



News of the Week April 19, 2023

Prayers of the Week

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

For Pastor Trina Johnsten as she
undergoes medical tests in Utah.

**From the Montana Synod Prayer
Calendar:**

Immanuel Lutheran Church,
Missoula
St. Paul Lutheran Church, Missoula

Florida-Bahamas Synod



Words from the Bishop: Stand Up for Love

On Monday evening, I attended an online gathering with our Jewish siblings called “Standing Up Against Hate.” This was part of their commemoration of Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day. After the prayers of remembering, panelists spoke about a variety of ways their organizations were standing up against hate, particular with regard to the increasing antisemitic speech and actions happening across our world, country and state.



This is important and necessary work that we as Christians are all called to participate in for there is no place for hate among those who claim the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. But as the work continues against what it seems are tidal waves of hate, I find myself wondering: does not Jesus call us to go further than standing against hate? Rather doesn't he call us to learn how to love?

What if we spend more of our time and energy learning and teaching one another how to love rather than focusing only on how not to hate? When we are focused on fighting against hate, we are always on the defensive, reacting against people we consider "the haters" and attacking them with our own versions of rage, violence and hate. And so the cycle perpetuates itself with hate always seeming to have the upper hand and controlling the conversation.

But as I read Jesus, Paul, and many other parts of scripture, I see and hear God calling us to spend more time following Jesus' by teaching us what love looks like and how we're supposed to love. Again and again Jesus encourages and even demands that we step out of the cycle of hate and stand up for love, even in relation to those we name enemy. ("I say unto you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...Mt 5:43-44)

But what would a "learning how to love" process look like? I think there are many lessons from scripture, tradition, reason and experience that we can use to learn and practice Jesus' kind of love. Today, I will name two and then will offer more in future communications.

One of the first lessons in practicing love is to see people as Human Beings, not as political abstractions, one-dimensional caricatures, stereotypes, or as confined by tiny boxes created by our own perceptions. All people – yes ALL – are full human beings and therefore complex, multi-dimensional children of God with a rich and complicated depth and breadth that is hard enough for each person to understand in themselves much less someone from the outside who is making judgments based on what they see or hear.

All human beings are created in the image of God and are worthy of dignity and respect.

All human beings bring a lot of stuff – physical, emotional, mental, psychological, and spiritual experiences and knowledge – to the table.

All human beings are capable of amazing love, compassion and goodness as well as horrible hate, violence and evil.

So the place to start our lesson in love is in our own mind with our perceptions, attitudes, and approaches to our neighbor. How will we practice seeing and hearing the full humanity of every person and group we engage with? In the Lutheran tradition, we name that perspective as first seeing Christ in everyone we meet before seeing anything else. One way we can practice better seeing people as human beings is by educating ourselves, particularly in relation to those who are different than us. (Although those we think are most like us may actually have much more variety than we are willing to perceive. Complicated people, remember?)

Educating ourselves involves listening to and getting to know individuals and groups of people as they are and want to be known, not as we would stereotype, judge or caricature them. Education about others means spending time learning about their lives, heritage, history (the good, the bad and the ugly), their experiences today and their culture.

Educating ourselves means being curious, not judgmental, about their humanity.

In the ELCA, a new opportunity has emerged for us to educate ourselves in relation to the Indigenous people we live our lives with. As the ELCA, the church is joining the Truth and Healing Movement that will "provide opportunities to learn the true history and current realities of Indigenous people." Please watch Bishop Elizabeth Eaton's video below and click on [this link](#) to see how you can participate in the practice of loving Indigenous people as full human beings as they are and want to be known through education.

There are many more lessons than these about how we can learn to love. We can do more than stand against something; we can stand up for love and teach each other as followers of Christ what it truly means to love. Next time we'll look at recognizing the difference

between admonishing and exhorting and the role each can play in learning to stand for love.

In the meantime, Easter Blessings to you all!

Bishop Laurie



Please join me in this movement, which is not so new to our Indigenous relatives, but is a new opportunity for our church!

More information will be shared online. Stay tuned to our ELCA and Living Lutheran social media channels and [ELCA.org/indigenous](https://www.elca.org/indigenous) for upcoming opportunities to get involved.

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

2023 Assembly Information

Registrations are now open!

A few things to remember before registering:

- Have all information needed to register beforehand including Name, email, physical address, and any meal requirements for each person registering.
- Carefully read all options available before registering, make sure to select the appropriate option for your registration.

- An individual email is required for each person.
- If prompted for a country code at the address portion of the registration, enter the number 1.
- All payments are online only.
- There will be **NO in person registration** at the assembly. All voting members **Must** be registered before the registration cut off date of May 11th.
- There is **no need** to print the tickets generated by Tithely. You will receive your registration packet in person at the assembly.

Click here to register for the 2023 Montana Synod Assembly!

After you register make sure that you have a room reserved at the **Heritage Inn** in Great Falls and ask for our discounted room rate for the Montana Synod Assembly.

If you would like to register for a display table, submit a video or annual report, or help sponsor part of the assembly [download the form here!](#)

Any questions about registration can be directed to: cmccarty@montanasynod.org.

Check the weekly e-news or our website, www.montanasynod.org for more information including nominations and resolutions and deadlines.

**Nominations and resolutions submissions are
now closed**

Looking for Assembly help

We are looking for worship leader volunteers during the Montana Synod Assembly this year in Great Falls.

Positions include:

Musicians

Readers

Ushers

Communion Leader

If you are interested please contact the Synod office: office@montanasynod.org

ELCA Farm Bill Listening Sessions

The U.S. Congress is working to draft a new, five-year Farm Bill. “You may already know Farm Bill reauthorization is underway,” says John Johnson, ELCA Program Director for Domestic Policy. This impacts all of us who eat, including those of us who struggle with hunger. Beyond our bellies, we’ll feel the impact of farm bill policy decisions through our vocations. “Many of you work on farms, in businesses, and help to feed hungry people not only in the United States but around the world,” he observes.

What Is the Farm Bill and Why Now?

The farm bill is legislation that is critical to addressing hunger in the United States and globally. It covers federal nutrition programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), environment, trade, foreign aid and rural development. The bill impacts the lives of Lutherans and their communities – among us are farmers and ranchers and Indigenous communities and global partners and low income Americans. Congress is preparing to reauthorize the bill in 2023. Each reauthorization provides an opportunity to improve or expand programs that ensure access to fresh and healthy food while addressing root causes of hunger.

What Is a Listening Session?

ELCA farm bill listening sessions are virtual gatherings where ministry leaders, members of congregations, and those with valuable lived experiences gather our opinions and experiences informed by faith values on stewardship, justice and serving our neighbor. This input will equip one another and the many communities of this church for farm bill advocacy that reflects those values, including our ELCA Witness in Society advocacy staff. These viewpoints, opportunities, concerns and hopes for a future farm bill will inform ELCA advocacy and help shape the ultimate law that Congress passes.

When Are They Happening & How Can I Register?

At this time, three, 1.5 hour listening sessions are scheduled in April 2023. Register for any, but each session will feature some discussion specific to the region of a particular time zone.

- Eastern & Central Time Zone focus
- Tuesday, April 18 – 6 p.m. ET / 5 p.m. CT
- Register – <https://bit.ly/ELCAfarmbilllisteningEasternCentral>
- Pacific Time Zone focus
- Friday, April 21 – 12 noon PT [3 p.m. ET)
- Register – <https://bit.ly/ELCAfarmbilllisteningPacific>
- Mountain Time Zone focus
- Tuesday, April 25 – 6 p.m. MT (8 p.m. ET)
- Register – <https://bit.ly/ELCAfarmbilllisteningMountain>

[Click here to watch an introductory video](#)

[Click here to give to the Montana Synod](#)

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