



**North/West Lower  
Michigan Synod**

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## **The Church as Idol**

What does Reformation Day mean in a time when many of us simply want things to return to the way they were or to become the way we want them to be?

My dear friend, The Rt. Rev. Matthew Lynn Riegel, S.T.M., Bishop of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod, who says out loud things I am thinking but dare not speak, recently gave a talk that I would summarize as “the church as idol.” Bishop Riegel reminds us that, in the Small Catechism, Luther explains the first commandment by saying, “We should fear, love, and trust God above all things.” This does not mean we should not love other things, like family and the church. But our love for other things, including family and the church, derives from and is not above our love of God. The church becomes an idol when we love the church more than we love God. I find this to be a pointed and poignant message to contemplate during this month when we commemorate the Reformation.

When the church becomes an idol, we can forget and deny that all expressions of the church, like all living things, have a lifespan. When the church becomes an idol, we can forget that the building is not more important than what goes on in the building. When the church becomes an idol, we can reduce new people to a commodity to do the work and pay the bills necessary to preserve our congregation. Or, we can discount new people as we strive to get people who have left the congregation back. When the church becomes an idol, we could either seek radical change or resist any change if we think that is what will preserve the congregation. And we cloak all of this in the piety of the Holy Spirit.

As Lutherans, we confess that the church is always reforming, which means the church will inevitably change. Some changes we will embrace. Other changes we will resist. Over time, some changes may even become too much or too little for us to bear. For example, I expect that, if the ELCA does not do a better job responding to persons who live with disabilities, I will, in retirement, find a denomination that does. I embrace this change. On the other hand, I expect that if worship projected on the screen or online becomes normative, I will find worship grounded in the historic liturgy. I resist this change.

I don't see this self-understanding and acknowledgment as a threat or as a barrier. I understand that, as much as I love this expression of Christ's Church, I love Jesus more. So the goal is not to tailor the church to fit me perfectly. Should I find this expression of the church no longer fits, I won't go off stomping my feet, kicking up dust on Facebook, and disparaging Elizabeth Eaton or anyone else to everyone who will listen. I will simply seek an expression of the church that helps me to fear, love, and trust God above all things. And should others need to do the same thing, I will not disparage them or anyone else. Rather, I will honor them for trying to be faithful in their journey with Christ. This too is reformation.

“Almighty God, gracious Lord, we thank you that your Holy Spirit renews the church in every age. Pour out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep them steadfast in your word, protect and comfort them in times of trial, defend them against all enemies of the gospel, and bestow on the church your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.”

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

## Racial Justice

*"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." (Galatians 3:28)*

My parents loved to travel. Growing up in northern Michigan, we would take Sunday and weekend road trips all over "Pure Michigan." I vividly remember a Sunday afternoon when we explored the village of Harbor Springs. I think I was about 8 years old at the time. We came upon the Holy Childhood of Jesus School. My parents told me that it was a boarding school where orphaned "Indian" children were taken in and lovingly cared for.

I have thought of that encounter many times in recent years. I believed that narrative for many years. It was only in recent years that I came to understand that Native American children and youth were removed from their parents and stripped of their culture under the guise of making them better people, particularly better American people.

Every year, the Traverse City Film Festival features a film directed and produced by those from the Native American community. These films have helped me to understand the culture and struggles of the Native American peoples. During the Q&A after each film, local Native Americans who actually lived at Holy Child share their experiences with the audience. Currently the Denos Museum in Traverse City is hosting the exhibit "Away From Home: American Indian Boarding School Stories." (The exhibit runs through October 20). It is important for each of us to avail ourselves of books, exhibits, movies, YouTube videos and other educational materials that will help us grow in our understanding of the culture and identity of the Native Americans who are the Indigenous People of Michigan.

We celebrated Indigenous Peoples' Day on October 11. This day recognizes Native Americans, Alaskan Natives and Native Hawaiians and the invaluable contributions they have made to the world. Let us continue to grow in relationships with God and one another as we work to create a world that is free of any traces of systems that supported racism, colonialism and annihilation of Indigenous People.

As we find ourselves in the midst of controversy over Critical Race Theory, I am reminded of what I was taught as a child regarding Native Americans. My parents taught me what they were taught. Current scholarship on Critical Race Theory examines how the social construction of race and institutional racism has created and perpetuated a racial caste system. It behooves all of us to reeducate ourselves regarding the truth of what we were taught or not taught about who everyone is as a Child of God.

Let us continue to pray and walk together to end the sin of racism in our world.

*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.*

Rev. Rosanne M. Anderson  
Assistant to the Bishop and Director of Candidacy

## COVID-19 Response Grants

When COVID-19 began, the ELCA created the COVID-19 Response Fund and encouraged donations. This fund has now generated over \$1.5 million. The North/West Lower Michigan Synod applied for and received distributions from this fund to assist congregations helping those in their communities.

The COVID-19 grants distributed by the Synod have totaled \$72,200 thus far. We have had 25 congregations approved for grants and it's estimated that these congregations have been touching the lives of 2,248 people a week through the pandemic. Over the summer we will be sharing some of those stories.

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

### **Immanuel, Suttons Bay** By Pastor Jonathan Reid

During the initial surge of COVID-19, Immanuel cooperated with other congregations in the community to provide a free lunch program to local families with children and seniors in need. We had a specific focus on tribal families and those families who had a direct economic hit during the first wave. Food was prepared by local restaurant kitchens, which kept the flow of money local.

Since then, Immanuel has found other ways to assist those affected by COVID-19 including having a family within our congregation care for children whose parents were diagnosed with COVID-19 and were too sick to care for them. After the children were tested and found to be free of the virus, the host family (vaccinated very early because they are medical practitioners) hosted the children for two weeks while their parents recuperated. This situation repeated itself two weeks later with another family in the community. The COVID-19 Response Grant from the Synod allowed us to assist the host family with the direct costs related to hosting the children.

Immanuel has primarily tried to address ongoing needs that have been accentuated by the pandemic, including food parity and access to broadband internet. A number of families in our rural areas do not have a good internet connection and so with money from the Synod's COVID Education Grants, Immanuel has been able to purchase Wi-Fi hotspots to assist the local school system with virtual learning in rural areas.

Throughout the pandemic, we were able to build some good relationships by working with groups in our county as well as with individual families. We pray that we will have an ongoing relationship with them, and we will certainly work towards that. Our ecumenical bonds have been strengthened and good can come from that as well.

## ELCA Fund for Leaders Scholarships

Each year, the ELCA Fund for Leaders awards over 40 new full-tuition scholarships to future ELCA pastors and deacons who attend ELCA seminaries. The scholarship application window will be open from November 15, 2021 to February 25, 2022.

Eligible candidates must be planning to enroll full time in fall 2022 and must have received a positive entrance decision or begun the process of seeking candidacy for rostered ministry in the ELCA. Candidates are encouraged to apply to seminary and for a Fund for Leaders scholarship simultaneously. Students who have completed no more than one semester of coursework prior to fall 2022 are also welcome to apply.

Scholarship recipients may apply their full-tuition scholarship to any ELCA seminary that has offered them admission. Awards are automatically renewed each year, provided recipients continue to meet the scholarship requirements.

To learn more about the Fund for Leaders scholarships and application requirements, visit [ELCA.org/FundForLeaders](https://www.elca.org/FundForLeaders)

## All Creation Sings



### All Creation Sings

*All Creation Sings* is a new a liturgy and song supplement in the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW) resource family, designed to expand upon and complement ELW by offering a fresh and diverse selection of contents to enliven worship and people's song in a new day.

*All Creation Sings* continues the work and trajectory of *Renewing Worship* and ELW, in keeping with the intent of the 2005 Churchwide Assembly's commending resolution that ELW would be the core of an unfolding family of resources over the next generation. It draws on several supplemental resources that have been developed for the ELCA since ELW and it collects some of the most useful new liturgy and assembly song resources from across the churches that have been created since 2006.

*All Creation Sings* includes two liturgies of Holy Communion with new musical settings, A Service of World and Prayer designed especially for contemplative worship, more than seventy-five new prayers and liturgical forms for diverse occasions and circumstances, and approximately 200 hymns and songs, many of them newly created over the last fifteen years, supporting the church year and a wide range of topics.

*All Creation Sings* reflects directions and positions the ELCA has taken in social statements adopted since the publication of ELW. Its prayers and hymn texts give attention to areas such as expansive language for God and humankind, gender identity and sexual orientation, and faithful living in a society tragically affected by systemic racism, sexism, inequities in justice and economic opportunity, and other ills.

Additionally, *All Creation Sings* supports other areas of contemporary concern, such as the growing crisis surrounding the environment, the fragility of human life and health among an aging population in our churches, and now, in the face of a global pandemic; and the increasing need to include in our worship cries of lament over social and personal brokenness.

The ELCA has created a variety of resources introducing *All Creation Signs*, which are available for congregational use:

#### **All Creation Sings Overview Video**

Deacon John Weit and Jennifer Baker-Trinity host a webinar, which provides an overview of *All Creation Sings*. Watch Now: <https://youtu.be/Wjme2jpWWr0>

#### **Introducing All Creation Sings Document**

A brief introduction for congregations to use as they prepare to introduce *All Creation Sings*. Download Now: <https://bit.ly/3v9TM4L>

More resources including a digital preview of *All Creation Sings*, accompaniments to assembly songs, a list of hymns, and topical blog posts and videos are available at [www.augsburgfortress.org/AllCreationSings](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/AllCreationSings)

The family of resources for *All Creation Sings* includes three editions: the Pew Edition for the assembly's use, the Leaders Edition for presiding ministers/worship leaders, and the Accompaniment Edition for music leaders.

All of these editions are currently available for purchase from Augsburg Fortress at [www.augsburgfortress.org/AllCreationSings](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/AllCreationSings)

## Coronavirus Resources

In response to the Delta variant, the CDC has updated their mask guidance. Given the current information about the Delta variant, vaccine effectiveness, and current vaccine coverage, the CDC now recommends masks be worn in indoor public places by everyone, regardless of vaccine status, in areas of substantial or high transmission. The CDC is also recommending universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/3xyBlq8>

The CDC and public health officials continue to recommend getting a COVID-19 vaccine to best protect yourself and others from COVID-19. Vaccines in the U.S. are highly effective at preventing severe disease and death, including against the Delta variant. Currently, everyone aged 12 and older is eligible to receive a vaccine. The State of Michigan offers information about the different vaccines, vaccine incentives, and how to book a vaccine appointment on their website. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/3iDnU3V>

There have been some questions about religious exemptions to vaccine requirements. ELCA leaders have encouraged participation in vaccination as a primary means to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is no ELCA policy resolution dedicated to vaccination, but a basis in Lutheran tradition and ELCA teaching for religious exemption is virtually non-existent. On the contrary both the Lutheran heritage and ELCA teaching encourage participation in public health efforts since health is a shared endeavor. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/3kak7M9>

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

## Autumn Leadership Event

Given the recent increase in COVID-19 cases in our state and congregations and concerns raised by our pastors about spreading the virus, we have made the difficult decision to cancel the Autumn Leadership Event, which was scheduled for October 26, 2021 in Mt. Pleasant.

We share in the disappointment in not being able to come together for this event; however at this time we feel this decision is in the best interest of our pastors, congregations, and community.

Those who are registered for the Autumn Leadership Event will automatically receive a refund. Refunds will be processed this week and will take 7-10 business days to appear on the credit card used to register.

Many of us look forward to this event as place to be refreshed and renewed, and as an opportunity to reconnect with colleagues in the Synod. Therefore, we are working to find alternatives including the possibility of holding the event in Advent. If you have any suggestions, please share them with your Conference Dean who will pass them along to Bishop Satterlee.

As the COVID-19 virus continues in our lives, we encourage our pastors, congregation members, and communities to take steps to protect themselves and others by getting vaccinated, wearing masks, and staying home if you're feeling sick.

Please know that we are keeping you in our prayers, are eager to help in any way we can, and hope that we will be able to gather together soon.

Peace,  
Bishop Satterlee and the Synod Staff

## Synod Finances

Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund	September	YTD
Mission Support Revenue	103,951	899,612
Other Revenue	4,525	134,410
Net Assets Released from Restriction	0	0
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>108,476</b>	<b>1,034,022</b>
Churchwide Proportionate Share (50%)	51,976	449,806
Other Expenses	64,664	451,682
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>116,639</b>	<b>901,488</b>
Net Change to Fund Balance (Revenue - Expenses)	(8,164)	132,534
Beginning Fund Balance	374,896	234,198
Ending Fund Balance	366,732	366,732
<b>Other Fund Balances</b>		
Unrestricted-Designated		700,623
Temporarily-Restricted Endowment-Related		1,045,516
Temporarily-Restricted		318,778
Permanently-Restricted		924,639
<b>Total - All Funds (as of 9/30/21)</b>		<b>3,356,288</b>

## Treasurers

As we move into the last calendar quarter of 2021, some congregations may be looking at their treasurer terms ending and wondering about finding their successors. It is wise to fill this role with someone who has accounting education and/or experience. If no such person is available in your congregation, it might be wise to outsource some of the functions to a local CPA firm or other person who can ably handle the responsibilities. Another thought is to consider having a CPA firm train your new treasurer, considering the resources provided by the ELCA at <https://elca.org/Resources/Financial#FinanceC>

We welcome your questions about processes at the Synod Office. Contact Rebecca Bossenbroek at [finance@mittensynod.org](mailto:finance@mittensynod.org) or 517-927-4755.

## 2021 Hein-Fry Book of Faith Challenge

The annual Hein-Fry Book of Faith Challenge is an endowed theological lecture series that seeks to enliven the biblical engagement of the whole church by encouraging the development of faithful, innovative, and effective ways to teach and learn Scripture. This year's challenge is under the theme "Imagining Scriptural Encounters in the New Normal" and features four online presentations by ELCA Seminary students. This free event is open to all and sponsored the seven ELCA seminaries, the Hein-Fry planning Team and the ELCA Book of Faith Initiative.

### Hope Remains: A Creation Care Faith Study

Kaylie Ines, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary  
Wednesday, October 20, 2021 at 4:00pm (ET)

### Return to Baptism, Return to a New Normal

Aneel Trivedi, Wartburg Theological Seminary  
Friday, October 22, 2021 at 3:00pm (ET)

### Looking at Today's World Through the Psalms

Rev. Katrina Steingraeber, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago  
Thursday, October 28, 2021 at 11:00am (ET)

### Environmental Stewardship: Reconsidering the Creation Narratives in the 21st Century

Melissa Harris, United Lutheran Seminary  
Friday, October 29, 2021 at 1:00pm (ET)

Learn More and Register: <https://bit.ly/3oVduQJ>

## ELCA Youth Gathering

Every three years, 30,000 high school youth and their adult leaders from across the ELCA gather for a week of faith formation known as the ELCA Youth Gathering. Through days spent in interactive learning, worship, Bible study, service and fellowship, young people grow in faith and are challenged and inspired to live their faith in their daily lives. The next ELCA Youth Gathering will be held July 24-28, 2022 in Minneapolis, MN.

Early Bird Registration is now open and will close on November 21, 2021. Learn More: <https://bit.ly/2VFb0de>

## Pastor Appreciation Month

October is Pastor Appreciation Month! We give thanks for the pastors and deacons in our synod and encourage congregations to take a moment to share their appreciation.

In celebration of Pastor Appreciation Month and Pastor Appreciation Sunday (October 10), Bishop Satterlee shares a message for pastors, deacons, and congregations.

Watch Now: <https://youtu.be/lxxZ4uSApb8>

## Upcoming Events

October 15-16	ELMM: Daniel, Apocalyptic, and the Early Jewish Period	<a href="http://elmm.org/events">elmm.org/events</a>
October 17	A People of Hope: Until All Are Fed	<a href="https://bit.ly/2XbqkPu">https://bit.ly/2XbqkPu</a>
October 20-29	Hein-Fry Book of Faith Challenge Presentations	<a href="https://bit.ly/3oVduQJ">https://bit.ly/3oVduQJ</a>
October 31	Reformation Day	
November 12-13	ELMM: Revelation	<a href="http://elmm.org/events">elmm.org/events</a>
November 15-19	Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders	<a href="https://bit.ly/3lzG3RB">https://bit.ly/3lzG3RB</a>
November 25	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.

<p><b>Bay Conference</b></p> <p>St. Peter/Unionville (Part-Time)</p>	<p><b>Rev. Emily Olsen, Dean</b></p> <p>Pastor Bill Huether retiring October 2021 / CALL ACCEPTED: Pastor Jeff Bonn, Installation November 21</p>	<p><b>Kalamazoo Conference</b></p> <p>St. John/Baroda (Part-Time)</p>	<p><b>Rev. Joan Oleson, Dean</b></p> <p>Pastor Jim Morgan last Sunday October 31 / Pastor Vicky Blough, Stated Supply / Seeking additional candidates</p>
<p><b>Capital Area Conference</b></p> <p>Christ United/Dewitt (Part-Time)</p> <p>All Saints/Mason (Part-Time)</p>	<p><b>Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean</b></p> <p>Episcopal Diocese of Michigan taking the lead in the call process.</p> <p>Pastor Erick Johnson, Stated Supply / Seeking a candidate</p>	<p>Immanuel/Allegan (Part-Time)</p> <p>Hope/Plainwell (Part-Time)</p> <p>St. Peter/Battle Creek</p>	<p>Pastor Dennis Smith, Stated Supply / Congregational Vote October 24</p> <p>Supply Pastors / Preparing MSP</p> <p>Pastor Jennifer Michael to Southeastern Synod; last Sunday October 17 / Pastor Cheryl Johnson and Pastor Michael Anton, Stated Supply</p>
<p><b>Greater Grand Rapids Conference</b></p> <p>Immanuel/Big Rapids (Part-Time)</p> <p>Christ/Wyoming</p>	<p><b>Rev. Julie Schneider- Thomas, Dean</b></p> <p>Interviewing</p> <p>Pastor Jack Ferra, Interim / Pastor Justin Walker on disability</p>	<p><b>Stony Lake Conference</b></p>	<p><b>Rev. Sarah Samuelson, Dean</b></p>
		<p><b>Sunrise Conference</b></p> <p>St. John/Haggensville; St. James/Millersburg; Trinity/ Ocqueoc</p>	<p><b>Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean</b></p> <p>CALL ACCEPTED: Pastor Mary Hughes, Ordination and Installation was October 3</p>
		<p><b>Traverse Conference</b></p> <p>Evangelical/East Jordan</p> <p>Trinity/Manton</p>	<p><b>Rev. Scott Torkko, Dean</b></p> <p>Pastor Ken Lein retired October 10 / Pastor Matt Deames, Stated Supply</p> <p>Pastor Ruth Overdier retiring November 7 / Pastor Bill Heuther, Stated Supply</p>