



Montana Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

News of the Week, April 20, 2016

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Prayers for April 24, 2016

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Please remember in your prayers this week:



[From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:](#)

St. Paul Lutheran, Missoula
Atonement Lutheran, Missoula
Our Savior's Lutheran, Bonner

Minneapolis Area Synod

St. Paul Area Synod

Words From the Bishop - Deepen Faith and Witness - Silence



"Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46: 10
You may have participated in an exercise with this verse, whittling it down.

Be still and know that I am God
Be still and know
Be still
Be

Silence is a faith practice. We live in a noisy world, and a fast-paced world. It is acoustically noisy. It is also visually noisy, if we can combine the senses like that. The current political season is but one manifestation of our society's absence of silence, as candidates shout over one another, interrupting, yelling to be the loudest voice in the room. We need silence.

Often we engage in conversations like ping pong matches-lobbing comments back and forth as fast as we can. Whether it is a chance encounter in the grocery store, a heart-to-heart with a good friend, or a serious debate-we fill the space with words. And we can miss what happens when there is silence.

Our order for worship includes silence. And yet in most congregations, if the silence is more than about 5 seconds, people become uneasy. We don't know what to do with "dead air." We fidget. So that refreshing, holy part of the liturgy gets sacrificed because of our discomfort.

We need silence. We need it as individuals. We need it as communities of faith. We need it as a society. We need silence for reflection. We need silence for contemplation. We need silence in order to be able to hear others, to hear God.

Quakers know about silence. Quaker meetings are long periods of silence, broken only when someone in the meeting feels called on to speak. Silence is the norm; speaking is the exception. In our gatherings, it is the opposite. Speaking is the norm, silence the exception.

What do Quakers do during the silence? They listen for the Spirit. Oh, I'm sure that not everybody stays focused the entire time. I'm sure some people are thinking about other things, just as Lutherans sitting in pews during a sermon have been known from time to time to be thinking about other things.

Have you tried to keep silence for a sustained period of time? Not talking isn't the real challenge. The real challenge is emptying your mind, slowing down, clearing out the internal chatter as well as the external noise. The real challenge is setting aside your agenda, letting go of your racing thoughts, your great ideas, your big questions, and waiting.

Quakers know that they can sit for a whole meeting and never hear the murmuring of the Spirit. Keeping silent does not guarantee that the voice of God will fill that space. Mother Theresa, in her reflections published after her death, wrote of the terrible silence she felt because she did not hear from God.

When Elijah was on Mount Horeb, he experienced all kinds of epic events that might have been God's way of communicating. The mountain split and crashed, but God was not in the mountain. The earth split, but God was not in the earthquake. A fire raged, but God was not in the wildfire. And there was "sheer silence." And God spoke, into the deep silence. (I Kings 19:11 ff).

"Be still, and know that I am God."

Try it.

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!

CHRISTIKON ANNUAL BENEFIT AUCTION

We are celebrating Christikon's 65th Anniversary! The Christikon Annual Benefit Auction "Quilts and a Whole Lot More" will take place on Sunday, April 24th at the Billings Depot located at 2310 Montana Ave. Doors will open at 4:00 p.m. and the cost for admission is only \$15.00 per adult. Hors d'oeuvres provided by Top Notch Catering and drinks will be available. Guests may bid on silent auction items and examine live auction items. The live auction, with auctioneer Rick Young, begins at 5:30 pm. A few of the live auction items include a raffle of a 2001 Sea Swirl boat with trailer, beautiful handmade quilts in assorted sizes, condo and condo/cabin packages at Big Sky and Red Lodge, artwork, a Minnesota Vikings game package, Big Horn Fishing Getaway and much more!



In the splendor of the Absaroka-Beartooth Mountains south of Big Timber, Christikon Bible Camp provides camping and backpacking opportunities to youth, families, and developmentally-disabled adults. Many of the proceeds from the Benefit Auction will help fund Christikon's Sojourners session, which is offered to at-risk youth free of charge. At-risk youth participating in Sojourners are those who may be experiencing significant challenges in their lives, including declining performance in school, emotional or behavioral problems, an absent parent, a family member who is imprisoned or on parole, or a family dealing with financial hardship.

Please join Christikon for this exciting evening. Tickets available at the door!

Boat raffle tickets available at the Christikon office!

More information about registering for the camp as a counselor or camper can be obtained through the website: www.christikon.org. Christikon is a not-for-profit organization, it may be considered for endowment gifts, bequests, and other planned gifts.

If you have a question or would like to contact us, please contact the office at 406-655-1969 or email us at secretary@christikon.org.

Lutheran Seminary Award to St. John's "Community of the Cross"

The Reverend Dr. James Nieman, President of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, recently announced that St. John's Lutheran Ministries has been selected as 2016 recipient of a prestigious award. Within a February 19th letter addressed to St. John's President and Chief Executive Officer, Kent Burgess, President Nieman wrote:

"It is my pleasure to inform you that the faculty of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) has voted to honor St. John's Lutheran Ministries with the Community of the Cross award . . . presented to a community, institution, congregation, or any collectively functioning Christian group whose activities manifest the invitation of our Lord to take up the cross and follow him, and whose services is directed to the world around it, both Christian and non-Christian, and whose satisfaction and honor dearly derive from the gospel."

President Nieman stated of this award, "It is the highest group honor our faculty can bestow, reflecting the respect and esteem with which they regard the recipient." In telling why LSTC faculty voted to confer this award to St. John's, he observed these reasons:

- * Since its founding in 1963 by twenty-three Lutheran congregations of Montana, the work of St. John's now spans the entire state of Montana and offers a wide array of services to people without regard to religious preference, race, gender, age, diagnosis, or disability.
- * Through its multiple campuses across the state, St. John's provides a full continuum of senior living care, and through its facilities in Billings, it shows a model of intergenerational engagement that includes both children and senior adults.
- * St. John's has managed Lutheran Social Services of Montana, which has provided mental health counseling services, adoptive services, disaster response work, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee services.
- * St. John's became the second organization within the United States to develop Green House Cottages, a model for long-term care designed to provide a home environment.
- * Since 2003, St. John's in collaboration with local ELCA congregations, served as a learning context for a dozen seminary interns, half of whom were from LSTC.
- * St. John's has been an active ecumenical partner as well as supportive of and welcoming to people from all faith traditions, including those who identify as non-religious.
- * In these and many other ways, St. John's stands as a model of bearing the cross in daily life through being an exemplary social service ministry. All of this embodies LSTC's own commitment to prepare leaders for a public church.

President Nieman concluded, "Please accept my sincere congratulations on the selection of St. John's Lutheran Ministries for this year's Community of the Cross award."

Within reply, Kent Burgess wrote, "The honor of receiving the Community of the Cross award is deeply appreciated by the St. John's community. Our sincere thanks to LSTC and the faculty for this award and for the recognition and encouragement it gives to our ministry across Montana and Northern Wyoming."

On Sunday, May 15, 2016, Kent will receive this award on behalf of St. John's during commencement exercises at LSTC.

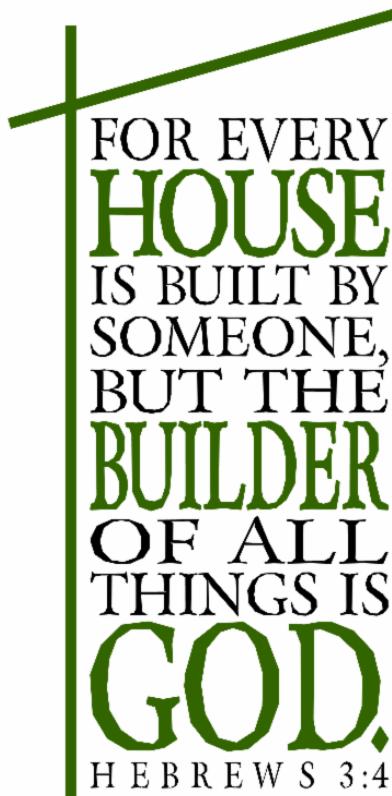
Mara Flynn
Graphic Designer
St. John's Foundation
406-655-5716

Portico Update

As of April 1, 2016, the Montana Synod has reached 47.86%. Thank you to the 56 of you who have taken the Health Assessment through Portico. We only need 21 more of you to reach 65% and collectively, congregations and ministries in the Montana Synod will save \$11,000 on contributions this year.



PLUS, you automatically receive \$150 immediately just for taking it, and a potential additional \$250 if you complete the GO! Challenge to create a healthy, lasting lifestyle change. Hurry, the deadline is April 30, 2016, so there are only a few more weeks.



Previous news and notes:

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.](#)

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 Chris 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



Discover Your Calling...

**SPIRIT in the DESERT
Retreat Center**

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](#)

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

Women's Spring Retreat

April 22-24, 2016

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



NRIT News:

The following events require pre-registration:

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 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.

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!



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.

June

3-5 Montana Synod Assembly



Please put these important dates on your calendar:

2016 Montana Synod Assembly and Theological Conference: June 3-5, 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

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

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

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

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

Amazon Smile

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



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

Contact Information

phone: (406) 453-1461
www.montanasynod.org

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