



# Montana Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

## News of the Week April 21, 2021

### Prayers of the Week

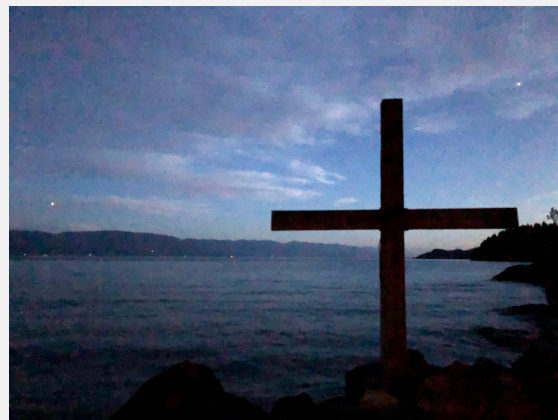
**Please remember in your prayers this week:**

For the family of Retired Pastor Barbara Westhoff, who died due to Covid complications this week.

**From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:**

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Butte  
Gold Hill Evangelical Lutheran Church, Butte

Wyoming Interfaith Network, Dr. Susie Markus, Director  
Indiana-Kentucky Synod



### Words from the Bishop: Neighbor Love

“How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.” These words from Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s poem are usually read as a romantic expression of love, a Valentine’s Day pronouncement of the sentimental heart to the lover’s beloved. But what if we read them as a question and response to Christ’s eternal call to love our neighbor with the fervor of people who are so passionately loved first by God?

Love, though often sentimentalized by our society, is actually more attitude and action than feeling, at least in the way Christ call us to love our neighbors, God and self. And it’s grounded in the love that God gives to us every moment of every day.

- God’s love is a deep passionate desire for the well-being of all of creation, including each and every human being and the entire human race. It is also the deep sadness and even anger God has when we don’t share this desire for the well-being of our neighbor and act to destroy rather than build up.



- God's love is a rich friendship with all of creation, including humanity, that wants to walk through life together with us, supporting, encouraging and raising us up to new life in an intertwined relationship of beloved companions on the journey.
- God's love is the willingness to lose the self for the sake of all of creation, to give up God's own rights and privileges, wants and self-centered goals as Jesus did so that the whole creation and all the creatures in it (including humans) may live in wholeness, harmony, and fullness of life.

This is the love that we are called and commanded to try and share with our neighbors, despite the obstacles of finitude and our bondage to sin. The love commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves both empowers and demands we seek the well-being of everyone else, even to the point of denying one's self to live in holy friendship with all of God's creation.

Now this love is justice; but this love goes way beyond justice.

- This love, as described by the apostle Paul, is patient, kind, rejoices in truth, bears, believes, hopes, endures all things, and never ends. (1 Cor 13)
- This love holds to what is good, hates evil, offers mutual affection, outdoes each other in honoring the other, rejoices in hope, is patient in suffering, perseveres in prayer, contributes to the needs of others, extends hospitality to strangers, blesses persecutors, lives in harmony with one another, associates with the lowly, lives as peaceably as possible with all, feeds hungry enemies, overcomes evil with good, and does no wrong to a neighbor. (Rom 12 &13)
- This love is filled with joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-management, and bear one another's burdens. (Gal 6)
- This love involves humility, speaking truth, saying only what is useful for building up, forgiving others, and tries to maintain unity in the bond of peace. (Eph)
- This love means laying down our lives for one another in truth and action, not just words. (1Jn3)
- As we can see, the love we are called to give one another is not just a feeling; it is attitude and action, verbs not just nouns, an embedded way of life that infiltrates everything we are and do.

Will we fail at this perfect love? Yes. Thank God for grace-filled forgiveness that empowers us to try again and again.

And who are we called to love with this love? Our neighbors. All of our neighbors.

- Our neighbors who are black, who are indigenous, who are Asian, who are Latinix, who are white, who are any and every ethnic group and race that we humans have divided ourselves into.
- Who are we called to love with God's love? Our neighbors who are Republican, Democrat, Libertarian, Independent, liberal, conservative, small government, big government, blue, red or some other socio-political shade.
- Who are we called to love with God's love? Our neighbors who are male, female, transgender, gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight, queer, intersex.
- Our neighbors who are Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, indigenous spiritual, Sikh, and Buddhist.
- Our neighbors who are elderly, middle aged, young and child.
- Our neighbors who are differently-abled and those neighbors who are struggling with illness in mind, body, heart and spirit.
- Who are we called to love? All of these plus everyone I didn't name as well as everyone and thing that does not fit into these human constructed identities, including all of creation – the animals, the plants, the land, water, and air. (Blessed Earth Day!)

And how do we love these? Let me count the ways...which are too many to name here.

But one easy way, right now in this moment, is to get vaccinated against the Covid-19 virus. This action shows love not only for yourself but also for your neighbor as we work together to stop this thing in its tracks, develop communal immunity, and come closer to fully loving each other.

I know from experience that getting vaccinated can involve a sacrifice – I got my second dose on Monday and it wiped me out to barely functional on Tuesday as the vaccine activated my body to empower itself to face the virus head on. But I've recovered – the miracle of the human body and the science that can support it never ceases to amaze me! Thanks be to God!

Getting vaccinated is one of the clearest ways we can express our love for neighbor and ourselves right now. So please get vaccinated. In this, you will truly be blessed and offer God's blessings to your neighbors!

Bishop Laurie

God of Truth,  
We thank you today  
For the Justice of this moment and a  
Judgment according to  
Your will.  
You have again  
Inspired action that  
Brought down the arrogant and  
Called the powerful to account.

May this give all people hope for our  
healing—together!  
May you free us from our  
Need for vengeance  
And clear the field to be ready for new seed.

—Richard Rohr 4/20/21

Father Richard wrote this prayer yesterday after former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was found guilty of the murder of George Floyd. Richard and the Daily Meditations editorial team invite you to pray these words, along with your own, as your contemplative practice today.

[Click here to read today's "Contemplative Call to Nature" meditation.](#)

I have an idea, but I can't seem to get it off the ground. The committee is really struggling to work together.

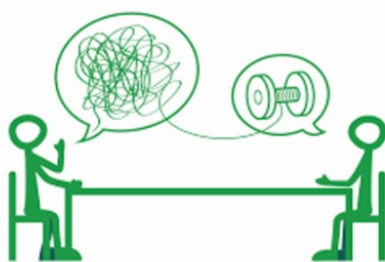
The work would be accomplished.

My first step would be...

My next step....

Resources.....

## Coach's Corner



Cost:

Your first session would be free.  
See if you like the results you got.

Coach's Role  
What do you want?

If you had it- how would you know?  
What resources do you need?

Every new project begins with baby steps.

**What are yours?**

Find out more:

<https://www.montanasynd.org/coaching-in-the-montana-synod.html>

Contact: Ps. Peggy PaughLeuzinger , DEM for Montana Synod at: [ppluzinger@montanasynod.org](mailto:ppluzinger@montanasynod.org)

Or: Marilyn Hall, Montana Synod Coaching Coordinator at:

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## Singing Plains, Calling Mountains

An Original Liturgy from the MT Synod Changing Climate Task Force

Dearest Colleagues, are you tired of teaching all about bread? Remember, this is Year B and we who follow the RCI have 6 weeks on bread toward the end of August. What if the Climate Change Task Force gave you a fully built liturgy, sermons (or sermon guidance), videos, new songs, and new prayers all geared toward Creation Care that you could sub – in during that 6 week cycle? During this workshop, the Task Force will provide an introduction to the new liturgy, have a text study on the chosen scriptures, and provide an update on what the Task Force is currently doing.

Date: April 29

**Time: 5-8pm MST.**

**Cost: \$25 (includes access to the liturgy after the class)**

**Montana Synod Devotion for the Easter Season is Ready to be**



## Distributed in Your Congregation

EQUIPPING...  
FOR THE WORK OF MINISTRY



EASTER SEASON DEVOTIONS  
WRITTEN BY LEADERS IN  
THE MONTANA SYNOD

Leaders and pastors in the Montana Synod have written 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.

### Synod Staff:

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