



North/West Lower Michigan Synod

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Words Matter

I say this as one known (and criticized) for being direct, even blunt: words matter. To be direct, even blunt, I say this in response to video footage, released on January 9, of rioters who, having assaulted our nation's Capitol, stormed the halls chanting, "Hang Mike Pence!". I also say this in thinking about the words used by some leaders in our government, including representatives, senators, and the president, in response to the assault on our nation's Capitol. Words matter.

To be even more direct, even more blunt, I say this because Scripture tells us words matter. As an act of recognition and discipline, I am intentionally recalling James 3:2-12. If you have not read it in a while, permit me to share it with you.

"Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits.

"How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing.

"My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can saltwater yield fresh."

I suppose I could provide a commentary on James' commentary. However, as I spend time with them, I find these words speak volumes for themselves. A power of scripture is that it can speak directly to us; one reason scripture is the norm of our faith and life.

James reminds us that words matter; our tongues have the power to do great good and to bring devastating damage. I suspect that, were James writing today, he would also include fingers, keyboards, and communicating on social media.

It is not faithful to use our tongues to destroy. Yet, in these challenging days, to be faithful is not to be silent. To be faithful is to mind our tongues.

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

Points of Light

*"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the **Lord** has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the **Lord** will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn" (Isaiah 60:1-3).*

On the day of Epiphany, January 6, Isaiah 60 was the Old Testament text. We are living in a very dreary time. A time where it often seems that the darkness is overtaking the light. But the prophet reminds us about the light of God. Many years later we hear it again in reference to Jesus and his fulfilling God's promises, "a light no darkness can overcome".

The current pandemic, political unrest, economic uncertainty, and racial injustice has brought about a time when we wonder if there is light. But God shines light in places we might not be aware. In the 1950s and 1960s, several authors used the image of "1000 points of light". President George Bush also used it in his 1988 acceptance speech. I would like to offer **113 Points of Synod Light**. While I do not have room for a report from all 113 congregations in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod, I will share some of my favorites:

- This fall, our Synod offered COVID-19 Education Grants and, so far, we have given seven grants to congregations. Working in consultation with local school districts, three grants were given for enhanced Wi-Fi to better help virtual schooling in poor access areas, two grants were given to be used for purchasing educational manipulative toys for kindergarten and pre-school classes so that teachers do not have to disinfect them between each class, and one grant was given for sanitary kits for kids that show up at school without a mask, hand sanitizer, or disinfectant wipes.
- Our Synod has eight congregations in the five county Mid-Michigan flood area where more than 5,000 homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed. Assisted by Lutheran Disaster Response, our congregations have been actively assisting those affected by the floods by rebuilding homes, giving emotional and spiritual help, and providing supplemental food and water. These efforts have been supported by over \$28,000 that was donated to the Synod for flood relief.
- In May, the ELCA began a campaign for a COVID-19 Response Fund. All of the funds collected are being channeled through synods to congregations continuing and increasing outreach during the pandemic. Priorities are for providing meals and food assistance, shelter for those experiencing homelessness, and personal needs items. Currently, 23 congregations around the Synod applied for and have received COVID-19 Grant funds. They include providing community meals for those in need, food pantry and food bank distributions; support for homeless shelters and church programs for sheltering homeless people; and personal needs pantries including hygiene supplies and diapers. It is estimated that through the pandemic, congregations in the Synod are touching the lives of around 2,000 people a week in extra outreach. In addition to the usual outreach areas, additional efforts have been made to include Native American tribe members, those living in poverty, migrant farmworkers, and those who have found themselves new to poverty and homelessness due to the pandemic.

I give God thanks and praise that congregations of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod have been points of light in a dark world throughout this pandemic and I pray that the new and existing connections to our communities will be renewed and strengthened even after the pandemic subsides.

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

Equipping Leaders for Mission and Ministry

Equipping Leaders for Mission and Ministry (ELMM) is excited to announce their winter course offerings:

The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, January 15-16, 2021 with Professor Wally Taylor

Angels and shepherds at the birth of Jesus; parables and Mary and Martha; the road to Emmaus and the mission of the church to take the Good News to the ends of the earth—these are the themes we will explore in the only two-volume work in the New Testament. A special emphasis is outreach/evangelism—and food!

The Gospel of John, February 5-6, 2021 with Professor Wally Taylor

Although sharing with the other New Testament gospels the same basic outline of the story of Jesus, the Fourth Gospel pushes the account of his life all the way back before creation and divides the narrative of Jesus' life into the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory. The "I am" sayings provide unique insights into who Jesus is for us, and the importance of believing reminds us how the Holy Spirit works in us.

The Letters of Paul, February 26-27, 2021 with Professor Wally Taylor

In his letters and in his personal witness the Apostle Paul gave the early church—and us—the theological grounding that is still the foundation of what we believe and teach about Jesus. His language about the cross, justification, baptism, and resurrection was at the heart of his ministry, of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, and is at the center of the Lutheran Church today.

Registration information is available on the ELMM website: <https://elmm.org/events>

North/West Lower Michigan Synod 2021 Synod Assembly



As 2020 comes to a close, the North/West Lower Michigan Synod is looking ahead to our 2021 events. Given the ongoing concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic, many events will continue to be held differently than in past years. This includes our biggest event, Synod Assembly. For the 2021 Synod Assembly, Synod Council has approved a virtual assembly, which will be held May 14-15, 2021.

While next year's assembly will be different than past years' assemblies, we are looking forward to using this opportunity to engage members in new and exciting ways. The Synod Staff is already at work planning and more information will be available in the coming months.

Due to the nature of a virtual assembly, we are expecting to need volunteers to help with technology. If you have experience in filming, video and/or audio editing, production, technology support or any related fields and are interested in volunteering, please complete the interest form linked here: <https://bit.ly/2WdBQWf>

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

Synod Finances

	December	Year to Date
Net Assets (aka "fund balance") without donor restrictions, undesignated (as of 1/31/20) <i>This fund balance relates to the budget adopted by Synod Assembly each year and revised as needed by Synod Council. It reflects cumulative revenue less expenses over time.</i>	182,221	155,747
Mission Support Revenue	117,245	1,170,496
Other Revenue	6,073	56,508
Net Assets Released from Restriction	0	0
Total Revenue	123,318	1,227,004
Churchwide Proportionate Share (50%)	58,623	585,248
Other Expenses	58,372	608,957
Total Expenses	116,994	1,194,205
Net Change to Fund Balance (Revenue - Expenses)	6,323	32,789
Net Assets (aka "fund balance") without donor restrictions, undesignated (as of 12/31/20)	188,545	188,546
<i>In addition to the unrestricted fund balance described above, our synod has four more fund categories:</i>		
Net Assets without donor restrictions, designated (includes synod-designated endowment fund, cash flow reserve, etc.)		633,600
Temporarily-restricted Net Assets related to endowment funds (accumulated gains on investments and disburseable distributions)		759,816
Temporarily-restricted Net Assets subject to specified purpose (for use as directed by donors)		380,584
Permanently-restricted Net Assets (original gifts in perpetuity subject to spending policy as directed by donors)		924,639
Total Net Assets 12/31/20		2,887,184

Behind the Numbers

When Synod Council met in early December, we spent some time talking about fund balance (aka net assets). When we review year-to-date actual revenue and expenses, it is important to consider the beginning and ending fund balance.

In the summary above, we see that we began this fiscal year with \$155,747 in our unrestricted, undesignated fund. From February through December 2020, we have recorded \$1,227,004 in revenue and \$1,194,205 in expenses, increasing our fund balance by \$32,798. So as of December 31, we have \$188,546 in our unrestricted, undesignated fund.

In addition to the unrestricted, undesignated fund for which Synod Assembly adopts the budget each year, we have four other fund categories. We see brief descriptions and 12/31/20 balances above. We rejoice in the abundance of financial resources available to fund ministry!

Rebecca Bossenbroek, Director of Finance

Synod Staff Video Sermons for Weekly Worship

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

Rostered Ministers are invited to sign up to receive the sermons in advance on Wednesday afternoons. These sermons are then released to the general public on Sunday afternoons.

Sign-up: <https://bit.ly/3hnZd7A>

Coronavirus Resources

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

On December 18, The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services updated its epidemic order to allow indoor activities where Michiganders can remain masked. The new order will last until January 15. Bishop Satterlee continues to recommend the suspension of indoor in-person worship.

Learn More: <http://bit.ly/3oCuWA6>

Many congregation leaders are asking how they can utilize technology to conduct meetings necessary for the business of the congregation. The North/West Lower Michigan Synod has provided an FAQ document with common questions related to conducting a remote meeting. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/3nwsdyd>

View all resources: <https://bit.ly/2MPx4to>

Annual Rostered Minister Reports

2020 Annual Rostered Minister Report forms are now available! All rostered ministers are expected to complete and return a report to Bishop Satterlee. To complete the annual report form, please download the appropriate form and save it to your computer before completing it. Once completed, please email the report to Bishop Satterlee at bishopcraigsatterlee@mittensynod.org.

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

Upcoming Events

January 15-16	ELMM: The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts	Zoom	https://elmm.org
January 18	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day		
January 20-23	ELCA World Hunger Leadership Gathering	Online	bit.ly/2021WHLG
January 21	Ignite the Church Conference	Online	https://www.ignitethechurch.net
February 5-6	ELMM: The Gospel of John	Zoom	https://elmm.org
February 18	Ignite the Church Conference	Online	https://www.ignitethechurch.net
February 26-27	ELMM: The Letters of Paul	Zoom	https://elmm.org

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

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.

Currently, there are no active open calls in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod.

Bay Conference	Rev. Emily Olsen, Dean	Kalamazoo Conference	Rev. Kjersten Sullivan, Dean
Capital Area Conference	Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean	Stony Lake Conference	Rev. Sarah Samuelson, Dean
Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean	Sunrise Conference	Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean
		Traverse Conference	Rev. Scott Torkko, Dean