



News of the Week February 2, 2022

Prayers of the Week

Please remember in your prayers this week:

For the family of Rev. Randy Olson as they mourn his death. Pastor Olson served at St. John's Lutheran in Helena, Montana from 1986 to 1997

From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:

Big Timber Lutheran Church, Big Timber
Immanuel Lutheran Church, Absarokee



Words from the Bishop: Do Unto Others...

Dear Friends in Christ,

What have we done with the Golden Rule?

In Matthew 7:12, Jesus summarizes Jewish and Christian law, stating, "In everything, do to others as you'd have them to do to you." But our culture seems to have forgotten that rule. Instead, another rule has taken its place, "Do for yourself; ignore others, hurt others, or tear them down unless they do what you demand they do."

And yet, Jesus still calls us to follow this rule and even go beyond it by loving our neighbor. Even, and especially, in times of uncertainty, anxiety and fear. Even when we think the best or only answer is to think of ourselves and tear others down to lift



ourselves up.

Did you know that the Golden Rule is found in nearly all major world religions and philosophies? For example, it appears in its “do not” form in ancient Greek philosophy (“Do not do to others that which angers you when done to you,” Isocrates) and in Buddhism (“Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful,” Buddha). In its positive form, the rule is found in Judaism and Christianity (“Love your neighbor as yourself,” Lev. 19:18); in Islam (“that which you want for yourself, seek for humankind,” Muhammad); and North American Indigenous spiritualities (ex. “All things are our relatives; what we do to everything, we do to ourselves,” Black Elk). The Golden Rule, then, can help connect us across our divisions.

But following this rule is not easy. In order to follow the Golden Rule, we must be able to self-reflect honestly and have empathy for others. We need to be able to step into another person’s shoes and ask ourselves “How would I feel if I were in this situation and that were done to me? If I wouldn’t like it, maybe I shouldn’t do it them. If I would like it, then maybe I should consider doing it for them, with their permission and blessing, of course.”

Perhaps this is where we go wrong. Turned in on our selves and our own anxieties, we forget how to self-reflect and empathize with our fellow children of God. Maybe empathy is something we need to practice, trying again and again in all of our relationships to understand where others are coming from and what they may be experiencing, particularly with those who are different from us. Perhaps we can grow our empathy abilities by learning and listening and allowing ourselves to be transformed by another person’s story.

We as followers of Christ are called to live the Golden Rule in every interaction, even going beyond the Golden Rule and doing unto others as *Christ* has done for us. For Jesus knew what we’d do to him and yet died for us anyway, rising again to give us new life. The least we can do in response is “*in everything*, do to others as we’d have done to us.”

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” It’s a simple command from God that, in times of fear and anxiety, we too quickly ignore. But the only way we will get through life is by walking in our journeys together, putting ourselves in others’ shoes, taking on one another’s burdens and going the extra mile. This is what Jesus Christ did for us and does for us every day.

May God bless and keep you this day!

Bishop Laurie

2022 ELCA Youth Gathering canceled



After much prayer, conversation and tears, we have made the difficult decision to cancel the 2022 Gathering, MYLE and the tTable due to the ongoing pandemic, the recent COVID-19 surge and public health considerations.

We know there are thousands of young people who will not get to experience the Gathering, and our hearts break for them. This was not an easy decision, and we ask for your prayers and your grace. We understand the impact this decision will have on our youth, volunteers and planning teams, and we hope to return to Minneapolis for a future Gathering.

Registered congregations can visit their registration accounts starting Monday, Feb. 7, to select their desired refund option.

With God's power at work in and through us, we can do far more than we dare ask or imagine! The ELCA is fully committed to supporting the young people of our church and to seeing that the ministry of the Gathering, MYLE and the tAble continue for years to come. With that assurance, we are turning our attention toward 2024 for the next Gathering. Stay tuned to Gathering communications for a location announcement this summer.

The 2024 Gathering will take place July 16-20, 2024, with the Multicultural Youth Leadership Event (MYLE) and the tAble taking place July 13-16, 2024. The location will be announced this summer.

Grace and peace.

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 24th Ave. S. Great Falls, MT 59405, or to 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

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