



North/West Lower Michigan Synod

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Synod Assembly

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A New Way to Celebrate Easter

At the most recent meeting of the Conference of Bishops, Kenneth W. Inskip, Director of Research and Evaluation, shared with us that “many ELCA congregations believe they are already doing exactly what they should be doing, no more and no less, when they provide worship; attend to members who are sick and needy; contribute to charity in the local community; and teach people the basics of the Christian faith.” I am not surprised. As a parish pastor, I endured conference after conference aimed at teaching me to make my congregation the “best” at doing these things. When I was told to downplay the sacraments because they are divisive, I went off to graduate school to find a better way.

Statistics indicate that, if congregations exist to worship, care for members, contribute to charities, and teach the faith, and nothing more, there are 1,500 too many congregation in the ELCA. Looking across our Synod, one can spot places where we have too many congregations. Thank the Lord that our church is not a business that closes franchises! Still, unless we do something more or different, many of our congregations are not sustainable. You see, being the “best” at worship, charitable contributions, and teaching leaves us clawing for the biggest piece of the shrinking pie that is people interested in congregational membership.

What can congregations do? First, we can prayerfully ask Jesus Christ, crucified and risen,

to come to us behind the locked doors of our fear, extend us his peace, breathe the Holy Spirit into us, and send us to the people in our neighborhood and the congregations that are our neighbors with the good news of new life in Christ. Be serious and ready, though, because Jesus will come.

Second, congregations can do something more to cooperate and collaborate rather than coexist and compete with their nearest ELCA congregations. This might be hard, because an unanticipated consequence of trying to be the “best” is that partners become competitors. Congregations will need to forgive, recast the narrative of the relationship with the neighboring congregation, and be willing to be the first to sacrifice—all things God does for us.

Third, congregations can have a community impact and be an important part of their local neighborhoods. This certainly means getting out of our queues and into the streets. It means going not to bring Jesus to the people who are there, but to meet Jesus who is already there. And it means expecting to encounter the risen Christ in people different, sometimes very different, from us.

I know all the reasons why these things can't happen. I also know one reason why they can and will: Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead. Now, he brings new and abundant life. And I

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expect that Jesus intends new and abundant life for his church, his body in the world. As you do all the powerful and wonderful things we do this holy week and Easter, take a moment and think about how we can embrace the new life Jesus brings.

Gathering with you at the cross,

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

Synod Finances

FINANCES AT A GLANCE

(as of February 29, 2016)

Income

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Mission Support | \$80,581 |
| <u>All Other Income</u> | <u>\$33,806</u> |
| Total Income | \$114,387 |

Expenses

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Support to ELCA | \$40,291 |
| <u>All Other Expenses</u> | <u>\$55,561</u> |
| Total Expenses | \$95,852 |
| Balance +/- | +\$18,535 |

For the Life of the World



Synod Assembly 2016

Synod Assembly 2016

This year's Synod Assembly will be held May 15-17 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids. Voting members and visitors are encouraged to check the synod website regularly for updated information.

Registration forms are now available on the Assembly page of the Synod website!

Work continues on the synod quilt, so if you congregation has yet to submit a quilt square, please do so by March 31.

Committee Chairs: Please submit your annual report to synodassembly@mittensynod.org by March 31 for publication in the Synod Assembly Book.

2016 Health Assessment

Mayo Clinic Healthy Living Online is the destination for ELCA health plan members to take the Mayo Clinic health assessment. Complete the assessment and earn money to pay out of pocket medical costs. Our Synod still needs 15 more people to take the assessment to reach our goal before the deadline of April 30, 2016!

Login into Portico Now: <https://www.porticobenefits.org/>

We Are Stronger Together

By Pastor David Sprang

We are a church together. We are a church for the sake of the world. We are a church, not of one congregation, but nearly 10,000 in the United States, and we are part of a federation of 145 Lutheran Churches in 98 countries. That is the Lutheran Church. Together we are stronger. Together we make a difference.

Our synod has always been strengthened and humbled by our Companion Synod partnerships in Latvia, Honduras, and Papua New Guinea. Our partnerships are focused on walking with each other, supporting each other in prayer, and sharing in relationships.



The story of Lutherans in Papua New Guinea began over 125 years ago. German Lutheran missionaries from Bavaria traveled to this remote country north of Australia to tell them the story of Jesus. Soon after, American Lutheran missionaries joined the effort. With the advent of World War I, the German missionaries had to retreat back to Germany and the American Lutherans took the lead. Many German Lutherans who settled in the Midwest took up the effort.

Today, there are more than 1 million Lutherans in Papua New Guinea. As you read this, I will be ending a trip to our companions in Papua New Guinea. This is our oldest companion relationship. In January, they elected a new Head Bishop and I was invited to represent the synod and join the ELCA delegation at the installation of Rev. Jack Urame, in Lae on March 13.

In the early days of our companion relationships, it was very difficult to connect with our partners. Mail took weeks, faxes were expensive, as were phone calls. Now with internet, email, and social media, connection with our partners is instant. Your congregation can connect with our partners. The Global Mission Committee of our synod is looking for congregations who would like to be partners. This is not a financial commitment, but a partnership where congregations in N/W Michigan and congregations in Papua New Guinea's Papuan District agree to pray for one another, support one another, and share relationships.

For more information about becoming a partner with a Lutheran congregation in Papua New Guinea, contact Jaime Spellicy at spelljl@aol.com.

For more information about The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea go to <http://www.elcpng.org/>

To find out more about the ELCA's global relationships go to <http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Global-Church/Global-Mission>

Upon my return, look for stories and pictures of the installation at Mission in the Mitten <http://mittensynod.server303.com/mission-in-the-mitten/>

Understanding Islam Event

Join Dr. Mark Swanson and Bishop Satterlee for a day of conversation on Saturday, April 16 at Faith Lutheran Church in Okemos. The event will begin at 9 am and conclude at 3pm. Lunch will be provided. To register, contact Ann at the Synod Office. There will be a modest fee for food.

An ordained pastor of the ELCA, Mark Swanson teaches in the areas of Christian-Muslim studies at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Before coming to the great ecumenical and interfaith meeting-place that is the city of Chicago, Dr. Swanson taught at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., and at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, Egypt. His research interests include the history of Christian-Muslim relations, medieval Egyptian church history, and early Arabic Christian literature.

Grace Gathering

The Grace Gathering will be held in partnership with the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in New Orleans Aug. 10-13. The gathering will bring people together from across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Participants will see the church in action, worship with Churchwide Assembly voting members, engage in experiential learning, and attend a variety of workshops that will equip congregations and synods with tools to prepare for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

The partnership of the Grace Gathering and the 2016 Churchwide Assembly will provide a place for all members to prepare for the Reformation anniversary – which is an opportunity to rejoice in the life-giving, liberating power of the gospel – by connecting, reflecting on and discovering ways the Reformation continues to guide us today.

Learn more and register at www.ELCA.org/GraceGathering.

Upcoming Events

March

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|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| March 21, 22 | Chrism Mass | Trinity, Battle Creek |
| March 24 | Maundy Thursday | |
| March 25 | Good Friday | |
| March 27 | Easter Sunday | |

April

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| April 7 | Synod Boundaries Workshop | Synod Office, Lansing |
| April 16 | Understanding Islam Event | Faith Lutheran, Okemos |

For information on these events and more, be sure to read our weekly update emails and visit the events section on our website.

Congregations in Pastoral 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.

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| Bay Conference | Rev Dan Stoneback, Dean | Kalamazoo Conference | Rev Kari Fast, Dean |
| Trinity/Midland | Carl Bjork, Interim Pastoral Assistant/ Interviewing | St. Peter's/Battle Creek | Cheryl Johnson, stated supply/MSP Received |
| Faith/Saginaw | Paul Nuechterlein, Interim/Preparing MSP | Prince of Peace/Portage | Jim Foster, Interim/Preparing MSP |
| Resurrection/Saginaw | Connie Sassanella, Administrative Pastor/ Preparing MSP | Allegan/Immanuel | Paul Kehnle, Stated Supply. Dean Beckwith, Pastoral Care /Discerning Future |
| Capital Conference | Rev Gary Bunge, Dean | Stony Lake Conference | Rev Doug Ogden, Dean |
| All Saints/Mason | John Schleicher, Interim/MSP Submitted | Immanuel/Muskegon | Jack Ferra, Interim/ Discerning Future |
| Bethlehem/Lansing | CALL ACCEPTED: Matthew Smith (Pastor), Installation 4/17 | St. Luke's Muskegon | Jack Ferra, Interim/ Discerning Future |
| Christ/Michigan Center | Erick Johnson, Stated Supply/MSP Submitted | Sunrise Conference | Rev Chrisy Bright, Dean |
| Greater Grand Rapids Conference | Rev Julie Schneider-Thomas, Dean | Spruce | Chrisy Bright, Administrative Pastor/MSP Submitted |
| Grace/Hastings | Paul Kuhlman, Intentional Interim | St. Thomas /Cheboygan | Mike Kemper, Intentional Interim/ Interviewing |
| Faith/Sidney | Betsy Kamphuis, Administrative Pastor/In conversation with Grace Episcopal. MSP Received | St. James/Millersburg and Trinity/Ocqueoc | Supply Pastors/ Discerning Future |
| Trinity/Grand Rapids | CALL ACCEPTED: Dan Schewe (Assoc. Pastor), Ordination/ Installation 3/19 | Traverse Conference | Rev Kent Lee, Dean |
| Zion/Woodland | Polly Stanton, Interim/ Discerning Future | Feast of Victory/Acme | Matthew Deames, Intentional Interim/ Preparing MSP |
| Jack Pine Conference | Rev Bill Huether, Dean | Bethany/Northport | Supply Pastors/MSP Submitted |
| Immanuel/Big Rapids | Bob Garrels and Jerry Schweitzer, Stated Supply/CALL ACCEPTED: Adrian Brown, 2/7 | Bethany/Kaleva | Fred and Ruth Overdrier, Administrative Pastors/ Interviewing |
| | | Calvary/Elk Rapids | Supply Pastors/ Discerning Future |
| | | Advent/Lake Ann | Chrysanne Timm/Transitional Pastor |