



**Montana Synod**

**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

## **News of the Week, November 30, 2016**

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## **Prayers for December 4, 2016 Second Sunday of Advent**

### **Please remember in your prayers this week:**

For the family of Pr. Lowell Stordahl, who passed away unexpectedly on Sunday. He previously served in Fairfield and Kalispell.

For the family of LPA Don Bidwell whose mother in law, Millie Vallach, died last week.

For the family of Pr. Frederick W. Reinke, who previously served St. John Lutheran Church in Great Falls.

### **From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:**

First Lutheran, Miles City  
First Lutheran, Lambert  
St. John's Lutheran, Jordan

Immanuel Lutheran Communities, Kalispell

Virginia Synod



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## **Words From the Bishop: Deepen Faith and Witness - Advent: Darkness into Light**

In the Northern Hemisphere the days are getting shorter. Each day the sun comes up later, and sets earlier. I am still driving to work in daylight, but I go home in the dark. The Christmas lights on the houses as I drive home- some garish, some sweet- cheer me as I join the traffic heading across town. I don't know what it is like to spend Advent in the Southern Hemisphere with the days getting longer as Christmas approaches. Maybe some day I will find out visiting one of our companion synods. Until then, I experience Advent as a time of increasing darkness. At least physically.



But there's this light that shines in the darkness, and no matter what, the darkness does not overcome it. It is the light of Christ, coming into the world, shining in spite of the darkness, refusing to give in to despair, to grief, to pain. Advent's darkness reminds us of our need for life-giving light. Without light we cannot survive. A catastrophic event, whether natural or human caused, could block our sunlight and cause life on earth as we know it to cease. That is darkness unto death.

As December plunges us into darkness, we seek God's presence with an intensity that we do not necessarily experience in the summer months. And we wait for God's coming to be among us. We never really know what that will be like, do we? Did the occupied Jews of first century Palestine expect that God would come as a nearly homeless infant, and die as a condemned criminal? Do we recognize Jesus in the stranger, the refugee, the prisoner, the homeless person?

Advent challenges us to seek God, to see the light in the darkness. The people who have walked in darkness shall see a great light. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness shall not overcome it.

Thanks be to God.

Jessica Crist, Bishop

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## Attention: Congregations and Pastors in Transition

We have been informed that the ELCA portal for pastors' RLPs and congregations' MSPs will be unavailable December 15 through January 17.

That means that nobody will be able to post or download. Please be aware of this.

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## 2017 Salary Guidelines

The new Salary guidelines are now available on our website under the Resources tab. They can also be downloaded [here](#).



## Concordia College Christmas Concert

The Concordia Christmas concert will be rebroadcast on Montana PBS stations this year!

Broadcast times are:  
December 24th 8pm  
December 25th 1pm

Concordia College of Minnesota re-imagines the Christmas message with new music embracing peace

and reconciliation under the artistic leadership of composer and conductor Rene Clausen. This concert production marks the 125th Anniversary of the College's founding by Norwegian immigrants. 400 student musicians perform in front of an original mural measuring nearly 200 feet wide.

For more info [click here](#)

Any questions should be directed to Doug Brekke of Big Timber Lutheran. 406-932-5400

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## The Progressive Clergy Network of Montana

The Progressive Clergy Network of Montana (PCNM) is a multi-denominational statewide network of clergy and faith leaders dedicated to the values of equality, justice, and supporting human rights in Montana. The mission of PCNM is to educate and advocate on behalf of progressive issues, as well as provide a support network for clergy in both urban and rural areas. PCNM welcomes faith leaders from all religious backgrounds, denominations, and locations within Montana to connect with each other, share resources, and work together towards creating a powerful faith-led voice in Montana's progressive movement.

Join Us for the Inaugural PCNM Retreat!

PCNM will workshop together, receive training in faith-based advocacy, and shape our mission, vision and voice. Furthermore, we will set our priorities for the 2017 Legislative Session.

Tuesday, December 6th from 10:00am-3:00pm St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Helena Please register for the retreat at:

<https://progressiveclergynetworkmt.com/retreat-registration/>

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## Dear Congregational Leaders,

Your Mission Support helps to fund ministries of the church that no one congregation can do alone. Through it, your congregation is part of all that our church does in Montana and northern Wyoming through the Montana Synod. In addition, the Montana Synod passes on 40% of what it receives to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for its work nationally and throughout the world. Thank you for your partnership in making all the ministries of our church possible!

**Watch for the large envelope from the Montana Synod with the bright pink label on it. Discuss at your next Council meeting. Return your 2017 Mission Support Intent Form by February 1, 2017 in the self-addressed envelope.**

For the coming year 2017 we will be emphasizing the fourth of our Montana Synod's Benchmarks: "Promote Unity". With God's help, we do this in our congregations and also in the ministries of the Montana Synod and the ELCA. In all the expressions of our church, we do God's work together! Thank you for your partnership in our shared ministries through your Mission Support!

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor George Karres  
Director for Evangelical Mission - Montana Synod



**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.

## Midwinter Theological Conference - Izaak Walton Inn Jan 30-Feb 1

These sessions attempt a reading of Paul's letter to the Philippians placed into conversation with ancient love poetry and the writings of the contemporary philosopher of religion, John D.

Caputo. So, what do ancient poems and Caputo have to do with Jesus? Both poetry and Caputo are fierce opponents of philosophy's (and theology's, too!) bad habit of ridding God of mystery and ridding you of that certain something that cannot be named but gets you out of bed in morning. Call it faith. Call it love. Call it hope. Both Paul and Caputo (and me, too) are convinced that the metaphysical God of the philosophers (This is the God you are supposed to explain and defend when you get the question why did God do this? from grieving parishioners) actually gets in the way of faith, hope, love, and longing. But the philosophical, theological, metaphysical God, the God who holds the secret to all of our whys?, is the default setting for so much of our (and I take this word very seriously) talk about God. So these sessions, like Paul's letter to the Philippians itself and Caputo's forty plus year career, are dedicated to the questions How might we have faith? and How might God's name be saved?

Conference starts with supper Monday at 5pm and ends at noon on Wednesday.  
11 Contact hours available.

For more information or to sign up: <http://www.montanasynod.org/nrit>

### \*Adult Study Opportunity

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

We hear about the war in Syria almost every day, but many of us don't know a lot about the history of this country and especially how it relates to the early church. Pr. Tom Lee, a retired pastor and Old Testament Scholar spent time on archeological sites in the middle east and for one summer in Syria. He agreed to sit down with Colter McCarty and record this class on the antiquities in Syria and what they can tell us about our history as Christians. You can access this digital/online hour long class for \$25 and continue to have access for a year. A great opportunity for an ongoing adult study. (Pr. Lee shares reading resources as well.)

*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 purchasing, you will receive access information.*

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## WELCA News

[Click here for the full fall newsletter](#)

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# Montana Synod Winter Youth Gathering 2017

When: February 10-12, 2017

Where: Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Billings, MT.

Cost: \$50 (before January 13) (\$60 after January 13) Adult Leaders Free.

What: A youth Gathering for Jr. & Sr. High youth

Why: To Grow as Disciples of Jesus through togetherness, service, music and fun.

To register your group or for more information Contact Pastor Jason Asselstine at [jasselstine@montanasynod.org](mailto:jasselstine@montanasynod.org) #(406) 453-1461



For more information and to advertise in your congregation:

[Click here for the pdf version of the poster](#)

[Click here for the Microsoft Publisher version](#)

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## Montana Synod House Build

Thank you for your interest in partnering with the synod on this project. By utilizing volunteer labor, we will be able to save upwards of 15% of the building costs. With congregations from across the state participating it will truly be "our house!"

Here is what the project will look like;

We will be working with the ELCA Mission Builders. They have worked on a number of projects in our synod including Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp, Bethel Great Falls and Our Redeemers Helena. You can go to their [elcamissionbuilders.org](http://elcamissionbuilders.org) to find out more about them.

We will be seeking crews to start on June 6th and **expect to finish in early September.**

#### **Make up of crews**

We will be looking for teams of 4 builders and 2 cooks to work each week. The build team will be working under the supervision of the Mission Builder manager and foreman. There will be four mission builders joining the project. The cook team will provide snacks for the crew. Note that safety is key on the jobsite so hardhats and the use of safety equipment will be required.

#### **Work Week**

The work week will begin on Tuesday and end on Saturday. Mission builders works from 7:30am - 4:30 pm. with a morning break and devotions, lunch at noon and an afternoon break.

#### **Housing**

It appears that it would be more cost effective for the volunteers to stay in hotels. RV's and campers could be utilized, the cost at KOA is \$65 per night. It would be great if the congregations of Great Falls could provide some housing for volunteers during the project.

#### **Food**

Each team member will contribute to the food kitty. There will be 4 breakfast and dinner meals, 5 lunches as well as morning and afternoon snacks. The last evening is usually a celebration night where the teams go out together. The suggested contribution is \$40. It would be helpful if once a week a congregation or congregation members could host a meal either in homes or at the church.

#### **Equipment**

When you have registered we will provide you with a list of items you might bring with you.

#### **Expertise**

Through all phases of the build we will be able to utilize the skill level of each member of your team. If there are specific skills needed that will be communicated once we have the building schedule.

#### **Questions?**

Rev. Arne Bergland [arne@ourredeemerlives.org](mailto:arne@ourredeemerlives.org)

[Click here to download the full signup sheet!](#)

FOR EVERY  
**HOUSE**  
IS BUILT BY  
SOMEONE,  
BUT THE  
**BUILDER**  
OF ALL  
THINGS IS  
**GOD.**  
H E B R E W S 3 : 4

The new address for the Synod Office is:

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

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**The Synod Office has a New Address!**

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

**Montana Synod Opportunities:**

**The Luther 5** 

**November Newsbrief: Luther and the Devil**

Our society today has paradoxical views of the devil. On the one hand, we think that we are rational creatures who can explain away any Biblical references to the devil or demon possession by referring to them as a guilty conscience, or physical or mental illness that people in previous centuries did not know how to properly diagnose, and therefore blamed on the devil. On the other hand, we like to scare ourselves with horror movies, and there are legitimately some things that happen in life that we simply can't explain away rationally. In this month's newsbrief, Paul Seastrand takes a look at what Luther thought about the devil. Contrary to the idea of the devil in a red suit with horns and a tail, Luther thought of the devil as a real spiritual presence that worked to tear people away from the true Gospel by using such tools as doubt and temptation. If you've ever had doubts about the baptismal questions which ask us to renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways, then this newsbrief is for you.

## [Download it here](#)

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### Christikon Clips November 2016

#### 2017 Calendar!

The calendar and sessions listing is on our website [www.christikon.org](http://www.christikon.org). It's not too soon to start planning for next summer's trip to camp!

The Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday November 13th at Big Timber Lutheran Church beginning at 3:30pm. Your appointed Delegates and Pastors will be hearing about this past summer and the plans for the 2017 season, cabin renovation, and much more. Thank you to Big Timber Lutheran Church for hosting!

We look forward to seeing you all there!

It is the mission of Christikon to awaken and nurture faith in Christ- exploring God's creation and the adventure of life together.

CHRISTIKON • 1108 24th Street West • Billings, MT 59102  
406 656-1969 • [secretary@christikon.org](mailto:secretary@christikon.org) • [www.christikon.org](http://www.christikon.org)

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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!](#)*



#### 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.

#### January 13-15: Jr. & Sr. High Youth Ski Retreat

Come for an awesome time of food, fellowship, snow games, worship, skiing, and FUN! [CLICK HERE](#) for more information. 1 adult attends for free for every 10 youth!

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

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## [News of the Week Archive](#)

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## Upcoming Events, etc.

**February**  
10-12 Synod Youth Gathering



**Please put these important dates on your calendar:**

**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)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)