



## News of the Week September 8, 2021

### Prayers of the Week

**Please remember in your prayers this week:**

**From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:**

First Lutheran Church, Savage  
Grace Lutheran Church, Skaar  
Saco Lutheran Church, Saco

Northwestern Ohio Synod  
Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod



### Words from the Bishop:

Dear Friends in Christ,

As these summer months come to a close, I've heard a lot of expressions of tiredness from various people across our society. People are tired of Covid, tired of masks, tired of fighting about masks and vaccines. People are tired of the arguing about all matters of things in our nations, communities and world and across socio-political spectrums. People are tired of making decisions, adapting, change and we are tired of feeling all the feelings that come with these changes and the calls to change.

People are tired of feeling fear or anxiety, sadness and grief, anger and outrage, suffering and pain. People also seem to be tired of hearing about others' pain (it's called "compassion fatigue") and dealing with the consequences of how others' express their pain in unhealthy ways.



It seems we are running out of endurance. As I watched the marathons during the Olympics, I wondered with awe at the runners' endurance and resilience as they pushed through pain they were experiencing especially in the heat and humidity. Those who were able to finish, even if they came in last, were winners

to me because they just kept on going, one grueling step at a time, one shuddering breath at a time, reaching the finish line having given everything they had. What an expression of resilience and endurance!

Paul and other writers in the New Testament mention endurance several times in preaching the gospel to their fellow followers of Christ. Perhaps the most famous comes from Paul's letter to the Romans, "And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." (Rm 5:3-5) Here Paul lifts up the reality that our suffering and how we respond to it can make us more resilient in facing future suffering. Like a runner suffering through her training, she is building up her endurance to run another race.

But I would also say to Paul that not only does suffering produce endurance, it needs endurance to get through it. If we don't have the endurance in the first place, it's hard to move through it. And without the emotional and mental resilience to move through our sufferings, we often seek unhelpful and unhealthy ways around it or try to avoid it which can often do more damage than the suffering itself.

During my vacation, I read a book entitled *Building Resilience When There's No Going Back to the Way things Were* by Alice Updike Scannell (Episcopalian Priest and Chaplain). On the surface, it's a small simple book but the ten skills (attitudes and behaviors) she offers on building radical resilience in the emotional, mental, spiritual and physical aspects of our lives when everything has changed are not simple. The 10 skills she lifts up are 1) Mindfulness; 2) Courage; 3) Perseverance; 4) Flexibility; 5) Reframing the situation; 6) Creativity; 7) Realistic Optimism; 8) Hope; 9) Physical Activity; 10) Faith/ Spirituality.

These are skills we need to continually need to practice, training in them throughout all the circumstances of our lives. We do so to build resilience so that when we're feeling tired of just about everything, we have the endurance to push through, one step at a time, one day at a time, one breath at a time.

Of course, for we who follow Christ, the central aspect of our practice and training is continuing to open ourselves up to the work of the Holy Spirit in us to form and grow our faith in the God who loves us, empowers and strengthens us, equips us through many of these practices. Indeed, it is Spirit's power that enables and equips us to engage in these practices.

However, our participation in the Spirit's work matters. And it's here that Scannell's practices can guide us in a training regimen toward greater endurance and resilience. These don't take the tiredness and suffering away. But they can help us move forward into something better, into something closer to the abundant life God wants for us.

As we enter into these fall months, still facing the realities of Covid and turmoil and change, I encourage you to pick up Scannell's book or a similar resource to help you develop your endurance and resilience as you try to find your way through these unstable times. Scannell's book could actually serve as a helpful devotion, either as an individual devotional or in a larger group book study.

But even as you explore entering this practice, always remember Paul's words of pure gospel, also in Romans, "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rm 8:37-39)

You are not alone. God is always with you, strengthening you for every step, every day, every breath.

May God bless you always!

Bishop Laurie

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*6 Weeks on Money* is a digital course for ELCA congregations, synods, and leaders to offer individuals and groups.

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## Invitation to the LPA Program



**The Synod Staff will not be traveling, except**

**in the case of emergencies, in the month of September due to the rising numbers of Covid cases. We will also not be holding any events in the Synod office during this time.**

**Also, masks are required in the Synod office and we ask that if you plan to come into the building for longer than a drop off, that you are vaccinated.**

**The Synod Office will be staffed, so please always feel free to contact us by phone or email.**

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**Synod Staff:**

Bishop

Laurie Jungling: [ljungling@montanasynod.org](mailto:ljungling@montanasynod.org)

Associate to the Bishop

Pastor Jason Asselstine: [jasselstine@montanasynod.org](mailto:jasselstine@montanasynod.org)

Director for Evangelical Mission

Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger: [ppleuzinger@montanasynod.org](mailto:ppleuzinger@montanasynod.org)

Director of Technology and Communications

Colter McCarty: [cmccarty@montanasynod.org](mailto:cmccarty@montanasynod.org)

Office Manager

Candi Standall: [cstandall@montanasynod.org](mailto:cstandall@montanasynod.org)

Director of NRIT

Jenny Kunka: [j.kunka@nrit.org](mailto:j.kunka@nrit.org)

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