommend playing on a team! Only one account is needed for a team so if you're playing on a team with other members of your congregation, just have one person create an account.

Submit the information by clicking "I Agree and Sign Up."

# 3

### ENTER THE JOIN CODE

After creating an account, you'll be prompted to enter the event's join code.

The join code is **MITTENSYNOD**

Once you enter the join code, click "Use Code" to join the event.

# 4

### COMPLETE THE CHALLENGES

Review the list of challenges and complete them to earn points!

Challenges may involve taking photos or videos, scanning QR codes, entering text, or taking quizzes.

The scavenger hunt challenges will go live on May 16! The top 3 teams will receive prizes!



## 2025 SYNOD ASSEMBLY DISPLAY TABLES

Learn more about ELCA and  
Synod Ministries!

Display Tables featuring  
members of various ELCA and  
Synod Ministries and Ministry  
Partners will be available at the  
Comfort Inn & Suites in Mt.  
Pleasant.

Display Tables will be located  
in the conference rooms  
adjacent to the main meeting  
room.

Display Tables will be available  
from the evening of May 18  
through the morning of May 20



## ELCA REGION 6 ARCHIVES

The Region 6 Archives preserves the documents and artifacts relevant to Lutheran history in the states of Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky, and Indiana. We also advocate for establishing and maintaining congregational archives.

Explore congregational resources for maintaining a congregational archives and an array of congregational histories from the North/West Lower Michigan Synod.

## SYNOD CAMPUS MINISTRIES

Our synod has active campus ministries in four locations, which serve seven college campuses: One Community (MSU), Immanuel On Campus (CMU), Matrix (WMU and Kalamazoo College), and United Campus Christian Fellowship (GVSU, GRCC, and Kendall College of Art and Design).

Connect with members of these campus ministries and learn how our campus ministries share the story of Jesus and provide a safe, welcoming, and loving place for students.

## ELCA MISSION INVESTMENT FUND

The Mission Investment Fund is a financial ministry of the Church, and we exist to provide loans to ELCA congregations and ministries for various building projects. Our loans are used to purchase property, construct new buildings, expand existing ones, and make renovations and capital improvements.

Our loans expand the capacity for ministry. They expand and update worship spaces and build new sanctuaries; they create space for youth groups; they expand educational buildings; and they provide new kitchens for preparing community meals. These are special places, and together, we are enhancing the capacity for ministry in these places - inviting more people to worship, offering more educational opportunities, and sharing meals with a larger community. Without these loans, we would not simply have fewer church buildings, but we would have fewer of the life-changing ministries that those buildings make possible - ministries that share God's love with the world.

## PORTICO BENEFIT SERVICES

Living well is a personal journey that presents each of us with unique opportunities to steward all dimensions of our lives. In baptism we are reminded that every aspect of our being belongs to God. When we pay attention to all aspects of our humanity - our bodies, our relationships, our money, our minds, our feelings, our work, our faith - we experience a "life worthy of our calling" in Christ and are able to share God's love with others.

As a ministry of the ELCA, Portico Benefits exists for the well-being of our rostered ministers and church professionals. Portico provides retirement, health, life, disability, and wellness benefits to enhance the total well-being of those who serve in the ELCA. People need different types of health care at different times in their lives.

## YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

Our synod's Youth and Young Adult Ministry Table seeks to enhance youth and young adult ministry across our synod. Connect with members of the Table and gather resources to use in your contexts to connect with youth and each other.

## TRINITY LUTHERAN SEMINARY

Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University is a seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America located in Columbus, OH. We are a community committed to living our Christian vocation and baptismal call by letting the light of Christ shine in and through us in all we do. Our mission is to form leaders for Christ's Church at work in the world.

Trinity offers Master of Divinity and Master of Theological Studies Degrees. Our students explore faith, grow in knowledge, and participate in practical ministry training throughout their time at Trinity. This is done through Trinity's multi-faceted contextual education experience, which includes leadership engagement with congregations and other communities of faith each semester of study.



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If you have additional  
questions, please email  
[assembly@mittensynod.org](mailto:assembly@mittensynod.org).

### RECONCILING IN CHRIST

Since 1974, ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation has advocated for the full welcome, inclusion, and equity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromantic (LGBTQIA+) Lutherans in all aspects of the life of their Church, congregations, and community.

Our vision: To keep expanding the welcome, liberating those who are forced to live in the margins. To keep dismantling barriers and building bridges. To keep working until all of God's beloved have equity. We believe that God values and embraces each person as a beloved child, that the Spirit gives a diversity of gifts for the common good, and that Jesus Christ calls us to work for justice. Visit our table to learn more about becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation and how you can get involved.

### WORLD HUNGER TEAM

Explore the global and domestic work of ELCA World Hunger! ELCA World Hunger is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year: 50 years of fighting hunger in the U.S. and around the world with relief, sustainable development, and advocacy. Jesus calls us to care for our neighbor and to feed the hungry. ELCA World Hunger is the global hunger ministry of our church, doing remarkable and life changing work around the world, and living out Jesus mandate to feed the hungry.

### ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP TASK FORCE

Experience God's love for God's wondrous creation and Jesus's call to God's people to be good and faithful stewards of what God has provided. Learn more about churches, organizations, and others helping to steward God's planet in a way that is faithful to the gospel.

### PUBLICLY ENGAGED CHURCH

Learn about our synod's Publicly Engaged Church Table, which includes Disability Ministries, World Hunger, Creation Care, Open Hands, Open Church, and more.

### SAMARITAS

Samaritas embraces Jesus's command to serve "the least of these brothers and sisters" (Matthew 25:40) and continues its mission of serving people as an expression of the love of Christ.

Last year, Samaritas offered help and hope to more than 38,000 Michiganders in need through four areas of service: Helping Children and Families Thrive, Welcoming and Resettling Refugees, Creating safe and welcoming Affordable Living Communities for low-income residents, and offering a path forward for those in need of Behavioral Health and Substance Misuse Treatment.

### LIVING WATER MINISTRIES

Located on the shores of Stony Lake in New Era, MI, Living Water Ministries is a safe place for all of God's children to experience intentional community centered in Christ where they are formed in their faith, developed as leaders, and equipped as servants of the gospel.

Learn about summer programs for students completing grades 1 through 12 and specialty programs including weeks for children in foster care, adults with developmental disabilities, and high school students aspiring to be anti-racist leaders.

### CAROL MEIER MUSIC

Carol Meier, our Synod Assembly musician, is a composer, singer, pianist, and choral conductor. She is passionate about writing music that is well-crafted, accessible, theologically sound, and expressive. Learn more about her compositions.

**BE SURE TO STOP BY THE DISPLAY TABLES FOR  
INFORMATION, GIVEAWAYS, AND MORE SCAVENGER  
HUNT CLUES!**



## 2025 SYNOD ASSEMBLY WORKSHOP OPTIONS

The 2025 Synod Assembly Workshops are tentatively scheduled for the afternoon of May 19, 2025. Workshops will be one hour in length.

Participants at the 2025 Synod Assembly will have the opportunity to sign up for one workshop on the Synod Assembly registration form.

All workshops will be held at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Mt. Pleasant.

If you have additional questions, please email [assembly@mittensynod.org](mailto:assembly@mittensynod.org).



## CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF ELCA WORLD HUNGER

Led by our synod's World Hunger Team, this workshop will celebrate 50 years of the work of ELCA World Hunger. Participants will learn about ELCA World Hunger, what it has accomplished, and what it is doing now. Participants will also have the opportunity to share about local hunger ministries and discuss ways to support ELCA World Hunger. Fighting hunger through sustainable development, advocacy, and education is an important dimension of "living a life worthy of our calling" as Jesus calls us to share our bread with the hungry saying, "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat" (Matthew 25:35).

## EXPLORING YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

In this workshop, our synod's Youth and Young Adult Ministry Table invites participants to learn about the Youth and Young Adult Ministry Table and how congregations across the synod can engage with this ministry and access their resources. Participants will also have the opportunity to share their ideas about what synod youth and young adult ministry can be and how we can move toward that future together.

## FOSTERING A CARE FOR CREATION

Hosted by our synod's Environmental Stewardship Task Force, this workshop will discuss how caring for creation is an important part of our calling as Christians and share how participants can take relatively easy and financially affordable steps toward environmental stewardship. Participants will also learn how some congregations in our synod are using their sustainable resources to serve their communities by feeding and sheltering people during power outages and other emergency situations.

## GLOBAL OUTREACH IN PALESTINE

In this workshop, the Global Outreach Ministry of First Lutheran Church in Muskegon will share how they support Dar Al-Kalima, one of the Lutheran Schools in Bethlehem, Palestine. Participants will have the opportunity to learn about the school, our Christian siblings in Palestine, and how the First Lutheran Outreach Ministry has been able to educate, bring awareness, and foster dialogue about the plight of the Palestinian people. Participants will also learn what churches can do to make a difference in a hurting world as it is our call as followers of Christ to "do justice, love mercy and walk kindly with our God" (Micah 6:8).

## ENGAGING WITH SAMARITAS

In this open forum, participants will have the opportunity to learn more about the work of Samaritas and their mission of serving people as an expression of the love of Christ. Participants will be able to connect with representatives from Samaritas, ask questions about their work in light of the changing political landscape, and gather resources to support this ministry.

Attendance at a workshop is optional. 2025 Synod Assembly participants are also welcome to use the workshop time to rest, visit the display tables, or gather for conversation on their own. As the hotel will be preparing for dinner, the main meeting room at the Comfort Inn & Suites will not be available.