



## News of the Week June 14, 2023

# Prayers of the Week

**Please remember in your prayers  
this week:**

Prayers of celebration and recognition of Juneteenth as we commemorate the end of slavery in our country and freedom for those who were oppressed for so long.

For the family of Pastor Ronald Jensen who died on June 6. He served in Broadus, Joliet, and Red Lodge.  
([Obituary here](#))

For King of Glory Lutheran in Billings and all of the other congregations and people who experienced flooding and damage in the rains the past few weeks.

**From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:**

Malta Lutheran Church, Malta MT  
Loring Lutheran Church, Loring MT  
Kremlin Lutheran Church, Kremlin MT

Metro-DC Synod  
Minneapolis Area Synod



# Words from the Bishop: Mountain Preacher

**Editor's Note: This article is a rerun from September 9, 2020.**

*You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy... Psalm 16:11a*

He preached the gospel to me without even knowing it. I was over half-way up the trail to Firebrand Pass in Glacier Park and it had been a long slog. The trail had been steep with more “up” to come. It was covered with overgrown foliage making it hard to see the roots and stones I kept tripping over. The higher I climbed, the harder it was to breathe. I was losing my will to keep going even though I knew I was just getting to best part – the view!



I had stopped to sit on a stump to rest and eat a snack when he came down the trail toward me. “How’s it going?” he asked. “Oh, good,” I lied. “Slow but sure.” He didn’t hear the lie. Or maybe he did. For the next thing he said was just what I needed to hear. “Yeah, that’s the way. I try to enjoy every step.” And then he hiked on.

Enjoy every step?! That was not something I was doing. I was suffering each step. Groaning some steps; losing hope on other steps. And stopping every 10 steps to rest. I was tired, frustrated and in pain. I was not enjoying anything.

But not being one to give up, I decided to give it a try and practice enjoying every step. So I started up again, this time slowing down. I focused on the trail and the flowers and the new view each step brought to my eyes. I breathed evenly and with intention instead of gasping and groaning. I stopped worrying about getting to my destination and just tried to enjoy each step.

And it worked – mostly. I began to enjoy the whole hike more fully. And in that way, I reached the top and the sheer awesome beauty of the pass. All because the mountain preacher proclaimed joy to me.

Joy, at least from a Christian perspective, is not warm, fuzzy, cuddly happiness. Instead, joy is about recognizing God’s blessings and gifts in and around us no matter the circumstances, good or difficult, and being enlivened by their presence – God’s presence – on our journey. Joy is about finding hope, faith and love in and through Christ in the moment, every moment, rather than suffering on a difficult past path or worrying about what future steps may bring. Joy is living and moving through life in God’s beauty and the Spirit’s strength rather than getting stuck in my own stuff.

Not every step I took after my encounter that day was a happy one. In fact, a lot of them were not very happy. They were slow, brutal, hard steps that my own will did not want to take. But even so, I found joy in many of those steps (not all; there were still some grumbles and groans). And finally I was rewarded by the exhilaration of reaching the top of the pass where the view was spectacular and the wind (Spirit?) nearly blew me off my feet.

I learned some things from that hike about the journey we are on now through pandemic, political and social strife, economic difficulties and the suffering of so many people who have been wounded for too long.

First, I learned that this journey is a lot longer than my hike and won’t be completed in a day, week, month or maybe even a year. Life is a journey and not every step is a happy one, or even a joyful one. Yet we must keep plodding forward and yes, even upward. We cannot give up.

Second, we aren’t on the journey alone. My hike had that preacher (and other hikers) who encouraged me along, whether they knew it or not. And as I practiced enjoying every step, I experienced God in each step as well. God steps, walks, struggles, groans and cries with us as we walk our journey in these days. When we step in love with each other, instead of getting in each other’s way, we can find joy in the journey together.

Third, we can choose how we will step on the journey. We can fight or resist every hard step like I was doing before I met my preacher. We can choose to be apathetic or frightened or anxious and just stay home. We can even try to go backwards, although on life’s journey that just doesn’t work. We can’t go back again except in our minds. Or we can choose to listen to the preacher and hear God’s call to come, to follow, to grow and to love,

letting God lead the way. We have the choice to participate in God's joy, the joy God wants for us, simply by following Christ.

Finally, I remember something I read once from an unknown source: "In this life, we are all walking up the mountain. We can sing as we climb or we can complain about our sore feet. Whichever we choose, we still gotta do the hike. I decided that singing makes a lot more sense."

Often on life's journey we get caught up in complaining every step of the way because it's not going as we want it to or think it should. But singing evokes so much more joy than complaining. So on my hike I started to sing. What did I sing, you may ask? Well, for some reason I chose, "I'm not throwing away my shot!" from the musical Hamilton...over and over and over again. It got old eventually but it did get me up that mountain.

I'm pretty sure the Spirit spoke to me that day through that mountain preacher: "Enjoy every step. For I am with you always, to the end of the age. And in my presence there is joy." (Matt 28:20; Ps 16:11)

So let's choose to sing! Yes, quietly, under our breath, behind masks in worship for now. But go ahead and belt something out in your bedroom at home or even on the trail.

Because singing just makes more sense!  
Bishop Laurie

*Bishop Laurie will be out of the office on retreat from June 17th - 26th. If you are in need of immediate assistance please contact the Synod Office: 406-453-1461 or [office@montanasynod.org](mailto:office@montanasynod.org)*

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## 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.

**This offering will be closed next Tuesday. Thank you for your generous gifts to these important ministries!**

### 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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