



Montana Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Equipping for Ministry

News of the Week June 30, 2021

Prayers of the Week

Please remember in your prayers this week:

Prayers for Pastor Rob Nedbalek (Freedom in Christ) as he recovers from a broken clavicle, and his family as they mourn the death of his daughter in law, Nichole.

From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:

Zion Lutheran Church, Lewistown
Devon Lutheran Church, Devon
Galata Lutheran Church, Galata

Northeastern Iowa Synod



Words from the Bishop: Freedom Run Amok

Freedom run amok.

That is what this image symbolizes for me.

This picture was captured the moment immediately following a major crash on the first day of the Tour de France this year, a crash caused by a single spectator who put her own freedom to do what

she wanted above all of the bike riders, the spectators and the many people whose livelihood depends on making this race happen. For whatever reason, this fan felt the overpowering desire to be on TV and say



hello to her grandparents, so she created a sign and then as the riders were racing her way at speeds well over 20 mph, she stepped into the road and turned her sign toward the camera and away from the riders.

Unable to swerve or stop, one of the riders crashed into her causing him to go down and to take out the entire peloton (large group of riders) behind and around him. This image shows the mayhem that ensued. We live in a society where individual freedom is prized above all things; where it's not only acceptable but even encouraged to put our own individual freedoms above the needs of others or the whole community. "Have it your way!" we hear again and again in advertising and from politicians and the wider culture, each teaching us in a variety of ways, "you live in the land of the free so you are of course free to do or say whatever you want, whenever you want, wherever you want and however you want no matter the consequences to anyone else or to the whole community."

And when we do that, when we exert our own freedoms without considering how it might affect those around us, we create mayhem and pile-ups and destruction. This image portrays the carnage that happens when we place our own personal freedoms above others' freedoms. Notice the tangled pile of bodies and limbs, bicycles and gear as more and more riders continued to crash into these from behind. All because one person insisted that her freedom to be on TV was more important than protecting the safety of the riders and the enjoyment of the spectators.

For too long, too many of God's precious children have been damaged by freedom run amok, human beings who've been left behind, damaged or dead on the road. It happens so easily and often without our realizing it, so focused we are on seeking our personal freedom.

But Christ's freedom is different. Certainly there is freedom in Christ, a freedom from sin, death and the power of evil. A freedom from the injustice and suffering that emerges from our individual and communal sin, our worship of death, and the evil that infiltrates our social systems and our lives.

But Christ's freedom that is given to we who would follow him is always a freedom for loving others. Christ's gift of freedom is centered on the death and new life of the cross, in which Christ gave up all freedom and then claimed it all back again so that the whole world could live a new abundant life in the freedom of God's love.

It is this divine love we have been freed to share with those around us. All gifts of God's grace – freedom, healing, salvation, redemption, new life – all these and much more, Christ gives for love so that we can love one another instead of fighting for our personal freedoms at the expense of others. "As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil." (1Peter 2:16)

This week, once again, we celebrate the freedom of this nation from the autocracy and tyranny caused by people long ago who demanded their own freedom to do what they wanted at the expense of others. We still face such threats of autocracy as individuals or groups try to claim all power and freedom for themselves, not caring who is harmed in the process.

Also, two weeks ago we commemorated Juneteenth, the day that all the slaves who suffered under the lash of chattel slavery in this country were finally freed from that form of oppression. Of course, it wasn't long before new ways were devised to deny these same people freedom so that others could have all the freedom for themselves.

As we who would follow Christ consider these days of commemorating the freedom from that which would oppress us, let us remember first that we are called to use our freedom for love. And, as a part of that love, we are called to seek justice for all those who have been damaged by the freedom run amok in our world. For finally, by the Holy Spirit's power, true freedom is found in our love for all.

As Paul reminds us, "...you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become servants to one another." (Gal 5:13)

In Christ's love,

Bishop Laurie

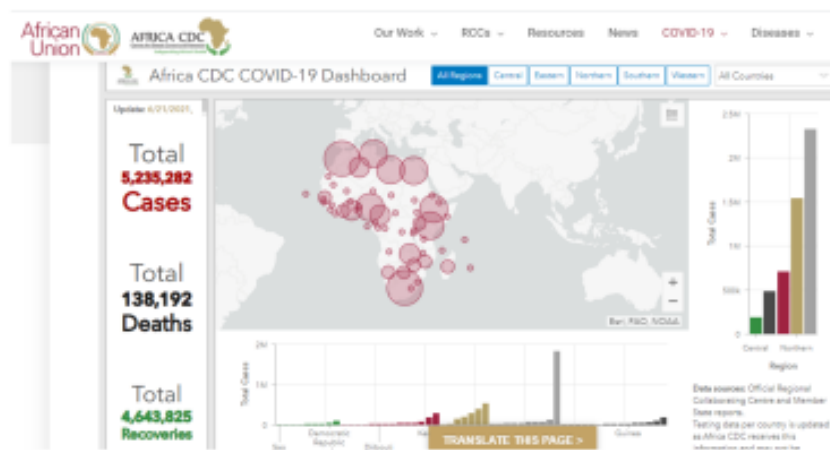
Dear friends,

Warm greetings,

Southern Africa, along with many other regions of the world, including parts of the USA, is experiencing a Third Wave of the COVID-19 pandemic with increases in cases and deaths. We are deeply concerned about this trend and especially for those who are still waiting for the rollout of vaccines. One of our companions conveyed a message a few days ago saying: "I have tested positive for COVID-19. I am pretty sick ... I pray I will not need hospitalization as the hospitals are full and no oxygen is available."

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has been calling for global cooperation including a three-year waiver on intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines saying:

"We are facing an emergency that is affecting the entire world. And it is wholly unfair and wholly unjust that pharmaceutical companies, as well as certain countries, are refusing to allow this provision to be waived so that there can be mass production of these vaccines, so that we can save lives."



The World Health Organization has announced it will be setting up a hub in South Africa to help poor and middle-income countries produce their own COVID-19 vaccines in the next nine to 12 months. The U.N. agency is calling on pharmaceutical companies to share their technology to make the plan successful.

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton has joined with faith leaders and medical professionals across the United States to ensure that all our neighbors have access to COVID-19 vaccines. Faiths4Vaccines is a multifaith movement seeking to increase vaccination rates by promoting equitable vaccine distribution and combating vaccine hesitancy. Learn how faith leaders are helping promote the vaccine. #Faiths4Vaccine <https://faiths4vaccines.org/stories/>

ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response continues to support several projects in Southern Africa to assist the churches as they work to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the communities they serve.

Thank you for your prayers, support and your participation in God's mission locally and globally.

Yours faithfully,
Rev. Dr. Philip Knutson
ELCA Regional Representative - Southern Africa
June 24, 2021

My blog page address is: <https://southernafricanconnections.wordpress.com/>
Please visit my [fundraising page](#). (Note: This fundraising page is set up for individuals' gifts only.) If you are donating on behalf of a congregation or organization, please visit ELCA.org/MissionaryGiving for online giving.



An Opportunity for Generosity

The Montana Synod is offering a special opportunity for individuals to share in the gift of CAMP this summer. Make a special donation today to allow EVERY KID the chance to go to camp.

100% of donations made to the MT Synod for this campaign will be split equally between Christikon and Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp for post COVID needs.



[Click here for a video from Christikon](#)

Check out these videos from camp!

Give Now

Select menu option
"Camps Special Appeal"

Or mail a check to:
Montana Synod, ELCA
1221 24th Street S
Great Falls, MT 59405

Now through June 30



[Click here for a video from FLBC](#)

Thank you for your generosity!

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