



North/West Lower Michigan Synod

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In this Issue:

Anticipating Pentecost

COVID-19 Grief

Anti-Racism Seminar Part 3

Synod Council Update

Upcoming Events

Congregations in Transition

Anticipating Pentecost

Pentecost is May 24; you can read about the Holy Spirit coming to the apostles in Acts, chapter 1. As I look ahead to Pentecost, perhaps more honestly to our governor calling us out into the streets as the Spirit called the apostles, I find myself in Acts, chapter 2. Chapter 2 begins with Jesus' ascension, a neglected and important holiday. I appreciate Ascension Day so much that, this year, I'll offer a sermon. You will be able to watch it at 12pm on May 21. Before he ascended, Jesus promised, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses..." (Acts 1:8). On Pentecost, we celebrate that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit into the church. How are you experiencing the Holy Spirit empowering your congregation to witness to Jesus during this time a pandemic?

After Jesus ascended, the apostles returned to Jerusalem, to the room where they were staying, and one of my favorite things happens: Matthias is chosen an apostle. Here is everything we know about Matthias: Matthias was with Jesus from baptism to ascension. After Pentecost, when the apostles prayed and cast lots, flipped a coin, rolled the dice, or cut cards to select someone to replace Judas Iscariot, Matthias won. Matthias was then named one of the apostles. Immediately following his election, Matthias disappeared from both Scripture and church history.

Matthias will be linked forever with the person not elected an apostle. Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) also had been with Jesus from baptism to ascension. For all we know, Joseph went on being a Christian and, like Matthias, disappeared from Scripture and church history. The only difference between these two is that Matthias won the coin toss and was elected an apostle; Joseph lost and was not. Matthias was granted a saint's day. Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) is still waiting for one.

This story is about Jesus, who as an expression of great love for the church and the world, sets individuals apart, appoints them as apostles, and sends them to witness

publicly to the good news, so that neither God's people nor the world will ever forget about God's incredible love. And, when these witnesses are no more, Jesus through the church calls and sends other witnesses to replace them.

The most important credential these witnesses carry as they go is that the church sees in them what the New Testament church saw in Joseph and Matthias. They have witnessed Jesus in baptism. They have seen Jesus heal and heard Jesus teach. They have experienced the power of Jesus' forgiveness, and have seen Jesus reveal God's love in suffering and death. They can point to Christ's resurrection, and trust that Jesus will always bring new life. In other words, they have experienced the power of God at work in Jesus Christ. And, in response to our church's process of casting lots, and sometimes even in spite of it, these witnesses, like both Matthias and Joseph, follow Jesus from death to new life so that the world never forgets God's incredible love. Is Jesus raising up witnesses in your congregation who should be invited to consider leadership in your congregation or public ministry in our church? Who are they? When will you tell them what you see in them.

The message of Acts, chapter 1 is Jesus is preparing his Church to receive the Holy Spirit and for the mission and future to come. This good news holds equally true for us. How are you experiencing the Holy Spirit empowering your congregation to witness to Jesus during this time of pandemic? Is Jesus raising up witnesses in your congregation who should be invited to consider leadership in your congregation or public ministry in our church? Who are they? When will you tell them what you see in them? In answering these questions, I pray God graces you with moments of gratitude for what Jesus is doing in our Church and for the leaders through whom Jesus is working.

Peace be with you!

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

COVID-19 Grief

We are in a different place right now. As I write this we are in week eight of sheltering in place. The daily realities are quite different than they were eight weeks ago. So much has changed. There is a new normal and it could last a long time. There are many new challenges. We have also lost many things. We have lost face-to-face conversations, traveling where and when we want, physical displays of affection, jobs, worship in the church building, eating out, getting our hair done, and so much more.

When someone dies there is grief. We have grief for the people we know that have gotten the virus and died. We have grief for people who have died from other causes. We also have grief where there is loss. Loss of relationships, loss of routines, loss of jobs, loss of seeing loved ones, graduations, weddings, and funerals. We all are experiencing varying levels of COVID-19 grief. The virus and the sheltering in place we are doing produces grief.

We have learned from the exceptional work of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross that grief has stages. We do not go through them in a linear fashion, but jump back and forth. **The stages are: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.** And as we see people's reactions to COVID-19, we can see people working through these stages.

1. **Denial** - Conspiracy theories, science deniers, and quack medicine is rampant on the internet. Many are slow to believe the science that tells us that the virus is real and there is still no vaccine. We don't want it to be real. Maybe if we deny it, it will just go away.
2. **Anger** - We saw it in protests at the state capital, we see it in family dynamics as things get tense being cooped up with family members. We are tempted to lash out at the very folks we are sheltering in place to protect. We feel anger because things are different and we have a fear things will not return to the way things used to be.
3. **Bargaining** - If we just open things everything will be okay. Can't we start communion right away? Do we really have to wear a mask? Can we still go on a cruise in June? I need more than two - 36 roll packages of toilet paper, I have a big family. On May 28, we can just open everything up and we promise to practice social distancing.
4. **Depression** - This is really serious. Scientist and medical experts are saying this will be with us for a long time. Predictions for the death rate even for Michigan are as high as 10,000 or more. It is predicted that everyone of us will know someone who has contracted or died from COVID-19.
5. **Acceptance** - It is a reality. It is happening and we can't make it go away. Dr. Fauci, the president's COVID-19 medical advisor: "We do not make the timeline, the virus makes the timeline." If we use the guidance, "our goal is not to cause anyone to die", then we have it right. There is no such thing as closure. There is acceptance. COVID-19 has happened. We will move on. We will remember the pain, the discomfort, the lives lost, the opportunities missed, and the gambit of feelings and emotions.

Thinking about COVID-19 in terms of dealing with grief might be helpful when it comes to feelings we are having, reactions we are having or behaviors or emotions we are seeing in others. Some things have been lost, people have been lost, incomes have been lost, and so much more. Through it all God is with us. God promises to be with us in the grief and losses of life. The Gospel for May 17 is John 14:15-21 and verse 18 says, "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you." **In our grief and stress over COVID-19 God is with us.**

Partners in Christ,

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

Coronavirus Resources

We continue to post updates and resources pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic on our website at: <https://www.mittensynod.org/news/coronavirus-resources/>

New resources include information and guidance on what congregational leaders should consider as they think about reopening and returning to church buildings.

Anti-Racism Seminar

Part Three

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the "Stay Home, Stay Safe" executive order for Michigan, the third weekend of the Doing Our Own Work: An Anti-Racism Seminar for White People could not be held in person. We were, however, able to meet three times through a Zoom conference. The experience of interacting on Zoom was enhanced by the fact that our cohort had created a deep sense of community when we met in person during January and February.

The Doing Our Own Work seminar was an eye-opening experience for all of the participants. The first realization for people was the inherent racism that has been part of the pattern of life in the Americas since Christopher Columbus arrived here in 1492. We looked at the systemic roots of racism that permeate our world each and every day. Much of our discussion was directed toward the fact that racism encompasses people of divergent racial heritage and backgrounds. In doing work for racial justice it is evident that various aspects of life, including race, gender, sexual orientation, age, education, disability, class background, ethnicity, family configuration, immigration status, relationship status, religious background, size, nationality, language and employment all factor into racial discrimination and racial justice.

Most of the participants in the seminar have been involved in anti-racism and racial justice work for many years. Many are weary from working for racial justice and seeing the continuing and actually increasing manifestation of white supremacy and anti-racism in our midst. People were encouraged and strengthened in continuing to strive for racial justice as we shared experiences and developed strategies for on-going work in the future.

All of the members of the cohort were white, which was to be expected when the topic of the seminar was "anti-racism for white people". A focus of the time together was how we can be allies for change as we walk together with those who are the victims of systemic racism. A second important focus was how to sustain our energy to be people working for racial justice.

As an ongoing response to the reality of racism in our midst, the North/West Lower Michigan Synod is having a 3-week "Learning With the Bishop" workshop on Racial Justice. It is scheduled on Zoom for May 12, 19 and 26. If you missed the first session on May 12, you can still sign up for May 19 and 26. Register Now:

The sessions are also being recorded, so you will be able to view them on the North/West Lower Michigan YouTube channel.

As I reflect on the anger, fear and embedded racism that seem to permeate society today, I am reminded of Galatians 3:26-28: "For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

May we continue to walk together into racial justice for all people.

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.

Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Rev. Rosanne M. Anderson
Assistant to the Bishop

Synod Council Update May 2020

In addressing the unprecedented challenges of the continuing and anticipated ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through 2020, and with the top priorities being to protect the health and safety of the membership of the Synod Assembly and to mitigate any spread of the COVID-19 virus, the Executive Committee of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod recommended and the Synod Council approved the decision to cancel the 2020 Synod Assembly originally scheduled for May 14-16, 2020 in Mt. Pleasant, MI. This decision was communicated to lay and rostered leaders across the Synod beginning the week of March 16, 2020. The next Synod Assembly is deferred until the 2021 Synod Assembly, which is scheduled for May 23-25, 2021 in Mt. Pleasant, MI. View more information about Synod Assembly on our website: <https://bit.ly/3bwHMyP>

In accordance with the North/West Lower Michigan Synod's constitution, "The Synod Council shall be the board of directors of this synod and shall serve as its interim legislative authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly" (*S10.02). The following actions and activities are being led by Synod Council as a result of the cancellation of the 2020 Synod Assembly:

Fill Open Positions – All aligned to Synod Council

- **Secretary:** Ms. Christine Allen will serve a 1-year extension of her current term. This position will be on the ballot at the 2021 Synod Assembly for a full 4-year term.
- **Treasurer:** Mr. Dan Carter was reappointed to a third 4-year term, to begin September 1, 2020.
- **Lay Male:** Mr. Richard Weingartner will serve a 1-year extension of his current term. This position will be on the ballot at the 2021 Synod Assembly for a full 3-year term.
- **Lay Male:** Mr. Bill Trevarthen will serve a 1-year extension of his current term. This position will be on the ballot at the 2021 Synod Assembly for a full 3-year term.
- **Lay Female:** This position will remain open until the 2021 Synod Assembly.
- **Minister of Word & Sacrament – Male:** The Rev. Clay Bates (Immanuel, Big Rapids) has been appointed to serve a 3-year term beginning September 1, 2020.
- **Person of Color / Primary Language Other than English:** Ms. Candy McCorkle (Immanuel, Jackson) has been appointed to fill an unexpired term ending August 31, 2021.
- **Young Adult Male:** Mr. Connor Ashley will serve a 1-year extension of his current term. This position will be on the ballot at the 2021 Synod Assembly for a full 3-year term.
- **Youth Male or Female:** This position will remain open until the 2021 Synod Assembly.

Manage the current 2020-21 Fiscal Year Budget

- Includes reduction of approx. \$270,000 in planned expenses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes reduced travel, cancellation of the 2020 Synod Assembly, and reduction of approximately 20% for most synod committees and organizations.

Additional Areas of Focus – Second half 2020

- Prepare the 2021-22 Fiscal Year Budget
- Finalize 2021 NWLM Synod Compensation Guidelines

In addition, the Executive Committee issued a COVID-19 Resource Document for NWLM Synod Congregations. Items covered included guidance related to the following:

- Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) – including:
 - Applying for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan – the Synod has applied for and has been approved to receive a PPP loan.
 - Applying for Small Business Administration (SBA) loans and grants related to COVID-19 – the Synod has applied for and has been approved to receive an Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL).
- Information related to the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act (FFCRA), Michigan's Executive Order 2020-21 (the initial "Stay at Home" order), and expanded unemployment benefits due to COVID-19.
- Links to helpful references from the ELCA Churchwide Organization.

View Document: <https://bit.ly/3fUtpIj>

Synod Finances as of April 30, 2020

	Current Year		Prior Year	
	April	Year to Date	April	Year to Date
Revenue				
Mission Support	76,241	257,636	119,683	355,695
Other	2,439	23,203	12,065	34,143
Total	78,680	280,839	131,748	389,838
Expenses				
Churchwide Proportionate Share	38,121	128,818	59,841	177,848
Other	64,518	184,239	77,883	223,808
Total	102,639	313,057	137,724	401,656
Net Assets Released from Restriction	0	0	0	0
Net Change to Fund Balance	(23,959)	(32,218)	(5,976)	(11,818)

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>

THE NORTH/WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD & UNIVERSITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
 PRESENT
A VIRTUAL Hymn Sing
 PREMIERING LIVE ON FACEBOOK
 MAY 31, 2020 • 7:00 PM
 FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK: [FACEBOOK.COM/MITTENSYNODELCA](https://facebook.com/mittensynodelca)

Learning with the Bishop: Racial Justice Seminar

Rev. Rosanne Anderson, Assistant to the Bishop, will be offering a 3-week virtual seminar entitled "A Racial Justice Primer - Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow". The seminars will be held at 1:00pm ET on Tuesday May 12, 19, and 26.

All of the sessions will be recorded and available on our YouTube channel. If you missed the first one, you are welcome to watch the recording and register for the rest of the sessions.

Watch Recording of the May 12 Session:
<https://youtu.be/TuCnnWwULT4>

Register: <https://forms.gle/nXpxhjZvKBoqCJo7A>

Upcoming Events

May 19	Learning with the Bishop: Racial Justice Seminar - Part 2	Zoom	Learn More: https://bit.ly/3cyjaqT
May 21	Webinar: Becoming the Body of Christ - Condemning White Supremacy	Zoom	Learn More: https://bit.ly/2WV9Arv
May 26	Learning with the Bishop: Racial Justice Seminar - Part 3	Zoom	Learn More: https://bit.ly/3cyjaqT
May 31	Virtual Hymn Sing	Facebook	facebook.com/MittenSynodELCA

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/Interviewing
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/Interviewing	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/Interviewing
Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean	Augustana/Tustin	Supply Pastors/Awaiting a Candidate
Bread of Life/Hudsonville	Rev. Polly Standley, Interim/ Interviewing		
Bethlehem/Grand Rapids	Karsten Voskuil (RCA), Service of Invitation to Extended Service, TBD.		