



**Montana Synod**

**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

## News of the Week, July 6, 2016

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## Prayers for July 10, 2016 Eighth Week of Pentecost

Please remember in your prayers this week:

All those traveling this summer to and from vacations.

### From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:

Trinity Lutheran, Choteau  
St. Paul Lutheran, Cut Bank  
Greater Milwaukee Synod



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## Words From the Bishop - Deepen Faith and Witness: A Social Statement on Abortion

Social Statements are a significant part of the ELCA's identity and public witness. They represent the church's best thinking on an issue at the time. Composed by a task force comprised of lay and clergy experts and interested parties from a variety of backgrounds, the social statement is finally approved by a vote at a Churchwide Assembly. In 1991, the Churchwide Assembly adopted the Social Statement on Abortion. Because the church was still relatively new in 1991, the statement relies on earlier statements from the predecessor churches, namely the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church.



The adoption of the ELCA Social Statement on Abortion did not settle the matter in either church or society. The battle still rages. Indeed, despite the passage of our social statement, an ELCA physician who provided legal abortions, was murdered while ushering in his own church in

Kansas. Since 1991, medical science has continued to advance, with diagnostics, with contraceptive options, and with life support for pre-term infants. And the political scene has certainly been active as well. Since Roe v. Wade in 1970, state legislatures and political campaigns have been filled with issues of parental consent, universal health care, clinic requirements, spousal/partner consent, foreign aid and contraceptive restrictions, and waiting periods. The recent Supreme Court decision is a reminder that the issues are still alive.

Our 1991 statement takes a middle ground. It neither advocates for the elimination of all abortions, nor advocates for the elimination of all restrictions. Rather, it affirms the sanctity of life, acknowledges human brokenness and the need for difficult choices, encourages societal care for pregnant women and their children, and warns about unequal access to care.

Lutherans clearly support an ethic of life. But it is nuanced. On the one hand: "The strong Christian presumption is to preserve and protect life." This ethic is re-enforced in the social statement on the death penalty. The Abortion statement continues: "Abortion ought to be an option only of last resort. Therefore as a church we seek to reduce the need to turn to abortion as the answer to unintended pregnancies." Our position does not privilege the potential life of the fetus above all other lives.

The statement spends several paragraphs discussing how the church might support women and girls with unwelcome pregnancies. Adoption ranks high as a 1991 option. The statement advocates for hospitality, including the welcoming of women and children, foster care and adoption. It also affirms marriage and shared parenthood. And it suggests that congregations should be involved in sex education. Several topics in this section, "III. THE CHURCH AS COMMUNITY SUPPORTIVE OF LIFE," are addressed more thoroughly in subsequent ELCA social statements ("Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" and "Genetics") and social messages ("Gender-Based Violence")

In the section, "IV. GUIDANCE IN MAKING DECISIONS REGARDING UNINTENDED PREGNANCIES," the statement calls for compassion and for respectful and competent counseling. Concerning the decision for abortion the statement declares: " We recognize that conscientious decisions need to be made in relation to difficult circumstances that very greatly. What is determined to be a morally responsible decision in one situation may not be in another." It goes on: "Our biblical and confessional commitments provide the basis for us to continue. deliberating together on moral issues related to these decisions."

In the section, "PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES RELATED TO ABORTION," the statement offers: "Because of our conviction that both the life of the woman and the life in her womb must be respected by law, this church opposes:

- the total lack of regulation of abortion
- legislation that would outlaw abortion in all circumstances
- laws that prevent access to information about all options available to women faced with unintended pregnancies
- laws that deny access to safe and affordable services for morally justifiable abortions
- mandatory or coerced abortion or sterilization
- laws that prevent couples from practicing contraception
- laws that are primarily intended to harass those contemplating or deciding for an abortion

Church and society continue to debate abortion. The 1991 ELCA Social Statement was not intended to stop debate. It was intended to help Lutherans navigate the debate, by providing background theological resources as well as contemporary discussion. And it was intended as a guide for our participation in public policy. An addendum reminds us:

"Social teaching statements provide an analysis and interpretation of an issue, set forth basic theological and ethical perspectives related to it, and offer guidance for the corporate ELCA and its individual members. They also illustrate the implications of their teaching for the social practice of this church. In their use as teaching documents, their authority is persuasive not coercive."

To see the Social Statement, go to [www.elca.org/socialstatements](http://www.elca.org/socialstatements).

Jessica Crist, Bishop

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New address: 3125 5th Ave. S., Great Falls, MT 59401

Youth and Family Director Needed

## **Bethlehem Lutheran Church (ELCA), Kalispell, MT**

We are seeking a candidate to work together with staff, parents and volunteers to encourage, equip, mentor and guide youth in their faith journey as our Youth and Family Director. This is a newly expanded full-time position that will have responsibilities for K-12 youth and their families. The compensation is \$25,000-\$30,000 dependent on experience and includes benefits and subsidized housing.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church is located in NW Montana's scenic Flathead Valley, and only 30 minutes from the entrance to Glacier National Park. We are one of the founding congregations of the Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp (20 miles south of Kalispell) and host FLBC's office staff on our campus.

A complete position description can be found at <http://www.bethluth.org>. To apply, send a cover letter and resume to [office@bethluth.org](mailto:office@bethluth.org). Screening will begin July 15th and applications will be accepted until August 31st.

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## **Russian Correspondent Newsletter -Bradn Buerkle**

*Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,*

*Russia is the kind of place that keeps you on your toes. Just when it seemed that things had calmed down for me (with the renewal of my 5-year residency permit in February) and for the country (insofar as tensions with the West seem to be on a slow but relatively steady decline), in the past weeks the Russian parliament (Duma) passed a series of "anti-terror" laws that could possibly have serious side effects for the Church. The stated aim of the law is to deny terrorists the possibility of building underground networks, but in fact the result is a significant increase in the control the government exercises over religious organizations, especially small ones like ours. If signed by President Putin, attempts to draw new people in to the church could be severely limited, as could the activities of those congregations that meet in private homes (as opposed to traditional church buildings); the ministry of foreign missionaries would be seriously limited. Experience teaches us here that less important than the text of the law is the way local government officials choose to interpret it, so we'll have to just wait and see. In any case, I ask your prayer for those of us serving here, that we all might remain calm and have the wisdom to deal with any barriers we encounter in a Christ-like fashion.*

### **Educational Events in 2016**

The year thus far has been an interesting mix of the familiar and the new; as I write this I'm struck again at what a blessing it is to be called to such interesting work! The first educational event of the year was held at the seminary in Novosaratovka, where we tackled the themes of "Eschatology, Death and Burial" from the point of view of theology as well as pastoral practice. It felt good to work with students of the distance education program in an area so important for contemporary theology - the "last things" (eschatology). Usually I've limited myself to explaining traditional points of view on theological topics, but this time I was able to present one of my personal favorite approaches in the "Theology of Hope" (especially as expressed in the works of Jürgen Moltmann); I found the students responsive to a new way of viewing questions related to Christ's return and to the "end times."

[Read More...](#)

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# The Luther 5

## **July Newsbrief: Luther and the Apocrypha**

Quick - do any of these biblical texts ring a bell for you: Baruch 3:9; Wisdom of Solomon 5:15; Sirach 24:1-3; Hezekiah 6:8?

The last one listed is fictitious - an old joke among pastors and Bible teachers. But the first three "biblical" books listed all have texts that might get read on a Sunday morning in congregations using the Revised Common Lectionary's alternate First Readings. They're among those "biblical" books you may have seen in Bibles used by Roman Catholics, but probably not

included in the Bibles you have ordinarily used.

Tom Lee - pastor, biblical scholar, teacher, ecclesial servant (among other roles) - offers a brief introduction to those books called "the Apocrypha" in this month's Reformation 500 Newsbrief, with particular attention to their use by the church throughout the centuries, and to Martin Luther's regard for them. (Tom's comments also will provide background for why the quotation marks are placed around the word "biblical" in the previous paragraph.)

Well worth reading: both the Apocrypha, and Pastor Lee's Newsbrief. Check out the latter by clicking [here](#).

-Bob Quam

## **[Download it here](#)**

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[Parish Papers for July and August are up on the Website!](#)

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## **New LPA Class - Fall 2016**

### **2016-2018 Lay Pastoral Associate Class Nominations**

Now is the time to consider lifting up individuals with the gifts and skills for the Montana Synod Lay Pastoral Associate program (LPA). The next class will begin in October 2016, but now is the time to be educating those in the congregation about the LPA program, and seeking their commitment.

The congregational meeting is a good opportunity to nominate and support those in your congregation who have the desire and skills to serve as an LPA in the Montana Synod. At this annual meeting the congregation can pray for and, with the guidance of the pastor, recommend individuals to the Bishop for approval.

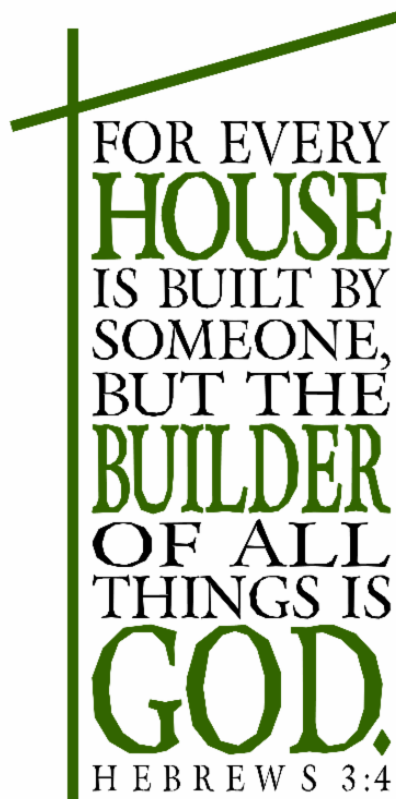
For more information, go to the [Montana Synod website](#) or call Pr. Jason Asselstine, Associate to the Bishop.

## **Interested in becoming an LPA?**

1. Talk to your church pastor. Talk about what it means to fill in for him or her and the traits it takes to provide pastoral leadership (albeit, temporary).
2. If your church does not have a pastor, feel free to contact our office. We'll put you in touch with someone who can shed some light on the role of an LPA.
3. **Have your church pastor contact Bishop Crist or Rev. Jason Asselstine, Assoc. to the Bishop via email or phone call. This contact and conversation will be your pastor's recommendation for your participation in the MT Synod LPA program.**

After approval from the Bishop (to enter the program), please ensure you have the following items to our Synod office at least 3 weeks prior to the class start date (our staff admin person will send you the paperwork to begin the process):

1. Completed biographical, information sheet.
2. Initiation of a required background check
3. First year's payment of \$200 via check made out to "MT Synod" with "LPA training program" in the check's memo section. This can also be brought with you to the 1st group retreat.



The new address for the Synod Office is:

**3125 5th Ave S  
Great Falls, MT 59405**

## Previous news and notes:

### Pews to a good home

Trinity Lutheran Church in Sheridan, WY just remodeled their sanctuary and now have: Three 13' pews, twenty 6' long red pew cushions, and twenty 7' red pew cushions.

If you are interested, call Pastor Phil Wold, 307-672-2411.

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### God's Work, Our Hands

On Sunday, Sept. 11, 2016, congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will again join together for "God's work. Our hands." Sunday. Whether we clean parks and roadways, visit the elderly and homebound or bake cookies and write thank you notes for first responders, this dedicated day of service celebrates the work you do every day and gives us the opportunity to share God's love with all people.

The 2016 "God's work. Our hands." Sunday will also mark the 15-year anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States.

The Rev. Stephen P. Bouman, executive director for ELCA Domestic Mission and former bishop of the ELCA Metropolitan New York Synod at the time of Sept. 11, shares the story of an ELCA pastor who served as a fire department chaplain.

"When the first plane hit the first tower he rushed across the Brooklyn Bridge to the site where firefighters were mustering," said Bouman. "He was asked to anoint the heads of firefighters with oil with the sign of the cross, for those who wanted this baptismal remembrance. They then rushed into the building. Survivors making their way down the smoky stairways remembered those brave rescuers, heads glistening with oily crosses, rushing to rescue, baptized for this

moment."

Reflecting on this, ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton said, "In baptism we have been marked with the cross. We are the ones who go into the broken places of the world. We are the ones who, by showing up on 'God's work. Our hands.' Sunday, shine the light of the cross in our communities."

Now is a good time to begin exploring opportunities for your congregation to participate in "God's work. Our hands." Sunday.

As you begin making plans for the day of service, we ask that you register your congregation. This will help us share and tell stories about the good work that we do together. [Click here to register.](#)

Visit [ELCA.org/dayofservice](http://ELCA.org/dayofservice) where you will find helpful resources for your planning for 2016. This includes an updated study guide designed for congregations to discuss what it means to serve with a joyful heart. You'll also find the 2016 version of the toolkit, bulletin inserts, posters and more. A new worship resource will be available later this spring.

Old Lutheran will once again have T-shirts available for purchase. The bright-yellow shirts provide a wonderful visual impact across the ELCA. The deadline for ordering your congregation's personalized T-shirt with Old Lutheran is Aug. 19.

If it's not possible for your congregation to participate on Sept. 11, please consider another day for your service activities.

Following the 2015 dedicated day of service, the Rev. Jason Adams, pastor of Reformation Lutheran Church in Las Vegas, described what the day meant for his congregation. "Of course, in our vocations we are serving neighbors every day, but when we are serving together, we are growing together as the people of God."

"God's work. Our hands." Sunday celebrates who we are as the ELCA - one church, freed in Christ to love and serve our neighbor. We look forward to doing this work together again this year.

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## 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.

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### **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



NRIT News:

*The following events require pre-registration:*

Our first digital offerings are now available on our website. When you purchase the classes,

you will have access to them throughout 2016 so can offer the class as a multi-session adult study or watch on your personal computer at your convenience.

## **DIGITAL EDUCATION**

### **Learning Our Place: Wilderness and Wonder from a Biblical Perspective**

With Dr. Kathryn Schifferdecker, professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary 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?" Cost of 12 months of access to the class is \$40

### **Syria in the Bible and in the Early Church: A Heritage at Risk**

With Dr. Thomas Lee who served for many years as Lutheran campus pastor at the University of Montana, Missoula, where he also-as a faculty affiliate-taught biblical Hebrew and Aramaic in UM's Religious Studies Department. During the 1980s and into the 1990s he served on the staff of two archaeological projects in the Kingdom of Jordan and one in the Republic of Syria. In recent months we've become aware as well of the tragic loss of Syria's rich cultural heritage at the hands of ISIS and by those who profit from the looting and sale of antiquities. This loss of antiquities and the humanitarian tragedy are not unrelated. As Dr. Amr al-Azm, a former official in the Syrian Ministry of Antiquities who now teaches Middle Eastern History and Archaeology at Shawnee State University in Ohio, reminds us: "A people without a history is a lost people . . . and history without people is meaningless." Not only the Syrians, but we too are deeply invested in Syria's history as evidenced by the bible and in the history of the early church. The loss of Syria's cultural heritage, then, is not only a tragedy for the Syrian people, but a tragedy for us as well. In this NRIT presentation by Tom Lee, we will explore the importance of ancient Syria for the bible and the church and will attempt to convey some sense of the threat posed by the Syrian civil war to our common cultural heritage.

The Cost of the class is \$25. After the percentage taken out by the online registration company, the remaining amount of each registration fee will be sent to the American Schools of Oriental Research for their "Syrian Heritage Initiative." ASOR's "Syrian Heritage Initiative" is committed to assist in whatever ways possible the preservation of antiquities under threat by the Syrian civil war.

*To purchase these classes, go to [www.nrit.org](http://www.nrit.org). Click on the NRIT logo on the upper left side of the page. This will bring you to the NRIT home page. Under the logo, to the right side, click on NRIT Digital Education Store. Then click on the class you would like to access. 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!*

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## **Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp** **Retreats, Events, and Updates:**

*[For additional information about these great upcoming retreats and events, check out our website at \[www.flbc.net\]\(http://www.flbc.net\)! Also, watch for our 2016 Summer Brochure around Christmas! Be sure to register early for your first choice of weeks and programs!](#)*



### **September 2-5: Labor Day Family Camp**

Family, faith, and fellowship on Flathead Lake as summer comes to a close. What could be better? [CLICK HERE](#) for more information!

### **October 7-8: Delegate Retreat & Annual Meeting**

Are you an FLBC delegate or ambassador for your congregation, excited to share the story of this ministry? Mark your calendar! This no cost Delegate Retreat will equip you to serve your congregation as the FLBC connection. On October 8th the retreat concludes with the Annual Meeting/Celebration!



## November 11-13: Crazy About Quilting Retreat

New and experienced quilters alike are welcome at this great retreat! Gather your friends and go crazy with quilting this weekend! [CLICK HERE](#) for more information and to register.

## December 2-4: Family Advent Retreat

You won't want to miss this retreat as we prepare for the coming of Jesus' birth! Give your family or friends the Christmas gift of this retreat by registering today! [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

[Rev. Nathan Clements, Associate Director](#)  
[Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp](#)  
[603 S Main St](#)  
[Kalispell, MT 59901](#)  
[\(406\) 890-5104 \(cell\)](#)

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### Upcoming Events, etc.

#### September

11 God's Work Our Hands

#### October

14-15 Bishop's Convocation

Please put these important dates on your calendar:

**2016 Bishop's Convocation**, October 14, 2016, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Helena, Montana

**2016 First Call Theological Education**: November 7-9, 2016, Great Falls

**2017 Montana Synod Assembly**: June 1-4, 2017, Best Western Heritage Inn, Great Falls

**2017 First Call Theological Education**: November 6-8, 2017, Great Falls

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

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

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

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

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### Amazon Smile

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



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

### Contact Information

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

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