



Montana Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

News of the Week, April 6, 2016

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Prayers for April 10, 2016 Third Sunday of Easter

Please remember in your prayers this week:

For Pr. Arne Bergland's mother, suffering from an aortic embolism.

From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:

Jocko Valley Lutheran, Arlee
Valley of Christ Lutheran, Frenchtown
Prince of Peace Lutheran, Missoula

Sapphire Lutheran Homes (Hamilton)

Southwest Minnesota Synod



Words From the Bishop - Deepen faith and witness - Generosity

"We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate in cheerfulness." (Romans 12: 5-8)

Generosity is a faith practice. It naturally follows hospitality, our topic last week. It involves letting go of ownership and control. Jesus lifted up a poor widow as a model for generosity.

"He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. He said, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.'" (Luke 21: 1-4)

Generosity is sharing, but it is more than sharing. It is letting go, and it is letting go with joy.



Generosity is living as if everything we have comes from God, and not holding on to it too tightly. Generosity is seeing the need in others and responding. Generosity is going above and beyond what is required. Generosity can even be offensive. The unnamed woman who anointed Jesus in Bethany angered Jesus' disciples.

"While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, 'Why was this ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor.'...Jesus said, .. 'Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.'" (Mark 14: 3-9)

Giving is important. It is part of who we are, what we do as Christians. Mark Allen Powell, in his book *Giving to God: The Bible's Good News about Living a Generous Life*, makes the point that giving is part of worship. Passing the plate during worship is not simply an inefficient way to pay the bills. With opportunities to pay online, or have automatic deductions from a bank account (all of which do help pay the bills), we can forget that giving to the Lord is an act of worship.

We are an incarnational people. We don't just live in our heads. Our worship is embodied. We baptize with real, wet water, making puddles and splashes sometimes. We communion with real bread and real wine, which we believe become the real body and real blood of Jesus. We pass the peace with real handshakes, hugs and greetings. And, I think we can argue, that we take seriously that offering plate that goes around as an opportunity for real letting go.

Paul writes to the Galatians:

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things." (Galatians 5:22-23)

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!

Attention: Portico Members over
50

PORTICO[®]

Benefit Services | A Ministry of the ELCA

You're invited to participate in a new opportunity for plan members age 50+ or within 15 years of retirement. We converted our popular day-long pre-retirement seminar into a convenient online webinar series. We're offering this series for the second time nationwide this spring.

The three webinar sessions will cover a variety of retirement topics, from health care options to Social Security. Sessions will feature live presenters from Portico and Ernst & Young, as well as live Q&A - all at no cost to you. Sign up for the series and join us for as many sessions as you can. As this is a series, you will receive the most benefit from participating in all three sessions.

Session 1: Retirement Planning and Health Care, April 12, 2 - 3 p.m. (Central)

Explore these retirement planning questions and more:

- What might my budget look like in retirement?
- Will I be eligible for housing allowance in retirement?
- What health care options do I have in retirement?

Session 2: Investments and Accumulations, April 19, 2 - 3 p.m. (Central)

Explore these investment questions and more:

- How can I manage my investment risks?
- What investment options are available in the ELCA Retirement Plan?
- What resources are available to help me determine which investments are right for me?
-

Session 3: Income in Retirement, April 26, 2 - 3 p.m. (Central)

Explore these retirement income questions and more:

- What distribution options do I have from my ELCA retirement account?

- What strategies should I know so that I can maximize my Social Security payment?
- How might I use different sources of retirement income to fund my retirement?

> [Register for the series!](#)

Out of the Darkness

by Cindy Bye
Shepherd, MT



"I came out of the darkness and into the light." These were the words proclaimed by a woman at the Iglesia Evangelica Luterano Boliviano (IELB) National Women's Leadership Conference at the Jessica Crist Retreat Center in August 2015. With passionate testimony, she revealed the joy and peace she received when she accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior. The movement of the Holy Spirit through the room was almost palpable, as she shared her life-changing story of coming to faith.

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.

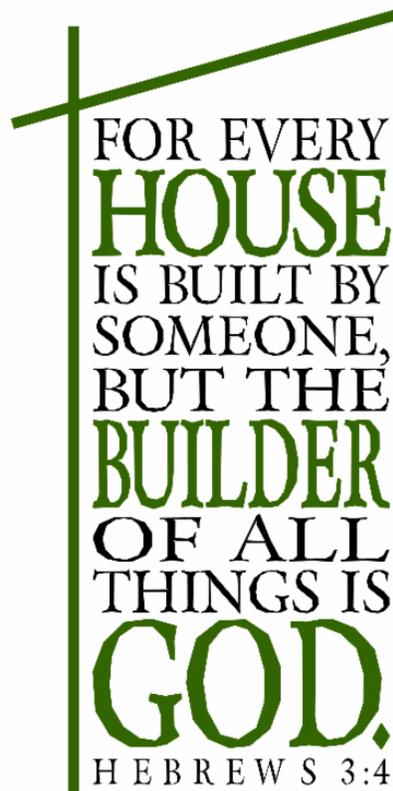
For further information, click [HERE](#) or contact George Karres at 406-453-1461 or by email at gkarres@montanasynod.org.

Adult Ed Opportunity

The Rev. Jan Olav Flaaten will be the speaker at Bethlehem Lutheran's Waldum Renewal lecture Series in Kalispell April 10-11 both at 7pm.

Pastor Flaaten has extensive experience in ecumenical ministry.

For more information contact Bethlehem Lutheran: 406 752-6140



Previous news and notes:

Music Director Job Opening

Music Director-American Lutheran in Billings, MT is seeking a part time Music Director. This person will be dedicated to coordinating with the pastors for the musical aspects of Sunday and seasonal mid-week worship services, including: playing the piano for the contemporary service; rehearsing and directing the worship instrumentalists and the contemporary choir; directing the kids' choir; coordinating music selections with the pastors according to the church seasons; and providing coverage for weddings and funerals, as needed. If you would like to apply for a portion of this position, you are welcome to do so. The Music Director will demonstrate successful leadership, encouragement, development of congregational singing, and commitment to working with pastors, staff, and volunteers. Contact pastortim@amluth.org for more information.

Prison Ministry Partnership

In June 2015, shortly after the Montana Synod of the ELCA celebrated their new partnership with Intermountain, caring for children and families at risk, Bishop Jessica Crist of the ELCA invited Bishop Elain Stanovsky of the United Methodist Church to explore how the Lutherans and Methodists in Montana could work together in prison ministries. The Rev. David Burt, Assistant to Bishop Stanovsky and the Rev. George Karres, Director of Evangelism and Missions for the ELCA were asked to pull together a group from both churches to begin this task. Representatives of the UMC (Rev. David Andersen of Butte and Pastor Wendy Ochs of Billings) and the ELCA (Rev. Joel Skindlov of Big Sandy and Havre and Rev. Melanie Martin-Dent, an ELCA pastor serving in interim ministry at the UMC church in Dillon) began to meet via conference call, getting to know each other and the ministries they are engaged in. YACUMC Vital Missions Coordinator Sally McConnell and Freedom in Christ pastor Rev. Rob Nebalek will joining the next call.

In February, the group adopted the name "Prison Ministry Partnership" and the purpose of exploring our common ministries and sharing opportunities to work together in this area. We intend to communicate information to the people in our respective churches about ways they can engage in and support this work. Three ministries which have been identified as starting points include:

- Freedom in Christ Prison Ministry in which Pastor Rob Nedbalek (ELCA) serves at the Men's State Prison in Deer Lodge, Montana
- Ministries at the Women's State Prison in Billings including monthly worship services led by members of Billings Evangelical UMC and chaplaincy work by TEEM Candidate Charles Bott
- Healing Communities Montana: a group of people from congregations from various denominations who have participated in training led by Rev. Doug Walker, UMC General Board of Church and Society.

This month we wanted to introduce this group and our work. Next month we will begin offering opportunities to get involved with each ministry. For now, we invite your prayers for our task force and for all engaged in ministry with people involved with the criminal justice system.

You may learn more about all these ministries by going to the Freedom in Christ website:

<http://www.ficprisonministry.com>

Healing Communities website: **<http://umc-gbcs.org/healing-communities>**

or contacting Wendy Ochs **pastorwendyochs@gmail.com**

or Charles Bott **Cajun_nomo@yahoo.com**.

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.



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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.

Pilgrimage to Germany, Palestine, and Israel

Pastor Paul Rowold of Polson will be leading a Pilgrimage to Germany, Palestine, and Israel from October 4-18. He has led numerous groups in the past, and emphasizes renewal of body and spirit, with significant contact with the Christian peoples in each country. Included in this trip are guided visits to the major Reformation sites (including Erfurt, Mansfield, Eisleben, Wittenberg, and Eisenach, with the Wartburg Castle) and the significant sites in the Holy Land. Visits to the homes of Christian families and worship in Bethlehem and Eisenach will highlight this Pilgrimage.

The 15 day experience departs from New York JFK and includes breakfasts and dinners at 4 star hotels each day. Cost is \$3225 per person (based on double occupancy). For detailed itinerary, contact Pastor Rowold at 406 883 5864 or paul.rowold@gmail.com

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>



Discover Your Calling...

SPIRIT in the DESERT Retreat Center

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 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

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 Valleys Women and Great Divide Clusters.



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.

*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 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.

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!



April 17-19: Adult Spirituality Retreat

This year's inspiring retreat will be co-presented by Dr. Jim and Julie Aageson, 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! There is still time to register!

May 8: Mother's Day Brunch

Celebrate the special women in your life by joining us for a delightful brunch at camp. Four seatings are available, and reservations are required. Call (406) 752-6602 by May 2nd to make your reservation. Suggested donation is \$20 per person. Proceeds benefit the the FLBC campership fund and the CASA program of Flathead County, assisting young women in foster care. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information!

May 27-30: Thrivent Memorial Day Family Work Retreat

Fun (and work!) for the whole family as we prepare our facilities for the summer camping season! This is a great time to introduce your children to camp and to meet our 2016 summer staff, who are eager to work, worship, and play with you! Call (406) 752-6602 to reserve your spot. This retreat is FREE in thankfulness for your assistance and funding from Thrivent Financial.

June 3-5: Women's Retreat

Calling all women! Join us for worship, great food, relaxation, yoga, spa time, and sessions with Dr. Nancy Eldredge-Hess, who will lead us in the theme, "Unsung Heroines of the Bible." [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

phone: (406) 453-1461

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

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