



**Montana Synod**

**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

## **News of the Week, February 24, 2016**

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### **Prayers for February 28, 2016**

#### **Third Sunday in Lent**

Please remember in your prayers this week:

Prayers for Pr. Don Melchert as he recovers from a fall.



Prayers for Pr. Char Schmiedeskamp, seeking treatment for breast cancer.

#### **From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:**

King of Glory Lutheran, Billings

Joliet Lutheran, Joliet

Our Savior's Lutheran, Laurel

Grand Canyon Synod

**Montana Synod Council meeting 2/26-27**

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## **Words From the Bishop - Deepen faith and witness - Healing**

The Introduction to the Church's Brief Order for Healing reads:

*"In its ministry of healing, the church does not replace the gifts of God that come through the scientific community, nor does it promise a cure. The church offers and celebrates gifts such as these: God's presence with strength and comfort in time of suffering, God's promise of wholeness and peace, and God's love embodied in the community of faith."*



Healing is a faith practice. While there may be healing without faith, there is never faith without healing. There are many kinds of healing. Some are short-term, some are longer-term. Some are physical, some are emotional, some are spiritual.

We inherit from our Hebrew ancestors in faith the word "Shalom." Shalom means peace, and it also means healing. It is larger than simply the absence of conflict, greater than the absence of disease. It is holistic. Shalom, and its Arabic cousin Salaam, mean deep peace, deep healing, the peace and healing that pass all understanding.

Jesus' ministry was a ministry of preaching and healing. When he sent out the 12 (Luke 9), "*he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.*" Christian life is about proclaiming the kingdom of God and healing. In the early church, when epidemics swept the great cities, everyone who could leave did so. But not the Christians. They stayed and cared for the sick. Hospitals, clinics, nursing homes and hospices across the globe were an outgrowth of the Christian imperative to heal. Even today, in an era of for-profit health care, Lutheran Services in America, the organization of Lutheran social service agencies, touches one in fifty Americans.

We are called not only to engage in physical healing. We are called to tend to brokenness all around-in ourselves, in our families, in our communities, in our world. Much of the work that pastors do is tending to brokenness in individuals and families. Much of the work that the synod staff do is tending to brokenness in congregations and communities. We respond with prayer and confession, with deep listening and communication. We respond with advocacy and action as we seek to heal a broken world.

Shalom healing is not a quick fix. For shalom healing to take place, it takes time. I think of a deep cut on someone's hand. Without proper care, the flesh will heal on the surface, but the deeper wound will remain and fester. Only when the deep wound is cleansed and begins to regenerate can the entire wound be healed. Spiritual wounds, emotional wounds, relational wounds are like that. We can try a quick fix and close up the surface rift. But until the deep injury is addressed, it will not heal.

John Koenig, in a chapter on Healing in Dorothy Bass's book, Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People(pp.147-8) says it this way:

We live in a society that defines healing as an activity that takes place largely between patients and their physicians or nurses. Christians understand the practice of healing as something much larger than this. The central image for us is not *cure*, but *wholeness*. Drawing on our Jewish heritage, we envision human wholeness chiefly in terms of right relationships with

God and our neighbors. We believe that what Jews call *Shalom*-an all-embracing peace that spells the end of meaningless suffering-is the ultimate reality."

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!

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## ELCA Advocacy: My God vs. our God

By: John Johnson, Program Director, Domestic Policy

*For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." - Romans 10:12-13*



*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those that are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! - Luke 13:34*

Last Sunday we heard Paul's letter to the Romans proclaiming that there is "no Jew and Greek ... under one Lord of all" and the story of the temptation of Christ in the wilderness. And this Sunday Paul invites his readers to remember that "our citizenship is in heaven" while Luke's Gospel is the lament over Jerusalem. When I tune into the latest news about this year's elections, I can't help but think about the timing of this Lent's readings and wonder, is God trying to tell us something?

[Read More...](#)

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## Health Coverage Tax information

This year, for the first time, you'll need to report health coverage when you file your federal income tax return, or potentially pay a financial penalty (unless you had Medicare as your primary coverage). This new requirement is part of the Affordable Care Act (ACA); you may have heard it called the "individual mandate."

Portico is here to help. We're mailing you a tax form that serves as proof of health coverage. Here's what to do:

- Watch the mail for Internal Revenue Service Form 1095-B, Health Coverage. It shows the months that you and any covered family members had ELCA-Primary health benefits in 2015.
- Keep Form 1095-B for your records. You don't need to submit it with your 2015 tax return.
- Check a box on your 2015 tax return to indicate you had coverage.

If you have any questions, call Portico at 800.352.2876. They are there to help you navigate an ever-changing health care landscape, so you can stay focused on your ministry. 800.352.2876

**Andrea Arey**

Regional Representative Regions 1 & 2 | Customer Outreach  
Portico Benefit Services | A Ministry of the ELCA

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## Congratulations on Grants Received!

Five entities in the Montana Synod were recently awarded domestic hunger grants from the ELCA. Zion Lutheran in Glendive received a grant for their Loaves and Fishes program. Family Promise of Great Falls received a grant, as did FISH of Great Falls. Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp received a development grant for "Growing Food and Kids." And the Poverello Center in Missoula received a grant for their Food Insecurity Program. These grants are all made possible by ELCA World Hunger funds.

A Mission Venture Capital Fund grant recently went to First English in Billings and Pastor Stacey Siebrasse to develop an older youth program in conjunction with Friendship House. The

program also received a grant from Wheat Ridge. Mission Venture Capital Fund grants come from a fund in the Montana Synod designed to fund creative new ministry ideas. The campaign for the Synod House is tithed to the MVCF.

The Montana Synod also provides Wellness Grants, with funds provided by Portico as a response to our Synod's good response on the health assessment. While many grants support individuals' wellness, St. John's Lutheran Ministries in Billings and Pastor Elisabeth Daniels received a grant to provide massages to residents.

In April the Hetzel Foundation Board will award grants to ministry projects focused on the elderly and/or youth.

You can see, there are ways to fund ministry beyond the congregation! Thanks to all who make this possible.

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## Looking for Information

We have started looking at a different system for our hearing impaired members in worship. Currently we have four earpieces that people really don't like because they are uncomfortable, don't fit in their ears, or don't work with hearing aids. And four isn't really enough.

We just started looking at a hearing loop. Are there any Montana congregations who have installed one of those that we could talk with? Or do you know of any other options that might work better for our people?

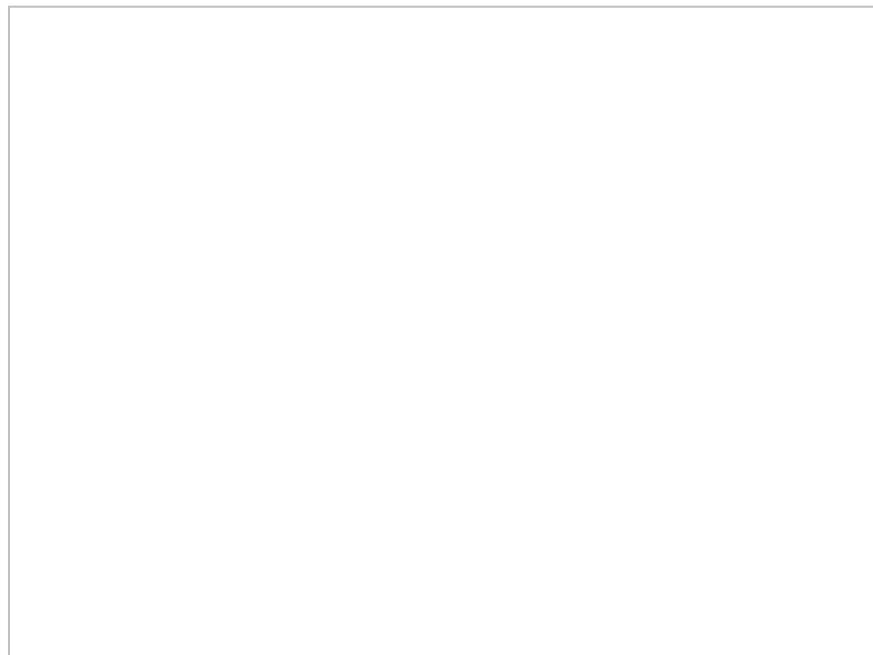
Thanks,

Will Johnson  
Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church  
Glendive, MT

[wjohnson002@luthersem.edu](mailto:wjohnson002@luthersem.edu)  
406-377-3369

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## Chico Registrations



Attached please find all of the information you need for the MT Synod Pastors Conference at Chico Hot Springs Resort. I'm sorry for any confusion about this. These documents have been posted on the Synod's website home page since Ash Wednesday. As I am on sabbatical right now, I neglected to follow-up and make sure these documents were e-mailed or mailed directly to each pastor from the Synod office (we know how hard they work and get overloaded!). I hope you all have found what you needed on the [Synod website](#) and are racing to get that discount for early registration. Lowell and Kathy are waiting for your registration form!

We will not be bringing copies of the schedule to the Conference to hand out, so bring you own hard copy or have it on you hand-held device. There will be copies posted for people to see.

Also, concerning our "book table" this year. If you will be bringing some to "share," bring them in a container of some sort (box, boxes, shoe boxes, brown bags, etc.) that is *labeled* with your name. That way it will be easier for you to identify your left-over books so that you can take them home with you!

Lenten blessings,

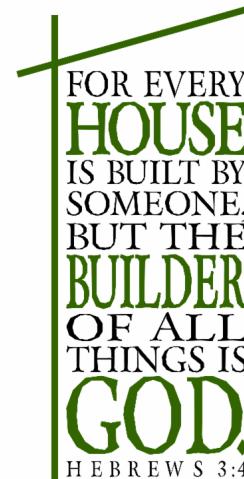
Linda Webster

[Click Here to go to the download page on 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:



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

## 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](#) account. 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!](#)

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## 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](mailto:gkarres@montanasynod.org).

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## 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, involucrarnos 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](#).

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## 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](mailto:gkarres@montanasynod.org).

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### **Post Easter Spiritual Wellbeing Retreat**

**April 11 - 14**

Pastor Dick & Naomi Bruesehoff

Pastors, worship directors, those who lead groups and outreach, etc ... this is your time to celebrate Easter! Pastor Dick & Naomi Bruesehoff will lead you into a time of quiet, renewal, wellness and celebration. For all the hours you give during the Lent/Easter season and all year long, this is your time to renew and recharge! [Register Now!](#)

### **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](#)

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## 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



# 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

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## 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](http://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](http://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](mailto: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.

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# The Luther 5

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 500<sup>th</sup> 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 area 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 5

**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 500<sup>th</sup> 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.

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## 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](http://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 \(cell\)](#)

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## 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/dh/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](#).*

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## Contact Information

phone: (406) 453-1461  
[www.montanasynod.org](http://www.montanasynod.org)

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