



**North/West Lower  
Michigan Synod**

**P.O. Box 517  
Dewitt, MI 48820**

**517-321-5066  
[mittensynod.org](http://mittensynod.org)**

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## **Faithful, Wise, and Active Citizens<sup>11</sup>**

November 6 is Election Day. In grateful response to God's love in Jesus Christ, we exercise our right and responsibility to vote as a way we share the good news of Jesus and serve God, neighbor, and the earth. As an expression of our faith in Jesus Christ, we vote in ways that stand in solidarity with and advocate on behalf of those whom Jesus names "the least of these" (Matthew 25:40). Solidarity includes faithfully providing food, drink, clothing, housing, healthcare, and visitation. Solidarity also means faithfully protecting rights and safeguarding opportunities. Advocacy involves participating in society as citizens, so systems and institutions more fully reflect and participate in God's coming reign announced and inaugurated by Jesus Christ. To do this, Christians strive to be faithful, wise, and active citizens.

As followers of Jesus, our citizenship is faithful. Faithful citizenship means our faith shapes our politics rather than our politics shaping our faith. The citizenship we seek is political, relating the gospel to government and public affairs, but not partisan. That "our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20) does not relieve us of our responsibilities as citizens here on earth. Rather, our citizenship in heaven frees and empowers us to fulfill our earthly responsibilities as followers of Jesus. So, we vote as an expression of our faith.

Because we are followers of Jesus, our citizenship is wise. Wise citizenship is prayerful and discerning rather than predetermined. It is principled and not ideological, civil without being soft, collaborative and not siloed. Wise citizens understand the separation of church and state is a constitutional and not a Christian doctrine. Its purpose is to prevent the state from regulating or interfering with religion, not to remove religion from public discourse and debate. Wise citizens regard their right and responsibility to vote as sacred and godly and prepare themselves to exercise it.

Because we are followers of Jesus, our citizenship is active. Christians connect their faith and their roles as parents and siblings, consumers and investors, workers and employers, and, in this instance, voters. Christians regard casting their ballots as a way to practice charity, solidarity, advocacy, and justice in their own lives and in the lives of others. Christians regard their vote as a proclamation or sharing of the good news of Jesus and the way we serve God, neighbor, and the earth.

Loving God, creator of this world and source of our wisdom and understanding, watch over this nation during this time of election. Instill in us gratitude for the right to vote. Help us to hold this privilege and responsibility with the care and awareness it merits, realizing that our vote matters and that it is an act of faith. Grant that Jesus' love, teaching, and example will inform our decisions and actions. Guide us in truth and love. Lead our divided nation, state, and communities through this election, and when the results are determined, bring us together for the common good that we act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with you. We ask this in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

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

<sup>11</sup> This article is based on Craig Alan Satterlee, *My Burden is Light: Making Room for Jesus in Preaching* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023), 177-178.

## Cultivating Stewardship

This is the time of year many church folks think about stewardship. Yes, for years and years most churches have done traditional stewardship campaigns tied to times of harvest and times of planning budgets for the next year. However, the word "generosity" is replacing the word "stewardship" more and more. As experts explain, this is because generosity is something more people can relate to.

For many people, especially those who are older, "stewardship" is connected to pleas to fund the budget or shaming people into giving more. These connotations make "stewardship" hard for people to relate to, particularly those in younger generations. Instead, the word "generosity" is more easily understood and for most is a life goal. "Generosity" infers a lifestyle that is a goal and practice, and not just a church emphasis once a year. Generosity is a gift of the Spirit: "By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). Therefore, we strive to cultivate generosity.

As part of completing The Executive Certificate for Religious Fund Raising at the Lake Institute Lilly Family of Philanthropy, I have created a collection of Stewardship and Generosity Resources, which is currently available on the Synod's website: <https://www.mittensynod.org/mission/stewardship/>

On the page, you will find information including Generosity Fundamentals, Campaigns, How/Why We Give, Personal Money Management, Congregational Money Management, Bible Studies and Theological Reflection, Digital Giving Resources, Stewardship Consulting, and more!

As I continue to cultivate resources, they will be added to the website. Many thanks to our Communications Director, Chelsey Satterlee for taking my raw data and creating it into a webpage, and for Bishop Satterlee's suggestions for an organizational structure. Be sure to check it out!

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

### Pro-fessing the Faith!

By Pastor Paul Busekist, Member of the Environmental Stewardship Task Force

When I was in seminary, we studied confessions...of the church that is. You know, confessions from Augsburg and what not. The thing is, I always felt those were more like professions - of belief, of faith and of action.

When it comes to caring for the earth God made, we could suggest a few modern confessions, like those from Lutherans Restoring Creation, for example. LRC is a pretty awesome outfit. (Go ahead, Google it.) I dare you to imagine what their confessions embody, like "Just Transitions to a More Sustainable Future" and "Preaching on Creation," to name a few.

But sometimes I get even more excited about hearing personal PROfessions - that is, stories on how we can DO and BE in response to our own beliefs in daily life. Locally. Breaking what inspirational author Jon Acoff calls the old fear-based "soundtracks" we all hear in our world and inside our brains that weigh us down (e.g. "We'll never slow down climate change," or "What good are EVs if we're just powering them with coal-based electricity?") Those narratives are indeed old, often misguided, and truly help no one to move forward with hope or real change. If I had more time and space, I would share in more detail a fun project my son and I recently completed to install a solar panel on the roof of his playhouse in the back yard. Why? To bring light in the darkness, naturally - from the light of the Son (ahem, not a typo.)

So if you're excited about how you have dabbled in renewables, planted some trees or native species gardens - or if you'd just like to exchange a few ideas about green stuffs - feel free to email me at [paul.busekist@bethlehemtc.org](mailto:paul.busekist@bethlehemtc.org). Folks like me may not have all the answers. (Spoiler alert: we don't!) But I would love to talk shop on how you are moving from confessing to pro-fessing...Capturing the joy of making a change in your little corner of Creation.

## 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.

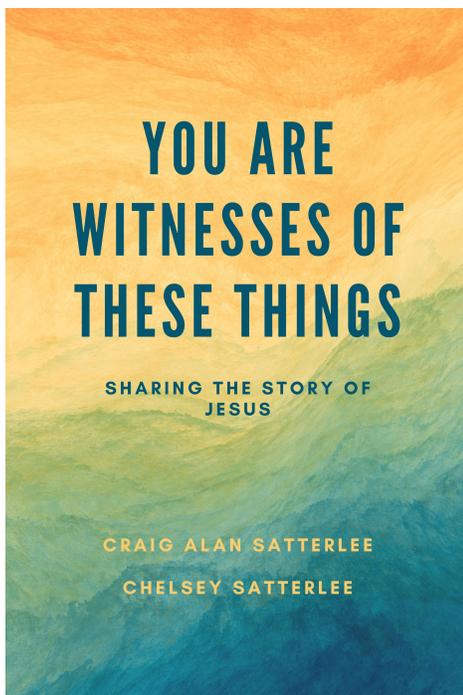
The goal of this six-week Zoom study is to learn from Paul and his house churches in the ancient Greek city of Corinth—both how they fell into conflict and how Paul sought to move them to reconciliation and ministry. The class sessions will also focus on problems facing believers today:

- 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.

Available November 1, 2022 on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)!

<b>Synod Finances</b>		
	<b>September</b>	<b>Year to Date</b>
<b>Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund</b>		
Mission Support Revenue	104,853	799,881
Other Revenue	42,657	90,067
Net Assets Released from Restriction	0	0
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>147,510</b>	<b>889,948</b>
Churchwide Proportionate Share (50%)	52,426	399,940
Other Expenses	57,312	471,867
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>109,739</b>	<b>871,807</b>
Net Change to Fund Balance (Revenue - Expenses)	37,771	18,141
Beginning Fund Balance	463,660	483,290
Ending Fund Balance	501,431	501,431
<b>Other Fund Balances</b>		
Unrestricted-Designated		603,721
Temporarily-Restricted Endowment-Related*		718,995
Temporarily-Restricted		315,945
Permanently-Restricted		1,002,547
<b>Total - All Funds (as of 8/31/22)</b>		<b>3,142,639</b>

\*September 30 Endowment Fund Statements were not yet published at the time of this summary. The amount shown here reflects balances as of 8/30/22.

### 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.

Thank you for your continued support and faithful generosity!

## 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 abortion, which is grounded in the conviction that "Christians are united in Christ through faith with both the freedom and obligation to engage in serious moral deliberation" (p. 1). As ELCA social teaching it draws upon this community's faith tradition that understands God's life-giving purposes as pressing "beyond the usual 'pro-life' versus 'pro-choice' language" (p. 2). The social statement provides guidance for pastoral care and deliberation regarding unintended pregnancies as well as basic themes for reflecting on and discussing public policy issues. It was adopted by the 1991 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

Read now: <https://bit.ly/3EGrLsr>

## 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, Bishop Satterlee offers a video message for pastors, deacons, and congregations.

Watch now: <https://youtu.be/Y2ixME1z4uc>

## *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.

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

## Upcoming Events

October 22	Disability Learning Day	Learn More: <a href="https://bit.ly/3S4Y8E1">https://bit.ly/3S4Y8E1</a>
November 4	Living Water Ministries Charge	Learn More: <a href="https://bit.ly/3yDDZOJ">https://bit.ly/3yDDZOJ</a>
November 11-12	ELMM: A History of God's People	Learn More: <a href="https://elmm.org/events">https://elmm.org/events</a>

## 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.

<b>Bay Conference</b> <b>Rev. Emily Olsen, Dean</b>		<b>Kalamazoo Conference</b> <b>Rev. Joan Oleson, Dean</b>	
Faith/Saginaw	Pastor John Soyster, Interim / Interviewing	Lutheran Church of the Savior/Kalamazoo	Supply Pastors / Preparing MSP
Messiah/Bay City	Pastor Andreas Teich retiring. Last Sunday October 30.	Messiah/Constantine (Part-Time)	Pastor Tom Pederson, Stated Supply / Seeking candidates
Our Savior/Saginaw (Part-Time)	Pastor Dan Stonebeck, Stated Supply / Seeking candidates	St. Peter/Battle Creek	CALL ACCEPTED: Pastor Ed Ruble. Installation October 23.
Trinity/Midland	Interviewing		
Zion/Freeland	Pastor Dan Stonebeck, Stated Supply / Seeking candidates		
<b>Capital Area Conference</b> <b>Rev. Gary Bunge, Dean</b>		<b>Stony Lake Conference</b> <b>Rev. Sarah Samuelson, Dean</b>	
All Saints/Mason (Part-Time)	CALL ACCEPTED: Pastor Gerald Ferguson. Installation November 6.	Harbor of Grace/Muskegon	Pastor Jack Ferra, Interim / Preparing MSP
Christ/Michigan Center	Pastor Michael Anderson, Stated Supply / Seeking additional candidates		
Trinity/Hillsdale	Supply Pastors / Seeking additional candidates		
<b>Greater Grand Rapids Conference</b> <b>Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean</b>		<b>Sunrise Conference</b> <b>Rev. Chrisy Bright, Dean</b>	
		St. John/Hagensville	Took first vote to disaffiliate from the ELCA. Second vote will be in November.
		St. Paul/Alpena	Seeking a part-time assistant pastor
		<b>Traverse Conference</b> <b>Rev. Jonathan Reid, Dean</b>	
		Feast of Victory/Acme	Pastor Carolyn Heider retiring. Last Sunday November 6.