



News of the Week November 10, 2021

Prayers of the Week

Please remember in your prayers this week:

Prayers of celebration for St. Johns Lutheran in Helena celebrating their 126 year anniversary last week.

Prayers of thanksgiving for Pastor Melissa Johansen who will be installed at American Lutheran in Livingston this Sunday.



From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:

First English Lutheran Church, Bainville
First Lutheran Church, Wolf Point
Spirit of Life Lutheran Church, Poplar

Southeastern Iowa Synod

Words from the Bishop - Assumptions

Dear Friends in Christ,

Over the past several weeks, as part of the Montana/N.Wy Synod's work seeking racial justice through our emerging task force, I participated in a five-session training presented by Common Good Missoula entitled "Wrestling with the Truth of Colonization." During this time, I listened, learned, wrestled and was challenged to see, hear, and live into new ways of being in relationship with my Indigenous neighbors. And although it was not often a "feel-good" experience for me, the time I spent



learning, listening, wrestling and being challenged was worth every second and I am grateful for the possibility of entering into new relationships.

Something I had to wrestle with during these weeks were my own assumptions...about historical practices, about contemporary realities, about Indigenous people's experiences as well as the experiences of my colleagues with whom I was learning. For example, one way I was challenged involved my assumptions that due to the traumas they've experienced for so long, Indigenous people are simply and only victims who only want to be treated that way by overly protective allies. I heard a different story that proved my assumptions wrong.

I heard that my Indigenous neighbors want to be treated as human beings with personhood, dignity, and worth, as well as persons with their own ideas and plans for their healing and recovery. I heard that what they don't want is to be pathologized, patronized, and permanently victimized. I heard that while the trauma, suffering, and the other consequences of oppression are very real for them and while truth-telling heard with my honest and open ears and wrestled with in my heart is crucial, what is ultimately hoped for -- eventually, after the hard work of repentance (change of mind, heart, spirit and action) is well underway -- is to work as partners to move forward in building healing relationships together with one another and with the land.

Now, I had heard all this before and had accepted it in my head. But this time it stuck in my heart and spirit and forced me to ask myself how I will choose to behave differently, beyond my assumptions, toward and with the many Indigenous people who are seeking healing and wholeness for themselves. As I wrestled with my assumptions, I was reminded of three important truths:

1. You only know what you know.
2. You don't know what you don't know.
3. You all too often don't know what you think you know.

These truths point to a spirit of listening and learning from multiple voices that often seems to be missing in our culture consumed with assumptions. If we're honest with ourselves, we see that we invest a lot of time in assuming we know the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We assume facts not in evidence and evidence that is not fact. We assume we know what other people are thinking, feeling, intending, or experiencing, either choosing to lay blame on them or claiming their thoughts, motives, or feelings on their behalf without asking them. We also assume that because one person from one group feels or experiences something in a particular way, others we put in that group experience life the same way. (Stereotyping.)

And we make these assumptions of all sorts of people – friends, family, neighbors, strangers, political leaders, celebrities, pastors, lay people, bishops, victims, oppressors, identity groups and those we've declared enemies. Anybody, (including ourselves) can be imprisoned by our assumptions, trapped by our unwillingness to listen and learn. I know I have been guilty of this and for that I am sorry.

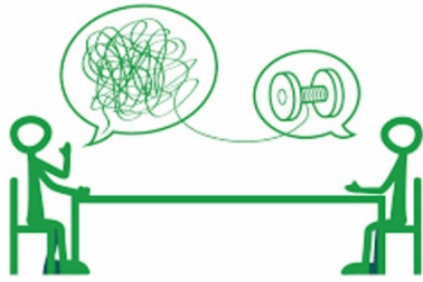
“But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.” (Eph 4:15-16)

The training I attended in the past weeks has reminded me once again how important it is for me to not only speak the truth, but to do so in love and with respect. And even more importantly, perhaps, to listen with love and respect, opening my mind, heart, and spirit to learn what another is actually saying, meaning, wanting or doing rather assuming I already know. Hopefully, in Christ, others will speak and listen to me in the same way, with respect and love, so that together we may grow up into Christ and build up the body of Christ rather than tear it down by our assumptions.

May God bless and keep you in love and truth this week!

Bishop Laurie

Coach's Corner



Coaching, to me, is a process and tool that helps me become more of who I want to be, in my life, in my relationships, in my vocation. The process draws on answers within me to guide goal oriented actions.

Not a mentor telling me what to do or a therapist telling me how to feel, coaching provides space for me to discover and decide where I want to go and how to get there.

I have been amazed at what coaching has helped me accomplish in all aspects of my life.

The coaching process has benefited my career, my relationships, and my mental health. It has taken me places I simply would not have gotten to on my own.



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.

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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