



## News of the Week January 26, 2022

### Prayers of the Week

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

For the people of South Africa as they mourn the death of bishop emeritus of ELCSA Cape Orange Diocese Bishop Mervyn Assur.

**From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:**

St. James Lutheran Church, Columbus  
Broadview Lutheran Church, Broadview

Western North Dakota Synod



### Words from the Bishop: A Blessing of Faith

“Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?...But strive first (have faith) for the kingdom of God and God’s righteousness (right relationship with you), and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Mt 6:27, 33)

So what does faith have to do with our everyday lives, especially in times of anxiety? Often we confuse faith with beliefs, as in “I believe that God exists” or “I believe that Jesus atoned for my sins.” Faith these days has become little more than accepting certain ideas to be true and going on with our lives as if these beliefs make no difference in how we live.



However, faith is much more than a set of beliefs. Faith has three intertwined aspects that empower and reinforce each other. Faith starts with trust. This is how Luther defines it in his Large Catechism. Faith is putting your trust in someone or something for all that you need from day to day. A second part of faith is commitment or loyalty. I trust in God's commitment to me in Christ for all that I need and therefore I am committing myself to follow Jesus in all I do and say. Only then do beliefs step in as we seek to better understand this God in whom we have faith and what it means to follow Jesus.

You'll notice that together trust and commitment describe a relationship between 1) we who have faith, 2) the God in whom we place our faith, and 3) those whom God in Christ calls upon us to love through our faith. When we have faith, we trust in this transforming relationship of love that God has with us, empowering us, strengthening us, fortifying us. We trust that somehow, some way God, through the power of the Spirit of Love, will guide us through into something better and life-giving. And we commit ourselves to the new life God is offering.

But this life of faith is not an easy one. Often in times of suffering we hear people say, "you just gotta have faith!" as if we can whip up this faith out of ourselves on our own power. But that's hard to do, especially these days when distrust of just about everything reigns rampant. In relation to the struggles of life, "just having faith" seems a naïve piece of advice. "I'm trying," we cry to Jesus, "but I just can't find any faith right now! Life is too hard. I'm struggling too much. Increase my faith, O God!"

But there is good news in the midst of our struggles. The good news is that faith is a gift, given by the Holy Spirit. This gift of faith comes to us through the power of the Word who is Jesus Christ. Faith is literally "in-spirited" in us when we open ourselves to hearing the gospel promises and receiving the new life shared with us daily in the reconciling grace of Jesus Christ. Faith comes to us when we give ourselves up to God and open our selves to the realm of Christ that is near.

In our trust, commitment to God, and beliefs that come to us through the Spirit, faith gives up trying to be God and gives up trying to control the world. Faith gives up judging people or self as less than, expendable or "other." Faith gives up trying to be better, stronger, tougher, and righter than others. Instead, faith asks, "self, why are you so anxious when the God of Jesus Christ is your God?" Faith asks "is all this worry helping me or anyone else? Is it adding to my hours on earth?" Faith seeks help and listens to those who will proclaim the promises of hope and the commands of love and courage. Faith prays, prays some more, and then stops to listen in the presence of God. Faith participates in God's mission for the world, sharing the trust given by the Spirit by loving one another with a commitment to living Christ's new life for our neighbors.

I close with a prayer first written in a letter to the Ephesians long ago. This is ultimately Paul's prayer for faith: "I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, God may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to God who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen." (Eph 3:16-21)

May God's Spirit bless you all with faith in the days ahead!

Bishop Laurie

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**Global Mission**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

January 24, 2022

Bishop A.M. Mnisi, ELCSA Acting Presiding Bishop

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa

Bishop M.Z. Manong

ELCSA - Cape Orange Diocese

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This afternoon we received the news that bishop emeritus of ELCSA Cape Orange Diocese Bishop Mervyn Assur entered the Church Triumphant.

On behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), I wish to express our sincere condolences to the Assur family, the Cape Orange Diocese and to all ELCSA members.

We give thanks to God for the life, witness and ministry of Bishop Assur, as a pastor, ELCSA General Secretary and as bishop in the Cape Orange Diocese.

May the Lord comfort and strengthen the family and members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa.

Soli Deo Gloria,

Yours faithfully,

Rev. Dr. Philip J. Knutson

ELCA Service and Justice Home Area

Regional Representative – Southern Africa

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## To Pastors, Congregational Presidents and Treasurers:

As your Annual Meeting concludes, please remember to fill out the “2022 Mission Support Statement of Intent” that is on the Montana Synod website in the Mission Support Downloads for your congregation. Thank you! Together as the Montana Synod, you support and fund ministry that empowers, equips and strengthens individuals, congregations, ministry agencies, Campus Ministry, Colleges and Seminaries and activities that strengthen us all to serve as disciples of our Lord! Thank you for sending the “Statement of

Intent” form to the Synod Office at the mailing address: 1221 24<sup>th</sup> Ave. S. Great Falls, MT 59405, or to [cstandall@montanasynod.org](mailto:cstandall@montanasynod.org) as soon as possible.

Also, the 2021 Fiscal Year ends on Jan. 31, 2022. Thank you to all the congregations as you have been sending in year end gifts.

**Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger**

Director for Evangelical Mission, Montana Synod, ELCA

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