



## North/West Lower Michigan Synod

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## Pandemic Resurrection

How much we are hoping that, come Easter, or at least the Easter season, we will emerge from the tomb of COVID-19 into a new day of resurrection. My seminary mate, Bishop Kurt Kusserow of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, compares the way leadership needs to change to surviving a hurricane. While we have sheltered in place, leaders kept us informed, did their best to tend to our needs, helped us to be patient, and assured us this wouldn't last forever. Now, as we make our way back into the world, we will need leaders to help us determine what to do first, second, and third. The reality is that we will respond to Resurrection in many different ways. The gospels make this clear.

Matthew is what we want: a sign as unmistakable as a great earthquake that the pandemic is over, an angel from heaven sounding the all clear, and everyone on the same page like Mary Magdalene and the other women. Some of us will be Luke's disciples; The news the pandemic is over will seem to us "an idle tale." Some, like Mary Magdalene and John, will linger by the tomb grieving all that has been lost, until someone calls them by name into new life. Then there are my heroes, the women in Mark, who "went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (Mark 16:8). These women were wise enough to know that Jesus' resurrection makes everything different. There is no getting back to "normal." So, a time of keeping holy silence about what comes next may be the best way to respond.

Everyone will tell you what to do first. Some pastors feel we need to restore physical community; they will shut down online worship ASAP. Other pastors are enjoying their online presence, even celebrity, and have visions of single-handedly "making disciples of all nations." Pastor Sprang will tell you to engage the community. The ELCA Churchwide Office thinks this is a good time to invite new, young, and diverse people to be part of our congregations as we come back together. Some feel people are hungry for a face-to-face conversation, so this is an ideal time for congregations to talk about systemic racism. From the phone calls I received in the past few months, many people think the first thing we should do is sing and have a potluck.

As a lover of John's Gospel, I think the first thing we need to do is be patient with ourselves and with one another. After Jesus met Mary Magdalene at the tomb and she told the disciples she had seen the Lord, they sheltered behind locked doors. Jesus had to coax, rather than command, the disciples to step into resurrection. I suspect that, as excited as we are to get there, Jesus will end up coaxing us, too.

For now, we can experience joy in knowing resurrection is coming. There will be plenty of time to figure out what to do about it.

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

## North/West Lower Michigan Synod 2021 Synod Assembly



### Synod Assembly 2021

Given the ongoing concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic, many events continue to be held differently than in past years. For the 2021 Synod Assembly, Synod Council has approved a virtual assembly, which will be held on May 15, 2021 via Zoom.

Due to its virtual nature, this year's Synod Assembly will be primarily business focused. Therefore, 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 social media.

As congregations select voting members, please keep in mind that 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.

In the coming months, additional updates and resources will be posted on the Synod Assembly page of the Synod website: <https://mittensynod.org/events/assembly>

### 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 social media. Registration forms must be completed online and submitted by April 21, 2021. There will be no late registration. Please read all of the registration information before completing the registration form.

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.

As part of registering for Synod Assembly, voting members will have the option to sign up for pre-assembly discussion sessions and technology orientations. The pre-assembly discussion sessions are two-hour, optional, informal sessions aimed at providing voting members with an opportunity to discuss resolutions and the budget. The one-hour technology orientations provide voting members with an opportunity to go over Zoom basics and practice voting. The pre-assembly discussion sessions will be held May 4-5, 2021 and the technology orientations will be held May 11-13, 2021. After completing the registration form, voting members should expect to receive emails in the coming months with additional information.

Register Now: <http://bit.ly/3qHLFZs>

### Memorials and Resolutions

To be considered for the 2021 Synod Assembly, resolutions and memorials must be submitted to the North/West Lower Michigan (NWLM) Synod Resolutions Committee. All resolutions and memorials must be submitted electronically to Ann Stavros at the Synod Office ([annstavros@mittensynod.org](mailto:annstavros@mittensynod.org)) by April 7, 2021.

Resolutions and memorials may only be submitted by a voting member of the upcoming Synod Assembly, a member of a NWLM Synod congregation, a member of a NWLM Synod committee, or a member of an agency of the NWLM Synod. Each proposed resolution and memorial is required to include the names of at least 25 confirmed members of the Synod who support consideration of the proposed document by the upcoming Synod Assembly.

A resolutions and memorials worksheet and guidelines document is available on the Assembly page of the Synod website (<https://mittensynod.org/events/assembly>). For additional guidance in drafting resolutions and memorials, authors are encouraged to contact the Synod Resolutions Committee via its chair, The Rev. Justin J. Walker, at [pastorjustin@clcwyo.org](mailto:pastorjustin@clcwyo.org). Resources are also available at [www.elca.org/documents](http://www.elca.org/documents) (search for "Resolutions").

### **Nominations**

The Nominating Committee is seeking nominations for Synod Council, the Discipline Committee, and the Consultation Committee. All nominations and completed Bio Forms must be submitted to Rev. Jessica Hahn ([pastorjessicahahn@gmail.com](mailto:pastorjessicahahn@gmail.com)) by March 31, 2021. A list of open positions, information on responsibilities and duties, and bio forms are available on the Assembly page of the Synod website.

### **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. To be considered, all videos must be submitted to Pastor David Sprang ([davidsprang@mittensynod.org](mailto:davidsprang@mittensynod.org)) by April 7, 2021.

### **Assembly Book**

To be included in the Synod Assembly Book, all reports must be submitted by April 7, 2021. Reports should be submitted to Rebecca Bossenbroek at [finance@mittensynod.org](mailto:finance@mittensynod.org).

## *Women's History Month*

During March, we celebrate Women's History Month to honor and commemorate the many ways women have shaped history.

In recognition of Women's History Month, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton offers a video message. In her message, Bishop Eaton reminds us that at this time we also recommit ourselves to the work of gender justice and working to seek justice and equity for all.

Watch Now: <https://bit.ly/3bINFH>



## God's Grace in Lent

I have been thinking a lot about numbers as I work on my taxes and look at end of year budgets and income. I started out as an engineering major in college, doing a great deal with numbers. How the physical world functions can mostly be reduced to numbers. Numbers are finite, concrete, and usually make sense. Of course, there is the occasional mistake which ultimately can seem impossible to correct. But in the end, I can always count on numbers. They are logical.

As we journey through Lent we encounter an illogical God who functions by love and grace and not just logic:

- A voice from heaven at baptism that says: "You are my beloved"
- Peter, who usually gets it wrong, confesses who Jesus is – the Son of God
- Jesus enters the temple and sweeps away the clutter that distracts from worship
- Jesus proclaims that God loves the world and his mission is not to condemn but love and save
- Jesus explains to Phillip and Andrew that dying produces life
- Jesus is lifted up on a cross as a sign of the sacrificial love of God

This is a description of the love and grace of God. It is very difficult for my mind that is geared toward engineering and numbers to figure out grace. And I assume that it is difficult, yes impossible, for any human mind to understand, figure out, or comprehend God's grace.

Grace and love are things that cannot be figured out by numbers, logic, or engineering; they are experienced. The Gospel accounts of Jesus tells us of God's grace. The sacrificial acts of others help us experience God's grace. The love between a parent and a child is an experience of God's grace. The extraordinary sacrifice of health care workers during this pandemic is an experience of God's grace. All examples of the illogical love and grace of God.

We are on our Lenten journey. Soon we will arrive at Good Friday when the cross of Jesus is lifted up with his wounded and swollen body nailed to it. There is no way to understand or rationalize that grace. We look at the cross as God's ultimate gift of grace. A gift we do not deserve and cannot earn or buy. And numbers cannot explain. God's logic created the universe. God's illogical love and grace saves us.

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

## Vitality Resources

Congregational Vitality is all the things we do and learn to keep our mission with Jesus alive and moving. Our Synod's Congregational Vitality Team: REVIVE, has been sharing resources on the Synod's website ([www.mittensynod.org/mission/revive](http://www.mittensynod.org/mission/revive)) for use by congregations working on vitality. There are currently 29 resources for evangelism, community engagement, growing young, and faith formation, and resources on spirituality, mission planning, and outreach will be added soon!

In addition to these resources, the Synod's website ([www.mittensynod.org](http://www.mittensynod.org)) offers a variety of other resources on topics such as governance, the pandemic, stewardship, public church, and grants. Be sure to check it out!

## How to Start a Green Team

By Rev. Ellen Schoepf

In his book, *Climate Church, Climate World*, author Jim Antal writes:

*God is calling us to reorient our hearts, our lives, and our laws so that we honor and respect the interdependence of all of creation. We are called to confess the harm our generation has done to the Earth and to future generations. Such honesty and repentance can set us free to take action that will help future generations to survive, perhaps even to thrive. (p. 59)*

One action churches can take is to form a Green Team. Here are some practical suggestions:

1. Pull together 4-5 people who are interested in working to be good stewards of creation.
2. Meet and do some brainstorming on ways in which the faith community can learn to become better stewards of creation. Some ideas that can be implemented early on might include:
  - Eliminate Styrofoam use
  - Encourage people to use paper straws instead of plastic straws
  - Have an energy audit done on your church facility and on your home
  - Use LED lightbulbs in your church facility and in your home
  - Create a butterfly garden on your property
  - Encourage the use of green eco-friendly detergents
  - Celebrate Earth Day by giving out seedlings or packets of wildflower seeds
3. Gather on a monthly basis and creatively continue to further develop ideas that encourage environmental stewardship.
4. Contact the Synod Environmental Task Force if you have questions or would like some help. Linn Kracht is the Task Force Chairperson: [ldkracht@gmail.com](mailto:ldkracht@gmail.com)

## Thank You from the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod

Bishop Michael Rinehart of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod offers a message of thanks for the North/West Lower Michigan Synod's financial support after the Texas Winter Storms. His message is printed below.

Bishop Rinehart also sent a video message, which can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/rbAtI1jmt5M>

Dear Bishop Satterlee and friends in my childhood home of Michigan,

Thank you and all the good folks of NW Lower Michigan Synod for your generous gift of \$5,000 to the Emergency Appeal. It's hard to convey the loss of life and property. You are a part of the healing.

Thank you!

Bishop Mike Rinehart

If you're interested in continuing to support those affected by the winter storms, the Gulf Coast Synod is engaging in an emergency appeal, with a goal of \$100,000. Gifts to this Emergency Winter Freeze Appeal will provide resources to repair lives, homes, and house of worship. It will support congregations serving communities in need. It will help us share God's love through food and housing assistance.

Learn More: <https://gulfcoastsynod.org/emergency-winter-freeze-appeal/>

### Synod Finances

Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund	February
Beginning Fund Balance	232,679
Mission Support Revenue	117,808
Other Revenue	819
Net Assets Released from Restriction	0
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>118,627</b>
Churchwide Proportionate Share (50%)	58,904
Other Expenses	46,919
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>105,823</b>
Net Change to Fund Balance (Revenue - Expenses)	12,804
Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund Balance as of 2/28/21	245,483
<b>Other Fund Balances</b>	
Unrestricted-Designated Funds	650,031
Endowment-Related Temporarily-restricted Funds	784,109
Temporarily-Restricted Funds	326,607
Permanently-Restricted Funds	924,639
<b>Total Other Fund Balances</b>	<b>2,685,386</b>
<b>Total - All Funds (as of 2/28/21)</b>	<b>2,930,869</b>

### Churchwide Resources

As we begin a new fiscal year, we are mindful of new congregation council members serving in new roles, seeking information about how they are to go about their respective responsibilities. For treasurers and bookkeepers, there are numerous resources available at [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org) under Resources/Financial/Congregations.

Particularly helpful are the Balance Sheet and Statement of Revenue and Expense examples in the resource "[Congregational Treasurers Financial and Accounting Guide](#)." This guide and "[Financial Best Practices for Congregations](#)" are highly recommended for new treasurers and bookkeepers. Compare the information in these resources with your current procedures and reporting processes.

If you have questions, contact Rebecca Bossenbroek at [finance@mittensynod.org](mailto:finance@mittensynod.org). We are here to help and always enjoying hearing from you!

### Day of Lament: March 21, 2021

The Asian and Pacific Islander Association of the ELCA recently issued a statement, affirmed by the ELCA Conference of Bishops, calling on the church to declare a day of lament during Lent to express solidarity with, help in healing and support Asian American victims of violence. Read Statement: <http://bit.ly/2Q0R15p>

The ELCA has announced that Sunday, March 21, has been named as the day of lament, though worshipping communities may choose a different date as appropriate for their context. The ELCA has provided worship resources for the day: <https://bit.ly/3qHEL6u>

### Synod Staff Video Sermons

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>

### Synod Worship Service

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod will be producing a worship service for the Sunday after Easter, April 11, 2021.

Rostered Ministers are invited to sign up here to receive the worship video file on March 30, 2021 to use in their congregations on April 11, 2021.

Sign-up: <http://bit.ly/3cutO39>

### Coronavirus Resources

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

On March 12, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services announced the state is expanding vaccination eligibility for Michiganders ages 16 and older with disabilities or medical conditions that put them at high risk of negative COVID-19 outcome beginning Monday, March 22. Beginning Monday, April 5, all Michiganders age 16 and up who were not previously eligible will be eligible to receive a vaccine. Learn More: <http://bit.ly/3cpl4v3>

On March 2, The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services extended its epidemic order requiring masks and limiting some indoor gatherings through April 19, 2021. Bishop Satterlee continues to recommend the suspension of indoor in-person worship. Learn More: <http://bit.ly/3rUjdQw>

With partnership and support from the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA, the ELCA Federal Credit Union (FCU) is now offering the second round of Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loans to congregations and ministries. To review eligibility requirements and apply for a PPP loan, please visit the ELCA FCU's website, [www.elcafcu.org/PPP](http://www.elcafcu.org/PPP)

View all COVID-19 resources: <http://bit.ly/3rL2fsF>

### Upcoming Events

March 18	Ignite the Church Conference	Online	<a href="https://www.ignitethechurch.net">https://www.ignitethechurch.net</a>
March 21	ELCA Day of Lament for anti-Asian Racism		<a href="https://bit.ly/3qHEL6u">https://bit.ly/3qHEL6u</a>
April 4	Easter Sunday		
April 15	Ignite the Church Conference	Online	<a href="https://www.ignitethechurch.net">https://www.ignitethechurch.net</a>

**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.

<b>Bay Conference</b>	<b>Rev. Emily Olsen, Dean</b>	<b>Kalamazoo Conference</b>	<b>Rev. Kjersten Sullivan, Dean</b>
<b>Capital Area Conference</b>	<b>Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean</b>	St. John/Baroda	Seeking a Candidate
<b>Greater Grand Rapids Conference</b>	<b>Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean</b>	<b>Stony Lake Conference</b>	<b>Rev. Sarah Samuelson, Dean</b>
		<b>Sunrise Conference</b>	<b>Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean</b>
		<b>Traverse Conference</b>	<b>Rev. Scott Torkko, Dean</b>