



News of the Week November 29, 2023

Prayers of the Week

Please remember in your prayers this week:

For the family of Jerry Redlin, who served as an LPA from 2002-2009, who died this past week. We thank him for his service to the Montana Synod.

For the victims of ongoing war across the world, including people of Israel and Gaza.

From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:

First English Lutheran Church, Bainville
First Lutheran Church, Wolf Point

Southeastern Iowa Synod



Words from the Synod: How is Immanuel Lutheran Communities a ministry of the Church



At Immanuel Lutheran
Communities in Kalispell, we
enrich lives by providing Christian

communities of support and loving care.

Lutheran congregations throughout the valley and in other parts of Montana helped form Immanuel Lutheran Communities (ILC) 66 years ago. The original idea came from members of Bethlehem Lutheran Church. Members of Bethlehem raised money through donors, event sales and from Lutheran churches up and down the Hi-Line. This money was the seed capital to build what became The Lutheran Home.



The organization was formed in 1953 for the purpose of providing housing and healthcare services to older adults in northwest Montana. Specifically, the Corporation is organized to establish, maintain, endow, and manage facilities and services of Christian charity and care, and to acquire by lease or purchase, the necessary real estate, buildings, equipment, and facilities necessary for such purposes, and to provide such other services which are consistent with the mission and philosophy of the organization.

From humble beginnings, when less than ten residents called Immanuel Lutheran, home, we at ILC now minister to over 300 residents in accordance with their specific needs. We are able to provide support and loving care to various 'neighborhoods' within our community at Immanuel. Whether it be independent or assisted living, skilled care needs, memory care, or rehabilitation, we provide a community where specific needs are met. Immanuel is proud of its service to older adults who have outlived their financial position and cannot care for themselves. Last year we provided over \$2 million for unreimbursed care to older adults who are qualified for Medicaid.

Immanuel is also pleased to reach out in ministry to those who may never physically visit or live in our community. On an annual basis, we provide over 3000 meals to the homeless in the valley. We have been participating in this ministry for years. Congregations and settings such as Immanuel work together to show those who are hungry that we care about their physical needs. We are also currently meeting with business leaders in Kalispell to better understand the homeless situation and help as plans are developed. We also serve as the "hub" for Valley Neighbors as we are the collection site for needed food for incoming refugees who are finding their new home here in the valley.

Immanuel has partnered with Northridge Lutheran Church to provide childcare services not only for our employees but for many more families who need quality affordable childcare. Northridge has 10 classrooms, a large gymnasium and a commercial kitchen and outdoor play area. It has been a wonderful fit to help meet a community need. We are opening a second location in Somers and between the two locations will serve 120 children 0-5 years of age. Employees of Immanuel are given a scholarship to make childcare even more affordable.

Through a \$700,000 grant from Lutheran Services of America, we have launched Immanuel at Home where we are serving older adults in their home and have regular community meetings with older adults at the senior center and the area agency on aging to identify the invisible older adult who may need services.

Consistent with our organization's by-laws, a majority of Board members must be members of Lutheran congregations. The gifts and talents of the individuals on the Board help shape Immanuel's present day and future ministries. It also allows ELCA members from various denominations to gather in one place where the gospel is lived out in loving ways with our seniors.

In response to the needs of our area congregations we provide our Director of Pastoral Care to serve in the pulpit whenever a pastoral vacancy due to illness, vacation, vacancy etc. is experienced. This is a gift back to the congregations at no cost since we all share in

the same ministry within the Church.

Immanuel is the only life plan community in western Montana with a full-time chaplain. This means the gospel is being shared by an ordained ELCA pastor to our community as well as the community at large. The weekly studies, worship services, pastoral care opportunities, grief classes, etc. are attended by Immanuel residents and Kalispell citizens as well.

Our Director of Pastoral Care participates in the monthly Cluster meetings held at different sites throughout the valley. This allows for good communication between the congregations and Immanuel when we are needed as an outlet for ministry for their parishioners. Also, monthly Interfaith meetings are attended by the Director of Pastoral Care. These gatherings allow for many different denominational leaders in the area to share in their ministry happenings.

Annually, Immanuel hosts our ELCA Cluster pastors at an appreciation luncheon at ILC. We offer this time as a way of thanking them for their ministries and allow a casual setting where their ministerial meeting may take place for the month.

At Immanuel, we also have the synod on our mind. When the synod office in Great Falls was being built, we participated with other ELCA sisters and brothers in the effort. It is always a good thing when the Body of Christ comes together from different points to aim toward a single cause. We were pleased to be part of the builders of the place where our bishop and staff lead us.

Open House Honoring Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger, DEM

Will be held at the Synod House 2:30pm - 4:30pm on December 14th.

Please join us in celebrating and thanking Peggy for her service to the Synod as she retires on December 15th.

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The Love Letter from a Prisoner to Prisoners

Lately I have heard an interesting question:
What's with all these prisoners "finding God"?



in the pen? So, here is my thought...

Have you ever really looked at the letter Paul wrote to the Phillipians? It is a short letter, a mere four chapters, only 1,629 words in Koine Greek, fewer words than the first chapter of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone! And often when we think of this little letter we take it at face value. It is a letter of hope and unity, there is an exhortation to stay aware from false teachers and a rebuke of two leaders who need to get on the same page and stop arguing about the color of the carpet and the length of the drapes and all the other human

things that we argue about in the church. But deeper, this is a love letter... A love letter from a prisoner to prisoners, or at the least ex-cons.

You see, we often forget how the church in Philippi was born. We have the story: in Acts 16 Paul and Silas are just walking along, getting verbally assaulted by a woman with a spirit. So, Paul screams at that spirit to "Leave her alone in the name of Jesus!" And then they get arrested, because this woman was making two men money and they accused Paul and Silas of stealing from them. And all the sudden Paul and Silas are beaten and thrown in jail, without much of a trial at all. So, there they sit in verse 25, in that prison's innermost cell, feet in the stocks, just cool as a cucumber and long "about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."

Imagine that... Two men were singing songs of hope and thanksgiving in the darkest cell and the other prisoners were listening to them. Sure, sure, in a few moments there will be an earthquake and they will save the guard's life and there will be a baptism and some other stuff will happen... But think of this moment, this is the birth of the church in Phillipi. Two men singing songs at midnight and people *listening* to them. There is no malice, no yelling that it's lights out, no grunts of disdain. The people of the church are listening... they are learning... they are sharing in the faith we all have in Christ, even though this may be the first place they are hearing the Word.

The church in Phillipi was born in the prison, among those who were discarded for "disturbing the city," yet the Spirit dwells there, in that darkest cell, feet in the stocks, calling on us to sing hymns of thanksgiving... And yes, the church will end up having arguments, there will be false teachers to run from, there will be hope, and there will be unity. There will be a time for thanksgiving and singing prayer, even at midnight in the darkest cell. There is hope inside, there is the spirit inside, there is the love of God inside. And Paul writes to this church from another prison, reminding them, and us, that we are all saved in God, regardless of where we first heard the Word being spoken.

Rev. Marlow Carrels, Pastoral Leader (he/him/his)

This is our QR code for our 2023 Appeals Campaign.

Scan with your phone or tablet and you will be taken directly to our Appeals page!

Share with your congregation and friends!
We, at Freedom in Christ, are committed to faithfully serving our men and women incarcerated throughout Montana. But it costs money to pay our pastor and staff to provide these programs to the least of our brothers and sisters, and we find ourselves

\$40,000 short of meeting our budget this year. We can't accomplish our commitments without YOU, our faithful supporters.

Freedom in Christ offers self-worth, a new path to walk, inclusion, and most importantly:

HOPE, LOVE, and FORGIVENESS through Jesus Christ.

According to America First Policy Institute, participation in religious programs can promote feelings of hope and self-worth, thus "increasing the likelihood that a person after release can cope with stresses and strains without the use of crime, drugs or alcohol."

We thank you for your prayers and support, and truly hope that you will join us in meeting our budget for this year. Without you, we will not be able to continue our mission and commitment to the incarcerated in Montana.

Blessings
Rev. Marlow Carrels, Lead Pastor
and
Bea Rosenleaf, Executive Director



Scan me

Montana and Northern Wyoming Synod Hunger Fund

At the September Synod Council meeting, a decision was made to establish a "Montana and Northern Wyoming Synod Hunger Fund". The purpose of this fund is to provide money to congregations and ministries in the Synod who are working to feed hungry people in our local communities. The reports from several of these ministries is that they have been seeing an increase in the numbers of people who are requesting food and assistance. The need is great in rural areas as well as in towns and cities across the Synod.

There are several congregations who are actively seeking to help feed the hungry and offer Gospel love. Could you and / or your congregation make a gift to this fund this fall and on a recurring basis? The Montana Synod has generously supported the work of the ELCA World Hunger Appeal. Can you help to feed people who are hungry here in our Synod, too?

A grant process is being established so that congregations and ministries can apply for funds. Thanks to the work of the Synod Council, seed money of about \$12,000 has been given to this fund. Be watching for information soon about how to apply for a grant from this fund.

As you give to the Montana/N. Wyoming Synod Hunger fund, please mark clearly on checks that it is for the Synod Hunger Fund. You may also give through montanasynod.org on the GIVE button via the dropdown link to the Synod Hunger Fund.

Thank you for your generous care for those in our communities who are in need!

[Montana Synod Hunger Fund Poster Download](#)

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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