



**North/West Lower
Michigan Synod**

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Lent: A Time of Resistance

In February, rostered ministers of our synod conversed with Dr. Charles Campbell, Professor Emeritus of Homiletics (Preaching) at Duke Divinity School, about Lent as a time for resisting the powers that oppose God and that are at work in us, our systems and institutions, and in the world. Dr. Campbell asserts that Lent is framed in Scripture as a season of resistance to these powers. Moreover, since Lent is historically a time to prepare for baptism (or renew our baptismal promises), Lent as a time of resistance is highlighted by the extraordinary baptismal renunciations in ELW (cranberry hymnal):

Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God?
Do you renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God?
Do you renounce the ways of sin that draw you from God?

Considering these renunciations in the context of the current state of our church, nation, world, and planet reminds me of words from the Ash Wednesday liturgy in LBW (green hymnal): “As disciples of the Lord Jesus we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from love of God and neighbor. Repentance, fasting, prayer, and works of love—the discipline of Lent—help us to wage our spiritual warfare.” While ELW uses the words “contend” and “resist,” during this particular Lent, “wage our spiritual warfare” resonates with me because many people—including me—feel under attack and unmoored from values we considered unshakable and are struggling to resist and to find some semblance of equilibrium. For many people, this Lent is neither safe nor tame.

Dr. Campbell invited us to use the renunciations from our baptismal liturgy as a way of resisting the powers and, I would add, waging our spiritual warfare. How do we do this?

We dismiss the powers when they try to sidetrack us. For example, the powers might tell us that Lent is exclusively about our individual soul and spiritual life. It's not. God has more in mind than saving souls. Again, renouncing “the devil” might sidetrack us into speculation over whether there really is a literal devil. Such speculation misses the point. The devil is evil in its concrete, real world expressions. We perceive the devil around us and experience the devil within us. A colleague calls the devil “the enemy,” as in, “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8 NIV). Those who have been pursued by the enemy intent on devouring them and defying God know the devil is not a matter for speculation. Don't let evil, the devil, or the forces that defy God tell you otherwise.

We renounce powers, not people. I am not talking about hating the sin and loving the sinner. We get beyond deeds and those who do them to examine the powers of this world that rebel against God by working in individuals and systems, including both church and state, to contradict love of God and neighbor. For example, I have said for years that mammon—money, wealth—is working hard to replace Jesus as Lord of the church. I wonder whether the spirits of entitlement and survival undermine the church's proclamation of the gospel. I fear the desire to hold onto power is causing civic leaders to let go of our values. Like many others, I am attempting to identify the powers at work in tariffs, pausing military aid to Ukraine, shutting down USAID, and cutting the Department of Education, and the Veterans Administration.

We dive deeply into scripture, not to find what we should, ought, or must be doing but to discover and remind ourselves who God is and what God is doing. From my recent sermon to the Conference of Bishops: “The good news we glimpse on the Mount of Transfiguration is that God will deliver God's people from captivity and oppression as

Continued from page 1

often as God must do it. Even when, like the worshipers of the golden calf, we bring captivity and oppression on ourselves. Injustice, oppression, infection, invasion, division, deportation, and hate will end. Jesus will lead us from these places of fear, despair, deprivation, and exhaustion to the fulfillment of God's reign." God's deliverance does not depend upon us. God's deliverance does not depend upon circumstance. God's deliverance depends upon God. And God's deliverance does not come without a cost; Jesus went to the cross to deliver us.

We pay attention to the verbs as we consider these renunciations—*defy, rebel against, draw from* God. Is this what is happening in and around us? Is something openly resisting or refusing to obey God? Is something fighting against God's authority or rule or reign? Is something attempting to obtain something—us, our church, our world—that rightfully belongs to God? We *renounce* these things. We abandon, reject, stop using or consuming them. This is harder than giving up candy and the reason Lent is a "struggle" and "our spiritual warfare."

We name the powers. Scripture teaches that, in naming the powers, they lose some of their power. Jesus asked the demon "What is your name?" and the demon replied "My name is Legion, for we are many" (Mark 5:9; Luke 8:30). We don't learn to name the powers in our head. We name the powers by attending to our emotions and what is happening in our bodies. What is causing us to feel anxious, angry, or afraid? What is causing us to eat too much or not at all? What is making it hard to get out of bed? What is keeping us up at night? Why are we obsessed with or afraid to watch the news? How much time are we spending on social media? Push beyond the circumstances to what they cause or represent in you individually and communally. How are they influencing your routine and actions?

We renounce the powers. Actually renounce the powers out loud. "I renounce them." If you prefer something scriptural, try, "Get behind me, Satan" (Matthew 16:23; Mark 8:33). Luther would have us stand up, face down the devil, and yell, "I am baptized! Nothing can separate me from God's love in Jesus Christ" (Romans 8:38–39). Allow your renunciation to find expression in repentance, prayer, fasting, and works of love—the discipline of Lent—as we wage our spiritual warfare.

We do not stop at renunciation. As we do in the baptismal liturgy, we turn to what we believe. Three times, once for each Person of the Trinity, we are asked, "Do you believe?" Three times, we respond together, "I believe." And we do not stop with these words; together we confess the Apostles Creed.

"I believe," spoken together. This simple action emphasizes a common belonging. The Creed puts into words the church's "I believe" so that we can speak and hear them. We can quibble about the details and lament the limits of language to capture the mystery of the triune God, including Jesus's incarnation, passion, death, and resurrection. We certainly must be clear about what the Creed does and does not confess. We must certainly grasp that "believe" is more about "trust" than "intellectual assent."

But the gift of the Creed is that, when the powers are so powerful that I cannot answer, "I believe," I can stand in worship and listen to people all around me answer for me by saying the Creed and believing on my behalf. And I can recall that Christians in congregations across the ages and throughout the world saying the Creed and believing with me. Oh, and I can say the Creed myself, and perhaps discover the way I do believe. And some days I can say the Creed for no reason other than someone around me might need me to say it for them.

And together we resist the powers. After all, we can only say "I renounce" because we say "I believe." So, I continue this Lenten journey believing for and with you—and relying on you to believe for and with me. I pray our trust in God frees and empowers us to renounce and resist the powers.

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

ELCA Governance

Recently, rumors have been circulating regarding supposed changes to ELCA governance coming before the 2025 Churchwide Assembly from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC). Some are suggesting that the Churchwide Assembly will eliminate congregational autonomy. Others are claiming that the Churchwide Assembly will authorize synods or the ELCA churchwide organization to seize congregational property. **To be clear, these rumors are untrue.** The ELCA Office of the Secretary has provided a document to help members of the ELCA learn more about the CRLC, Churchwide Assembly, and the proposed constitutional changes.

View document: <https://bit.ly/3FE3eGO>

An Introduction

Pastor Kjersten Sullivan, Assistant to the Bishop and Interim Director for Evangelical Mission

Hello! Thank you for your welcoming of me as Assistant to the Bishop and Interim Director for Evangelical Mission. While I know some folks from connections through Trinity, Battle Creek, I'm looking forward to getting to know more about you, your congregations, and the work you are doing.

A bit about me. First, the obvious, my name has a lot of consonants in it. It is pronounced Sure-sten. My mother was very proud of our Swedish heritage. I grew up in southern California as a member of the congregation my grandparents founded because there wasn't a Swedish Lutheran church in town when they moved there. I went to college at Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA (Go Zags!). In college, I experienced a call to ministry (a long, humorous story that involved a summer at Lutheran Bible camp, an Ignatian Silent retreat, and a mouse tail), and started exploring the idea of seminary. After college, I moved to Washington, D.C. with the Lutheran Volunteer Corps where I worked at a homeless shelter founded by an ELCA congregation and fell in love with how congregations can impact communities. I went to seminary at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, where I met Bishop Satterlee.

I was serving a congregation as an interim pastor in the Los Angeles area when Bishop Satterlee invited me to consider a call in Michigan. That congregation proved to be an incredible fit and I have been serving Trinity Lutheran Church in Battle Creek for the past ten plus years, until Bishop Satterlee once again invited me to consider a new call, this time as Interim DEM. I hope the Bishop's instincts were as good with this call as they were with the call to Trinity. I still live in Battle Creek (the town smells like cereal, it's amazing!) with my husband Travis, our son Nik, and two very opinionated cats. In my free time, I am an avid runner and, weather permitting, like to float on Battle Creek's many inland lakes and rivers.

The thing I am the most excited about in the DEM position is to get to work with congregations on how you can make Jesus known in your communities. As Lutherans, we are often the best kept secret, quietly doing absolutely amazing work and not telling anyone about it. I want to help you tell the story of the amazing work you are doing, so that more people can experience the love of Jesus as lived out in our congregations and ministries. I can't wait to get out on the road, start visiting congregations, and learn more about how Jesus is at work among you.

THE FUTURE NEED FOR PASTORAL LEADERS

PART ONE: TRENDS IN PASTORAL TRANSITIONS AND AFFORDABILITY

RELIGIOUS DECLINE IN US



The only religious demographic growing in the US is the religiously unaffiliated.

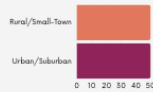
About 25% of US adults identify as unaffiliated and 90% of those adults say they are not looking to join a religion.



COMPOSITION OF ELCA CONGREGATIONS

Since 2015, the number of ELCA congregations has declined at about 1% each year.

The geography of ELCA congregations has remained constant in recent years: half are rural/small-town and half are urban/suburban



UNDER 50

Average worship attendance in ELCA congregations today.

This is a significant change in the composition of the ELCA, as a few years ago most ELCA congregations had an average worship attendance of 50-250.

CONGREGATIONAL FINANCES

\$180,000 The median income of an ELCA congregation in 2022

\$160,000 An important benchmark for congregations to afford a full-time pastor

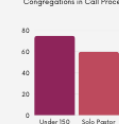
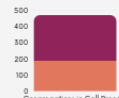
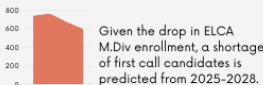
45% Estimated percentage of ELCA congregations that cannot afford a full-time pastor

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

Each year, 6% of all ELCA congregations have a pastoral transition. About 40% of these congregations are open to a first-call candidate.

30% Percentage by which pastoral openings in the ELCA has declined since 2015

Of the openings, 75% are in congregations with under 150 in average worship attendance and 60% are solo pastorates.



9% Percentage of ELCA congregations served by a SAM

Beginning in 2024, the ELCA's Research and Evaluation team launched a major study of pastoral leadership in the ELCA.

The purpose of the study is better understand the ELCA's system of mobility and call and to anticipate the church's need for pastoral leaders over the next five years.

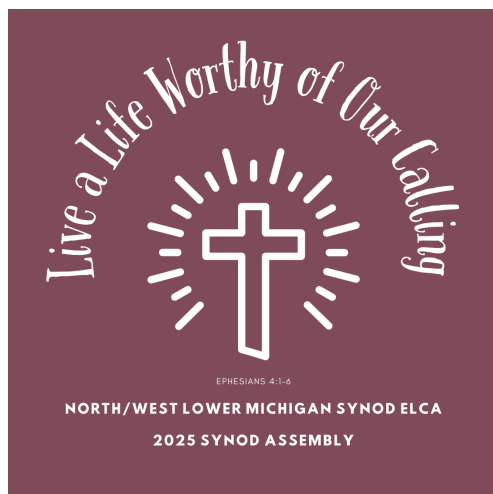
The first of two public reports has been released. Covering trends in pastoral transitions and affordability, the report provides comprehensive quantitative findings.

Highlights are shared in this graphic, but we invite you to read the full report at <https://bit.ly/ELCAFutureNeedsReport>

REFERENCES

Statistics provided by the ELCA Office of the Secretary. Full report is available at: <https://bit.ly/ELCAFutureNeedsReport>

Live a Life Worthy of Our Calling: 2025 Synod Assembly



The 2025 North/West Lower Michigan Synod Assembly will be held in-person on May 18-20, 2025 at the Comfort Inn & Suites in Mt. Pleasant, MI under the theme "Living a Life Worthy of Our Calling."

As announced in September, initial information pertaining to the 2025 Synod Assembly is available on the Synod's website: <http://bit.ly/3E6VYzP>

This includes guidance on electing voting members, parliamentary procedure, pre-assembly discussion sessions, workshops, greetings, display tables, and choir. In the coming months, updates and resources will continue to be posted there so please check back frequently.

All questions related to the 2025 Synod Assembly should be emailed to assembly@mittensynod.org.

Upcoming Dates & Deadlines

- March 17: Early Bird Registration Closes
- March 21: Resolutions, Memorials, and Nominations Due
- March 31: Materials for the Assembly Book Due

Registration: Early Bird Rates End March 17!

The Synod Assembly registration fee includes assembly costs for programming and select meals. Hotel reservations are separate and must be made directly with the hotel. **Registration for Synod Assembly will close on April 23, 2025.**

- Early-Bird Registration (February 15 – March 17)
 - Voting Members and Visitors: \$200
 - Retired Rostered Ministers / Rostered Ministers on Disability: \$150
- Regular Registration (March 18 – April 23)
 - Voting Members and Visitors: \$225
 - Retired Rostered Ministers / Rostered Ministers on Disability: \$165

All voting members and visitors must register for Synod Assembly in advance using the online registration form. There is no partial day registration. Due to our arrangements with the hotel and concerns about capacity and safety, there will be no late or walk-in registration.

As part of the registration form, voting members and visitors will have the opportunity to register for Pre-Assembly Discussions and Synod Assembly Workshops. Information about those sessions is available in the sections below. **If you are registering multiple people who want to attend different Pre-Assembly Discussions or Assembly Workshops, you will need to complete separate registration forms.**

When completing the registration form, make sure to complete the country code field of the address section. For addresses in the United States, the country code is US. If you have issues completing the form using Google Chrome, please try accessing it in a different internet browser (Safari, Microsoft Edge, Firefox, etc.). If you have issues completing the form on a mobile device, please try completing it on a computer.

Register Now: <https://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/9805238>

Hotel Reservations

A special group rate of \$106/night is available at the Comfort Inn & Suites in Mt. Pleasant. Voting members and visitors must make their own hotel reservations.

- Phone: 989-772-4000, Group Name: North West Lower Synod ELCA 5.18.25
- Book Online: <https://bit.ly/41ddwpI>
- Additional rooms are available at the Fairfield Inn in Mt. Pleasant. Call 989-775-5000 to book.

Continued from page 4**Pre-Assembly Discussion Sessions**

Prior to the 2025 Synod Assembly, there will be optional discussion sessions held via Zoom. Registration for these sessions is included on the Synod Assembly Registration Form. All are encouraged to attend!

- May 13, 6-8pm: Pre-Assembly Discussion on Resolutions/Memorials
- May 14, 6-8pm: Pre-Assembly Discussion on Budget/Compensation Guidelines
- May 15, 6-8pm: Pre-Assembly Discussion on Parliamentary Procedure/Voting/Bishop Election Process

Synod Assembly Workshop Options

Workshops are tentatively scheduled on Monday, May 19 from 4:45-5:45pm at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Mt. Pleasant. Voting members and visitors attending Synod Assembly will have the option of registering for one workshop when completing the Synod Assembly Registration Form. View options: <https://bit.ly/4hR0m85>

Code of Conduct for Synod Events

Synod Council created and approved a Code of Conduct for Synod Events in February 2025. It includes Synod Council meetings, Synod Assemblies, Synod Conference gatherings, Synod Training Events, and other meetings and events organized or co-hosted by the Synod or its representatives. All voting members and visitors are expected to review and agree to upload this Code of Conduct. It is included in the registration form and is also available online: <https://bit.ly/4hT7QXq>

Synod Assembly Scavenger Hunt

Similar to one at the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering, voting members and visitors will be able to participate in a digital scavenger hunt during Synod Assembly! The scavenger hunt will be available through Eventzee, a free mobile application. We encourage voting members and visitors to download the application and set up an account prior to Synod Assembly. We recommend playing on a team! Only one account is needed for a team so if you're playing on a team with other members of your congregation, just have one person create an account. Scavenger Hunt tasks will go live on May 16! View Joining Instructions: <https://bit.ly/3EH3Riz>

Nominations

The Nominating Committee is seeking nominations for six Synod Council positions, three Consultation Committee positions, and four Discipline Committee positions. Full position information and blank bio forms are available on the website. **All completed bio forms must be submitted by 5pm on March 21, 2025 to Sandy Schlesinger (sandyschlesinger@gmail.com).**

Resolutions and Memorials

To be considered for the 2025 Synod Assembly, all proposed resolutions and memorials must be submitted to the North/West Lower Michigan Synod Resolutions Committee in advance of the Synod Assembly. **All resolutions and memorials must be submitted by 5pm on March 21, 2025 to Ann Stavros (annstavros@mittensynod.org).**

Documents with guidance on drafting and formatting proposed resolutions and memorials is available on the website (<http://bit.ly/3E6VYzP>). For additional guidance, contact Pastor Jonathan Reid, Chair of the Resolutions Committee at pastorj@suttonsbayimmanuel.org.

Assembly Book

The Assembly Book will again be a series of pdf documents published on the Synod website. **All materials for the Assembly Book must be submitted by 5pm on March 31, 2025 to Rebecca Bossenbroek (finance@mittensynod.org).**

Synod Assembly Offering

Synod Council has designated two areas of support for the 2025 Synod Assembly Offering with 50% of the offerings designated toward each area.

- **ELCA World Hunger:** For 50 years, we have joined together as Lutherans to address the root causes of hunger and poverty around the world through ELCA World Hunger. Part of our church's long tradition of meeting human needs, ELCA World Hunger testifies to our hope for and commitment to God's promise of a time when we will hunger and thirst no more.
- **NWLM Synod Disaster Relief Fund:** This fund was established in 2016 to provide disaster relief to communities within our synod. As funds are available, this fund may also be used to provide disaster grants to other synods or international agencies of the church in responding to regional or international disasters.

The Pride Fairy Speaks



Pastor Sharon Van Dam

In a world that is increasingly filled with fear, misunderstanding, and hate, a rainbow colored bright spot shines through in the work of the Pride Fairy, also known as Pastor Sharon Van Dam.

Although retired, Pastor Sharon serves Augustana Lutheran Church in Tustin, MI and, in her free time, she moonlights as the Pride Fairy. Taken from a title given to her at a Pride Picnic, Pastor Sharon, as the Pride Fairy, shares video messages in support of what she calls “The Rainbow Community.”

An avid ally, the Pride Fairy uses her videos to connect with the LGBTQIA+ community, provide love and encouragement, and even share the story of Jesus. Her mix of heartfelt personal anecdotes, fun everyday experiences, and unconditional acceptance powerfully shares the gospel and reinforces the truth that God loves us all, exactly as we are.

With how pervasive hate has become in our society, it's important that we keep sharing the good news of Jesus and, like the Pride Fairy, show our acceptance, love, and support for each other and for those in communities that are feeling particularly hurt and scared.

The Pride Fairy's videos are available on Pastor Sharon's social media! Watch on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/18jgisj1k/> or Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/g_ma_sharon/

Stronghold Grants

“The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you” (Psalm 9:9-10).

A stronghold is a place where a particular cause or belief is strongly defended or upheld. A stronghold is a place that is protected against attack. For Christians, Jesus's cross is a stronghold that is the foundation of our belief in God's unconditional love for all people, solidarity with those who are in trouble or distress, and abundant life especially for all who are oppressed. Jesus was a stronghold for the oppressed when he preached good news to the poor, reached out to heal the sick and the suffering, welcomed the estranged and outcast, ate and drank with those deemed sinners and beyond God's love, and on the cross, opened his arms to all. As disciples of the Lord Jesus, we extend Jesus's own ministry when the church is a stronghold for the oppressed.

At this moment in the life of our nation, people in our country are afraid and in need of a stronghold. People fleeing war zones, children scared that their parents will be taken away, and both children and adults in the LGBTQIA+ community especially need to be reminded and assured that they are loved by God, find emotional and spiritual shelter in a safe space, and receive information and help in moving forward in their lives. Extending the very ministry of Jesus, providing such a stronghold has been the work of Christ's Church since the very beginning.

To assist congregations in providing a stronghold, Bishop Satterlee, in consultation with Pastor David Sprang, establishes “Stronghold Grants” for congregations reaching out to the immigrant, refugee, and LGBTQIA+ communities to share the love of Jesus, provide a safe space for prayer, fellowship, and conversation, and to offer resources and assistance to help members of these communities navigate the situations in which they find themselves.

To apply for a grant, please prepare a proposal that includes a narrative description of the ministry and a budget for how the money will be used. Preference will be given to proposals that explicitly share the story of Jesus and come from communities where other resources are not readily available. Grants will not exceed \$1,000. Please email your proposal to Bishop Satterlee at bishopcraigsatterlee@mittensynod.org.

These grants are made possible by an endowed outreach fund administered by the bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission and a gift from the Trapp Endowment. Grant proposals will be considered until the designated funds are awarded or until August 31, 2025.

Women's History Month

March is Women's History Month! To celebrate, we share a collection of influential women from the Reformation! You can learn more about these women, and many other important women in Christian History, in *Voices Long Silenced: Women Biblical Interpreters Through the Centuries* by Marion Ann Taylor and Joy A. Schroeder.

Katharina von Bora

1499 - 1552

"I will cling to Christ as a burr clings to a coat!"

Katharina, a former nun, escaped her convent with the help of Martin Luther.

After marrying Luther, she successfully managed their home, farm, children, boarding house, and a brewery.

Katharina and Luther had a strong partnership and his work was greatly impacted by their conversations.



Marguerite of Navarre

1492 - 1549

"For there's nothing more foolish than a man who thinks he's clever, and nothing more wise than the man who knows that he is nothing."

Marguerite was a writer, philosopher, and Queen of Navarre.

She corresponded with Protestant Reformers, advocated for the poor, established hospitals and orphanages, and worked to address clergy sexual violence.



Voices Long Silenced: Women Biblical Interpreters Through the Centuries

Marie Dentière

c. 1495 - 1561

"For what God has given you and revealed to us women, no more than men should we hide it and bury it in the earth."

Marie was a former nun, noblewoman, and writer. Inspired by Luther's writings, she worked to support the Reformation in Geneva.

She was a strong advocate of women's rights and publicly advocated that women should have a larger role in the Reformation.



Voices Long Silenced: Women Biblical Interpreters Through the Centuries

Olympia Morata

c. 1526 - 1555

"Though born a woman, womanly things I have left behind:
Yarn, the shuttle, threads of the loom, and baskets.
It is the flowery meadow of the Muses I admire,
And the cheerful choral dances of double-crested Parnassus.
Perhaps other women are pleased with other things,
But these are my glory, and these are my joy."

Olympia was a scholar and poet. Among her writings, she paraphrased eight psalms into Classical Greek, using imagery from classic mythology.

Olympia strongly advocated for the Reformation in Italy and is known for challenging gender roles, sharing her deep faith, and encouraging others in their faith.



Voices Long Silenced: Women Biblical Interpreters Through the Centuries

Synod Financial Summary - January 2025

Financial Position Indicators		1/31/25		1/31/24					
Cash (Comerica and MIF Checking)		216,970		278,501					
Investments (CDs and Money Market Account)		678,779		664,038					
Cash Flow Reserve Fund (NTE 16% of subsequent year budgeted expenses)		200,710		14,620					
Book Net Worth (Fund Balance - All Funds)		3,531,163		3,347,146					
Unrestricted-Undesignated Fund Activity (General Operating Fund)									
		Current Year				Prior Year			
		January		Year to Date		January		Year to Date	
		Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
Mission Support Revenue (50% goes to ELCA Churchwide)		115,070	101,081	1,204,176	121,950	109,379	110,000	1,215,497	1,100,000
Synod Assembly Revenue		0	0	4,920	5,000	0	0	40,550	60,000
Other Revenue		4,603	2,769	112,625	1,162,228	12,983	2,944	91,939	301,828
Total Revenue		119,673	103,850	1,321,721	1,289,178	122,362	112,944	1,347,987	1,461,828
Churchwide Proportionate Share (50%)		57,535	50,535	602,088	606,475	54,716	55,000	607,775	660,000
Synod Assembly Expenses		0	0	5,642	5,000	0	0	54,655	60,000
Other Expenses		64,202	60,119	759,162	726,594	70,073	74,008	692,960	799,107
Total Expenses		121,738	110,654	1,366,892	1,338,069	124,788	129,008	1,355,389	1,519,107
Net Change to Fund Balance (Revenue less Expenses)		(2,065)	(6,804)	(45,171)	(48,891)	(2,426)	(16,064)	(7,403)	(57,279)
Transfers as directed by Synod Council		0	0	0	0	0	0	(355,183)	0
Beginning Fund Balance		103,634		146,740		149,167		509,326	
Ending Fund Balance at 1/31/25 & 1/31/24		101,569		101,569		146,740		146,740	
Other Fund Balances									
Unrestricted-Designated*				1,061,562		999,547			
Temporarily-Restricted Endowment-Related**				1,021,374		846,118			
Temporarily-Restricted				311,111		319,194			
Permanently-Restricted				1,035,547		1,035,547			
Total Fund Balances at 1/31/25 & 1/31/24				3,531,163		3,347,146			

*Includes Synod Endowment Fund, Cash Flow Reserve, Synod Staff Support Fund

**Reflects unrealized gains/losses on investments and unspent distributions

2025 Mission Intent Forms

Thanks to congregations who submitted their 2025 Mission Intent Forms on or before the February 15, 2025 deadline! This information helps us budget responsibly. If you've not submitted your form, you can download it here: <https://mittensynod.org/docs/StatementOfIntent.pdf>

Once completed, please send the form via email to finance@mittensynod.org or mail it to the North/West Lower Michigan Synod at P.O. Box 517 Dewitt, MI 48820.

Join us at Synod Assembly

Pat Vance, Member of the Environmental Stewardship Task Force

In keeping with the theme of this year's Synod Assembly, the Environmental Stewardship Task Force will be offering you two opportunities to respond to our call from God to care for creation, to be united in Christ by helping one another, and to give the communities around us good examples of protecting our earth.

The first opportunity will be a table in the display area where you can watch videos and get printed materials. The second opportunity will be to attend our workshop, Fostering a Care for Creation, where you can hear about congregations that created effective green teams, made buildings more energy efficient, and became community centers for recycling. We'll offer how-to's, including ways to save and/or make money in the process.

Rob Rafson, from Solar Faithful, will also share data on the effects installing solar panels has had on churches and their membership. There will also be time to share what actions you have taken, whether environmental or not, that have resulted in more interest from folks in your communities. See you at Synod Assembly!

Trinity Lutheran Seminary Lectures

Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University has a series of upcoming lectures. All are invited to attend!

Nelson Lecture Series

March 18 & 20

Featuring Vance Blackfox, Citizen of the Cherokee Nation and Founder and Director for Other + Wise

Learn more: <https://bit.ly/4bRUzRz>

Nelson W. Trout Lectures

April 3-4

Featuring The Rev. Dr. Teresa L. Smallwood and The Rev. Dr. James Thomas

Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3v8ptA3>

Exploring God's Call to Lead

Do you ever get a sense that God is tapping you on the shoulder? Are you wanting to learn more about church leadership and wondering whether it might be for you? Have you ever thought about enrolling in seminary, or even just wondered what seminary study is like today?

You are not alone! The ELCA, in partnership with all our seminaries, is once again offering online groups where you can share your curiosity with others across the church. Over three sessions, explore how God might be calling you to lead in the ELCA. Sign up by visiting elcaseminaries.org and filling out the contact form, or by emailing recruitment@elca.org.

Are you a rostered minister interested in leading such a group? Email Rick.Summy@elca.org to learn more.

Upcoming Events

March 18 & 20	Trinity Lutheran Seminary Nelson Lecture Series	Learn more: https://bit.ly/40Uyzft
March 21	Synod Assembly Nominations Deadline Synod Assembly Resolutions/Memorials Deadline	Learn more: http://bit.ly/3E6VYzP
March 25	LFCNA Webinar: Living in the New, Digital World	Learn more: https://bit.ly/3DCbSVN
March 31	Synod Assembly Book Deadline	Learn more: http://bit.ly/3E6VYzP
April 3	Trinity Lutheran Seminary Nelson W. Trout Lectures	Learn more: https://bit.ly/3v8ptA3
April 4	Signs Along the Way: Discernment Retreat	Learn more: plts.edu/signs
April 22	End Gun Violence Michigan Lobby Day	Learn more: https://bit.ly/3DB4utQ
April 26	2025 Spring WELCA Gathering	Learn more: https://bit.ly/3R23stQ

Congregations in Transition

Note: This list contains congregations that are actively in the call process. Congregations are included on the list when the called rostered minister completes their ministry in the congregation. Thus, congregations in which the rostered minister has resigned but is still serving are not listed here. Additionally, calls are not listed as accepted until Bishop Satterlee signs the Letter of Call.

Bay Conference	Pastor Emily Olsen-Brandt, Dean	Kalamazoo Conference	Pastor Travis Wilson, Dean
		Trinity/Battle Creek	Pastor Cheryl Johnson, Stated Supply
Capital Area Conference	Pastor Neil Brady, Dean	Messiah/Constantine	Pastor Tom Pederson, Stated Supply / Seeking Candidates
Grace/Lansing	Pastor Brian Schneider-Thomas, Interim / Preparing MSP	Saron/St. Joseph	CALL ACCEPTED: Pastor James Smith, Installation March 25
Greater Grand Rapids Conference	Pastor Julie Schneider-Thomas, Pastor Kate Van Valkenburg, Co-Deans	St. John/Three Rivers	Pastor Victoria Blough, Interim beginning in April
Mamrelund/Kent City	Pastor Robert Johnson, Part-Time Interim / Seeking Candidates	Stony Lake Conference	Pastor Sarah Samuelson, Dean
Two Churches/Kentwood	Episcopal Church taking lead in transition / Preparing MSP	Sunrise Conference	Pastor Megan Crouch, Dean
Zion/Woodland	Supply Pastors / Seeking Candidates	New Life/Alcona County	Supply Pastors / Seeking Candidates
		St. Paul/Alpena	Seeking a part-time assistant pastor
		Traverse Conference	Pastor Jonathan Reid, Dean