



North/West Lower Michigan Synod

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Committing to Racial Justice

In recent months, we have seen our country plagued with instances of racial injustice, police brutality, and systemic racism. We mourned the lives needlessly lost, stood in solidarity with those who are discriminated against, and took time to listen, pray, and reflect on what we as a Synod can do to fight racism and white supremacy. As followers of Jesus, we love one another with the same life giving grace with which Jesus loves us. We experience the Holy Spirit in those who are different from us and we are committed to fighting for equality.

The ELCA's social policy resolution "Condemnation of White Supremacy and Racist Rhetoric" states, "We stand with those who are targets of racist ideologies and actions. With them, we demand and will advocate for a more just, loving, and peaceful world where the gifts of all people are appreciated, and the lives of all people are treasured." As a Synod, we are committed to this work and will be partnering with Justice Leaders Collaborative to provide learning opportunities to address the issues of systemic racism and racial justice.

Our first learning opportunity will be a series entitled "An Introduction to Social Justice," which will be held via Zoom. These six two-hour sessions are aimed at helping individuals deepen their understanding of and commitment to equity, inclusion, diversity and social justice along lines of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. This opportunity is open to 30 participants and will be limited to individuals on Synod Council, Conference Deans, and others in Synod Leadership.

When we are able to resume in-person meetings, we will be offering on-going training in each of our Synod's seven conferences. These four four-hour sessions, entitled "White People Working for Racial Justice" will help participants embody an anti-racist identity, understand their privilege, and equip them to continue working towards racial justice in their congregations and communities.

In addition to these upcoming learning opportunities, we are committed to prioritizing racial justice for the next five years. As part of this, the theme of our 2022 Synod Assembly will be racial justice and we will continue to offer resources and learning opportunities for those looking to deepen their knowledge and become better equipped to fight for racial justice in their communities.

As we continue to plan for these events, we invite you to explore the racial justice resources available on our website (<https://www.mittensynod.org/racial-justice-resources/>) and be on the lookout for additional information.

Peace,

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

The Rev. Rosanne M. Anderson, Assistant to the Bishop

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

Advocating for Fairness and Equality

By Paula Gaylord

Editor's Note: This month, we are sharing an article that was submitted by St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids. It was originally published in the August 2020 edition of The Epistle, St. Luke's monthly newsletter.

GRAND RAPIDS – Once a week from 11:00am-noon for the past several weeks members and friends of St. Luke's have expressed their support to end racism and promote justice by standing and holding signs on church property along the Beltline.

Our peaceful stance on this major thoroughfare has not gone unnoticed. Many drivers passing by will honk, wave and give us a thumbs up.

The church has had upward of 25 members each week, including families and children, who come as they are able. For many of the participants, this type of advocacy is just as impactful as joining a protest march, and less risky. I feel humbled and honored to represent what our church stands for, and right at the church. I'm more hopeful than I have been in a long time.

The signs we hold are varied:

"We are listening."

"Black Lives Matter."

"(K)NO(W) Justice, (K)NO(W) Peace."

"Diversity is our future."

"Stop racism."

"White silence is violence."

"What does the Lord require of you?"

"Love one another. - God"



Last month Pastor Dave invited the congregation to gather with signs, in part as a reaction to the news and seeing how Black Americans' lives were impacted by inequality, and in part as a response to the ELCA remembering the Emanuel Nine on June 17. Two of the pastors who were killed had attended an ELCA seminary, and the killer was a member of an ELCA congregation.

Pastor Dave says that it is his hope that we would all begin to see the image of God in all others because that is how we are created. He sees Christ encouraging members to stand up for what we believe – that it is not okay to treat others unjustly. "It's what we are called to do," he says.

Several participants shared their responses to the experience:

"We left our homes and our nets for an hour to stand with Jesus on behalf of justice for those who do not always receive justice." - Mike

"As I stood along the Beltline today, making sure to stay 6 feet apart and wearing my face mask, I couldn't help but feel closely connected to my fellow St. Luke's members as we held up our homemade signs to voice our support to end racism. It was confirmation of who we are at St. Luke's." - Lori

"What a positive experience! It's right and good for us to add St. Luke's voice to those all over our country who are speaking out for fairness and equality for all people." - Doug

"I felt emotional crouching in my garage making a sign that said: 'BLM.' I wondered what it is like to make a sign with a person's name on it." – Tracy

Be a part of our stand for equality and justice. Bring your sign and mask and join us on the church's front lawn each Wednesday from 11:00am - noon.

Equipping Leaders for Mission and Ministry Virtual Fall Events

The Writings - September 18-19, 2020

Professor George Heider

The third major section of the Jewish Scriptures (after the Torah and the Prophets) is "the Writings", a grab-bag of books that either didn't fit logically into the first two categories (like "wisdom literature") or were likely among the last written. Yet in this bag are some of the most important books in the Christian Old Testament (like Psalms) and some of the most beloved (like Ruth and Esther). We will look at a section of these books and consider their impact on both the Jewish and Christian traditions.

The Gospel of Mark - October 9-10, 2020

Professor Wally Taylor

In the Gospel of Mark, we are always "on the way". But on the way to where? We will explore that question as we survey the gospel and its major themes: good news, kingdom of God, Son of God, passion predictions, misunderstanding disciples, status degradation, and the cross.

Community Catalyst Training - Part I - October 3, 2020 - Part II - October 31, 2020

Pastor David Sprang

Jesus did his ministry in the community. He went to the synagogue on Sabbath, but most of the time he was out with people. And for much of that time, it was people on the margins, people left out, and people shunned. The church as Community Catalyst is learning how to listen to the community, accompany them on their road of life, and help them in need. It means being Jesus' hands and feet in the neighborhood that hears the church bells. This course will encourage congregational leaders to engage their community, give some tools to help listen, and help the congregation use its assets to become stronger partners with its neighbors.

The Gospel of Matthew - November 6-7, 2020

Professor Wally Taylor

In the Gospel of Matthew, we meet a Jesus who is the great teacher. We will delve into his teachings in the Sermon on the Mount and study who Jesus calls us to be as disciples. We will also see how Matthew connects Jesus with the past (chapters 1-2) and the future (chapter 28).

All events will be held via Zoom. Learn More and Register: <https://elmm.org>

Bringing Polarities into Balance: Virtual Autumn Leadership Event

October 26-27, 2020

It is difficult to move forward faithfully when life seems to be reduced to one choice between opposing sides. Living in between pre-COVID and post-COVID times (called liminal space), has polarized people more than ever and continues to deepen the divide in society itself. One way forward is to learn to balance opposites in healthy ways for ourselves, our churches, and our society. This retreat will teach tools to manage polarities and open paths for the future that create a variety of choices. Leading to a faith-grounded sanity necessary for a thriving church and its surrounding communities. Living with and more often than or gives us new perspectives for the emerging future; we can move between opposites without compromising our values, while at the same time widening our scope of possibilities.

Rostered Ministers are invited to attend this two day virtual learning event featuring presentations from Lisa Withrow, an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church, a former professor of church leadership, and currently a coach and consultant for churches, non-profits, and small businesses in the areas of leadership and team development, strategic visioning, and conflict management.

Register Now: <https://bit.ly/32cmup9>

"God's Work. Our Hands." Sunday

On Sunday, Sept. 13, congregations will observe "God's Work. Our Hands." Sunday. This year our church – and our world – are living through the COVID-19 pandemic. Physical distancing has changed the way we worship and serve. But the need is great, and God's church is at work.

We encourage you to plan your day of service in compliance with local health guidelines. The safety and well-being of your volunteers and those you serve is a top priority. Follow all local guidance regarding physical distancing, mask-wearing, maximum gathering size and building capacity limits.

Acts of service can happen anywhere: you might contribute to an online project from your home or volunteer in person keeping a safe physical distance and wearing a mask.

To help you plan, we invite you to visit [ELCA.org/DayofService](https://www.elca.org/DayofService) for resources including an invitational video from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, a planning toolkit, worship resources, promotional items, posters, and more!

Don't forget to share how your congregation is participating! Send your stories and photos to communications@mittensynod.org and use the hashtag #GodsWorkOurHands on social media!

The Season of Creation Devotions

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton and leaders from The Episcopal Church, the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada have prepared a series of devotions to observe the Season of Creation 2020, Sept. 1–Oct. 4.

The season, which begins with the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, is a time to join with the global Christian community in renewing, repairing and restoring commitments to God, to one another and to all of creation. For the four churches, it is also a time for strengthening relationships with one another. Through Scripture, hymns, advocacy and action, the weekly devotions, which begin Sept. 6, invite people to live out their vocation as stewards of creation.

"We pray that our actions as stewards of God's good creation will continue to deepen not only in this season, but for all time," said Eaton. "Even as our relations as churches are not bound by national or ecclesiastical borders, neither is our witness to the One who came to redeem all of creation."

The Season of Creation devotions are available to download on the ELCA website: <https://bit.ly/30WINOI>

In the latest installment, pastors from around the Mitten Synod share the challenges they've faced during their journey as ordained ministers of the church, both professionally and personally.

Read Now: <https://bit.ly/2CsNg29>

MISSION IN THE MITTEN

**WOMEN
CLERGY:
SHOUT OUT!**

Synod Finances as of July 31, 2020

	Current Year		Prior Year	
	July	Year to Date	July	Year to Date
Revenue				
Mission Support	113,432	605,614	115,282	684,662
Other	1,806	35,688	6,544	102,795
Total	115,238	641,302	121,826	787,457
Expenses				
Churchwide Proportionate Share	56,716	302,807	57,641	342,331
Other	46,661	347,852	58,301	467,896
Total	103,377	650,659	115,942	810,227
Net Assets Released from Restriction	0	0	0	0
Net Change to Fund Balance	11,861	(9,357)	5,884	(22,770)

Learning with the Bishop: Grief and Loss in Congregational Systems

Grief is a complex experience that includes emotional, social, spiritual and physical dynamics. It is our common human response to loss. In this time of change, uncertainty and upheaval, many are dealing multiple losses both individually and as congregations which result in grief upon grief. Join us at 11:00 AM on Saturday, August 22, for a one hour Zoom conversation about grief and loss in this unsettled time led by Bishop Michael Girlinghouse of the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod and author of *Embracing God's Future without Forgetting the Past: A Conversation about Loss, Grief and Nostalgia in Congregational Life* (Fortress, 2019).

Learn More and Register: <https://bit.ly/3iEhw9U>

Synod Staff Video Sermons for Weekly Worship

For the foreseeable future, Bishop Satterlee, Pastor Rosanne Anderson, and Pastor David Sprang will be recording sermons for congregations to use as part of their weekly virtual worship services.

Rostered Ministers are invited to sign up to receive the sermons in advance. Sermon videos will be emailed each Wednesday afternoon.

The sermons will be publicly released via our YouTube channel on Sunday afternoons.

Rostered Minister Sign-Up:
<https://forms.gle/EHikg4HYPuY7r1do6>

If you have additional questions, contact:
communications@mittensynod.org

Watch Sermon Videos:
<https://bit.ly/2LsuSHN>

Coronavirus Resources

We continue to post updates and resources pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic on our website.

New resources include information about conducting remote meetings and the new executive orders amending the MI Safe Start Plan and issuing revised workplace safeguards.

Learn More:
<https://bit.ly/2MPx4to>

Upcoming Events

August 22	Learning with the Bishop: Grief and Loss in Congregational Systems	Zoom	Learn More: https://bit.ly/3iEhw9U
August 26	Amazing Stargazing	Zoom	Learn More: https://bit.ly/3kDUlyl
September 1	Entering the Narrow Gate		Learn More: https://bit.ly/3kJNyTt
September 13	"God's Work. Our Hands." Sunday		Learn More: ELCA.org/dayofservice
September 18	ELMM: The Writings	Zoom	Learn More: https://elmm.org

Due to the current government restrictions and recommendations on in-person gatherings, many upcoming events have been cancelled or postponed. Please check with the event's organizer for more information.

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
Hope/Marlette (part-time)	Discerning future
St. Paul/Au Gres	Deacon Amanda Carpenter accepted call in NW Ohio. Last Sunday 8/16.
Grace/East Tawas	Rev. Matt Carpenter accepted call in NW Ohio. Last Sunday 8/23.

Capital Area Conference	Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean
Calvary/Lansing (part-time)	Pastoral Team: Rev. John Schleicher, Rev. Rick McKenzie, Rev. Jim Couser/Preparing MSP
St. Paul/East Lansing	CALL ACCEPTED: Rev. Carl Ballard/Installation TBD.
Grace/Lansing	CALL ACCEPTED: Rev. Christin Fawcett. Installation TBD.
Peace/Charlotte	Supply Pastors/Congregational Vote 8/16.
All Saints/Mason	Determining Pastoral Needs

Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean
Bread of Life/Hudsonville	Rev. Katherine Van Valkenburg, Transitional Pastor/Congregational Vote TBD.
Bethlehem/Grand Rapids	Rev. Karsten Voskuil (RCA), Service of Invitation to Extended Service TBD.

Kalamazoo Conference	Rev. Kjersten Sullivan, Dean
St. John/Baroda	Rev. James Morgan, Stated Supply/Determining Pastoral Needs

Stony Lake Conference	Rev. Sarah Samuelson, Dean
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Sunrise Conference	Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean
Peace/Gaylord	Contracted with Episcopal Priest in Gaylord/Congregational Vote TBD.

Traverse Conference	Rev. Scott Torkko, Dean
Messiah/Roscommon	CALL ACCEPTED: Rev. Jeff Bonn, Installation TBD.
St. Paul/Reed City	CALL ACCEPTED: Rev. Kara Shaw (A-OK), Transitional Pastor. Congregational Vote TBD.
Augustana/Tustin	Supply Pastors/Awaiting a Candidate