

December 15, 2011



MONTANA SYNOD, ELCA

Montana Synod Newsletter

Words from the Bishop

*As the dark awaits the dawn, so we await your light,
O Star of promise, scatter night, loving bright, loving bright,
Til shades of fear are gone.*

*As the blue expectant hour before the silv'ring skies,
We long to see your day arise, whole and wise, whole and wise,
O lucent Morning Star.*

*As the moon reflects the sun until the night's decrease,
May we your healing light release, living peace, living peace,
Unto your hold dawn.*

*Shine your future on this place, enlighten ev'ry guest,
That through us stream your holiness, bright and blest, bright and
blest;
Come dawn, O Sun of grace.*

By Susan Palo Cherwien, ELW 261

Christmas Greetings from the Montana Synod
Staff



News Notes

Call Accepted

Martin Russell, from Nebraska Synod to Lead Pastor, Our Redeemer Lutheran, Helena, 11/17/11

Retire

Ellen Skatrud Mickelson, 12/1/11

Paul Skatrud Mickelson, 12/1/11

Congregations in Transition

Key = V – Vacancy, I – Interim Assigned, S – Served by Seminary Intern, L - Served by LPA or SAM, C-Call Process Active (Interviewing Candidates)

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Arlee, V  
Billings, Good Shepherd, V I  
Billings, Messiah, V I  
Bozeman, Hope, V I Lead  
Broadus, V SAM  
Columbus, V  
Frenchtown, Valley of Christ, V  
Great Falls, First English, V, I  
Hardin, First, V SAM  
Helena, St. John's V I  
Missoula, Prince of Peace, V  
Kalispell, Bethlehem, V I  
Laurel, V I



## Board of Pensions Becomes Portico Benefit Services

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This winter, you will start to see the Board of Pensions going by a new name. They're changing their name to Portico Benefit Services.

“We believe a new name will help people better understand what we do as this church's provider of health, retirement, disability and survivor benefits and relat-

ed services,” said Jeff Thiemann, the organization's new president and CEO as of October 1. He added, “Though our name is changing, our connection to this church remains strong.”

Access to ELCA benefits will not be interrupted during this transition. Expect to see the new name appear gradually in communications over the next year, as they use up existing benefits materials.

**PORTICO**  
Benefit Services

A separately incorporated ministry of the ELCA

For more information, go to [www.elcabop.org/name.aspx](http://www.elcabop.org/name.aspx)

## A Special Opportunity at Our Saviour's, Rocky Boy

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I confess that at Our Saviour's on the Rocky Boy's Reservation we are always looking for opportunities of one kind or another. Especially looking for new ways of ministry to those on the Reservation and to those in the wider church. But, we can't do these things without help from others.

We have been given a special opportunity to raise funds for our outreach programs,

particularly our Rummage Sale Room, through a matching funds grant from the Thrivent Foundation.

Between now and Jan. 31, 2012, the Foundation will match up to \$10,000 that we receive in donations designated for our Economic Bridge Grant. This gives individuals and congregations a chance to donate twice - for taxes purposes, both in 2011 and 2012. Please consider making

special, designated donations to Our Saviour's for this grant. Feel free to contact me with any questions. Thank you.

Pastor Linda Webster  
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church  
on the Rocky Boy's Reservation  
Ph: 406-395-4307  
e-mail: [pastor@oslcrb.org](mailto:pastor@oslcrb.org)  
website: [www.oslcrb.org](http://www.oslcrb.org)

# Intents, Parochials, and Bishop's Reports, oh my . . .

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## **Intents**

As you and your congregation are making plans for the coming year, planning budget and annual meeting, please remember to submit your congregation's **Statement of Intent form** to the Synod Office. It helps us to get a more realistic sense of the income that we can count on so that we can fund ministry in the synod and in the wider church. Just as you count on congregation members giving an estimate of their projected giving, so do the Synod leaders count on congregations to give us an estimate of projected giving.

Intent forms were sent out in October in the Here We Are.2 packet. If you need an additional form, please contact our office.

The Rev. Jessica Crist, Bishop

## **Parochials**

A parochial report is your congregation's annual communication with our ELCA and your Montana Synod. Through this simple report that you can complete manually or online through [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org) you offer a snapshot of your congregation on such important topics as membership, average attendance, finances, programs, outreach, and plans for the future. The report helps you as a leader to tell your congregation's story to your members. The report also helps our Synod and ELCA tailor services to fit your needs and to be responsive to the challenges you see for your congregation's mission. The parochial report for 2011 will be due February 15. The information will still

be helpful to you, your Synod, and our ELCA.

If you need any help at all in completing your parochial report or need your password for electronic filing, please contact the Synod office, [ssmith@montanasynod.org](mailto:ssmith@montanasynod.org), 406-453-1461.

## **Bishop's Reports**

The 2012 Rostered Leaders Reports to the Bishop are now available. Merely open the appropriate form, fill it out and e-mail it to the synod office ([ssmith@montanasynod.org](mailto:ssmith@montanasynod.org) or [shedahl@montanasynod.org](mailto:shedahl@montanasynod.org)). These are printed and given to Bishop Crist to read and respond. Go to this [link](#) to find the form.

# ELCA Malaria Initiative

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It is not supposed to be this way, a child dying every 45 seconds?

The 2011 Churchwide Assembly adopted a resolution to raise \$15,000,000 over four years to combat malaria in conjunction with our African Lutheran brothers and sisters. Malaria is the second greatest killer of people in Africa, right after AIDS. The disease is particularly dangerous for children and pregnant women.

Much has been accomplished through the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation and research continues for eradicating this

deadly and debilitating disease, but the cure is not here yet. In the meantime we must help our brothers and sisters. Mosquito nets save lives now!

Our Montana Synod is part of this relief effort. Montanans and Wyoming residents are known for their generosity. We all know of cases where incredible sums of money are raised for a family who needs special health care, or young people who are striving to make a special journey of a lifetime. One small congregation raised \$40,000.00 for such an event over two years. I believe the Mon-

tana Synod could raise one million dollars toward this effort over the four years of this campaign, if our hearts are in it. We may be small in numbers, but our hearts our bigger than the vast Montana/Wyoming sky.

I beg each and every pastor in this Synod to take seriously this challenge. If you do not have the time or energy to implement an anti-malarial campaign, raise-up and support a congregational member who has the passion and commitment. If each congregation raised \$2,500.00 a year for four years we would meet the million

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dollar goal. We can do it for the sake of our brothers and sisters, our own sakes and most of all for Christ Jesus in whom we believe!

For resources for the anti-malarial campaign visit the following link or e-mail the synod office  
<http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Responding-to-the-World/ELCA-Malaria-Campaign/Our-Work.aspx>

The ELCA Malaria Campaign funds programs of our companion churches that: provide life-saving health care—including medicine to treat malaria train health care providers and church volunteers to diagnose and treat malaria teach people how to protect themselves from the mosquitoes that spread malaria, recognize symptoms and seek treatment distribute insecticide-treated mosquito nets and provide training on their use provide preventative medication to pro-

tect pregnant women and their babies encourage governments to provide adequate health care and malaria prevention activities support water treatment projects to control the environments where mosquitoes breed

Dr. Christine Holler-Dinsmore, Montana Synod Anti-Malaria Coordinator.

## Announcements and Links

☀ Many congregations in our synod are encouraging their members to consider alternative giving as they move through Advent. The ELCA's Good Gifts catalog ([www.elca.org/goodgifts](http://www.elca.org/goodgifts)) includes creative ways to support church-wide ministries. One of these "good gifts" is support for a missionary. We have over 240 missionaries serving in over fifty countries in the world. An excellent source of missionary stories, which educate ELCA members on what our missionaries do, is the newsletter "Hand in Hand", available online or at [missionarysponsorship@elca.org](mailto:missionarysponsorship@elca.org). This month's **bulletin insert** is a story about the missionaries working for us in Bethlehem: "In Advent Hope and Christmas Assurance, God Is With Us".

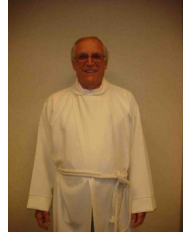
Cindy Larsen, Mission Interpreter

☀ The annual **Pastor's Spouse Retreat** will be held April 20-22, 2012 at Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp. Pastor Mark Gravrock will be the speaker and Bible study leader. Please mark your calendar for this fabulous weekend of rest, renewal, learning and fellowship. More information to follow in early 2012! Elaine Ulgenes, 265-4873.

☀ **Lutheran Staff Association March 4-7, 2012, Cannon Beach Christian Conference Center, Cannon Beach, OR. Cost: \$285**  
Save the date and look for more information soon! Include in the 2012 budget for your lay staff.

☀ Hope Lutheran Church in Bozeman has 26 nearly brand new choir robes (albs) to sell in assorted sizes, in addition to 4 colors of cinctures to go with them. I would guess they have been worn only about 3-4 times. \$2500 – buyer pays shipping.

Dar Ellingson  
Hope Lutheran Church  
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☀ To read Bishop Hanson's Christmas greeting, [go here](#).



☀ **Luther Tour: May 7-17, 2012.** In the spring of 2012, Pastor Don and Pam Melchert will host a tour to Luther's Germany. The guided tour will include Wittenberg, where the Reformation began with Luther's posting of the 95 Theses, Luther's home and the Castle Church, where he is buried, on the Elbe River, the Wartburg Castle where Luther translated the Bible into German. The tour includes Berlin, Munich, and Prague. For more information contact Pr. Don Melchert at 493-6619 or e-mail [montfish@gmail.com](mailto:montfish@gmail.com). The synod office has copies of the brochure.

☀ Want to learn some proven techniques for engaging people in worship? Want to build new skills for encouraging the faith formation of children, youth or adults? Augsburg Fortress & Sparkhouse offer **FREE 30 to 60 minute webinars** on a wide range of helpful topics! Check the webpage below often for the latest list of free and informative webinars: [www.augsburgfortress.org/webinars](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/webinars)

☀ Did you know the LPA page on the synod website has been updated? If you or members of your congregation have questions about the program,

you can probably find the answers there. Topics covered include future classes, mentoring, pulpit supply and other resources. Go [here](#) to see what's new.

☀ **Lutheran High School Ski Retreat**, February 22-24, 2012, Bozeman, MT. A new MLYO format. All high school youth welcome for a weekend of skiing, snowboarding, learning and fun! Registrations due Feb. 6th. Complete schedule and brochure [here](#).



☀ NRIT Upcoming Events. An updated list of NRIT events can be found [here](#).



☀ The new homepage of [ELCA.org!](http://www.elca.org/) was recently updated. The story-based homepage offers ELCA members, and those looking to get to know us better, a way to learn about what God is up to in the world through this church. <http://www.elca.org/>

☀ Order the new **2012 Global Mission Map Brochure** now! Filled with a panorama of photos and stories from across the globe, an overview of mission rooted in relationship. (See [here](#).) Learn how your gifts and offerings are turned into effective ministry around the world. Perfect for Epiphany, for annual meetings, and more. To order 10 or fewer copies, call 800/638-3522 or email [ris@elca.org](mailto:ris@elca.org). To order more than 10, see [http://resources.elca.org/Products-Global\\_Mission.html](http://resources.elca.org/Products-Global_Mission.html).

ELCA Global Mission  
773-380-2651

☀ **Daily Lectionary.** Beginning with Year B, the ELCA Worship site now offers the [Daily Lectionary](#). Along with our [Lectionary for Sundays and Lesser Festivals](#), these are tools that may be used for personal or group devotions or as planning resources. Subscribe to [Worship News](#)



## Resources for Youth Ministry in Region 1

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My name is Lisa Gray, and I am the Region 1 Facilitator for the ELCA Youth Ministry Network. The Network exists to *Renew, Connect and Educate* people engaged in ministry with and among children and youth.

It's my goal to make the resources of the Network available to everyone in this area of ministry.

If you have contact information for people involved in congregational or synodical youth ministry, whether rostered or lay, paid or volunteer, I would be happy to contact those people directly with information regarding ways the ELCA Youth Ministry Network might be of support for them.

The network is a professional organization that serves to create a level of com-

petencies in youth ministry that allow youth ministry professionals to "take it beyond dodge ball and pizza" to a level of transformational discipleship. You can find a wealth of information about the ELCA Youth Ministry Network at its website, [www.elcaymnet.org](http://www.elcaymnet.org). Some of the great resources that might be especially helpful to you and those you are training:

- **Third Tuesday Conversations** - those involved in youth ministry to interact with experts in the field of youth ministry. They are open to anyone.

- **Extravaganza** is an annual 4-day conference that draws together anywhere from 500-750 adults who work with children and youth in congregations of the ELCA for the premier renewal, education and networking event of our church.

- **Martin's List** is a collection of

resources available to members of the network.

- **Other resources** include a membership directory, salary and benefits survey, and opportunities for connection with colleagues and experts in the field.

The Region 1 team is made up of myself synod representatives. The Montana Synod representative is Paul Goodman, [paul.goodman@hopebozeman.com](mailto:paul.goodman@hopebozeman.com), Hope Lutheran Church, Bozeman

Please feel free to contact me with additional questions or for help in connecting with youth leaders in your synod.

Lisa Gray

[Lisa.marie.gray@gmail.com](mailto:Lisa.marie.gray@gmail.com)

Office – 503-266-4061

Cell – 503-481-7966

[Facebook](#)

[Soul Cafe](#)

## News from Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp

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The 2012 Summer Schedule for FLBC's programs is available at [www.flbc.net](http://www.flbc.net). Mark your calendars and plan for an amazing week at Camp! Registration begins in January.

Sign up today for the Youth Group Ski Retreat, January 20-22, 2012. This retreat is a great opportunity for fellowship with other junior and senior high youth groups. The Camp will provide all meals, and evening activities including games, worship, bonfire, and more. Contact Aaron Ells, 406-844-3201, [Aaron@flbc.net](mailto:Aaron@flbc.net)

FLBC Youth Gathering Trip, July 15-22, 2012. This 'camp trip' is designed for congregations with 1-3 youth who would like to attend the youth gathering in New Orleans. Contact Aaron Ells, 406-844-3201, [Aaron@flbc.net](mailto:Aaron@flbc.net)

It's time to book your winter or spring retreat at Flathead! FLBC staff can help you with the planning and implementation of your church council, women's, men's, confirmation, youth or family retreat. Contact the Camp today! 406-

752-6602, [Office@flbc.net](mailto:Office@flbc.net)

IRA Rollovers! Are you 70 and ½ years old or know someone who is who has an IRA? From now until the end of the year, the US government is offering a wonderful opportunity for you to make a gift out of your IRA to FLBC, the Montana Synod, your congregation, or all of the above! Save on taxes, make a gift, and give thanks to God for what has been entrusted to your care! Contact [Margie@flbc.net](mailto:Margie@flbc.net), 406-752-6602 for details.

## Pre-Retirement Seminar

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**Location:** Dumas Bay Centre, Federal Way, Washington

If you're within 15 years of retirement, attend an ELCA Board of Pensions Pre-Retirement Seminar and explore issues that form the foundation of a healthy retirement.

Thursday, February 9th 1-8pm and Friday, February 10th 9-Noon.

Cost: Overnight \$81 per person

To register: email Allison at [swwsynod@plu.edu](mailto:swwsynod@plu.edu) or call 253-535-8300

The Montana Synod may be offering this Pre-Retirement Seminar just prior to our assembly in Billings, June 1-3, 2012. If you won't be available then, consider attending the SW Washington Synod event.

# Freedom in Christ Prison Congregation

I just came back from leading worship at the Work Ranch Dorm at the Montana State Men's Prison in Deer Lodge. Each time I go I am touched by the experience. I want to invite you to be a part of this important ministry in whatever way you can.

There were familiar faces this Sunday and some new ones too, reminding me of the transitory nature of this place. The men who are gathered for worship there will be returning to the community—some are getting ready to “re-enter” society, some are newly arrived from the more secure side of the prison. What an opportunity! We are called to share the grace and love of God, praying that these men may leave this place with faith, hope and love and a deep desire to rebuild their lives as disciples of Jesus.

They are so grateful for the opportunity to worship and for those of us who bring the gospel. They are bold and enthusiastic trying new music and sing out loudly even if they don't know the tune.

One young man told another that he had been reading his Bible and was “convicted” of his sin and is seeking to live in a way that honors the Lord. One asked for prayer for a mother who has cancer, another for his elderly father who is alone on the farm. Several asked to pray that the Lord would soften the hearts of those who have not yet received the gospel, and another asked for prayers for courage and strength for the Christians gathered there as they seek to witness to others. They ask for prayers for their wives and children as they struggle to cope with life on their own. I added prayer for a family I know who is

dealing with the father's incarceration as well.

Advent is a season of prayer and of longing. I shared in prayer and longing with the men at the Work Ranch this Sunday. We on the Freedom In Christ Task Force are also longing for and praying for the day when we can announce that we have called our first pastor, who will move this ministry forward in a grand way. We invite your prayers, your gifts and your support in this Advent season as we seek the person who will minister in this unique and challenging place.

Pastor Melanie Martin-Dent  
FIC Task Force member

## soul cafe

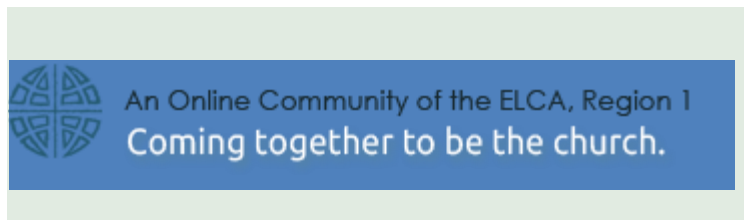
Soul Café, at [www.soulcafe.org](http://www.soulcafe.org), a new Region 1 online community, provides sacred space for rostered and lay leaders to share resources and conversation about ministry and mission in the Pacific Northwest.

The idea for an online community grew out of a series of listening events in the Oregon Synod. As congregational leaders shared their need to learn from colleagues and congregations facing similar challenges, the idea for Soul Café emerged.

Soul Café is not an "online church". It is not designed to replace communities or face-to-face ministry. Much in the same way that Facebook is "me-focused", Soul Café is "us focused".

Soul Café is a tool to bring people together who share similar interests, values and passions. This new online community enables geographically separated Lutheran congrega-

tions, individuals and church-affiliated organizations to meet, interact and get to know each other through idea-



sharing and communication for solutions to the shared problems, issues and challenges facing the church today.

Edwin Roark serves as community director for Soul Café. He has been shaped by faith and life in the church. Edwin has worked with large companies that have been strengthened by relationships and ideas brought together through online communities in a corporate context. Edwin's hope is that through this online community the church will be strengthened as congregational leaders share with one another.

How can you experience Soul Café?

- Sign on to Soul Café and fill out a profile
- Join at least one group
- Share Soul Café with others
- Help a friend sign up with Soul Café

Thank you for your support and prayers as we seek to build community for the

sake of God's mission in our Church and the world.

Soul Café: [www.soulcafe.org](http://www.soulcafe.org)  
Margit Peiffle  
Synod Communications Administrator



# ELCA GLOBAL LINKS

Stay informed. Be inspired. Get involved.

## Russia: A new era of service

Bradn Burkle (ROSTERED IN THE MONTANA SYNOD) and his spouse, Natasha, served parishes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States and its Novosaratovka Seminary in St. Petersburg from 2002-2011. He now begins a joint appointment between the ELCA and the Hermannsburg Mission (Germany) to serve in Siberia. Watch a short video at <http://blogs.elca.org/handinhand>.

## A nonviolent warrior for peace

"Every time the bold men rose up, they rose up with guns," says Liberian Lutheran Leymah Roberta Gbowee, winner of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize. Read Leymah's story by visiting "Living Lutheran" at [www.livinglutheran.com/stories/a-nonviolent-warrior-for-peace.html](http://www.livinglutheran.com/stories/a-nonviolent-warrior-for-peace.html).

## Madagascar: Standing on the success of past missionaries

Barbara Hinderlie recently completed service in Madagascar to begin service in Tanzania. She reflects on her missionary

service and how previous generations of missionaries have walked alongside the church there as it prepares for a new era of ministry. Read the entire story at [www.elca.org/handinhand](http://www.elca.org/handinhand); click either the copy-ready bulletin insert or the Fall 2011 issue of the Hand in Hand newsletter.

## Seeking agricultural volunteers

Various volunteer opportunities from two months to one year in duration are available with the Asian Rural Institute in Japan. Visit [www.elca.org/globalserve/search](http://www.elca.org/globalserve/search) and do a keyword search for "Japan" for more information.

[Subscribe](#) to Global Links

## Here We Are.2

See related information by Bishop Crist on p. 3

We hope that your congregation's council and perhaps your whole congregation has had an opportunity to view the "Now More Than Ever" dvd (sent to each congregation in October). This dvd looks at several interesting stories of faith and ministry in the ELCA.

We are grateful for your congregation's unique story of ministry and we are grateful the mission support dollars you send through our synod that help to create new stories of ministry. Did you know that

39.5% of every mission dollar sent goes to support the establishment of new congregations, missionaries in 50 countries, seminaries and colleges, campus ministry, and more?

The "Estimate of Giving" form for 2012 was also included in the October mailing. Once your congregation has decided the estimated amount of your mission support for 2012 have your council members sign this form and send it to the Synod Office. It is helpful for synod planning if

these forms are in no later than January 31st.

Again, thank you for the story of faith and ministry you live out in your local area, and for the stories of faith in Jesus Christ our Lord you enable throughout our country and throughout our world.

Pr. Dave Peters, Dir. for Evangelical Ministry and the Members of the Mission Table [dpeters@montanasynod.org](mailto:dpeters@montanasynod.org)

## IRS Announces 2012 Standard Mileage Rates

Beginning on Jan. 1, 2012, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car (also vans, pickups or panel trucks) will be:

- 55.5 cents per mile for business miles driven
- 23 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes
- 14 cents per mile driven in service of

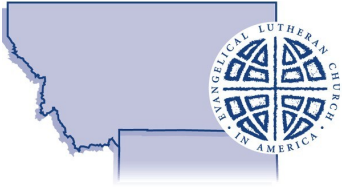
charitable organizations

The rate for business miles driven is unchanged from the mid-year adjustment that became effective on July 1, 2011. The medical and moving rate has been reduced by 0.5 cents per mile.

The standard mileage rate for business is based on an annual study of the fixed and variable costs of operating an automobile.

Taxpayers always have the option of calculating the actual costs of using their vehicle rather than using the standard mileage rates.

From [IRS Newswire](#)



## MONTANA SYNOD, ELCA

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*Marked by the cross of Christ forever, abundantly  
blessed, we faithfully serve God and neighbor.*

**[www.montanasynod.org](http://www.montanasynod.org)**

## Calendar

### December, 2011

Bishop Crist on Sabbatical this month.  
15 Newsletter to website  
23-26 Synod Office Closed  
25 Merry Christmas  
30 Synod Office Closed

### January, 2012

2 Synod Office Closed  
5 newsletter deadline  
13 Newsletter to website  
16 Martin Luther King Holiday

### February, 2012

Montana Synod Insert in The Lutheran  
5 newsletter deadline  
14-16 NRIT Midwinter—Essex  
15 Parochials due  
15 Spirit of Hope Nominations due  
15 Newsletter to website  
20 President's Day  
22 Ash Wednesday  
24-25 Synod Council  
28 Bishop's Reports due

+ **The Montana Synod Newsletter is published on the 15th of each month. Articles are due in the synod office by the 5th. E-mail your story ideas to Susan Hedahl, Newsletter Editor, at [shedahl@montanasynod.org](mailto:shedahl@montanasynod.org).**

+ **Please use any part of this newsletter in your congregational announcements, bulletins, and/or newsletters. Consider forwarding the newsletter to your council members and others.**

### Montana Synod, ELCA

Rev. Jessica Crist, Bishop

Rev. John Allen, Associate to the Bishop

Rev. Dave Peters, Associate to the Bishop, Director for Evangelical Mission

Susan Hedahl, Executive Assistant  
Communications, Assembly, Roster, Financial

Susan Smith, Administrative Assistant  
Mobility, Candidacy, LPA Programs