



**North/West Lower
Michigan Synod**

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Walking Our Way Through Easter

So how do you suppose Cleopas and his companion walked as they made their way along from Jerusalem to Emmaus? Did they meander mindlessly, lost in conversation? Or, determined to get out of Dodge, did their steps possess a certain spirit? Luke doesn't tell us. What we do know is that disappointment and despair affect us all differently.

Were you lucky...I guess I should say, were you "blessed"? Were you blessed enough to get caught up in the spirit of resurrection this Easter? How long did the feeling last? God has blessed you if you're still feeling it weeks later!

For too many of us, Easter worship was followed too quickly by the return of concerns. At some level, we wait for the bomb in the street, the phone call from the school, or the next breaking news. We have been confronted by the power of nature to destroy us. And we have come to be concerned that we might not be in control when the time comes for us to die. If we do a quick comparison between what the Gospel promises and what the Church delivers, we'll find ourselves lacking. And we have always been concerned about the past and about the future; we have always been concerned about the world around us and the secret thoughts and desires within us.

While we may not be ready to join Cleopas and his companion in saying, "But we had hoped that Jesus was the one to redeem Israel," we might be ready to admit that we had hoped that this would be the Easter when the whole world was redeemed. Looking for signs of resurrection leaves us wanting. We find ourselves shuffling along aimlessly or swaggering our way elsewhere, determined to get out of Dodge.

It's then, as we walk our way through Easter, that the risen Jesus overtakes us. Wouldn't it be great if the risen Christ turned the world upside down? But no, that's never been Jesus's style. Instead, Jesus asks us a simple question: "What are you discussing with each other as you walk along?" The question is so simple, so basic, that we don't recognize who is really asking it. Instead we see only a friend, a colleague, a teacher, a student, a loved one, a stranger.

"What are you discussing with each other as you walk along?" The question is so basic that it stops us dead in our tracks. "Don't you get it?" We ask. The world is exploding, the Church is in ruins, my self-worth is sinking, my family is in trouble. While Cleopas and his companion may have not gotten it that "the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory," we sometimes fail to get it that Christ's glory may not be in keeping with our expectations either for Jesus or for us. And Christ's glory might not arrive according to when we think Christ's glory should have happened, which, of course, is by now. And so our post-Easter walk home to Emmaus hasn't changed that much in two thousand Easters.

And, thankfully, neither has the risen Christ. Beginning, not with Moses, but with creation and flood, Abraham and Sarah, and all the family stories that we tell at the Great Vigil, Jesus speaks to and through us to declare that God will always, always, always, bring light out of darkness, hope out of despair, speech out of silence, peace out of violence, power out of weakness, dignity out of degradation, and life out of death.

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Opening the scriptures to us, Jesus risen opens our hearts as well. We feel our hearts burn within us, daring us to trust when trust is stupid; to believe when belief is foolish; to risk when risk is dangerous; to dream when the dream is lunacy. And if words are not enough, the risen Jesus gives us more—bread broken, the risen Christ revealed to us, at least for an instant, long enough for us to know that Jesus is here.

No, we are not told how Cleopas and his companion made their way to Emmaus that first Easter. We are told how they made their way back to Jerusalem. After the seven-mile journey, they rose at that very hour and returned. And so it is with us. It's only after we've been overtaken by the risen Jesus that we can authentically share the good news. It's only after we've experienced the risen Christ that we are empowered to go and be sent.

As we walk our way through Easter, it's not about straining to see signs of resurrection. It's about being overtaken by the risen Christ who asks what's on our hearts and minds. And, when we dare to tell him, this Jesus reveals to us God's living and loving presence in our midst. While we cannot know all the places that Jesus will overtake us as we walk our way through Easter and journey to our Emmaus, Jesus promises to be here when the Word is opened and when bread is broken and shared in Christ's name. Whatever our road to our Emmaus, Jesus will overtake us, moving us from sadness to joy, from despair to new hope, to witness to new life. For Christ is risen! Risen indeed!

Happy Easter!

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



Celebrating Earth Month

In April, we celebrate Earth Month, which is dedicated to raising awareness and advocating for change around environmental issues.

We praise God for the diverse and abundant natural resources that sustain life and the wonders of creation that inspire and humble us. We pray the we will be wise, generous, and responsible stewards and that we will work diligently to restore what we have damaged or depleted.

On April 22, 2023 we also celebrate Earth Day, which is an annual day dedicated to supporting environmental protection.

Lutherans Restoring Creation will be sharing an Earth Day worship service featuring a sermon from the Rev. Dr. R. Guy Erwin.

Congregations can register to receive components of the service in advance. It will also be released publicly on April 22 at 9am ET.

Learn more: <http://bit.ly/3GC1dc5>

Coming Soon: ELCA Congregational Vitality Training

The ELCA will soon be offering Congregational Vitality Training - Parts 1 and 2. Information about these sessions are below.

Congregational Vitality Training - Part 1 (Summer 2023)

Is your congregation ready to take some steps (even small steps) toward renewal or revitalization? Are you ready to try some new things, share some ideas, gain a greater understanding of the broader mission, bring clarity about your own congregation's mission, acquire knowledge on how to live that out in community, gain confidence to share what you have learned with the world, and find new allies from within a cohort of congregations? Then, you are invited to attend the 2023 Summer Session of the ELCA Vital Congregations Training, Part 1.

This is a fast paced co-creative and co-experimental Training facilitated by leaders with steep experience in redeveloping congregations as well as added guest presenters from a variety of settings with a wealth of knowledge. These principles and more will be explored: focusing on Jesus and justice; being expectant of the Holy Spirit; living as disciples of Jesus; engaging the neighborhood/community; multiplying leaders who are young, diverse and bring fresh insights; and aligning with purpose and core values.

This will be a four-session training. The training sessions will be held two times per day from 1:30-3:00 p.m. ET and from 7:30-9:00 p.m. ET on Thursdays June 15, June 29, July 13, and July 27. You may choose the best time each day that works for you. All sessions will be recorded and available to all registered participants. Pastors and congregations are encouraged to come as teams of 3-5 people for a time of inspiration, learning, planning, sharing, experimenting, visioning, and implementing. This training is for people who have not attended an ELCA Vital Congregations Training or who would like a refresher before attending the Fall 2023 Part 2 Training.

Register Now: <http://bit.ly/3zNAHbO>

Congregational Vitality Training - Part 2 (Fall 2023)

Is your congregation ready for a follow-up to ELCA Vital Congregations Training, Part 1? Have you taken some of the learning from that first training and put it into practice in your congregation? Has your congregation developed some next steps and are they beginning to live into revitalization and renewal? Are you seeking more training to move deeper into congregational transformation? Then, you are invited to attend the 2023 Fall Session of the ELCA Vital Congregations Training, Part 2.

This is a fast paced co-creative and co-experimental training facilitated by leaders with steep experience in redeveloping congregations as well as added guest presenters from a variety of settings with a wealth of knowledge. This training will build on the previous training of being expectant of the Holy Spirit, focusing on Jesus and justice; living as disciples of Jesus; multiplying leaders who are young, diverse and bring fresh insights; and aligning with purpose and core values. Focused on evangelism, this training will equip participants to identify and share their faith stories, recognize opportunities to share their faith, move into spaces and places that offer the development of new relationships, and become more comfortable with inviting people to come and see Jesus.

This will be a four-session training. The training sessions will be held two times per day from 1:30-3:00 p.m. ET and from 7:30-9:00 p.m. ET on Thursdays August 31, September 14, September 28 and October 5. You may choose the best time each day that works for you. All sessions will be recorded and available to all registered participants. Pastors and congregations are encouraged to come as teams of 3-5 people for a time of inspiration, learning, planning, sharing, experimenting, visioning, and implementing. This training is for people who have already attended a previous ELCA Vital Congregations Training.

Register Now: <http://bit.ly/3KR01Uz>

Contact Rev. David Sprang, Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission for further information or with questions: davidsprang@mittensynod.org or 517-331-8497. This resource is provided by the ELCA and is funded by Mission Support Gifts.

Continuing Resolutions Enacted by Synod Council

To prepare for the upcoming 2023 Synod Assembly, the Synod Council has completed actions to either create or update a number of Continuing Resolutions within the North/West Lower Michigan Synod Constitution, which is available on the Synod's website: <http://bit.ly/3UxGvGn>.

The changes, provided in detail below, include updating language to be in line with the language used by the ELCA, clarifying the number of voting members from congregations within each Synod Assembly, and allowing additional voting statuses in alignment with the model constitution. These changes will help streamline registration and credentials processes and simplify the proposed Rules of Organization and Procedure for our Synod Assemblies moving forward. While most members of the Synod will not engage with these continuing resolutions directly, we are providing the full updates and changes below for awareness.

In addition, we will be offering a Pre-Assembly Discussion Session on the Synod Constitution on May 1, 2023 from 6:00-8:00pm ET. This optional session is designed for voting members of the 2023 Synod Assembly and will cover updates to the Synod's Constitution from the ELCA and Continuing Resolutions. The option to sign up for this session is included in the registration form for the 2023 Synod Assembly. If you already registered for Synod Assembly and would now like to attend this session, please email communications@mittensynod.org.

The following Continuing Resolutions, aligned to *S7.21, clarify how membership of each Synod Assembly will be established and managed. Updates were made to 1) align existing Continuing Resolutions to changes made within the model constitution for synods and/or 2) clarify processes to be used during registration and credentialing processes for Synod Assemblies moving forward.

UPDATED: S7.21.A17.

In order to implement bylaw *S6.04.02., each congregation with fewer than 1000 baptized members may elect one additional Synod Assembly voting member who is a youth or young adult. A congregation with more than 1000 baptized members may elect two additional voting members who are youth or young adults, one of whom shall be a woman and one of whom shall be a man.

NEW: S7.21.A23.

Based on the voting membership of the Synod Assembly per *S7.21., duly registered by the stated registration deadline, the Credentials Committee of the Synod Assembly shall determine whether the required distribution of lay voting membership is achieved for the duration of the Assembly in accordance with *S6.04. If at least 60 percent of the voting members of the Synod Assembly are not laypersons, the presiding officer of the Assembly, in consultation with the Synod Council Executive Committee, may remove some or all of the registered, rostered ministers who are retired, on leave from call, and/or those granted disability status from the voting membership of the Assembly. If these adjustments result in a failure to meet the quorum requirement of S7.14., the voting membership of the Synod Assembly present may adjourn the meeting to another time and place in accordance with S7.14.01.

NEW: S7.21.B23.

The Credentials Committee of the Synod Assembly shall determine the presence of a quorum for conducting business at appropriate times within the initial and each adjourned meeting (i.e., plenary) within the overall Synod Assembly which is defined as a "session" within Robert's Rules. Such determination may be accomplished by a simple showing of identification tags or electronic check-in.

NEW: S7.21.C23. [replacing S7.21.A19. which has been deleted]

Synod Assembly voting members from congregations, other than those permitted by S7.21.A17., shall be apportioned according to the baptized membership on the most recent ELCA statistical report: (fewer than 175, at least one, but not more than 2 lay voting members; 175 – 1000, at least 2, but not more than 2 lay voting members; 1000-1500, at least 2, but not more than 3 lay voting members; 1501-2000, at least 2, but not more than 4 lay voting members; more than 2000, at least 2, but not more than 5 lay voting members). The lay voting members shall, as nearly as possible, be equally divided between women and men.

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The following Continuing Resolutions, aligned to *S7.22, *S7.23, S7.26, and S7.27, clarify our processes related to allowing additional voting status at each Synod Assembly. Note that in the past, these processes were managed within the Rules of Organization and Procedure for each Synod Assembly.

NEW: S7.22.A23.

All retired rostered ministers of this synod as well as rostered ministers on leave from call and those granted disability status, who are registered to attend the Synod Assembly, shall be voting members of the Assembly as long as the registered distribution of voting members is consistent with *S7.21.

NEW: S7.23.A23.

Permission is granted for the Synod Attorney to have voice but not vote at the Synod Assembly to support proceedings and to provide clarification as needed relative to the governing documents and policies of the synod as requested by the Synod Assembly Chair, the Synod Bishop or Synod Vice President as per S7.23.

NEW: S7.26.A23.

Permission is granted for up to two lay persons, one a woman and the other a man, from Synodically Authorized Worshipping Communities to have full voice and vote in all Synod Assembly proceedings.

NEW: S7.27.A23.

A Minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and who is serving a congregation of this synod by "Invitation to Special Service" during the period of the Synod Assembly shall have the privilege of both voice and vote in the Synod Assembly.

If you have additional questions about these Continuing Resolutions, please contact Pastor Dennis Smith, Synod Secretary or Sandy Schlesinger, Synod Vice President.

You Are Witnesses Retreat

"Then Jesus opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:46-48).

Pastor David E. Sprang and Bishop Craig Alan Satterlee invite you to join them for a retreat centered on the book *You Are Witnesses of These Things: Sharing the Story of Jesus*. This retreat is an opportunity to experience the joy and fun in sharing the story of Jesus for no reason other than Jesus is such life-giving good news. The retreat's primary audience is lay people, but pastors and deacons are also welcome to attend.

This retreat will be held in-person at the St. Francis Retreat Center in Dewitt, MI from September 17-18, 2023.

Learn More and Register: <http://bit.ly/3IxBuBz>.

My Burden is Light Preaching Retreat

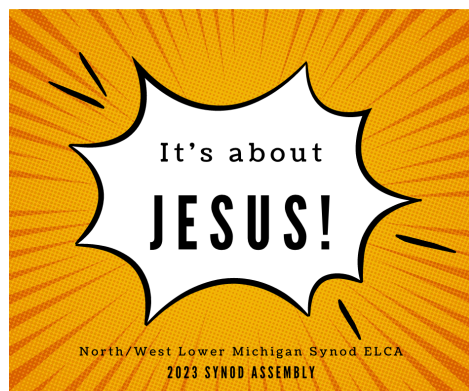
"Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30.

Bishop Craig Alan Satterlee invites you to join him for a preaching retreat centered on his new book, *My Burden is Light: Making Room for Jesus in Preaching*. This retreat is an opportunity to discuss the book and to intentionally reflect on both our preaching and our relationship with Jesus. Like the book, the retreat's primary audience is pastors and deacons, but lay preachers and listeners who care about preaching are also welcome to attend.

This retreat will be held in-person at the St. Francis Retreat Center in Dewitt, MI from October 16-18, 2023.

Learn More and Register: <http://bit.ly/3K5z0gc>

North/West Lower Michigan Synod 2023 Synod Assembly



The North/West Lower Michigan Synod's 2023 Synod Assembly will be held May 7-9, 2023 at the Comfort Inn & Suites in Mt. Pleasant under the theme "It's About Jesus!"

This year's Synod Assembly will be held in-person and will not be live-streamed or recorded.

All information pertaining to the 2023 Synod Assembly is available on Assembly page of the Synod's website (<http://bit.ly/3E6VYzP>).

Please check the website regularly as information will updated and added in the coming months.

Registration

The registration fee includes assembly costs and meals for Sunday - Tuesday. Hotel reservations are separate and must be made directly with the hotel. **Registration for Synod Assembly will close on April 21, 2023.**

- **Regular Registration (available April 1 - 21, 2023):**
 - Voting Members (Rostered Ministers and Lay): \$225
 - Retired Rostered Ministers and Rostered Ministers on Disability: \$165

All voting members and visitors must register for Synod Assembly in advance using the online registration form. There is no partial day registration. Due to our arrangements with the hotel and concerns about capacity and safety, there will be no late or walk-in registration.

As part of the registration form, you will have the opportunity to register for the Pre-Assembly Discussions and Synod Assembly Workshops. Information about these sessions is available on the website.

Register Now: <https://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/6908387>

Hotel Reservations

A special group rate of \$99/night is available at the Comfort Inn and Suites and the Fairfield Inn. Hotel reservations must be made directly with the hotel. **All hotel reservations must be made by April 21, 2023.**

- **Comfort Inn and Suites**
 - Phone: 989-772-4000, Group Name: North/West Lower Michigan ELCA
 - Book Online: <https://bit.ly/404Ag8j>
- **Fairfield Inn**
 - Phone: 989-775-5000, Group Name: North/West Lower Michigan ELCA
 - Book Online: <https://bit.ly/404Ag8j>

Change to Pre-Assembly Session

As there are no resolutions or memorials to be considered at the 2023 Synod Assembly, the Pre-Assembly Discussion on Resolutions/Memorials will be changed to a Pre-Assembly Discussion on the Synod Constitution. This session will cover updates to the Synod's Constitution from the ELCA and continuing resolutions. If you already registered for Synod Assembly and would now like to attend this session, please email communications@mittensynod.org.

Assembly Book

The Assembly Book will again be a series of pdf documents. It will published on the website on April 17, 2023.

Synod Finances		
	March	Year to Date
Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund		
Mission Support Revenue	107,616	210,128
Other Revenue	20,832	22,059
Net Assets Released from Restriction	0	0
Total Revenue	128,448	232,186
Churchwide Proportionate Share (50%)	53,808	105,064
Other Expenses	58,216	114,376
Total Expenses	112,025	219,440
Net Change to Fund Balance (Revenue - Expenses)	16,423	12,747
Beginning Fund Balance	505,649	509,326
Ending Fund Balance	522,073	522,073
Other Fund Balances		
Unrestricted-Designated		599,922
Temporarily-Restricted Endowment-Related*		701,333
Temporarily-Restricted		313,750
Permanently-Restricted		1,002,547
Total - All Funds (as of 3/31/23)		3,139,625

*March 31 Endowment Fund Account Statements were not available at the time of publishing this summary. The amount shown here reflects balances as of 2/28/23.

2023 Synod Assembly Offering

Synod Council has designated two areas of support for the 2023 Synod Assembly Offering. One area is an ELCA ministry focus and one is a Synod level ministry focus. 50% of the Synod Assembly offerings will be designated toward each area.

The Synod focus is Living Water Ministries Bridge Builder Fund and the ELCA focus is Lutheran World Relief's Crisis in Ukraine Fund. More information about these funds is available on the Synod's website: <https://mittensynod.org/events/assembly>

Donations to the Synod Assembly Offering can be made online at <https://mittensynod.org/donate>. From the link, click "Give" and then choose "Synod Assembly Offering" from the dropdown menu.

Publicly Engaged Church

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod's Publicly Engaged Church Table recommends the ELCA Social Statements as teaching and policy documents that provide broad frameworks to assist us in thinking about and discussing social issues in the context of faith and life. In the coming months, we will be highlighting each of the ELCA's social statements for discussion.

This month, we lift up the ELCA's social statement on Education, which is centered by the belief that God calls us to educate people in the Christian faith for their vocation and to seek with others to ensure that all have access to high-quality education. We are to seek access for all as service to the common good that makes possible development of personal gifts and abilities. This calling is rooted in a Lutheran heritage that values education for all people in both church and society.

Read Now: <http://bit.ly/40X0b2k>

Bishop's Newsletter Returns in June

There will be no Bishop's Newsletter for the month of May. The next Bishop's Newsletter will be for the month of June.

We look forward to seeing those attending the 2023 Synod Assembly in May.

Check the Synod's Weekly Update emails and website for news and updates.

ELCA Advocacy Farm Bill Sessions

The U.S. Congress is working to draft a new five-year Farm Bill, which is critical to addressing hunger in the U.S. and globally.

ELCA Advocacy will be hosting virtual listening sessions to equip communities for farm bill advocacy. These sessions will also inform ELCA advocacy and help shake the ultimate law that Congress passes. Listening sessions will be held on April 18, 21, and 25, 2023.

Register: <http://bit.ly/3GChDkG>

ELCA Rostered Ministers Gathering

Rostered Ministers in the ELCA are invited to join colleagues July 17-20, 2023 under the theme of "Rekindle the gift within you" (2 Timothy 1:6).

This gathering is an opportunity for rostered ministers to remember, reclaim, rekindle and revive themselves. Gathering with colleagues from across the church for fellowship, renewal, continuing education, worship, bible study and refreshment for their spirits.

Learn more at <https://www.elca.org/rmg>

Living Water Ministries Virtual 5K

Living Water Ministries will be hosting a virtual 5K benefitting the Living Water Ministries Scholarship Fund. The virtual 5K will take place May 6 - May 14, with emphasized participation on May 10. Learn more: <http://bit.ly/3GDYKh0>

Upcoming Events

April 18	ELCA Congregational Stewardship - Introductory Meeting	Learn more: http://bit.ly/41kyY9K
April 18	ELCA Advocacy: Farm Bill Listening Session	Learn more: http://bit.ly/3GChDkG
April 21	ELCA Advocacy: Farm Bill Listening Session	Learn more: http://bit.ly/3GChDkG
April 21	Deadline: Synod Assembly Registration and Hotel Reservations	Learn more: http://bit.ly/3E6VYzP
April 25	ELCA Advocacy: Farm Bill Listening Session	Learn more: http://bit.ly/3GChDkG
April 27	ELCA Seminar with Barbara Keller	Learn more: http://bit.ly/3UAohh1
May 6-14	Living Water Ministries Virtual 5K	Learn more: http://bit.ly/3GDYKh0
May 7-9	2023 Synod Assembly	Learn more: http://bit.ly/3E6VYzP
May 15-18	The Festival of Homiletics	Learn more: http://bit.ly/43nNbo8

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
Messiah/Bay City	Pastor Dan Stonebeck, Interim / Seeking Candidates
St. Matthew/Bridgeport (Part-Time)	Supply Pastors / Preparing MSP
Zion/Freeland	Pastor Andreas Teich, Interim / Congregational Vote April 30
Trinity/Midland	Pastor Dennis Smith, Specialized Supply Pastor / Interviewing
Faith/Saginaw	Pastor Sue Hand, Stated Supply / Congregational Vote April 30
Our Savior/Saginaw (Part-Time)	Pastor Andreas Teich, Interim / Congregational Vote April 30
Resurrection/Saginaw (Part-Time)	Seeking a partnership or quarter to third time pastor

Capital Area Conference	Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean
Trinity/Hillsdale	Supply Pastors / Congregational Vote April 23
Faith/Okemos	Pastor Ellen Schoepf retiring. Last Sunday April 30 / Interviewing Transitional Pastor; Congregational Vote April 23

Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean
St. Luke/Grand Rapids	Pastor Galen Knutson, Intentional Interim / Preparing MSP
Zion/Woodland (Part-Time)	Pastor Rebecca Ebb- Speese retiring. Last Sunday June 18 / Preparing MSP

Kalamazoo Conference	Rev. Joan Oleson, Dean
Messiah/Constantine (Part-Time)	Congregational Vote April 16
Prince of Peace/Portage	Seeking to call a deacon / Preparing MSP

Stony Lake Conference	Rev. Sarah Samuelson, Dean
Edgewood/Fruitport (Part-Time)	Pastor Len Dahlgren retiring. Last Sunday May 29 / Congregational Vote May 7
Harbor of Grace/Muskegon	Pastor Jack Ferra, Interim / Preparing MSP

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

Traverse Conference	Rev. Jonathan Reid, Dean
Feast of Victory/Acme (Part-Time)	Pastor Ruth Overdier, Stated Supply / Interviewing
St. Paul/Reed City	Supply Pastors / Preparing MSP