



News of the Week August 24, 2022

Prayers of the Week

Please remember in your prayers this week:

For Jeremy, Pastor Miriam Schmidt's husband, who is [recovering in the hospital](#) after a climbing accident last week.

From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:

Peace Lutheran Church Plevna
St. John's Lutheran Church, Jordan

Northwest Washington Synod



Words from the Synod: Helping Hands Food Ministry



-by Jenny Kunka

“Loving God. God of mercy. God of inclusion, welcoming and hospitality...”

So begins a Saturday at Helping Hands Food Pantry, the food ministry of First English Lutheran Church in Great Falls, Montana. The church and food distribution site sit within an area of concentrated poverty in Great Falls, within easy walking distance for many who are food insecure or homeless.

Carrie Parker, member of First English and the Director of Helping Hands, said the ministry began about forty years ago as a cupboard to help congregation members. In time, that evolved into once-a-month emergency food pantry and clothing distribution. When the pandemic hit, the ministry grew.

“We were seeing folks who got Covid and lost their jobs within a few weeks,” Parker said. Like most non-profits in the country, Helping Hands is now dealing with even greater need. At the beginning of the pandemic, they moved outside and, in time, were serving people once a week, every Saturday for two hours.

“We started hitting 100 people and thought that was a big deal. Now our biggest number is 334 people,” Parker said. That’s 334 people fed from boxes handed out within two hours. “It has blown up and I don’t see any sign that things are going to improve for folks soon, because housing is really an issue for people here.”

The numbers tell a story, such as the 2,000 pounds of food recently ordered from the Great Falls Food Bank and given out in one day. The more important story, though, is the work of the Holy Spirit. God present in the space where volunteers and guests (as the volunteers call them) interact, often times calling each other by name, treating each other with respect.

As guests wait in line, they are offered water bottles or coffee while volunteers bring out boxes of food. Helping Hands also creates “Go-kits” which are gallon ziplock bags filled with high protein foods for those who don’t have a kitchen or home. They can give up to 50 kits out on a Saturday.



The volunteers hope the food can tide a family or individual over for a week and that the love shared can uplift those who are struggling. “You can feel the Holy Spirit moving through that space sometimes,” Parker said.

Trying to meet such a huge need is not easy and, a couple months into the job as director, Parker became depressed because she couldn’t fix anything. “I really had to come to God and realize this isn’t about me. Even the team of us can’t do much. The only thing we have to offer is just to love the person that God puts in front of us. And then you love the next person. And the person after that.”

Parker reminds herself that God is loving and merciful. All who come to Helping Hands are loved children of God no matter what. “Isn’t that at the base of what we believe? It’s easy to get caught up in the mess and brokenness of it but at the root of it all is this huge, unfathomable, extravagant love.”

Helping Hands is *the* ministry of First English. It is the reason that some members, including Parker and her husband, decided to attend that church, because it’s faith in action. At the same time, Parker acknowledges the challenges for a small church to deal with the increasing need.

“There have been growing pains and it hasn’t been easy for folks because it isn’t comfortable. It’s difficult to see homeless people hanging around the church and I have compassion for those who find that hard.”

As Helping Hands has expanded, they’ve received help and volunteers from other Lutheran congregations as well as other denominations, yet Helping Hands would not exist if it were not for First English. They benefit from grants, individual gifts and the work of the local food bank. Even so, each Saturday is an act of faith, with volunteers wondering if there will be enough food for those who stand in line.

“We are stretching the seams on that space and on our capacity to help,” Parker said. “I just have to believe that Helping Hands will be provided for. And it happens over and over.

Somehow God provides. Every week at the end of the day I’m like, ‘I can’t believe it worked. I can’t believe we did it again.’ It’s incredible to see what happens when people come together to love one another. It truly changes things.”

Updated Synod Job Description: Office Manager

Start date: As soon as available. Accepting applications until the position is filled.

Compensation and Benefits

- Full-time, hourly. \$17 per hour, 40-hour week, time and a half overtime when needed and approved in advance.
- Benefits: health and retirement benefits, vacation, sick leave and family leave, continuing education support.

Position Description:

The Office Manager for the Montana Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is an integral part of the synod staff team whose primary responsibilities involve the day-to-day activities within an office environment including answering phone calls and email, maintaining paper and on-line filing systems, organizing events, maintaining a contacts database and a variety of front office reception tasks.

[Download the full job description and application instructions here.](#) Please feel free to share this in your congregation's newsletters!

Dear Congregation Leaders,

Is your congregation ready to take some steps (even small steps) toward renewal or revitalization? Are you ready to try some new things, share some ideas, gain a greater understanding of the broader mission, bring clarity about your own congregation’s mission, acquire knowledge on how

to live that out in community, gain confidence to share what you have learned with the world, and find new allies from within a cohort of congregations? Then, you are invited to attend the 2022 Fall Session of the ELCA Vital Congregations Training.

This is a fast paced co-creative and co-experimental Training facilitated by leaders with steep experience in redeveloping congregations as well as added guest presenters from a variety of settings with a wealth of knowledge. These principles and more will be explored: focusing on Jesus and justice; being expectant of the Holy Spirit; living as disciples of Jesus; multiplying leaders who are young, diverse and bring fresh insights; and aligning with purpose and core values.

This will be a four-session training. The training sessions will be held two times per day from 1:30-3:00 p.m. (eastern time) and from 7:30-9:00 p.m. (eastern time) on October 6th, October 20th, November 3rd, and November 17th. You may choose the best time each day that works for you. All sessions will be recorded and available to all registered participants. Pastors and congregations are encouraged to come as teams of 3–5 people for a time of inspiration, learning, planning, sharing, experimenting, visioning, and implementing. *NOTE: This training is for people who did NOT attend the Vital Congregations Re-BOOT Camp in Spring 2022 or 2021.*

You can find the registration link here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfcIeu4ptvSbdR4UXgcPasFcsvJTOBjYtQzL_LVz8UPFA-y8g/viewform?usp=pp_url

Contact DEM in the Montana Synod Peggy Paugh Leuzinger at ppleuzinger@montanasynod.org or email Anna-Kari Johnson, Anna_Kari.Johnson@elca.org for further information or with questions.

**A Message
from
Pastor Al**



Connections

Summer is connected to Fall, and yet we wait! We wait for cooler temps and college football. We wait for what has not yet come, but we wait all the more. You are no doubt making plans for the connection of summer events to fall (and winter) ministries. When we do this, we take into account how best we can minister to those God has entrusted to us.

The same is true at Immanuel Lutheran Communities. We are rejoicing at the ways you are discovering new volunteer opportunities at Immanuel. We also express our gratitude for your faithful giving to the ongoing ministry to our residents through the chaplaincy program. I cannot replace you, but I can sure be a faithful conduit of your love.

What connections do you need for me to make for you at Immanuel? How can I assist you in the outpouring of love for residents who are connected to your faith communities? We are in this together, and we are thankful for your partnership!

Carry on in the Joy of Jesus!

-Pastor Al

Immanuel Foundation supporting Immanuel Lutheran Communities

HELP US REACH OUR \$20,000 GOAL

Immanuel Foundation is one of 70 nonprofits in the Great Fish Community Challenge. Our goal is to raise funds that will directly support our Seniors in Need. When we reach \$20,000, Whitefish Community Foundation will provide a percentage match on those funds!



WAYS YOU CAN HELP

JOIN OUR TEAM at the Great Fish Fun Run and Community Fair on Sept. 10th at Whitefish Depot Park
REGISTER ONLINE AT [RUNSIGNUP.COM/GREAT-FISH-FUN-RUN](https://runsignup.com/great-fish-fun-run)

Donate on the web:

www.whitefishcommunityfoundation.org

Donate at the Pop-up Station at First Interstate Bank, on Main St., in Kalispell on Aug. 26
from 9am-1pm, to help us qualify for possible incentive grants.

For more information visit our [Immanuel Foundation](https://www.immanuelfoundation.org) website.

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