



**North/West Lower
Michigan Synod**

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Our Need for Good Friday

“Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline,” the document that establishes our church body’s necessary guidelines for our conduct, actions, and ways in which we communicate with one another, was recently revised to include members of congregations, in addition to rostered ministers and congregations. You can read the document here: <https://bit.ly/38CqFOy>

The grounds for discipline of members of congregations seem obvious. They include persistent and public denial of the Christian faith; willful and/or criminal conduct grossly unbecoming of a member of the church; continual and intentional interference with the ministry of the congregation; and willful and repeated harassment, abuse, bullying, libel, or slander of another member(s) of the congregation, including rostered ministers (pastors and deacons) and staff.

It is a fact of human life, including life in the church, that we do not make rules until rules are needed. In other words, this document was expanded to include members of congregations because the kinds of behavior that are grounds for discipline are occurring in our church. Though the church is certainly a gathering of sinners, it is not a place where we sin free of accountability and consequence.

I share this for two reasons. First, we are currently experiencing a great deal of conflict in the congregations of our synod. We all need a reminder of the promise we make when a pastor or deacon is installed: “In all things, to strive to live together in the peace and harmony of Christ.” We all need to pause and recognize that there is hurt, brokenness, accountability, and consequences when we do not.

Second, we receive this newsletter on Good Friday. We all need to contemplate how much even Christ’s Church needs Jesus to save us and to raise us to new life. Whether we are emerging from the pandemic now or still waiting for that time to come, we will emerge having said and done things contrary to living together in the peace and harmony of Christ. Perhaps we can bring them to the cross this Good Friday, not to absolve ourselves and to move on, but so that we can confess our sins, seek forgiveness appropriately, amend our lives, and move on to new life together.

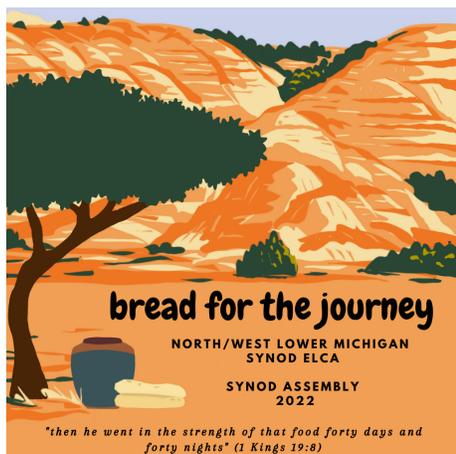
I am finding the Prayer of the Day for Ash Wednesday especially meaningful as I prepare to worship and preach on Good Friday:

Almighty and ever-living God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior, and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

I am also praying that, in our interactions, the church has the faith and courage to authentically and genuinely be Easter for itself and for the world.

Standing with you at the cross,
The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop

North/West Lower Michigan Synod 2022 Synod Assembly



The 2022 Synod Assembly will be held via Zoom on May 14, 2022. This year's Synod Assembly will be centered on the theme "Bread for the Journey" (1 Kings 19:8) and will primarily be business focused.

Additional information and resources is available and will continue to be posted on the Synod Assembly page of the Synod website: <https://mittensynod.org/events/assembly>

The Assembly Book will be available on the Synod website on April 22, 2022. All voting members are strongly encouraged to review the Assembly Book prior to Synod Assembly.

To attend Synod Assembly, all voting members must register by April 20, 2022.

When completing the registration form, voting members will be registering for Synod Assembly, Pre-Assembly Discussion Sessions,

and Technology Orientations. Information on these sessions, technology requirements, and a list of common registration form questions is included below. Please review this information before registering.

Given the technological nature of this Synod Assembly, voting members should be comfortable using computers, mobile devices, and/or tablets, learning and using applications, and accessing information from websites. Additionally, each voting member will need their own email address and voting device (smartphone or tablet). They will also need access to a computer to participate in the Zoom meeting. It is recommended that voting members use a computer to host the Zoom meeting and use a smartphone or tablet as their voting device.

All voting members are **required** to attend a Technology Orientation prior to Synod Assembly. The Technology Orientations will be held May 10-12 from 6:00-7:00pm via Zoom. Voting members will select their orientation date when they complete the registration form and must attend the orientation in order to receive their voting credentials.

In advance of the Synod Assembly, there will be two informal, optional discussion sessions. The Resolutions Discussion Session will be held on May 3 from 6:00-8:00pm via Zoom. The Budget & Compensation Guidelines Discussion Session will be held on May 4 from 6:00-8:00pm via Zoom. Voting members will have the option to sign up for these sessions when completing the registration form.

Common Registration Form Questions:

- **Country Code:** In the address section, remember to complete the country code. For addresses in the United States, the country code is US.
- **Internet Browser:** If you have issues completing the form using Google Chrome, try a different internet browser (Safari, Microsoft Edge, Firefox, etc.)
- **Registering Multiple Voting Members:** If you are registering multiple voting members on one registration form, you will all need to attend the same pre-assembly sessions. If you would like to attend different pre-assembly sessions, please complete a separate registration form for each person.
- **Mobile Devices:** If you have issues completing the registration form on a mobile device (phone or tablet), try submitting the form on a computer (desktop or laptop).

Registration forms must be completed online and submitted by April 20, 2022. There will be no late registration and we will not be able to process the changing of voting members after this date.

Register now: <https://bit.ly/3JaeZBS>

Talking About Jesus

Recently, several congregations have asked me to come and talk to them about mission and vision planning now that the COVID-19 pandemic is over. As I thought about this, I realized there are a few complications with this request. First, it will never be over. We will learn to live with COVID and other pandemics and illnesses as they come along. Second, COVID has caused us to re-examine everything. We have made some radical changes in the last two years. We have to evaluate what new things we keep and what things we stopped doing that need not come back. Third, no one knows what the future looks like, so 3-5 year mission plans are probably not worth the effort because no one knows what the world will look like in 3-5 years. Fourth, there is a lot going on that has influence on making plans for the future.

However, what I thought about most was that almost no one asked me to come and talk about evangelism and learning to talk about Jesus. It is my theory that since the 1950s our evangelism plan has been "if we build it, they will come." In recent years this changed to "all we need is a praise band and people will come." These plans were even reflected in the limited number of evangelism resources available to congregations. There was a point about two years ago where if a person went to the ELCA website and searched for evangelism resources, they received a response of "none found." After that, the resources posted were over 10 years old and about faith practices. With all of the changes in our world, these plans became out-dated. In conversations I've had with colleagues in our Synod and in the ELCA, I've come to realize that by focusing on these out-dated ideas and plans, we lost our ability to talk about Jesus, which is really what we should be doing.

So, what can we do to begin to regain the language of Jesus? First, start asking yourself and others in your congregation these questions: Where have you seen Jesus this week?, How have you seen God working in your life recently?, What is God up to in your congregation or community?, What is your favorite bible story and why?, What character in scripture do you identify with?, and What bible passage inspires or comforts you most? Really think about these questions and let people share their responses. Push them to actually name the work of Jesus in the world.

Second, take a look at some of the new evangelism resources available on the ELCA website: <https://elca.org/evangelism>. In addition, there are scholars across the church, including Bishop Satterlee, who are working on resources to help the church regain the language of talking about Jesus. As these resources become available, we'll share them on the Synod's website.

Third, the ELCA is promoting a 90-day mission planning tool as a way to get re-engaged, which is available on the Synod's website: <https://mittensynod.org/docs/REVIVE90DayPlan.pdf>. I am also available to come and work with congregations on re-engaging, focusing on the ideas above and on learning to talk about Jesus and inviting people to meet Jesus.

We can make grand plans for the future of the church and our congregations, but if we cannot regain the language of talking about Jesus and inviting folks to meet Jesus, then all our plans are for naught.

The Rev. David E. Sprang
Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission



Presiding Bishop Eaton's Easter Message

In her Easter Message, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton reminds us to declare confidently on this Easter and all times "I know that my Redeemer lives."

Watch Message: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1p8iOOar4E>

Read Message: <https://bit.ly/3KCfFAN>

Voting Rights

The ELCA understands government as a means through which God works to preserve creation and build a more peaceful and just social order in a broken world (*ELCA Civic Engagement Guide*). Therefore, a stable democracy offers the best hope of our political system effectively responding to challenges such as climate change, wealth inequity, criminal justice reform, access to healthcare, and racial inequality.

In recent months, legislation aimed at limiting people's ability to vote has been passed across the United States. These restrictive voter laws create barriers for many people and is a threat to our democracy. Exercising the right to vote is a key way we live out our Christian vocation as faithful and active citizens, participate in our democracy, and voice opinions on matters that affect all of us.

As the ELCA's Social Policy Resolution "Voting Rights to All Citizens" explains, members, congregations, and synods of the ELCA are "encouraged to spea[k] out as an advocate and engag[e] in local efforts such as voter registration and supporting legislation to guarantee the right to vote to all citizens."

Bishop Satterlee and the North/West Lower Michigan Synod's Publicly Engaged Church Table strongly encourage rostered ministers and congregation members to be faithful and active citizens and prayerfully consider how they can best support the efforts to secure voting rights for all. Some of the ways you can participate in this work is by advocating at the national or local level through the following initiatives:

- The ELCAvotes initiative serves to educate, equip and encourage discipleship through participating together in the electoral process. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/3uEkSmd>
- ELCA Advocacy is working to support the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act, which is focused on ensuring the voices of all citizens will be safeguarded and heard. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/3626o63>
- In Michigan, there is a petition drive, Promote the Vote – 2022, that is aimed at putting policies in place that advance voting rights, nullify voter suppression efforts, and eliminate the threat of future election subversion. Learn More: <https://promotethevote2022.com/>

If you would like to learn more about or get involved with these efforts, you can reach out to Pastor John Burow, member of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod's Publicly Engaged Church Table, at pastorjburow@yahoo.com.

A Plea for Slowing Down and an Invitation to Learn More

by Bishop Emeritus John Schleicher, Member of the Environmental Stewardship Task Force

Those of us born before the mid '60s will remember a brief time in the late '70s when we were asked, even mandated, to drive more slowly in order to conserve fuel. There was already a growing awareness that life on Earth had a finite capacity to absorb fossil fuel emissions beyond which the delicate balances that sustain life would be compromised. While that directive didn't hold very long, what if we were to voluntarily re-adopt that practice? What if we adopted a new discipline of normally driving 5 mph slower than we currently do? Beyond the money (already painfully high) saved, it would be a way of demonstrating our love for God and for our neighbors, both human and non-human, for now and for generations yet to be born. And perhaps, we can pray, it would be one way we all can help keep the closing window of opportunity open for a livable, sustainable future.

For help in living into this and other new life-altering disciplines, we invite you to sign up for the 2022 Holle Speaker Series at Faith Lutheran in Okemos on Saturday, April 23. Rev. Jim Antal, author of *Climate Church, Climate World – How People of Faith Must Work for Change*, will inspire you toward an ever-deepening witness and commitment to cherishing and protecting "our common home" (Pope Francis). You can register for this free event at <https://bit.ly/HolleSpeakerSeries>.

Do invite a friend or two to register and to ride to this event with you. The lasting value of what you learn will be much enhanced by ongoing conversations and actions with friends who share the same passion for more faithful living out the urgent call to better care for the Lord's earth.

Synod Finances		
	March	Year to Date
Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund		
Mission Support Revenue	118,584	205,744
Other Revenue*	16,478	16,835
Net Assets Released from Restriction	0	0
Total Revenue	135,062	222,579
Churchwide Proportionate Share (50%)	59,201	102,872
Other Expenses	56,394	122,595
Total Expenses	115,595	225,467
Net Change to Fund Balance (Revenue - Expenses)	19,468	(2,888)
Beginning Fund Balance	460,934	483,290
Ending Fund Balance	480,401	480,401
Other Fund Balances		
Unrestricted-Designated		672,118
Temporarily-Restricted Endowment-Related*		859,713
Temporarily-Restricted		298,839
Permanently-Restricted		1,002,547
Total - All Funds (as of 3/31/22)		3,313,619

*March 31 Endowment Fund Statements were not yet published at the time of this summary.

Thank You!

We thank you for your gifts to the Synod Disaster Relief Fund! During the month of March, we received \$4,016, which will be forwarded to Lutheran World Relief for aid in Ukraine. We appreciate your faithful generosity and care for others!

Lutheran World Relief and Lutheran Disaster Response are still collecting donations to support the people of Ukraine and provide food, clean water, safe shelter, medical supplies, and more.

Learn More: <https://www.mittensynod.org/news/prayers-for-ukraine/>

Connect Grants

The Connect Grant is an effort to support mission in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod. Modeled after the ELCA's Open Door Grants, Connect Grants are to be used to help congregations develop new ideas and build stronger connections with their communities as they emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/3t40QOZ>

To apply for a Connect Grant, applicants must submit a written grant proposal along with a proposed budget for the project. View Grant Proposal Instructions: <https://bit.ly/3vrw8TH>

The Bishop's Newsletter will return in June!

Due to the timing of Synod Assembly, there will be no May edition of The Bishop's Newsletter. The next edition will be published in June. Please check the Weekly Update emails and the Synod website to stay up-to-date!

Upcoming Events

April 17	Easter	
April 20	Synod Assembly Registration Deadline	Learn More: https://bit.ly/3i5KAbO
April 23	Holle Speaker Series: Rev. Jim Antal	Learn More: https://bit.ly/3t3Te15
April 25-27	Institute of Liturgical Studies	Learn More: https://bit.ly/35U8QLD
April 25-27	Ecumenical Advocacy Days	Learn More: https://bit.ly/3tSYmnM
April 30	The End of Youth Ministry? with Dr. Andrew Root	Learn More: https://bit.ly/3i4HI9K
May 14	Synod Assembly	

COVID-19 Resources

The CDC is continuing to monitor the BA.2 subvariant of the Omicron variant, which is more transmissible than previous Omicron subvariants.

Vaccination continues to be the most important public health action to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone aged 5 and older is eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Everyone aged 12 and older is eligible for a booster. Those ages 50 and up or those immunocompromised may choose to receive a second booster. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/3iDnU3V>

We continue to post updates and information pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic on our website. View all resources: <http://bit.ly/3rL2fsF>

Christ has risen indeed.

Alleluia!

*Wishing you a joyous
Easter!*



ELCA World Hunger's 2023 Domestic Hunger Grants

Registration for the ELCA World Hunger's 2023 Domestic Hunger Grants is now open!

Organizations applying for an ELCA Domestic Hunger Grant for the first time must register by creating an account in ELCA GrantMaker to access the application once the window opens on April 18, 2022. Organizations who previously registered in ELCA GrantMaker should log in to confirm their contact information is current. Learn More: <https://elca.org/domestichungergrants>

Congregations in Transition

Note: We include congregations on the public list when the called pastor or rostered leader completes her or his ministry in the congregation. Thus, congregations in which the pastor has resigned but is still serving are not listed here. We also do not post calls that are accepted until Bishop Satterlee signs the Letter of Call.

Bay Conference	Rev. Emily Olsen, Dean
Faith/Saginaw	Pastor John Soyster, Interim / Seeking candidates
Messiah/Bay City	Pastor Andreas Teich retiring. Last Sunday October 30.

Capital Area Conference	Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean
Christ United/Dewitt (Part-Time)	CALL ACCEPTED: Pastor Alex Aivars. Begins May 9.
St. Stephen/Lansing	Congregation voted to complete their ministry. Last Sunday May 22. Bishop Emeritus Gary Hansen and Bishop Craig Satterlee to serve in May.
All Saints/Mason (Part-Time)	Pastor Erick Johnson, Stated Supply / Seeking candidates
Trinity/Hillsdale	Pastor Dennis Smith, Interim / Preparing MSP
Christ/Michigan Center	Pastor Michael Anderson, Stated Supply / Preparing MSP

Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean
Christ/Wyoming	Pastor Polly Standley, Interim / Congregational Vote April 24.

Kalamazoo Conference	Rev. Joan Oleson, Dean
St. John/Baroda (Part-Time)	Pastor Vicky Blough, Stated Supply / Seeking candidates
Hope/Plainwell (Part-Time)	Pastor Julie Winklepleck, Stated Supply / Congregational Vote April 24.
St. Peter/Battle Creek	Pastor Cheryl Johnson and Pastor Michael Anton, Stated Supply / Preparing MSP
Messiah/Constantine (Part-Time)	Pastor Tom Pederson, Stated Supply

Stony Lake Conference	Rev. Sarah Samuelson, Dean
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Sunrise Conference	Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean
St. Paul/Alpena	Seeking a part-time assistant pastor

Traverse Conference	Rev. Jonathan Reid, Dean
Augustana/Tustin	Pastor David Done retiring / Pastor Sharon VanDam, Stated Supply