



## News of the Week September 29, 2021

### Prayers of the Week

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

For the Confluence Collective in Missoula, a new ministry exploration, starting to meet again this Sunday.

**From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:**

Faith Lutheran Church, Reserve  
Plentywood Lutheran, Church Plentywood  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Nashua

Saint Paul Area Synod



### Words from the Synod Office: Mission Support Update

Pastors, SAMs, and Congregational Leaders:

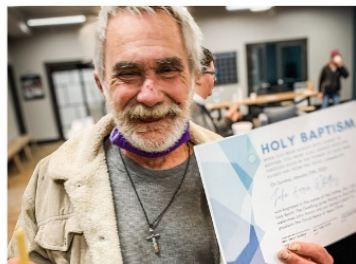
As you approach setting your congregational budget for 2022, be looking for a series of short videos from the Synod office to help to explain and share the story of how your congregation's Mission Support matters. We are producing these videos that you can use with church councils, share during announcements in worship, or make available for your members to watch on their own. There will also be links to the Estimate of Giving Form to indicate the level of Mission Support that your congregation is anticipating to give in 2022. As you begin planning for 2022, please convey the thanks of the ministry partners who receive money each month from the Montana Synod to further their ministry. (I wish that I could share the thank you notes that we receive in the Synod Office each month from the ministry partners who receive a portion of mission support from the Synod.) What your congregation gives to the Synod makes



possible ministries in the Synod and around the whole church.

Have you seen the link yet for the “Stories of Faith in Action” produced by the ELCA? <https://elca.org/SOFIA> Take a look at this website where you can download the print edition or watch/share videos (and consider how you can share this with others in your congregation) to see that even in the last year in the midst of pandemic, ELCA congregations across the country and ministries around the world have been sharing the grace and love of God in a variety of ways! The Mission Support from congregations empowers the church across the country and across the globe to be light and hope for the world.

Thank you! Thank you for the generosity that comes from individuals and families in regular offering to your congregations that sustains the daily ministry in your location. And thank you for the regular and generous gifts of Mission Support that your congregation shares with the Synod that makes possible ministry that drives the engine in and through the wider church.



*Your Mission Support  
at Work*

 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

In the last weeks, you have shared stories of how your congregations have touched your community through actions during your “God’s Work Our Hands” day. Thank you for sharing how you all have been agents of grace and love in your community. From clean ups and painting, putting together school kits and quilting for LWR, and a variety of other activities, Lutherans in the Montana and northern Wyoming Synod have touched others and made a difference! I give thanks to God for the witness and love that you have shared with others through the day of service. And even more, I give thanks to God that your service and generosity does not last for a day but extends through the whole year.

I’ve been involved in several conversations with pastors and leaders around the synod who report that they have been pleased (and relieved) to see the generosity from members and friends of the congregation, including those who join in worship online. A

year and a half ago there were those of us who wondered how congregations would do as worship was shut down and people could not come inside to worship. Now as many congregations are back to worshipping in person (though in some places with somewhat reduced numbers) I’ve heard that stewardship remains strong. Thank you. Thank you for your generosity and for continuing to be supportive of your congregation and its ministry. We have learned that in the midst of such a challenging time, God’s grace continues to sustain God’s people and God’s people have continued to be faithful and generous. We have learned that we can adjust to new circumstances and that joining together, we are stronger and more resilient than we imagined!

Even as I give thanks for the generosity that you continue to share, I also know of congregations and communities around our Synod where people are struggling, where people are facing financial challenges due to the pandemic, drought and a variety of other issues. Even as we pray for one another, please let me remind you to continue to share generously with your congregation because there are those among us who are not able to share as generously at this time. Each week in this publication, a few congregations and a Synod or two are lifted up for our prayers. It is a small gesture that is meant to remind us that we are church, together. What happens in one location affects the rest of us. We, in congregations and across the whole Synod, and in the ELCA are intertwined in a web of relationships and united together through our baptism into Christ and as sisters and brothers in Christ. May we each be strengthened as witnesses and disciples of Jesus the Christ.

Receive this benediction: “May the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ,

the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do God's will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in God's sight; through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (ELW Funeral blessing)

Yours, in Christ,  
Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger  
Director for Evangelical Mission  
in the Northern Wyoming and Montana Synod

**The Montana Synod Staff will be providing a recorded sermon following the lectionary for any interested, especially those congregations currently without a pastor. Check the Synod website every Friday or the Vimeo playlist [here](#). These will be provided every week now through the end of the year.**

## Montana Synod Comings and Goings



### Montana Synod: New Calls

#### Melissa Johansen

Melissa Johansen has been called to American Lutheran in Livingston. She will be ordained in October.

Melissa grew up in a western suburb of Chicago and did her undergrad at Augustana College in Illinois. After receiving a master's degree in social justice from Loyola University, she worked at "Feed my Starving Children," in Aurora, Illinois, serving as a volunteer coordinator for the ministry that sends meals to countries around the world. While there Melissa

became involved in a local church, working on their communications and social ministry.

Through her involvement at the church, Melissa began considering seminary. She was working at a Missouri Synod church and loved what she was doing but wanted to do more, to serve in a more spiritual role. She began seeking out ELCA churches and joined one that helped to open things up for her to say yes to nudges she'd felt to pursue ordained ministry.

Melissa attended Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN and did her internship in Billings, Montana at both Peace Lutheran and St. John's United. Her first call is to American Lutheran where she will be serving half-time while also working half-time as a hospital chaplain in Bozeman.

#### Tim O'Shields

Tim O'Shields serves at Zion Lutheran Church in Fairview. He has been there almost six months.



Tim had a circuitous route to ordained ministry. He said one of his profound memories as a child is praying, “God, don’t make me a preacher. I don’t want to do that.” And as he grew up, he rerouted himself in every other direction.

He is a musician and almost went into full-time music ministry but instead worked as a part-time church musician while following a career in environmental sciences. In time, his career became too demanding and he gave up the church musician role. Tim spent many years in Colorado working for a large environmental testing organization, traveling widely for his job. Ultimately, though, his company was taken over and his job was eliminated. After this happened, Tim said he went through a challenging time of questioning and praying for purpose.



In 2013, he ended up at a church in Albert Lea, MN working as a minister of music and worship which included leading the choirs and serving as the organist. He loved the work but felt that God was telling him that there was something else and he began attending Luther Seminary while keeping his job at the church in Albert Lea.

Tim’s internship was at a downtown church in Spokane which was, he said a very rich experience, serving in a place of high poverty and addiction. After seminary, Tim served a two-point parish before coming to Fairview where he says he’s been welcomed by kind people.

“Finally, the purpose I prayed for is the purpose I have right now,” he said.



### **JP Carlson**

JP Carlson has been called to Lutheran Campus Ministry at Montana State University. He will be working three-quarter’s time in that capacity while also continuing his work as a youth director at Christ the King Lutheran in Bozeman.

He is the son of a Presbyterian Church (USA) pastor and an elementary school music teacher and spent his early childhood days in Bellingham, Washington and his adolescent and teen years in Lakewood. JP and his wife married while attending Whitworth University in Spokane where he graduated with a B.A. in Religion. He received his Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary and soon thereafter was ordained as a Presbyterian Church (USA) pastor.

JP’s wife, Mary Alice Carlson, is a tenured professor at MSU working in the Department of Mathematical Sciences. They are blessed with two children, Madelyn (19 - a sophomore at MSU) and William (14 - a freshman at Gallatin High School). In 2016, Christ the King Lutheran Church (CtK) in Bozeman called JP to serve as their Director of Children’s, Youth and Family Ministries. After recently being called by the Lutheran Campus Ministry Board of Directors, he will now partner with both LCM and CtK in a shared ministry position, serving each community in a part-time capacity.

Thank you to these pastors who have retired in the past few months. We are grateful for your ministry and for your years of service to the Montana Synod:

Pastor Aprille Jordan  
Pastor Steve Schmidt  
Pastor Arne Bergland  
Pastor Barb Gwynn  
Pastor Rand Drollman

## Joplin quilters help train derailment victims

JOPLIN — For the passengers displaced in Saturday's [tragic Amtrak derailment](#), Montana's Hi-Line might have felt like the middle of nowhere. But as they quickly found out, sometimes the best people in the world come from the middle of nowhere.

Look no further than the Quilting Ladies of Joplin, which formed in 1967. They range in age from 72 to 92 and meet every Tuesday at the Bethel Lutheran church for friendship, fellowship and quilting.



[Read the full story here](#)

**As of October 4th the Synod Staff will begin traveling for essential reasons only.**

**Also, masks are required in the Synod office and we ask that if you plan to come into the building for longer than a drop off, that you are vaccinated.**

**The Synod Office will be staffed, so please always feel free to contact us by phone or email.**

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