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*“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*

April 2025

Dear friends in Christ,

Thank you for your dedication and faithfulness, as together we continue to share God's love throughout the world.

During the past year and a half, I had the privilege to gather with many of you at our God's Love Made Real regional conversations. Connecting with you during these events was extremely inspiring as we heard about the many ways God's love is being made real in communities across this church.

Among the stories that were shared, we heard about a congregation's "bold" decision to reconstruct a food pantry to help increase the capacity to serve more people, a Christmas in July celebration for a single mom and her five children experiencing homelessness, a Queer youth poetry open mic event described by one pastor as a tangible experience of God's Love Made Real, a partially gutted parsonage that was renovated to provide long-term housing for survivors of human trafficking, and an ecumenical ministry group that developed a community center that feeds people with meals and spiritual connections.

Our vision of a world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation is being made manifest in these ministries, but these are only a few examples of what's happening throughout our church. I know this is work your congregations do every day, and I thank you for helping people know the way of Jesus to discover community, justice and love.

The world around us is changing, and our church will also experience change with the election of a new presiding bishop and a new secretary at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly this summer. Many of you will be electing a new synod bishop and other leaders.

Amid these changes, our call remains the same: to love and serve others as Jesus taught. Our church will continue our work to proclaim the gospel and to serve all of God's people.

It has been a privilege to serve as your presiding bishop. May God continue to hold us and guide us into the future.

In Christ,



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

Report of the Bishop

North/West Lower Michigan Synod ELCA

2025 Synod Assembly
May 18-20, 2025



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

INTRODUCTION

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).

When I proposed “Living a Life Worthy of our Calling” as the assembly theme to Synod Council, I had in mind that the calling of a bishop—or renewing the call of a bishop—affords the synod the opportunity to renew our *conviction* that none other than God through Christ Jesus calls us. God calls us to a specific activity or occupation. Even more, God calls us to a life lived entirely in God’s grace. As a synod calls—or renews the call of—a bishop, we also renew our *commitment* to live a life worthy of this calling. Of course, as Lutheran Christians, we know that our call, conviction, and commitment all come as God’s gift and are grounded in God’s grace.

When I proposed “Living a Life Worthy of our Calling” as the assembly theme to Synod Council, I could not have imagined how important and pressing it would be for us—individual Christians, congregations, synod, and church—to consider in concrete, everyday terms what it means to live a life worthy of our calling in response to a societal and political reality that, at this writing, changes daily and, from my perspective, is consistently at odds with the Jesus I know and have proclaimed for almost 40 years. What does it mean to live a life worthy of our calling?

This report describes the efforts of people who strive to live lives worthy of their calling—their baptismal calling, yes. In some instances, their calling as rostered ministers. Certainly, their calling to lead and serve this synod. I am, of course, referring to our staff. They are hard-working, faithful servants of Jesus Christ. I find them inspiring. Much of what they do goes unnoticed until it goes missing. So I thank my partners in our efforts to live a synod life worthy of our calling: Pastor Christina Bright (Assistant to the Bishop and Director of Candidacy), Pastor David Sprang (Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission), Pastor Kjersten Sullivan (Assistant to the Bishop and Interim Director for Evangelical Mission), Ms. Rebecca Bossenbroek (Director of Finance), Ms. Lynn Kriser (Synod Attorney), Ms. Chelsey Satterlee

(Director of Communications), Ms. Ann Stavros (Office Manager), and Ms. Cathy Satterlee (Bishop's Driver). I genuinely thank these leaders for both the calling we share and their collaboration in the writing of this report. I am grateful that Ms. Chelsey Satterlee put the finishing touches on the report and Ms. Rebecca Bossenbroek included it in the "Assembly Book."

As our church anticipates with gratitude the conclusion of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton's service, I regularly recall her mantra: "We are a church. We are a Lutheran church. We are church together. We are church for the sake of the world." This is certainly one way to describe communally living a life worthy of our calling. So, as our Presiding Bishop reminds us, as an expression of the church, "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 Ms. Karen Bird, our Synod Secretary Pastor Dennis Smith, Synod Council, the Conference Deans, and all who are in any way working to make this assembly happen.

ASSEMBLY

THEME: Under the theme "Living a Life Worthy of Our Calling," the 2025 Synod Assembly will consider three aspects of God's gracious gift of life lived entirely in God's grace through three addresses: (1) called by God, (2) united in Christ, and (3) given to one another by the Spirit. As the assembly agenda permits, we will hold table conversation based on these presentations. I am grateful to Bishop Laura Barbins, Bishop Suzanne Darcy Dillahunt, and Bishop Don Kreiss for serving as our presenters.

SPECIAL GUESTS: We are privileged to welcome a number of special guests to this year's assembly. Our churchwide representative is Deacon Mary Ann Schwabe. Deacon Schwabe is the Executive for Synod Relations and the Natural Systems Coordinator for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Deacon Schwabe will chair the bishop election and give the churchwide report.

We will be blessed by the presence of the bishops of Region 6. Bishop Laura Barbins (Northeast Ohio Synod), Bishop Daniel Beaudoin (Northwest Ohio Synod), Bishop Suzanne Darcy Dillahunt (Southern Ohio Synod), Bishop Tim Graham (Indiana-Kentucky Synod), and Bishop Don Kreiss (Southeast Michigan Synod). Bishops Barbins, Dillahunt, and Kreiss will offer keynote addresses. Bishops Beaudoin and Graham will preach. It is the practice of the Bishops of Region 6 to attend one another's assemblies when there is a bishop election so I will be joining the Region 6 bishops at the Southern Ohio Synod Assembly in June.

Ms. Carol Meier, Composer and liturgical musician, will serve as our assembly musician. Ms. Meier loves to make music with people of all ages, denominations, and musical abilities and is passionate about writing music for the church that is both well-crafted and accessible, theologically sound, and authentically expressive. Ms. Meier believes the gift of music is a powerful tool for the important work of healing divisions and promoting unity in our world.

WORSHIP: Our friends at churchwide who oversee bishop elections determined sitting bishops are not to preach at assemblies with bishop elections when they are available to serve another term because to do so might give them an unfair advantage over other candidates. So I will not preach. It's important to me that you know that I want to preach, but I have been benched. So I am especially grateful that Bishop Daniel Baudoin will preach at Opening Eucharist with Pastor Kjersten Sullivan presiding. Bishop Tim Graham will preach at Closing Eucharist with Pastor Christina Bright presiding. I will lead morning prayer and Pastor Rachel Laughlin will lead evening prayer, both on Monday. I am grateful to all our worship leaders and to Pastor Rachel Laughlin and her team for coordinating worship at our assembly.

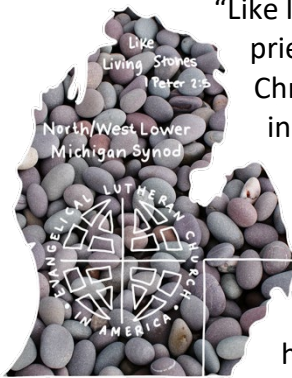
“VISION”

From my perspective, “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”—the “vision” or “overriding purpose” we’ve named for almost 12 years—remains especially poignant and urgent these days. This “vision” is grounded in the Bible verse that has served as the north star of my ministry as pastor, professor, and bishop: “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).

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.

You’ll notice “vision” is in quotes. Since long before I was a bishop, one of my personal missions has been to reduce the use of ableist language in the church as we undertake to reduce language of race and gender. “Overriding purpose” is clunky and has yet to catch on. Until it does, I smile when someone notes with just a hint of criticism that my use of the word “vision” is ableist language. I genuinely appreciate the sensitivity. I also experience a splendid sense of irony when I hear that, under my leadership, our synod lacks “vision.” They say that over time, a congregation begins to reflect the character of its pastor. I pray that I have not made our synod “blind.” Yes, you can chuckle!

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/>.

As I say in every written report to Synod Council and the Synod Assembly, “Living Stones” provides a framework for our strategic initiatives for the three-year period (2023-2025). I find this framework helpful in directing and communicating synod mission and the work of the staff.” 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, Living Stone initiatives, and other synod ministries 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>.



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 our 2023 Synod Assembly, we introduced *You Are Witnesses of These Things: Sharing the Story of Jesus*, a resource to assist Christians in feeling comfortable and competent sharing the story of Jesus for no other reason than it is such good news. Many of us discovered that sharing the story of Jesus expecting nothing in return can be fun!

Under Pastor Sprang’s leadership, our synod received the first ELCA Evangelism Grant to hold retreats using this resource. Under this grant, Pastor Sprang, Pastor Bright, and I led two in-person retreats in our synod, one with adults and the other with confirmation students. As I write this, a third retreat is being planned for May 2025.

We welcome invitations to meet with groups interested in learning to share the story of Jesus 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 we would be delighted to come and lead in your congregation or conference.

You can obtain the book primarily from Amazon (<https://bit.ly/3DXlk2e>). However, Pastor Sullivan 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.



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 (UCCF). 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 Bright, Pastor Sprang, and I were privileged to visit United Campus Christian Fellowship in November when the synod provided dinner. Pastor Kate Van Valkenburg serves full-time as servant leader. 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. Learn more at <https://www.uccfmi.org>

After a time of discernment, and in consultation with Pastor Sprang, Sudanese Christ Lutheran Community, formerly a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community, determined that its best way forward is as part of Christ Lutheran Church in Wyoming. Synod Council therefore closed Sudanese Christ Lutheran Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community and commended them to the mission and ministry of Christ Lutheran Church in Wyoming, Michigan. We continue to provide financial support to Christ Sudanese as is appropriate.



STRATEGIC CONGREGATIONS: As defined by the ELCA, “strategic congregations” cannot become self-sufficient and receive financial support because the congregation ministers 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 one Strategic Congregation: Trinity/Battle Creek.

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. Trinity/Battle Creek is currently discerning the most faithful way to continue this essential work. We thank the people of Trinity/Battle Creek for ministering on our behalf. We also thank the congregations and members of our synod for supporting Trinity/Battle Creek.



WELCOME

"Our synod has a renewed commitment to discuss ways to welcome all God's people." I increasingly 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 are we 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?" Discussing these questions is even more important in our changing societal and political context.


STRONGHOLD GRANTS: The psalmist declares, "The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you" (Psalm 9:9-10). To assist congregations in providing a stronghold, I, in consultation with Pastor David Sprang, established "Stronghold Grants" for congregations reaching out to the immigrant, refugee, and LGBTQIA+ communities to share the love of Jesus, provide a safe space for prayer, fellowship, and conversation, and to offer resources and assistance to help members of these communities navigate the situations in which they find themselves. For those who have asked how to contribute to this fund, Synod Council approved use of an online donation option for the NWLM Synod Stronghold Grant Fund on the synod website's "Donate" page. Learn more about Stronghold Grants at <https://www.mittensynod.org/mission/stronghold-grants/>


ICE ENTERING CHURCHES: We provided a resource document for congregations in response to the executive order authorizing ICE to enter church buildings. It is available on the synod's website: <https://bit.ly/4hc2yGx>.



MINISTRY WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TASK FORCE: Our Ministry with Persons with Disabilities Task Force held a learning/training day for rostered ministers and lay leaders in October at Peace Lutheran Church in Gaylord. The Task Force is planning to hold one more

learning day. Given the low attendance at the previous learning days, the Task Force will primarily focus on being available for consultation with congregations.

 RACIAL JUSTICE: I remain profoundly grateful to Pastor Rosanne Anderson for her passion and leadership, which led our synod to take some steps on the ongoing journey of working for racial justice. Under Pastor Anderson's leadership, 90 people participated in the "Introduction to Social Justice" course and a smaller group participated in the "White People Doing Their Work" course. 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. The Publicly Engaged Church Table feels that racial justice work belongs in their portfolio and not that of the synod staff. The synod staff therefore gratefully entrusts racial justice to the Publicly Engaged Church Table.

 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 have a renewed Youth and Young Adult Ministry Table and we anticipate holding more youth events in our synod, such as the peer ministry training held in February. Our Youth and Young Adult Ministry Table is hosting a display table and workshop at this assembly and we invite you to connect with them.

We encouraged and facilitated our congregations' participation in the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans, including MYLE, the tAble, and the Young Adult Gathering, by providing \$15,000 in scholarship assistance. Chelsey and I attended the Gathering in July. Our reflection is available in the August 2024 newsletter: <https://bit.ly/4cr2vng>. We thank Pastor Dan Schewe (Trinity/Grand Rapids) and his crew for facilitating the region day. The next youth gathering will be June 28 – July 2, 2027 in Minneapolis, MN.

CAMPUS MINISTRY: We thank Pastor Sprang for convening our campus ministers quarterly for continuing education, idea-sharing, and support until his retirement and we anticipate those quarterly gatherings resuming. Campus Ministry Grants have again been awarded for 2025. 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 has restructured campus ministry grants and intends to offer fewer, but larger, grants each year. Campus ministries now apply directly to churchwide. 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. I encourage congregations to reach out to a campus pastor and invite them to visit your congregation and perhaps preach.

RECONCILING IN CHRIST: Our "Open Hearts. Open Church" Task Force is available to consult with congregations considering becoming Reconciling in Christ. Reconciling in Christ is hosting a display table at this assembly and we invite you to engage with them.

RENEWING CONGREGATIONS



CALL PROCESS: Lutheran Christians believe the triune God works through the church to call and send deacons and pastors to congregations. The synod staff therefore considers matching the right pastor or deacon and congregation essential to congregations thriving, engaging their communities, and sharing the story of Jesus. We therefore make a priority of attracting candidates to our synod and actively attending to call processes. Often, this work does not become important to people in our synod until they are either a pastor seeking a new call or a member of a congregation seeking a pastor. Then this becomes the most important thing we do! 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.

We celebrated 8 installations since our last assembly. From 2023 to 2025, we celebrated 32 installations; we also negotiated many contracts for stated supply pastors for congregations unable to call a pastor. As I write this report, I count 10 congregations who would consider themselves in the call process: four are full-time and six are part-time. I understand that, if you are a congregation waiting for a pastor, it is hard to rejoice that other congregations are installing pastors. For a full-time pastor, the ELCA average is 12 to 18 months from submitting the MSP to installation. The main obstacles to making a match are politics, affordability, and location. A breakdown of Call Process statistics is available in the December 2024 newsletter: <https://bit.ly/4bePKNK>.

We include a report of congregations in transition (congregations actively in the call process) in the monthly Bishop's Newsletter for awareness and transparency. Congregations and call committees continue to request 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. 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 2026 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.

PASTORAL CARE OF CONGREGATIONS: For the third 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 related to leading or supporting ministry initiatives but they also do not want their congregations to close. These people seek 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 pray with rostered ministers 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. My disappointment and heartbreak comes when I find a way forward and congregations resist and refuse because they want what they want. Many want the ELCA, the synod, and other congregations to change so they won't have to.

Obviously, we do not hear from every congregational leader. Therefore, we thank congregations that submitted the new and improved parochial reports that congregations are required to complete annually. Submitting those reports has become more important because the ELCA Church Council rightly 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 look for trends in our synod that will assist us in identifying congregations where synod support and engagement might be helpful and congregations from whom we can all learn.




SUSTAINABILITY: Sustainability of struggling congregations is a growing focus of our synod staff's ministry and we expect the need will continue to increase. This year we worked with 12 congregations on issues of sustainability. These congregations reached out to us; I know of more that did not. 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 the congregation 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 think about sustainability in terms of quality versus quantity of life. Pastors in these settings often describe their ministry as "hospice work."

Congregations that find themselves at-risk desire to explore the possibility of the synod assuming their mortgage or absorbing their pastor's compensation package. Frequently encouraged by a retired pastor, congregations inquire about the possibility of returning to "mission congregation status," so that additional funding and support from the synod and possibly other sources becomes available. In the past, 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 under Synodically Authorized Worshiping Communities, the ELCA restructured how new worshipping communities are developed and "mission congregation status" no longer exists.

 PARTNERSHIP: I celebrate the 22 congregations in our synod that are currently, formally, or informally partnered with another congregation, whether ELCA or full communion partner, because forging and maintaining partnerships is challenging, often tedious work. After completing all the work to form a partnership, congregations often decline, just shy of the finish line, hoping to be the last congregation standing and believing that everyone will then come to them. Once established, it is unlikely that partnerships will continue indefinitely. We can identify some common culprits that derail partnerships: (1) conflicting worship times and the related Sunday morning fellowship and education hours, (2) rationalizations concerning the reasons the partner congregation should pay more so that we pay less, (3) concern the pastor is spending too much time with "them" and not enough time with "us," (4) the pastor who holds the partnership together accepts a new call or retires and the congregations do not agree on the next pastor, and (5) people who hold considerable power in the congregation experience their power as diminished in the partnership.

Partnerships can seem simple, straightforward, and obvious, especially to "armchair quarterbacks" and "backseat drivers." Indeed, if "the church is a business," partnerships would be as simple as consolidating two branch locations. My Roman Catholic colleagues, who can partner parishes, tell me it's never simple, straightforward, and obvious. In truth, partnering congregations is more like merging corporations. Partnerships require time, negotiation, and tending. The question is not what we get from a partner, but what we are willing to give up in order to have a partner. Often, a partner gives a congregation a season of stability and sustainability. We tell potential partners that if, in a six month period, they can worship

together, fellowship together, study together, and do an act of service together, they have a chance of becoming partners. Ideally, partner churches can name how their partnership will enhance the ministry of Jesus Christ, and not merely allow them to continue as they are for a while longer. Our ecumenical partners are really not interested in partnerships whose goal is stasis. Neither am I. These partnerships take too much effort for what turns out to be too little reward. So, we give any potential partnership a chance, but not an open ended chance. When congregations' initial response to partnership is to offer up a first round of objections, we know they are not ready to partner.

DISAFFILIATION: The New Testament records two incidents of “disaffiliation”—ending an association or connection with a person, group, or organization—that I can think of. First, in Acts 15:36-41, disagreement between Paul and Barnabas ends their association and they go their separate ways as missionaries. Second, while Paul is considered an apostle, there were instances of tension and disagreement between Paul and the other apostles, most notably with Peter, where Paul publicly criticized Peter for not fully embracing the inclusion of Gentiles in the Christian faith, as detailed in Galatians 2:1–10; this event, known as the "Incident at Antioch," is considered a key point of disaffiliation between Paul and some of the other apostles. Disaffiliation happens.


Since our last synod assembly, two congregations, formerly in our synod, voted to disaffiliate from the ELCA. Synod Council accepted both the disaffiliation vote of Messiah Lutheran Church/Roscommon, releasing the congregation from the ELCA and commending the congregation to the care of the North American Lutheran Church, and the disaffiliation vote of Hope Lutheran Church/Marlette, releasing the congregation from the ELCA.

Both congregations report the decision to disaffiliate has been a long time coming. Both congregations expressed disagreement with the ELCA's stand on certain social issues. I am grateful to Pastor David Sprang for meeting with Messiah/Roscommon and preaching on the Sunday when the congregation took their final vote to disaffiliate. I am grateful to Pastor Dan Stoneback for preaching at Hope/Marlette until it was no longer appropriate for him to do so. I am grateful to both congregations that their interactions with me were positive and amicable. I pray that the Lord of the Church will bless both congregations as they embark on their new journeys.

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).

Trinity Lutheran Church/Barton City completed its ministry on May 23, 2024. We commend this congregation to God's care as we thank the people of Trinity 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 the fourth and fifth courses in our Adult Theological Education Program. Pastor Amy Reumann, Senior Director for Witness and Society ELCA, taught a six-week course titled “Witnessing to Christ and Love for Neighbor in this Election Year” in September. Dr. Amy Lindemann Allen, who teaches New Testament at Christian Theological Seminary, taught a course titled “Jesus and the Little Children” in January.

We are thrilled that through the five courses we offered, we have connected with 2,100 people both in our synod and throughout the ELCA. As these courses can only be done virtually, we are inspired that participants’ strong desire to learn and connect with each other has made them so successful.

I describe the program as things I want to learn about from people I want to learn from. 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.

In academic year 2025-26, Dr. Kent Bureson, who teaches Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary, is scheduled to lead a course titled “Reassessing Death” in Fall 2025. Dr. Rachel Wren, who teaches Biblical Studies at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, is scheduled to 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. I am disappointed that we did not reach our goal of identifying 20 people to enter public ministry as a pastor or deacon. However, I rejoice that, during the period of 2023-2025, four pastors were ordained—Christina Schultz, Kyle Duff, Bridget Whately, and Megan Floyd. Three of these pastors come from our synod. I also rejoice that six people are exploring whether God through the church is calling them to public ministry.

Both Pastor Floyd and Pastor Whately come from Prince of Peace in Portage. Indeed, the work of identifying and raising up leaders for public ministry is primarily that of congregations and pastors. When you notice someone possesses the gifts for ministry, no matter how young they are, tell them. You may be planting the seed that takes root.

We all need to consider how attractive public ministry actually is. Several pastors have shared with me their reluctance to invite high school and college age students to consider a call to public ministry because congregations only seem interested in remaining the same and do not

share Jesus even as they decline. Many pastors feel that congregations have the attitude that the right leader will fill the pews and the collection plate and, when that doesn't happen, it is the leader's fault. I have spoken to people who I would like to consider public ministry who respond that, when they see the way the congregation treats their pastor, they think they'd be better off serving God in some other way.

On the other hand, at its heart, public ministry comes down to being sent by God to serve all people with the gospel of hope and salvation. We get to be with people in the most precious moments of their lives. So, if you are experiencing even the slightest curiosity about becoming a pastor or deacon, reach out to your pastor, to Pastor Chrisy Bright, or to me.

SEMINARY SCHOLARSHIPS: I have said for years that, in this synod, money will not prevent anyone considering a call to be a pastor or deacon from going to seminary. We have generous scholarship money available for seminarians. Scholarships and financial aid from the Fund for Leaders, ELCA seminaries, and congregations exceed the number of students. Seminary education is flexible, offering both residential and distance learning options. If they so desire, graduates return to their home synod. This year, Synod Council approved renewed policies and procedures related to management of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod Seminary Scholarship Fund. I thank Pastor Julie Bailey and Vice President Schlesinger and the members of the newly appointed Seminary Scholarship Committee for their service.



CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR ROSTERED MINISTERS: Of course, we encourage rostered ministers to participate in our Adult Theological Education Program and You Are Witnesses retreats and are glad when they do. We also offer learning opportunities geared especially for rostered ministers.

The Autumn Leadership Event for Rostered Ministers was held September 10, 2024 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Midland. It was a time for learning, worship, conversation, and connection. This year's focus was walking with those dealing with mental and psychological challenges including ways to support them and their families. I am grateful to Pastor David Sprang for organizing this day and to Trinity/Midland for hosting. I am also grateful to Pastor Julie Schneider-Thomas for arranging a social gathering the night before.

In October, Dr. Robert Krieg, Professor Emeritus of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, led a three-day retreat on preaching Jesus as Savior. We reflected on the church's understandings of God's self-disclosure in Christ, which unfolded over the centuries. The goal of the retreat was that participants go away with a set of "preaching tools" they can use to proclaim Jesus as Savior. In addition to presentation and conversation, the retreat included time for worship, fellowship, prayer, and reflection. Bishop Katherine A. Finegan of the Northern Great Lakes Synod served as chaplain. I am personally thrilled that we have offered two preaching retreats that over 40 rostered ministers have attended.

In February, we held a Zoom conversation with Dr. Charles Campbell, James T. and Alice Mead Cleland Professor Emeritus of Homiletics, Duke Divinity School. Dr. Campbell reflected on the powers opposed to God at work in the world through the lens of Lent. Campbell thinks Lent is

framed in Scripture as a time for resistance to the powers and that the extraordinary baptismal renunciations in the ELCA baptismal liturgy highlight that emphasis.



SEMINARY DEBT REDUCTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: Rostered ministers are relieved of some measure of educational indebtedness. This is the most successful of our original Living Stones initiatives. From 2023-2025, our synod awarded \$24,000 in debt reduction grants. This program will continue as long as there is a need and available funds. 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.

ROSTERED MINISTERS SABBATICAL SUPPORT FUND: This year, Synod Council approved the new Pastors (Rostered Ministers) Sabbatical Support Fund. Grants from this fund will assist pastors and congregations who apply for, but do not receive, a Lily Endowment Sabbatical Grant by providing funds for a Supply Pastor for up to 12 weeks, making sabbaticals possible for pastors and deacons serving smaller congregations. Contact Bishop Satterlee to learn more about or apply for this grant. Guidelines for sabbaticals are included in the annual compensation guidelines. Providing pastors and deacons sabbaticals benefits congregations because a sabbatical provides a season of rest and renewal that allows pastors and deacons to remain in their current call longer.

PASTORAL CARE OF ROSTERED MINISTERS: I regularly thank God that Pastor Dana Hendershot and Pastor Sarah Samuelson are back to work! Several pastors, both active and retired, continue to deal with significant health issues. Several more are dealing with health issues in their families. In some instances, I provide direct pastoral care. In other instances, I make certain that the rostered minister has the pastoral care they desire. I hold all of them in prayer, check in regularly (often by text), and am vigilant for ways the synod and I can provide assistance.

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.

We held Zoom gatherings after both the presidential election and inauguration so rostered ministers would have a safe place to reflect on our political and societal context. This is a challenging time because congregations are not of one perspective; pastors and deacons may be in a different place than their congregations. Pastors need to care for their people while processing their own response. We will continue to hold Zoom gatherings for as long as they are valuable.

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.

DISCIPLINE: I thank Pastor Rosanne Anderson and Pastor David Sprang for providing boundary training on Zoom in four one hour sessions in February. I also thank the 40 rostered ministers who participated in this training.

The ELCA is transitioning into a three-year rotation of boundary training that includes traditional boundary training, racial justice, and gender justice. We will need to begin to learn about and implement this renewed boundary training in the fall.

STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS

PREACHING THE WORD AND ADMINISTERING THE SACRAMENTS: Please see the attached visitation report. I find this year's report significant because it records all the congregations where Pastor Strang preached during his 11 years of service to our synod. This report is dear to me because it reminds me that, more than administrators, conflict resolvers, complaint receivers, and personnel officers, Pastor Bright, Pastor Sullivan, and I are, most important of all, ministers of Word and Sacrament. Thank you for inviting us to participate in your worship, especially when there is no other agenda that we need to address.

We are, of course, 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 continue to 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: Many report that our Celebration River Cruise was among the best events of the year. Celebrating our God of abundance, we thanked congregations leading and growing in their mission support of our synod, together with individuals committed to supporting synod ministries financially. In 2024, we made the river cruise available to the entire synod and celebrated congregations' and pastors' anniversaries. We are grateful that over 70 members of our synod participated in last year's cruise. We thank Ms. Karla Chamberlain (Grace/Lansing) and her family for making this event possible, and we extend our prayers and best wishes as they consider the future of the Michigan Princess.

EVENTS: Counting only the incomplete list in this report, this synod offered 17 events since our last assembly. 11 events were in-person and six were online. In-person events included the witnessing retreats, the preaching retreat, the autumn leadership event for rostered ministers, disability learning day, and two ordinations. Online events included adult theological education courses and gatherings for rostered ministers. I recall that our Environmental Stewardship Task Force and Honduras Team also offered online events that I have not counted because I did not mention them in this report. I thank all those who planned, supported, and attended all of these events!

DISASTER RESPONSE: I include disaster response under “strengthening connections” because this is the one mission on which the entire synod seems to agree. Thank you for your generous response to natural disasters. Inspired by the Flint Water Crisis, we established a Synod Disaster Relief Fund so we are ready to assist when natural disasters, such as the flood in the Bay Conference, occur in our synod. 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. Most recently, we sent a gift to the Southwest California Synod to help them respond to the LA wildfires. Thank you!

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 Blue Sky (@mittensynod.bsky.social), 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 Blue Sky profile (@craigalansatterlee.bsky.social) 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 office is not staffed daily, so please leave a message and someone will call you back.

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. Pastor Bright and I work from the office with unscheduled regularity or for scheduled appointments. Pastor Sullivan works primarily from Battle Creek.

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 routinely attend three Church Council meetings in a single evening.

SYNOD STAFF: At their best, synod staffs are teams, partnerships, ensembles, orchestras—or, perhaps, combos. Ideally, the members of a synod staff enjoy, trust, consult, count on, and are accountable to one another. They learn that they cannot do even their own job alone, and that, together, their efforts are synergistic. Over time, they grow in their gratitude for one another, especially in those moments when a phone call transforms the mundane into the perplexing and the routine into the unbelievable.

To help build such teams, staffs in most synods, including ours, are co-terminus with the bishop. The staff resigns when the bishop's ministry ends. A new bishop might retain some of the staff, but there is no expectation or guarantee. So, if you notice the staff is anxious beyond making certain the assembly goes well, this is likely the reason. I am anxious for them, despite their assurances that they will be fine. If my ministry as bishop ends, I will grieve the loss of working with them. So I want to make certain that both you and they know how grateful I am for them.

In November, Pastor David Sprang retired as Director for Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop after 11 years. We had a wonderful worship service and reception for David at Christ

the King in Gladwin. In my sermon, I talked about the calls that are uniquely ours and how, over time, they become more and more important. David is embracing his call as husband, brother, father, and grandfather. He is returning to his love of being a small church pastor. This year David was named firefighter of the year in Gladwin. I am keenly aware of David's absence, not in terms of things that aren't getting done, but because David isn't here. And I miss him.

I believe Ms. Rebecca Bossenbroek has served our synod for more than 20 years, currently part-time as our Director of Finance. I trust Rebecca's counsel, benefit from her perspective, appreciate her humor, borrow from her faith, and am inspired by her commitment to justice. Though I do not always (usually) understand when Rebecca speaks in the language of accounting and money, I know that the treasure entrusted to our synod is in good hands.

Pastor Christina Bright is almost 2 years into her call as Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Candidacy. Like all who venture into this work, Pastor Chrisy is learning how much there is to do and how little she knows about how to do it. This is the beginning of wisdom and effectiveness. I appreciate Pastor Chrisy's advocacy for small, rural churches and the pastors that serve them. I am grateful that we can be straight with one another. I enjoy tag teaming with Pastor Chrisy in congregations. She is smart, faithful, and funny. And I wouldn't mess with her. If you want to make Chrisy's day, greet her with "Go Blue!"

Lynn Kriser volunteers as our Synod Attorney. As Lynn not only does what I ask but takes on initiatives she knows we need, I smile at how hard I worked to get Lynn to agree to be our attorney. I am a better chair of the assembly because Lynn Kriser sits next to me. I am a better bishop when it comes to hard things because I have Lynn's counsel. Lynn is wise, thorough, and faithful. 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. Many in our synod appreciate Cathy most for her oatmeal butterscotch cookies, which she will not bring to this assembly so that she cannot be accused of attempting to bribe people to vote a certain way. A pastor in another synod once asked one of our pastors if she thought I'd consider being available to serve as their bishop. Our pastor responded that the other synod could have Craig, but we are not letting go of Cathy! Cathy will tell you all she does is get me to church, familiarize me with the chancel so I am less likely to trip, and get me dressed in those vestments I love. I will tell you that Cathy does much more for me and so much more for our synod, all behind the scenes.

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 has been able to speak truth to this power since she was three so she remains an invaluable advisor. Chelsey chairs our staff meetings assisted by her cat, Tonks. Both Chelsey and I would find it awkward for me to praise her in this report, since I am

her dad. Rebecca would have you know that “Chelsey is always gracious and professional in her work and is committed to a high standard of excellence. We value her expertise, partnership, leadership, wisdom, and candor.” Pastor Bright adds, “Chelsey provides wisdom and assistance far beyond her job description. She keeps us all on task with grace. She has a great sense of humor and an innate ability to provide a listening ear and ask clarifying questions to help get to solutions to whatever we might be dealing with. Chelsey is a gift to all of us in the synod.”

It is a blessed day in my life when Ms. Ann Stavros, who serves part-time as our Office Manager, and I happen to be in the office at the same time and I sit across her desk as I did in the old days. 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. An abiding question in our synod these days is, “Bishop, when does Ann sleep?” Ann will be especially excited to see you at assembly.

Pastor Kjersten Sullivan is two months into her call as Assistant to the Bishop and Interim Director for Evangelical Mission. I have known Pastor Kjersten since her seminary days and she is smart, quiet, quirky, and, in her own way, driven. She doesn’t give up. As bishop, I went to California, where she was serving, to persuade Pastor Kjersten to come to Michigan for Trinity/Battle Creek. She has since emerged as a leader in our synod and in the ELCA. I am excited to see how Kjersten will employ her skills as a mission developer, experience with the churchwide organization, and passion for the marginalized in her new role.

As for me, I remain profoundly honored and grateful for the privilege of serving as your bishop and serving alongside these people. Thank you. I am curious about what I will be doing a year from now. I could not have imagined that, a year after our last Bishop election, we would be in a global pandemic and I would be writing two books. And, as I said in my January newsletter article, I am hopeful that we have a positive, meaningful, holy assembly; that I do not tie myself up in knots over the results of a bishop election; and that neither my staff nor my family experience derision either on account of me or aimed squarely at them. Gratitude, curiosity, and hope – perhaps these are marks of living a life worthy of our calling.

CONCLUSION

Writing this report has been upbeat, positive, and joyous as I report and reflect upon the work of our synod and the ministry and service of the synod staff. I hope reading this report affects you the same way. I am blessed that I regularly experience Jesus through my work as your bishop. I look ahead with energy and excitement. I continue to believe the North/West Lower Michigan Synod is a place where God is acting in new ways to fulfill long-standing promises. I believe that people need the good news of God’s love in Jesus more now than they have in a long while. And we get to proclaim Christ and prayerfully participate in Jesus’s own work of reconciling the world to God’s very self by living a life worthy of our calling. Thanks be to God!

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

2025 Roster Change Report

Event	Name	Name	Date	Location
Deaths				
Rev.	Charles	Schultz	05/08/2024	Retired
Rev.	Daniel	Duetsch	09/16/2024	Retired
Rev.	George	Madsen	10/21/2024	Retired
Installations				
Rev.	David	Beese	06/02/2024	Bread of Life/Hudsonville
Rev.	Bryan	Schneider-Thomas	03/17/2024	Grace/Lansing
Rev.	Marcille	Miller	04/14/2024	St. Paul/Reed City
Rev.	Rosanne	Anderson	06/23/2024	Advent/Lake Ann
Rev.	Bridget	Whately	09/22/2024	Peace/Sparta
Rev.	Jonathan	Niketh	12/04/2024	Trinity/Grand Rapids
Rev.	Megan	Floyd	02/02/2025	Faith/Okemos
Rev.	James	Smith	03/25/2025	Saron/St. Joesph
On Leave from Call				
Rev.	Christin	Fawcett	02/23/2025	2 nd year renewal OLFC
Rev.	Danielle	Shealy	03/01/2025	OLFC

2025 ROSTER CHANGE REPORT (cont.)

Ordinations/Clergy				
Rev.	Bridget	Whately	08/24/2024	Prince of Peace/Portage
Rev.	Megan	Floyd	02/01/2025	Prince of Peace/Portage
Ordinations/Deacons				
Resignations or Removed from Roster				
Transfers In				
Rev.	Jonathan	Niketh	10/20/2024	New England Synod/MA
Rev.	Philip	Van Dam	02/25/2025	West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod
Rev.	Harry	Biles	03/03/2025	Delaware-Maryland Synod
Deacon	Sharon	Biles	03/03/2025	Delaware-Maryland Synod
Transfers Out				
Rev.	Michael	Conklin	06/04/2024	Northwestern Synod/Ohio
Rev.	Julie	Winklepleck	09/09/2024	Southeast Michigan Synod
Rev.	Barbara	Bender	03/06/2025	Northwest Washington Synod
Rev.	Timothy	Bender	03/06/2025	Northwest Washington Synod

2025 ROSTER CHANGE REPORT (cont.)

Retirements				
Rev.	Joan	Oleson	08/01/2024	Saron/St. Joseph
Rev.	David	Sprang	12/01/2024	North/West Lower MI Synod
Rev.	Sue	Hand	01/01/2025	OLFC
Rev.	Paul	Sutter	05/01/2025	Military Chaplain
Calls Accepted'				
Rev.	Kjersten	Sullivan	02/08/2025	North/West Lower MI Synod
Congregation Actions				
Trinity Lutheran Church/Barton City		Closed May 23, 2024		
Messiah Lutheran Church/Roscommon		Disaffiliated 9/7/2024		
Hope Lutheran Church/Marlette		Disaffiliated 9/7/2024		

**Synod Ministers of Word and Sacrament
 Congregational Visitation Summary – Preaching/Presiding
 July 2013 – March 31, 2025**

# Preach	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	26	28/ 29	
# Congs	2	2	5	7	10	13	14	5	11	2	5	6	13	2	3	4	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1/1

LOCATION	CONGREGATION	CAS	DES	CMB	KJ	A2B
BAY CONFERENCE						
Au Gres	St. Paul (16)	3	6			7
Bay City	Messiah (10)	3	5	2		
Bridgeport	St. Matthew (18)	5	7			6
East Tawas	Grace (8)	1	6			1
Freeland	Zion (14)	6	8			
Gladwin	Christ the King (26)	5	14			7
Marlette	Hope (14)	4	3			7
Midland	St. Timothy (14)	3	7			4
Midland	Trinity (10)	3	6			1
Mt. Pleasant	Immanuel (26)	4	21	1		
Rhodes	Hope (5)	1	3			1
Rose City	Prince of Peace (22)	2	13	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 (28)	16	3	6		3
Grand Ledge	Immanuel (8)	4	1	1		2
Hillsdale	Trinity (14)	4	3	1		6
Jackson	Immanuel (6)	5	1			
Jackson	St. James (8)	5	1			2
Lansing	Bethlehem (7)	5	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 (8)	4	2	1		1
GRAND RAPIDS CONFERENCE						
Big Rapids	Immanuel (15)	5	7			3
Comstock Park	Zion (7)	6	1			
Edmore	Our Savior's (8)	5	1	1		1
Gowen	Settlement (20)	13	1	4		2
Grand Rapids	Bethlehem (4)	2	1			1
Grand Rapids	Faith (5)	3	2			
Grand Rapids	St. Luke's (23)	14	4			5
Grand Rapids	Trinity (10)	8	1			1
Grand Rapids	UCCF (6)	2	3	1		

Greenville	St. Paul (15)	11	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 (8)	3	3	1		1
Kent City	Mamrelund (7)	3	2	1		1
Kentwood	Ascension/HC (5)	3	1			1
Rockford	Hope (6)	3	1			2
Sidney	Faith (8)	3	1			4
Sparta	Peace (8)	3	2	2		1
Woodland	Zion (10)	3	3	2		2
Wyoming	Christ (13)	4	4			5
Wyoming	Christ Sudanese (18)	4	14			
Wyoming	Gethsemane (5)	1	2			2
KALAMAZOO CONFERENCE						
Allegan	Immanuel (14)	7	1	2		4
Baroda	St. John (7)	3	1			3
Battle Creek	St. Peter (14)	10	1			3
Battle Creek	Trinity (29)	16	8	1		4
Constantine	Messiah (12)	6	2			4
Kalamazoo	Savior (14)	5	2			7
Kalamazoo	Trinity (11)	4	4			3
Niles	Holy Trinity (4)	2	1			1
Plainwell	Hope (14)	8	3			3
Portage	Lord of Life (9)	7	2			1
Portage	Prince of Peace (11)	4	2	2		3
South Haven	Peace (10)	7	1			2
St. Joseph	Saron (12)	7	2	1		2

Three Rivers	St. John/Trinity (12)	6		1		5
STONY LAKE CONFERENCE						
Fruitport	Edgewood (6)	2	3			1
Ludington	Bethany (7)	4	2			1
Ludington	Emanuel (6)	4	1			1
Ludington	Victory Trinity (10)	6	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 (17)	5	8	1		3
North Muskegon	First (3)	1	1			1
Whitehall	Lebanon (8)	4	3			1
SUNRISE CONFERENCE						
Alpena	Grace (8)	2	4	2		
Alpena	St. Paul (8)	5	1			2
Barton City	Trinity (5)	3	1	1		
Cheboygan	St. Thomas (11)	2	3	1		5
Gaylord	Peace (13)	7	3			3
Hagensville	St. John (10)	5	1			4
Herron	St. Matthew (4)	2	1			1
Millersburg	St. James (17)	6	3	2		6
Ocqueoc	Trinity (16)	6	2	2		6
Oscoda	Hope St. John (6)	2	1	2		1
Posen	Leer (4)	1	3			
Spruce	New Life (12)	5	4	1		2
Spruce	Spruce (4)	2	1			1

TRAVERSE CONFERENCE						
Acme	Feast of Victory (14)	5	4	3		2
Cadillac	Zion (10)	3	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 (22)	10	2	3		7
Lake City	St. John (15)	6	4			5
Le Roy	Zion (2)	1	1			
Manton	Trinity (16)	3	6	1		6
Northport	Bethany (14)	3	2			9
Petoskey	Cross Christ (12)	4	5			3
Reed City	St. Paul (14)	2	5	3		4
Roscommon	Messiah (7)	1	4			2
Suttons Bay	Immanuel (13)	8	1	1		3
Traverse City	Bethlehem (7)	4	1	1		1
Tustin	Augustana (18)	2	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 continue within my 14<sup>th</sup> 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 within the mission & ministry that takes place across our synod.

As per the constitution, my primary focus is to serve as chair of the Executive Committee and 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 on Synod Council:

- **Class of 2025 (with terms concluding on 8/31/2025):** The Rev. Neil Brady, Ms. Karla Chamberlain, the Rev. Sherry McGuffin, The Rev. Craig A. Satterlee (Bishop), The Rev. Dennis Smith (Secretary), Ms. Linda Wicander, and Ms. Holly Wohlfert
- **Class of 2026:** The Rev. Julie Bailey, Mr. David Marquette, Mr. Steven Pendziszewski, Ms. Sandra Walker, and the Rev. Kate Van Valkenburg
- **Class of 2027:** Mr. Noah Parker, the Rev. Jake Lehman, Ms. Sandy Schlesinger (Vice President), Mr. Bill Trevarthen, and Ms. Phyllis Klingler
- **Class of 2028:** Ms. Karen Bird (Treasurer)

It is an honor 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 2025** who complete their current terms of service on August 31, 2025 – their leadership and dedication to the work of the synod is truly appreciated!

| NWLM Synod Council Terms                           |                                            |                                                 |                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Through 8/31/25                                    | Through 8/31/26                            | Through 8/31/27                                 | Through 8/31/28                               |
| Synod Officers                                     |                                            |                                                 |                                               |
| <b>SATTERLEE</b> Bishop Craig (Second Term)        |                                            | <b>SCHLESINGER</b> Ms. Sandra, VP (Fourth Term) | <b>BIRD</b> Ms. Karen, Treasurer (First Term) |
| <b>SMITH</b> , Rev. Dennis, Secretary (First Term) |                                            |                                                 |                                               |
| <b>WICANDER</b> Ms. Linda (First Term)             |                                            |                                                 |                                               |
| Synod Council "At-Large" Members                   |                                            |                                                 |                                               |
| <b>BRADY</b> Rev. Neil (First Term)                | <b>LEHMAN</b> Rev. Jacob (First Term)      | <b>BAILEY</b> Rev. Julie (First Term)           |                                               |
| <b>CHAMBERLAIN</b> Ms. Karla (First Term)          | <b>KLINGLER</b> , Ms. Phyllis (First Term) | <b>MARQUETTE</b> Mr. David (First Term)         |                                               |
| <b>MCGUFFIN</b> Rev. Sherry (Unexpired Term)       | <b>PARKER</b> Mr. Noah (First Term)        | <b>PENDZISZEWSKI</b> Mr. Steven (First Term)    |                                               |
| <b>WOHLFERT</b> Ms. Holly (Second Term)            | <b>TREVARTHEN</b> Mr. Bill (Second Term)   | <b>WALKER</b> , Ms. Sandra (Second Term)        |                                               |
|                                                    |                                            | <b>VAN VALKENBURG</b> Rev. Kate (First Term)    |                                               |



Highlights of key activities managed by the Executive Committee and Synod Council since the last North/West Lower Michigan (NWLM) Synod Assembly include:

### **Synod Staff & Synod Council Actions**

- Wished the Rev. David Sprang well as he retired from his ELCA call as Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM) for the NWLM Synod in November 2024
- Called the Rev. Kjersten Sullivan as Assistant to the Bishop and Interim Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM) for the NWLM Synod in March 2025
- Expressed formal thanks for the time, wisdom, leadership, counsel, strategic input and overall dedication provided by out-going Synod Council members:
  - Class of 2024 (with terms that ended August 31, 2024): Mr. Dan Carter (Treasurer), Dr. Tim Lundgren and Mr. Rich Weingartner
  - Class of 2025 (with terms ending August 31, 2025): The Rev. Neil Brady, Ms. Karla Chamberlain, the Rev. Sherry McGuffin, The Rev. Craig A. Satterlee (Bishop), The Rev. Dennis Smith (Secretary), Ms. Linda Wicander, and Ms. Holly Wohlfert
- Welcomed and on-boarded new Synod Treasurer Ms. Karen Bird in September 2024

### **Financial Actions**

- Approved a new Sabbatical Support Fund for Pastors
- Approved updated policies and procedures for the NWLM Synod Seminary Scholarship Fund
- Finalized proposed 2026 Synod Compensation Guidelines for approval by the 2025 Synod Assembly
- Finalized a proposed 2026-27 Fiscal Year Budget (for the next fiscal year) aligned with the expectations of incoming mission support & planned mission & ministry expenses – for approval at the 2025 Synod Assembly
- Reviewed initial findings and conclusions from the 1Q 2025 audit of the NWLM Synod 2024-25 financial records conducted by CPA firm Maner Costerisan
- 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 use of the synod website’s “Donate” page to include an on-line donation option for the new NWLM Synod Stronghold Grant Fund
- Approved transfer of \$6,000 from the Honduras Education Endowment Fund to the Salud Para la Vida (aka Health for Life) temporarily-restricted fund as requested by the Honduras Team.
- Approved disbursement of \$5,200 from the Multicultural Ministry Fund to Samaritas to aid in resettlement of legally vetted refugees in Michigan. This support was formally requested by Samaritas in response to an Executive Order that suspended distribution of planned federal funding, adversely affecting Samaritas’ ability to provide planned services and support to people from other countries who are in the process of re-settling in Michigan communities.
- Approved transfer of \$36,418 from the Synod Staff Support Fund to the Unrestricted – Undesignated Fund (aka the General Operating Fund) to mitigate unplanned salary and benefit

expenses in the 2024-25 fiscal year related to changes in Assistant to the Bishop staffing in May 2023.

- Approved revisions to the 2025-26 (FYE 01/31/26) budget related to changes in DEM staffing in March 2025
- Approved multiple disbursements from the synod's Disaster Relief Fund: up to \$5000 as matching funds for donations in support of disaster relief following the Maui wildfires (Pacifica Synod); \$5,000 each to the Southern Ohio and IN-KY Synods in support of disaster relief following tornadoes; \$5000 to the Southwest California Synod in support of disaster relief following the Los Angeles wildfires; and up to \$5000 in support of disaster relief and recovery efforts in northern Michigan following the March 2025 winter storms.

### **Synod and Congregation Actions**

- Designated United Campus Christian Fellowship as a Synod Authorized Worshiping Community for 2025 with the Rev. Kate Van Valkenburg as their servant leader (annual requirement for ELCA grant eligibility)
- Affirmed Trinity Lutheran Church – Battle Creek as a Strategic Congregation for 2025 (annual requirement for ELCA grant eligibility)
- Approved closure of the Sudanese Christ Lutheran Synodically Authorized Worshiping Community in Wyoming, MI
- Accepted disaffiliation votes from Messiah – Roscommon and Hope – Marlette as they exited the ELCA
- Received updated constitutions for archival from multiple congregations throughout the year

### **Synod Assembly Preparation & Management**

- Approved final plans and logistics for the 2025 Synod Assembly including approval of assembly committee chairpersons, identification of a Display Table Coordinator, completion of the nomination slate, finalization of Rules of Organization and Procedure, and approval of documents, reports, etc. to move forward to the Synod Assembly.
- Appointed the Rev. Jonathan Reid as chair of the 2025 NWLM Synod Assembly Reference & Resolutions Committee
- Appointed Ms. Sandy Schlesinger as chair of the 2025 Synod Nomination Committee
- Appointed the Rev. Kjersten Sullivan as chair of the 2025 Synod Assembly Credentials Committee
- Appointed Mr. David Marquette as Chair and Ms. Lorelle Dalke, Mr. Noah Parker, and Ms. Phyllis Klingler as members of the 2025 NWLM Synod Assembly Elections Committee
- Approved 2025 Synod Assembly Offerings be divided equally between ELCA World Hunger and the NWLM Synod Disaster Relief Fund
- Appointed the Rev. Daniel Stoneback and Ms. Denise Palmer as co-Chairs and the Rev. Haley Vay Beaman, the Rev. Neil Brady, Mr. Brian Dalke, Mr. Dan Eversole, Ms. Barbara Marquette, Ms. Rachael Nelson, the Rev. Ed Ruble, Ms. Dawn Smith as members of the 2025 NWLM Synod Assembly Bishop Election Committee

- Approved a “Guidance and Responsibilities” document for use by the 2025 NWLM Synod Bishop Election Committee
- Approved a new “NWLM Synod Code of Conduct for Synod Events”, including approval of the Rev. Rosanne Anderson as Chair of the Code of Conduct Task Force for the 2025 Synod Assembly.
- Moved proposed “2026 NWLM Synod Compensation Guidelines” with a recommended 4.0% increase to the salary models to the 2025 NWLM Synod Assembly for approval
- Approved the 2026 NWLM Synod Assembly to be a 1.5-day in-person meeting tentatively from Friday, May 15 through Saturday, May 16, 2026, at a church located within the synod that can accommodate an estimated 250 attendees (includes meeting space, parking, hotel availability, etc.). The first “pre-assembly” day will focus on worship, fellowship, celebrations and education. The second day will serve as the official “Synod Assembly” meeting to address required business, elections, resolutions, etc.
- Approved Prince of Peace, Portage as the host congregation and location for the 2026 Synod Assembly

### **Committee Actions**

- Elected Mr. Daniel Carter to a 3-year term and the Rev. Andreas Teich to fill an unexpired term on the NWLM Synod Audit Committee
- Appointed the Rev. Julie Bailey as Chair and the Rev. Alex Aivars, Ms. Jan Charter, Ms. Phyllis Klingler, and Mr. James Martin as members of the NWLM Synod Seminary Scholarship Committee
- Approved appointment of the Rev. Clay Bates to serve as Chair of the NWLM Synod Publicly Engaged Church Table
- Approved appointment of the Rev. Daniel Schewe as Chair of the NWLM Synod Youth and Young Adult Ministry Table

### **General Actions**

- Received ELCA Church Council updates from the Rev. Kjersten Sullivan, ELCA Church Council Member
- Supported strategic processes & programs led by the synod staff – including the on-going “Living Stones” initiatives, management and support of call processes, Seminary Debt Reduction grant management, Synod Trust Fund management (i.e., Grace and Wilson Trust, etc.), support of social justice initiatives, support of ELCA grant submissions, etc.
- 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), compensation management for synod staff (called, support, and deployed), approval/oversight/support of sabbatical plans for called staff, addressing resource needs as staffing changes take place, etc.
- Continued partnership with and support of Bp. Craig Satterlee, Asst. to the Bishop the Rev. Christina Bright, out-going Asst. to the Bishop / Dir. of Evangelical Mission the Rev. David Sprang and

incoming Asst. to the Bishop/Interim Dir. of Evangelical Mission the Rev. Kjersten Sullivan as they carried out strategic/constitutional responsibilities across the synod and beyond on behalf of our 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, fiduciary and strategic oversight of synod-led initiatives, support for synod events as requested, etc.

**Recommendations for the 2026 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 assure our compensation guidelines are fair and competitive – especially 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 relative to those in the 5 other synods within ELCA Region 6. This year’s assessment was based on base salary levels in 2025 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 - 2026 Proposal                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Years of Service                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 2025 Minimum Base Salary - Pastors           | 2025 Minimum Base Salary - Pastors | 2025 Minimum Base Salary - Pastors                                                                                                                        | 2025 Minimum Base Salary - Pastors                                                                                                                                                                  | 2025 Minimum Base Salary - Pastors | 2025 Minimum Base Salary - Pastors                                                                                                                                                   | +4.0% to Starting Base Salary - Pastors |
| % Increase within Models from Previous Year                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | +4%                                          | +4%                                | +10%**                                                                                                                                                    | +2.5%                                                                                                                                                                                               | +4%                                | +6%                                                                                                                                                                                  | +4.0% PROPOSED                          |
| 0 yrs of service (First Call)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 46,391                                       | 46,391                             | 45,000                                                                                                                                                    | 46,400                                                                                                                                                                                              | 45,940                             | 45,850*                                                                                                                                                                              | 48,247                                  |
| 5 yrs of service                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 48,391                                       | 49,033                             | 48,000                                                                                                                                                    | 47,800                                                                                                                                                                                              | 48,720                             | 48,030                                                                                                                                                                               | 50,247                                  |
| 10 yrs of service                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 50,891                                       | 51,922                             | 51,000                                                                                                                                                    | 49,200                                                                                                                                                                                              | 51,500                             | 49,920                                                                                                                                                                               | 52,747                                  |
| 20 yrs of service                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 56,691                                       | 57,246                             | 57,000                                                                                                                                                    | 55,350                                                                                                                                                                                              | 56,940                             | 56,508                                                                                                                                                                               | 58,547                                  |
| 30 yrs of service                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 63,691                                       | 60,168                             | 63,000                                                                                                                                                    | 61,510                                                                                                                                                                                              | 60,830                             | 60,596                                                                                                                                                                               | 65,547                                  |
| 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 <b>minimum Base Salaries only</b> - excluding other contributors to overall Defined Base Compensation such as add'l degrees, prior experience, higher than average responsibilities / congregation size(es), etc.                                           |                                              |                                    |                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                         |
| Additional Input on Synod Models                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | +\$500/yr thru 16 yrs; +\$700/yr for 17+ yrs | not stated                         | +\$600/yr for 26+ yrs<br>** 10% increase in 2025 to re-set salaries to be more equitable compared to other Region 6 synods. 3% increase planned for 2026. | *Stated salaries are a "best estimate" based on a new scenario-based model. Assumes a median housing price of \$100,000 with adjustments for merit, incentives and other experience as appropriate. | not stated                         | *Stated salaries are a "best estimate" based on a new model. Assumes a median housing price of \$200,000 with adjustments for merit, incentives and other experience as appropriate. |                                         |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>For Reference: Recent Cost of Living (COLA) Increases</b><br/>                 2020 - 1.6%; 2021 - 1.3%; 2022 - 5.9%; 2023 - 8.7%; 2024 - 3.2%; <b>2025 - 2.5%</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>For Reference: Recent Compensation Increases within the NWLM Synod Base Salary Model</b><br/>                 2021 - 1.6%; 2022 - 2.0%; 2023 - 4.5%; 2024 - 6.0%; 2025 - 4.0%; <b>2026 - 4.0% Proposed</b></p> |                                              |                                    |                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                         |

Key “take-aways from the 2025 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
- It appears that 3-4 other synods in the region implemented significant increases from 2024 to 2025 to match our guidelines
- Our recommended base salaries at 30+ yrs of service continue to be 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 2026.
- With the anticipation of 20+ congregations in the call process over the next year, we want to remain competitive with our minimum base salaries. 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 2026 include:

- **Lines 91-102:** Updated guidance on medical plan selection through Portico – i.e., selecting Gold+ vs. a Silver+ plan as the “base plan” for the organization (congregation).
- **Lines 121-128:** Guidance on medical coverage offset options when a rostered minister is eligible to waive the Portico medical/dental health coverage while still participating in the other Portico benefits.
- **Lines 140/275/301/884/908:** 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 542/625/986/1070:** Accumulation of Continuing Education funds over a 5-year period is suggested to allow use in support of a sabbatical (as an option).

### **Preparing for the 2026 Synod Assembly – Logistics for Awareness & Planning**

Looking forward to 2026, Synod Council has the responsibility to finalize and communicate key aspects of the Synod Assembly to our congregations and voting members. In accordance with section S7.11.01. of the synod constitution, “The time and place for the next regular assembly shall normally be announced 12 months prior to the assembly.”

For Reference - Past N/W Lower MI Synod Assembly Locations:

|                      |                                             |             |                          |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Prior to 2009</b> | <b>Lansing (primary) &amp; other cities</b> | <b>2017</b> | <b>Mt. Pleasant</b>      |
| <b>2009</b>          | <b>Lansing</b>                              | <b>2018</b> | <b>Lansing</b>           |
| <b>2010</b>          | <b>Lansing</b>                              | <b>2019</b> | <b>Mt. Pleasant</b>      |
| <b>2011</b>          | <b>Kalamazoo</b>                            | <b>2020</b> | <b>Cancelled (Covid)</b> |
| <b>2012</b>          | <b>Lansing (with SEMI Synod)</b>            | <b>2021</b> | <b>Remote (Zoom)</b>     |
| <b>2013</b>          | <b>Lansing (with SEMI Synod)</b>            | <b>2022</b> | <b>Remote (Zoom)</b>     |
| <b>2014</b>          | <b>Dearborn (with SEMI Synod)</b>           | <b>2023</b> | <b>Mt. Pleasant</b>      |
| <b>2015</b>          | <b>Lansing</b>                              | <b>2024</b> | <b>Remote (Zoom)</b>     |
| <b>2016</b>          | <b>Grand Rapids</b>                         | <b>2025</b> | <b>Mt. Pleasant</b>      |

In preparation for the 2026 Synod Assembly, Synod Council has approved the following:

Dates: May 15-16, 2026

Host Congregation / Location: Prince of Peace – Portage, MI

Format: In-person at a host congregation location. The first “pre-assembly” day will focus on worship, fellowship, celebrations and education. The second day will serve as the official “Synod Assembly” meeting to address required business, elections, resolutions, etc.

Thanks to Prince of Peace – Portage and the Rev. Rachel Laughlin for their willingness to partner with Synod Council and the Synod Staff as we work to bring this new “host congregation” model to life in 2026! We also appreciate the five other congregations who also expressed an interest in hosting this inaugural assembly format. If this new in-person format meets our needs, we will have the ability to arrange future assemblies at a number of host congregations / locations around the synod in the coming years!

In terms of logistics for the 2026 Synod Assembly, synod assembly voting members will be responsible for arranging their own overnight accommodations as needed. A block of hotel rooms in one or more nearby hotels will be reserved by the synod to support this activity. Registration fees and other logistics will be finalized closer to the meeting. If needed, it is suggested that congregations use the 2025 registration fees as an estimate for planning.

In conclusion, we are clearly an active synod led by extremely gifted leaders! 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 in our part of the world. Thanks be to God for all that we do in His (and in Jesus’) name!

Yours in Christ,

Sandy Schlesinger  
NWLM Synod Vice President

## 2024-25 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@mittensynod.org](mailto:bishopcraigsatterlee@mittensynod.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](mailto:sandyschlesinger@gmail.com)

**BIRD** Ms. Karen, Treasurer  
Home Church: New Life - Spruce  
4-yr term, exp. 8/31/28 (first 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

**BAILEY** Rev. Julie  
Home Church: Ascension - Saginaw  
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/27 (first term)

**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)

### Synod Council At-Large Members (cont.)

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

**MARQUETTE** Mr. David  
Home Church: St. Peter – Battle Creek  
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/27 (first 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: University – East Lansing  
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/26 (first term)

**PENDZISZEWSKI** Mr. Steven (Steve)  
Home Church: Prince of Peace - Portage  
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/27 (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)

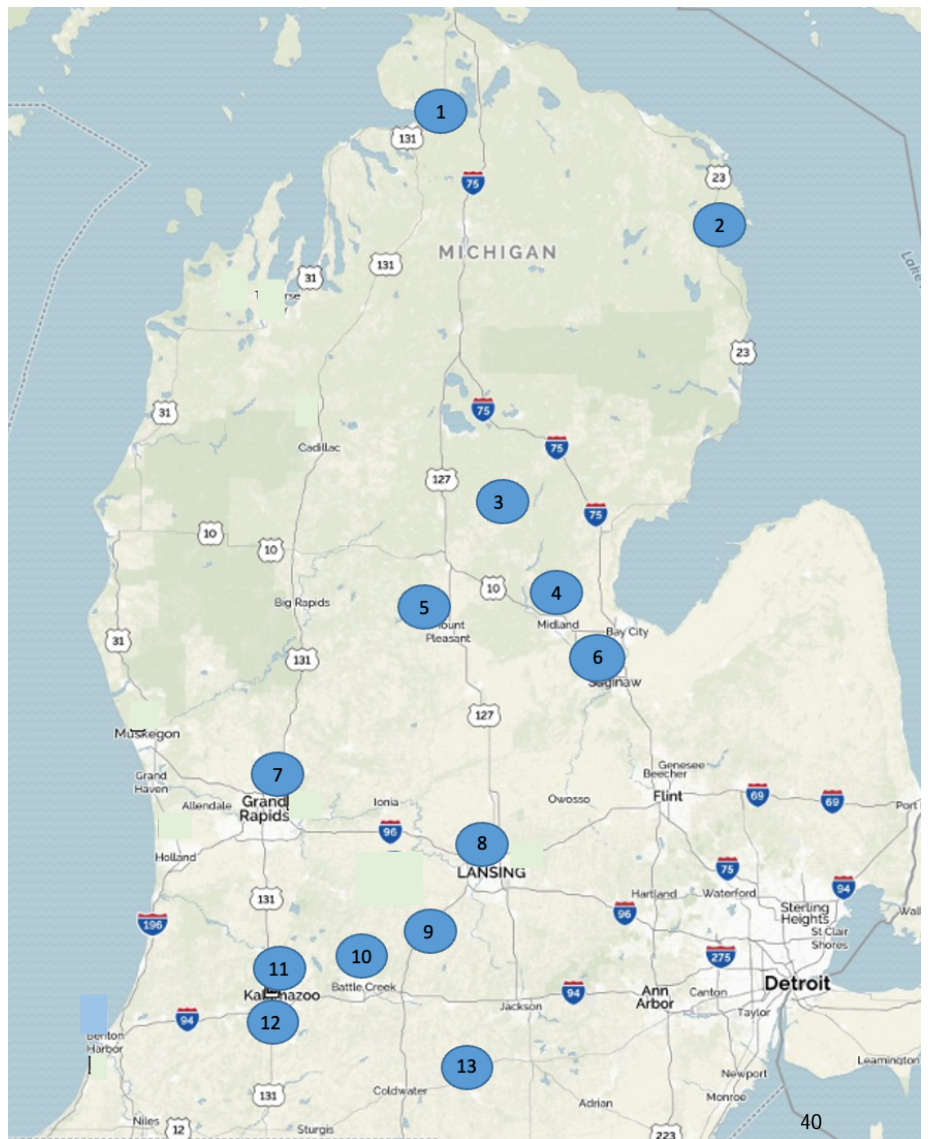
**WOHLFERT** Ms. Holly  
Home Church: Trinity - Kalamazoo  
3-yr term, exp. 8/31/25 (second term)

## Synod Council: 2024-25 Term

| NWLM Synod Council Terms                           |                                            |                                                 |                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Through 8/31/25                                    | Through 8/31/26                            | Through 8/31/27                                 | Through 8/31/28                               |
| <b>Synod Officers</b>                              |                                            |                                                 |                                               |
| <b>SATTERLEE</b> Bishop Craig (Second Term)        |                                            | <b>SCHLESINGER</b> Ms. Sandra, VP (Fourth Term) | <b>BIRD</b> Ms. Karen, Treasurer (First Term) |
| <b>SMITH</b> , Rev. Dennis, Secretary (First Term) |                                            |                                                 |                                               |
| <b>WICANDER</b> Ms. Linda (First Term)             |                                            |                                                 |                                               |
| <b>Synod Council "At-Large" Members</b>            |                                            |                                                 |                                               |
| <b>BRADY</b> Rev. Neil (First Term)                | <b>LEHMAN</b> Rev. Jacob (First Term)      | <b>BAILEY</b> Rev. Julie (First Term)           |                                               |
| <b>CHAMBERLAIN</b> Ms. Karla (First Term)          | <b>KLINGLER</b> , Ms. Phyllis (First Term) | <b>MARQUETTE</b> Mr. David (First Term)         |                                               |
| <b>MCGUFFIN</b> Rev. Sherry (Unexpired Term)       | <b>PARKER</b> Mr. Noah (First Term)        | <b>PENDZISZEWSKI</b> Mr. Steven (First Term)    |                                               |
| <b>WOHLFERT</b> Ms. Holly (Second Term)            | <b>TREVARTHEN</b> Mr. Bill (Second Term)   | <b>WALKER</b> , Ms. Sandra (Second Term)        |                                               |
|                                                    |                                            | <b>VAN VALKENBURG</b> Rev. Kate (First Term)    |                                               |

### 2024-25 Synod Council & Synod Leaders

- 1 – Rev. Sherry McGuffin
- 2 – Ms. Karen Bird
- 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 – Rev. Julie Bailey
- 7 – Rev. Kate Van Valkenburg
- 8 – Ms. Karla Chamberlain
- 8 – Ms. Lynn Kriser
- 8 – Mr. Noah Parker
- 8 - Bishop Craig Satterlee (Synod Office)
- 8 – Mr. Bill Trevarthen
- 8 - Ms. Sandra Walker
- 9 – Rev. Neil Brady
- 10 – Mr. David Marquette
- 11 – Rev. Dennis Smith
- 11 – Ms. Holly Wohlfert
- 11 – Pr. Jake Lehman
- 12 – Mr. Steve Pendziszewski
- 13 – Ms. Phyllis Klingler





**2025 North/West Lower Michigan Synod Assembly**  
**Secretary's Report**  
Motions of Synod Council  
September 2024 – April 2025

**September 2024**

**Motion: SC24.09.03.**

To close Sudanese Christ Lutheran Synodically Authorized Worshiping Community and commend them to the Mission and Ministry of Christ Lutheran Church in Wyoming, Michigan. Note: This synod will continue to provide financial support to Christ Sudanese through Christ-Wyoming as is appropriate.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC24.09.05.**

Accept the disaffiliation vote of Messiah Lutheran Church - Roscommon and release them, commending the congregation to the care of the North American Lutheran Church.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC24.09.06**

Accept the disaffiliation vote of Hope Lutheran Church - Marlette and release them from the ELCA.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC24.09.07.**

Redirect restricted funds in the NWLM Synod Disaster Relief Fund (\$37,100) originally designated for the 2020 Mid-Michigan Flood to the regular Synod Disaster Relief Fund.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC24.09.08.**

Elect Mr. Daniel Carter to the Synod Audit Committee for a 3-year term from 9/1/2024 through 8/31/2027.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC24.09.09.**

Approve the new Pastors Sabbatical Support Fund (a Temporarily Restricted Fund), including transfer of \$60,000 from the *To Whom Shall We Go (TWSWG) Seminary Education Assistance Fund* as presented.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC24.09.10.**

Move the balance of the gift from Calvary - Lansing from deferred revenue to the temporarily-restricted TWSWG Seminary Education Assistance fund.

Discussion: The synod received \$7,496 in November 2021 marked “use at Synod’s discretion.” The balance is now \$6,746.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC24.12.03**

Approve the Rev. Clay Bates to serve as chair of the Publicly Engaged Church Table, effective immediately.

**Adopted**

**December 2024**

**Motion: SC24.12.04**

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 December 14, 2024, continues to designate United Campus Christian Fellowship as a Synod Authorized Worshipping Community (SAWC) for 2025 and also designates Pastor Kate Van Valkenburg to continue as their servant leader.

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

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC24.12.05.**

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod Council at its meeting on December 14, 2024, affirmed Trinity Lutheran Church – Battle Creek as a Strategic Congregation for 2025.

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

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC24.12.06**

Approve the renewed policies and procedures related to management of the N/W Lower MI Synod Seminary Scholarship Fund as presented and amended.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC24.12.08.**

Appoint the Rev. Jonathan Reid as chair of the 2025 Synod Assembly Reference & Resolution Committee.

Discussion: Pr. Reid will assemble additional committee members as needed to facilitate receipt of proposed Memorials and/or Resolutions by stated deadlines and partner with submitters to appropriately prepare each for consideration at the Assembly.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC24.12.09**

Appoint the Rev. Daniel Stoneback (retired) and Ms. Denise Palmer (New Life – Spruce) as co-chairs of the 2025 Synod Assembly Bishop Election Committee.

Discussion: The co-chairs will work with VP Schlesinger to assemble additional committee members to facilitate their work.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC24.12.10.**

Approve the “2025 NWLM Synod Bishop Election Committee Guidance and Responsibilities” document as presented.

**Adopted**

**February 2025**

**Motion: SC25.02.02.**

Call the Rev. Kjersten Sullivan as Assistant to the Bishop and Interim Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM) for the North/West Lower Michigan Synod, effective March 10, 2025.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.02.06.**

Approve use of the synod website’s “Donate” page to include an on-line donation option for the NWLM Synod Stronghold Grant Fund.

Discussion: Currently the following five options are included on this page:

- NWLM Synod ELCA Youth Gathering Fund
- NWLM Synod Disaster Relief
- NWLM Synod General Fund
- NWLM Synod Living Stones
- NWLM Synod Seminary Debt Reduction
  - This category of donation would help Congregations create “safe” spaces to help people.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.02.07.**

Confirm appointment of the Rev. Dan Schewe (Trinity, Grand Rapids) as chair of the Youth and Young Adult Ministry Table.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.02.08.**

Confirm appointment of the following persons to the NWLM Synod Seminary Scholarship Committee. Initial term durations will be determined by the committee chair to assure an efficient rotation of alternating 3-year terms moving forward.

- Chair: Rev. Julie Bailey (Ascension, Saginaw)
- Rev. Alex Aivars (Christ United, Dewitt)
- Ms. Jan Charter (Grace, Alpena)
- Ms. Phyllis Klingler (Trinity, Hillsdale)
- Mr. James J. Martin (Lord of Life, Portage)
- Staff Liaison: Rev. Christina Bright, Assistant to the Bishop

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.02.09.**

Approve the 2025 Synod Assembly Offering to be designated as follows: Divide the offerings from the Synod Assembly worship services(s) evenly between ELCA World Hunger and the NWLM Synod Disaster Relief Fund.

Discussion: The current balance for the NWLM Synod Disaster Relief Fund is \$10,700. Additional discussion focused on other urgent needs both within this synod and world, especially in light of recent federal funding cuts to church agencies.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.02.10.**

Approve the 2026 N/W Lower MI Synod Assembly to be conducted as a 1.5-day in-person meeting tentatively from Friday, May 15 through Saturday, May 16, 2026, at a church (TBD) located within the synod that can accommodate an estimated 250 attendees.

Discussion:

- The recommended dates do not conflict with Mother's Day and Memorial Day.
- The first "pre-assembly" day will focus on worship, fellowship, celebrations and education.
- The second day will serve as the official "Synod Assembly" meeting to address required business, elections, resolutions, etc.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.02.12.**

Elect the Rev. Andreas Teich to the Synod Audit Committee to fill an unexpired term ending 8/31/2026.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.02.13.**

Appoint Ms. Sandy Schlesinger (Trinity, Midland) as chair of the 2025 Synod Nomination Committee. Within this position, the chair will work with the Synod Staff, Conference Deans, Synod Council, and other leaders across the synod to solicit nominees (including self-nominations) for the open positions.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.02.14.**

Appoint Rev. Kjersten Sullivan as chair of the 2025 Synod Assembly Credentials Committee. Within this position, the chair will assemble additional committee members as needed to facilitate the registration and credential verification process for the assembly.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.02.15.**

Confirm appointment of the following people to serve on the 2025 NWLM Synod Bishop Election Committee alongside the previously appointed co-chairs. Additional members will be added by the co-chairs as needed prior to the assembly.

- Co-Chair: Rev. Daniel Stoneback (Messiah, Bay City)
- Co-Chair: Ms. Denise Palmer (New Life, Spruce)
- Dawn Smith (Trinity, Midland)
- Rachael Nelson (Immanuel, Mt. Pleasant)
- Barb Marquette (St. Peter, Battle Creek)
- Dan Eversole (Immanuel, Mt. Pleasant)
- Pr. Haley Vay Beaman (Feast of Victory, Acme)
- Pr. Neil Brady (Peace, Charlotte)
- Pr. Ed Ruble (St. Peter, Battle Creek)

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.02.16.**

Approve the proposed “NWLM Synod Code of Conduct for Synod Events” document as presented. Discussion: Recommend that this information be included in the registration for the 2025 Synod Assembly.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.02.17.**

Approve the proposed “2026 NWLM Synod Compensation Guidelines” with a recommended 4.0% increase to the salary models to move forward to the 2025 Synod Assembly as presented.

**Adopted**

## April 2025

### **Motion: SC25.04.03.**

Approve disbursement of \$5,200 from the Multicultural Ministry Fund to Samaritas to aid in resettlement of legally vetted refugees in Michigan. This support was formally requested by Samaritas in response to an Executive Order that suspended distribution of planned federal funding, adversely affecting Samaritas' ability to provide planned services and support to people from other countries who are in the process of re-settling in Michigan communities.

**Adopted**

### **Motion: SC25.04.05.**

Withdraw \$6,000 from the Honduras Education Endowment Fund and transfer to the Salud Para la Vida (aka Health for Life) temporarily-restricted fund as requested by the Honduras Team.

**Adopted**

### **Motion: SC25.04.06.**

Approve transfer of \$36,418 from the Synod Staff Support Fund to the Unrestricted – Undesignated Fund (aka the General Operating Fund).

Discussion:

- This transfer between funds addresses unplanned expenses (salary and benefits) realized during the 2024-25 fiscal year as a result of a change in Assistant to the Bishop staffing in May 2023.

**Adopted**

### **Motion: SC25.04.07.**

Approve revisions to the current 2025-26 (FYE 01/31/26) budget as presented, with updates in revenues and Staff Salary and Benefit expenses related to the change in DEM/Assistant to the Bishop staffing in March 2025.

**Adopted**

### **Motion: SC25.04.08.**

Approve the proposed 2026-27 (FYE 01/31/27) budget to move forward to the 2025 NWLM Synod Assembly as presented for consideration and adoption.

**Adopted**

### **Motion: SC25.04.09.**

Approve the proposed memorial titled "IN SUPPORT OF ADDRESSING THE LEGACY OF AMERICAN INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES" to move forward to the 2025 NWLM Synod Assembly for consideration and adoption.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.04.10.**

Appoint the Rev. Rosanne Anderson (Advent, Lake Ann) to serve as chair of the 2025 Synod Assembly Code of Conduct Task Force. The chair will select 2-3 additional voting members or visitors to serve on the task force during the 2025 Synod Assembly.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.04.11.**

Approve the proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure to move forward to the 2025 NWLM Synod Assembly as presented and modified.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.04.12.**

Approve the 2025 Slate of Nominees for Synod Council, Consultation Committee and Discipline Committee positions to move forward to the 2025 NWLM Synod Assembly as presented and modified.

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.04.13.**

Appoint the following to serve on the 2025 NWLM Synod Assembly Elections Committee: David Marquette - Chair (St. Peter, Battle Creek), Lorelle Dalke (Advent, Lake Ann), Noah Parker (University, East Lansing) and Phyllis Klingler (Trinity, Hillsdale).

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.04.14.**

Approve the following: “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 2025: The Rev. Neil Brady, Ms. Karla Chamberlain, the Rev. Sherry McGuffin, The Rev. Craig A. Satterlee (Bishop), The Rev. Dennis Smith (Secretary), Ms. Linda Wicander, and Ms. Holly Wohlfert. Their time, wisdom, leadership and overall dedication to the ministry and other strategic initiatives conducted and led across this synod throughout their term(s) is much appreciated!”

**Adopted**

**Motion: SC25.04.15.**

Approve Prince of Peace, Portage as the host congregation and location for the 2026 Synod Assembly.

**Adopted**

2025 Anniversaries

**MINISTER of WORD and SACRAMENT**

**5 years**

Katherine F. Van Valkenburg

**15 years**

Christopher Laughlin

Jacob Lehman

Kari Fast

Karleen Kinker

Kevin Sullivan

Matthew Miller

Rachel Laughlin

Susan Hand

Wayne Shearier

**25 years**

Kathy Gies

Sharon Van Dam

**35 years**

Gerald Ferguson

Joy Schroeder

**50 years**

Bruce Weber

Darrel Larson

Galen Knutson

Ken Ponds

Leonard Dahlgren

**55 years**

Gary Hansen

John Ferra, Jr.

John Schleicher

Michael Anderson

Richard Carnes

Robert Garrels

Robert Mueller

S. James Petteys

**60 years**

B. Douglas Niemi

Wayne Buskirk

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**CONGREGATIONS**

Saron Lutheran Church/St. Joseph ..... 150 years

Immanuel Lutheran Church/Jackson ..... 100 years

Edgewood Lutheran Church/Fruitport ..... 50 years

New Life Lutheran Church/Spruce ..... 25 years