



Montana Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

News of the Week, February 3, 2016

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Prayers for February 7, 2016

Transfiguration of our Lord

Please remember in your prayers this week:

Pastor Mark Peterson (Interim, Bethlehem Billings)
whose father is hospitalized with congestive heart failure.



From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Billings

Synod Committees:

Montana Synodical Women's Organization (MTSWO)

Women of the ELCA

Montana Synod Mission Table

Sierra Pacific Synod

Words From the Bishop - "Meet the Future Boldly-But what will it look like?"

Our Synod is committed to meeting the future boldly. It is one of our benchmarks, and it informs everything that we do. Presiding Bishop Eaton is asking the ELCA to help determine the future of the ELCA. She has appointed a Future Directions Table, and she is asking for conversations all across the church.

She is asking us to think and pray and converse about the following questions:

1. What is distinctive about our identity as a Lutheran Church?
2. What kind of church do we believe God is calling us to become?
3. What are the most important ministries we should be engaging?
4. What institutional structures do we need for the future?
5. How do we recruit and invest in leaders to become the church God is calling us to be?
6. What does this mean for you as a member and a leader in this church?



You can take some time at coffee hour, maybe at your annual meeting, at your church council, in adult forum, to discuss these questions. The Synod Council will be discussing these at the end of February, and we'll be addressing these one by one in our weekly staff meeting. And we are likely to hear more about the work of the Future Directions Table at our Synod Assembly. I look forward to hearing how you decide to engage these questions that Bishop Eaton has put before us. There are no right or wrong answers-just good conversation with one another.

In Christ,

Bishop Jessica Crist

A reminder: Please send in your Rostered Leader reports to the Bishop ASAP. We have had a great response so far, so keep them coming!

Luther Seminary's KAIROS Continuing Ed

These courses offer a wealth of learning opportunities designed for clergy and church leaders of all denominations. Each year a fresh array of courses are made available in ministry areas of preaching, Bible, theology, leadership, vocation and congregational care.

Course offerings in the area of preaching include the **Working Preacher Lectionary study** series as well as a **Narrative Lectionary study series**. Join Luther Seminary's Bible instructors and your colleagues to explore the lectionary texts and generate theological insight and preaching ideas.



KAIROS offers leadership classes to help you navigate the many complex roles and aspects of ministry leaders today. Choose a class to grow your administrative expertise, like the **Mini-MBA for Pastors and Church Leaders** or **Stepping Up to Staffing and Supervision**. Learn about **The Daring Way™ for Faith Leaders** and increase your capacity to be courageous in uncertainty. Discern God's mission in your community through **Trust-Building and Collaborative Leadership for Collective Insight**.

Explore the [KAIROS Catalog online](#) for even more class options.

[Register today](#) for these exciting classes! For more information, visit www.luthersem.edu/kairos or email kairos@luthersem.edu.

Money Leadership:

Your Life with Money

Money - how do we view and use it in our lives? What is the relationship between money and our Christian faith? Do we feel comfortable in our dealings with money, or does the topic make us nervous?

Money Leadership: Your Life with Money - is a six-week SELECT online learning course that will help us examine the attitudes and behaviors we have about money as Christians - and to become more comfortable and confident in thinking about and discussing this. Pastor George Karres, Director for Evangelical Mission of the Montana Synod, will be the facilitator.



Who should take this course? Pastors, as stewardship leaders in their congregations, will especially benefit from this - but LPAs, congregation treasurers, stewardship committee members, or anyone who would like to grow in their understanding of how Christians are called to view and use money in their lives are also encouraged to participate as well!

The course will be from April 10 - May 21, 2016 (with a pre-course Orientation online or phone meeting on April 7). The registration cost is \$175, but a \$100 rebate will be given to participants upon completion of the course - making the total cost only \$75. Rostered leaders will also receive 18 continuing education credit hours from NRIT. Registration is limited to 12 persons.

For further information, click [HERE](#) or contact George Karres at 406-453-1461 or by email at gkarres@montanasynod.org.

Comprehensive Ministry Review

How is your congregation doing? Is it thriving and are its members filled with a sense of enthusiasm for doing God's work? Or is it just "going through the motions" as things seem to stay the same or decline?

Perhaps your congregation could benefit from a "Check-up" called a **Comprehensive Ministry Review**. This is a process offered by the Montana Synod that examines a congregation's health and ministry from a number of different perspectives - such as its pastor; lay leaders; looking at and listening to the community where it is located and serves; its facilities; history and trends, etc.

This process - led by a "Synod Review Team" consisting of the Director for Evangelical Mission and other MT Synod leaders - can help a congregation to gain new insights and also a renewed understanding of its purpose and mission for the context where it is located.

To learn more about the **Comprehensive Ministry Review** process and discern whether this might perhaps be for your congregation, contact Pastor George Karres - Director for Evangelical Mission - at 406-453-1461 or by email at gkarres@montanasynod.org.

[Roster Transitions are posted here on the website](#)

PORTICO[®]

Benefit Services | A Ministry of the ELCA

Wellness Dollars & Personal Wellness Account - ELCA primary Health Benefits

Take your Health Assessment now.

Plan members and spouses with ELCA-Primary health benefits can each earn \$400 wellness

dollars in 2016. Depending on your health benefit option and age, wellness dollars you earn are credited either to a personal wellness account, which is legally a health reimbursement arrangement (HRA), or deposited in a health savings account (HSA).

Start here: <https://myportico.porticobenefits.org/SignIn?redirect=https://info.myhealthyliving.mayoclinic.org/55>

Have You Taken Your Health Assessment?

The start of a new year reminds Portico health plan members and spouses to take their health assessments by logging into their [My Portico](#) accounts. Completion of the assessment earns you \$150 in wellness dollars, with the opportunity to earn \$250 more in follow up activities. Taking the assessment also helps the synod reach its 65% participation goal, saving your congregation 1% in health contributions. [Take yours today!](#)

The Luther 500

Lutherans and Catholics-what's the deal? 499 years ago the Church split-Lutherans went one way, and Catholics another. It was not an amicable parting of the ways. The stakes were high, and the religious issues were all tangled up with political issues. Mutual condemnations flew back and forth. Wars broke out. The lines were drawn between Protestant and Catholic.

And now, the Pope is coming to the 500th Anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation. Finnish Lutherans were able to receive communion at the Vatican, and the ELCA Churchwide Assembly will receive a document of agreement between Lutherans and Catholics outline 32 major areas of agreement. What's the deal? Go to the Luther 500 page for a downloadable study on Lutherans and Catholics, and share it with your congregation, or with an ecumenical group.

[Click here for the full brief](#)

Exploring Transitions: Life's Detours and Roadblocks

April 25-27



Led by Tammy Devine & Tom Morgan, with worship/music by Michael Larson

Detour ahead. Road closed. Throughout life's journey, we encounter unexpected turns in direction: illness, loss of loved ones, change of work and opportunity. A loss of direction is disorienting. Together, we will explore this time of transition.

This is part of the *Transitions Series*: for those who are either nearing or currently living in their *3rd Chapter of Life*. It is one of a 4-parts series of retreats to explore personal life callings, passions, meaning, and purpose. Each workshop stands alone, so you can join in at any time.

[More details, costs and registration page](#)

Large Print Wanted!

If your congregation has an extra large print Pulpit/Lectern Bible that could be donated to Immanuel Lutheran in Westby please contact [Pastor Stan Hoobing](#)

Spirit of Hope Nominations

The Spirit of Hope award was established by the Montana Synod Council to recognize individuals and ministries who have exemplified the spirit of hope in their lives.

For Perseverance and Faithfulness in Ministry with the People of the Montana Synod

Please submit a letter nominating a person, group or ministry for the Spirit of Hope award by February 15, 2016. The Montana Synod Council, in its meeting February 26-27, 2016, will select the Spirit of Hope awardee.

Past awardees have included a family who has adopted a dozen special needs children, a congregation whose building burned down on Christmas Eve and rebuilt by the following Easter, Lutheran Disaster Relief fire relief workers, individuals who have battled life-threatening illness, people who have gone above and beyond to serve their community, and more

Summer Internship Opportunity for College Students

Messiah Lutheran Church in Vancouver, WA, is again offering two internships for full-time college students this summer. These will be 10-12 week full-immersion experiences into the life of the congregation. The program is specifically designed for young adults to discern whether God may be calling them into professional church work (including ordained ministry) or to other vocational pursuits. Housing is provided along with a \$4,250- \$5,100 summer stipend. An internship description and application materials are available online at: <http://bit.ly/Summer-Intern-Program-2016>

Synod House

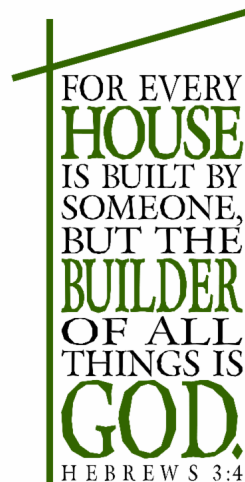
Welcome to 2415 13th Avenue South in Great Falls - the home of the Montana Synod.

Come on in and look around. The Bishop's office is to the right while Susan and Colter share the office to the left. And there is the work room with the copy machine and supplies needed to carry out business.

Go down the stairs and you will find the bathrooms (yes, they are down a flight of stairs), and two offices - one for Pastor Jason and Pastor George has a conference room lined with full file cabinets to keep him company.

Oh there are more file cabinets there - the foyer has some and the office shared by Susan and Colter. Full file cabinets everywhere.

WE NEED YOUR HELP! We need space for our staff to work efficiently and effectively. Your gift to the Synod House Campaign will help us provide space to work - and yes, space for file cabinets.



New LPA Class - Fall 2016

2016-2018 Lay Pastoral Associate Class Nominations

Now is the time to consider lifting up individuals with the gifts and skills for the Montana Synod Lay Pastoral Associate program (LPA). The next class will begin in October 2016, but now is the time to be educating those in the congregation about the LPA program, and seeking their commitment.

The congregational meeting is a good opportunity to nominate and support those in your congregation who have the desire and skills to serve as an LPA in the Montana Synod. At this annual meeting the congregation can pray for and, with the guidance of the pastor, recommend individuals to the Bishop for approval.

For more information, go to the [Montana Synod website](#) or call Pr. Jason Asselstine, Associate to the Bishop.

Interested in becoming an LPA?

1. Talk to your church pastor. Talk about what it means to fill in for him or her and the traits it takes to provide pastoral leadership (albeit, temporary).
2. If your church does not have a pastor, feel free to contact our office. We'll put you in touch with someone who can shed some light on the role of an LPA.
3. **Have your church pastor contact Bishop Crist or Rev. Jason Asselstine, Assoc. to the Bishop via email or phone call. This contact and conversation will be your pastor's recommendation for your participation in the MT Synod LPA program.**

After approval from the Bishop (to enter the program), please ensure you have the following items to our Synod office at least 3 weeks prior to the class start date (our staff admin person will send you the paperwork to begin the process):

1. Completed biographical, information sheet.
2. Initiation of a required background check
3. First year's payment of \$200 via check made out to "MT Synod" with "LPA training program" in the check's memo section. This can also be brought with you to the 1st group retreat.

Still have questions? Call our Synod office at 406-453-1461

Previous news and notes:

The Montana ELCA's sister Synod in South America is the country of Bolivia.



Bolivia is a land-locked country in the center of South America with 8 different regions and very diverse geography. In the north is rain forest with tributaries to the Amazon River. The south is very dry with salt flats, the east has palm trees and the west has very high mountains.

With over 10 million people, Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in the world with the average worker earning just \$2.00 US per day. Most of the people are concentrated in the major cities.

Although Bolivia is 95% Catholic with Spanish influences, Lutherans have been in Bolivia since the early 1900's as German immigrants moved to escape various political regimes. After WW2, many German & Italian refugees settled in South America. In 1531, the Spanish conquered the Inca's, taking over the Alto Peru which included Bolivia. In 1825 Bolivia became independent from Spain. In 1938 the ElAlta Church

was founded by the Missouri Synod and became ELCA in 1970.

To read more, [click here](#).



KOGUDUS RETREAT AT ROCKY BOY'S April 14-16, 2016

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church and the Bear Paw Cluster extend an invitation to the members and friends of the Montana Synod to take part in a "Lament & Laughter" retreat on the Rocky Boy's Reservation.

We will gather at Our Saviour's Thursday at 6:00 p.m. for dinner and getting acquainted. This Kogudus Renewal Ministry retreat features small group Bible study, creative worship, singing, joke telling, and personal sharing.

[Click here](#) for more information and the registration form

Immanuel Lutheran

— COMMUNITIES —

INVITES YOU TO JOIN US FOR

POWER & HEALTHY FOODS & AGING

An informative luncheon event at The Villas at Buffalo Hill

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11TH
11:00a.m.

Buffalo Hill Terrace

40 Claremont Street
Kalispell, MT 59901



Please RSVP at **406-752-9624** as seating is limited.

YAGM Taylor Wiese - 3 Month Update from South Africa

What's Up in Upington?

It has been three months in South Africa, three months since my first 12-hour Intercape bus ride from Joberg to Upington as I pulled closer to my new home. As my wide eyes took in the muted browns and greens of the dusty landscape, I felt prepared for a new season of openness in my life. No matter what I was expecting or what advice I had been given, South Africa was going to reveal itself in ways that were completely beyond my preconceptions. The bus pulled into Upington's Intercape station, and I stepped into a period of wide newness and great dependency.

[Click here to read more!](#)



Christikon Clips

February, 2016

Christikon Youth Camp Brochures have been mailed to every young person in your congregation who are in grades 4-12. The brochures detail some very special possibilities, and some very special deals for registering early for camp, and for bringing a friend to camp as a new camper. Save by registering before March 15. Additional brochures are available from your church office.



Do it online! You can use the Internet to register for all camp sessions at Christikon, or to make a gift, or to find out more about this special ministry. Go to www.christikon.org.

Save the dates: The annual Christikon Benefit Auction at the Billings Depot is coming on Sunday, April 24

Too few young people (not to mention adults) have significant outdoor experience. Christikon combines spirited outdoor experience with focused community experience, helping to open people to the deeper realities of the life of faith. Think about joining the Christikon life this coming summer. It can do a world of good...

**It is the mission of Christikon to awaken and nurture faith in Christ -
exploring God's creation and the adventure of life together.**

CHRISTIKON • 1108 24th Street West • Billings, MT 59102
406 656-1969 • christikon@aol.com • www.christikon.org

A Chico Heads Up

Sorry for any confusion! The only accommodations that are left at Chico Hot Springs Resort are for 3 partial reservations (meaning for 1 or 2 nights only, not for all three) and two off-site houses (no discount offered by CHSR) that can accommodate 4 to 6 people each. The Resort has provided a list of alternate lodging that they recommend.

Registration materials will come out February 9th (Fat Tuesday) on the Synod website.

Rev. Linda Webster
Logistics Chair for the MT Synod Pastors' Conference

[Click here for Alternate Lodging Information](#)

Women's Spring Retreat

April 22-24, 2016
Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp

SAVE THE DATE! Plan now to attend the WOMEN'S WOMEN'S RETREAT. Motivating speaker, Fun, Fellowship, Service projects, Music, Great food (no cooking!).... Bring your friends, daughters, mothers, granddaughters (14 and up) along for a fun, restful, spirit-filled weekend on beautiful Flathead Lake. Check out www.imluchurch.org/womensretreat for more details, to get on our mailing list and to register! Hope to see you there. Sponsored by the Five Valleys Women and Great Divide Clusters.

[Click here to download the 2016 Annual Meeting Letter from Bishop Crist](#)



NRIT News:

The following events require pre-registration:

Rural Ministry Workshop

with Dr. Alvin Luedke Luedke

Tuesday, March 1st

9:30am - 3:30pm

Zion Lutheran, Glendive, MT

This workshop will provide a chance to gather with colleagues to talk about rural ministry. The morning hours will focus on change in communities and congregations and the griefs, challenges and opportunities associated with change. The afternoon will include time for asset mapping.

\$75 for clergy (JC Scholarship Funds available)

\$50 for New to Ministry, LPA, retired (JC Scholarship Funds available)

\$20 for lay not needing CEUs

Register on the NRIT website

Narrative Lectionary

I have not been successful I attempts to plan an NRIT class on using the Narrative Lectionary. I haven't given up but, in the meantime Luther is offering the following that looks excellent.

Webcast: Narrative Lectionary Study Series - June 7th - Feb. 7

Designed to provide theological insight and preaching ideas. Each webcast session is archived and available throughout the preaching period covered.

Go to www.luthersem.edu/kairos for more information.

SCHOLARSHIPS

We know that some churches are not able to provide the recommended amount of continuing education assistance and what is offered doesn't always go far enough. At the same time, we strongly believe in the importance of continuing education for our synod and we support the ELCA expectation of 50 hours of continuing education credits a year.

- Scholarships are now available to cover half the cost of NRIT events.
- Apply online or by leaving a message for Jenny at 406-453-1461.

*NRIT is grateful for financial gifts in support of this scholarship fund. Designate by writing "Jessica Crist Scholarship Fund" in the memo line.

The Luther 500

The Reformation 500 Task Force is looking for people to serve with our group. The only requirement is an interest in Reformation history and how the church is continually reforming. Many of our meetings are held via Google Hangouts so that very little lengthy travel is necessary, also helping to fulfill the first benchmark of the Montana Synod, "Meet the future boldly." If you would like to join our fun group, please contact Rev. Tonya Eza.

Help Plant a Tree in Wittenberg

"Even if I knew that the world were to collapse tomorrow, I would still plant my apple tree today."
(attributed to Martin Luther)

In anticipation of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the Lutheran World Federation is sponsoring "500 years of reformation-500 trees for Wittenberg." The Montana Synod has been asked to participate by donating a tree. A representative our reformation task force, Tonya Eza, will be present for the planting of the Montana Synod tree.

You are invited to participate by helping to raise the \$500. that the tree will cost. You could:

- Dedicate a Lenten offering.
- Do a special appeal on Earth Day, April 20.
- Use it as a Sunday School, youth group, Bible Study group project.
- Do a special offering.

Send checks to Montana Synod with "Wittenberg tree" in the memo line.

In conjunction with the Montana Synod's third strategic benchmark, "Deepen faith and witness," the 2016 Synod Assembly and Theological Conference theme will be the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. Yes, it's a year early, but this is part of how we meet the future boldly, so that when 2017 comes along, we will all be prepared! In conjunction with the Synod Assembly, the Reformation 500 Task Force is sponsoring a Reformation stole and banner contest. We invite the member congregations of the Montana Synod to bring original stoles and/or banners with them to the Synod Assembly in June. Following are the rules that we ask you to follow:

If you are making a stole:

- Stoles must be able to be worn while presiding over worship, and should be able to withstand 10 worship services (feel free to experiment with materials!).
- Stoles should be between 3" and 6" wide at the shoulder, and between 48" and 54" long.
 - o Be sure also to consider weight of stole and range of motion for the pastor in your design.

Stoles need to be appropriate for a liturgically red service

- o Red doesn't need to be the only color in the stole, but it should play a prominent role in the color palette of the stole.
- The stole should be your own original design - it is fine to use established patterns (provided they are not copy-written) as long as they are put together in your own way.

If you are submitting a banner:

- Banners should be appropriate for display in a worship context
 - o The size of the banner should be able to fit comfortably within the dimensions of your sanctuary.
- Banners should be of an original design. You may use established patterns (provided they are not copy-written) as long as they are put together in your own way.

Please bring the stoles and banners with you to the Synod Assembly, and they will be displayed in a place where everyone can see. Assembly attendees will vote on their favorites.

Questions? Please contact Rev. Tonya Eza, chair of the Reformation 500 Task Force, or any of the other members of the group.

Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp

Retreats, Events, and Updates:

For additional information about these great upcoming retreats and events, check out our website at www.flbc.net! Also, watch for our

[2016 Summer Brochure around Christmas!](#) Be sure to register

[early for your first choice of weeks and programs!](#)



March 13: Outdoor Ministry Sunday

Celebrate camp on Sunday, March 13th at your congregation (or pick a Sunday that works for you)! [CLICK HERE](#) for more information!

March 18-19: Middle School Retreat

A one-night overnight retreat to bring your youth group to camp, filled with fun, games, Bible study, craziness, and an introduction to our 2016 summer theme, "Living Like Jesus." [CLICK](#)

[HERE](#) for more information!

March 18-20: Cross Country Ski Retreat

Whether you are brand new to cross country skiing or an expert, this retreat is for you!

Participants must be 13 years of age or older. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information!

Rev. Nathan Clements, Associate Director

Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp

603 S Main St

Kalispell, MT 59901

(406) 890-5104 (cell)

[Click Here to Take the, "Yes I read the Entire News of the Week Survey"](#)

Upcoming Events, etc.

February

1 NRIT Midwinter Theological Conference
12-14 Synod Youth Snow Event



Please put these important dates on your calendar:

2016 Montana Synod Assembly and Theological Conference: June 2-5, 2016, Holiday Inn Grand, Billings

2016 Bishop's Convocation, October 14, 2016, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Helena, Montana

2016 First Call Theological Education: November 7-9, 2016, Great Falls

2017 Montana Synod Assembly: June 1-4, 2017, Best Western Heritage Inn, Great Falls

2017 First Call Theological Education: November 6-8, 2017, Great Falls

Find upcoming issues of **The Parish Paper** [here](#)

To see what's coming up on the Montana Synod Calendar, go [here](#)

To download or view our Clergy Roster, Congregational and LPA Directories, find them [here](#)

Roster Transitions are updated mid-month and may be found [here](#)

Amazon Smile



Shop at <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/36-3514273> in support of the Montana Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

This e-letter is intended to convey information from synod staff, ministries and congregations, and we reserve the right to edit all submissions. All items must be received by the Monday before publication on Wednesday. Send submissions to [Colter McCarty](#).

Contact Information

phone: (406) 453-1461

www.montanasynod.org

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)