



**North/West Lower
Michigan Synod**

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In this Issue:

Weight Watchers

Connect Grants

Adult Theological Education

Upcoming Events

Congregations in Transition

Weight Watchers

Encouraged by my mother, doctor, and a friend, and supported by my wife, I returned to Weight Watchers after a 20-year hiatus. On Wednesday mornings, I hold myself accountable to the scale and attend a 30-minute workshop. I cannot help but compare and contrast the workshop to the church and I am startled by my reflections.

First, at Weight Watchers, everyone knows and names the reason they attend the workshop: to lose weight. To lose weight, we need the accountability of scale (sometimes akin to public confession), the wisdom of the program (the word), and the companionship with people who understand because they are on the same journey.

No one talks of “my Weight Watchers family” or frets that, if new people don’t come, the workshop will be cancelled. We are instructed to RSVP to the workshop and I suspect that, like branch offices in business or courses in a college curriculum, if a workshop is undersubscribed, it will be cancelled. It’s about fulfilling the purpose not preserving the group.

I also hear anecdotally that, while attending a workshop online is fine, it is not the same as showing up in person and stepping on the scale. The time may come, sooner than we expect, when we can abandon our buildings and green screen our beloved worship spaces for all those content to worship online.

Why do you come to church? What is your church’s purpose? As we study the trends and statistics, it occurs to me that Jesus might be joining me in trying to lose weight and get his body in shape for what is to come. And Jesus may be more concerned with pursuing his purpose than preserving a group. So, what is your church’s purpose? Permit me to suggest three from which to choose:

- “If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). Church might be the workshop where we go to have our beliefs strengthened and to learn to confess Jesus Christ by sharing the story of Jesus.
- “We will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ” (Ephesians 4:15). The church is a workshop where we learn to become better and more holy people, imitators of Christ, through Bible study, prayer, worship, and generous giving.
- “They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do” (Galatians 2:10). It seems Paul and the other apostles had strong disagreements. Yet, they agreed on this. Remembering the poor might be a uniting purpose.

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

If you don't like these three, open your Bible, and find one of your own. What's important is that the purpose be one that your church can agree is as real and relevant as losing weight is to those who attend a Weight Watchers workshop. But showing up to preserve the group isn't it.

Second, I am also astounded at the way the people at the Weight Watchers workshop are hard on themselves and genuinely gracious with others. They are stern with themselves for slips, mistakes, and succumbing to temptation that results in gaining weight. And they are overly gracious to someone else who does the same. How can the church become better at judging ourselves and being gracious to others? My immediate response is to read the Gospels and imitate Jesus.

Lastly, I wonder what congregations and the church would learn about themselves if we tracked how we spend our time and money in the same way that we on Weight Watchers track everything we eat. We might learn our actual purpose and how we are treating ourselves and one another. Then we can determine what, if anything, we need to change as Jesus gets his body in shape.

I pray you are having a refreshing summer!

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

Lutheran Disaster Response: Maui Wildfires

Multiple wildfires have broken out on the Hawaiian island of Maui. Exacerbated by strong winds, wildfires on Maui have claimed dozens of lives and have destroyed homes, businesses and lines of communication. The Big Island of Hawaii has also been impacted by wildfires, and more islands remain vulnerable to additional fires this season. Lutheran Disaster Response is coordinating with the Pacifica Synod and other partners to assess the needs of people impacted by the wildfires. Give now: <https://community.elca.org/uswildfires>

My Burden is Light Preaching Retreat

Join Bishop Satterlee 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>

You Are Witnesses of These Things Retreat

Join 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>.

Connect Grants

In 2021, the ELCA developed a grant program for congregations that wanted to try new ways of connecting with the community as we learned to live with COVID-19 and gather together safely. Unfortunately, only around 50 grants were given out. Bishop Satterlee and I got together and decided to create our own Connect Grant Program. We gleaned gifts and left over grant funds from closed projects and designated \$10,000 for Connect Grants. Our synod's program focused on new ideas and outreach projects designed to connect with the community in the ongoing goal of finding new ways of sharing stories of Jesus. So far, we have received and awarded 11 Connect Grants funded through our synod's Connect Grant and Outreach Funds.

Here are a few highlights:

Peace, Charlotte – Pastor Neil Brady shares that each quarter, volunteers from Peace spend time at the local laundromat, offering each person the opportunity to do their laundry at our expense. We provide detergent, fabric softener, and laundry baskets. We also assist with childcare, help wash, dry and fold laundry, and currently some members are making durable/reusable laundry bags to hand out at each event. I urge our volunteers to simply be a presence in that moment and listen. We have “business cards” with some general information about worship available with our new logo and theme, “come grow with us,” that are handed out to all who participate.



St. Luke's, Grand Rapids – For the past two summers, St. Luke's has hosted an outdoor Summer Concert Series featuring jazz and pop music from local talent. The family-friendly concerts are held on their back lawn and also feature a picnic with hotdogs, watermelon, and ice cream. The food and concerts are free and all are welcome to attend.

Grace, Lansing – Grace is located in an established neighborhood just west of the state capitol in Lansing. Many of the older homes are being purchased by young families who want to be close to the downtown activities and businesses. Other residents have lived there for decades. Grace is meeting their

neighbors through weekly cookouts in August and a special hymn sing on the Michigan Princess river boat.



There are many more stories to tell and the Connect Grant Fund still has enough funds to share with 2-3 congregations. Try something new, try new ways of sharing the stories of Jesus in your neighborhood and community. Meet your neighbors, listen to their stories and connect them with God's loving and gracious story.

Pastor David Sprang
Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission

Cultivating Generous Congregations Fall Cohorts

How do we, as communities of faith, change our thinking on stewardship and generosity to meet the challenges of the moment? In partnership with the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, the ELCA is offering congregations the opportunity to reexamine their stewardship thinking and imagine ways to act on their findings in their communities. This six-week webinar will be held Late September through October and will offer virtual cohort sessions where congregational leaders can discuss, dissect and collaborate on how generosity might work in their contexts. Contact the Rev. Larry Strenge at Larry.Strenge@elca.org and the Rev. Tim Brown at Tim.Brown@elca.org if you're interested in participating.

Mocha Café

Pastor Kate Schroeder

There are so many good things going on at Immanuel, Jackson, I wanted to share at least one of them with you! Immanuel is well-known in Jackson for its outreach and service to the community, but sometimes that just means letting groups use our building. One of our members who is a librarian at one of the local elementary schools became aware that a colleague was looking for a place to hold a three-week summer reading program. Understanding our mission of service in the community, this member inquired whether we would be open to hosting what is known as Mocha Café and, although there was a tiny bit of angst about who it might inconvenience and how it would affect custodial hours, it was approved by our leadership team.

Mocha Café is led by a certified local teacher, Angela Turner. The program focuses on remediating reading gaps heightened during the pandemic by providing intense reading instruction through small groups, student centers, and individualized instruction for 2nd – 5th grade students. Their mission is to promote the well-being of children, youth, and their families, with a primary focus on those impacted by socioeconomic risk and racial inequity through increasing their educational opportunities.

Mocha Café is completing their third week here and we are sad to see them go. A couple of people who use our building had to make some schedule changes, but they were happy to do so to accommodate this program. Members who regularly come into the church office during the week, as well as our staff, took great joy in seeing and interacting with the kids in the building, noting they were so well-behaved. One person brought in a big box of books for each child to take one home. Having Mocha Café here has been well worth any accommodation we have made for them, so I would encourage other churches to make themselves available for similar activities.

Mission Support River Cruise



On August 2, 30 synod leaders gathered onboard the Michigan Princess to enjoy a river cruise and hear stories of congregations that received synod grants to connect with their communities. Those stories included the growing food pantry at Faith in Okemos, a boxing club at Zion in Saginaw, a kids club at Christ the King in Gladwin, and a school blessing event at Peace in Gaylord.

These congregations support their communities by providing food and other essentials, a safe place to be, and engaging youth activities. All of the programs are also supported by members of our synod through mission support, Living Stones, and other gifts. We thank Karla Chamberlain and the crew of the Michigan Princess for a wonderful cruise. We also thank you for your partnership and dedication to helping our congregations foster connections with their communities!

Update from Pastor Anderson

As I write this update, I am thinking of the Gospel lesson for Sunday, August 13. It is the account from Matthew of Jesus walking on the water in the midst of a storm. It is a wonderful reminder that Jesus comes to us in the midst of the storms in our lives. I have felt the presence of Jesus over these past eight "stormy" months of health challenges in my life.

I am very grateful for the prayers, cards, emails, texts, and phone calls that so many of you have shared with me. Until very recently I simply was not up to answering or responding but please know that each communication helped me through a very difficult time. Thanks to all of you for your heartfelt concern.

As many have been asking, here is a brief summary of the past several months. Everything started December 11, 2022 when I tested positive for COVID and was sick for a couple weeks. I mention COVID because it probably played a significant role in the other health issues that transpired. I then had cataract surgeries on January 25 and February 7, 2023, which were very successful. However, when I came out of the second cataract surgery, the nurse told me to go to my primary care physician right away because my blood pressure was very low. The visit to my physician resulted in my being sent to ER where my blood pressure was 78/40. I presented with sepsis, acute kidney failure, an abscess of the colon, and dehydration. Ironically, at that time I didn't feel sick, but the ER doctor said I was critical. As I look back, I realize that I was relatively close to death. I spent six days in the hospital. My kidney function returned to normal (praise God!) and I was sent home with heavy duty antibiotics.

During the time in the hospital, my right shoulder, which had range of motion pain for quite awhile, became extremely painful to move. My physician gave me a cortisone shot and scheduled physical therapy. Neither the shot nor the physical therapy helped—the pain only got worse. I then saw the orthopedic surgeon who replaced my knee five years ago and was scheduled for a complete replacement of my right shoulder. That surgery had to be scheduled three months after the cortisone shot and was scheduled for June 28, 2023. However, pre-op x-rays for the shoulder surgery showed a nodule on my right lung and I had a CT chest scan as follow up. The chest scan showed a large blood clot on the right lower lobe of my lung. Obviously, the shoulder surgery was cancelled. I was put on a blood thinner and was told the protocol would be three to six months on the blood thinner to dissolve the clot before the possibility of the shoulder surgery. I had the follow-up CT scan on July 25, 2023 and the scan showed no blood clot! It was completely dissolved (again, praise God!). I now have an appointment with my orthopedic surgeon in the coming week with the shoulder replacement tentatively scheduled for September 6 or 13, 2023. Until the surgery, I am trying to stay ahead of the constant pain with Tylenol.

2023 has been quite the year so far! As you know, I am now retired. I had intended to continue in my role as Assistant to Bishop Satterlee through the end of August 2025 (don't tell anyone, but that's when I will be 75!). However, these health issues necessitated an earlier retirement. I thoroughly enjoyed the five years that I worked with Bishop Satterlee, the rest of the Synod Staff, and all of the pastors and members of the congregations in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod. Moving into the future, after the shoulder surgery, I accepted Bishop Satterlee's invitation to continue with our synod's Racial Justice process. Pastor David Sprang and I will also work together on a Boundary Training in the coming winter.

I appreciate your continued prayers as I have shoulder surgery and go through the recovery process. For any future communications, you can reach me by email at revrosanne@aol.com.

Having first-hand knowledge that Jesus does come to us during the storms of our lives, I know that Jesus does bring us new life! I am reminded that new life is not a return to an old way of life, but rather to new ways of experiencing God's presence and love. I am looking forward to the ways in which the Spirit moves in my life in the days ahead!

In Christ's love,
Pastor Rosanne M. Anderson

Adult Theological Education - Luther's Small Catechism

NORTH/WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD ELCA

ADULT THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM



JOIN THE REV. DR. KIT KLEINHANS, DEAN OF TRINITY LUTHERAN SEMINARY AT CAPITAL UNIVERSITY, FOR A SIX-WEEK STUDY OF LUTHER'S CATECHISMS!

TUESDAYS STARTING OCTOBER 24
ZOOM

When Luther wrote that familiar question, "What does this mean?" he meant it! He wanted Christians to understand their faith and to see how God was at work in their lives, in the church, and in the world.

Join the Rev. Dr. Kit Kleinhans, Dean of Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University, for a six-week study of Luther's catechisms. Let's dig deep into what God means *for us!*

Before she was Dean at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Dr. Kleinhans taught religion, including Lutheran Confessions and History of Christianity, at Wartburg College for 25 years. A fifth-generation Lutheran pastor and a brilliant theologian and Luther scholar, Dr. Kleinhans cares about her students, the Church, and what it means to be Lutheran today. She has a pastor's heart and is capable of both the deeply esoteric and the foundationally concrete.

The class will meet on six consecutive Tuesday evenings: October 24, 31, November 7, 14, 21, 28 from 7:00 - 8:15pm ET. This course is open to all adults, both laypeople and rostered ministers, and is free of charge. Sessions will be recorded and available to registered participants. Registration is required and will close on October 19, 2023. Register now: <https://forms.gle/DQu3F2QicSDrPjWp8>

Additional information, including Zoom links, will be sent via email closer to the start of the course. If you have additional questions, please contact communications@mittensynod.org.

ELCA Stewardship Webinar: "Stewardship When Economics Are Uncertain"

The economy has been unpredictable as we slowly emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. Unemployment remains low, yet interest rates have jumped considerably, and with three very public bank failures this year, people are being more cautious with their resources. How can we talk about stewardship and money in a way that is honest and honors uncertain economic times?

On August 21, the ELCA in partnership with the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, will host a webinar geared toward helping leaders talk openly, honestly and inspirationally about stewardship and generosity, even in uncertain times. The webinar will be held via Zoom from 7-8pm ET and will be led by the Rev. Meredith McNabb and the Rev. Tim Brown.

Join webinar: [Zoom Link](#) (active on August 21) or visit <https://zoom.us/join> and enter Meeting ID: 835 7971 8246 Password: 000320. One tap mobile: +13017158592,,83579718246# US (Washington DC)

ELCA Vital Congregations Training

The ELCA Vital Congregations Training, Part 2 is a fast paced co-creative and co-experimental training facilitated by leaders with steep experience in redeveloping congregations. This training is intended for those who attended ELCA Vital Congregations, Part 1 as it builds 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 four-session training will be held on August 31, September 14, September 28, and October 5. For more information, contact Pastor David Sprang at davidsprang@mittensynod.org.

Register: <https://bit.ly/3KEieEm>

Synod Finances

	July	Year to Date
Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund		
Mission Support Revenue	97,643	600,246
Other Revenue	1,811	80,256
Total Revenue	99,454	680,503
Churchwide Proportionate Share (50%)	48,821	300,123
Other Expenses	48,913	370,799
Total Expenses	97,734	670,922
Net Change to Fund Balance (Revenue - Expenses)	1,720	9,581
Beginning Fund Balance	517,186	509,326
Ending Fund Balance	518,907	518,907
Other Fund Balances		
Unrestricted-Designated		621,790
Temporarily-Restricted Endowment-Related*		787,969
Temporarily-Restricted		314,678
Permanently-Restricted		1,002,547
Total - All Funds (as of 7/31/23)		3,245,891

*July 31 ELCA Ministry Growth Fund Account Statements were not available at the time of publishing this summary. The amounts shown here reflect balances as of 6/3/23,

ELCA Financial Resources

When congregation treasurers, financial administrators or bookkeepers reach out to the synod office with questions, we frequently refer them to the wealth of resources provided by ELCA Churchwide's Office of the Treasurer.

To review and download these resources, visit <https://elca.org>, click on Resources, then select Financial, then Congregations. A direct link is provided here: <https://elca.org/Resources/Financial#FinanceC>

Compensation Guidelines

As congregation councils begin to think about their 2024 budget process, we remind you that our synod's [2024 Compensation Guidelines](https://bit.ly/4452vFn) are available on our website: <https://bit.ly/4452vFn>

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.

Autumn Leadership Event

The Autumn Leadership Event will be held September 12, 2023 at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids. This year it is open to rostered ministers and lay leaders!

The theme of the event is "Sharing the Story of Jesus with Youth and Young Adults" and will feature presentations from The Rev. Jake Mulder from the Fuller Youth Institute and co-author of the book *Growing Young*.

The Autumn Leadership Event will be held from 9:00am - 5:00pm. The day will include worship, lunch, and three presentations. The registration fee is \$30 and includes lunch and snacks.

All registration forms must be completed online and submitted by September 6, 2023.

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



"God's work. Our hands." Sunday



On Sunday, Sept. 10, congregations across the ELCA will join together for "God's work. Our hands." Sunday. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the ELCA's annual day of service!

The tenth anniversary of "God's work. Our hands." Sunday is a feature story in *Living Lutheran* this month. Read an article celebrating a decade of service in our communities: <https://bit.ly/3qqQqfM>

As you plan for "God's work. Our hands." Sunday, the ELCA has resources available on their website: elca.org/dayofservice. Old Lutheran also has t-shirts and other items available for purchase. The deadline for ordering your congregation's customized T-shirts is **August 18**.

We'd love to hear what your congregation is doing! Send your stories and photos to communications@mittensynod.org and livinglutheran@elca.org so that we can celebrate what God accomplishes through you!

You can also participate on social media using **#GodsWorkOurHands**.

2024 ELCA Youth Gathering

The 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering will be held July 16-20, 2024 in New Orleans under the theme, "Created to Be." It will also include MYLE, tABLE, and Young Adult gatherings.

The Getting Ready Materials, a curriculum designed to get your group together and talking about the daily themes of the Gathering are now available!

Volunteer applications are now open! This cycle, there are five different volunteer opportunities. For a detailed list of responsibilities and deadlines, and to apply, visit the Gathering website.

Learn more: <https://elca.org/gathering>

As you plan for the 2024 Gathering, Pastor Dan Schewe, our synod's ELCA Youth Gathering Champion, is available to answer questions. Email Pastor Dan at mittensynodgathering2024@gmail.com.

Resources for Congregational Visits

We're excited to share new resources for congregational visits! Visit our website to download a customary, liturgy, and bulletin inserts for when Bishop Satterlee, Pastor Bright, and Pastor Sprang visit your congregation!

Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3s2ycBH>

Upcoming Events

September 10	"God's work. Our hands." Sunday	Learn more: https://elca.org/dayofservice
September 12	Autumn Leadership Event for Rostered Ministers	Learn more: https://bit.ly/3PWdCKA
September 17-18	<i>You Are Witnesses of These Things</i> Retreat	Learn more: https://bit.ly/3IxBuBz
October 16-18	<i>My Burden is Light</i> Preaching Retreat	Learn more: http://bit.ly/3K5z0gc
October 23 - 26	Ecumenical Community of Michigan Retreat	Learn more: https://bit.ly/3XTMGjs
October 24	Adult Theological Education: Small Catechism	Learn more: https://bit.ly/3rnwR8l

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	
Messiah/Bay City	Pastor Dan Stonebeck, Interim / Seeking additional candidates	Prince of Peace/Portage	Seeking to call a deacon / Seeking candidates
St. Matthew/Bridgeport (Part-Time)	Pastor Andreas Teich, Stated Supply / Call Process suspended until January 2024	Stony Lake Conference Rev. Sarah Samuelson, Dean	
Trinity/Midland	CALL ACCEPTED: Pastor Jeff Gramza (NWOH); Installation October 22	Harbor of Grace/Muskegon	Pastor Jack Ferra, Interim / Preparing MSP
Resurrection/Saginaw (Part-Time)	Pastor Andreas Teich, Stated Supply / Seeking a partnership or quarter to third time pastor	Sunrise Conference Rev. Megan Crouch, Dean	
Capital Area Conference Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean		New Life/Alcona County	Supply Pastors / Preparing MSP
University/East Lansing	Pastor Gary Bunge retiring September 30 / Preparing MSP	St. Paul/Alpena	Seeking a part-time assistant pastor
Faith/Okemos	CALL ACCEPTED: Pastor Bruce Thorsen, Transitional Pastor; Installation November 11	Traverse Conference Rev. Jonathan Reid, Dean	
Greater Grand Rapids Conference Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean		Feast of Victory/Acme (Part-Time)	Pastor Ruth Overdier, Stated Supply / CALL ACCEPTED: Pastor Haley Vay Beaman; Installation November 19
St. Luke/Grand Rapids	Pastor Galen Knutson, Intentional Interim / Interviewing	St. Paul/Reed City	Pastor Marcy Miller, Stated Supply / Seeking candidates
Trinity/Grand Rapids	Pastor Bob Linstrom retiring November 2023		
Bread of Life/Hudsonville	Supply Pastors		
Zion/Woodland (Part-Time)	Supply Pastors/Interviewing		