



News of the Week June 7, 2023

Prayers of the Week

Please remember in your prayers this week:

On Sunday, May 28th, Pastor Ron Nelson passed away. Pastor Nelson served Trinity Lutheran Church from 1986-2005. Please keep his wife Joan and their 3 children, Kathy, Mike and Pam in your prayers. May the sure and certain promise of the resurrection be an abiding gift for all who loved Pastor Ron. He was living in Colorado.



From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:
Bethel Lutheran Church, Joplin
Goldstone Lutheran Church, Gildford

Metro New York Synod

Words from the Bishop: Assembly 2023

Dear Friends in Christ,
Grace to you and peace from the Trinity who creates, reconciles and sustains us all in God's empowering love.

"Equipping for Generosity." That was the theme of the Montana/N. Wyoming Synod Assembly last weekend on June 2-3. And what I noticed most about our time together was the generosity of God that appeared over and over again in grace-filled conversations, fellowship, worship and yes, in the ordinary business of the assembly's actions.



As the assembly walked Christ's way together (the definition of "synod"), we remembered the many Missing and Murdered Indigenous People during a vigil on Thursday evening, we honored the generous creativity of the Trinity on Friday's worship and we experienced the blessings of the Trinity's healing during worship on Saturday. We elected a new vice president of the synod, Ms. Kim Bloch from Shelby MT. We passed the 2024 Synod budget after some thoughtful discussion. We amended the synod constitution as required and recommended by the ELCA Churchwide Assemblies in 2019 and 2022.

We had rich and empowering conversations led by Pastor Tim Brown and Pastor Peggy Paugh-Leuzinger about how we are called to live generous lives in stewardship of the resources we've received from God.

We also heard from Ms. Marie Anne Sliwinski about our synod's relationship with the ELCA's Churchwide expression; from Ms. Loni Taylor about her experience as a Region 1 representative on the Churchwide council as well as about the ministry of Our Saviour's on Rocky Boy reservation; from the new Associate to the Bishop, Pastor Brenda Frelsi, about the upcoming churchwide Youth Gathering; from Pastor Marlow Carrels about the exciting work of Freedom in Christ Prison Ministry; and from me (Bp Laurie) who offered a bible study on Ephesians 4 and the announcement of a Vision, Calling and Values statement for the synod. Watch for further study materials on this text and the statement later this summer.

And while the assembly itself ended on Saturday afternoon amidst the real threats of flooding and road closures around the synod, LPAs continued to gather for a time of reconnecting, fellowship, learning and worship until noon on Sunday.

Thank you to all of you who helped make the Montana/Northern Wyoming Synod Assembly happen! Your service was invaluable.

Many may be wondering these days about the role of the synod, the synod assembly and why we do things the way we do as ELCA and the MT/NWY Synod. I'd like to conclude by offering the following perspective by one of our pastors in the synod, Pastor Seth Nelson at Faith Lutheran in Ronan, who addresses these questions in an exceptional way:

Just as questions have arisen in local congregations about the value and purpose of church membership and participation, similar questions have arisen in regard to how ELCA congregations work together in clusters, synods and regions. Are synods and churchwide organizations simply bureaucratic institutions that should be re-examined and potentially done away with? Does our congregation...really need to put time, energy, and money into connecting and working with congregations hundreds of miles away? Does our regional church structure have the same value that it once did?

As the times change, so do our expectations and our connections. Surely the Montana Synod of the ELCA is not the same thing as the Montana District of the old American Lutheran Church denominational body. The Synod needs to function differently than it did forty years ago. The Synod and its staff are now being called upon to do many things that would have been far from the imagination generations ago. Whereas the regional church used to help congregations... start, charter, and build their churches, now the Synod [staff] is being called upon to help more and more congregations close and liquidate their properties (if possible). Just as pastors are being called upon to think creatively, expansively, and work doggedly if we want our congregations to continue to survive and thrive, so synod staff and bishops are being forced to cover the shortcomings of local congregations and ministries across their areas in ways that used to be unthinkable. There is work that cannot be accomplished just at the local level, and we give thanks to God for those who serve as regional church leaders.

In spite of all the change and adaptation that we are being forced into these days (perhaps even because of it), it is still good to be "on the road together" with congregations across Montana and Wyoming. We can do more together than we can apart, and I eagerly anticipate how we will compel each other forward again this year.

Thank you, Pastor Seth, for these words of support and wisdom as we walk together on the Holy Spirit's way as the Montana/N. Wyoming Synod. Bp Laurie

Let us pray: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love is empowering us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Synod Assembly 2023

Thank you everyone who was part of the assembly! Below are several resources that were requested from the weekend.

[Slides from Tim Brown](#)

[Recorded videos of both days as well as the recognition banquet](#)

If you or your congregation still wish to give to the Synod Assembly Offering [you can do so here!](#) This offering is being used to support the ministry of the Caring for Creation and Racial Justice Task forces as well as Our Saviour's Lutheran Church at Rocky Boy's.



YOUR MISSION SUPPORT GIFTS AT WORK

APRIL 2023 Mission Support Memo

STORYTELLING ENGAGEMENT

ALL Ages Living Their Faith

A story from our ELCA churchwide organization

As you read this story, what catches your attention?

How can you use and share these ministry resources?

Imagine people of ALL ages living their faith, claiming their Christian identity and sharing God's love in the world in creative and unique ways — that is the hope for ELCA Ministry with Children. The Rev. Janelle Rozek Hooper, manager of the program, knows that children are spiritual beings and that they deserve not merely a place to be told what to believe but creative and careful faith formation that instills a lifetime of experiencing God with and for themselves. Funded through generous Mission Support, the program curates appropriate faith-formation resources for congregations across this church, content that gives children the opportunity to lead, ask important questions and experience loving Christian community.

We all know it's been a challenging couple of years in children's ministry; the pandemic showed us that we have taken Sunday school for granted. Yet for over 10 years ELCA children's ministry has been curating a wide variety of Sunday school, confirmation and youth materials for use in congregations and homes. The ELCA Children's Faith Formation site at www.elcafaithformation.org includes resources for education, ministry, faith-at-home and seasonal activities, plus it gathers resources from all our full communion partners for a ton of great content.

Yet the site is just part of our ministry to youth. Pastor Janelle thrives on teaching other pastors and children's ministry leaders, speaking on the subject of effective children's messages, sharing Scripture through Godly Play resources, and serving on the board and leading the Diversity and Justice Team of the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELCAschools.org), which assists over 300 ELCA schools and early learning centers. This ministry embodies the purpose of the ELCA: "to activate each of us so more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love." Please engage in this ministry for yourself, children in your midst and our future church.

ENGAGE WITH US

During April, Luther Seminary Faith+Lead highlighted year-round stewardship practice. There are four segments to check out, and we are delighted that one of them is on stewardship and storytelling!

Year-Round Stewardship and Narrative Budgets: “God’s Week, Our Line Items”

Year-Round Stewardship and Preaching: “Stewardship Preaching Without Excuses”

Year-Round Stewardship and Storytelling: “Longing for Engagement”

Year-Round Stewardship and Leaders: “Give to a Story”

Check it all out here at <https://faithlead.org/blog-name/stewardship-leaders/>



GRATEFUL

During the first few months of the year we have been blessed to engage with you all in many ways. From in-person gatherings such as the Conference of Bishops and A2B gathering to online connections such as our recent storytelling engagement workshop, we appreciate the opportunity to have important conversations with you about Mission Support, storytelling and the ministry we all engage in together. We are grateful to everyone who has sat down with us for conversation, participated in group discussion, signed on to an online workshop and shared their joys with us. Beyond being able to accompany you in the work you do, we have also learned much from you that will help us continue to grow as your partners.

Blessings from your Churchwide Mission Support Team,

Victoria Flood, Senior Director for Mission Support

Nick Kiger, Director for Mission Support

Karen Kretschmann, Coordinator for Storytelling Engagement



Sermon Manuscripts Available

Montana Synod leaders have been providing manuscripts for use in congregations through the Lent and Easter seasons. We are happy to announce that these manuscripts will be provided throughout the entire year! Thank you to the leaders

in the Montana Synod who are providing these manuscripts every week. They can be found and downloaded on the [Montana Synod website here](#).

[Click here to give to the Montana Synod](#)

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