



News of the Week May 26, 2021

Prayers of the Week

Please remember in your prayers this week:

For the congregation of Gold Hill Lutheran in Butte. Who experienced fire in their building on Friday.

Prayers for healing and patience for retired pastor Steve Van Gilder and family as he recovers from a stroke and continues medical testing.



From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:

Malta Lutheran Church, Malta MT
Loring Lutheran Church, Loring MT
Kremlin Lutheran Church, Kremlin MT

Metro-DC Synod
Minneapolis Area Synod

Words from the Bishop: Against Violence

“Multiple people dead in mass shooting near San Jose light rail yard.” This is the headline I read in a newsfeed just minutes ago. Another headline on Monday reported that there were 12 mass shootings across the country over this past

weekend. (A mass shooting is defined as four or more people killed or wounded in one incident.)

Violence, including but not limited to gun violence, has become a regular, even predictable part of our culture these days and it only seems to be getting worse as we open up from the Covid-19 pandemic. We may not have as many of these type of incidents in Montana/N. Wyoming (yet) but that doesn't mean that violence doesn't affect so many of us where we live and work.



It seems that too many people believe that violence, against others or themselves, is the standard solution to whatever problem they are facing in their lives. Violence is the answer, they say, and with few other answers to the contrary shared in the public sphere, it's considered more and more to be an acceptable answer by too many. In fact, the violence – physical, emotional, psychological, verbal, spiritual -- has gotten so prevalent that we are becoming numb to the horror it causes in the lives of too many people.

So what are we as Christ's church supposed to do in the face of such violence? How do followers of Christ respond to the different forms of violence plaguing the world we live in? Do we hide from it? Do we fight against it with more violence? Do continue to offer our thoughts and prayers until it happens to us?

Often after these acts of violence, we hear people say, "our thoughts and prayers are with you." But what should we be thinking and praying before, during, and after these events? Do we bother to pray to God at all or has it become one of those nice things we say but never really follow up on because we think that, since nothing is changing, God doesn't care or isn't planning to do anything about it?

As followers of Christ, we believe that God's message to us in and through Christ is clear. The answer to the problems we face in life is not more violence. The answers to our problems are found in God's good news to us in and through the cross: new life, resurrection, love, hope, faith, reconciliation, compassion, forgiveness and so many more gifts, all of which are non-violent.

But we also believe that God works through us in this world, that we are to be God's hands, mouths, and feet, participating with God to create a more peaceful, non-violent place to live. It does us no good to pray to God to fix things if we aren't willing to participate in God's solutions.

So yes, first let us pray against the violence in the world. In faith, we know that God weeps and groans with us with sighs too deep for words in the face of such violence. And God responds to our prayers with divine power, the Spirit's love, and new life in Christ.

Let us pray for the victims of the many shootings and other forms of violence, those who have died and who are still alive fighting for their lives. Let us pray for the far too many families and friends who are grieving the loss of their loved ones' lives and those who are waiting by the bedside in the hope that their loved one will regain a life beyond their injuries.

Let us pray for all who have been traumatized by or live in fear of violence in body, mind, heart and spirit as well as for those who face violence and its consequences in their homes, communities, jobs, schools, streets, celebrations, and gathering spaces.

Let us pray for our leaders at the local, state, and national level to work with God's Spirit to create change instead of choosing apathy, greed, grief, anger, or ignorance. May they respond actively

and helpfully to seek the best solutions to this epidemic of violence.

Let us pray for ourselves in our own grief, anger, fear, apathy, or unwillingness that we may use the mouths, minds, hearts, spirits, hands and feet God gave us to honestly and lovingly think about, pray for, talk about and enact healthy solutions to our nation's worship of violence as the solution to our problems.

And then let us live out those prayers, empowered by Spirit and renewed in the new life of our baptisms to continuously find Christ-centered alternatives to the violence that engulfs our nation and attacks our lives.

May God bless and keep us in these days!

Bishop Laurie



Beyond Covid is a resource that was featured in the April and May editions of Seeds Monthly. This free Post-Covid Congregational Re-Gathering and Renewal Resource has been downloaded by 163 leaders in 33 states and 4 countries. If you are looking for a resource to use in your congregation, take a look at this.

Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger, DEM, Montana Synod.

If you're looking for a resource to encourage, inspire, and challenge your members and get them in the right frame of mind for your post-Covid journey ahead, consider Thriving Beyond Covid, a scripture-based small and large group study. The days ahead will be challenging but they can be managed with faith and a plan. Check out this two-minute video (<https://youtu.be/w1VQ5dMoeo0>) and the website to see if this resource is something your congregation might want to use. A leader guide, small and large group participant guides, and videos, are available for free download at www.ThrivingBeyondCovid.org.

To access and review the resource, simply go to www.ThrivingBeyondCovid.org and submit the brief Download Resources request. You will immediately receive an email reply with links to everything. I have also attached some graphics in case you may wish to use them.

Pastor Jeff Linman served for 33 years as an ELCA pastor, 22 of them in redevelopment settings, and have a deep passion for church renewal. As a relatively new member of the retired roster. He states, "I continue to serve by leading congregational renewal weekends and by serving pastors as an ELCA Level 1 coach. This resource is my gift to the church for these challenging times."

By the power at work in our midst, God is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine!

Ephesians 3:20

www.ThrivingBeyondCovid.org

www.BeDreamLeaders.com

www.IgniteTheChurch.net

cell: 828-216-7233

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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

Synod Assembly Link

The 2021 Montana Synod assembly will be livestreamed to the Synod's [YouTube channel](#). This is a public stream, for both voting members and visitors. Make sure to bookmark this page in your web browser, or subscribe to the channel to

access the livestream!



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