



North/West Lower Michigan Synod

2900 N. Waverly Rd.
Lansing, MI 48906

517-321-5066
mittensynod.org

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Life Aboard the Ark

“Then [Noah] sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him in the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark with him. He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. Then he waited another seven days, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him any more” (Genesis 8:8–12).

I think we know how Noah, Noah's family, and both the wild and domestic animals reacted when the dove returned not once but twice to indicate that it was not yet time to disembark the ark. We do not know what everyone said when Noah took in the dove and shut the window of the ark. We do know what the children of Israel said when it was not yet time to abandon the wilderness and arrive in the promised land. “And all the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron; the whole congregation said to them, ‘Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!’” (Numbers 14:22).

The COVID-19 flood continues; our wilderness journey is not yet done. We need to get vaccinated to protect ourselves and others. We need to wear masks to slow the spread of a more contagious variant. I assess that we are at the worst place in the pandemic because the COVID-19 virus has been joined by a virus of anger, impatience, frustration, and complaining, which often seems to be expressed at church and directed at pastors.

A pastor recently told me that they are exhausted from doing everything possible to keep the congregation safe and healthy and then having to respond to their complaints for doing so. Another pastor described feeling like a complete failure because of the impossibility of finding a way to please anyone, since every decision madeangers and alienates someone. I have talked to several pastors who are actively wondering what they could do other than serve the church. I regularly recall words of the prophet Ezekiel read when I was installed in my first call: “The people also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them; and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God.’ And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that there has been a prophet among them” (Ezekiel 2:4-5). I love that God tells Ezekiel not to be afraid of their words nor dismayed by their looks.

First, I share all of this to indicate to our pastors and deacons that I am aware, I care, and I implore you to reach out to me when you need help. Second, I ask everyone in our Synod to get vaccinated and to wear a mask to help contain the virus. Jesus commands us to love one another as he loves us (John 13:34) and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31). Christianity is not an “I” but a “we” faith and so we must do our part in loving and protecting one another. Third, I recommend congregations begin to plan now for what they will do when things get worse and restrictions return. I expect the dove to return to the ark because there is not yet a place for it to land.

When you need to grumble and complain, when you're running short on patience, take it to the Lord in prayer rather than to your pastor in anger. Ask our gracious God to increase in you the gift of patience, to soften your heart, and to grant you grace to put the best construction on things. Eventually the flood subsided, the exodus concluded, and this pandemic will end. We're just not there yet.

With you in the ark,

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

COVID-19 Response Grants

When COVID-19 began, the ELCA created the COVID-19 Response Fund and encouraged donations. This fund has now generated over \$1.5 million. The North/West Lower Michigan Synod applied for and received distributions from this fund to assist congregations helping those in their communities.

The COVID-19 grants distributed by the Synod have totaled \$72,200 thus far. We have had 25 congregations approved for grants and it's estimated that these congregations have been touching the lives of 2,248 people a week through the pandemic. Over the summer we will be sharing some of those stories.

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

Ascension Lutheran and Holy Cross Episcopal (Two Churches)

Our Community Ministry Program is very grateful for the grants we have received from the North/West Lower Michigan Synod. Here's a summary of what they have meant for us.

Diaper Depot

For the safety of our volunteers and the families who come to us for diapers, and to comply with suggested COVID guidelines, we changed our procedure for giving out diapers. We now offer drive-up service and have discontinued repackaging diapers. Now we give out diapers in whatever quantities the manufacturer packages them. That varies considerably, but no child is given fewer than 24 diapers and some receive as many as 36. This takes a bigger bite out of our budget, but the families are very appreciative and the grants have helped tremendously. Slightly more than half of the families we are currently serving are new to us since March of 2020. Some families come only occasionally depending on their circumstances; others come every month. Since the pandemic began, we have given out about 1500 packages of diapers.

Green Apple Pantry

We have a long association with our local food pantry, which serves many of the same families who come to us for diapers. Throughout the pandemic, we encouraged monetary donations instead of physical donations and included funds we were given from the grant. One way we did this was by holding a Virtual Spaghetti Dinner. We used some grant money to buy ingredients for making spaghetti, posted photos in our church newsletter and encouraged people to send a donation in lieu of buying a dinner ticket. Then we presented a check and the supplies we purchased to Green Apple. We did a similar event in January with the Souper Bowl of Caring. In lieu of cans of soup, grant money was donated to Green Apple along with monetary donations from the congregation, which more than matched the grant.

Breakfast Cafe

St. Mark's Episcopal Church in downtown Grand Rapids serves a weekly breakfast to the homeless. We usually volunteer to help several times a year but during this past year, it wasn't feasible for us to do that. Instead, we made a contribution of some of the grant money we had received to help buy supplies.

What Now?

As the pandemic restrictions end, we hope to return to some of the ways we had been doing things. In person dinners, friendly competitions, and working together are all ways that build strong relationships within our congregation and community. Since our church is located in an area with a large number of immigrant families, we will continue to work toward clothing little bottoms and feeding the hungry, per Matthew 25:40.

Shirley Neitzel
Two Churches (Ascension Lutheran and Holy Cross Episcopal)
Community Ministry Committee

Racial Justice

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)

Critical Race Theory. We've seen references to it everywhere these days. We've also heard a lot of controversy about it. As we advocate for racial and social justice as followers of Jesus, it is important that we have an understanding of what Critical Race Theory (CRT) really is. Thanks to Justice Leaders Collaborative for helping to delineate the basic principles of CRT for us.

Critical Race Theory is a decades-old academic concept that seeks to explain why there are racial disparities in our country. It was developed 40 years ago by legal scholars and, like most academic fields, it is an extensive field of study that has produced many books and scholarly articles over the past four decades. There are two main things that are helpful to know:

First, Critical Race Theory acknowledges that "race" is a social grouping rather than a biological one. In other words, different racial groups are not different species, nor are they biologically or scientifically distinct. Instead, race is based on the labels humans have put on each other. Race is primarily based on where your ancestors were historically from and how you and people from similar places have been treated throughout history.

Second, Critical Race Theory seeks to make sense of the connections between race and social inequality. Most people acknowledge that there is inequality in our country based on race. Some people would argue that this inequality is "natural"—that some people simply do not work hard enough, are not as smart, or are naturally inferior. In contrast, scholars of Critical Race Theory would argue that our social systems have been designed in ways that unfairly disadvantage some groups and unfairly advantage others.

While Critical Race Theory has inspired some of the work we more commonly think of as "DEI" (diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice, anti-racism, etc.), the term "critical race theory" has never really been used outside of academic venues until recently when some people co-opted it as an umbrella term meant to refer to the discussion of *anything* related to issues of race and racism. Therefore, it is likely that even people who have been doing DEI work for years have never heard or used the term "critical race theory" to talk about these efforts or initiatives.

There is a movement to stop racial progress in our country. In education, this movement has been manifested in efforts to ban the teaching of anything related to race, racism, or any other social issues which have inaccurately been lumped together under the banner of "critical race theory." The majority of people taking up the *anti-critical race theory* mantle do not understand the academic concepts of Critical Race Theory. They are simply using it as the talking point to hinder movement toward a more inclusive country. For justice-minded people who support diversity, equity, and inclusion, there is nothing problematic about Critical Race Theory. Current scholarship on Critical Race Theory examines how the social construction of race and institutional racism has created and perpetuated a racial caste system.

Let us continue to pray and walk together to end the sin of racism in our world.

*Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.
Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.
Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.
(Martin Luther King, Jr.)*

Rev. Rosanne M. Anderson
Assistant to the Bishop and Director of Candidacy

The Power in a Name

By Rebecca Bossenbroek, Administrator, Equipping Leaders for Mission and Ministry

"But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1).

I've been thinking about the importance of names. Names give us an identity and tell us and others to whom we belong. Some names are common, some unique. My mother's first name, and her mother's middle name, was Egnota.

My grandmother told me her mother used this name to honor a native American woman she had befriended during her ministry in the northern region of Michigan's lower peninsula. Some sources tell us Ignota means "unknown", in the feminine form, in Latin, and is used in some contexts when the name of a person is unknown. I wonder if my great grandmother did not know the native woman's name, and so called her Ignota or Egnota.

Some groups in which I belong have more than one Rebecca, and in an effort to alleviate confusion, I then ask to be called Reba. I could tolerate being called Becca, but as another Rebecca fiercely states: "Anything but Becky!" Names have the power to make us feel loved and accepted. They also have the power to make us bristle and feel insulted. As a child, I was known as Becky. Some of my relatives feel uncomfortable calling me otherwise even though I have preferred Rebecca for 45 of my 63 years.

In January 2016, our Synod Council adopted a name change. We changed *Lay Ministry Training Program* to *Equipping Leaders for Mission and Ministry*. We believe this name better describes the program's vision: a community of scripturally-grounded, mission-driven, spirit-led disciples. Although we've been using this name for more than five years, some still default to the former name and trip over the current one. Name changes take time.

Equipping Leaders for Mission and Ministry (ELMM) invites lay leaders to grow in their scriptural knowledge, expand connections with peers around the Synod, and develop their skills in talking about their faith. Many participants find the ELMM experience integral in identifying their gifts and sensing God's call. Some assist in pastoral care. Some go on to seminary.

We offer five virtual sessions this fall and hope you will consider joining us.

- **September 17-18:** Hebrews, James, 1 Peter with Prof. Wally Taylor
- **October 2 & 23:** Pastoral Care Assistant Training with Prof. Rosanne Swanson
- **October 15-16:** Daniel, Apocalyptic, and the Early Jewish Period with Prof. Kelly Murphy
- **November 12-13:** Revelation with Prof. Kelly Murphy

For more information, visit www.elmm.org and/or contact Rebecca Bossenbroek at 517-927-4755 or administrator@elmm.org.

Autumn Leadership Event

Rostered Ministers are invited to gather for the Autumn Leadership Event on October 26, 2021 from 10am-3pm ET at Immanuel, Mt. Pleasant. This one day event will include a Service of Remembrance and Loss with All Saints overtones, opportunity for conversation, a boxed lunch, and a presentation by Bishop Satterlee, "Where is Jesus when you preach?". This presentation is the basis of Bishop Satterlee's forthcoming book and has been well-received in other synods. This event is designed to be easily dismantled should COVID-19 make it inappropriate for us to come together.

Register Now: <https://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/4016533>

Registration will close October 20, 2021.

Stewards of Hope in the Face of Devastation

By Pastor John Schleicher, Environmental Stewardship Task Force

You are no doubt aware of the newly released report from the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Based on more than 14,000 studies, the report concludes that the world cannot avoid some devastating impacts of climate change, but that there is still a narrow window to keep the devastation from getting even worse.

The Synod's Environmental Stewardship Task Force encourages all preachers in our synod to register for Bishop Satterlee's presentation "Preaching and Climate Change" on September 9. This workshop will be held via Zoom and will be focused on strategies for including the cosmos in preaching.

Learn More and Register: <https://bit.ly/2VAA8Bp>

The Synod's Environmental Stewardship Task Force also encourages 3-8 members of every congregation to attend a one hour Zoom event on Creating and Renewing a Green Team on September 23. As preparation for this event, a link for a Stewardship of Creation video will be shared a few days prior to the event.

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

Both of these events are intended to help us respond to the impending global devastation with actions borne of faith and hope in Christ's costly grace.

LIRS Support of Afghan Refugees in Western Michigan

For two decades, the U.S. Government has employed Afghan allies to serve alongside U.S. Troops, diplomats, and other government employees as interpreters, translators, cultural advisors, drivers, and more. Because of their service to the U.S. Mission, our allies and their families soon became the targets of anti-American violence.

As the U.S. armed forces rapidly withdraw from Afghanistan, more than 18,000 Afghans who served alongside them face a severe backlog in the processing of their Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs). Our Afghan allies and their families are in grave danger and at risk of retaliatory attacks from the Taliban. Learn more about Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS)'s work on this issue:

LIRS has taken the lead in resettling our Afghan allies and their families and is currently looking for assistance in supporting these refugees in Western Michigan.

Local Needs for Western Michigan

Samaritas is organizing the resettlement of refugees in Western Michigan. They have expressed a need for housing options for refugee families to Western Michigan. Options can either be temporary/transitional or permanent. They are looking for both 1/2/3 bedroom apartments and larger single family homes.

Others supplies for families, such as house furnishings and supplies for babies and young children, are also needed. Monetary donations are also being accepted and will support rental homes or apartments.

If you are interested in supporting this ministry, have housing leads, or items to donate, please contact Chris Cavanaugh, Samaritas' Director of New American Resettlement for Western Michigan at ccava@samaritas.org.

Learn More: <https://bit.ly/3yGQEHl>

Lutheran Campus Ministries

Soon college bound students will be packing up and moving into dorm rooms and apartments. It has been a crazy year of cancelled classes, virtual classes, and hybrid learning. But this fall, it looks like most colleges, universities and tech schools will be going back to somewhat normal schedules. Through it all, Lutheran Campus Ministries has been at work supporting, connecting, and serving. With the return to campus approaching, now is the time to connect your students with Lutheran Campus Ministries.

Our Synod supports active campus ministries at Western Michigan, Central Michigan, Michigan State, and Grand Valley State Universities. In addition, the Southeast Michigan Synod supports Lutheran Campus Ministries at the University of Michigan and Wayne State. Additionally, the ELCA's Campus Ministry Network (LuMin) is one of the largest networks of Lutheran and Ecumenical Partner ministries in the county and includes over 230 colleges and universities across the United States.

To connect with a local campus ministry, you can use the contacts listed below or you can refer a student through the LuMin website at: <https://www.luminelca.org/ministries/>

Local Contacts

Michigan State University: Pastor Haley Vay Beaman, haley.vay@gmail.com

Western Michigan University: matrixcampusministry@gmail.com

Grand Valley State University: Pastor Kate Van Valkenberg, pastorkatevv@gmail.com

Central Michigan University: Craig Torgensen, office@immanuelmp.com

University of Michigan: Pastor Elizabeth Friedman, pastorelizabeth.lcm@gmail.com

Coronavirus Resources

In recent weeks, the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus has become a source of concern as cases rise across the U.S.. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Delta variant is currently the predominant strain of the virus in the U.S.. The Delta variant is more contagious and spreads faster than earlier forms of the virus. Unvaccinated people remain the greatest concern as data suggests that the Delta variant might cause more severe illness in those who are unvaccinated than previous strains. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/3lUSx79>

In response to the Delta variant, the CDC has updated their mask guidance. Given the current information about the Delta variant, vaccine effectiveness, and current vaccine coverage, the CDC now recommends masks be worn in indoor public places by everyone, regardless of vaccine status, in areas of substantial or high transmission. The CDC is also recommending universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/3xyBlq8>

The CDC and public health officials continue to recommend getting a COVID-19 vaccine to best protect yourself and others from COVID-19. Vaccines in the U.S. are highly effective at preventing severe disease and death, including against the Delta variant. Currently, everyone aged 12 and older is eligible to receive a vaccine. The State of Michigan offers information about the different vaccines, vaccine incentives, and how to book a vaccine appointment on their website. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/3iDnU3V>

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

Synod Finances

Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund	July	YTD
Mission Support Revenue	99,645	689,153
Other Revenue	6,004	129,896
Net Assets Released from Restriction	0	0
Total Revenue	105,649	819,049
Churchwide Proportionate Share (50%)	49,823	344,577
Other Expenses	51,451	333,331
Total Expenses	101,273	677,908
Net Change to Fund Balance (Revenue - Expenses)	4,376	141,142
Beginning Fund Balance	370,964	234,198
Ending Fund Balance	375,340	375,340
Other Fund Balances		
Unrestricted-Designated		690,043
Temporarily-Restricted Endowment-Related		1,029,640
Temporarily-Restricted		309,887
Permanently-Restricted		924,639
Total - All Funds (as of 7/31/21)		3,329,549

Compensation Guidelines

As congregation councils begin to think about their 2022 budget process, we remind you that our Synod's 2022 Compensation Guidelines are available on the Synod's website.

Learn More: <https://mittensynod.org/docs/CompensationGuidelines2022.pdf>

These compensation guidelines are approved annually by the Synod Assembly and include recommended increases to base salaries based on cost of living and other strategic inputs, along with changes to general guidelines for reimbursements and time off to ensure consistency with other synods in our region.

ELCA Youth Gathering Updates and Information

Every three years, 30,000 high school youth and their adult leaders from across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America gather for a week of faith formation known as the ELCA Youth Gathering. Through days spent in interactive learning, worship, Bible study, service and fellowship, young people grow in faith and are challenged and inspired to live their faith in their daily lives. The next ELCA Youth Gathering will be held July 24-28, 2022 in Minneapolis, MN.

Registration Information

The Gathering will be utilizing a brand-new online registration system for the the 2022 Gathering. Gone are the days of mailing in your payments and rooming lists! Sign up for the registration webinar on August 19 at 8pm ET or access the recording later to learn more. Register Now: <https://bit.ly/3lQHxhn>

Early Bird Registration for the 2022 Gathering opens September 22! Learn More: <https://bit.ly/2VFb0de>

Financial Assistance

The Gathering has set aside funds for individuals with financial need, to help offset the cost of their registration for the 2022 Gathering. Primary adult leaders and congregational leadership may apply for financial assistance on behalf of a specific young person. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/3xIIJ2a>

Webinars

Join Gathering leadership for a monthly webinar to prepare you for the 2022 Gathering, the Multicultural Youth Leadership Event (MYLE) and the tAble. Topics will vary each month, but all webinars will be split between a presentation and a Q&A. Learn More: <https://elca.org/YouthGathering/About/Webinars>

Mitten Synod Information Session

In preparation for the event, our Synod Coordinator Pastor Dan Schewe and our Synod Day Director Megan Floyd held an informational meeting to help plan. It is available to watch on YouTube: <https://bit.ly/3AM5hlf>

Synod Staff Video Sermons

As Bishop Satterlee, Pastor Rosanne Anderson, and Pastor David Sprang return to visiting congregations this fall, they will be taking a break from the weekly video sermons. Sermon videos will be available through Sunday, September 5.

The Synod Staff will continue monitoring the changing situation with the pandemic and assessing the need for these sermon videos to determine if/when to resume them. If you have additional questions, contact communications@mittensynod.org

“God’s Work. Our Hands.” Sunday

“God’s Work. Our Hands.” Sunday is Sunday, September 12, 2021. This day is an opportunity to celebrate who we are as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America — one church, freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor.

Resources, including a toolkit and a new “God’s Work. Our Hands.” Sunday hymn, is available on the ELCA website.

Learn More: elca.org/dayofservice

Upcoming Events

September 9	Preaching and Climate Change	https://bit.ly/2VAA8Bp
September 12	“God’s Work. Our Hands.” Sunday	elca.org/dayofservice
September 16	Entering the Narrow Gate	https://bit.ly/3yNlR7x
September 17-18	ELMM: Hebrews, James, and 1 Peter	elmm.org/events
September 23	Creating & Renewing a Green Team	https://bit.ly/3jKBOAG

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	Kalamazoo Conference	Rev. Joan Oleson, Dean
St. Peter/Unionville (Part-Time)	Pastor Bill Huether retiring October 2021 / Interviewing	St. John/Baroda (Part-Time)	Pastor Jim Morgan, Stated Supply / Seeking additional candidates
Capital Area Conference	Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean	Immanuel/Allegan (Part-Time)	Pastor Dennis Smith, Stated Supply
Christ United/Dewitt (Part-Time)	Episcopal Diocese of Michigan taking the lead in the call process.	Hope/Plainwell (Part-Time)	Supply Pastors
All Saints/Mason (Part-Time)	Pastor Erick Johnson, Stated Supply / Preparing MSP	Stony Lake Conference	Rev. Sarah Samuelson, Dean
Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Rev. Julie Schneider- Thomas, Dean	Sunrise Conference	Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean
		St. John/Haggensville; St. James/Millersburg; Trinity/ Ocqueoc	Forming a cooperative ministry
		Traverse Conference	Rev. Scott Torkko, Dean