



News of the Week May 19, 2021

Prayers of the Week

Please remember in your prayers this week:

For the family of Pastor Valorie Putt (Chinook) who died this morning. More information will be available at a later date.

From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:

Bethel Lutheran Church Joplin
Goldstone Lutheran Church Gildford

Metro New York Synod



Montana Synod Racial Justice Task Force

In June of 2019, voting members at the Montana Synod Assembly approved a resolution entitled, “Standing for Racial Justice and Cultural Competency in the Montana Synod.” The essence of this resolution acknowledged the work we’ve done and yet still need to do as a Christian denomination so as to reconcile our participation in a history that has prioritized settler-colonial laws and ideals for hundreds of years until now.

Such ideals have left Indigenous peoples and communities of color fighting, literally, for their lives to maintain their traditions, customs, and ways of life. These devastating losses over time have resulted in ongoing health disparities, suffering that we know concerns God’s heart and evokes Christ’s insistent urgings to love our neighbors as ourselves.

The resolution also resolved to assemble a MT Synod Racial Justice Task Force (RJTF) that will work to center our ministries and conversations on God’s distinct love for humanity in all of its diversity, doing so in light of the cultural and ideological differences we experience in this diversity.

After a slow start, the RJTF it has gotten off the ground and is structuring itself through regular conversation and relationship-building. So far, the RJTF is comprised of several lay leaders, clergy members, and leaders of color throughout Montana and the Montana Synod. However, the task force is still looking for more participation from you, trusting God's Spirit is working to bring more hands and hearts into this important work.

You can become a member of the RJTF in four ways. First, if you are an Indigenous leader or leader of color in Montana, we invite you to become a member of the Advisory Team. The Advisory Team will be advising and guiding the RJTF to take particular actions as we work to uplift the voices and leadership of Indigenous people and people of color in Montana, particularly those who are already leading or serving their communities with heartfelt intention.

If you are a church-rooted, non-indigenous member of an ELCA congregation, especially someone with a love for God's diverse creation, we invite you to become a member of the Strategy Team. The Strategy Team will focus on implementing strategy recommended by the Advisory Team. Members will be responsible for calculating when and how to carry out the actions of the RJTF synod-wide.

Third, if you're someone who isn't into strategic planning but is otherwise interested in taking action when needed, we invite you to be on the RJTF Action Team. The Action Team will help with turnout to events and trainings. They will conduct one-to-one relational meetings within their church communities to get other members and lay leaders involved in our work. They will do their own work to wrestle with the truths of colonization and how the effects of our history shape how we relate to our neighbors and God's creation.

Finally, you can either initiate or become a member of your own Congregational Connection Team (CCT). Each CCT will follow the strategies of the RJTF synod-wide while implementing local actions that support Indigenous leaders and communities of color. Your congregation's CCT will study together, challenge one another, and host conversations about the history of race in the United States. Your CCT will show up to events distinctively pertinent to tribal nations and communities of color in need of support throughout Montana. They will learn and practice the art of trust-building and deep listening. They will take action on strategies we hope will one day help to establish healing, wholeness, and reconciliation for all communities throughout our state and synod.

To learn more about the Racial Justice Task Force, their teams, strategies, or objectives, please contact Pr. Stacey Heggem at stacey.heggem@gmail.com. Blessings to all of us as we seek to love one another in all of our diversity!

Pr. Stacey Heggem & Bp. Laurie Jungling

Some wisdom from the Bishop re: recent CDC Guidelines

Many of you have no doubt heard about the confusing guidelines that came last week from the CDC regarding mask wearing, social distancing and other activities that affect our worship spaces and practices. Communities, counties, states and organizations are also attempting to issue guidelines based on the CDC guidelines which seems only to be making things more confusing. In light of this confusion, I will make no attempt to issue yet another set of guidelines as the congregations in the MT/NWY Synod continue to discern new and familiar ways to be church together as you emerge from pandemic related realities in your settings. Instead, I will offer the following:

- In whatever you decide and whatever you do, love one another.
- In whatever you decide and do, be wise, careful and ready to return to the safety-centered previous practices should Covid-19 numbers begin to rise again in your context.
- Keep an eye on the number of active cases in your area and listen to your health professionals, making decisions accordingly.
- Do not judge one another for the choices others are making or put stumbling blocks in the way of others in their faith. (cf. Rm 14:13ff)
- Instead lift one another up in mutual respect and "please your neighbor for the good purpose of building up your neighbor." (cf. all of Romans 14-15)
- Congregation councils and pastoral leaders, take a deep breath of fresh air outside, let it out slowly, and then continue to work together to make decisions for the common good of

your congregation and your surrounding communities.

Finally, in all that you do, think and say, remember and live out the verses from Galatians I've quoted often during this time of pandemic, "For you were called to freedom, siblings in Christ; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence but through love become servants to one another." (Gal 5:13)

Your (just as confused) sibling in Christ, Bishop Laurie

Attention Montana Synod Assembly Voting Members!

If you are a voting member to the Montana Synod Assembly, please keep an eye out for informational emails in the coming weeks. These emails will most likely be sent on Tuesdays and Fridays, so make sure to check junk or spam mail if it does not appear in your inbox.

Pastors and Leaders:

I would like to invite leaders interested in tools and ideas for revitalizing your ministry. Teams of 3 - 4 or more are invited to join with their pastor to reignite mission. This course will offer best practices and strong foundations for congregations who are in a time of transition, renewal and redevelopment. (As we come closer to post-Covid, isn't that nearly every congregation?) This is an opportunity to discern, kickstart efforts, or reimagine in the hopes of growth in vitality, sustainability, and reaching new people. The first online webinar will begin on May 27th at 11:30-1:00 MDT. This is a four-part training. Additional dates are June 10, June 24, and July 8th at 11:30-1:00 MDT. This series is free of charge for congregations and leaders. Free Registration Link: <https://forms.gle/rutFSdwYxijkRmZu8>

If you are interested, I recommend that you register even if you cannot attend all the sessions. Everyone who registers will receive recordings of each lecture plus the materials and a "tool box of resources" via email. Even if you cannot attend during the daytime, we recommend registering if you are interested in the topics and materials.

Please [use the attached Powerpoint](#) to gain info about the process of this Vital Congregation training and use it to share and invite others to participate!

Please register by May 24th using the link above. For more information please contact Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger, DEM (Director for Evangelical Mission)

All courses will be led by Rev Nancy Nyland, Rev CeCee Mills and Rev Jason Adams in partnership with the ELCA Christian Community and Leadership Congregational Vitality Team.

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