



Montana Synod Weekly Announcements March 14, 2022

Update from Pr. Bradn Buerkle, Missionary in Russia

Greetings from the Buerkle family, temporarily located in Istanbul!

This opening line to a note wouldn't have seemed realistic to me even 10 days ago. That Russia might start an all-out war (rather than the territory grabs that have been its pattern in regional conflicts over the past 15 years) seemed like the worst possible (and a very unlikely) scenario at that time. Obviously we were mistaken; the quick deterioration of the situation placed before us a difficult decision - to risk remaining in the country or to risk leaving. Each of these options come with great consequences for our ministry and for our family. Prayers and encouragement from those who cared about us eventually led us to decide that we did need to leave, and to do so very quickly. With the help of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Saxony (for which I work) and the ELCA (which also supports ministries in Lutheran churches of the former Soviet Union) we were able to evacuate on Friday, March 4.

In the last week we have started to get over our shock, and are taking steps to determine next steps, leading us likely either to Germany or the United States. We hope that visa-related issues will be resolved soon, but in the meantime... there are certainly worse places to be stuck. The poor weather and our generally anxious state have hindered us from enjoying this fascinating city (and Martin's birthday earlier this week...soon to be followed by Lukas') as much as we would otherwise, but we still count it a blessing to be here. To the degree to which it is possible, the kids try to keep up on whatever homework we can do online, and I am thankful that WhatsApp and Zoom are still working (so far, at least) worldwide, which helps us maintain our personal contacts and remain engaged in ministry. Earlier this week I was particularly touched when our weekly text study group had participants from Odessa, Crimea, various regions of Russia...and, this time, from Turkey, too. As we discovered in our discussion, Lenten themes are particularly relevant this year, wherever we are...

Many thanks to each and every one of you who has offered us help. Prayers are welcome; unless any of you happen to be in Istanbul with winter clothes (we rather overestimated the temperatures we would encounter here!... but just kidding about the clothes, we'll be fine) it is hard to know what else might be done for us personally.

In the meantime, please be generous to those who help refugees; you can donate, for example, [here](#):

Additionally, please use your voices both to speak out against war and to speak up for those who are unjustly demonized because of their citizenship or ethnicity. While their politicians' actions have caused shame, suffering from millions of people, and long-term damage to the world community and their place in it, by distancing ourselves from ordinary people of Russian background we would do nothing to encourage peace and justice. In a similar way to how the world has properly shown solidarity to those suffering in Ukraine, I find it important that we not abandon those in Russia who are working for a healthier society through strengthening of spiritual community. Each of us – whatever country we live in – are to a degree complicit in political, military, and economic systems that cause great harm. With time I hope that bridges can be rebuilt and understanding deepened as we realize together that we all have room to grow when it comes to resisting tyranny in its multiple forms.

I look forward to continuing to be in touch.

Montana Jewish Project presents:

Passover and Easter: An Imaginative Journey

Montana Jews and Christians in Conversation

Rabbi Mark Kula
currently serves Jewish
communities around the West.

Rev. Jessica Crist
retired Bishop of the Montana
Synod of the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America.

Sunday, April 3,
2022
4-5pm MT

Virtual on zoom
Register at:
<https://bit.ly/PassoverMJP>



Report to the Bishop Reminder

Pastoral leaders! Please remember to fill out your report to the Bishop!
You can [find the form here](#)



Time to register for the Chico Hot Springs Pastoral Conference!

[Click here](#) to go to the registration page and to find out speaker and registration info, as well as instructions on how to make sure you have a room at Chico!

You will need to reserve your room at Chico separately from the conference registration!
Room reservations can be [made here](#).

Nadia Bolz-Weber Lecture

April 6, 2022, 7pm
Petro Hall of the MSUB Student Union Building
Billings, MT

Sponsored by United Campus Ministry at MSU Billings, MSUB Women and Gender Studies, and the Rocky Mountain College's Wheatley Lectures, the Rev. Bolz-Weber will present on her book *Shameless: A Sexual Reformation* which reminds us that sexual flourishing can and should be for all genders, all bodies, and all humans. Methodist Bishop Karen Oliveto will be hosting a conversation with Rev. Bolz-Weber following the presentation and a Q&A will follow along with a book signing. Copies of *Shameless* will be sold by the MSUB Bookstore. Tickets to the event are free.

Please register here: https://billingsgrace.breezechms.com/form/nadiabolz-weberlecture?fbclid=IwAR3vrw-r3b2njCdh2AqeB8cd_mzV4TJoMuMooPTJvkASCiyh63j34if64Bo

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IS YOUR FAMILY INTERESTED IN ADOPTION?



St. John's United Family Services invites families to learn more about adoption and our program eligibility.



St. John's United

FAMILY SERVICES

Contact Lori at

406-586-2486

or lkopp@sjlm.org to learn more.

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