



Southeast Michigan Synod • ELCA

Conference 1 Report for 2025 Southeast Michigan Synod Assembly

Our conference includes the following congregations:

All Saint Lutheran-Hartland, Pr. Denise Russell and Pr. Diane Sponheim
Grace Lutheran-Howell, Pr. Ken Greble
Holy Spirit Lutheran-Grand Blanc, Pr. Nathan Allen
King of Glory Lutheran-Flushing, Pr. Monica Villarreal (contracted stated supply)
Lord of Life Lutheran-Brighton, Pr. Dale Hedblad
Messiah Lutheran-Swartz Creek, Pr. Kristin Vander Ploeg (contracted stated supply)
Our Risen Savior Lutheran-Burton, Pr. Sean Meyers (interim)
Salem Lutheran-Flint, Pr. Monica Villarreal
Shalom Lutheran-Pinckney, Pr. Dan Quagliata
St George Lutheran-Brighton, Pr. Ken Staib
St John Lutheran-Fowlerville, Pr. Diane Greble
Transfiguration Lutheran-Fenton, Pr. Kate Zywicki

Conference 1 gathered regularly to support one another and share updates about the congregations we serve. In February 2024, Pr. Dan Quagliata arranged a meeting over Zoom with Pr. Larry Osborne, author of *Sticky Teams*, which led to an enriching conversation about the book. At our June meeting, Bp. Kreiss joined the conference to share some reflections on his approach to preaching. In November, we decided to shift to either in-person or zoom meetings instead of offering a hybrid option at each meeting.

There were a number of transitions and celebrations from Conference 1 in the past year. After Pr. Sharon Smith accepted a call to serve St. Paul Lutheran in Imlay City in April 2024, Pr. Julie Winklepleck served St. George in Brighton for some of the interim until she accepted a call to American in Clinton Township. Pr. Michael Wentzel stepped in until St. George called Pr. Ken Staib in November. He began his ministry at St. George in January 2025.

On June 29, members of the conference celebrated with Pr. Monica Villarreal and her spouse, Andy, as their son, Christophe, was baptized. A month later, we bid farewell to Pr. Sue Lidums, who faithfully served Our Risen Lord in Burton for 25 years before retiring on August 1. Pr. Sean Meyers has been welcomed as their interim pastor while Our Risen Lord journeys through the call process. In January 2025, Pr. Bart Muller retired from serving as stated supply for Messiah in Swartz Creek, and Pr. Kristin Vander Ploeg began serving there in February.

This fall, the conference plans to welcome via Zoom Dr. Amy Allen, who will present on her new book, *The Gifts They Bring: How Children in the Gospels Can Shape Inclusive Ministry*. If you are interested in joining this zoom meeting (or any future book discussion Zoom meetings), please email me, and I would be happy to share the meeting details.

Each of the congregations in Conference 1 continues to do meaningful ministry in its local context, and I am grateful for the faithfulness and creativity of my conference colleagues as they serve in our Synod.

Respectfully submitted,
Pr. Nathan Allen, Dean