



# Montana Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

## News of the Week January 6, 2021

### Prayers of the Week

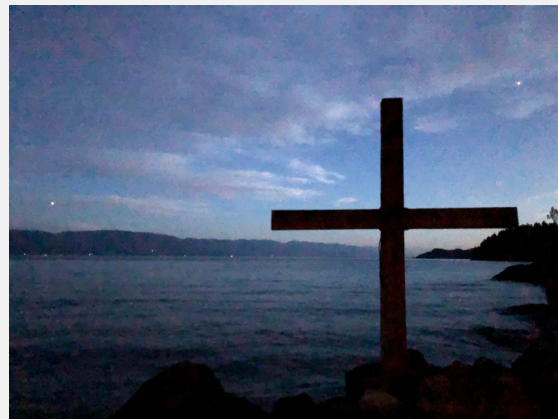
**Please remember in your prayers this week:**

For Retired Pastor Larry Vincent who is in the hospital, being treated for Covid-19.

**From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:**

Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Laurel  
Joliet Lutheran Church, Joliet

West Virginia - Western Maryland Synod



---

#### We pray for our nation:

Almighty God, bless our land with honesty, truth, honor, and compassion. Save us from violence, discord and confusion; from pride and arrogance; and from every evil course of action.

Where our hearts are fearful, grant courage and hope. Where anxiety is infectious, grant peace and reassurance. Where distrust twists our thinking, grant healing and reconciliation. Where we are surging with hate, fill us with love and peace.

Bring fortitude and comfort to this nation as we grieve the consequences of yet more violence and teach us all to apply our hearts and minds to your wisdom. All these things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our savior and true Lord. Amen

[ELW p. 76-76 (excerpts)]

---

### Words from the Bishop: New Eyes, New Lives

I still reach for my eyeglasses every morning as I get out of bed even though I don't need them anymore.

I still prepare myself to take out my contact lenses before I go to sleep despite the fact that I've thrown them all away.

Over the Christmas season, I had cataract surgery on both eyes and now I can see in new ways. Though there is still some healing and adjustment to take place, I am no longer reliant on contacts or glasses (except possibly readers) to experience the world around me. Life has become manifest to me in clearer ways than when I was in the second grade. I can see!



The season of/after Epiphany that we enter into today is all about seeing in new ways and thus living in new ways. It's about manifestation and revelation. Epiphany is when we in the western church recognize and honor the Christ-ness, the Messiah-ship of Jesus of Nazareth as he becomes manifest in his fuller glory for all to see.

During Epiphany we celebrate events like the Magi following the star from the East as well as Jesus' baptism and God's voice revealing the beloved anointed one through a booming from the clouds. We also see Christ manifest to us in the miracle at the Cana wedding, his first proclamations that "the Kingdom of God is near," his first healings, and his shining transfiguration on the mountain.

In these manifestations of Christ, we who are willing to see are given new eyes so as to recognize who Jesus really is: God's divine presence dwelling with us and humanity's savior working among us for love and life.

Jesus the Christ is not just a cute baby who comes to be our best friend. Nor is he just the good guy on the sidelines, supporting our platforms and cheering us on while we fix the world according to our dysfunctional human tools and violent rage.

Jesus the Christ is the life-giving, world-transforming, love-filled presence of God come to our homes, families, communities, social systems, and nations to change everything. Everything! Jesus the Christ is God's love made flesh who calls us again and again to follow him in a radical way of love and complete trust in God.

During this time of epiphany revelation, I encourage you to let the Holy Spirit give you some new eyes to see Jesus the Christ manifest in the world around you. No need to go as far as cataract surgery. Just clear your eyes of the messiness of the news and the anxieties of the pandemic, perhaps through prayer and contemplation. Open yourselves up to the Spirit's work in your mind and heart.

And then look around through Spirit-lenses to see how God's love is manifesting itself to you and your fellow followers of Christ. Ask yourself again and again, **what is Jesus the Christ doing in my life, my congregation's life, my community today? Where is Jesus the Christ calling you to go, what is Christ calling you to do, and how is Christ calling you to live? And finally ask, how can I be better equipped to see what Jesus so badly wants me to see so that I can follow him?**

But beware! There are wolves in sheep's clothing trying to trick our eyes into seeing Jesus Christ in places and actions in which he would *never* reveal himself. Jesus the Christ does not manifest God's Kingdom in lies and falsehoods for he is the Truth of God's love. Jesus does not manifest God's Kingdom in fear-filled hatred and demonizing of other people for he is the Courage and Spirit of God's love. Jesus does not manifest God's Kingdom in violent actions or words demanding harm against *anybody* for he is the Prince of Peace.

To put it bluntly, we who would follow Jesus the Christ cannot follow those angry, self-centered cries to take out our rage on one another because we disagree about social actions or political outcomes.

**Violence is not and never will be the answer for God -- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To follow those voices of hate is to leave the Way of Christ behind.**

**Christ's Way is always the Way of Love, God's selfless love for the whole world!**

So let us open our eyes to a new way of seeing and being love this Epiphany season, let us open our hearts to the Spirit's power, and let us follow Christ's vision of life in God's Kingdom. For God has come to dwell with us. See?! Jesus is right there!

In Christ's Love,

Bishop Laurie

**[Click here to download the Annual Meeting Letter from Bishop Laurie Jungling](#)**

## Synod Council Spotlight



My name is Dick Deschamps and I serve as the Vice-president of the Synod Council. I live with my wife, Barb, in Bozeman, MT, and am a member at Hope Lutheran church.

I am officially retired from a career with USDA, so my work life is varied. I am a Lay Pastoral Associate with the Montana Synod and provide pulpit supply at Hope and lead worship/preach at other congregations upon request. I am part of the leadership team at Hope, as well as co-chair the Mission Resource Team and serve as head usher. I serve as a Stephen Minister. I coordinate a mobile soup kitchen feeding program in Bozeman. I have three horses and their care, training and my enjoyment with them takes a bit of time. I also have a small custom having business, putting up my hay and that of neighbors. I am an amateur wood worker and grab some time in the shop when I can. One aspect of my life that is becoming increasingly important is that of contemplative Christianity. I am in the second year of a two-year course in the Living School of the Center for Action and Contemplation (Richard Rohr, OFM). I am finding this way of understanding Jesus Christ, his life and teaching, informing all other aspects of my life. Lastly, I/we travel some to be closer to kids and take care of our family property in Green Valley, AZ.

My experience on the Synod Council for the last 4-5 years has taught me the importance of the council and synod staff in helping the congregations of the Montana Synod (including Northern Wyoming), to be church together. We are vast in geography and varied in all areas of demographics. We also tend to be independent; after all Montana is a 'home rule' state. But Christ called us to be together in community and to serve one another. The synod council and staff have many duties, but if we can increase our interdependency, one upon the other, we will come closer to a key point of our Christian heritage.

When I retired from USDA, my intent was to shift from serving in administrative/leadership roles in the church; to focus more on what I called 'ministry' roles. Then Bishop Crist, shook her head

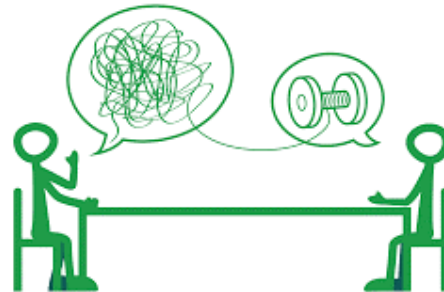
and smiled, and promptly appointed me to the Synod Council to fill a vacated position. I was then appointed/elected to the lead the council upon the untimely death of Tom Gossack. I have also found myself in other church and non-church associated leadership roles. I now consider these opportunities to serve, the point from which I live out my faith, at least in part. God calls; our job is to listen.

## Coach's Corner

### Coaching begins with the client's holy discontent..

a desire to seek change and work for it.

Many pastors and church leaders have coaches to help them with an idea they'd like to implement, or a change that needs to be made, or a plan that needs work.



**The work begins with a dream**, not a deficit.

Coaches connect dreams to concrete actions that create change for individuals and congregations.

Find out more:

<https://www.montanasynod.org/coaching-in-the-montana-synod.html>

Empowering leaders who power ministries.

---

### Synod Staff:

Bishop

Laurie Jungling: [ljungling@montanasynod.org](mailto:ljungling@montanasynod.org)

Associate to the Bishop

Pastor Jason Asselstine: [jasselstine@montanasynod.org](mailto:jasselstine@montanasynod.org)

Director for Evangelical Mission

Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger: [ppleuzinger@montanasynod.org](mailto:ppleuzinger@montanasynod.org)

Director of Technology and Communications

Colter McCarty: [cmccarty@montanasynod.org](mailto:cmccarty@montanasynod.org)

Office Manager

Candi Standall: [cstandall@montanasynod.org](mailto:cstandall@montanasynod.org)

Director of NRIT

Jenny Kunka: [j.kunka@nrit.org](mailto:j.kunka@nrit.org)

---

