



**Montana Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

The Season of Epiphany, 2016

Dear Congregations of the Montana Synod,

*“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.”*  
*(I Corinthians 12: 12)*

On behalf of the Montana Synod, I greet you at the time of your annual meeting. Thank you for your service to God and neighbor in your community and beyond. Across our territory Lutherans are preaching the Gospel and serving our neighbors. Whether it is through participating in “God’s Work. Our Hands.” Sunday, or through ongoing cooperative ministries, ELCA congregations are making a difference. Thank you.

Together we are members of the Body of Christ. An annual meeting is a time when a congregation sets its priorities and directions for the upcoming year. It is also a time when a congregation has an opportunity to review its ministries, including the ministries of the larger church, the body of which we are all members. I want to let you know about a few of those ministries.

In 2015, the ELCA reached our goal of raising \$15 million dollars to eradicate malaria in Africa. Through your noisy offerings, your special appeals and your individual and regular giving, you helped make that a reality. Although the campaign will end on January 31, we will continue to fight malaria through our World Hunger program.

In 2015, the Montana Synod reached the half-way mark in our fundraising for the new Synod House. Many congregations and individuals have stepped up to be a part of the process.

In 2015, we received a new congregation into the Synod, New Hope in Great Falls. And the Synod Assembly voted to become part of Intermountain Children’s Home, a faith-based agency for children. The Assembly also re-affirmed our participation in the Montana Association of Christians, and renewed our 20-year-old agreement with the Montana Association of Jewish Communities.

What is on the horizon for 2016? We are gearing up for the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. A team is working hard to produce resources, and our 2016 Assembly will focus on the Reformation. We are looking at some new ministries in the Synod, including partnership with Friendship House on the south side of Billings. We hope to complete fundraising and begin our building. We are invigorating Synod youth ministry, and our companion synod committees. And we are offering congregations a comprehensive ministry review. You make all this and more possible. Thank you.

*“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.”*  
*(I Corinthians 12: 12)*

Jessica Crist, Bishop