



# Montana Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

## News of the Week March 24, 2021

### Prayers of the Week

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

For Pastors Greg and Chris Holler-Dinsmore as they mourn the death of his mother.

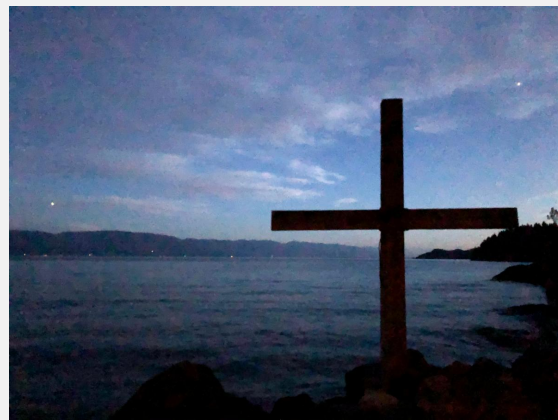
For Pastors Wenda Fry and Aprille Jordan and their families as they mourn the death of their mother.

For Bishop Jaech from the Southwest Washington Synod, recovering from surgery.

**From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:**

Jocko Valley Lutheran Church, Arlee  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Missoula  
Atonement Lutheran Church, Missoula

Eastern North Dakota Synod  
Northwest Intermountain Synod



### Words from the Bishop: Partiality

"I truly understand that God shows no partiality." Those are the first words that Peter proclaimed after a huge transformation to his life. Peter didn't always believe these words. He believed that God was partial to certain people – Peter's group -- and that meant that Peter could show partiality towards his own group too. And since Peter was a sinful human, he also interpreted that to mean that if God was for certain people, God was against the other people, the people who were not in Peter's group. It took some serious fasting, praying and



some outside intervention to show Peter he was wrong. (See Acts 10)

God does not show partiality; humans do. And when we do, we sin. (James 2:9)

From the moment humans began to walk the earth, no matter where on the earth we walked we've shown partiality and favoritism for certain people and against other people. We're especially inclined to be partial to "our own kind," people like us, and against people who are different, other, "strange."

We've also claimed God for our own kind, that we are God's favorite, while at the same time proclaiming that others are less favorite, even bad, in God's eyes. After all, if God loves us, then God can't love them or care about what happens to them, right? God might even despise them. That's the oldest story of sibling rivalry in the book – God loves me more, and if I see a hint otherwise, I have to remove you from the picture. (As I write, my cat is trying to remove the computer from my lap because he's certain I am partial to it rather than him!)

This belief that partiality, bias, prejudice is okay and even God's desire has led to horrible consequences. Any honest study of world history shows that no matter the civilization or culture, it has built itself in some shape or form on partiality: we are good, they are bad; we are angels, they are demons; we are God's favorites, they are God's enemies or at least don't matter as much to God as we do. And whenever we do that, suffering, destruction, abuse, violence and oppression follow. No matter what ideologies, theologies, philosophies, ethics or cultural beliefs and customs we try to couch it in, partiality kills, ruins, devastates human beings. And it is wrong.

God shows no partiality. Again and again, scripture states this truth.

*"For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the Lord your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear. (Dt 10:17-20)*

God also demands that we who would follow Jesus show no partiality, no prejudice, no favoritism over and against one another:

*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, I warn you to keep these instructions without prejudice, doing nothing on the basis of partiality. (1Tim 5:21)*

But if God requires this, why does it feel to some of us like we are being asked to be partial toward some groups which leads us (wrongly) to think we're being asked to be partial against our own group? Well, because we screwed things up. We've made such a mess of things by living out our partiality against some people that life isn't equal anymore (if it ever was this side of sin). We have dehumanized, demonized, oppressed, and hated the human dignity right out of some groups of people, often in an effort to humanize, lift up and love ourselves and our own groups before God. Whether we knew it or not, whether we chose to do it or not, we've partialized some people over other people and declared it good.

But partiality is not good. And now we need to try make things right. We will fail, but we must try. And we can, participating with God, make things better. And that means standing up with those whom we or our ancestors deprioritized by accompanying, loving and supporting our siblings in Christ so that the "us vs. them" consequences of partiality can be torn down and we can all do our best to live together in a less partial, prejudiced, biased world. That's justice!

God shows no partiality and, in Christ, God calls us to end our partiality too. (Prov 24:23) God loves the whole world and every person, group, and thing in it and God loves us so much that God chose not to condemn us but to save us from our own partiality. How? By sending Moses to teach us; by sending the prophets to remind us; by sending Jesus to save and redeem us; by sending the Holy Spirit to equip and empower us to live and love without partiality, the way Jesus did.

This is crucial to the message of the gospel: no partiality for any one group or against any other group. Instead, the gospel of love calls us to strive for equality before God and equity amongst humanity, lifting up every human being and ALL human beings as created in God's image and having equal dignity and worth as we do. We are called to strive to bring about a wholeness that only God can construct in its fullness, yet striving for it nonetheless. And we are called to strive using repentance and reconciliation, in love, faith, and hope, doing compassion (suffering with), kindness and welcome.

No, God shows no partiality. But God does ask, through the command to love, that we all take on the responsibility together of cleaning up the mess that human partiality has created. And in so doing, we will be sharing the life-giving love of God that is ours already with all of our neighbors whom God already loves too.

Bishop Laurie

Region 1 Bishops will be providing a recorded Good Friday Service. Link available next week.

## 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**

# Registration will close April 15th!

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.

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

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

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)

**Montana Synod Devotion for the Easter Season is Ready to be Distributed in Your Congregation**

Leaders and pastors in the Montana Synod have written

EQUIPPING...  
FOR THE WORK OF MINISTRY



EASTER SEASON DEVOTIONS  
WRITTEN BY LEADERS IN  
THE MONTANA SYNOD

reflections for Easter Season Devotions that are now available for congregations to print to distribute to people in congregations or to prepare to share on the Congregations' web site or Facebook page.

The document is available [here as a PDF link](#). It is also available to download on the Montana Synod website. It prints out well as a bifold booklet, IF your printer has that capability. Otherwise, it will print with each page being 8 1/2 x 11 in size.

If you prefer to post each day's devotion on your congregation's Facebook page, you can do that from the Synod's website or share it from the Synod's Facebook page.

Congregations and leaders are encouraged to share this as a way in which the whole Synod is growing together as we are "equipped for ministry."

Please contact Candi in the Synod office if you have questions about how to print the document. Please contact Colter if you have questions about how to share the devotions electronically.



## 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 set 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.montanasynd.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.

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

**Synod Staff:**

Bishop

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