

Bishop's Newsletter

December 2022



North/West Lower Michigan Synod

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Advent Colors

In the last few weeks, I've had a number of conversations about the color of Advent, since Advent can be either purple or blue. The color purple is meant to suggest penitence; the color blue is intended to inspire hope. The third candle on the Advent wreath is sometimes pink or rose to suggest joy. Purple is the older color and rose works best with purple to suggest a joyous respite from a penitent Advent. Besides, to me, pink and blue insinuate a reveal party for baby Jesus, which Advent is not.

My Advent observation is that purple and blue are "both/and" rather than "either/or." We are motivated to be penitent—feeling or showing sorrow and regret for having done wrong—by either fear or hope. Together, purple and blue remind us that our penitence, our repentance, is motivated by hope. And that reminds us, that the One who "will come again to judge the living and the dead" is Emmanuel, God-with-us, lying in a manger and dying on a cross. Jesus loves us, becomes one of us, and gives himself for us, no matter what.

This is good news because we have some repenting to do. More than feeling, and showing sorrow or regret, for what we have done wrong, we need to turn around. We need to return to God. We need to change in every area of our life. Fear tries to seduce us to get back to business, as usual, to doing what we've always done. Fear scares us with things that are different to the point that we seek to eliminate the agent of change (ask Jesus). Fear dresses up as hope and tries to convince us that, if we do this or that, or if we don't do this or that, we will get what we want, which is usually getting back to the way things were.

Advent hope is not wishing on a star that things will turn out as we want. Advent hope is the good news that, come what may, Jesus is with us, and the future is securely in God's hands. Advent hope makes us brave, even daring. Advent hope does not make repenting and changing easy, painless, or free of grief. True repentance and change is hard, costly, and heartbreaking. Advent hope assures us that God is on our side, Jesus is with us, and the Holy Spirit directs and empowers us.

So Advent brings us to the Jordan, where, behind all the bluster, John the Baptist calls us to change. How wondrous that John is trying to motivate us to change with fear when Jesus came to bring us hope. So hope enough to be penitent. Hope enough to repent, to turn around, to return to God. Hope enough to change. Dare to hope that much. It's Advent.

With joy in Christ who comes,

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

What the Church Can Learn from Libraries and Laundromats

I have never been homeless; however, a pastor friend of mine, whose family is in the process of moving to a new call, recently spoke about her experiences of moving to a new place, searching for a house, borrowing a place to live, and experiencing life from the perspective of being temporarily semi-homeless. Reflecting on this experience, she shared two places that gave her insight into the ways the church can connect with the community.

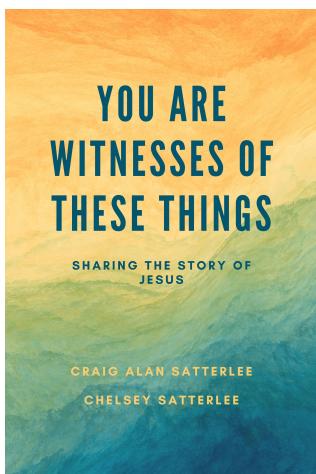
The first place is laundromats. Laundry is something we all have to deal with. It is more of a luxury than I had often considered. To have a washer and a dryer in a room in my house where any time I choose, I can drop a few things in the washer, come back later and put it in the dryer, and in a short while have clean, dry, mostly wrinkle free clothing (if I don't forget the items in the dryer). These days a new washer/dryer set starts at about \$1,200. That may be out of reach for many folks. A person also has to have a place to put a washer/dryer and be able to afford the utility cost to run them. For some, that just isn't possible. For those experiencing homelessness, low income, unemployment, fixed income, or other circumstances, having your own furnished laundry room is not possible. So, they go to the laundromat. In most laundromats there are few chairs, no wi-fi, no TV, and very little to do. This could certainly be a place where a local congregation could be Jesus to those folks. I have heard of churches having "free laundry nights" where they come with quarters, welcoming people, nutritious food, used clothing to give away, and even Bible Study, or a small intimate service of worship. They go to the laundromat to build community and share stories of faith and Jesus. What a great idea!

The second place is libraries. This reminded me of a National Public Radio story I heard about the importance of libraries in our communities today. When I was a kid, I still remember getting my first library card and the adventure of seeking books about technology, adventurous places, or engaging stories. Libraries still have books, but they also have so much more. They have learned to listen to their communities and have become community gathering places. Even in many places fines for overdue books are gone. I checked with the library in the town where I live and they offer eBooks, a mobile app, genealogy research, Michigan ELibrary access, wireless printing, story time, a needlepoint club, a Lego (STEM) club, free wi-fi and technology, music to loan, meeting rooms, and so much more. Libraries have adapted to their community needs and have become a place where people can go for help and to connect in many ways. Gone are the days when we are hushed when entering the solemn rows of books. Libraries are alive and bustling with people. What can the church learn from libraries? The ability to change, to listen to what people need, and to meet those needs. To be a community hub. Some libraries, like book stores, now have a coffee shop. Any ideas?

As we think about libraries and laundromats, what ideas are sparked in you about how the church can reach out, change, adapt and find ways to walk with the folks in your community and share together the stories of faith and Jesus.

Here is a link to my friend's article: <https://bit.ly/3YjMCJm>

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



You Are Witnesses of These Things

With all that is happening in society, the world, and their lives, people are open, even eager, to receive the story of Jesus and the good news that God is working to bring unconditional love and abundant life to all creation. In fact, the only reason new people will join the church is because they received the story of Jesus, want to learn more about Jesus, and experience the church actively following Jesus.

You Are Witnesses of These Things: Sharing the Story of Jesus equips and empowers Christians to share the story of Jesus with people for whom it is new for no other reason than because Jesus is such life-changing, world-shaping good news. This book brings the good news to people who do not yet know Jesus and helps people who know Jesus to be comfortable and confident sharing this good news with others.

Now available on Amazon: <https://bit.ly/3DXlk2e>

Servant Grants from the North/West Lower Michigan Synod

Last month Pastor David Sprang wrote a very timely article for the Bishop's Newsletter updating us on the various grants for mission and ministry that are available to the North/West Lower Michigan Synod through the ELCA. We are blessed as Pastor Sprang works with the ELCA and our congregations to further our ministry in the Mitten Synod in his role as Director of Evangelical Mission. It therefore seems appropriate to give an update on the grants that are available to congregations through the North/West Lower Michigan Synod. These grants are made possible through your generous mission support and endowments.

Connect Grants are designed to help congregations emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic to develop new ideas and ways to meet new people, reconnect with people and move those met online into greater relationship with Jesus and the church. Recipients of a Connect Grant in 2022 are: St. Paul, Alpena for a men's breakfast; Trinity, Battle Creek for funds to cover the community college's use of the building for classes; Christ the King, Gladwin to restart an after school program; St. Luke, Grand Rapids for a summer concert series; Bethlehem, Lansing for training and outreach materials for community engagement; Harbor of Grace, Muskegon to extend their food program to the neighborhood.

Learn more and apply: <https://bit.ly/3Kue3Zb>

Publicly Engaged Church Table (PEC) Grants are meant to assist congregations in the Mitten Synod as they provide ministry in furthering the mission of Jesus in their local communities. PEC grants were awarded to the following congregations in 2022: Immanuel, Allegan for ministries with members who are veterans. Peace, Charlotte for a school backpack and success program and a Thanksgiving meal; University, East Lansing for a program on understanding racism; Settlement, Gowan to help bridge the gap at Barrie's House and for a WELCA Barrie's lunch; Faith, Okemos for food pantries; Ascension, Saginaw for elementary youth weekend food bags; Synod Hunger Team for a scholarship to attend the national ELCA hunger conference.

Learn more and apply: <https://bit.ly/3VPtrpm>

Trapp Grants are designated from an endowment created through the Paul E. Trapp estate. The endowment was created to support "people oriented" ministries in the northern conferences (Sunrise or Traverse) of the Mitten Synod. During 2022 the following congregations were awarded a grant: St. Paul, Alpena for gratitude lunches; Grace, East Tawas for Coats for Kids and a food pantry; Peace, Gaylord for community meals; Bethany, Kaleva for a food pantry; Trinity, Ocqueoc to support Trinity families; New Life, Spruce for a food pantry. Applications for these grants are handled through the Sunrise and Traverse Conferences.

John D. Schleicher Care of Creation Grants are given to inspire and assist congregations of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod to respond to climate change as a matter of faith and discipleship. The grants were established in response to the resolution dealing with the climate emergency that was adopted at the North/West Lower Michigan Synod's 2021 Synod Assembly. The grants are named to honor Bishop Emeritus John D. Schleicher for his commitment to and leadership in care of creation. In 2022, a grant was awarded to Trinity, Grand Rapids to develop a site plan for creating a natural habitat on their property.

Learn more and apply: <https://bit.ly/3qjDFRu>

James 3:17 Grants were recently created to provide a consultant to assist congregations with issues that have emerged as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. A grant was awarded to Holy Trinity, Niles to assist with discerning and accomplishing a holy closure. Applications for these grants are handled through the Synod Office.

Much ministry is happening in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod through these grants. Gratitude is expressed to the congregations and individuals who make these grants possible through their generous mission support.

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

Reducing Food Waste

Patricia Vance, Member of the Environmental Stewardship Task Force

Want to save money and work to help save the planet at the same time? It is estimated that Americans waste 15-25% of the food that they buy. And globally, food waste accounts for 8% of all greenhouse gas emissions. Here are some tips for making that grocery bill shrink by wasting less food.

- Check your pantry, cupboards and freezer before you make a grocery list. When you buy new items, put them behind the old items on the shelves. Scan your fridge for ingredients that are about to expire and incorporate them into your meal plan.
- Put leftovers where they will be noticed and get creative in using them up. Salad greens can be sautéed; heartier greens can be chopped into soups. Leftover veggies and bits of meat can be used in a frittata or in stir-fried rice. Cook soft fruits into oatmeal or use them in a smoothie.
- And speaking of expiration dates – A “sell by” date is meant to be used by the store. A “use by” date means that the quality of the food may not be at peak quality after that. The only meaningful expiration date is on infant formula and some adult feeding formulas. Smell and appearance are the best indicators of whether a food is safe to eat.
- Wisely use what freezer space you have. It’s a good place to stash a half-used jar of spaghetti sauce. Keep a container marked “soup” and throw in leftover bits of veggies and meats. When it’s full add some broth and rice or pasta and have homemade soup.
- Don’t just cook what you are in the mood for. Check the fridge and see what needs to be used. Look up new recipes for it on the internet. Speaking of which, did you know that there is a recipe for banana bread using the peels? Haven’t tried that one yet!

An article last year estimated the average household can save \$1,300 a year by paying more attention to not wasting food. And that was before inflation hit. It’s worth your time and energy to try.

If you’d like more information about environmental stewardship or would like to be more involved in caring for creation, reach out to the North/West Lower Michigan Synod’s Environmental Stewardship Task Force’s chair Linn Kracht at ldkracht@gmail.com.

Christmas Sermon and Worship Videos

There's still time to sign up for Bishop Satterlee's Christmas sermon and the Synod produced Lessons and Carols Worship Service!

Bishop Satterlee will be releasing a Christmas sermon for congregational use on Sunday, December 25, 2022. If your congregation would like to receive access to this video, please complete the form below. Video links will be emailed to those registered on Monday, December 19, 2022 and the sermon video will be released to the general public via YouTube on the afternoon of Sunday, December 25, 2022.

Register: <https://forms.gle/q246erV6tVsLicfR8>

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod will be rereleasing the Synod produced Lessons and Carols video worship service for congregational use Sunday, December 25, 2022 or Sunday, January 1, 2023. If your congregation would like to receive access to this video, please complete the form below. Video links will be emailed to those registered on Monday, December 19, 2022. Register: <https://forms.gle/VuoAjYLWpgh2ygRP7>

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

Synod Finances

	November	Year to Date
Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund		
Mission Support Revenue	113,123	996,954
Other Revenue	7,075	106,437
Net Assets Released from Restriction	0	0
Total Revenue	120,198	1,103,391
Churchwide Proportionate Share (50%)	56,511	498,477
Other Expenses	62,250	613,429
Total Expenses	118,761	1,111,906
Net Change to Fund Balance (Revenue - Expenses)	1,437	(8,515)
Beginning Fund Balance	473,338	483,290
Ending Fund Balance	474,775	474,775
Other Fund Balances		
Unrestricted-Designated		576,316
Temporarily-Restricted Endowment-Related*		638,850
Temporarily-Restricted		293,862
Permanently-Restricted		1,002,547
Total - All Funds (as of 11/30/22)		2,986,350

*November 30 Endowment Fund Statements were not yet published at the time of this summary.
The amount shown here reflects balances as of 10/31/22.

Reminder: Use the Synod Office's New Address

We've noticed that since moving the Synod Office to Dewitt last July and publishing our new mailing address in a variety of ways, some checks are still being sent to our former address (2900 N. Waverly Rd. Lansing, MI 48906). We see some envelopes addressed this way and see some checks printed with this former address because the Synod Office's new address has not been entered in congregations' accounting software programs.

Please use our current mailing address for all mail and checks:

North/West Lower Michigan Synod ELCA
P.O. Box 517
Dewitt, MI 48820

Please take a moment to make this change in your records and share this information with others who many need to do so. Your financial support is crucial to the ministry we do together and although mail sent to our former address does eventually arrive via the USPS forwarding service, there is a delay in delivery which can be significant. For example, our November 30 deposit includes checks dated October 31.

To those who have made this change in your records, thank you! We deeply appreciate your partnership in ministry and pray you find peace and hope in this Advent season.

Holiday Email Scams

As we enter the holiday season, it is likely that email spoofing and scams will become more prevalent. We do not currently know of any email scams affecting Bishop Satterlee, the Synod Staff, or congregations in our synod, but it is important to remain vigilant and be aware of common email scams.

In previous years, these email scams have focused on asking people for gift cards to use as Christmas presents for the Synod Staff. As a reminder, Bishop Satterlee and the Synod Staff **will not** contact you in this way. Please **do not** respond to these emails or send any money or gift cards.

Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3Bq5sVq>

Synod Office Mailing Address

As a reminder, the Synod Office's mailing address is:

North/West Lower Michigan Synod ELCA
P.O. Box 517
Dewitt, MI 48820

Please update all your relevant records to this new address, including those in your accounting software.

All mail and checks will reach us sooner if they come directly to our current mailing address rather than through the USPS forwarding service.

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 Criminal Justice, which presents a comprehensive perspective on matters related to the U.S. criminal justice system and the many communities affected by this system. The statement affirms the principles of the U.S. criminal justice system but also reveals the desperate cries that reflect the system's serious deficiencies. It recognizes that many people in the system serve their professional vocations with competent and humane performance. Yet it also recognizes that current approaches, such as the emphasis on mass incarceration, impose significant costs on all involved in the system and on society as a whole. These approaches are founded on an underlying punitive mindset and persistent inequalities based on race and class.

Read now: <https://bit.ly/3iPHjkB>



And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth

John 1:14



Bishop Satterlee and the Synod Staff will be taking some time away from Zoom and emails from December 24 to January 2. If you have an emergency, please leave a message at the Synod Office (517-321-5066).

We wish you a joyous Christmas and a healthy New Year!

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
Faith/Saginaw	Pastor John Soyster, Interim / Interviewing	Lutheran Church of the Savior/Kalamazoo	Supply Pastors / Preparing MSP
Messiah/Bay City	Supply Pastors / Pastor Dan Stonebeck, Interim beginning January 2023	Messiah/Constantine (Part-Time)	Pastor Tom Pederson, Contracted through December 2023
Our Savior/Saginaw (Part-Time)	Pastor Dan Stonebeck, Stated Supply / Interviewing	Stony Lake Conference	Rev. Sarah Samuelson, Dean
Trinity/Midland	Pastor Dennis Smith, Consulting Pastor / Interviewing	Harbor of Grace/Muskegon	Pastor Jack Ferra, Interim / Preparing MSP
Zion/Freeland	Pastor Dan Stonebeck, Stated Supply / Interviewing	Sunrise Conference	Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean
Capital Area Conference	Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean	St. John/Hagensville	Disaffiliated from the ELCA
Christ/Michigan Center	Pastor Michael Anderson, Stated Supply / Congregational Vote January 1.	St. Paul/Alpena	Seeking a part-time assistant pastor
Trinity/Hillsdale	Supply Pastors / Seeking additional candidates	Traverse Conference	Rev. Jonathan Reid, Dean
Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean	Feast of Victory/Acme	Pastor Ruth Overdier, Stated Supply / Preparing MSP