



News of the Week December 13, 2023

Prayers of the Week

Please remember in your prayers this week:

For Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger as she retires from her position as Director of Evangelical Mission.

For the victims of ongoing war across the world, including people of Israel and Gaza.

From the Montana Synod Prayer Calendar:

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd Church, Billings
Peace Lutheran Church, Billings

Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod
Southeastern Synod



Words from the Bishop: Farewell and God's Blessings, Pastor Peggy!

Greetings Dear Friends in Christ!

This week I write to you with much gratitude yet also some sadness as we say "Farewell and God's Blessings" to Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger. Pastor Peggy is resigning as the Montana Synod Director for Evangelical Mission position (DEM) effective this Friday, Dec. 15. She will be retiring

to enjoy more time with her family and move in new directions where the Spirit may be calling her to go.

Pr. Paugh Leuzinger has served as the DEM since 2017 and has given her gifts, skills and full self to this calling. The DEM position is a unique one in the ELCA in its focus on prophetic visioning and equipping of the church to explore and discern where God is leading Christ's church into the future. It's one of those few roles in the church where a crisis can look more like an opportunity than a stumbling block.



Peggy's passion, talents and energy for this role have been clear to me since I was elected and I have been honored and grateful to have Peggy as part of the synod staff team. I could write for hours naming the many ways she and her gifts have made a difference to the ministries of the Montana Synod as well as the many congregations, Synod Authorized Worshiping Communities, pastoral leaders and LPAs, fellow DEMs and other staff across the region and the wider ELCA. But I won't and will instead let you share your stories on the [Kudoboard link](#).

I have especially appreciated Peggy's previous experience as synod council member/secretary and pastor of two different sets of congregations in Montana; whether she wanted to or not, she became a synod historian. And she has been an excellent colleague and friend to me as we've journeyed with the synod staff through mountains, valleys, rough places and plains (quite literally as well as metaphorically) to equip the synod for the sake of the ministry of the gospel in Montana and Northern Wyoming.

Peggy will not be leaving the synod. She will remain in Livingston, Montana with her husband, Steve, and will continue to serve the synod in a few ways such as being a part of the Synod Hunger Team, a guide and coach for a cohort of congregations in the Faithful Innovations Process, a liaison leader with the Excellence in Leadership program through Rocky Mountain Synod, and as support and resource for the new DEM.

So this is not "Good-bye," Peggy, but rather "Farewell and God's Blessings" as you take the next steps on the journey that the Holy Spirit has in mind for you. Please know that you go with our prayers, well-wishes and most importantly our appreciation and thankfulness for all that you have given and all that God has done for us through you.

Tomorrow, Thursday, December 14 from 2:30-4:30 p.m. we will be hosting an Open House at the Synod House in Great Falls so that those who are nearby and able can have an opportunity to stop by and offer Peggy their own thanks. If such travel doesn't work, I encourage you to offer your gratitude and greetings to Peggy on the [Kudoboard link here](#).

Go with God, Pastor Peggy! And know that even though you will no longer be available to function as synod staff after December 15, 2023, I will not be losing your number!
Bishop Laurie

**Click here to leave a message on a
Kudoboard for Pastor Peggy!**

Open House Honoring Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger, DEM

Will be held at the Synod House 2:30pm - 4:30pm on Thursday December 14th.

Please join us in celebrating and thanking Peggy for her service to the Synod as she retires on December 15th.

1221 24th St. S
Great Falls, MT 59405



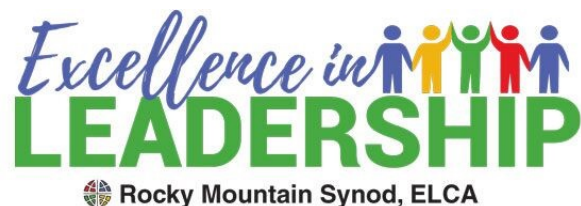
This week we have something a little different for you. A video! Pastor Marlow talks with us on how prison ministry helps those incarcerated and invites you to join us. Click on the link to watch the video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_NNKdd_mVG4

We have a budget shortfall for 2023. Can you help us meet our budget? To give click the link below:

<https://bit.ly/3GDChQV>

Thank you for your support and prayers!



“It’s not easy to be the church these days”. This is a common sentiment in mainline Christian denominations. We know there is a need for hope and grace and the power of the gospel, but the ways of communicating that and the ways of being church in the world are shifting beneath our feet.

In response to this truth and the desire to raise up courageous, resilient, and faithful leaders, the Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA, has created a leadership ministry called Excellence in Leadership. The coursework is a 13-month investment, meeting 2 times each month which will provide tools and resources to last a lifetime, and deep relationships with leaders from around the country to accompany you on your journey in your local community.

At the heart of this ministry is the belief that effective leadership begins with the individual and is honed in community. This ministry helps each person learn how to appreciate who they are, how they are embodied, and manage the way they personally respond to challenges and conflict. Through engaging in this work, individuals are then able to show up more effectively in places of anxiety, conflict, and frustration. When leaders show up in healthy ways, they are better equipped to help the people and systems they work in and with to also respond in healthier ways.

By engaging deeply in the studies of adaptive leadership, vulnerability, emotional intelligence, family systems, Theory U, and spiritual practices, we will be stepping forward to meet the future boldly. We are inviting participants from all regions and walks of life – lay or rostered, young or old. That includes you!

The next cohort will begin on January 5, 2024, and will meet twice per month on Friday mornings from 9:00am-12:00pm Mountain Time, with a commissioning on January 17, 2025.

Truly this initiative is helpful for not only for congregations, but for all people who wish to improve their leadership skills and increase their capacity for emotional intelligence in any area of their lives. Whether you would like to do it as an individual or would like to participate as a group, this initiative is for you. Listen to this testimony from Flip Wilson, a commissioned participant from the program. (note: the video mentions an 18-month cohort, which we also offer, beginning each fall)

<https://vimeo.com/748832132>

We don't know exactly what the future holds, but we do know that it begins with each personal journey toward emotional and spiritual wholeness. Let's embark on this journey together.

Find out more information and register here: <https://www.rmselca.org/excellence-in-leadership>

Sign up today!

Montana and Northern Wyoming Synod Hunger Fund

At the September Synod Council meeting, a decision was made to establish a "Montana and Northern Wyoming Synod Hunger Fund". The purpose of this fund is to provide money to congregations and ministries in the Synod who are working to feed hungry people in our local communities. The reports from several of these ministries is that they have been seeing an increase in the numbers of people who are requesting food and assistance. The need is great in rural areas as well as in towns and cities across the Synod.

There are several congregations who are actively seeking to help feed the hungry and offer Gospel love. Could you and / or your congregation make a gift to this fund this fall and on a recurring basis? The Montana Synod has generously supported the work of the ELCA World Hunger Appeal. Can you help to feed people who are hungry here in our Synod, too?

A grant process is being established so that congregations and ministries can apply for

funds. Thanks to the work of the Synod Council, seed money of about \$12,000 has been given to this fund. Be watching for information soon about how to apply for a grant from this fund.

As you give to the Montana/N. Wyoming Synod Hunger fund, please mark clearly on checks that it is for the Synod Hunger Fund. You may also give through montanasynod.org on the GIVE button via the dropdown link to the Synod Hunger Fund.

Thank you for your generous care for those in our communities who are in need!

[Montana Synod Hunger Fund Poster Download](#)

Sermon Manuscripts Available

Montana Synod leaders have been providing manuscripts for use in congregations through the Lent and Easter seasons. We are happy to announce that these manuscripts will be provided throughout the entire year! Thank you to the leaders in the Montana Synod who are providing these manuscripts every week. They can be found and downloaded on the [Montana Synod website here](#).

The Montana Synod Office will be closed and Synod staff off Dec. 24-26 and Dec. 29 - Jan. 1, in observance of Christmas and New Years.

[Click here to give to the Montana Synod](#)

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