

**North/West Lower
Michigan Synod**

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Women's History Month

Along with St. Patrick's Day, and the technical start of spring, March also brings us Women's History Month. I was lucky to have a very strong role model in my mother growing up. There was never a question that I could do whatever I wanted for a career; however, at least when I was younger, I don't think anyone would have guessed being a pastor was my vocational path. As luck would have it, Pastor Rich knew I had a call to ministry long before I did, and his response to my wondering out loud about ministry was a smile and a "It's about time you figured that out."

As I look back, it's funny that while I never had any female pastor role models, I never even considered that there were faith traditions where that was not allowed. These days, I find it a bit shocking that even though women were the ones who first experienced the resurrection and were the first to preach the good news that Jesus is Risen, there are still so many faith traditions who seek to silence women in the church and various other parts of society.

Of course as I grew older I became more aware of the struggle of women in various vocations and how many of us still do not earn the same income as our male counterparts, not to mention the differing societal expectations and sometimes outright harassment that women face in their vocations (even and sometimes especially in the church). We've come a long way but we still have a very long way to go!

As we celebrate Women's History Month, we look back at some pivotal moments both in our county and our church:

- Women were given the right to vote in a constitutional amendment passed by congress on June 4, 1919. This amendment was ratified by 36 states on August 18, 1920 and certified August 26, 1920.
- Part of the Lutheran Church in America (a predecessor church of the ELCA), Elizabeth Platz was the first ordained Lutheran woman in America. After graduating from Gettysburg Seminary, she worked as a lay minister at the University of Maryland-College Park for the five years prior to her ordination on November 22, 1970.
- Part of the American Lutheran Church (another predecessor church of the ELCA) Barbara L. Andrews was ordained on December 22, 1970.
- In our synod, I celebrate that we are getting closer to a 50-50 split in the number of active pastors and deacons. Of our pastors within the first three years of their first call, it's an even split.

More information about the history of women in the ELCA can be found on the ELCA's website: <https://www.elca.org/50yearsofordainedwomen>. Another great resource is *Voices Long Silenced: Women Biblical Interpreters Throughout the Centuries* by Dr. Joy Schroeder and Marion Ann Taylor (<https://bit.ly/3T4AATx>). Dr. Schroeder led this semester's Adult Theological Education Course, which was a wonderful and deeply insightful learning experience. I personally learned a lot of new things about often overlooked theological women and highly recommend her book, on which the course was based, to everyone.

Throughout the year, but especially this month, I encourage you to reflect on the ways you can support the women in your life. If you happen to know a woman in ministry, please let them know you appreciate them. Pray for them and their ministry. Support their ideas, seek their input, and echo what they say by name: "as Pastor/Deacon Jane Doe said..." As women in our world continue to fight for justice, equity, and inclusion, we give thanks for the women who have gone before us and pray for continued growth in our world. Happy Women's History Month!

The Rev. Chrisy Bright

Assistant to the Bishop and Director of Candidacy

Strengthen What Works

When the same name comes up in two completely different conversations in one week, I pay attention. Many people across the church have been working on engaging new folks and teaching and sharing the story of Jesus. I talked with Lutheran Outdoor Ministry leaders about the growing number of children and youth who are coming to church camp, but know little or nothing about Jesus and are not associated with a faith community. They mentioned the name of Jake Sorenson. Two days later at the monthly Zoom meeting of the Christian Community and Leadership Home Group of the ELCA, Jake Sorenson was the presenter.

Rev. Jake and Rev. Anna Sorenson, in consultation with Dr. Rollie Martinson, Professor Emeritus of Children, Youth & Family, and Pastoral Care at Luther Seminary, have been doing research with thousands of ELCA Lutherans about what connected them to the church and led them to stay in the church when they became adults. Their discoveries are that Sunday School/Christian Education, Lutheran Church Camp, The ELCA Youth Gathering, and Lutheran Campus Ministry are at the heart of engaging youth and young adults. These four things are the best things we do as a church for youth and young adults to welcome them, teach them about Jesus, build relationships with them, and connect them to a faith community.

Sunday School/Christian Education: Sunday School/Christian Education provide a variety of ways for adults to build relationships with children and share in the telling and learning of the stories of Jesus. Sunday School doesn't have to be on Sunday; it can be other days during the week. The main point and purpose is for adults to build relationships with kids and talk to them about Jesus.

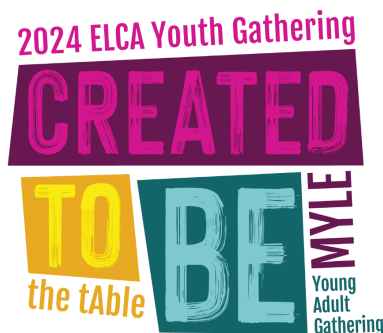
Church Camps: Our Lutheran Church Camps provide a welcome atmosphere to share Jesus. In congregations, it's rare for children and youth to have the opportunity to hear young adults talk about faith and share Jesus. However, at camp this is a more common experience. In addition, a week of camp provides an opportunity to live in an intentional Christian Community and memories are made that will last a lifetime.

The ELCA Youth Gathering: This event for high school aged youth brings together thousands of youth from ELCA congregations across the country. Gathering in different cities around the US, it is an opportunity to meet new people and learn about Jesus in a welcoming church atmosphere. Featuring powerful music and speakers, the memories made at the Gathering also last a lifetime.

Campus Ministry: Lutheran Campus Ministry takes place on college campuses around the country. It assists young adults, many away from home for the first time, by providing a place of love, acceptance, sharing of Jesus, and people who listen and give them a way to serve.

We do not have to reinvent the wheel to engage youth and young adults. We can support the ways the church is already reaching out to share Jesus with them. Encourage youth to go to camp and The Youth Gathering, connect college students with Lutheran Campus Ministries, and find ways to build relationships and share Jesus with children in your congregation or community. These are tried and true practices that can engage youth and young adults in knowing Jesus. Bishop Satterlee's article, "Attracting Young Families" in the February newsletter (<https://bit.ly/3SN1xd6>) highlights ways to invite and support families with young children. Christian Education, Church Camp, The Youth Gathering, and Campus Ministries are ways to teach them about Jesus and build relationships that will last a lifetime. You can learn more about Rev. Jake Sorenson's work and find additional resources on the Sacred Playgrounds website: <https://sacredplaygrounds.com/>

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



The 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering will be held July 16-20, 2024 in New Orleans under the theme, "Created to Be."

Registration closes April 15! 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>

Women of the Reformation

In March, we celebrate Women's History Month and give thanks for women throughout history and in our lives who have shared their gifts and leadership with the church and society. We highlight four women from the Reformation Era whose work had an incredible impact in both the Protestant Reformation and wider church.

We invite you to learn more about these women, and so many more women throughout church history, by reading *Voices Long Silenced: Women Biblical Interpreters Throughout the Centuries* by Dr. Joy Schroeder and Marion Ann Taylor (<https://bit.ly/3T4AATx>).

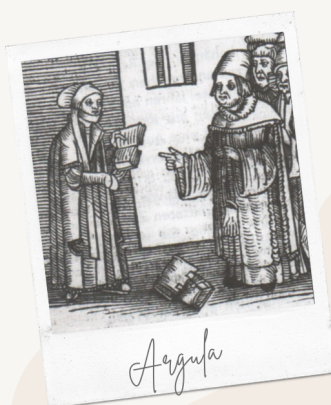
Women's History Month

Argula von Grumbach

c.1492 - c. 1554

"What I have written to you is no woman's chit-chat, but the word of God."

Argula, Lutheran noblewoman, was the first-known woman to enter the Reformation debates by using the printing press to publish pamphlets. Filled with arguments about Scripture and church teachings, more than 29,000 copies of Argula's pamphlets circulated in German-speaking territories.



Voices Long Silenced: Women Biblical Interpreters Throughout the Centuries

Women's History Month

Katharina Schütz Zell

c.1498 - c. 1562

"These words are a reminder that He will not abandon you, nor forget you, as He also says in the prophet: 'As little as a mother may forget her suckling child, so little may I forget you.'"

Katharina wrote theological texts, assisted refugees, and published a hymn book. She often presented God in the image of a nurturing mother, and, like a protective mother, felt called to speak up for truth and help her neighbor.



Voices Long Silenced: Women Biblical Interpreters Throughout the Centuries

Women's History Month

Justitia Sengers

fl. 1585

"The Son of God suffered such fear and agony that he, too, could not pray much, and in his fear he called out, 'God help me for the waters reach to my soul.' Even though this is a very short prayer, it is nevertheless a wonderful prayer, full of hope and comfort in very few words."

Justitia, a Lutheran interpreter, published a commentary on Psalm 69 where she reflected on Christ's suffering in light of her own experience as someone who had been born blind. Sengers's commentary is the most sustained work of scriptural interpretation written by a sixteenth-century Lutheran woman.

Voices Long Silenced: Women Biblical Interpreters Throughout the Centuries

Women's History Month

Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg

1633 - 1694

"Blessed be the fruit of the womb of Mary, Jesus Christ!...Blessed be its growth and formation from minute to minute, from moment to moment!"

Catharina, a Lutheran noblewoman, wrote meditations on the prenatal Christ. Well-informed in anatomy and obstetrics, her spiritual and anatomically correct meditations helped correct previous beliefs about fetal development.



Voices Long Silenced: Women Biblical Interpreters Throughout the Centuries

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 4**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.

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 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>

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		
	February	Year to Date
Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund		
Mission Support Revenue	104,680	104,680
Synod Assembly Revenue	0	0
Other Revenue	3,613	3,613
Total Revenue	108,292	108,292
Churchwide Proportionate Share (50%)	52,340	52,340
Synod Assembly Expense	0	0
Other Expenses	57,103	57,103
Total Expenses	109,442	109,442
Net Change to Fund Balance (Revenue - Expenses)	(1,150)	(1,150)
Beginning Fund Balance	145,649	145,649
Transfers directed by Synod Council		0
Ending Fund Balance	144,499	144,499
Other Fund Balances		
Unrestricted-Designated		999,547
Temporarily-Restricted Endowment-Related*		831,966
Temporarily-Restricted		310,426
Permanently-Restricted		1,035,547
Total - All Funds (as of 2/29/24)		3,321,985

*February 29 ELCA Ministry Growth Fund Account Statements were not available at the time of publishing this summary. The amounts shown here reflect balances as of 1/31/23.

Statement of Intent

Thank you to congregations who have sent in their [2024 Intent Forms](#) and [Congregation Certification of Financial Compliance Reports](#).

These forms are available at mittensynod.org and may be emailed to finance@mittensynod.org.

Stories of Faith in Action

The March 2024 Mission Support Memo is now available! This month highlights the creation of Ministry Lab in the Central States 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 W. Trout Lectures

Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University will host the Nelson W. Trout Lectures on April 11-12, 2024.

Dr. Valerie Bridgeman, Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor of Homiletics and Hebrew Bible at the Methodist Theological School of Ohio will present on "Healing: Preaching Job."

The Trout Lectures are free and open to the public.

Learn more and register: <https://bit.ly/3v8ptA3>

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 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 7	LSTC Liturgy and the Natural World	Learn more: https://bit.ly/4ahx7Hf
April 8	Synod Assembly Registration Deadline	Learn more: http://bit.ly/3E6VYzP
April 11-12	Trinity Seminary Nelson W. Trout Lectures	Learn more: https://bit.ly/3v8ptA3
April 16	Cultivating Generous Congregations	Learn more: https://bit.ly/3Vc4EhI

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 Prince of Peace/Rose City	Pastor Emily Olsen-Brandt, Dean Pastor David Sprang, Administrative Pastor / Supply Pastors / Discerning future
Capital Area Conference Grace/Lansing	Pastor Neil Brady, Dean Supply Pastors / Congregational Vote to Call Interim Pastor March 17
Greater Grand Rapids Conference Trinity/Grand Rapids Bread of Life/Hudsonville Peace/Sparta Zion/Woodland (Part-Time)	Pastor Julie Schneider-Thomas, Pastor Kate Van Valkenburg, Co-Deans Pastor Dennis Smith, Interim Senior Pastor / Preparing MSP Contracted Pastor David Beese / Exploring Call Supply Pastors / Seeking candidates Supply Pastors / Seeking candidates
Kalamazoo Conference Stony Lake Conference Sunrise Conference New Life/Alcona County St. Paul/Alpena Trinity/Barton City	Pastor Joan Oleson, Dean Pastor Sarah Samuelson, Dean Pastor Megan Crouch, Dean Supply Pastors / Seeking candidates Seeking a part-time assistant pastor Discerning Future
Traverse Conference Advent/Lake Ann St. Paul/Reed City Messiah/Roscommon	Pastor Jonathan Reid, Dean Pastor Rosanne Anderson, Administrative Pastor / Supply Pastors Supply Pastors / Identified Candidate Took first vote to disaffiliate from the ELCA