



North/ West Lower Michigan Synod

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Remembering Baptism

Mr. John Yeager, a leader at Grace Lutheran Church in Lansing, gave Pastor Anderson a Petoskey stone accompanied by an insight. Mr. Yeager observed that Petoskey stones look beautiful and alive when they are wet. He then made the connection to baptism and our Living Stones initiatives. At their best, our Living Stones initiatives are grounded in, a response to, and empowered by God's gift of beauty and new life that we receive in the waters of baptism.

October brings Reformation Sunday. Rather than recalling these nailed to a church door, what if we use the occasion to remember God's gift of baptism? After all, among Martin Luther's greatest contributions is what Evangelical Lutheran Worship calls "the baptismal life"—a baptismal spirituality, or even a baptismal way of living. From a Lutheran perspective, washing with water in the name of the triune God before the Christian assembly is at the center of one's whole life as a Christian, no matter when in life baptism occurs.

We might imagine baptism as the wellspring from which the entire Christian life flows. Using the words of John's Gospel, baptism is "a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (4:14). This spring gushes up from the font, where, "by water and the Word in baptism, we are liberated from sin and death by being joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus." From the font, God's spring of living water flows through the congregation into every day of the Christian's life. The streams of the baptismal spring include nurture, formation, initiation, return, affirmation, vocation, remembrance, and, ultimately the completion of God's promise in the life to come, when the wellspring of baptism overflows in new life. Between the moment of our baptism and the moment of our death, we continually do that which baptism attests. "By God's gift and call, all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus are daily put to death so that we might be raised daily to newness of life" (UMG 17).

This baptismal way of life is as important to the life of the Church as it is to the life of the Christian. In addition to the source of the Christian life, baptism is also the wellspring from which congregations are gathered and in which Christian denominations find their shared life in Christ. Lately, I imagine the Living Stones initiatives as Petoskey stones in a baptismal font (On many days I have been thankful that Bishop Emeritus Schleicher left an old baptismal font in the corner of my office). Under the brooding of the Holy Spirit, these initiatives provide ways our Synod is daily put to death and is being raised with Christ to newness of life. This month, as we observe the Reformation, kindly allow me to suggest some ways we might use the Living Stones initiatives to remember God's gift in baptism:

Seven congregations start REVIVE, our two-year congregational vitality program, in November. To celebrate new life in baptism, pray for them. And explore being part of the class that begins in June.

Baptism confers a vocation to live as Christ's person in the world. Identify four people from your congregation to participate in our EMM program in one of four tracks: (1) Lutheran Bible study leader; (2) stewardship specialist; (3) community evangelist/catalyst; (4) assisting minister. Perhaps you are one of those four. And I wonder: Do you know someone who should consider becoming a pastor or deacon? Tell them. And tell Pastor Rosanne Anderson. And if that someone is you, tell Pastor Rosanne. She is great at helping people figure these things out!

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Baptism brings freedom. I am convinced that money or Mammon is the strongest power holding Christians and congregations captive, and the surest way to disempower Mammon in our lives and in the church is to give money away in the name of Jesus. We will award four debt reduction grants in 2020. For a few hundred dollars more, we can award five. Perhaps you can help. Perhaps you are a pastor or deacon and need to apply. Or, you might join 43 living stone givers by making an annual gift of \$500 to the work of our Synod for each of the next three years, or you might join many others making special one-time living stone gifts.

Baptism is about growing in grace and that often comes to learning. Attend an educational event this fall. There's a church music day on October 26 and in intergenerational stewardship demonstration and training in November. You might also send kids to a Synod or Living Water Ministries Youth event. And If you don't have kids in your congregation, how about sending some scholarship money or finding some kids in your neighborhood and sending them?

To celebrate God's welcome in baptism, learn more about or spend time with a child of God very different from you—a different race, a different religion, a different sexual orientation, someone who manages a disability, someone who does not enjoy legal status in our country. You might end up meeting Jesus. Or, perhaps this is the time that you tell someone dear to you who really needs God's love about Jesus.

To celebrate the unity of baptism, could your congregation invite a neighboring congregation, especially if the two congregations are struggling, to worship together, fellowship together, learn together, or serve together before the end of the year? Could Advent be a season of unity?

To help you figure out what the holy spirit might be inviting you to do, spend a few minutes praying at the baptismal font. Touch it and remember God's gift of love for you. If you happen to be by my office, I will show you the baptismal font in the corner and the Petoskey stone on my desk. And I will pray asking God to help you find a wonderful way to remember your baptism.

Peace,

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

The Generosity Project

The Generosity Project is an expression of the ELCA's Macedonia Project, with initial funding provided by Thrivent Financial Services. The purpose of the Macedonia Project is to grow faithful steward leaders by providing a curriculum about generosity and stewardship. They offer a curriculum of intergenerational learning about generosity and stewardship, developed by the ELCA, and will be hosting three learning events in the Lansing area on November 10-11, 2019.

Learning Opportunities:

Generosity Lab - Sunday, November 10, 1:00pm - University Lutheran Church, East Lansing

An opportunity to experience one of the intergenerational labs with families, stewardship leaders, and rostered leaders. Lunch is provided.

Generosity Lunch - Monday, November 11, 12:00pm - St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Lansing

Come for lunch and learn about The Generosity Project from Director Linda Staats. Rostered leaders, lay leaders, and all who want to learn more about The Generosity Project are welcome to attend.

Generosity Project Leader Training - Monday, November 11, 6:00pm - St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Lansing

This leader training is for anyone who would like to learn how to teach The Generosity Project.

If you are interested in attending any of these events, please RSVP to Pastor David Sprang at davidsprang@mittensynod.org

Learn More: <https://bit.ly/2B7xrd7>

Synod Finances as of August 31, 2019

| | Current Year | | Prior Year | |
|---|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | August | Year to Date | August | Year to Date |
| Revenue | | | | |
| Mission Support | 115,161 | 799,823 | 125,299 | 786,566 |
| Other | 7,718 | 110,514 | 823 | 91,059 |
| Total | 122,879 | 910,337 | 126,122 | 877,625 |
| Expenses | | | | |
| Churchwide Proportionate Share | 57,581 | 399,912 | 62,649 | 393,283 |
| Other | 64,361 | 532,297 | 62,983 | 559,555 |
| Total | 121,942 | 932,209 | 125,632 | 952,838 |
| Net Assets Released from Restriction | 0 | 0 | 1,156 | 1,156 |
| Net Change to Fund Balance | 937 | (21,872) | 1,646 | (74,057) |

Breaking Down Walls

On November 9, 2019, the world will commemorate the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall. ELCA Global Mission has provided an array of resources to assist in remembering those who have helped bring down walls in the past and those seeking just and peaceful ways to bring down the walls in our midst today.

Included in these resources is a special liturgy patterned after the weekly prayer services that were held at St. Nicholas Church in Leipzig, Germany during the Cold War, services that many believe helped topple the Berlin Wall.

Learn More: <https://bit.ly/35CDC74>

Leading the Church's Song: A Day of Learning

Music is a vital part of worship in most congregations. The music we sing and hear in worship helps form our faith. Therefore, it is important that pastors and church musicians work together to select and lead music that will help the entire congregation sing praise to God.

Join us for a day of learning to explore new styles, teach new music effectively, and utilize the musical gifts present within congregation no matter the size.

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

Golden Rule 2020: A Call for Dignity and Respect in Politics

Bishop Satterlee joined Presiding Bishop Eaton and other bishops throughout the ELCA in supporting "Golden Rule 2020: A Call for Dignity and Respect in Politics." This statement was developed by a wide range of Christian leaders in conjunction with the National Institute for Civil Discourse in Washington, D.C. and is aimed at applying Jesus' teaching that we "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" to political discussions and activities throughout the upcoming 2020 election season. Congregations are welcome to participate in this endeavor and incorporate this message into worship and learning activities on November 3, 2019.

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

Upcoming Fall Events

| | | | |
|----------------|--|------------------|---|
| October 17 | Portico Pre-Retirement Seminar | Dundee, MI | Learn More: https://bit.ly/2pjVuCP |
| October 18-20 | A Weekend with Emmy Kegler | Grand Rapids, MI | Learn More: https://bit.ly/2lOYSUM |
| October 22-24 | LARC Retreat | Conway, MI | Learn More: https://bit.ly/2E9akAF |
| October 26 | Leading the Church's Song: A Day of Learning | Portage, MI | Learn More: https://bit.ly/2kHBJmP |
| October 29 | Synod Boundaries Workshop | Muskegon, MI | Learn More: https://bit.ly/2XVmFDA |
| November 8-10 | Mitten Synod Youth Retreat | Midland, MI | Learn More: https://bit.ly/2Mel6dh |
| November 10-11 | The Generosity Project | Lansing, MI | Learn More: https://bit.ly/2B7xrd7 |

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 Priddy, Dean |
| Prince of Peace/Rose City | CALL ACCEPTED: Nan Dahnke, Installation 11/3 | St. John/Baroda | Dennis Smith, Interim |
| Faith/Saginaw (part-time) | Supply Pastors/Awaiting Additional Candidate | Stony Lake Conference | Rev. Sarah Samuelson, Dean |
| St. Peter/Unionville (part-time) | CALL ACCEPTED: Bill Heuther, Installation 11/3 | Sunrise Conference | Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean |
| Capital Area Conference | Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean | Peace/Gaylord | Supply Pastors/Interviewing |
| Calvary/Lansing (part-time) | Supply Pastors/Interviewing | Traverse Conference | Rev. Scott Torkko, Dean |
| Immanuel/Jackson | Cheryl Johnson, Stated Supply/CALL ACCEPTED: Rev. Kate Schroeder (PA) Installation 11/3 | Bethany/Northport | CALL ACCEPTED: Chrysanne Timm, Installation 10/27 |
| St. Paul/East Lansing | Supply Pastors/Preparing MSP | | |
| Grace/Lansing | John Schleicher, Contract Pastor/Preparing MSP/ Exploring Mission Partnership | | |
| Peace/Charlotte | Supply Pastors/Preparing MSP | | |
| Greater Grand Rapids Conference | Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean | | |
| Peace/Holland | Clay Bates, Contracted through December/ Interviewing | | |
| Immanuel/Big Rapids (part-time) | Jack Ferra, Contracted beginning of October | | |