



## Montana Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

## News of the Week March 17, 2021

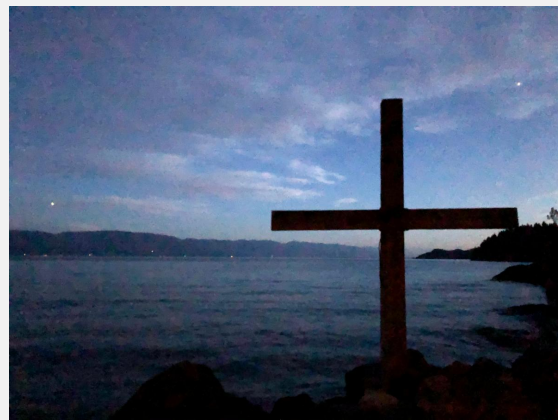
### Prayers of the Week

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

For all the victims and families of violence in Atlanta and Chicago over the past few days.

**From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:**

Faith Lutheran Church, Hamilton  
Valley of Christ Lutheran Church,  
Frenchtown  
Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Bonner  
  
East-Central Synod of Wisconsin



### Words from the Bishop: Cleansing

So how many times have you cleansed your house since the Covid-19 virus arrived at your doorstep? Ten? Twenty? One hundred?!

There have been days when I felt like I was living in a petri dish with those tiny covid cells having a party on everything I touched, even though I hadn't experienced any symptoms. And a couple of times I gave into the urge and just cleansed the whole house. I washed every item of clothing, bedding, and towel that had touched my body...with bleach when I could. I wiped down every counter, sink, knob and light switch in the house with bleach cleaner. And then I sprayed and wiped Lysol cold and flu killer on every surface I could find...computer, phones, keys, TV remotes, even my car. I felt like I was at war. But there was no way I was going to leave even one of those nasty little cells alive to infect me.



I wonder if that's a bit like what Jesus felt when he entered the temple in Jerusalem during the Passover

festival...like his house, his Father's house, had been infested by a virus. Only in this case the virus wasn't Covid or the flu, it was sin: coveting, greed, and idolatry as people were worshipping everything except God. (John 2) Greed and idolatry had infected the temple, God's sacred house, the place where people were supposed to go to worship, pray to and praise the God who had saved them. Instead, self-centered profiteers were worshipping money and stealing power. And the religious leaders weren't doing a darn thing about it. In fact, they were in on it, getting kickbacks and feeding their families off the profits.

Time for a cleansing! In fact, that's what the story in John 2 is often called: Jesus cleanses the temple. In a fit of zeal --- an uncontrollable passion for what is right and good -- Jesus makes himself a whip of cords and he begins to cleanse. He chases the cows, sheep and doves out of the temple like a rancher on a wild horse. He dumps over tables and pours money on the ground to be stomped on by the livestock. He shouts and yells at the people climbing over each other to get away from him.

"Take these things out of here!" Jesus shouts, waving his arms and throwing things. "Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

Now that's a cleansing! I'm envisioning those tiny covid viruses fleeing my house in the same way, running and screaming for their lives.

I'm guessing we don't like this picture of Jesus very much. This angry Jesus who's so passionate about fixing things in God's house, even God's kingdom, that he loses his temper. Jesus' zealous cleansing of the temple is one of those images from John's gospel we'd rather not watch. I mean, if a man came in screaming about our fancy church building or how we're misusing God's house, I doubt we'd listen. We'd probably call the police instead. This is not what we imagine when we think of Jesus.

But in truth Jesus does have something to be angry about. To him a Wall Street bank has taken over God's sacred temple and is selling salvation. People, especially the poor, are being oppressed and taken advantage of by unscrupulous money changers. Too many people are more concerned about worshipping money or power or their ideology than worshipping God. No wonder Jesus is mad -- these people are breaking most of the 10 commandments, particularly commandment number one. They are loving and trusting things before and instead of God.

What things or people are we loving and trusting other than the God of Jesus Christ? Money? Property? People in power or celebrities? What about our ideologies or platforms or politics? Even our self-interest over and against others can be an idol to us?

Thankfully, Jesus' anger at the moneychangers in the temple is not God's final word to us. Thankfully, in Christ we are loved, forgiven and called into new relationship with God again and again even as we stray towards the idols we fall prey to in our lives. Thankfully, God's steadfast love in Christ endures forever with us.

But that love calls us into a life-changing relationship that is different than what the world demands. Our life-changing relationship with Jesus expects us to put the God of Jesus Christ -- the God of faithfulness, mercy, peace, patience, kindness, justice, hope, and generosity -- at the center of our lives, first in all we say and do. That is to be our response to the baptismal cleansing we receive day after day. And that is the covenant the Holy Spirit calls on us to keep. So let us put aside our idols and follow Christ into the Kingdom of Love and New Life that the whole cosmos has been invited to enter, living out the gospel in all we do and say.

May God bless and keep you all in the grace of Christ!

Bishop Laurie

## Welcome Pastor Al Jensen!

Pastor Allen Jensen, Chaplain at Immanuel Lutheran Communities, Kalispell, MT

Pastor Al moved to Kalispell last August, accepting a



call to be the chaplain and pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Communities.

Al grew up in Alabama and, by the time he was in confirmation, he was already considering ministry. The talk of a gracious God was new to him and, at 13 years old, he told his mother he was going to be a Lutheran pastor someday. After attending college at Texas Lutheran, majoring in theology and minoring in communications, he went straight to Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Ohio.

For his internship, Al was sent to Oregon, and he loved it. After seminary, he accepted a call to Sweet Home, Oregon and stayed for five years before accepting a call in Portland. He and his wife thought they would stay in Oregon long term, but a friend convinced him to consider a move to Arizona and, from 2009 to 2020 he was a pastor in that state.

“First we thought we’d be in Oregon forever, then we thought we’d be in Arizona forever,” Al said. “Then this call in Kalispell opened up.”

Immanuel Lutheran Communities offers housing and services ranging from residential living to memory support to skilled nursing care. At Immanuel, Pastor Al leads three services every Sunday afternoon in three different areas. He also does a bible study every week in the same areas where he preaches. Both are available in person and online. His chaplaincy work, of course includes being on call for emergencies, and also offering grief classes and help for people going through transitions and dealing with loss.

There are about 300 residents and 300 staff people at Immanuel and Pastor Al said this means his opportunity is wider than he expected. He not only ministers to the residents but also to staff, some of whom have no church affiliation.

“I’m their pastor. Many don’t have a church home and they come to me for pastoral things. It’s a plus.” Additionally, chaplains are at the meetings where big decisions are being made, so Pastor Al gets to be part of the spirit of what happens. “Immanuel made the conscious decision to make sure it’s not only okay but needed to talk about how God is present here,” he said.

“I teach, preach and reach out. It’s a gift from God to work with the gifts God has given me. It’s nice at this point in my career to discover another time of joy in my ministry.”

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## 2021 Montana Synod Assembly Registration "Equipping Ministry for Change"

*...Equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...*

**Ephesians 4:12**

**The 2021 Montana Synod Assembly will be held as a virtual meeting  
June 4-5.**

Tutorials will be available to help voting members with participation.

**[Click here for the Assembly registration link!](#)**

**Please only register if you are a voting member nominated by your congregation!**

Multiple voting members can be registered at the same time when you click on the form. Please note, there will be no physical registration or physical payment allowed this year. Please insure that each individual voting member has their own unique email address and has the ability to check it regularly.

**There will be no visitor registrations this year**, the assembly will be streamed on Youtube, so any non-voting individuals can watch there.

**Registration will close April 15th.**

If you have any questions about the registration process email:  
[cmccarty@montanasynod.org](mailto:cmccarty@montanasynod.org)

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**Region 1 Boundaries Training**  
**May 18 & 20, 2021 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

Presented online via Zoom

Rostered leaders serving in the synods of Region 1 are invited to participate in boundaries training, led by Pastor Grant Barnett Christenson and Pastor Lynne Ogren of the Montana Synod. The topics covered use FaithTrust Institute's 201 course materials.

Day One will sets the foundation of good boundaries with three sessions:

- **The Joy of Boundaries**
- **Power and Vulnerability**
- **Living with Healthy Boundaries: Self-Care**

Day two will look more specifically at concerns related to:

- **Living with Healthy Boundaries: Internet Technology**
- **Living with Healthy Boundaries: Social Media**

Register for one or both days through the Montana Synod's Northern Rockies Institute of Theology: <https://www.montanasynod.org/nrit.html> 3 Hours of Continuing Ed per day.

**Cost:** Day 1: \$30 Day 2: \$30 Both days: \$50

**Save the Date:**

**Care of Creation Liturgy Workshop- April 29<sup>th</sup>** – More information coming soon.

Attention: Pastors and Church staff:

A Devotional for the Easter season which will include reflections from the Bishop and Synod staff, Pastors and LPAs will be available to download and print out for individual use, for members in congregations, or for download to include in social media, by Tuesday of Holy Week (Mar. 30<sup>th</sup>). Make plans now about how you will share these reflections with your congregation. The daily devotion will also be posted on the Synod's Facebook page – please considering sharing from that, too. This will be a way for all in the Montana Synod to join together, reflecting on God's grace and love revealed to us in the risen Savior.

## Attention church councils, especially treasurers!

Congregations are now eligible for the Employee Retention Credit on their payroll taxes for 2020 and 2021 if they meet certain criteria. [See attached FAQ](#) from the ELCA Churchwide office for more information to see if you are eligible.

# Save the Date: Retired Pastors Gathering Online April 9th 10am - 11:30am

### Synod Staff:

Bishop

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