



**North/West Lower  
Michigan Synod**

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## **Future Church**

At our recent meeting, the Conference of Bishops reviewed the ELCA’s Future Church initiative, including the survey available to all members of the ELCA and Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton’s video. Both are available on the ELCA website and I encourage you to watch the video and complete the survey: <https://lovemadereal.elca.org>.

In her video, Bishop Eaton provides a vision for our church that I find as memorable as the four “We Are Church” statements she gave us in 2013: “The vision for the future of our church is a world experiencing the difference God’s grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation.” In discussing Future Church with the bishops, Bishop Eaton explained that our church buildings and communities are part of that world, but they are outposts, places to gather and be sent into the world to tell the story of God’s love in word and deed. She also stated that Future Church is not about institutional survival, or the survival of the ELCA, but giving the gospel free reign in the world.

I wonder how passionately we all agree with this. I spend more time talking to people about the survival of their church building and community than I do about being sent into the world to share the story of God’s love in Jesus Christ. I find myself returning to Jesus’s words, “For whoever would save their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 16:25). In Luke, Jesus tells parables about counting the cost (Luke 14:25-34). There are costs to be counted regardless of whether we choose to pursue congregational/institutional survival, share the story of Jesus with the world, or attempt to thread the needle and do a bit of both.

I am regularly asked how to make this conversation concrete rather than abstract. So let’s consider a case study: online or live-stream worship. Some consider online worship the best way to share the story of God’s love in Christ with the world: televangelists have told us this for decades. Others find the time and energy necessary to produce online worship could be better spent engaging people in the neighborhood. I regularly hear from congregational leaders who feel that online worship primarily enables people to stay home from church and that it’s time to come back. Yet, they hesitate to pull the plug unless everyone else does, out of fear that those same people will simply find another online church. Someone recently mused that a single studio capable of green screening 100 worship spaces is much easier to maintain than 100 church buildings, and is also more economical and better for the environment.

As we consider Future Church and visions we have for the future of our church and congregations, we need to consider our priorities. If we want our church buildings and communities to survive, and we are staying away, then it’s time to return to them. It might even be time to turn off the camera. If we want to have more energy and resources to share the story of Jesus with the world, then maybe it is time to let go of our buildings and expand our definition of church community. All I know is, rather than survival, it’s long past time to make sharing the story of God’s love in Christ for all people and creation our vision and purpose. Thank you, Bishop Eaton!

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

# "God's work. Our hands." Sunday in the Mitten Synod

Hope Lutheran in Rockford tied quilts for Lutheran World Relief.



Prince of Peace in Portage spends all year collecting supplies and preparing materials to create backpacks, health kits, and quilts for Lutheran World Relief during "God's work. Our hands." Sunday. Others in the congregation worked on ongoing helping ministries: the craft group makes prayer shawls and preemie blankets, the Jubilee garden grows food for the local food bank and a local ministry for moms in recovery, the "plyarn" group makes mats out of dry cleaning bags for a partner in Ethiopia, and our furniture ministry for incoming refugees.



Zion in Comstock Park created care kits for kids going into foster care through Samaritas.



"God's work. Our hands." Sunday



September 10, 2023

Cross of Christ in Petoskey spun and bottled honey from the hives at their Bee Haven.



Members of Trinity Lutheran in Midland volunteered at eight different agencies in their community. Across the different sites, volunteers cleaned classrooms, assisted with gardening and landscaping, painted and cleaned a new women's shelter and other spaces, tied quilts, and collected groceries.



Hope Lutheran in Plainwell completed 15 baby bags, 13 men's homeless bags and 12 women's homeless bags. The homeless bags contained personal hygiene items, snacks, and socks.

**Thank you to the congregations who shared their "God's work. Our hands." Sunday projects!**



## Adult Theological Education - Luther's Small Catechism



When Luther wrote that familiar question, "What does this mean?" he meant it! He wanted Christians to understand their faith and to see how God was at work in their lives, in the church, and in the world.

Join the Rev. Dr. Kit Kleinhans, Dean of Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University, for a six-week study of Luther's catechisms. Let's dig deep into what God means *for us!*

Before she was Dean at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Dr. Kleinhans taught religion, including Lutheran Confessions and History of Christianity, at Wartburg College for 25 years. A fifth-generation Lutheran pastor and a brilliant theologian and Luther scholar, Dr. Kleinhans cares about her students, the Church, and what it means to be Lutheran today. She has a pastor's heart and is capable of both the deeply esoteric and the foundationally concrete.

The class will meet on six consecutive Tuesday evenings: October 24, 31, November 7, 14, 21, 28 from 7:00 - 8:15pm ET. This course is open to all adults, both laypeople and rostered ministers, and is free of charge. Sessions will be recorded and available to registered participants. Registration is required and will close on October 19, 2023. Register now: <https://forms.gle/DQu3F2QicSDrPjWp8>

Additional information, including Zoom links, will be sent via email closer to the start of the course. If you have additional questions, please contact [communications@mittensynod.org](mailto:communications@mittensynod.org).

## My Burden is Light Preaching Retreat

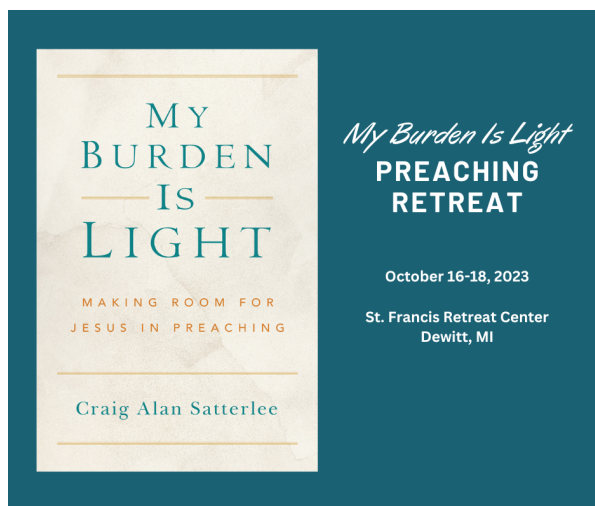
"Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Join Bishop Satterlee for a preaching retreat centered on his new book, *My Burden is Light: Making Room for Jesus in Preaching!* This retreat is an opportunity to discuss the book and to intentionally reflect on both our preaching and our relationship with Jesus.

The retreat will be held October 16-18, 2023 at St. Francis Retreat Center in Dewitt, MI. The registration cost is \$180 and covers food and lodging.

Like the book, the retreat's primary audience is pastors and deacons and will therefore include conversation about ordination. With this understanding, lay preachers and listeners who care about preaching are welcome to attend.

Registration is required and will close on October 6, 2023. Register now: <https://bit.ly/3K5z0gc>



## Synod Finances

	August	Year to Date
<b>Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund</b>		
Mission Support Revenue	95,591	695,737
Other Revenue	68	81,323
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>95,659</b>	<b>777,060</b>
Churchwide Proportionate Share (50%)	47,796	347,869
Other Expenses	52,322	423,442
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>100,118</b>	<b>771,311</b>
Net Change to Fund Balance (Revenue - Expenses)	(4,458)	5,750
Beginning Fund Balance	519,534	509,326
Ending Fund Balance	515,075	515,075
<b>Other Fund Balances</b>		
Unrestricted-Designated		633,876
Temporarily-Restricted Endowment-Related*		824,599
Temporarily-Restricted		325,299
Permanently-Restricted		1,002,547
<b>Total - All Funds (as of 8/31/23)</b>		<b>3,301,397</b>

\*August 31 ELCA Ministry Growth Fund Account Statements were not available at the time of publishing this summary. The amounts shown here reflect balances as of 7/31/23,

### Portico Benefit Services Resources

Be sure to explore the resources at Portico Benefit Services during your annual budgeting process. Many congregations find the calculator tools especially helpful.

These are available to you without the Employer Link log-in credentials. Click on the Employer Link tab and you'll find the [Benefits Cost Calculator](#) and [Compensation & Benefit Allocation Calculator](#) links available at the bottom left section of the page.

A good way to stay in touch with the congregation resources available at [elca.org](http://elca.org) is to sign up to receive the monthly email from [Administration Matters](#). This publication contains descriptions of, and links to, helpful information for congregation leaders.

### Lutheran Disaster Response

The North/West Lower Michigan Synod has committed \$5,000 in matching funds to all disaster response gifts for the Maui Wildfires that come through the Synod. Select NWLM Synod Disaster Relief from the dropdown menu. Give now: <https://bit.ly/48f4b2f>

Lutheran Disaster Response is supporting those affected by Hurricane Idalia, which caused life-threatening storm surge, flooding, and winds in southwestern Florida. Give now: <https://bit.ly/45Ps2Ee>

Lutheran World Relief is supporting those affected by the earthquake in Morocco, which has caused massive devastation and resulted in the deaths of over 2,000 people. Give now: <https://bit.ly/3Lj98xa>

## Resources for Congregational Visits

We're excited to share new resources for congregational visits! Visit our website to download a customary, liturgy, and bulletin inserts for when Bishop Satterlee, Pastor Bright, and Pastor Sprang visit your congregation!

Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3s2ycBH>

## 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering

The 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering will be held July 16-20, 2024 in New Orleans under the theme, "Created to Be." It will also include MYLE, tABLE, and Young Adult gatherings.

Registration for the ELCA Youth Gathering opens on September 15! Registration prices, deadlines, and information about the process is available on the Gathering's website.

Learn more: <https://elca.org/gathering>

As you plan for the 2024 Gathering, Pastor Dan Schewe, our synod's ELCA Youth Gathering Champion, is available to answer questions. Email Pastor Schewe at [mittensynodgathering2024@gmail.com](mailto:mittensynodgathering2024@gmail.com).

## Toward a Brighter Future

Bishop Emeritus John Schleicher,  
Environmental Stewardship Task Force

Worldwide, we just experienced the hottest month ever recorded. Yet in Christ we know that in the midst of this and other ominous signs, the future of Earth, our common home, will be renewed. We, members of his Body, the Church, are called to be agents of that renewal.

One increasingly accessible witness to that coming promised renewal is the use of solar energy. To learn more about solar energy and how you can use it in your congregation, the Synod's Environmental Stewardship Task Force will be hosting a one-hour webinar with Rob Raison of Solar Faithful. This webinar will be held on October 26, 2023 at 7:00pm ET.

Register now: <https://bit.ly/468ZUeT>

You can learn more about the options available from Solar Faithful here: <https://bit.ly/3Rlfhg1>

One of the options, a no upfront cost power purchase agreement, is already used by First Lutheran in Muskegon and Faith in Okemos.

New federal legislation makes it more feasible than ever to start moving now toward minimizing the impact of climate change. Going solar can be an important witness to God's promise to make all things new.

## ELCA Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling

The ELCA is leading a coordinated effort to research Lutheran involvement in Indian boarding and day schools dating back to the 1820s. New opportunities to get involved in this initiative are happening throughout September! Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3PAmGal>

## Upcoming Events

September 17-18	<i>You Are Witnesses of These Things</i> Retreat	Learn more: <a href="https://bit.ly/3IxBuBz">https://bit.ly/3IxBuBz</a>
September 21-24	Trinity Days	Learn more: <a href="https://bit.ly/4683rtR">https://bit.ly/4683rtR</a>
September 24	Kaleidoscope in Christ	Learn more: <a href="https://bit.ly/489oG0d">https://bit.ly/489oG0d</a>
October 7-8	Wartburg Theological Seminary Intensive	Learn more: <a href="https://bit.ly/45NdpkR">https://bit.ly/45NdpkR</a>
October 16	World Food Day	Learn more: <a href="https://bit.ly/44PfA63">https://bit.ly/44PfA63</a>
October 16-18	<i>My Burden is Light</i> Preaching Retreat	Learn more: <a href="https://bit.ly/3K5z0gc">https://bit.ly/3K5z0gc</a>
October 23 - 26	Ecumenical Community of Michigan Retreat	Learn more: <a href="https://bit.ly/3XTMGjs">https://bit.ly/3XTMGjs</a>
October 24	Adult Theological Education: Small Catechism	Learn more: <a href="https://bit.ly/3rnwR8l">https://bit.ly/3rnwR8l</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>Pastor Emily Olsen, Dean</b>	<b>Kalamazoo Conference</b>	<b>Pastor Joan Oleson, Dean</b>
Messiah/Bay City	Pastor Dan Stoneback, Interim / Interviewing	Prince of Peace/Portage	Seeking to call a deacon / Seeking candidates
St. Matthew/Bridgeport (Part-Time)	Pastor Andreas Teich, Stated Supply / Interviewing	<b>Stony Lake Conference</b>	<b>Pastor Sarah Samuelson, Dean</b>
Trinity/Midland	CALL ACCEPTED: Pastor Jeff Gramza (NWOH); Installation October 21	Harbor of Grace/Muskegon	Pastor Jack Ferra, Interim / Preparing MSP
Resurrection/Saginaw (Part-Time)	Pastor Andreas Teich, Stated Supply / Seeking a partnership or quarter to third time pastor	<b>Sunrise Conference</b>	<b>Pastor Megan Crouch, Dean</b>
<b>Capital Area Conference</b>	<b>Pastor Neil Brady, Dean</b>	New Life/Alcona County	Supply Pastors / Preparing MSP
University/East Lansing	Pastor Gary Bunge retiring September 30 / Interviewing	St. Paul/Alpena	Seeking a part-time assistant pastor
Faith/Okemos	CALL ACCEPTED: Pastor Bruce Thorsen, Transitional Pastor; Installation October 22	<b>Traverse Conference</b>	<b>Pastor Jonathan Reid, Dean</b>
<b>Greater Grand Rapids Conference</b>	<b>Pastor Julie Schneider-Thomas, Pastor Kate Van Valkenburg, Co-Deans</b>	Feast of Victory/Acme (Part-Time)	Pastor Ruth Overdier, Stated Supply / CALL ACCEPTED: Pastor Haley Vay Beaman; Installation November 19
St. Luke/Grand Rapids	Pastor Galen Knutson, Intentional Interim / Interviewing	St. Paul/Reed City	Pastor Marcy Miller, Stated Supply / Interviewing / Seeking additional candidates
Trinity/Grand Rapids	Pastor Bob Linstrom retiring November 2023		
Bread of Life/Hudsonville	Supply Pastors / Interviewing		
Peace/Sparta	Pastor Bryan Schneider-Thomas, last Sunday October 15.		
Zion/Woodland (Part-Time)	Supply Pastors / Interviewing		