



Montana Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

News of the Week May 12, 2021

Prayers of the Week

Please remember in your prayers this week:

For Pastor Sarah Schilcher (Gloria Dei, Butte) in the hospital in Missoula as they monitor pregnancy complications.

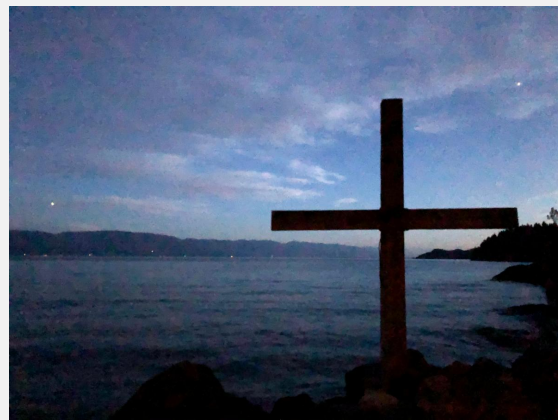
For Pastor Valorie Putt, who is hospitalized in Billings.

From the Montana Synod Prayer

Calendar:

St. John's Lutheran Church, Helena
Whitewater Lutheran Church, Whitewater
Grace Lutheran, Worland, WY

Metro Chicago Synod



Words from the Bishop: Calling

What does it mean to be called by God? This is a season of graduations, whether from college, high school or kindergarten, and many seniors or their parents may be wondering about what is next in their lives. "Where is God calling me to go? Who is God calling me to be? What is God calling me to do?" These are questions our graduates as well as many of the rest of us post-pandemic may be asking as we move through transitions in life.



One misconception church members tend to have is that only pastors and missionaries are called. Or that God calls us to only serve the church on Sunday mornings and gives us the rest of our lives with which to do whatever we want outside of the church. We as Christians have too often separated our callings into Church (which God cares about) and the rest of life (which we mistakenly think doesn't really matter to God). But that's just not true. Now don't get me wrong. God indeed calls people to serve Christ's Church and its mission in a variety of ways: pastors, deacons, LPAs, musicians, council officers/members, committee members, youth leaders, chaplains, Stephens Ministers, Bible study leaders, theologians, teachers, and the list can go on and on. I give thanks for each one of you who continue to serve faithfully in these callings across the church in the MT Synod and the ELCA. Your ministry is very much appreciated!

But we need more! The church is currently in great need of people to serve the church as pastoral leaders. In particular, the need for pastors and LPAs to serve congregations in the Montana Synod is overwhelming.

At this moment, we have far more openings in congregations than we have available pastors to fill those openings. And this is happening across the church in many denominations. We as church together are going to have to find innovative and creative ways to do ministry that might involve changing how we think about what it means to be church in order to fulfill God's ongoing call to proclaim the gospel, equip followers of Christ, and serve the neighbor in these places.

But in the meantime, we need more people to listen for and seriously consider the Holy Spirit's call to be a pastoral leader. There are so many ways to seek ordained ministry now, for example the three candidates who went through the TEEM program and will be ordained in the next two months. Congratulations Tim Tharp (Savage/Skarr), Wendy McAlpine (Sunburst) and Cheryl Muncy (Joplin) and thank you for your willingness to serve the mission of Christ's gospel in the MT Synod!

There's also the LPA program in the MT Synod which is going to start up again in the fall and will only be getting stronger as we prepare lay leaders to serve their congregations. Thank you to all of our LPAs who contribute to the life of the church in so many ways. We in MT wouldn't be where we are without you!

In the end, though, Jesus' call to follow him directs us out from the church into the world in which we live. In and through the church we are empowered to live as disciples -- "followers of Christ" -- in every nook and cranny of our lives, no matter where we are, who we are, or what we're doing.

The Spirit's call does send us into our congregations to be nourished, equipped, encouraged and inspired by the gospel message of "new life in Christ for you." But then we are called out of our congregations to bring Christ's gospel into our communities, our state, our nation, and our world whomever we are, and whatever we say, think, feel and do.

So as we emerge from the limitations of the pandemic, think about what God may be calling you to seek, be and do with your lives to serve Christ's gospel. And may the Holy Spirit inspire you always to follow Jesus' call wherever it may lead.

God's blessings be with all who are graduating this season as you transition into the next part of your lives.

Bishop Laurie

Jesus calls us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

But how can we best love our neighbor right now during this time?

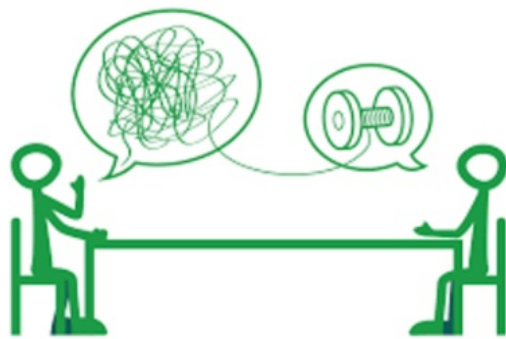
One easy way is to get vaccinated against the Covid-19 virus. This action shows love not only for yourself but also for your neighbor and your community as we work together to stop this thing in its tracks, develop communal immunity, and practice neighbor love as followers of Christ.

I know from experience that getting vaccinated can involve some suffering – I got my second dose several weeks ago 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 be blessed and also share God's blessings of health and hope with your neighbors! Bishop Laurie

Coach's Corner



How can you make change work *FOR* you?

Fear of change often stops us from taking steps to change. A coach creates a safe place to explore ideas, challenge assumptions, and build something new. It doesn't take a long commitment... even 2 or 3 visits can yield results! Coaching is new in the ELCA and does not come from a position of deficit, but from strength---*strength to continue what you have had to create to make it through the pandemic.*

Montana Synod has **trained** coaches ready to work with you and lay leaders. These are fellow Jesus followers who want to help you make a difference. Find out more:

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

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