

# Minutes

Montana Synod Council  
19 February 2021 – ZOOM Electronic Meeting

Present: Bishop Laurie Jungling, Vice President Dick Deschamps, Treasurer Sue Ost, Secretary Amanda Liggett, Allen Hansen, Rev. Anna Merritt, Rev. Peter Erickson, John Sheppard, Robin Matthews, Kristi Lobdell, Rev. Doris Tollefson, Rev. Jessie Obrecht, Kevin Johnson, Rev. Gretchen Wagner, Associate to the Bishop Jason Asselstine, DEM Peggy Paugh Leuzinger, and Colter McCarty.

Guests: Rev. Eric Huseeth, Patrick Miller, and Rev. Stacey Heggem.

Absent: Mary Hutchinson and Evan Ceaicovschi.

*Bishop Laurie Jungling welcomed the council.*

*Robin Matthews led the council in a devotion. Those present were invited to share updates about their lives.*

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Vice President Deschamps called the Montana Synod Council to order at 9:23 a.m.

## **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Motion

Second: Adopt the agenda with the privilege of the chair to revise.

### **SC21.02.01**

**VOTE: ADOPT THE AGENDA WITH THE PRIVILEGE OF THE CHAIR TO REVISE.**

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion

Second: Approve the minutes of the January 2021 meeting.

### **SC21.02.02**

**VOTE: APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 2021 MEETING.**

## **REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

Treasurer Sue Ost shared her report with the council.\*

Motion

Second: Accept the Treasurer's report as presented.

### **SC21.02.03**

**VOTE: ACCEPT THE TREASURER'S REPORT AS PRESENTED.**

The money from the PPP loan will be an issue for discussion in the future, once the loan is forgiven.

## **REPORT OF THE ELCA CHURCH COUNCIL**

Loni Taylor offered a report and greetings on behalf of the ELCA Church Council.

Future Church Design was affirmed by the Church Council at the fall 2020 meeting. It restructured the churchwide organization and emphasized the need for members, congregations, synods and churchwide to work together.

Guidelines for what it means to be a “sanctuary” church body will be presented to the Church Council at their next meeting in March. The Government and Civic Engagement social statement was released last summer. A task force is working on this at the moment. The Youth Gathering will be July 24-28, 2022 in Minneapolis. They are hoping that this and the churchwide assembly will be in-person events.

#### **CONGREGATION UPDATE ON OUR SAVIOUR’S – BOX ELDER/ROCKY BOY**

Loni Taylor also shared her perspective of how things are going at Our Saviour’s. She reported that there has been a lot of loss this past year, but they surround one another with care. They have a new pastor and are grateful to have communion again. They had to postpone their 100 year celebration because of the pandemic, and so will celebrate 101 years this year (perhaps in late August/ early September). She also shared a description of the campus of the congregation and how they have been using their buildings to benefit the whole community, including housing people who needed a place to quarantine. They hope to be able to provide a safer parsonage for the pastor.

In order to call their new pastor, they applied for and received a grant in the amount of \$30,000 from the ELCA. They formerly raised funds through summer retreats, but that model is going to change. The Bishop proposes that as a synod we increase our support, noting that connections need to be built with synod congregations.

#### **REPORT OF THE BISHOP**

Bishop Jungling offered her report.\* She noted especially that the first call process has changed significantly. Visions and Expectations has gone away, and they are using instead Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline. This too is being updated to fit the times. One example of an addition is that there will be a mechanism to discipline leaders who “misbehave” on social media. The synod can’t discipline members, but can discipline congregations.

#### **REPORT OF THE ASSOCIATE TO THE BISHOP**

Pastor Asselstine offered his report.\* They will be offering LPA retreats over ZOOM. They are trying hard to make it easier for students to get materials.

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR EVANGELICAL MISSION**

Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger offered her report.\* In addition to what is in her report, she added that the Faithful Innovation process is going well. The first cohort of congregations are meeting and the second training is scheduled for next month. She is working to recruit congregations for the second cohort. The vitality task force has also been meeting. Coaching is becoming an important part of what the synod does to walk with leaders. A new coaches training is coming up, and they are expected to adhere to covenants and expectations for behavior in their coaching.

Council members are invited to contact the DEM should you know of anyone who has an idea for a creative new ministry. Freedom in Christ Prison Ministries is working with technology to be in relationship with the inmates, as Pastor Nedbalek is not allowed inside the prison at this

time due to the pandemic. Confluence Collective in Missoula is essentially on hold at the moment.

Motion

Second: Appoint Marilyn Hall as the Montana Synod coaching coordinator as a volunteer position for a two-and-a-half-year term (through June of 2023).

**SC21.02.04**

**VOTE: APPOINT MARILYN HALL AS THE MONTANA SYNOD COACHING COORDINATOR AS A VOLUNTEER POSITION FOR A TWO-AND-A-HALF-YEAR TERM (THROUGH JUNE OF 2023).**

**REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT/EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

VP Deschamps offered his report, as well as that of the executive committee.\* He reiterated his thank you to the council and the staff. He is excited about how we are moving to collaborate and include people and congregations in the decision-making process of the synod.

**STEWARDSHIP TASK FORCE**

Dennis Trotter and DEM Peggy Paugh Leuzinger gave the council an update on the stewardship task force.\* They meet nearly monthly to think about how to be more strategic and intentional about stewardship, to stabilize mission support and to help congregations in their own stewardship work. Dennis put together a calendar for Peggy to help her organize her monthly activities.

Dennis described what “crowdfunding” might look like for the synod. One trend in philanthropic giving is that people aren’t going to give automatically to organizations. Instead, they like to be connected directly with individuals through things like social media. This is best accomplished by focusing on a single ministry or initiative with a specific stated goal, held over a given period of time (usually not more than one week). Over time, you learn what people really respond to and can begin to target specific givers to specific ministries. This process builds momentum.

The task force recommends pursuing two fundraisers this year, beginning with Our Saviour’s Rocky Boy.

Motion

Second: Approve and support the Stewardship Task Force in pursuing a crowdfunding platform for ministry fundraising.

**SC21.02.05**

**VOTE: APPROVE AND SUPPORT THE STEWARDSHIP TASK FORCE IN PURSUING A CROWDFUNDING PLATFORM FOR MINISTRY FUNDRAISING.**

Motion

Second: Receive the report of the Stewardship Task Force.

**SC21.02.06**

**VOTE: RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE STEWARDSHIP TASK FORCE.**

**PRESENTATION OF THE BUDGET**

Treasurer Ost presented the budgets for 2021 and 2022.\*

- 2021 Budget

Motion

Second: Approve the revisions to the 2021 budget.

**SC21.02.05**

**VOTE: APPROVE THE REVISIONS TO THE 2021 BUDGET.**

- 2022 Budget

Motion

Second: Recommend the 2022 budget to the Synod Assembly.

**SC21.02.06**

**VOTE: RECOMMEND THE 2022 BUDGET TO THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY.**

### **RACIAL JUSTICE AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY**

Rev. Stacey Heggem shared an update on the RJCC task force. The council was sent a video presentation and report ahead of time for review. Stacey walked the council through the very detailed strategy steps and the process they have engaged in so far. The priority at the moment is funding for the advisory team, so that we don't take advantage of them for their time. She sent a budget proposal\* and walked us through her thought process in how she came to those numbers. It was suggested that the synod could seed some money and grants be applied for.

Motion

Second: Use the money from the Rudyard Lutheran Church telephone cooperative capital credits to support the Racial Justice Task Force.

**SC21.02.07**

**VOTE: USE THE MONEY FROM THE RUDYARD LUTHERAN CHURCH TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE CAPITAL CREDITS TO SUPPORT THE RACIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE.**

### **CARE FOR CREATION AND RESPOND TO CHANGING CLIMATE**

Rev. Eric Huseth and Patrick Miller gave the council an update on this task force. They highlighted that they have been impressed with the group they have put together, even in spite of the particular challenges of the past year. They have sifted through a lot in defining the mission of the task force, putting much energy and stock into the synod assembly. That it will be a virtual assembly threw a curve ball at them in terms of their plans. Their goal is to highlight how Montanans of all walks of life work to protect the climate and point to where we want to be. Building bridges and inviting people to join are two areas of focus. They hope to put together a liturgy, which introduces new textual readings designed to replace some of the "bread of life" sequence in year B.

Motion

Second: Accept the reports of the Racial Justice Task Force and Care for Creation Task Force.

**SC21.02.07**

**VOTE: ACCEPT THE REPORTS OF THE RACIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE AND CARE FOR CREATION TASK FORCE.**

## SYNOD ASSEMBLY

The council went through the plans for the upcoming assembly.

- Action on Council Resolution of holding the Assembly by virtual means. This needs a 2/3rds vote to be approved. The vote was unanimous.\*

Motion

Second: Approve the council resolution for holding the assembly by virtual means.

**SC21.02.08**

**VOTE: APPROVE THE COUNCIL RESOLUTION FOR HOLDING THE ASSEMBLY BY VIRTUAL MEANS.**

- Official request to Bethel in Great Falls to use their space 5/31-6/5

Motion

Second: Request that the congregational council of Bethel Lutheran Church, Great Falls, allow the synod to use the main church building for the virtual Synod Assembly beginning June 1 and ending June 5, 2021. The synod will pay any expenses associated with the use of the building and offer a building use honorarium of \$1000.

**SC21.02.09**

**VOTE: REQUEST THAT THE CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL OF BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH, GREAT FALLS, ALLOW THE SYNOD TO USE THE MAIN CHURCH BUILDING FOR THE VIRTUAL SYNOD ASSEMBLY BEGINNING JUNE 1 AND ENDING JUNE 5, 2021. THE SYNOD WILL PAY ANY EXPENSES ASSOCIATED WITH THE USE OF THE BUILDING AND OFFER A BUILDING USE HONORARIUM OF \$1000.**

- Approval of Synod Assembly Agenda

Motion

Second: Approve the agenda of the Synod Assembly with the privilege to modify.

**SC21.02.10**

**VOTE: APPROVE THE AGENDA OF THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY WITH THE PRIVILEGE TO MODIFY.**

- Rules of the Assembly\* – The rules of the assembly were presented, including the modifications concerning virtual meetings. A concern was raised regarding whether delegates can be substituted. Especially if a delegate does not have the technological capabilities, congregations can appoint new delegates. In this situation, if there are last minute changes, we will simply do our best to accommodate people. Plenaries will be opened with a “vote” for credentialing purposes. We will strongly encourage that only very necessary resolutions be allowed.

Motion

Second: Accept the rules of the assembly as written with the option of modifications.

### **SC21.02.11**

#### **VOTE: ACCEPT THE RULES OF THE ASSEMBLY AS WRITTEN WITH THE OPTION OF MODIFICATIONS.**

- Technological Logistics – Colter McCarty reported on the technology preparations for the assembly.
  - We will be using E-Ballot, which is priced according to the number of voters you are expecting.
  - We need a co-host for the ZOOM meeting, should the host drop out for any reason (for example, a power outage). The cohost needs to know how to reinitiate the stream and what to say to people in the event of a power loss.
    - John Sheppard volunteered to do this, saying that he would most likely attend the assembly from the university to ensure a good connection.
  - A council member from the elections committee (and one non-council member) is needed to be present on site to assist the Bishop and to help the elections and voting move forward. This person would have hosting abilities in ZOOM to help people come online to speak and to dismiss them from the meeting when they are finished. This person would also make sure the Bishop has what she needs on a screen to know who people are and what they intend to speak on.
    - Several people volunteered. (Kristi, Allen, Anna, Robin, Jessie).
  - Colter will also be looking for two or three people to do live tech support. They don't have to travel to Great Falls, but must be willing to be on call and help anyone with questions (Kristi).
- Synod Assembly Offering –

#### **Motion**

Second: Designate the Synod Assembly Offering to First Call Theological Education, Care for Creation Task Force and Racial Justice Task Force (divided into thirds).

### **SC21.02.12**

#### **VOTE: DESIGNATE THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY OFFERING TO FIRST CALL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION, CARE FOR CREATION TASK FORCE AND RACIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE (DIVIDED INTO THIRDS).**

### **NEW BUSINESS**

- Consent Agenda

#### **Roster Issues:**

*On Leave From Call:* Pastor Kristi Bummer

#### **Appointments to Ongoing Committees:**

*Hetzel Foundation:* Pastor Elizabeth Liggett for Term #2 and Pastor Seth Nelson for Term #1

#### **Approval of Upcoming Synod Council Meeting Date:**

February 18-19, 2022, Great Falls

Motion

Second: Approve the consent agenda.

**SC21.02.13**

**VOTE: APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA.**

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Motion

Second: Set a synod council meeting for June 2, 2021 beginning at 5:30pm.

**SC21.02.14**

**VOTE: SET A SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING FOR JUNE 2, 2021 BEGINNING AT 5:30PM.**

*The council closed with a devotion from Robin Matthews.*

Bishop Jungling adjourned the meeting at 12 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Amanda Liggett

Secretary, Montana Synod

**Synod Council Meetings**

--April\_\_\_\_\_, 2021 (ZOOM)

-- June 2, 2021, (ZOOM)

--September 17-18, 2021 Great Falls

-- February 18-19, 2022, Great Falls

-- June 3, 2022, Billings

-- September 23-24, 2022, Great Falls

**Assembly**

--June 4-5, 2021, Virtual

\* Addendums

Treasurer's Report February 19, 2021

2020 Financial Reports

Mission Support came in at \$906,269.82 – compared to our budget of \$975,000. This is the lowest it's ever been, but our expenses have been low also. Our income exceeded our expenses by \$23,010.46.

Lower expenses occurred mostly in Travel and Administrative areas.

\$3,120.96 was received as a "gift" – this was a cash out of capital credits from Triangle Telephone Cooperative. When the church in Rudyard closed a few years ago, they signed over their capital credits to the Synod. Capital Credits are a share (because Triangle is a cooperative) of the profit based on the monthly bill of the church over time. Since the church doesn't have an account any longer, the value of the credits was actually decreasing, so it seemed like we should cash it out and use those funds. Now we need to decide how to do that: we can leave it as part of our cash reserve (it's part of the \$23,000 I mentioned above, income exceeding expenses), we can move the cash to one of our Restricted accounts, such as Stewardship Growth to continue paying Dennis Trotter as our consultant, or for a new Restricted account to fund our Racism and Social Justice Task Force. These are just some ideas, and an area for discussion.

PPP Loan forgiveness application has been submitted, not granted yet. ELCA Credit Union (our lender) is very busy processing applications for the second round of PPP Loans so it might be a little while before they process our forgiveness application. No reason to think it will not be granted. Currently we see that amount in Cash and Notes Payable on the balance sheet. \$62,662.50.

Sue Ost

Treasurer

#### REVISIONS TO 2021 BUDGET

Let's talk about expenses first.

Moved \$5,000 from the seminaries to Rocky Boy – per Bishop's and officers' recommendation. Region I FSO is updated per their budget.

Payroll – all were approved at a 2% raise. Bishop's wish is for Candi to be at \$17/hr in one more year, thus a raise of \$.79 this year and \$.80 next year to get her there. My thoughts on this: \$17 is a more fair wage for the work Candi is doing, and we want to keep her. Also, when

a person making \$50,000 a year gets a 2% raise, it is \$1,000. When a person making \$30,000 gets the same percentage, it's only \$600 – so the disparity between the lowest and highest paid employees gets bigger every year. This proposal gives Candi a little over \$1600 in each year 2021 and 2022. In the big scheme of things, not that much, but for Candi it will make a big difference.

Pension/Medical – Newer, more accurate estimates for 2021.

Workers Comp – Adjusted based on 2020 actual

Continuing Ed – Bishop to \$600 and Jason back to \$700.

Editor Honorarium – Jenny is doing a little more than last year, so increased to cover that.

Travel – I tried to average 2019 and 2020 actuals – we will be traveling more than 2020, but not as much as we previously did.

Postage/Telephone – adjusted based on 2020 actual.



Cell Phone Allowance – Bishop (\$60) and Jason (\$130) same, Colter from \$10/month to \$60/month and Candi from \$0 to \$20/month, since they are both doing more work remotely – especially Colter – and using their personal phones for work.

These changes result in a balanced budget IF we make the revised Mission Support income \$950,000 – a decrease of \$15,000 over what was approved for 2021. Is this reasonable? We need to discuss, have faith, but also be realistic and have a balanced budget.

#### 2022 Proposed Budget

Expenses pretty much the same. Staff (except Candi) will have a 1% raise, and I estimated an 8% increase in Pension/Medical.

Eased Travel up a bit over 2021, thinking we will be doing more in the future than in 2020 or 2021.

A negative \$2500 at the bottom – this is using \$965,000 for the Mission Support estimate. Is this reasonable? Is it realistic? If we cut this income amount, which expenses will we cut to make a balanced budget?

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#### Bishop's Report

Rev. Laurie Jungling

Synod Council (Zoom)

February 19, 2020 (one day)

What new normal?

I've been bishop for 15 years and my term is up...at least according to one of the synod pastors! And I'm feeling it. In September, I talked about the constantly changing new normal. But really there is no "normal" yet; just a lot of change, learning, challenge, struggle, risk-taking and exhaustion among our leaders, congregations, ministries, and church.

But God is in the midst of this dark night of frustration and exhaustion. God is our anchor in the midst of the storm that is just beginning to calm. God is providing hope, that light at the end of the tunnel which is still small but growing bigger each day. God is filling us with steadfast and never-ending love which in-spirits us to keep on stepping forward to care for, serve and love our neighbors.

God is renewing us in the life of Christ, transforming and transfiguring us into the body of Christ and into followers of Christ we are called to be. Only in trusting in the new life of Christ can we as a Church and a synod move through the transition and into the transformation that God wants for us. Only in faith, hope and love can we take the faithful risks necessary to be the Montana/NWY synod together as followers of Christ.

Where are we in February in our life as the Church, both as the ELCA and the MT Synod?

Churchwide. Please note that Loni Taylor, one of the Region 1 CW Council reps will be offering a report on churchwide happenings as well. Much of the remaining staff at Churchwide office continue to work from home, though they are gathering frequently via zoom as they seek to implement the transitions effected by the new Future Church process. (See below) Nearly every activity, including most synod assemblies, bishop's elections, the March COB meeting in two weeks, and other work of the various parts of the CWO is happening online through zoom and other formats. We've now moved to MS Teams, lots of Teams, a better format mostly. Less emails.

The 66 bishops + continue to gather every week for learning, discussion, and updates from around the Church which allows for more interaction and relationship building. I continue to meet with my Region 1 colleagues every week for support and ideas, including ways the synods

can partner in doing work together. Already the bishops and synods are collaborating more instead of living in our own spaces.

Things that have happened or are happening at the CW level:

1. Future Church strategy: the “paradigm-shifting” process is underway at the churchwide level. Staffing changes have been made, though the number of cuts were not as extensive as originally thought. Still, some were informed in November that they would be losing their jobs in February and given a good 6 month transition package. Not only were there cuts but the Churchwide office structure has been redesigned to function more efficiently and with fewer silos. A change in culture is being attempted in how the Churchwide expression of the ELCA functions in relation to the other expressions, synod and congregation, with the hopes that there will be leveling of engagement and a new openness to innovation. Time will tell what will emerge from these transitions. One thing that did not change is the DEM position which will stay in place at least through 2022 and probably longer. Conversations will continue about whether the DEM will stand under the synod or Churchwide umbrella. But the DEM will stay with us for the next few years.

2. The new First Call process I mentioned in September has been constructed and took effect Feb. 1. While we are still learning and experimenting, it looks and feels like a better process than what existed before. It does require more investment by the bishops and A2B’s with the candidates coming through the synod’s candidacy process but this allows deeper relationships to be formed.

3. The ELCA Church council has taken on the responsibility, through its committee on appeals, to update the Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline for Rostered Leaders, Congregations and Members. As you may have heard, Visions and Expectations went away last March and is no longer being used to discipline misbehaving pastors (it never should have been used that way in the first place.) Definitions and Guidelines has existed from near the beginning of the ELCA but rarely known or used. Now it is being brought into the 21 st century with some serious upgrades. The final product will be voted on by the Churchwide Council hopefully sometime this Spring. It will be used to guide the behavior of not only rostered pastors and deacons but also LPAs, congregations and members of congregations when the need for discipline arrives.

The Synod: we continue to respond to the needs of the congregations, ministries, and leaders (pastors, deacons, LPA’s directors of ministries, etc.) with the desire to empower and encourage their thriving and vitality. Exhaustion and frustration, both from doing ministry during the pandemic and engaging their congregations in the midst of the strife surrounding the election and post-election, is real among our leaders and they are anxious and depressed, particularly as they deal with individuals causing dissension in the congregation. Still the fights over masks, fellowship, and worship continue!

Congregations and pastors are struggling to discern their direction, wondering what it means to be Church and pastoral leaders during this time of “vaccinated ministry” as vaccines are in that “already, not yet” stage. Although our LPAs continue to serve as pulpit supply and support for congregations without pastors, they too are feeling the stress in their own congregations and others they serve.

As we move into a more stable place through vaccinations (hopefully), I have concerns about our pastoral leaders and how they will weather the transitions they face in the next couple of months and years. Some recognize the opportunities to explore the new, vital, and thriving ways of being church and will be our innovators and leaders. Others may burn out, experience caregiver crash, or need mental and emotional care which is hard to find in MT/WY. I wonder if the congregational transitions and requests for on leave from call will increase in the short-term; and there will be some who choose to leave the ministry altogether. This may create an even deeper shortage of pastors. The LPA program may become a more important resource in this synod and

so we are doing some rethinking about the training that program provides to better prepare our LPAs for the transitions ahead.

Ministries in the synod: The Bible Camps have found a way to make it work this year and people have stepped up to help financially through generous gifts. FLBC purchased a new piece of land adjacent to the camp which will protect the camp's interests. Both plan to go back to full-time programming this summer, though no doubt with some Covid protections in place. Campus ministries are also hanging in there, with student activities happening throughout the fall and into the winter. While Emmaus seems to be holding its own financially, MSU campus ministry suffered financially. Fortunately, the MT Synod Covid relief fund was able to assist them in making budget this year. I have not had an update recently on St. John's United but I do know that both SJU and Immanuel have played large roles in protecting their residents and community from the effects of Covid. Our Saviour's, Rocky Boy's: Pastor Tom Gehring arrived and was ordained and installed in November. Loni may speak to this as well.

Synod Office response: Regarding Covid-19, we've played it safe as the numbers of cases and deaths continued to rise. The office remains closed to the public since Candi is often in the office alone from 8:30-4:30 every weekday. Staff also worked primarily from home over the past months, trying to not to cross paths too much. Now that numbers are declining, we hope to meet in person on some Wednesdays for staff meeting. We get more accomplished when we're in the same room. Currently, we are limiting travel to necessary reasons only such as a congregation blow-up or ordinations. We're doing a lot of meeting with folks via email, phone and zoom. Fortunately, most of us were able to take vacation days in December and January which were much needed times away.

As we enter Lent, one year into the pandemic, here are some things we have done or are planning to do to help equip and support leaders and congregations during this time:

- Regular Deans zooms – every other month at least. I'd like to find more ways to have cluster/dean system work for us during this time and beyond.
- Weekly Gather zoom with active clergy and LPA's. We stopped in January but hope to begin again in next week.
- Weekly Dwelling in the Word Zoom
- Providing a counseling resource list for pastors in various parts of the synod.
- Lots of pastoral counseling for our leaders.
- Bi-monthly synod council conversations
- Two Bishop's Convos – 1 in Oct, 1 last week, equipping our leaders;
- Coaching, Leadership training/guidance and various other support opportunities
- Updated our synod communications: Weekly Announcements and Weekly News.
- Communications Team meeting every month: me, Colter, Lindean, Peggy, and Jenny
- New webpage working well
- Many, many zoom and phone calls with pastors, congregation leaders as they go through transitions or difficulties.
- Prep for synod assembly
- ...and more

Me: I'm still videoing slowly a course for the LPA program about basic Lutheran theology. I have agreed to be on the next social statement task force focusing on Church, State and Civic Engagement: we have met twice already and will be busy for the next 5 years. Expect listening posts. I along with Jason and Peggy are attending via zoom the "Excellence in Leadership Academy" through the Rocky Mt Synod so that we can bring that knowledge to the Montana Synod. I continue to explore and implement my leadership gifts and skills which is a team-style,

collaborative approach that invites participation from others. Through this approach, I hope to discern new, old and various ways to fulfill our mission to equip folks for the ministry of the gospel in the synod. I had cataract surgery over the December holidays which has made my life a lot simpler – no contact lenses!

Finally, I continue to pray...a lot, for myself and for the pastoral leaders, congregations, and ministries of the synod. Contemplative prayer, mindfulness prayer, dwelling in the word prayer, sitting and doing nothing prayer. That return to our center, the God of love in Jesus Christ, is crucial for me and for all of us during these days of feeling exhausted and strained. Opening myself up to the life-renewing power of the Holy Spirit has been healing and has allowed me to step outside my own anxiety (on my good days) to be the best pastoral leader I can be for the synod. Getting my own coach is helping too.

Question for the future months and year: How will we as synod leadership continue to equip the pastoral leaders (rostered and lay) as well as congregations and ministries to do the work of Christ's gospel ministry in the synod and wider world?

Your Servant In Christ,  
Rev. Laurie Jungling, Bishop

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February 2021 A2B Synod Council report

Mobility/Transition

Open Congregations

Livingston, Wilsall American Lutheran—Using LPAs have PCUSA pastor option

Redeemer/Shields River—using LPAs

Fairview Ready to Interview. Also option with Episcopal Church in ND.

Billings, First English Using Lay and retired pastors

Shepherd Paperwork done. Waiting my reply. Possible combination

Billings, Bethlehem Working with Council to determine future. Mark Morgenstern Vice.

Hardin Mark Taylor temp.

Circle voted to stay in ELCA working with Eric Rydbom and SAM

Joliet Using LPA's Jayson Nicholson Vice Pastor

Great Falls, Bethel Trina Johnson interim, Interviewing

Glasgow, First Interviewing

Absarokee, Immanuel Pastor left, working with Call Committee

Bozeman, Hope Working with Call Committee

Transitions

Ken Carrothers called to Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Billings

Will Rima called to Harlem, Hogeland, Turner

LPA

- Due to the Covid outbreak and the Governor's recommendations we cancelled all the in person retreats this spring. We offered an amended zoom schedule and additional assignments to give credit to those who needed this final pastoral care retreat to finish the program.

- The worship and preaching retreats have been rescheduled for April over Zoom. Pastor Lynne Ogren will be leading the Worship Retreat and Pastor Kim Peterson the Preaching retreat.
- Completely redoing the LPA program in this time of transition. We are creating new resources locally for the education piece and will include all of the materials in the cost of the program.
- Will be ready to go in the Spring.

#### Youth

- Synod-wide youth event has been put on hold.

#### Synod House

- Adjusting the heating vents as needed.
- Installed a security bar over the door on the shed to keep people out and the door closed. The wind blew it open last month.

#### Other Misc.

- Thank you for the opportunity to serve as the A2B and as a partner in the work of the church in this Synod.
- Working with Nominating Committee on securing nominees for the Synod and Churchwide Assemblies.

In Christ, Pastor Jason Asselstine

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Director for Evangelical Mission: Report to the Montana Synod Council Feb. 19, 2021

Winston Churchill: "Never let a good crisis go to waste."

ELCA Purpose -- Future Church Design: Activate each of us that more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love."

2 Cor. 4:7: "For we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us."

Stewardship Task Force: see written report

Faithful Innovation Process:

The leadership team includes Pastor Andy Wendle, Pastor Anna Merritt, Pastor Kim Peterson and Dick Deschamps. On Nov. 15, three congregational guiding teams from Our Saviors, Great Falls, Zion, Lewistown and Faith, Hamilton gathered with their coaches and the leadership team via Zoom for a 3 ½ hour training on "Listening to God". Each congregational guiding team and their coaches have continued to meet monthly and have been working on how to listen to God and to their community.

The second training for this 1<sup>st</sup> cohort of congregations will be on March 21<sup>st</sup>, again via Zoom.

The leadership team and I are now also recruiting for a 2nd cohort of congregations to enter the process. We plan now to begin the next cohort with the 1st training on April 25th. Please contact me if interested.

I anticipate that the Faithful Innovation process can be repeated at least twice a year and my hope is that in the next cohort, we may include up to six to ten congregations. I am thinking that a 3rd cohort of congregations could even begin in the late fall of 2021. (Though that may be overly optimistic.) Currently, I do not anticipate that we will try to meet in person, but will continue to meet via zoom for the trainings. One advantage of that is that no one is limited because of geographic distance.

#### Vitality Task Force:

Members of the Vitality Task Force include: Pastor Kim Peterson, Trinity, Choteau; Pastor Paul Anderson, Faith, Hamilton; Dick Deschamps, Synod VP, LPA, Hope, Bozeman; John Munding, LPA, St. John's, Helena, Pastor Brenda Frelsi, Zion, Glendive, Pastor Lynne Ogren, Zion, Lewistown, Rick Brown, LPA, Faith, Hamilton.

Now that the Faithful Innovation process is underway, this team will be making some adjustments to continue to shift and focus in some new ways. One possibility that I am wondering about is recommending that this group focus on "new ministry" possibilities, rather than work on vitality in established congregations. As the Future Direction process gets underway in the ELCA, one focus is on the purpose statement at the beginning of this report. It may be that the Vitality Task Force can embrace that.

#### Coaches in the Montana Synod:

I recommend that Marilyn Hall, of Immanuel Lutheran in Missoula be appointed as the Synod Coaching coordinator in the Montana Synod. Marilyn and her husband moved to Missoula about 18 months ago from the Seattle area. She had been in leadership in her congregation and her pastor recommended to me that we might connect. In conversation with her, she expressed interest in being trained as a coach and joined in the 1st training here in Montana in the fall of 2019. She went on and received level 2 training in two areas and joined in a Mentor coaching training also. She is pursuing even further credentials as a coach. She and Peter Erickson are both participating in a Synod coaching pilot project to help strengthen and lend an organized and strategic lens to coaching in Synods this year.

Currently there are 8 people who are trained as level 1 coaches. At least 3 more from the Synod will be trained in the spring. A few of these are involved in coaching 1st call pastors, a few are coaching other people and a few are involved in coaching congregational guiding teams in the Faithful Innovation process. Two of the leaders of ministries who receive churchwide funding are being coached by people outside the Synod. (I am paying for their coaching relationships from the DEM account.)

I see the value of coaching in the power of asking questions and allowing space for people to seek their own answers and solutions. We are in the process of creating a positive coaching culture here in the Montana Synod.

#### New Mission Starts:

Do you have any ideas about a new mission start here in the Montana Synod? As the ELCA moves into the Future Directions work, new ministries are important for us all to be wondering about. Where is God calling us in the Montana Synod to pray about a new ministry? Where is God nudging us to engage in conversations about new and renewing ministries? As we have learned many lessons in the past year, I pray and hope that we can all be open to wondering what new things God is doing in our midst?

Ministries that receive Synod and Churchwide Funding:

Freedom in Christ: Pastor Rob Nedbalek serves this ministry. He is making contact via a tablet that inmates have access to and through phone calls mostly. The FIC board is working to revise the Memorandum of Understanding with the staff in the prison and is working to clarify and strengthen the ministry and functioning of the board.

Spirit of Life Ministry: Pastor Chris Holler-Dinsmore is working part-time doing what she can when she cannot go inside the Tribal Correctional Facility. The churchwide grant was reduced to \$6000 for 2021. I believe it is important for the Synod to support this ministry in that Chris is our link to ministry on the Fort Peck Reservation.

Rocky Boy – Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church: Pastor Tom Gehring is challenged as a new pastor in this ministry to try to get to know people and to begin to engage the community in ministry. He is asking good questions and is anxious for people to be vaccinated so that ministry there may get underway.

Confluence Collective: Rebekah Cochrane and John Lund continue to be in conversation about what Confluence can mean in the Missoula community. At this point, the ministry is “on hold” until they can begin to meet regularly in person. They are not receiving any funding from the Montana Synod and receive just \$6,000 from churchwide this year. I hope that by the fall, they can reimagine the ministry there.

ELCA Covid Grant Funds:

In the spring, the Synod Council designated that the Disaster Funds held be available for Covid 19 disaster relief for congregation. Money has been received from congregations, individuals and Endowment Committees and the fund has grown to currently have just under \$20,000. There have not been requests for money from that fund for a few months. As money was given generously, I wonder how and when money can and should be disbursed? It is interesting to note that the needs from congregations that we anticipated have not unfolded.

I continue to give thanks to God and to you all for the opportunity to serve God and the Synod as the DEM.

Peggy Paugh Leuzinger

Director for Evangelical Mission, Montana Synod

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Vice President Report

Montana Synod Council

February 19, 2021

I am finding that it is difficult to write a report to people who watch most of what I do within the organization, but it is good to reflect on our ministry since that last time we met.

Actually, that is not quite right since we have had two additional council meetings since our last regular meeting in September. I want to sincerely thank you for the extra time and effort you have given to the synod organization. The COVID pandemic has found most of all of us doing things differently than we would have ever thought of doing a year ago. Taking this additional time to brainstorm and plot a future path for the synod/council has, I think, been more productive, than trying to accomplish that type of activity during a regular meeting. I do look forward to the time we can once again meet in person. Ginger keeps asking me when she will get to come to the next meeting to see you all again. I think a big plus is that we have discovered

new ways to do business, that will keep us at home and productive during times we really do want to stay home.

I am really excited by the direction all three of the task forces who will be reporting at this council meeting. For the two task forces put in place by the assembly resolutions, there is important work being done that speaks directly to the spirit of Creation Care and Racial Justice. The Stewardship Task Force is on track to not only be a resource for the synod, but also for all congregations making up the synod.

I am also moved by the way we are working to involve congregations in all that we do. That is not to say we haven't involved individual congregations in the past, but there seems to be this movement to involve congregations in a collective way so that we eventually become the "synod together", maintaining individuality, but at the same time recognizing the power and grace of community. Not only do I think this is important for congregational health and vitality, but it may be what ensures our survival as a church.

We are moving towards our first virtual or digital assembly. Again, this may not be the way we wish to do this, but we are blessed to have the tools and expertise to be able to have the assembly. As you will hear today and, more than likely at our April meeting, it will take the help of the entire council to pull this off. We all will have a job. I want to thank you for this additional effort, in advance. I am confident, that in the end, we will have a successful assembly, as well as the knowledge of how to hold a large meeting in a virtual format.

The Executive committee met on February 16, 2021 in preparation for this meeting. Agenda items, most of which will be discussed further at Synod council, included:

- 2020, 2019, 2022 budget discussion including recommendations to full council.
- Updates on Freedom in Christ Prison Ministry, Spirit of Life, and Our Savior's LC at Rocky Boy.
- Review of draft assembly agenda and other assembly issues

Peace to you.

Respectively Submitted,  
Dick Deschamps  
Synod vice President

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February 19, 2021  
Director of Communication and Technology – Colter McCarty

A year of scrambling for tech upgrades and streaming software, training, and consultation, I'm now focusing on getting our Synod Assembly ready to go.

I'm currently in the process of designing a streaming setup for the assembly, prepping our voting system, and will be talking to several local suppliers to check prices and availability of specific hardware.

I am also working through how to train everyone as painlessly as possible by researching every aspect of what we'll be using in order to reduce potential confusion.

I'm also happily plugging away at my day-to-day responsibilities, including the split of our news into two distinct mailings, hosting meetings, tech consultation, registrations and reports.

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Report to the Montana Synod Council for Feb. 19, 2021  
Montana Synod Stewardship Task Force

Throughout 2020 and into 2021, the Stewardship Task Force has been working to draft a year-round Stewardship plan for the Synod, including regular communication to congregations from Bishop Jungling, Synod Officers and me (DEM Peggy Paugh Leuzinger) through short videos, letters and articles to “ask, tell and thank” congregations for their generosity. There is an intentional emphasis to communicate most directly with the top 40 giving congregations who provide about 80% of mission support to the Synod. For the seasons of Advent and Christmas, I compiled a devotion written by pastors in the Synod that was made available through the website and social media so that it could be made available to congregations. An Easter season devotion is in the works now.

Thanks to Dennis Trotter for his help and kind assistance as the Stewardship Task Force has embraced a more intentional and strategic plan to address Stewardship on behalf of and for the Montana Synod and the congregations. This plan is “a work in process”, but with Dennis’ assistance, we are crafting a plan to work toward, which can also be tweaked as needed in the months and coming years.

The Stewardship Task Force made up of Treasurer Sue Ost, Barb Arensmeyer, Choteau, Pastor Phil Wold, Pastor Tim Tostengard, Pastor Scott Thompson and Pastor Lindean Barnett-Christenson (and Dennis Trotter, Synod Stewardship Consultant) meets on a monthly basis. I am grateful for their input and work as we as a Synod work to provide stewardship education and support for leaders and congregations.

Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger,  
Director for Evangelical Mission  
Montana Synod

Fed by Ravens

### Congregational Stewardship Proposal for the Montana Synod

Dennis Trotter  
February 2, 2021

Over the past six months, working with the Montana Synod ELCA, we have attempted to create strategies and communications to increase Mission Support funding. Despite the impact of Covid-19 on church attendance, offering and giving, through focused changes to Mission Support strategies and communications, the Montana Synod ELCA positioned itself to weather the economic storm created by the world-wide pandemic. Through judicious financial planning, which included decreased expenditures and participation in the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), the Montana Synod is prepared to move to the next phase of addressing Mission Support. Despite this time of incredible challenge, there is much to be praised and much opportunity.

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As we worked to develop activities and initiatives to address the trends of decreasing funding and support as well as the economic impacts of Covid-19, it became apparent that making changes that would impact long-term congregational giving to Mission Support funding cannot happen without engaging pastors and congregational leaders in discussions and teachings related to stewardship. Stewardship must be reclaimed by the church and move beyond being viewed as

a packaged “program” that provides a better way of asking for money. As a member of the Stewardship Task Force stated, “No one likes to be programmed.” Instead, a plan is necessary to help change and liberate hearts and minds regarding our relationship to money and to develop a biblical perspective on finances through the lens of stewardship, discipleship and generosity. What I propose for consideration is for 3 to 5 churches to work in collaboration with the Montana Synod to pilot the Fed by Ravens project. These churches, pastors and congregational leaders will engage in a partnership to restructure stewardship and giving for their churches and the ELCA. During the next six months, we will engage biblical teachings and financial management principles to explore our relationship with personal finance and seek to develop new narratives to remove the stigma and misunderstanding associated with stewardship and congregational giving. Using 1 Kings 17 as a foundational text and exploring God’s provision for Elijah, and others, through scripture, the purpose of Fed by Ravens will seek to reestablish our relationship of reliance and trust in God and give back for God’s use that given to us. To be clear, Fed by Ravens is not a prepackaged program with schedules, charts, graphs, tables, posters, letters, and communications to be implemented as part of a stewardship campaign. Instead, Fed by Ravens is a journey of exploration in which participation and engagement drive discovery and create opportunities. There will be a structure to guide the process and an expectation that professional knowledge and practical experience in financial management, stewardship, fundraising, marketing, and communications will contribute to and shape the plan. Still, the particular manner in which stewardship is implemented will be unique to the congregation participating in the process.

#### Fed by Ravens Implementation Schedule 2021

##### March

1. The identification of 3 to 5 Congregations and Pastors willing to participate.
2. Conduct Zoom meeting with Pastors to explain the process and schedule.
3. The identification of at least 2 Congregational Leaders from each congregation.

##### April

1. Session 1: Zoom Meeting
  - a. Text Study: 1 Kings 17
  - b. Presentation: American Christian Giving Research
2. Session 2: Zoom Meeting
  - a. Presentation: Congregational Stewardship: Background, History, and Culture
  - b. Presentation: Money and Us

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##### May

1. Session 3: Zoom Meeting
  - a. Presentation: Money and Society
  - b. Presentation: Money and God
2. Session 4: Zoom Meeting
  - a. Discussion of Congregational Budget
  - b. Development of Congregational Stewardship Plan

##### June

1. Session 5: Zoom Meeting
  - a. Further Discussion of Congregational Stewardship Plan
  - b. Prepare for Implementation

July

1. Fed by Ravens: Launch of Stewardship Plan to Congregation
2. Zoom Meeting: Invitation for Congregational Participation
3. First Fed by Ravens presentation to Congregation

August and September

1. Further implementation of Fed by Ravens

Fall 2021

1. Roll out of Fed by Ravens to an additional 10 to 12 congregations
2. Implementation through 2021 Fiscal Year

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The Council of the Montana Synod of the ELCA  
Resolution to Hold the 2021 Synod Assembly by Virtual Means

We, the undersigned, being all the council members of this synod, consent and agree that the following corporate resolution was made on a live virtual meeting where we all had the opportunity to see and be seen and to hear and be heard on February , 2021, at am/pm.

Whereas; it is stated in the constitution of the Montana Synod †S7.01. This synod shall have a Synod Assembly, which shall be its highest legislative authority. The powers of the Synod Assembly are limited only by the provisions in the Articles of Incorporation, this constitution and bylaws, the assembly's own resolutions, and the constitutions and bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and

Whereas; it is stated in the constitution of the Montana Synod †S7.11. A regular meeting of the Synod Assembly shall be held at least triennially; and

Whereas; it is stated in the constitution of the Montana Synod S7.11.11. The Synod Assembly shall meet annually at a time and place set by the Synod Council in consultation with the bishop; and

Whereas; the affects of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic are still present in Montana and it would be imprudent to risk the health of the participants at an in-person assembly in June Of 2021; and  
Whereas; there is no guarantee that the public health conditions would be significantly improved by the scheduled time of the assembly (June 2021); and

Whereas; it is stated in the constitution of the Montana Synod S7.13.01. Notice of a regular meeting of the Synod Assembly shall be given to the president of each congregation of the synod and each ordained minister at least 60 days prior to the meeting.

Whereas; the synod staff and council needs significant time to prepare for an assembly held by virtual means; and

Whereas; the synod council voted at a special council meeting help on December 3, 2020, to hold the 2021 Synod Assembly by virtual means.

Therefore; be it resolved that the 2021 assembly of the Montana Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will be held by virtual means in June 2021, with an actual date to be announced.

The council members and staff of the Montana Synod are authorized to carry out the functions in support of this resolution.

Laurie Jungling, Bishop Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Richard Deschamps, Vice President Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Sue Ost, Treasurer Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Amanda Liggett, Secretary Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Allen Hansen Council Member Signature Date

Robin Matthews Council Member Signature Date

Anna Merritt Council Member Signature Date

Evan Ceaicovschi Council Member Signature Date

Peter Erickson Council Member Signature Date

Mary Hutchinson Council Member Signature Date

Kevin Johnson Council Member Signature Date

Kristi Lobdell Council Member Signature Date

Jessica Obrecht Council Member Signature Date

John Sheppard Council Member Signature Date

Doris Tollefson Council Member Signature Date

Gretchen Wagner Council Member Signature Date