



North/West Lower Michigan Synod

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Seek the Welfare of the City

Listening to an address on national unity from Gettysburg, I felt renewed gratitude for the privilege of teaching at the (then) Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg and walking that sacred battlefield. I came away with more than the names of talented seminarians, some of whom I am honored to serve alongside as pastors in this Synod. I also came away with an almost visceral connection to the sacrifice our forebears on both sides made for the sake of our nation and in pursuit of freedom. As your bishop, I have walked the halls of Congress, met our senators, representatives, and, most inspiring of all, their very young staffers, and visited the White House. I was privileged to address soldiers at Fort Leonard Wood, thanking them for their service and pledging to pray for them and their families— a promise I have kept. Serving as a bishop strengthens my sense of patriotism.

Speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, the Lord God declared, “But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (29:7). If God would have Israel pray for Babylon, where they were exiled, how much more would God have us pray for the United States of America, where we are privileged to live. The separation of church and state is a doctrine aimed at protecting religion from government interference. It is not an excuse that relieves people of faith from fulfilling our responsibility as citizens. So, as we approach Election Day and move farther into fall toward winter, I ask you to do two things in addition to praying for the welfare of your city, our state, and our nation.

First, to seek the welfare of the city, state, and nation, vote. Make your plan. Vote in a way that is best for you. But vote. If you have questions on how to vote, join us for a Learning with the Bishop Zoom meeting with Assistant Secretary of State Heaster Wheeler who will explain the voting process. This gathering will held be October 17 at 11 AM ET. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/2GLcqeJ>

Second, to seek the welfare of the city, sacrifice. I recently saw a documentary on the home front during World War II and was brought up short by the way those Americans sacrificed for the sake of our nation. We refuse to wear masks and keep social distance. We complain that we can't get into our church buildings, sing songs, and drink coffee. We accuse our pastors of being lazy and not working when they won't do things our way. We are unwilling or unable to sacrifice.

I know it's tough. I have not seen my daughter since December. I have not presided at or received Holy Communion since March. I continue to work remotely. Synod staff continues to work remotely. The ELCA Churchwide Organization will not consider returning to the office until January. We have not deemed it appropriate to return to visiting congregations in person. It's hard. To be honest, without preaching, presiding, and wearing the bishop garb, and instead fielding complaints, this gig isn't a ton of fun. “But seek the welfare of the city,” God declares. Stay home. Keep social distance. Wear a mask. So 200,000 more don't die by the end of the year.

When I grow weary of sacrificing, I hear words of Jesus, which reduce me to a puddle. Jesus prayed, “While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost” (John 17:12). Mindful that I will one day stand before God and give an account, I don't want to have to explain why I made decisions that resulted in even one of you whom Jesus protected with his life being lost. I suspect many pastors, deacons, and faithful Christians feel this same way.

“Seek the welfare of the city, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” Pray. Vote. Stay home. Keep social distance. Wear a mask. Sacrifice. Please. For Jesus' sake.

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

COVID-19 Grants

This Spring, as the COVID-19 pandemic spread across our county, the ELCA began a campaign to raise funds for vulnerable congregations and for congregations distributing extra food and personal needs supplies or providing shelter in their neighborhoods. The thought was that the ELCA might be able to raise \$250,000. As of October 1, the campaign has raised \$1.6 million. To distribute these funds, the ELCA asked Synods to apply for grants and distribute them to congregations in their territory. So far, 23 congregations in the North/West Lower Michigan Synod applied for and received these COVID-19 Grants. Congregations who received these grants are ones who already provide food and care in many ways to their communities and have seen a drastic increase in the number of people needing meals and food distributions. In addition, baby pantries and personal needs pantries have seen increases and homelessness and rental support continues as the unemployment numbers increase.

In addition, the North/West Lower Michigan Synod has made grants available from some endowment funds for congregations to assist schools and teachers during the pandemic. So far, five congregations have applied for and received these COVID-19 Education Grants. Education Grants have included two congregations that provide enhanced Wi-Fi in their community or their church parking lot for students, two that provided additional educational toys and materials for kindergarten or preschool teachers so that each student had their own set to use, and one church, at the request of their local school district, made 200 sanitizing kits for students who do not have masks or hand sanitizer at school.

Congregations are continuing and increasing their community engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. On average, our congregations doing special outreach during the pandemic are helping an additional 1,905 people per week. Those people know that the Lutheran churches in their neighborhoods are the hands and feet of Jesus. They know that they will see Jesus in the faces of the volunteers who are wearing masks, giving them extra diapers, a box of food, a hot meal, or helping with their heating bill. "God's Work. Our Hands." is not just a catch phrase. It is our response to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus that God gives as a gift of grace. Each day we are called to live in response to God's gracious forgiveness and hope. Our congregations are giving the hope of Jesus by sharing food, shelter, and personal needs items.

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



As we mourn those we have lost this year, including the more than 200,000 from COVID-19, we invite you to join Bishop Satterlee for a prayer of remembrance premiering live on the North/West Lower Michigan Synod Facebook page at 7:00pm ET on November 1.

Join us on Facebook:
<https://facebook.com/MittenSynodELCA>

If you would like to remember someone who died this year during the service, we invite you to submit their name using the form below. Submissions will be accepted until October 26.

Submit a name to be remembered:
<https://bit.ly/3741vaO>

Mid-Michigan Floods Update

On May 17-18 2020, many areas of Mid-Michigan received between 4-7 inches of rain. Water backed up behind area dams and flooded homes and roads, and washed out bridges. On the night of May 19, the Edenville (Wixom Lake) dam breached and water came over the Sanford dam, damaging it. In total, 5,000 residents' homes and businesses in a five county area were damaged or destroyed.

In Michigan, the ELCA Synods are the Lutheran Disaster Response representatives, making the North/West Lower Michigan Synod the Lutheran Disaster Response representative in our part of the state. We have been providing support and supplies in this time of flood recovery and are grateful to all those who have donated.

Midland, Gladwin, Arenac, Saginaw, and Iosco counties have been declared disaster areas. The emergency response phase has ended and now the recovery phase has begun. Our Synod has nine congregations in the affected areas and each congregation is helping in some way with COVID-19 and Flood Response. Each county has established a Long Term Recovery Group which will steer the recovery efforts and collect donations of money and materials. The Synod, as a partner with Lutheran Disaster Response, has supplied food for emergency shelters and flood recovery centers, monetary grants for building supplies, masks for recovery workers, mold remediation sprayers, and emotional and spiritual support.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief has taken the lead in supporting recovery, which also includes World Renew from the Reformed Church, Mennonite Disaster Relief, and our Synod representing Lutheran Disaster Response. As I work in the flood recovery, partnering with these groups ecumenically, it is a model of the Church in action. It is what the people of God are called to do in John 17.

The Synod has partnered with the Michigan Crisis Response Association to produce a video on the stress of a flood and how to manage disaster stress, which is being distributed to all five counties for use during the disaster.

Rebuilding is beginning. Working in a COVID-19 environment means workgroups will be small and there are very few places for housing overnight. Therefore, there is a need for workgroups who can drive in for the day. Please contact me if your group would like to come work.

The Rev. David E. Sprang
Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission
davidsprang@mittensynod.org

Bringing Polarities into Balance: Virtual Autumn Leadership Event October 26-27, 2020

Registration closes October 19! It is difficult to move forward faithfully when life seems to be reduced to one choice between opposing sides. One way forward is to learn to balance opposites in healthy ways for ourselves, our churches, and our society. This retreat will teach tools to manage polarities and open paths for the future that create a variety of choices. Rostered Ministers are invited to attend this two-day virtual learning event featuring presentations from Lisa Withrow.

Register Now: <https://bit.ly/32cmup9>

Learning with the Bishop: Voter Education October 17, 2020

Join Bishop Satterlee and Assistant Secretary of State Heaster Wheeler on Saturday, October 17 at 11:00am ET for Learning with Bishop: Voter Education. This presentation will cover how to vote and what churches can and cannot do to help people vote.

Register Now: <https://bit.ly/2GLcqeJ>

Synod Finances as of September 30, 2020

	Current Year		Prior Year		Variance*	
	September	Year to Date	September	Year to Date	September	Year to Date
Revenue						
Mission Support	92,102	855,097	106,425	906,249	(14,323)	(51,152)
Other	7,123	45,625	3,197	116,353	3,926	(70,728)
Total	99,225	900,722	109,622	1,022,602	(10,397)	(121,880)
Expenses						
Churchwide Proportionate Share	46,051	427,549	53,213	453,124	(7,162)	(25,575)
Other	53,041	448,746	73,904	606,053	(20,863)	(157,307)
Total	99,092	876,295	127,117	1,059,177	(28,025)	(182,882)
Net Assets Released from Restriction	0	0	0	0		
Net Change to Fund Balance	133	24,427	(17,494)	(36,575)	17,627	61,002

*Variance in "other" revenue reflects no 2020 Synod Assembly. Variance in "other" expenses reflects no 2020 Synod Assembly and changes in staffing.

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.

Sign-up:
<https://bit.ly/3hnZd7A>

Coronavirus Resources

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

Bishop Satterlee and the Synod Staff continue to work remotely. The ELCA Churchwide Organization will not consider returning to the office until January 2021.

Learn More:
<https://bit.ly/2MPx4to>

ELMM Fall Retreats

Register now for the remaining ELMM Fall Retreats:

Community Catalyst Part 2 with Rev. David Sprang on October 31.

The Gospel of Matthew with Professor Wally Taylor on November 6-7.

Learn More:
<https://elmm.org/events>

Upcoming Events

October 17	Learning with the Bishop: Voter Education	Zoom	Learn More: https://bit.ly/2GLcqeJ
October 26-27	Autumn Leadership Event	Zoom	Learn More: https://bit.ly/2SThf8c
October 31	ELMM: Community Catalyst	Zoom	Learn More: https://elmm.org
November 1	All Saints Day Prayer of Remembrance	Facebook Live	Learn More: https://bit.ly/36ZC8GY
November 6-7	ELMM: The Gospel of Matthew	Zoom	Learn More: https://elmm.org

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)	Interviewing Stated Supply	St. John/Baroda	Rev. James Morgan, Stated Supply
St. Paul/Au Gres	Supply Pastors/ Congregational Vote 10/25		
Grace/East Tawas	Supply Pastors/ Congregational Vote 10/25	Stony Lake Conference	Rev. Sarah Samuelson, Dean
		Sunrise Conference	Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean
Capital Area Conference	Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean	Peace/Gaylord	CALL ACCEPTED: Rev. Megan Crouch, Installation TBD.
Grace/Lansing	CALL ACCEPTED: Rev. Christin Fawcett. Installation 10/25.		
All Saints/Mason	Rev. Erick Johnson, Stated Supply	Traverse Conference	Rev. Scott Torkko, Dean
		St. Paul/Reed City	CALL ACCEPTED: Rev. Kara Shaw (A-OK), Transitional Pastor. Congregational Vote TBD.
Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean	Augustana/Tustin	CALL ACCEPTED: Rev. David Doane (I-K), Installation TBD.