



**North/West Lower
Michigan Synod**

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Ten Things the Bishop Cannot Do for You

It's nothing personal, but there are just some things I cannot do for you. Since I'm asked a lot, here are ten of the most common ones. So, please, stop asking! 😊

1. I cannot close your church. Closing a congregation requires a 2/3 vote of the congregation at a legally called congregational meeting. Of course, I also cannot save your church. I do not have the authority or resources to keep congregations going perpetually.
2. I cannot order a congregation to partner with your church. Been there, done that. Doesn't work. I can advise, recommend, cajole, predict, even beg. But partnering is the congregation's decision. We have found that most congregations would rather die than partner because of deep hurts and long histories that pre-date my time in this synod.
3. I cannot take a congregation's assets, including the building. As long as the congregation is a congregation, they determine what happens with their things. Of course, if the congregation ceases to exist or is unwilling or unable to dispose of its assets, that responsibility falls to the Synod. The bishop also has a responsibility to warn the congregation if they are disposing their assets in ways that are inappropriate or unlawful. For example, the 15 remaining members cannot divide the congregation's remaining \$200,000 among themselves and take it home—not without telling the IRS. Money given for the ministry of Jesus should be used for the ministry of Jesus.
4. I cannot force a congregation to take a pastor. And pastors, I cannot force a congregation to take you, no matter how much the Holy Spirit has told you you're supposed to be there. Pastors are called by a 2/3 vote of the congregation at a legally called meeting of the congregation. The bishop's role is to facilitate a call process and attest that the congregation has followed a legitimate call process. This means, for example, that three members of a congregation cannot hire their cousin to be their pastor.
5. I cannot order a pastor to go to your church. Some of us remember a time when there were more pastors than calls and we pretty much went where we were told. The Church has endeavored to become more sensitive to pastors' preferences and the number of available full-time calls gives pastors plenty of available options. Despite what you may think, I do not have a waiting room full of pastors ready to be sent where I send them.
6. I cannot fire a pastor. Pastors are not at-will employees. Terminating a pastoral call requires a 2/3 vote of the congregation at a legally called congregational meeting after a consulting process with the bishop. Oh, and Bishop Eaton cannot fire me.
7. I cannot ordain someone just because I like them. I can only ordain people who have fulfilled a whole bunch of criteria (ask a seminarian) including earning a Master of Divinity degree, successfully completing a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education and a year of internship, being recommended for ordination by a seminary faculty and approved for ordination by the Synod Candidacy Committee, and receiving and accepting a call from a congregation. Even Synodically Authorized Ministry has changed.

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Rather than *ministers*, the focus is on *ministries* (congregations that cannot secure a pastor and are either ethnically specific, distant from another ELCA congregation or full communion partner, or are so vital to their community that the community would be diminished if they were not there). Ministers serve in one specific place for as long as there is a need, normally one year, after which they are strongly encouraged to enter into candidacy and seek ordination. I have not implemented these changes out of respect for our SAMs; however, the time will come when this Synod will need to align with the Church and I do not believe it faithful on my part to leave that work to the next bishop.

8. I cannot give a congregation money just because they ask and I want to. Some of us joke about the mythical safe in the Synod Office containing the millions of dollars raised for the Center for Mission and Ministry. While it would be nice, it doesn't exist. The Synod Council recommends and the Synod Assembly approves the budget. I lack both the latitude and the inclination to steal from Peter to pay Paul. Besides, I suspect Rebecca Bossenbroek, Dan Carter, Sandy Schlesinger, and our auditors would have something to say if I tried.
9. I cannot unilaterally undo Synod Assembly resolutions and ELCA Social Statements. In fact, I'm to take them seriously. For example, when the Assembly passed a resolution about climate change and reducing our carbon footprint, the Synod is required to take this work seriously, and that has very real implications for our ministry. Additionally, I cannot make our Church either pro-life or pro-choice; neither can Bishop Eaton. Since I represent the Church, my personal convictions get subordinated to the Church's teachings. However, I recently learned that although I am the presiding officer at a synod assembly, I can speak to resolutions that I believe conflict with things like the Lutheran Confessions because I am the Synod's pastor. So you can expect me to find ways to do this in the future, though not from the podium.
10. I cannot stop loving you, praying for you, forgiving you, and trying my best to help you, regardless of what you think of me. It comes with the job. When I was installed as your bishop, I was asked, "Will you love, serve, and pray for God's people...?" I said I would and I asked God to help me. Truth be told, I am not always pleased with where loving, serving, and praying for you gets me. But I will not stop.

Please watch for my Thanksgiving greeting on Thanksgiving Day!

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

Christmas Sermon and Worship Videos

Bishop Satterlee will be releasing a Christmas sermon for congregational use on Sunday, December 25, 2022. If your congregation would like to receive access to this video, please complete the form below. Video links will be emailed to those registered on Monday, December 19, 2022 and the sermon video will be released to the general public via YouTube on the afternoon of Sunday, December 25, 2022.

Register: <https://forms.gle/q246erV6tVsLicfR8>

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod will be rereleasing the Synod produced Lessons and Carols video worship service for congregational use Sunday, December 25, 2022 or Sunday, January 1, 2023. If your congregation would like to receive access to this video, please complete the form below. Video links will be emailed to those registered on Monday, December 19, 2022. Register: <https://forms.gle/VuoAjYlWpgh2ygRP7>

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

Grants for Mission and Ministry

One of the elements of my role as Director for Evangelical Mission is to be a connection between the Synod and the ELCA in the area of missional grants. A reality of that role is that the pool of money for missional grants has been greatly reduced in the last few years and the direction is now more focused on the ELCA's goals of "growing younger and more diverse." There are no grants available within the ELCA or our synod to assist congregations that are not working on growing, growing younger, or growing in outreach to the diverse populations within their communities. There is no current process for an existing congregation to "go back on mission status" and receive ELCA funding again after being on their own. The basic rule of the ELCA when it comes to congregational grant programs is that a congregation should have an average worship attendance of at least 50 to be a viable candidate for renewal and vitality. Many would say that is a low number and it should be more like an average of 75. In many places, the sad but true reality is that it is easier to start a new worshipping community for a younger and more diverse population than it is to totally change the mission focus of an existing congregation that is tired.

The ELCA has a limited number of grant programs that directly support the ministry of local congregations. There is funding in partnership with the Synod for starting **New Worshipping Communities** called Synodically Authorized Worshipping Communities. These are seedling worshipping communities that could grow into congregations or remain as they are when the grant run out. The Mission Developer pastor is supervised by the Director for Evangelical Mission as they reach out to share the love and story of Jesus with new Christians, those hurt by previous churches, or those seeking to become part of a Christian community. Many of the Synodically Authorized Worshipping Communities are in ethnic specific communities, groups of people seeking places where their sexuality can be open and affirmed, or in places where there is not a welcoming Christian community already in existence.

There are a small number of grants for **Strategic Congregations**. These congregations are often in places of ethnic diversity where the community needs the church to be there but there is not sufficient financial support from the community to cover the expense of operating the church. This could be in areas of poverty, homelessness, or where there is a need for local resources. These grants are for places that are developing new congregational and community leaders, responding to the needs of their community, growing local partnerships and bringing people to Jesus, and active in issues of advocacy, justice, diversity, and community connections.

There are grants from the ELCA to synods to assist with **Congregational Vitality**. We received grants in 2018-2019 for REVIVE, our Congregational Vitality Program. Using these grants, we enrolled congregations in the program and began training and support. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, we moved REVIVE to a resource-based initiative, with videos and other resources available on the Synod's website: <http://bit.ly/3hyS9uL>. In 2021, the ELCA began offering Congregational Vitality Training via Zoom, paid for by mission support. The Synod's REVIVE Program will continue to provide resources for congregations interested in vitality with the remaining grant funds. The next REVIVE emphasis will be on Evangelism and assisting in providing copies of *You Are Witnesses of These Things* (<http://bit.ly/3DXlk2e>) and workshops on how to engage with and use the book.

In addition to the ELCA grants, the Synod offers grants for some specific mission ideas:

- **Connect Grants** – These grants are to be used towards implementing new ideas and ways of connecting with the community as we learn to live with COVID-19 and its new realities. Learn more: <http://bit.ly/3Kue3Zb>.
- **Mission Outreach Grants** – These grants are to be used to fund new ideas for mission outreach in a congregation's context. These grants are seed money for "out of the box thinking." Learn more: <http://bit.ly/3Kue3Zb>.

Two new resources are also available:

- **The Congregational Vitality Survey** – This new tool is aimed at helping congregations get a sense of what the congregation and leadership think about a congregation's mission, vitality, and sustainability. The survey is again paid for by mission support funds and is available digitally.
- **MissionInsite Reports** – The ELCA no longer provides research and analysis reports for synods and congregations. Therefore, the Synod is contracting with MissionInsite to be able to provide a comprehensive demographic profile of the congregation's community, with interpretation and explanation by the Director for Evangelical Mission.

Access to both of these resources is available through the Director for Evangelical Mission and the costs are covered by your mission support gifts.

Many things have changed since the beginning of 2020. It is a new era for the Church. We cannot go back to the way things were. It is a different world. What we do know is that the heart of the mission of the Church is still and always will be sharing the story of Jesus. It is not saving the congregation, funding the budget, or immortalizing the building. The faithful story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is at the heart of congregational vitality and health.

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

Adult Theological Education

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod is excited to announce a new series of theological education courses! For five semesters beginning in Winter 2023, the North/West Lower Michigan Synod will offer six-week Zoom courses led by seminary professors. These courses are open to all adults, both laypeople and rostered ministers, and are free of charge.

The first course offering will be *Corinthian Correspondence: Conflict, Case Studies, Contemporary Congregations, and Christ* led by Rev. Dr. Walter F. Taylor, Jr., the Ernest W. and Edith S. Ogram Professor Emeritus of New Testament Studies, Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University.

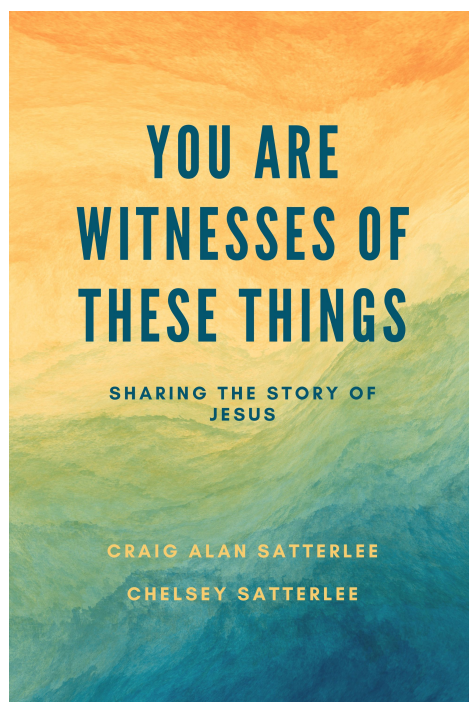
The goal of this six-week Zoom study is to learn from Paul and his house churches in the ancient Greek city of Corinth—both how they fell into conflict and how Paul sought to move them to reconciliation and ministry. The class sessions will also focus on problems facing believers today:

- how to deal with divisions within a congregation
- how to live together in a congregation in positive ways
- how to live as physical bodies
- how to live in intimate relationships
- who should lead congregations, including the roles of women and men
- how believers can look beyond themselves
- what really is the resurrection and how does it affect life today?

Each session will be self-contained so that participants could miss a week and still take part in later sessions. Resources for the session will be available on the synod's website.

The class will meet on six consecutive Tuesday evenings: January 10, 17, 24, 31; February 7, 14, 2023 from 7:00 - 8:15pm ET.

Registration will close December 1, 2022. Register now: <https://bit.ly/3g5fgfP>



You Are Witnesses of These Things

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod is excited to announce a new resource for congregations!

With all that is happening in society, the world, and their lives, people are open, even eager, to receive the story of Jesus and the good news that God is working to bring unconditional love and abundant life to all creation. In fact, the only reason new people will join the church is because they received the story of Jesus, want to learn more about Jesus, and experience the church actively following Jesus.

You Are Witnesses of These Things: Sharing the Story of Jesus equips and empowers Christians to share the story of Jesus with people for whom it is new for no other reason than because Jesus is such life-changing, world-shaping good news. This book brings the good news to people who do not yet know Jesus and helps people who know Jesus to be comfortable and confident sharing this good news with others.

Now available on Amazon: <https://bit.ly/3DXlk2e>

Synod Finances

	October	Year to Date
Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund		
Mission Support Revenue	84,151	884,031
Other Revenue	9,274	99,342
Net Assets Released from Restriction	0	0
Total Revenue	93,425	983,373
Churchwide Proportionate Share (50%)	42,075	422,016
Other Expenses	77,905	570,604
Total Expenses	119,980	992,620
Net Change to Fund Balance (Revenue - Expenses)	(26,555)	(9,247)
Beginning Fund Balance	500,598	483,290
Ending Fund Balance	474,042	474,042
Other Fund Balances		
Unrestricted-Designated		560,469
Temporarily-Restricted Endowment-Related*		592,651
Temporarily-Restricted		310,036
Permanently-Restricted		1,002,547
Total - All Funds (as of 10/31/22)		2,939,746

*September 30 Endowment Fund Statements were not yet published at the time of this summary.
The amount shown here reflects balances as of 9/30/22.

Mission Support Mailing Address

We remind you to use our new mailing address for mission support and other gifts:

North/West Lower Michigan Synod ELCA
P.O. Box 517
Dewitt, MI 48820

Please update all relevant records, including those in your accounting software. Checks will reach us sooner if they come directly to our current mailing address rather than through the USPS forwarding service.

Third quarter congregation contribution statements will be mailed this month along with Mission Support remittance slips bearing our new mailing address. Please review your statement and compare it with your records. If you find any discrepancies, contact Rebecca Bossenbroek at finance@mittensynod.org.

Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Program

Due to a very generous donation, the Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Program will be offering a second round of grants to qualifying rostered ministers with educational debt.

Applications are available on the synod's website and must be submitted by November 23, 2022.

Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3jJNWbu>

COVID-19 Resources

The CDC recently recommended an updated COVID-19 booster, which targets the Omicron BA.4 and BA.5 variants. This updated booster is available for ages 12 and older.

Learn more and locate an updated booster: <https://www.vaccines.gov>

We continue to post updates and information pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic on our website: <http://bit.ly/3rL2fsF>

Publicly Engaged Church

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod's Publicly Engaged Church Table recommends the ELCA Social Statements as teaching and policy documents that provide broad frameworks to assist us in thinking about and discussing social issues in the context of faith and life. In the coming months, we will be highlighting each of the ELCA's social statements for discussion.

This month, we lift up the ELCA's social statement on Caring for Creation, which explains the ELCA's teachings on ecology and the environment, grounded in a biblical vision of God's intention for the healing and wholeness of creation. This statement provides a Christian understanding of the human role to serve in creation, and a hope rooted in God's faithfulness to the creation from which humans emerge and depend upon for sustaining life. It provides a framework for understanding the human role in creation, the problem of sin and the current environmental crisis.

Read now: <http://bit.ly/3E1qcDp>

My Burden is Light: Making Room for Jesus in Preaching

We are excited to announce Bishop Craig Alan Satterlee's new book, *My Burden is Light: Making Room for Jesus in Preaching*, will be released by Fortress Press on January 10, 2023!

We are able to provide a complimentary copy of the book to pastors and deacons rostered in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod. If you would like a copy, please sign up by December 1, 2022

Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3B8ATTe>

Upcoming Events

November 24	Thanksgiving
December 24	Christmas Eve
December 25	Christmas Day

WISHING YOU AND YOUR
FAMILY A BLESSED

Thanksgiving



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
Faith/Saginaw	Pastor John Soyster, Interim / Interviewing
Messiah/Bay City	Supply Pastors / Pastor Dan Stonebeck, Interim beginning January 2023
Our Savior/Saginaw (Part-Time)	Pastor Dan Stonebeck, Stated Supply / Seeking candidates
Trinity/Midland	Interviewing
Zion/Freeland	Pastor Dan Stonebeck, Stated Supply / Seeking candidates

Capital Area Conference	Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean
Christ/Michigan Center	Pastor Michael Anderson, Stated Supply / Seeking additional candidates
Trinity/Hillsdale	Supply Pastors / Seeking additional candidates

Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean
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Kalamazoo Conference	Rev. Joan Oleson, Dean
Lutheran Church of the Savior/Kalamazoo	Supply Pastors / Preparing MSP
Messiah/Constantine (Part-Time)	Pastor Tom Pederson, Stated Supply
St. Peter/Battle Creek	CALL ACCEPTED: Pastor Ed Ruble. Installation December 11.

Stony Lake Conference	Rev. Sarah Samuelson, Dean
Harbor of Grace/Muskegon	Pastor Jack Ferra, Interim / Preparing MSP

Sunrise Conference	Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean
St. John/Hagensville	Took second vote to disaffiliate from the ELCA.
St. Paul/Alpena	Seeking a part-time assistant pastor

Traverse Conference	Rev. Jonathan Reid, Dean
Feast of Victory/Acme	Pastor Ruth Overdier, Stated Supply / Preparing MSP