



## News of the Week February 23, 2022

### Prayers of the Week

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

**From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:**

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Kalispell  
Northridge Lutheran Church, Kalispell  
Christ Lutheran Church, Libby

Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod  
Caribbean Synod



### Words from the Bishop: Justification



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As the Fiscal Year for the Montana Synod has come to a close, on behalf of the Synod Council and the whole Synod, thank you so much for the generous giving that you and your congregation have provided for the work of the Montana Synod in 2021! We are awed and inspired again by the ways that the congregations in northern Wyoming and Montana have given generously!

Here are ways that Mission Support has equipped the Montana Synod to do ministry:

- There are 11 congregations who have called and installed new pastors in the Synod in the last year.
- There are 8 congregations who have been participating in the Faithful Innovation process.
- There are 20 members of congregations who are finishing up the Lay Pastoral Associates training and 21 more who will begin the LPA training in April.
- There are 9 people in the Synod who are in the ELCA Candidacy process (attending Seminary) to serve as rostered leaders in the ELCA.
- There are about 25 leaders in the Synod who have been participating in some aspect of leadership development, either through Excellence in Leadership, Thriving Leaders or Coaching.
- Colter McCarty, from the Synod staff has assisted 37 congregations in the Synod with technology support over the past year.
- There have been 5 congregations engaged in the Fed By Ravens pilot process on stewardship and generosity.
- And so much more!

Thank you! The Synod's budget came in at about 97% of the budget. You have all done so much as you have been church together, equipping one another for the ministry of the Gospel!

The Montana Synod Council, Bishop Laurie Jungling, and Synod staff

## Feature Update from IELB in Bolivia



After a long visa process for Rev. Aaron Decker, he finally arrived in Bolivia this past February 6<sup>th</sup>. Rev. Decker will be serving as a theological educator. His main role is to consolidate and formalize the curricular design and organizational design of the Betel seminar in the IELB, organize and lead courses on theological education and ministerial formation, with emphasis on confessional identity, and facilitate workshops and dialogues that strengthen the church, congregations, and districts in the processes of theological education and ministerial formation according to the IELB curriculum.

Rev. Decker writes of himself and his work with the IELB:

“I grew up in a small town in the NE Pennsylvania Synod, where I am currently rostered. I studied in Michigan and in Pennsylvania for a Bachelor’s in Information Technology. The Call-You-Can’t-Ignore came and I enrolled at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago for my M.Div., with an internship in Omaha. Life kept taking me west, so I was surprised to be assigned to New England. I served two congregations for seven years, and then went for a Th.M. in Old Testament at Princeton. I taught at Malaysia Theological Seminary (which is where it sounds like it is) for 2018, and would have stayed longer, had we not hit visa complications.

When the pandemic began, I was serving as interim for two congregations in Reading, PA. And now, here I am in an AirBnB in La Paz, Bolivia, wondering what on earth I am doing here! But it looks like, Bishop, that you understand the non-traditional, unexpected ministry path. The Holy Spirit always knows best, but She doesn’t make things easy! The work here should be interesting. Primarily, it is centered on ministerial formation—developing curriculum and teaching/bringing scholars to teach clergy and lay leaders in the church.

There’s not much here now. Perhaps there is room for creative collaboration with NRIT; it seems like you have one of the more rich and organized lay education programs in the ELCA—which I think is vital for the future of the our Church.”

I will be having a conversation with Rev. Decker soon about ways in which we in the Montana Synod can partner with him and the IELB for education and leadership training opportunities. I will keep you posted on this wonderful news coming out of our companion synod in Bolivia that has been a long time in the works. Please pray for Pastor Decker and continue to keep the IELB in your prayers as well.

Bishop Laurie



**2022 Hetzel Grant Applications are now available.**

Agencies, institutions, and ministries which serve the elderly and youth in the Montana Synod of the ELCA are eligible to apply for grant assistance from the Hetzel Foundation.

ELCA organizations are eligible to apply, provided that they demonstrate evidence of project partnership, participation, and/or investment from within an ELCA entity. For example, a non-ELCA affiliate could ask an ELCA church to co-author the grant with them. The application deadline is March 15, 2022.

Go to our website for more information and to download the application.  
[www.hetzelfoundation.org](http://www.hetzelfoundation.org)

[Click here to download the application](#)

## 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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### **Synod Staff:**

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