



North/West Lower Michigan Synod

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Sleepless in Our Synod

I was recently asked what is keeping me up at night. It's my inability to answer this question: What will the Synod response be when what happened to George Floyd in Minneapolis happens in Grand Rapids, Lansing, or Kalamazoo? I used to assure myself things like that don't happen here, but Minneapolis, which I consider a liberal, diverse, Lutheran city, taught me better. I don't have a complete answer to this question yet, but I am committed to finding our way forward.

Part of the answer is that we will not wait for something horrific to happen to respond. I am grateful that Pastor Anderson is leading weekly conversation on racial justice and that leaders faithfully participate in that conversation. I am committed to bringing quality training on systemic racism to every conference throughout our Synod. Racial justice will also be the theme of our 2022 Synod Assembly.

I know discrimination firsthand. I also know the discrimination I experience as a person who lives with a disability does not compare to discrimination based on race. I know what it is to be stared at; I do not live with the daily fear of being shot. So, I find myself a bit frustrated that not being able to see well prevents me from joining in the demonstrations. Early on, Pastor Sarah Friesen-Carper explained that my marching would be more a hindrance than a help because, as we have witnessed, the tenor can change from peaceful to violent in an instant and I wouldn't see it coming. So I don't march. But if I could...

So, if you participate in peaceful demonstrations for racial justice, I request you do two things. First, be so clear how your participation is a response to your faith in Jesus Christ that you can explain it to someone who asks. Second, if you let me know you are going, I will pray for you. I would be honored to pray with you.

For anyone concerned that I have ventured from faith into politics, I can only say that, when the president went to St. John's Episcopal Church and lifted the Bible into the air, he invited Christ's Church and its bishops into the conversation. Moreover, when the president held up the Bible upside down, I recalled that the American flag flying upside down is a distress call, an SOS. Indeed, we need our God to save us by bringing the reign of justice, peace, and love proclaimed and promised in sacred scripture, and embodied in our Lord Jesus Christ. As Christ's body in the world, we participate in the new life Jesus brings to all people.

I was recently asked how people could hold me in prayer. When I am not sleeping, I ask God for wisdom, attentiveness, and courage. I covet your prayers.

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

Racial Justice

Commemoration of the Emanuel Nine – June 17

On June 17, 2015, Clementa C. Pinckney, Cynthia Marie Graham Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lee Lance, DePayne Middleton-Doctor, Tywanza Sanders, Daniel Lee Simmons, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, and Myra Thompson were murdered by a self-professed white supremacist while they were gathered for Bible study and prayer at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (often referred to as Mother Emanuel) in Charleston, South Carolina. Pastors Pinckney and Simmons were both graduates of the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary.

Congregations of the ELCA are encouraged to reaffirm their commitment to repenting of the sins of racism and white supremacy which continue to plague our world and to mark this day of penitence with study and prayer. The ELCA has provided resources to help congregations mark this day. Many of these materials were recently produced for this first year of marking the commemoration; among the others are helpful ELCA websites and documents as well as resources from our ecumenical partners. View Resources: <https://bit.ly/3fgnITS>

An **ELCA Prayer Service for Commemoration of the Emanuel Nine** will be available for online viewing at 12pm Eastern Time on June 17. The service will include leaders from around the ELCA and ecumenical partners, including episcopal leadership from the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton will preach the sermon. We invite you to join Bishop Satterlee in watching the service on Facebook: <https://facebook.com/MittenSynodELCA>

ELCA Conference of Bishops' Statement on Combating Racism and White Supremacy

Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Dreasjon (Sean) Reed, and George Floyd were our neighbors. We grieve with, pray for and stand in solidarity with the families and friends of all whose loved ones have been and continue to be victims of injustices run amok, racist violence and the insidious venom of white supremacy. The ELCA Conference of Bishops has released a statement reaffirming this church's commitment to combat racism and white supremacy. Read the full statement: <https://bit.ly/37tCcNw>

Qualities and Commitments of White Allies

As we are living through the recent experience of the murder of George Floyd and continue the struggle to overcome systemic racism, I share with you the following information from Allies for Change:

Those who strive to be allies are people passionately committed to eliminating the system of oppression that unjustly benefit them. The word "ally" should be regarded as a verb rather than a noun because it has to do with action, showing up, and right relationship. It is not a static reality, once and for all achieved. Nor is it a label that people with privilege can claim for themselves. People who are targets of oppression determine who their allies are.

Arduous, persistent, and soul-stretching work is required of white people if they want to understand the privilege they carry, nurture authentic relationships across race, and act collaboratively with people of color to dismantle racism. Good intentions and eagerness to "help" are not enough. Consistence and long-term commitments are essential. Trust has to be earned, again and again.

Allies for Change is a network of anti-oppression educators who share a passion for social justice and a commitment to creating and sustaining life-giving ally relationships and communities.

Learn More: <https://www.alliesforchange.org>

Suggested Reading

[Waking Up White](#) by Debby Irving

[White Fragility](#) by Robin Diangelo

Rev. Rosanne M. Anderson
Assistant to the Bishop

Floods Ravage Mid-Michigan

Rev. David E. Sprang

Early in the evening on Sunday, May 17, it started raining. Weather forecasters predicted there would be heavy rains, and those heavy rains did not stop. As the rain continued to come down, the floods began to rise. On Monday, the headwaters of the Tittabawassee river system in Gladwin County began to flood and by Tuesday there was fear of dams breaching. Homes in Gladwin County were evacuated and many had over three feet of flood water in their houses. As the waters reached the crests of the many dams, evacuations were ordered downstream in Midland County. Late in the evening on May 19, the Edenville dam failed and then the Sanford dam failed sending 21 billion gallons of waters rushing downstream. In Gladwin County, an estimated 800 homes were damaged and in Midland County over 2,500 homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed. Flood damage was reported in western Saginaw County including homes and roads and also in Arenac County with flooding along the Rifle River.

Congregations in the affected area include Trinity – St. Timothy Midland, Christ the King Gladwin, Hope Rhodes, St. Paul AuGres, Zion Freeland, and Ascension, Saginaw. Trinity began housing evacuees and offering meals, volunteers began bringing supplies to the emergency shelters, and pastors began checking on church and community members who lived near water. Since that time, volunteers from those congregations have been helping with immediate needs like food, shelter, and personal care items. We give thanks that no one died.



With the reorganization of Lutheran Social Services to Samaritas, coordination for Lutheran Disaster Response was shifted to the synods. Pastor David Sprang, Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission has taken on the responsibility for the North/West Lower Michigan Synod. Pastor Sprang immediately connected with Lutheran Disaster Response staff at the Churchwide Office and calls were made to investigate where help was needed. Using funds from the North/West Lower Michigan Synod Disaster Relief Fund, the Synod has supplied food, water, cleaning supplies, and baby care supplies to shelters and sites in Gladwin and Midland counties. The Synod has also joined Michigan Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster as the ELCA is a member of the national organization to help assist those affected.



Much of the initial cleanup has finished and Pastor Sprang is now talking with rostered ministers, county officials, and other church disaster organizations to see what role the Synod and Lutheran Disaster Response will play in the long term recovery plan for Mid-Michigan.

Thank you to all who have donated and helped support our work in helping those affected by the flooding. We are continuing to collect funds for recovery efforts through the Synod website: <https://www.mittensynod.org/donate/>. In addition, Thrivent is offering a matching gift program that will assist Mid-Michigan and the Midland/Gladwin Community Foundation is also collecting gifts.

COVID-19 Response: Synod Grants

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the ELCA raised funds for congregations helping with vital needs in their communities, especially congregations serving impoverished communities or communities of color. In the first round of grants, the Synod received \$7,500 from the ELCA COVID-19 Response Fund and \$20,000 from Lutheran Disaster Response. A grant application was formed and sent to congregations. There have now been three rounds of grants and 18 congregations have participated. Currently, the Synod has given \$21,500 to congregations to assist in feeding, sheltering, and distributing personal needs products.

Here are a few of our congregations' stories:

- Trinity, New Era's food and baby supply pantry distributes clean diapers and baby supplies to those in need in West Michigan. It serves many members of the Latino community and there has been a 25% increase in usage since COVID-19 started.
- Trinity, Grand Rapids partners with many other congregations in the area to support Family Promise, a homeless program using church facilities. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, they cannot use church buildings so they have been using hotels to house an average of 50 people a night. The grant funds help Family Promise pay for these hotel rooms.
- Immanuel, Jackson has a food pantry located in Jackson's downtown area. It is used by people of various ethnicities who need emergency food. Immanuel also has a history of giving books to kids who come to the food pantry with their parents.
- Christ the King, Gladwin is the primary site in Gladwin County for emergency food distributions from the Food Bank of Northern Michigan. After the stay at home order was issued, the congregation and community moved from monthly to weekly distributions. On average, 500+ families receive boxes of food including meat and fresh produce. They have partnered with the Knights of Columbus to handle traffic flow.
- Sudanese Christ Lutheran, Wyoming cares for their community members. Many have been laid off as a result of the pandemic so the community has been helping those families with food, clothing and other needs.
- Zion, Saginaw, a multicultural congregation in the courthouse district, feeds about 250 seniors a week through their free senior lunch program. They also offer a food pantry, which has been open every day throughout the pandemic.
- St. John, Baroda and Saron, St. Joseph have partnered to help the Holy Family Catholic Health Care which assists those living in migrant farm worker camps in Southwest Michigan. The camps are becoming more active as the growing season gets started.
- Immanuel, Suttons Bay partners with other communities on the Leelanau Peninsula to support their local food pantry and provide daily free lunches. About 40% of the clients are from the Native American tribes in the community.
- New Life, Alcona; Spruce, Spruce; Grace, Alpena; and St. Thomas, Cheboygan partnered to apply for a grant for their food pantries in the northeast part of the the state. Poverty is often hidden in these areas, but there has been a 20-35% increase in demand.

There still seems to be an overwhelming need in Michigan for food assistance and housing needs. The Synod has applied for another round of ELCA COVID-19 Response Grants so we can continue to assist congregations in serving their communities. We give thanks to God for the overwhelming way people of faith are stepping up to assist those in need during this time of crisis. We are truly the hands and feet of Jesus giving food to the hungry and rest for the weary.

Rev. David Sprang
Assistant to the Bishop & Director for Evangelical Mission

Getting Rest in the Storm

"A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But Jesus was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm" (Mark 4:37-39).

As we continue to face a global pandemic and adjust to a "new normal", I know that we are tired. Our pastors and deacons are tired. I am tired. When facing a crisis, our tendency is to spend ourselves responding to the storm rather than knowing when we need to rest. Our motives are pure. We want to respond to a quickly changing situation and serve the people entrusted to us.

I shared with a friend my concern that, without regular rhythms and routines, pastors and deacons are working harder than ever. Most are not taking their usual post-Easter break, and do not know when it is time to stop and rest. "Really, Craig?" My friend responded, "when was the last time you powered down your phone and took a few days off?"

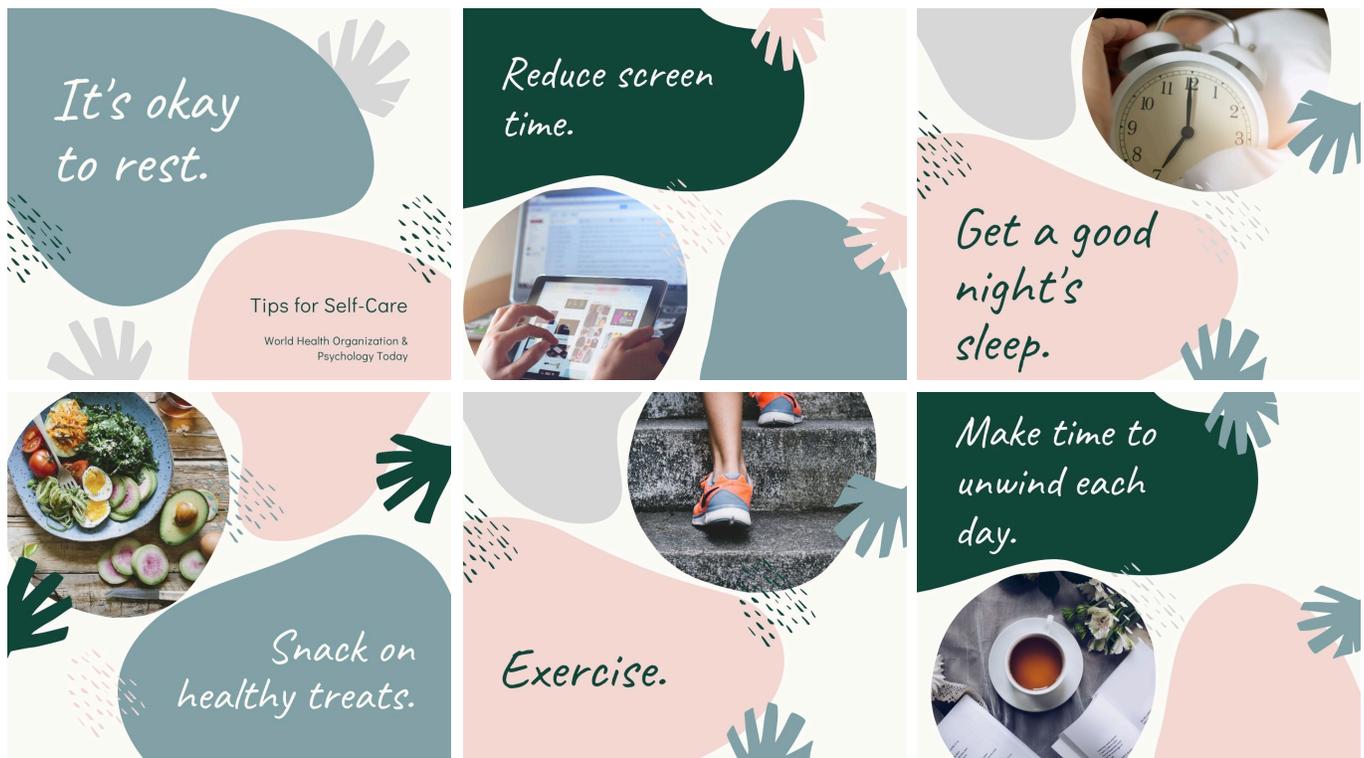
It is hard to call it vacation when we cannot leave the house. Yet, many industries are not carrying over vacation time because they know their people need it now. And many supervisors, customers, and clients are helping people to take it.

So, I wonder, even as we move toward reopening, might congregations help their pastors and deacons take a break? One way they might do this is to partner with another congregation for virtual Sunday worship. The people of one congregation would worship with the other and the pastor would be told to take the week off. The next Sunday, the two congregations would swap roles. Perhaps congregations could partner with others across the Synod so that everyone can experience something new.

What other ideas might congregations come up with to help their leaders take their rest? Truth be told, only Jesus is going to rebuke the wind, still the sea, and calm the storm. And Jesus is going to do this whether we are on duty or not. So, rather than giving pastors and deacons one more thing to do by telling them to rest, I ask congregational leaders to help their pastors or deacons take their rest. Help them develop a plan so that they can rest deeply, without guilt or fear or the feeling they are letting someone down.

Peace be with you!

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



View additional resources on managing stress and keeping yourself mentally healthy on our website:
<https://bit.ly/2zsZdIp>

Synod Finances as of May 31, 2020

	Current Year		Prior Year	
	May	Year to Date	May	Year to Date
Revenue				
Mission Support	112,842	370,479	114,039	469,734
Other	2,826	26,029	59,231	93,374
Total	115,668	396,508	173,270	563,108
Expenses				
Churchwide Proportionate Share	56,421	185,239	57,019	234,867
Other	59,999	248,350	106,756	331,587
Total	116,420	433,589	163,775	566,454
Net Assets Released from Restriction	0	0	0	0
Net Change to Fund Balance	(752)	(37,081)	9,495	(3,346)

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. Sermon videos will be emailed each Wednesday afternoon.

The sermons will be publicly released via our YouTube channel on Sunday afternoons.

Rostered Minister Sign-Up:
<https://forms.gle/EHikg4HYPuY7r1do6>

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

Watch Sermon Videos:
<https://bit.ly/2LsuSHN>

Coronavirus Resources

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

New resources include information about state required safeguards for employees, printable building signs from the CDC, and things congregational leaders should consider as they think about reopening and returning to church buildings.

Learn More:
<https://bit.ly/2MPx4to>

Women's Ordination Jubilee Digital Sermon Collection

All rostered women are invited to submit a sermon for publication in a digital sermon collection.

The sermons will be based on the Revised Common Lectionary, complementary series for Year B (2020-2021). The goal is to have the broadest diversity of voices across all texts. Texts are available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

The submission deadline is June 22, 2020.

Learn More:
<https://bit.ly/37m1kUE>

Prayer Service for Commemoration of the Emanuel Nine

An ELCA Prayer Service for Commemoration of the Emanuel Nine will be available for online viewing at 12pm Eastern Time on June 17.

The service will include leaders from around the ELCA and ecumenical partners, including episcopal leadership from the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton will preach the sermon.

We invite you to join Bishop Satterlee in watching the service on Facebook:
<https://facebook.com/MittenSynodELCA>

Additional resources are available on the ELCA website:
<https://elca.org/emanuelnine>

Upcoming Events

June 17	ELCA Prayer Service for Commemoration for the Emanuel Nine	Facebook	facebook.com/MittenSynodELCA
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Due to the current government restrictions and recommendations on in-person gatherings, many upcoming events have been cancelled or postponed. Please check with the event's organizer for more information.

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. Kjersten Sullivan, Dean
Hope/Marlette (part-time)	CALL ACCEPTED: Rev. Neil Brady (NWOH). Installation TBD.	Stony Lake Conference	Rev. Sarah Samuelson, Dean
Capital Area Conference	Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean	Sunrise Conference	Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean
Calvary/Lansing (part-time)	Pastoral Team: Rev. John Schleicher, Rev. Rick McKenzie, Rev. Jim Couser/ Preparing MSP	Peace/Gaylord	Supply Pastors/Discerning Future
St. Paul/East Lansing	CONTRACT ACCEPTED: Rev. Carl Ballard/Congregational Vote TBD	Traverse Conference	Rev. Scott Torkko, Dean
Grace/Lansing	Rev. John Schleicher, Contract Pastor/ Congregational Vote 6/14	Messiah/Roscommon	CALL ACCEPTED: Rev. Jeff Bonn, Installation TBD.
Peace/Charlotte	Supply Pastors/Awaiting a Candidate	St. Paul/Reed City	Rev. Matt Deames, Intentional Interim/Congregational Vote TBD.
Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean	Augustana/Tustin	Supply Pastors/Awaiting a Candidate
Bread of Life/Hudsonville	Rev. Polly Standley, Interim/ Congregational Vote TBD.		
Bethlehem/Grand Rapids	Karsten Voskuil (RCA), Service of Invitation to Extended Service, TBD.		