



Montana Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

News of the Week, July 13, 2016

In this issue

[Words from the Bishop](#)

[Travel to Germany with Bishop Crist](#)

[Thinking about Tech](#)

[Looking for Books](#)

[Synod House](#)

[Russian Correspondent, Summer 2016](#)

[July Newsbrief: Luther and the Apocrypha](#)

[GWOH 2016](#)

[NRIT News: Digital Education Update!](#)

[Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[Amazon Smile](#)

Follow Us!



Prayers for July 17, 2016

Ninth Week of Pentecost

Please remember in your prayers this week:

AIM Allen Sasser-Goehner installed as director of Worship and Music at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Missoula.



From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:

St. Paul Lutheran, Fairfield

Grace Lutheran, Fairfield

South-Central Synod of Wisconsin

Words From the Bishop - in response to the shootings in Louisiana, Minnesota, Texas, Michigan



"How long, O Lord, how long?"

Many in our congregations and communities are shocked and saddened by the events of last week. How could this happen? How could this happen again? When will it stop? What can we do? How do we answer the question of "Who is my neighbor?" in light of these events.

Once again, in 2 separate incidents, black men have been shot and killed by police officers. The toxic combination of racism and violence has become all too familiar. The later shooting of numerous police officers at the end of a peaceful rally only raises the tension and despair.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has gone on record opposing racism, and opposing violence, including in the criminal justice system. Yet our reality does not measure up to our ideals. As a denomination, the ELCA ranks at the bottom of almost all church bodies in terms of racial diversity. The explanations are many and various-northern European origins, rural settlements. But the fact remains that plenty of other denominations with similar histories have managed to become far more diverse. We have a problem, and part of the problem is our own racism. We might as well own it.

The United States (and the colonies beforehand) have had a long story of racism, beginning with the Doctrine of Discovery, which declared that non-Christian indigenous peoples were savages with no rights, and that European Christians have a moral obligation to take their land and subdue them. Soon thereafter the first Africans were brought to the Americas as slaves. This country that we love and respect was built on the dehumanizations of the original inhabitants of the land, and the involuntary servitude of millions of others.

Racism isn't simply an attitude of prejudice towards a person of another race. It is prejudice combined with power. Racism, because it is systemic, affects everyone. It affects the people who are in positions of power, and it affects the people who are in positions of powerlessness. It is bigger than all of us. So when there is an all-too-frequent tragic death that involves racism and violence, we are tempted to comb through details, looking for reasons-someone to blame, extenuating circumstances. But the fact remains that there is pattern to these incidents-a pattern of racism and violence. It is a pattern that we can and must break.

As Americans we like to think of ourselves as leaders, with a lot to teach the rest of the world. And we do have things to teach the rest of the world. But we also have things to learn from the rest of the world. It is time to get over our arrogance in thinking we have all the answers. We could learn from South Africa about race relations. We could learn from Canada about justice for indigenous peoples. We could learn from Australia about gun violence.

As Lutheran Christians in the United States, ELCA Lutherans with the least diversity of any US denomination except the National Baptists, we must begin our response to racially motivated violence with deep repentance for our own participation in the history of violence, racism and injustice. We must be involved in healing, but only after confession.

We can demand justice, and we can demand change. But only if we are prepared to engage in it ourselves. Racism and violence are systemic-and we are part of the system that perpetuates itself through racism and violence. We do not have the choice to distance ourselves from the very system in which we all live and work and exercise our Christian callings.

We pray for those who have suffered losses, and who continue to suffer losses. We pray for a change of heart for those who have committed violence and injustice. We pray for healing. And we commit ourselves to change.

One of our Synod Benchmarks is "Promote Unity." Surely this is a time when it is appropriate. Surely this is a time when we must answer the question "Who is my neighbor?" by engaging

with our neighbors, with those who may think differently from us, from those whom we might characterize as "other." Jesus answered the lawyer's question by expanding the idea of neighbor. We can and we must do likewise in our increasingly globalized and interconnected world.

May God have mercy.

Jessica Crist, Bishop

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

Travel to Germany with Bishop Crist

Time to Register!

A Billings travel agent is organizing a Montana Synod trip to Reformation sites in Germany in May, 2017. Information was sent to every congregation, and it has been advertised in our news of the week. Although the trip is more than 9 months away, the agency needs some indication about the interest in the trip, which will be accompanied by Bishop Jessica Crist.

Please read the information below and contact Brian Mathis with questions and indications of interest.

[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.

Now that our office is moved, the phones work, and all our computers talk to each other again (whew) I wanted to give a quick reminder to all congregations in the Montana Synod. I am available to travel to your congregation and consult with anyone interested in future tech needs, or current problems.

Lets schedule a trip if you need help with:

- Web design
- Software questions/training
- Computer trouble
- Social media strategies
- Office networking
- A/V worship needs



Give me a call at the Synod office: 453-1461
Email: cmccarty@montanasynod.org

Montana YAGMs

Three Montana Synod Connected people have been chosen as ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission for the upcoming year, beginning in August.

Erik Bay of Hope Lutheran in Bozeman will serve in the United Kingdom.
e_bay08@hotmail.com.

Sarah Vatne, from Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp will serve in Southern Africa.
sarahvatne@gmail.com.

Savanah Phelan, from Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp will serve in Cambodia.
phelanss@plu.edu.

Please keep these volunteers in your prayers, along with the 84 others serving across the globe. You can keep in touch through email, and sign on to their blogs. You can also help support them. Each volunteer is responsible for raising \$4000. for her or his year.

The Young Adults in Global Mission Program is a gem in the ELCA. Many young adults from the Montana Synod have served over the years. YAGMs deepen their faith and understanding of the world. Some become pastors-and we have several pastors and seminarians in our Synod who are YAGM alums. YAGM alums also serve the world in a variety of other ways. As Lutherans, we are committed to celebrating the gifts of the baptized, wherever they may lead.

Congratulations, YAGMs. And the rest of us, pray for and support these folks. And be thinking about recommending the program to young adults you know.

A request from Pr. Chris Holler-Dinsmore

The Tribal Correctional Facility could use books for their library. We could use novels and mysteries by authors such as Grisham and Erdrich, collections of essays and reflections by people such as Kathleen Norris, Annie Lamont, and adult coloring books and colored pencils as well as puzzle books. Books by Native American authors would be greatly appreciated or about Tribes. Books can be sent to:

Spirit of Life
400 Garfield Street,
Wolf Point 59201

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. Screening will begin July 15th and applications will be accepted until August 31st.

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.

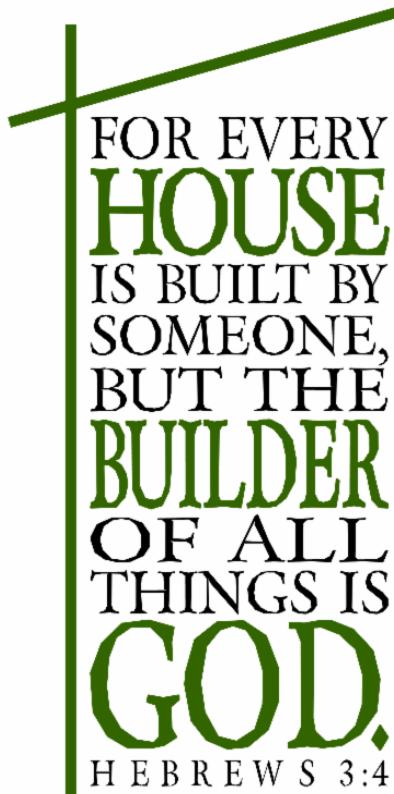
Interested in becoming an LPA?

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



The new address for the Synod Office is:

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

Previous news and notes:

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."

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](#)

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

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 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.

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. 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!

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!](#)



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)

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

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

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)