



Montana Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

News of the Week, February 17, 2016

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Prayers for February 21, 2016 Second Sunday in Lent

Please remember in your prayers this week:

Prayers for Martin Russell and his family mourning the death of his parents, mother Colleen on February 11th, and his Father Rev. John Russell on February 16th.



From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:

Messiah Lutheran, Red Lodge
Broadview Lutheran, Broadview
Grace Lutheran, Worland, WY

Pacifica Synod

Montana Synod Council meeting 2/26-27

Words From the Bishop - "Deepen faith and witness- Forgiveness"

"Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us."
When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he also taught them to forgive. Forgiveness is an essential faith practice. And, like so many of the faith practices, it is not a one-way street. We must learn over and over to ask for forgiveness, to grant forgiveness, and to receive forgiveness.



One of extraordinary outcomes of the shootings at the Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina in June was that the families of the victims all came forward and stated that they forgave the shooter. They forgave the young man who violated their sacred space, who took advantage of their hospitality, and murdered their loved ones, including their pastor. They forgave him publicly. And America was dumbfounded. Because such forgiveness is not part of our "we're #1," "winning is everything," "don't get mad, get even!" culture.

We saw it a decade earlier when a man went into an Amish school in Pennsylvania and shot a number of girls. The families of those beloved children said, no, they would not seek the death penalty. Instead they forgave the man. And America was shocked.

Forgiveness is counter-cultural. And while Christians are not the only ones who preach and practice forgiveness as a central part of who we are, forgiveness is integral to our faith. After all, we are the people who follow the crucified Christ, who near the moment of his death asked for forgiveness for his tormentors. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." In worship we regularly ask for God's forgiveness. And we receive the assurance of the forgiveness with the absolution given by the pastor. And just as Jesus taught us to love God with all our being, and neighbor as ourself, getting into right relationship with God requires getting into right relationship with our neighbor. And that means asking for, receiving, and granting forgiveness.

I suspect that each of us is better at one of the three aspects of forgiveness. I know people who are great at saying "Sorry," but not so great at hearing it from others. I know people who believe fervently that God forgives all kind of others, but are so sure if they, really, are part of it. Forgiveness is all three-asking, receiving and granting. It is all part of the same faith practice that connects us more closely with God.

Forgiveness does not mean there are no consequences. A convicted murderer still has to be accountable for his or her actions. And saying you are sorry for something you have done does not mean that the problem will go away. It is simply the start of right relationship. Not everybody is in the same place as those Amish families in Pennsylvania, those AME families in South Carolina. We cannot force people to forgive us. We can only ask.

Even time we bring our Apology to the Tribes to another tribal council, we have to be prepared that they will not accept our Apology, that they will say it is too little, too late. Or worse. Each time we have been relieved and deeply touched at how seriously the tribal council took our Apology,, how respectful they were to us and our need to seek forgiveness.

I was in college at the height of the "Love Story" fever. You could get key chains, posters and

other paraphernalia with the movie's most memorable quote, "Love means never having to say you're sorry." The author happened to be a junior professor on campus in the Classics Department. One day in a class on Tragedy, a senior professor took a break from Aeschylus and Dostoyevsky and Melville and burst out, "Young Eric has just got it all wrong! Of course you have to say you're sorry!" He was right, of course.

"Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us."

Jessica Crist, Bishop

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!

School Grant Opportunity

Across Montana there are **teachers** and other **school staff** that are spending **their own money** to feed their **hungry students**. While that is commendable, Montana No Kid Hungry offers an alternative solution, offering grants to make breakfast more accessible to students thereby increasing student engagement. Join the 100+ Montana schools that are addressing childhood hunger through breakfast!

To learn more about our alternative breakfast models, such as Breakfast in the Classroom visit: <http://mt.nokidhungry.org/school-breakfast-program>



Thank you to everyone who participated in the Montana Synod Snow Day!

Lutheran Suicide Prevention Ministry: Guns and Suicide Deaths

More than 60 percent of people in this country who die from guns die by suicide.

In recent years, as the gun homicide rate has flattened out, the gun suicide rate appears to be

increasing back up slightly.

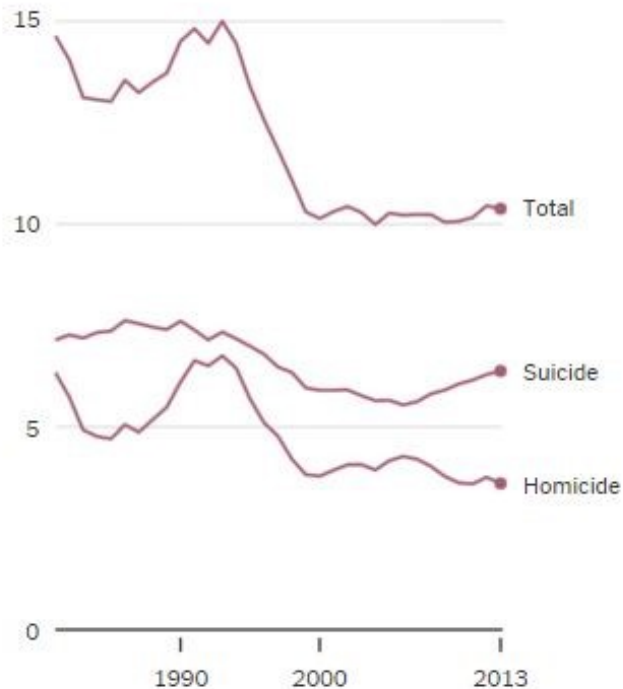
Measures meant to prevent gun homicides might have an effect on gun suicides, particularly those designed to identify and help people with mental health needs.

Mental illness is a clear risk factor for suicide.

To learn more [click here](#).

More Americans Die in Gun Suicides Than Gun Homicides

Gun deaths in the U.S. per 100,000 people



Death rates are age-adjusted. Some categories of gun deaths, such as those from accidents, are not shown.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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!](#)

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!

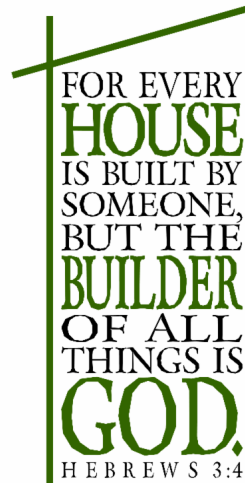
The course will be from April 10 - May 21, 2016 (with a pre-course Orientation online or phone meeting on April 7). The registration cost is \$175, but a \$100 rebate will be given to participants upon completion of the course - making the total cost only \$75. Rostered leaders will also receive 18 continuing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

Synod House

February this year has an extra day - and that happens to be a Monday. For most of us, it is a work day. Consider contributing your income from that ONE day to the Synod House Campaign as a thank offering for the goodness that comes new to us every day.

What better way for us to approach those benchmarks of the Montana Synod as we faithfully serve God and our neighbor. To God be the glory.



Previous news and notes:

A Growing Community of Women



En tanto que somos una comunidad de mujeres creadas a imagen de Dios, llamadas a convertirnos en discípulas de Jesucristo, y fortalecidas por el Espíritu Santo, nos comprometemos a crecer en la fe, afirmar nuestros dones, apoyarnos las unas a las otras en nuestras respectivas vocaciones, involucramos en el ejercicio del ministerio y la acción, y promover la sanación y la integridad en la iglesia, la sociedad y el mundo.

As a Community of Women

Created in the image of God

Called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit

We Commit Ourselves to

Grow in faith

Affirm our gifts

Support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness

in the church, the society, and the world.

My community of women increased on the visit to Bolivia. This was an experience of a lifetime in many ways: the opportunity to meet with and share experiences with women from one of our companion synods and the opportunity to share this experience with new friends from Montana.

This visit was unique only in that the delegation was comprised of all women. This was at the request of Pastore Presidente Emilio. Our itinerary and agenda were set to maximize meeting

with women. We met with women in many different settings: worship, crafts, school and after-school programs and at a retreat attended by women from all over the country of Bolivia.

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

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](#)

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](#)



**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 Kogodus 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

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

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.



NRIT News:

The following events require pre-registration:

Faithful Leadership in Small Town and Rural Ministry: Challenge and Promise

With Dr. Alvin Luedke

**Tuesday, March 1st
9:30am - 3:30pm
Zion Lutheran, Glendive, MT**

This workshop will discuss how we faithfully lead in a missional era. Leading change within community is addressed, as well as identifying assets for this ministry. Our faithful leadership helps us, and those we serve, to discover God's promise of hope.

Cost:

\$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 at www.nrit.org (click on the NRIT logo in the upper left side of page and then scroll down to the Rural Ministry event to sign up online) or register by emailing Jenny Kunka at j.kunka@nrit.org

Ecumenically appropriate. Please invite your colleagues.
Continuing Education Credits for clergy and LPAs = 5 Contact Hours.

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

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](#)

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 of 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 \(cell\)](#)

Upcoming Events, etc.

February

26-27 Synod Council Meeting



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

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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](#)

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## Amazon Smile

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



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*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.montanasynd.org](http://www.montanasynd.org)

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