



Montana Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

News of the Week, March 16, 2016

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Prayers for March 20, 2016 Palm Sunday

Please remember in your prayers this week:

For the family of Tom Blevins, last Bishop of the Pacific Northwest Synod of the LCA, who died March 11 and whose funeral will be March 19 at First English in Billings at 11 am.

For Pastor Mark Peterson (Bethlehem, Billings), whose father died.

For Pastor Char Schmiedeskamp (Harlowton), in treatment for breast cancer.

For Sandy Drollman's parents, Jerry & Barb Copp, who are having health issues.

From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:

Grace Lutheran, Barber
American Lutheran, Harlowton
Trinity Lutheran, Martinsdale

Montana Synod Candidacy Committee
Eastern North Dakota Synod



Words From the Bishop - Deepen faith and witness - Sabbath

"So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation." Genesis 2:3

Observing Sabbath is a faith practice. It permeates who we are. Sabbath is a biblical practice, a discipline. It is a given in scripture, from day 1 (OK, day 7). In Genesis 1, we read about God's creation of everything, day by day. And we read about God resting. Sabbath is already a practice in the wilderness, even before God gave the 10 commandments including: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

(Exodus 20:8) God gives the manna and instructs people to gather only enough for the day, except for the sixth day. "See!

The Lord has given you the Sabbath, therefore on the sixth day he gives you food for two days; each of you stay where you are and do not leave your place on the seventh day."



The Ten Commandments did not create the Sabbath. They simply regularized it and made it applicable to the whole community, not just the believers. Everyone got a rest. Martin Luther, in his Large Catechism describes it this way: "You are to hallow the day of rest." He writes:

"We observe them (holy days), first, because our bodies need them. Nature teaches and demands that the common people-menservants and maidservants who have gone about their work or trade all week long-should also retire for a day to rest and be refreshed. Second and most important, we observe them so that people will have time and opportunity on such days of rest, which otherwise would not be available, to attend worship services, that is, so that they may assembly to hear and discuss God's Word and then to offer praise, song and prayer to God." (Kolb and Wengert, p. 297)

Luther reminds us of the 2 functions of Sabbath-rest time and holy time. Because of the influence of Calvinism in the United States, some people have associated Sabbath more with the "thou shalt not's" than the "thou shalt's." Growing up in Pennsylvania, I remember "blue laws." Stores were not open on Sundays, nor were movie theaters. And I can remember reading Laura Ingalls Wilder books in which Sundays were days in which you were supposed to have no fun at all.

I think it is fair to say that our society as a whole no longer sees the Sabbath as a time to forbid fun. But I also think it is fair to say that by and large our society ignores the Sabbath as a time for rest and as a time for the holy.

Brita Stendahl, in her book: *Sabbatical Reflections: The Ten Commandments in a New Day*, describes how a sabbatical influenced her understanding of Sabbath:

"For us the greatest and loveliest result of the sabbatical year was that it gave us our lives back. In small measure that is what the Sunday service is supposed to do every week. It gives us back the week for judgment and forgiveness. The purpose of worship is not to hear a sermon, to sing a hymn or two. It is something much larger: to come in contact with the world as it is and as we want it to be. Both, and at the same time. That's why it looks so silly to an outsider and observer who objects to the seemingly easy transition, not knowing that it is not easy at all. It is an ongoing process, Sunday after Sunday. It is not habit; it is discipline and discipleship. In one short hour to moan and to mourn and then to forget oneself and join with joy the others in a mock-up banquet reminding us of bread-hunger, wine-blood, life-death, and resurrection-the hope that defies despair. You don't do that in an hour-the hour becomes only a manifestation of what it takes a lifetime to realize."

Sabbath is a precious gift in our overprogrammed and over secularized society. Remember.

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!

Report from Wittenberg

The Montana Synod now has a tree in Wittenberg, Germany, as part of the Luthergarten, "500 years of reformation, 500 trees for Wittenberg." Pastor Tonya Eza of Powell, Wyoming, was able to witness the planting of the silver linden tree when she was in Wittenberg for a Lutheran World Federation seminar on the Reformation.



You are invited to help pay for the tree as a special offering. Earth Day, April 20, could be an opportune time. Send your checks to Montana Synod, with "Wittenberg tree" in the memo line.



Travel to Germany with Bishop Crist!

[Click Here](#) for information about a Montana Synod trip to Germany to visit Reformation sites in May of 2017. Join Bishop Crist and others from around the Synod on this trip to Wittenberg.



Montana Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

The 500th Anniversary of
Martin Luther's 95 Theses (1517-2017)

May 9-18, 2017

Travel to Germany
With Bishop Crist

The Montana Synod is offering a chance to tour Germany to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of Martin Luther's Nailing of the 95 Theses to the doors of the All Saints Church in Wittenberg.



NRIT News:

The following events require pre-registration:

NRIT is entering the world of digital education. Our first digital offering is now available on our website. When you purchase the class, you will have access to it throughout 2016 so can offer the class as a multi-session adult study or watch it on your personal computer at your convenience.

DIGITAL EDUCATION

Learning Our Place: Wilderness and Wonder from a Biblical Perspective

With Dr. Kathryn Schifferdecker This course explores the book of Job and several biblical texts for insights about God, creation and humanity. What kind of world is this? What is our place in this world? How does the Bible speak of wilderness and wild creatures? What about "acts of God?"

To purchase the class, go the NRIT website. Under the logo, to the right side, click on NRIT Digital Education Store. Then click on "Learning Our Place..." You will need to pay online with a credit or debit card. After you have placed your order, you will be sent an email with all of the access information. Look for more offerings to come!

COMING WORKSHOPS:

Spiritual But Not Religious: What Can We Learn From Them? How Can We Welcome Them? Dr. Melinda Quivik

Monday, April 25th - American Lutheran in Billings

Friday, April 29th - St. John's Lutheran in Helena

9:30am - 3:30pm

(5 credits) \$75 clergy/\$50 New to Ministry, retired, LPA/\$20 for nonrostered no CEUs

Leading Worship Matters: Shaping Faith

Dr. Melinda Quivik

Tuesday, April 26th - First Lutheran in Wolf Point

Thursday, April 27th - New Hope in Great Falls

9:30am - 3:30 pm

(5 credits) \$75 clergy/\$50 New to Ministry, retired, LPA/\$20 for nonrostered no CEUs

To sign up, www.nrit.org and click on the NRIT logo near the upper right side of the Montana Synod page to see our offerings.

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.

Loving Your Neighbor by Pastor John Lund

Kudos to the Darby library for going forward with the March 9 talk on Islam by UM scholar Samir Bitar. The rampant rhetoric of fear regarding Muslims immigrants is out of line with our core American value of granting life and liberty to all people. What has made us great is our willingness to give everyone a chance regardless of race, ethnicity, social class, or beliefs. Certainly, we need to denounce and fight ISIS, and we need protection from their attacks. It is reasonable to be concerned about screening immigrants from a war-torn nation. But to judge all Muslims because of ISIS is unfair. The claim that Islam is at war with Christianity or with the US and that all Muslims are out to get us is plain wrong.



For those of us who are Christian, we would do well to look first at the log in our own eye. We have to acknowledge that many Christians justified the killing of native peoples by calling them "heathens" and "savages." Later, Christians sent Native children to boarding schools so they could be "Christianized" and re-cultured. Christians also justified slavery, and many later fought against civil rights for Blacks and all people of color. European Christians perpetuated stereotypes and discrimination against Jews, which allowed the rise of Nazi hatred and the Holocaust. Many Christians fought against the right of women to vote, and some still believe that women should be subject to men and silent outside their homes. Even today, Christians fight the hardest against civil rights for people in the LGBTQ community. If the atrocities of some Christians were used to judge all of us, we'd be lucky to have any neighbors at all.

The truth is that there are an estimated 3.3 million Muslims in this country, and many have been here for decades. Most work hard as teachers, business owners, laborers, doctors, and in other professions, and are integrated into American culture and life. They wage peace through daily prayer, compassion, care for their neighbor, and devotion to the same God that Christians and Jews worship. They honor Moses and Jesus as Major Prophets and have great respect for the Bible. I have known many Muslims in my lifetime and feel fortunate to have some as friends. They are among the most genuine, gracious, giving and humorous people I know. In all of our major cities, Imams and Muslim leaders work with Christian, Jewish and other faith leaders to foster relationships, peace and unity among the world religions. Time after time, when Christians actually meet Muslims and get to know them and share a meal and conversation, relationships are formed, attitudes and perceptions are changed, and the whole community is enriched for the better. Thank God we have different languages, music, food, skin colors, traditions and beliefs! Because of that we learn and grow and become fuller human beings when we are together.

Yes, there are horrible things being done by some Muslims who manipulate Islam and the Quran to justify their own ideology of terror and control. Yes, some Muslims believe that women should obey their husbands and have fewer rights than men. Yes, some Muslims are fundamentalist and practice horrific forms of violent retribution. And this is true for some Christians as well. We see evidence of this today in KKK rallies, mass shootings and vandalism of Black churches and abortion clinics, and the high rate of domestic violence against women. The greater truth is that the huge majority of the estimated 1.7 billion Muslims and 2.4 billion Christians in the world are people who love God and neighbor, care for those in need, and seek peace in our world.

As Christians, we are called not only to love the neighbors who are similar to us, but to also love those who are different and even our enemies. Our world is already filled with fear, lies, hatred, and violence. We can do much better by waging peace, forming relationships, listening to each other, sharing life, and expecting the best from each other. That is exactly what a Galilean Jew did 2000 years ago amid times of great fear, much like today. Perhaps we can follow his lead.

-Pastor John Lund is Campus Pastor at the University of Montana

March 2016 ELCA Advocacy Update

Today, we present our ELCA Advocacy Update for the month of March. [Please read below](#) for important

Lutheran Disaster Response: Spring Storms

In the midst of Lent, our neighbors cry out with weary hearts as heavy winds, floodwaters and tornadoes have affected many regions of the U.S., especially Louisiana and Texas. We anticipate more devastation in the days and weeks ahead.

In many areas in the South, river flooding has reached historic levels, affecting streets and highways, damaging or destroying homes, causing thousands to evacuate, and leaving at least five dead.

Your gifts to respond to these U.S. spring storms through Lutheran Disaster Response will work to bring God's hope, healing and renewal to those who have been affected. Together, we stand with synods, congregations, pastors and Lutheran-affiliated social ministries as we work together to respond.

Lutheran Disaster Response's coordinators are currently present, working with local communities and officials to begin planning the long-term recovery. We are ready to respond and walk with survivors in the weeks and months ahead, for as long as we are needed.

Gifts designated for [U.S. Spring Storms](#) will be used in full (100 percent) until the response is complete to help disaster survivors recover and rebuild their lives. Your generous offerings of prayer and financial support will help address the unmet needs of those affected.

Join me in prayer and partnership, and use this [bulletin insert](#) in your congregation to help spread the word and support those who need rest.
In service,

The Rev. Daniel Rift
Director, ELCA World Hunger and Disaster Appeal
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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.

Organ Donor

Carroll College has an organ they would like to donate to a church. Please contact Patty White, Communications Director, if you are interested, at 406-447-4454 or pwhite@carroll.edu.

Update from Justin Eller

As Amalia timidly stands up with her hands clasped together, taking her turn to present on the traditional medicines she made from local, ancestral plants found throughout the area surrounding Lake Titicaca near La Paz, Bolivia, she gently speaks in Spanish to explain that the majority of the women in her rural community, many who had gathered to hear her presentation, only speak their indigenous Aymara language.



With her first words in Aymara, she transforms from an eager student to a commanding, informative, and inspiring teacher. She explains the illnesses, treatments, and remedies of each of the four colored bottles on the table in front of her with their corresponding medicinal plant ingredients and where to find them. Her educational presentation captures the attention of the 20 plus women huddled together, which brings forth testimonies of previous illnesses in some of them and how Amalia had helped in their healing process.

Many of the community members who benefit from Amalia's training, care, and medicines have little-to-no access to formal medical attention or clinics due to their rural locations. She chuckles as she explains that sometimes she arrives to a neighboring community and people come in search of her to consult her about a minor illness or call her cell phone asking her to visit a sick relative. She goes on to explain that she doesn't just take the medicine she has prepared, but also listens to their stories, prays with them, and teaches them about how they can better their health.

Amalia is one of about 30 members (lay and clergy) of the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church (Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Boliviana- IELB in Spanish) being trained as a Rural Health Promoter (Responsable Popular en Salud- RPS in Spanish) in the "Integral Community Health" program of the IELB, which is supported by a ELCA World Hunger grant. The project began in 2008 and has recently completed an in-depth evaluation with with recommendations on how to further develop and bring to market their traditional medicines, widen their curriculum to involve more women from rural areas, and explore ways to include an intentional "Train the trainer" methodology into the two-year program.

Together, the Integral Community Health program of the IELB in Bolivia and ELCA World Hunger are actively accompanying rural Lutheran health promoters in their traditional medicine training, making natural herbal medicines (syrups, juices, clays, and pomades), community support, and spiritual accompaniment skills. Your support, through ELCA World Hunger, helps make real, sustainable impact in the lives of the program participants and in the betterment of health of their communities. Thank you for helping to make projects like this possible.

-Justin Eller

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 your 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

Please bring your ELW's to CHICO this year. They will be needed for Tuesday Evening Opening Worship. (Bring extra, if possible, for our Episcopal colleagues to share.) Also, in celebration of the ecumencial nature of this year's Chico gathering, we will be collecting an offering to benefit MAC (Montana Association of Christians.) Thank you for remembering!

[Click Here to go to the download page on montanasynod.org](#)

MAC on the Move

Mid-March 2016 Update

Here you will find MAC, Partner & Network Related Events, Initiatives, & News. The events, projects, organizations, and information sources provided have been approved/endorsed by MAC Council (and meet MAC's Mission).

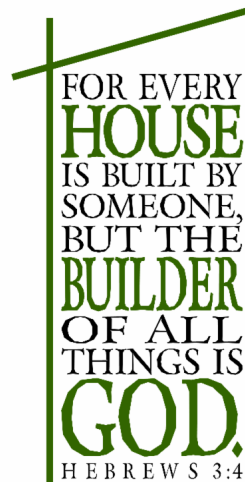
[Make sure to read the update here.](#)



Synod House

The Ides of March are upon us, Easter is two weeks away, and the first quarter of 2016 will be ended. Time marches on. As you read in Bishop Crist's message recently, the ELCA Mission Builders have been engaged to help with the building of our new Synod House. NOW is the

time to begin considering our part in the process - provide funds (they are tax-deductible, you know), plan time to come to Great Falls to be part of the building in so many ways (I can't count them), and PRAY. Let's make this a project that we will be proud to have had a part in it. Stay tuned - more information will be coming



Portico Update

April 30, 2016 - Last day ELCA-Primary health plan members and spouses can help earn 1% discount by taking 2016 health assessment.

As of March 1, 2016, the Montana Synod has reached 35.04% of its 65% goal of members taking the Health Assessment. That means, 41 of you have taken it, and 36 more still need to do so in order to save us collectively \$11,000 this year. Please take it now. The Montana Synod has reached its goal every year, so don't stop now.

Check out the Go! Challenge <https://employerlink.porticobenefits.org/Campaign/Go>



Roster Transitions

For Roster transitions and changes, check out our website at this link:
<http://www.montanasynod.org/news-archive.html>

Updated are posted on the 15th of each month.

Previous news and notes:

Bolivian Textiles

by Susan Leaverton



Textiles and fibers surround us constantly as an integral part of life. Our synod women's group of ten intrepid travelers immersed ourselves in Bolivian culture last August, visually feasting on sights that truly exemplify the connections of fabric to daily life for many women of this vibrant country. Clothing and textile arts of Bolivia excel in color, pattern and craftsmanship. Exotic llama and alpaca fibers are the norm for clothing construction.

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

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.



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](#)

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

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

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.Impluchurch.org/womensretreat for more details, to get on our mailing list and to register! Hope to see you there. Sponsored by the Five

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 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 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 in 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! An outdoor ministry litany and special offering envelopes are available by contacting the office: office@flbc.net or (406) 752-6602.

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!

March 26-April 2: Desert Southwest Backpacking Trip

FULL!

Have a great trip! Thank you for your prayers for the campers and staff leading this trip!

April 17-19: Adult Spirituality Retreat

This year's inspiring retreat will be co-presented by Dr. Jim and Julie Ageson, with the topics,

"Spiritual but not Religious: Spirituality in a Non-Religious World" and "Quest for God: Contemplative Practices and a Life of Faith." [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.

March

29-April 1 **Pastoral Conference**

June

3-5 Montana Synod Assembly



Please put these important dates on your calendar:

2016 Montana Synod Assembly and Theological Conference: June 2-5, 2016, Radisson Hotel 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

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

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