



**North/West Lower
Michigan Synod**

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Continuing to Learn About Racism

In the fall of 2021, I spent time following parts of the Alabama Civil Rights Trail. Arriving in Birmingham, I found myself excited but also a little apprehensive. I was excited to visit places I had never been, but also apprehensive to hear and relive the hard truths about those places. As I prepared to head out for the day, I opened the Alabama Civil Rights Trail app on my phone and planned my route.

My first stop was Bethel Baptist Church, which was the headquarters for the Alabama Christian Movement for Civil Rights from 1956 to 1961. There was a historical marker and some banners outside the church, but no one around. There are no longer any signs of the three different times this African-American Church was bombed during those years. I sat in the car for a moment thinking, “this will be easy,” just drive by and look.

I then headed downtown to Kelly Ingram Park. This was the site of many gatherings for protest marches on City Hall, especially in 1963. Now the park stands as a memorial to those who gave their lives fighting for equality. The park is bordered on one side by 16th Street and right on the corner is the 16th Street Baptist Church. On the other corner is the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. Freedom Walk, the path through the park, is lined with sculptures. As I walked through, I was surrounded by sculptures of policemen with clubs and snarling dogs—close enough to feel what it would have been like to have their breath on my face and their teeth in my skin. I came face to face with water cannons powered by fire trucks that were used to hinder the protesters, children behind bars in jail, a trio of praying pastors, a statue of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and the “Four Spirits” statue commemorating the four girls who died in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church. The statue depicts them playing joyfully, a stark contrast to the way that they died. The park is a powerful place as each sculpture comes alive with the horrors of racism and the bravery of African Americans who stood up to white supremacy and hatred. I sat there for a long time. I prayed for the eradication of the racism that still exists within me. I prayed that someday “we shall overcome.”



After gathering my thoughts and prayers, I walked across the street and found that the Alabama Civil Rights Institute was just opening. The Institute is part of the Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument and an affiliate of the Smithsonian Museums. It offers a self-guided experience through six galleries, each of which offers a unique experience in the history of civil rights. The last gallery champions civil rights movements around the world. As I moved through the Institute, I was overwhelmed with the information, the method of presentation, and the feelings it rosed in me. Leaving the Institute, I walked back across the street to the park thinking about the civil rights events that happened in my lifetime. I remembered the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the protests shown on the TV news, and my own experience of segregation in the city schools I attended in Columbus, Ohio.

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Crossing the street, I headed to the 16th Street Baptist Church. The congregation was founded in 1873 and the present church building was completed in 1911. It has been the center of Black community life in Birmingham for more than a century. It was a gathering place for protests, worship services, and prayer vigils for an end to racism. It is also known for the bombing that happened on September 15, 1963 when four young girls were killed and many more injured. I walked around the building to get a sense of the place and found no sign of the damage done in the bombing. Each stop on the Alabama Civil Rights Trail invoked a wealth of feelings, but I found the feeling at the 16th Street Baptist Church to be very powerful.

A man appeared from the building and greeted me. I told him I did not have a reservation for the tour but was studying the history of civil rights. He invited me in and directed me to a group of ladies who were the welcoming committee. I found out later that this kind man who welcomed me in was Senior Pastor Arthur Price, Jr. The ladies welcomed me and directed me to the picture gallery that told the story of the church. They said that a group of high school students was due to arrive and I would be welcome to tag along in the back for their orientation and tour. Their presentation was powerful as they described the depth of the hatred and violence that they and their ancestors had experienced in the history of the church. I vividly remember coming home from church that Sunday, September 15th, and listening to the news and seeing the pictures of the devastation of the church building. Even at the age of eight, I pondered where the depth of this kind of hatred could come from. I reflect even more on that as I get older.



After the tour, I visited the Birmingham Jail memorial plaque, which commemorates the place where Dr. King wrote "Letter from Birmingham Jail." One of the most important documents in the civil rights movement, Dr. King's letter challenged local churches to take action against "unjust laws" and not sit idly by waiting for justice to come. I finished my day with an inspiring visit to Rickwood Field, America's oldest professional ballpark still in operation. There was a maintenance man there and he gave me an incredible private tour. Rickwood Field was the home of the Birmingham Black Barons of the Negro Baseball League and hosted famous players like Babe Ruth, Dizzy Dean, Mickey Mantle, Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, Satchel Paige, Willie Mays, and Hank Aaron. It was a powerful day filled with grace, grief, and hope.

Reflecting on my time in Birmingham reminds me how important it is for us to continue studying and celebrating Black History, especially as this month is Black History Month. Studying Black History makes us aware of the history of our country and the way racism has influenced our society. It also shows us that racism still exists in our world. As a church and as a synod, we continue our work of countering racism with the study of history and work to reform the ways we treat people who are different than us. We strive to work together to counter the effects of racism in our church and in the world.

As part of our continuing anti-racism work, our synod is looking at offering trips to learn more about the history of racism both in Michigan and across the country. This would include traveling to historic sites in our state and a portion of the U.S. Civil Rights Trail in Nashville and Birmingham. More information will be available in the coming months, but if this is something that interests you, please let us know here: <https://forms.gle/2XJe8R4Jl8DcaABb8>.

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

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Every February, the U.S. honors the contributions and sacrifices of Black Americans who have helped shape the nation. Black History Month celebrates the rich cultural heritage, triumphs and adversities that are an indelible part of our country's history.

African Descent Ministries of the ELCA celebrates Black History Month with "Talks at the Desk," a four-part video series that explores diverse expressions of the church. A new video premieres each Wednesday in February at 8:30pm ET. Watch at <https://ELCA.org/ADM>

Salt, Light, and Leaven: 2024 Synod Assembly



Jesus names us “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world,” and compares the kingdom of heaven or reign of God to “leaven” (Matthew 5:13–16; 13:33).

At the 2024 Synod Assembly, the North/West Lower Michigan Synod will celebrate ways our congregations are “salt of the earth,” “light of the world,” and “leaven” of the kingdom in ways large and small as we prayerfully participate in Jesus’s own work of reconciling the world to God’s very self.

The 2024 Synod Assembly will be held virtually via Zoom on May 11, 2024. Only voting members will be able to register for and participate in the Zoom meeting. All non-voting members and visitors are invited to watch the Synod Assembly via livestream on YouTube.

All information pertaining to the 2024 Synod Assembly will be posted on the Assembly page of the Synod’s website (<http://bit.ly/3E6VYzP>). Please check the website regularly as information will be updated and added in the coming months. If you have additional questions, please email assembly@mittensynod.org.

Registration

Registration is now open! Given the nature of this year’s Synod Assembly, only voting members will be able to register. All non-voting members and visitors are invited to watch the Synod Assembly via livestream on YouTube. **Registration forms must be completed online and submitted by April 8, 2024.** There will be no late registration.

Given the technological nature of this Synod Assembly, voting members should be comfortable using computers, mobile devices, and/or tablets, learning and using applications, and accessing information from websites.

Additionally, each voting member will need their own email address and voting device (smartphone or tablet). They will also need access to a computer to participate in the Zoom meeting. It is recommended that voting members use a computer to host the Zoom meeting and use a smartphone or tablet as their voting device.

When completing the registration form, make sure to complete the country code field of the address section. For addresses in the United States, the country code is US. **If you are registering multiple people who want to attend pre-assembly sessions on different dates, you will need to complete their registrations separately.** If you have issues completing the form using Google Chrome, please try accessing it in a different internet browser (Safari, Microsoft Edge, Firefox, etc.).

Register Now: <https://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/8449284>

Pre-Assembly Sessions

We will be offering Pre-Assembly Discussion Sessions and Technology Orientations via Zoom in advance of Synod Assembly. Registration for these sessions is included in the Synod Assembly Registration Form. When registering, voting members should select which sessions they would like to attend.

The optional two-hour Pre-Assembly Discussion Sessions will be focused on Resolutions/Memorials and Budget/Compensation Guidelines. We strongly encourage voting members to attend!

- Pre-Assembly Discussion on Resolutions/Memorials - April 30, 6:00-8:00pm ET
- Pre-Assembly Discussion on Budget/Compensation Guidelines - May 2, 6:00-8:00pm ET

All voting members are **required** to attend a one-hour Technology Orientation. These sessions will provide an overview of Zoom basics along with training on the voting process. **Voting members must attend an orientation in order to receive their voting credentials.**

- Technology Orientations - May 7, 8, 9, 6:00-7:00pm ET

Continued from page 3**Nominations**

The Nominating Committee is seeking nominations for six Synod Council positions and seven Churchwide Assembly Voting Members. **All nominations and completed bio forms must be submitted by 5pm on March 22, 2024 to Sandy Schlesinger (sandyschlesinger@gmail.com)**. Additional information and blank bio forms are available on the website.

Assembly Book

The "Assembly Book" will again be a series of pdf documents published on the Synod website. **All materials for the Assembly Book must be submitted to Rebecca Bossenbroek (finance@mittensynod.org) by 5pm on March 22, 2024**. Submission guidelines and requirements are available on the website.

Resolutions and Memorials

To be considered for the 2024 Synod Assembly, all proposed resolutions and memorials must be submitted to the North/West Lower Michigan Synod Resolutions Committee in advance of the Synod Assembly. **All resolutions and memorials must be submitted by 5pm on March 22, 2024 to Ann Stavros (annstavros@mittensynod.org)**. Guidelines and requirements for submitting a resolution or memorial are available on the website.

Synod Ministries Video Submissions

Synod ministries, synod tables, and synod committees are welcome to submit a short video to be considered for the Synod Assembly. Each group may submit one video that is one-two minutes in length. Videos should feature the work of the ministry, table, or committee. Given the business focus and time considerations of this year's Synod Assembly, submitted videos are not guaranteed to be shown during Assembly. All videos will be released via social media after Synod Assembly. Submission guidelines are available on the website. **To be considered, all videos must be submitted by April 3, 2024.**

Salt, Light, and Leaven Congregation Videos

In order to celebrate and share the ways our congregations are "salt of the earth," "light of the world," and "leaven" of the kingdom, congregations or groups of congregations will have the opportunity to produce and submit a video showcasing one way they are salt, light, and leaven. We will select four videos to be shown during the 2024 Synod Assembly. Congregations who submit a video will receive a \$100 donation to their ministry and congregations whose videos are selected to be shown at the 2024 Synod Assembly will receive a \$500 donation to their ministry. All videos will be shared on the Synod's social media after the 2024 Synod Assembly. Submission guidelines are available on the website. **To be considered, all videos must be submitted by April 3, 2024.**

Offering for Synod Assembly

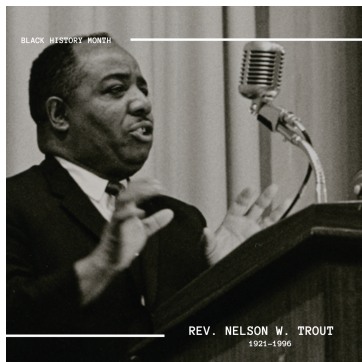
As the 2024 Synod Assembly is a one-day, business-only, virtual event with no worship service, and therefore no designated offering. At congregations's request, we offer a few giving suggestions for those who desire to make a contribution in lieu of the traditional Synod Assembly offering:

- **Living Stones Initiative** - The recently renewed Living Stone initiatives for the period of 2023-2025 continues to provide a way for those committed to, and appreciative of, synodical ministry to give directly to the synod.
- **Synod Disaster Relief Fund** - This fund is instrumental in providing assistance to those affected by natural disasters both in our synod and across the country.

More information about these funds and how to give is available on the website.

Black History Month

February is Black History Month! We honor the contributions of Black Lutherans who helped shape our church by featuring some of the Black Lutherans whose lives and work had an incredible impact on both the individuals directly worked with and the wider church.



Rev. Nelson W. Trout

Nelson W. Trout, an ordained pastor, became the first African American U.S. Lutheran bishop. Trout was a graduate of Capital University and Trinity Lutheran Seminary. He was also awarded a doctor of divinity degree from Wartburg College. Following all of Trout's education, he served as a pastor for several congregations in Wisconsin, Alabama and California. He was passionate, intelligent, and powerful in his preaching and teaching and in 1991, Trinity Seminary established the Nelson W. Trout Lectureship in Preaching in honor of him. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/49tuhyi>

Rev. Will L. Herzfeld

Will Herzfeld, an ordained pastor, played a large role in creating the international presence the Lutheran church has today. Herzfeld received an associate of arts degree from Immanuel Lutheran College and a master of divinity degree from Immanuel Lutheran Seminary. Herzfeld served congregations in Alabama and California and held many other positions before he became the associate executive director of ELCA Global Mission. In this position, he created new relationships and partnerships with 70 church bodies and 25 other institutions. He also placed around 300 ELCA missionaries and volunteers throughout the world. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/49tuhyi>



Rev. Rudolph Featherstone

Rudolph Featherstone, an ordained pastor, has followed his life-calling in leading the African American Lutheran community. Featherstone was the first African American to graduate from Gettysburg College and is also a graduate of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg and Harvard Divinity School. Featherstone served as a pastor in New York City and Detroit and as a professor at Trinity Lutheran Seminary where he taught cross-cultural theological studies and mission. A powerful preacher and teacher, Featherstone dedicated his career to advocating for African American Lutherans. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/49tuhyi>

Rosa Young

Rosa Young's drive and determination enabled her to spearhead the development of Black Lutheranism in the South. In 1912, Young, then a 22-year-old Methodist, started a school for Black children in Wilcox County, Alabama. Bad economic conditions threatened its survival and Young sought assistance from the Lutheran Synodical Conference. They responded positively, supporting her school and sending pastors to the area to start Lutheran congregations. Young embraced Lutheranism with a passion and became the driving force behind new Black Lutheran congregations and parish schools across the county. By 1927 there were 29 Black Lutheran congregations and preaching points in the area, and 27 day schools. During this period Wilcox County was the fastest-growing area of Lutheranism in the United States. Learn more: <https://bit.ly/4bzeVKC>



Attracting Young Families

"How do we attract young families?" Congregations ask. How tightly we cling to the illusion that scores of young families are out there searching for a church home; if we can only attract them to our church, all our problems would be solved. We will meet our congregation's budget, expand our congregation's pool of volunteers, and prolong our congregation's life. So the church is on a quest for the perfect program and congregations seek to call the right pastor to attract young families. When young families don't show up, congregations pin the blame on the pastor or the denomination rather than face the sobering truth that attracting children, youth, and young families is difficult and complicated and will not solve our problems.

There Aren't Scores of Young Families

For starters, there are not scores of young families searching for a church home. Michigan's population is aging while the number of births in our state declines.^[1] Michigan has more than 2 million residents over age 60, representing about 25% of the state's population, and 37% of Michigan residents are 50 and older. Michiganders 85 and older are the fastest-growing age group of all. Our state also has one of the top 15 oldest populations in the nation.

Simultaneously, Michigan holds the second highest drop in the annual number of births since 2000. While the nation has experienced a 5% drop, Michigan's loss approaches 20% (-24,745 births). Only Illinois has fared worse. Michigan had about 153,000 births in 1990, according to U.S. Census figures. Births dropped to 136,000 in 2000 and 114,000 in 2010. In 2017, the last year data is available, Michigan had about 111,000 births.

We experience this decline in closed maternity wards in northern Michigan, sinking school enrollments throughout the state, and certainly in the absence of children in worship. The last time so few babies were born in Michigan was 1944, when the state had about half as many residents as it does today. The trend is not likely to change unless lots of people decide to move to Michigan and have children. Regrettably, each year, 60,000 more people move from Michigan than to Michigan; most of them are younger with an above average education.

In an article for *Second Wave Michigan*, Erick Guthrie, Michigan's official demographer, observes, "You can draw a diagonal line across the state starting at the crook of the thumb (a line that would include Bay City, Midland and Mt. Pleasant), and almost everything north is in natural decline (more deaths than births) already. Over the next decade, that line is going to creep south. Over the next 10-20 years, the entire state will have more deaths than births."

If Michigan's population is both aging and declining, declining congregations may not be the fault of the pastor or program, but the reality of the communities in which they are located. Like aging individuals and their families, church families may need to decide how they will negotiate their aging congregation. Will congregations deny their age? Will congregations become more "age friendly?" Will congregations acknowledge there are things they can no longer do? How will congregations weigh quality versus quantity of church life? Can they fathom leaving home and coming together with another congregation to preserve or enhance their quality of church life?

Young Families Are Staying Home – Even from School

To further complicate the matter, absenteeism in schools, what in my day we called "skipping school" or truancy, increased to an alarming rate since the pandemic.^[2] Nationwide, the rate of chronic absenteeism — defined as missing at least 10% of school days or 18 in a year — nearly doubled between 2018-19 and 2021-22, to 28% of students, according to Thomas Dee, a professor of education at Stanford. Michigan's rate was 39%, the third highest in the country. If parents are not sending their children to school, it is likely that they will not bring them to church, regardless of how good the pastor or program is.

The consequences of absenteeism from school include falling school achievement, deteriorating mental health, social isolation, and elevated youth violence. Less obvious, but equally important, school is where children are awakened to the world's opportunities, learn how to be productive citizens and, for some, find a daily routine and regular meals.

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Can we name the consequences of absenteeism from church? When Jesus is explicitly the heart of a congregation's life, the losses include children hearing regularly that God loves them unconditionally, values them immeasurably, and provides a community in which they belong, no matter what. They are not taught the stories of scripture, especially the good news of Jesus, as their "family stories" that provide meaning and direction for their lives. They are not helped to embrace a way of life that exhibits love of God and neighbor and will sustain them in difficult times; acting as Christians on Sunday tends to make us better people during the week. Church can be a safe place where children come to appreciate music and exercise leadership. When congregations are healthy, families experience the fun of church life that reinforces belonging and commitment.

The reasons for truancy are numerous. During the pandemic, the suspension of in-person instruction for online education had the unanticipated consequence of rendering school less serious and therefore less important. Since the pandemic, many schools continue to offer online classes and material – and so do many churches. Is it possible that online worship has made going to church less serious and therefore less important? The slope from in-person to virtual to nothing at all can get very slippery. The church needs to consider whether online worship has this same unanticipated consequence as online education.

Thanks to online school, parents were delivered from dragging kids out of bed before daybreak, wrestling them into proper clothes, and getting them to the bus stop while trying to get to work. If parents don't want that struggle for school, they're certainly not going to undertake it again for church. Once children get to school or church, they face the discipline needed to sit through a school day or be on good behavior in a worship service. Rather than engaging in the struggle, many families now claim Sunday morning as "family time," time to be at home, to relax, and to do things together. Congregations that want to attract young families need to decide whether they can provide family-friendly alternatives to Sunday morning and perhaps modify their expectations of acceptable behavior.

As some congregations know, sometimes kids stay home because they lack school clothes and school supplies. How can congregations better address those needs? And how can the congregations change their expectations of what it takes for families to come to church and lovingly communicate those changes to young families?

Attracting Young Families

Experts conclude that families need help to rebuild the habit of going to school. How much more do families need help to rebuild the habit of going to church, which, in fact, may not be a manner of rebuilding but of trying something new. Congregations desiring to attract young families should decide how they can and will be helpful. Here are 10 steps you might take.

1. Decide how your congregation will participate in helping to rebuild the habit of returning to school. Discover whether absenteeism is a concern in your community. Some congregations might provide school supplies and clothes. Others might offer after school study and tutoring. Still others might decide to provide direct support to teachers. Reach out to a school near your church and ask what you can do to help.
2. Decide whether your congregation truly desires young families to come to your church. Parents today do not want to drop their kids off in the nursery; ask them to do so and they are likely to leave. Young families bring noise to worship and leave Cheerios in the pew. If young families are going to volunteer, it will be a while before they do. Congregations also need to consider what they are willing to change, let go of, and give up to attract young families.
3. Consider whether your congregation is better suited to become "age friendly" and attract seniors. Some experts contend that, except for their grandchildren, many seniors prefer not to worship with the noise and chaos that children sometimes bring. Only large congregations appear to be able to attract both seniors and young families simultaneously.
4. Determine whether there are, in fact, children and young families in your neighborhood and community to attract to your church. Research your community's demographics, including school enrollment. Consider the ministries to young families of neighboring congregations. Are there enough young families in the neighborhood to support more than one congregation's ministry?

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5. Treat young families as gifts entrusted to your congregation by God rather than as resources that will serve your congregation. "At that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will'" (Luke 10:21). Jesus does more than command that disciples must not hinder children from coming to him. Jesus makes children a model for adults. Jesus set a child in the midst of the people as an example (Matthew 18:2-5; Mark 9:36-37; Luke 9:46-47). Jesus teaches that unless we turn and become like children, we will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17). Welcome children and those who bring them as our teachers. Expect nothing from young families and be open to and surprised by what you receive.
6. If you want children and young families to come to your church, go to where children and young families live their lives. Public school activities such as sports games, plays, and band concerts are a place to start. The pastor cannot do this alone. A relationship with the pastor does not automatically transfer or extend to the congregation. Seniors sitting in the stands wearing church t-shirts and cheering while expecting nothing in return is powerful for families whose grandparents may live far away.
7. Help families connected to the congregation reinforce the habit of coming to church. Phone calls, emails, cards, and texts are all appropriate means. The approach must be genuinely loving rather than judgmental and certainly not judgmental dressed up as loving.
8. In time, visit young families at home in such a way that they experience love rather than judgment. These visits are not just the pastor's responsibility. Again, a relationship with a pastor does not automatically extend or transfer to a congregation. Share the story of Jesus. Ask about the family's desires and needs and how the congregation might help to meet them. Ask to pray with the family.
9. Provide opportunities to participate in the congregation and ways of connecting to the congregation that cater to young families. Do not ask the young families you are trying to attract to develop the program and take charge of it.
10. When you know a young family, and they have become part of the congregation, invite them into service and leadership.

If this sounds like a lot of work, you're right. It is a lot of work. This is not a "quick fix" for congregations seeking money and volunteers. Each step takes at least a couple of months to organize, a few months more to implement, and some steps, like going where young families are, are ongoing. Congregations are therefore wise to consider whether they have the commitment, energy, and resources to undertake this work.

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

^[1] Estelle Sloomaker and Patrick Dunn. Special report: Michigan prepares for a rapidly aging population by becoming more "age-friendly." Second Wave Michigan. April 27, 2023. Run French. "'Where Have All The Babies Gone?' Michigan births lowest since 1944." Bridge Michigan. March 11, 2019.

^[2] Alec MacGillis. "Skipping School: America's Hidden Education Crisis." ProPublica. January 12, 2024.

This article was originally published on Bishop Satterlee's website: <https://craigasatterlee.com/2024/02/08/attracting-young-families/>

Updates from the Environmental Stewardship Task Force

Pat Vance, Environmental Stewardship Task Force

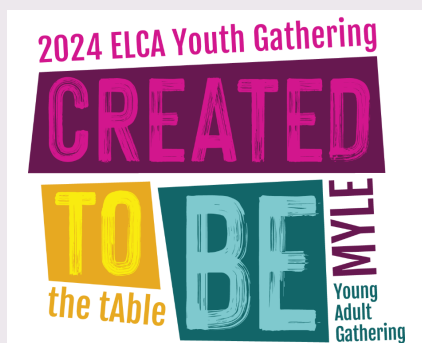
Who, what, where, when and how are the tenets of good reporting. Here are some updates from the Synod's Environmental Stewardship Task Force.

Who and Where: The congregations of the Mitten Synod. Some have formed Green Teams, some have left the task to their congregation's stewardship committees.

What: Green Teams are answering the call to protect and cherish God's Creation by recycling, eliminating polystyrene foam and reducing the use of single-use plastics, getting more energy efficient equipment, posting information around their buildings, investigating and installing alternative energy sources, using fair-trade coffee, and doing utility audits and acting on those recommendations. We also know that at least three congregations have installed or are in the process of installing solar panels.

When: Now! The actions listed above are what congregations reported doing in a survey at the 2023 Synod Assembly. It's urgent to take action now.

How: Contact the Environmental Stewardship Task Force through Paul Busekist (paul.busekist@bethlehemtc.org) for help forming an effective Green Team. Contact Solar Faithful for information on how to install solar energy. Contact your local utility for an energy audit. Visit Michigan Interfaith Power and Light for more ideas: <https://www.miip.org>



The 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering will be held July 16-20, 2024 in New Orleans under the theme, "Created to Be." Registration is now open! Learn more: <https://elca.org/gathering>

Congregational Leaders can apply for funds from The North/West Lower Michigan Synod ELCA Youth Gathering Fund, which seeks to make the ELCA Youth Gathering more accessible for families and congregations in our synod, by completing this application: <https://bit.ly/3QYRQsz>

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

Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church

At the 2022 Churchwide Assembly, several memorials directed the ELCA to convene a Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC). The CRLC has been meeting since the summer of 2023, and has been considering our church's structures, constitutional language, and how our church might change to be better prepared to meet the needs of our current time. Learn more: <https://www.elca.org/crlc>

From within our synod, we are blessed to have Dr. Candy McCorkle (Immanuel - Jackson) serve on the Commission. As vice president of diversity and inclusion at Western Michigan University, Dr. McCorkle's knowledge, skills, and experience align perfectly with the objectives of this strategic initiative. If you have questions about the work of the CRLC, you can contact Dr. McCorkle at candysm12@gmail.com.

The CLRC invites all members of the ELCA to share their thoughts through an online survey, which will close on March 15, 2024. The survey is expected to take 15-20 minutes and all responses will be kept strictly confidential.

Complete the survey: <https://bit.ly/49Qumwr>

Synod Finances

	January	Year to Date (Feb-Jan)
Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund		
<i>Figures are unaudited and subject to adjustments following review</i>		
Mission Support Revenue	108,518	1,214,636
Synod Assembly Revenue	0	40,550
Other Revenue	4,483	83,439
Total Revenue	113,001	1,338,626
Churchwide Proportionate Share (50%)	54,259	607,318
Synod Assembly Expense	0	54,655
Other Expenses	62,810	685,697
Total Expenses	117,069	1,347,670
Net Change to Fund Balance (Revenue - Expenses)	(4,068)	(9,044)
Beginning Fund Balance	149,167	509,326
Transfers directed by Synod Council		(355,183)
Ending Fund Balance	145,099	145,099
Other Fund Balances		
Unrestricted-Designated		997,981
Temporarily-Restricted Endowment-Related*		841,258
Temporarily-Restricted		319,194
Permanently-Restricted		1,035,547
Total - All Funds (as of 1/31/24)		3,339,079

*January 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 12/31/23.

Annual Audit

In the coming weeks, a large sampling of congregations will receive a request from our auditors to verify their mission support contributions as shown in our records. Timely return of these requests will be helpful and appreciated.

Thank you!

Stories of Faith in Action

The February 2024 Mission Support Memo is now available! This month highlights the beauty and difficulty of attending a closing service of a local church in the Southeast Michigan Synod.

This month's Mission Support Memo and previous Mission Support Memos are located on the ELCA website: <https://bit.ly/3Qf7waL>

Annual Congregation Reports

All ELCA congregations, synod-authorized worshipping communities, and new starts need to complete the annual congregation report.

A packet with a paper copy of Form A, instructional documents, and the password that congregations or communities will use to file their report online was mailed in mid-January. The online form is accessible at elca.org/congregationreport.

Annual Rostered Minister Reports

Annual Rostered Minister Report forms are now available! All rostered ministers are expected to complete and return a report to Bishop Satterlee.

Bishop Satterlee will respond to all rostered minister reports when he returns from sabbatical in April 2024.

Download Forms: <https://bit.ly/38HxIEU>.

Synod Pets

Calling all pets! We are working on an upcoming project featuring the pets of the Mitten Synod. If you would like your pet to be featured, please email a photo of your pet, their name, and your connection to the Mitten Synod (ex: congregation name) to communications@mittensynod.org. As the resulting project will be shared publicly in synod communications, submission of a photo confirms your consent to have it and the corresponding information shared.

Trinity Seminary Nelson Lecture Series

Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University will host the Nelson Lecture Series on March 13-14, 2024 at Huntington Recital Hall Capital University.

On March 13, Jeremy Gillet will present "Black and Twenty-Five in America" and on March 14, Jenny Sung will present "God With Us: Seeing God in people around the world." These events are free and open to the public!

Learn more: <https://bit.ly/42CiHi2>

Lutheran Summer Music

Enrollment is open for Lutheran Summer Music 2024 and spots are filling fast! Students receive advanced musical instruction through large ensembles, chamber music, private lessons with collegiate-level faculty, and elective classes.

Lutheran Summer Music is open to students who have completed grades 8-12. Learn more at LSMacademy.org/nominate.

Upcoming Events

March 7	Deepening Our Relationship with the Spirituality of Fundraising	Learn more: https://bit.ly/4byEjQD
March 13-14	Trinity Lutheran Seminary: Nelson Lecture Series	Learn more: https://bit.ly/42CiHi2
March 22	Synod Assembly Book Deadline	Learn more: http://bit.ly/3E6VYzP
March 22	Synod Assembly Memorials and Resolutions Deadline	Learn more: http://bit.ly/3E6VYzP
March 22	Synod Assembly Nominations Deadline	Learn more: http://bit.ly/3E6VYzP
March 29	Good Friday	
March 31	Easter	
April 3	Synod Assembly Videos Deadline	Learn more: http://bit.ly/3E6VYzP
April 8	Synod Assembly Registration Deadline	Learn more: http://bit.ly/3E6VYzP

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	Pastor Emily Olsen-Brandt, Dean	Kalamazoo Conference	Pastor Joan Oleson, Dean
Prince of Peace/Rose City	Pastor David Sprang, Administrative Pastor / Supply Pastors / Discerning future	Stony Lake Conference	Pastor Sarah Samuelson, Dean
		Harbor of Grace/Muskegon	CALL ACCEPTED: Pastor Jack Ferra; Installation February 18
Capital Area Conference	Pastor Neil Brady, Dean	Sunrise Conference	Pastor Megan Crouch, Dean
Grace/Lansing	Pastor Christin Fawcett last Sunday, January 28, 2024 / Supply Pastors	New Life/Alcona County	Supply Pastors / Seeking candidates
Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Pastor Julie Schneider-Thomas, Pastor Kate Van Valkenburg, Co-Deans	St. Paul/Alpena	Seeking a part-time assistant pastor
Trinity/Grand Rapids	Pastor Dennis Smith, Interim Senior Pastor / Preparing MSP	Traverse Conference	Pastor Jonathan Reid, Dean
Bread of Life/Hudsonville	Pastor David Beese, Stated Supply / Discerning future	Advent/Lake Ann	Pastor Rosanne Anderson, Administrative Pastor / Supply Pastors
Peace/Sparta	Supply Pastors / Seeking candidates	St. Paul/Reed City	Supply Pastors / Seeking candidates
Zion/Woodland (Part-Time)	Supply Pastors / Seeking candidates		