

Montana District Reflections

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Creation and the Creator

The man, one of my neighbors, had been raised as a Christian but he left The Faith during college, largely because he couldn't reconcile the Biblical story of creation and the young age of the earth, with what he observed and had learned from science. When I asked him if he ever attended a church anymore, he said, "I worship in the church of the big blue dome." Instinctively, you know what he means. He loves to camp and fish and hike and hunt and it is in those things, those activities, that he believes he worships *something* and finds peace and rest.

The peak tourist time of year in Montana is coming to its end. People have come from all over the world to see the great outdoors, to experience some of the wild things (the animals, not the people). A few have come to pet the fluffy buffalo's in Yellowstone National Park. Not all of them are seeking to worship or find God or a god in the "church of the big blue dome," but many are.

From the words, "**In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,**" Bible believing Christians are set at odds with the unbelieving world, with those who have rejected the Creator but who enjoy and even worship His creation. The Genesis account of creation is not a mythology, it's not like the Babylonian creation myth (Enuma Elish), or the Greek explanation and understanding of how things came to be, or like any of the other creation myths. Each "civilization" seems to have their own story, their own myth, and they all seem to start in chaos, darkness, and water and they all seem to end in a return to chaos and darkness too. The details are surprisingly similar, and each myth has some higher being, some god or gods that made and interact with it all.

The details of the creation stories are similar because all of those myths, even though their authors don't fully realize it or believe it, have their source in the true story of creation in Genesis.

Genesis 1 and 2 are the beginning of the true story that the Bible tells us about the one true God, the only God, who created everything that you can see, and also that which you can't see, out of nothing, in six regular days, simply by speaking.



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The true story of creation begins in chaos, darkness, and water but God quickly bring light and order. We confess each week, *“I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.”* We often sing that confession too. One of our hymns says it this way, “At His voice creation sprang at once to sight, all the angel faces, all the hosts of light, thrones and bright dominions, stars upon their way, all the heavenly orders in their great array” (“At the Name of Jesus,” LSB 512.2, public domain)

The one true God is the Author of creation, science, and mathematics, of animals and man, and He is the source of true wisdom, knowledge, understanding, beauty, truth, order, and light. But, if you believe this, then my neighbor, along with the majority of the people of this world, considers you a fool. It isn’t hard to see and recognize the beauty and the order of creation, but they don’t know the God who created it, redeemed it by His blood, and who will come again to judge the living and the dead.

This can only be believed and confessed by the work of the Holy Spirit through the same Word that spoke the creation into existence, the Word that became flesh and brought light into the world that had been brought back into darkness by sin. By faith in Christ, **“we understand that the universe was created by the Word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”** (Hebrews 11:3) By faith in Christ, worked by the Holy Spirit, you believe that Jesus **“is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”** (Colossians 1:15-17)

We are blessed to live in a beautiful place, and I hope that you are able to enjoy the wonders of God’s creation that are all around us. But I also hope that you recognize the great blessing God has given you to know the Creator of this creation and to have been washed in His blood in the waters of Holy Baptism.

As you head out into the wilderness, as you look at the majestic mountains, or watch the storms roll in over the golden plains, remember that the creation does testify to its Creator. **“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.”** (Psalm 19:1–2) As you go to enjoy this creation that points to its Creator, take Genesis 1 and 2 along with you. Consider what your God has done by the Word of His mouth, consider that you are **“fearfully and wonderfully made”** (Psalm 139:14) and in looking at the grandeur and glory, ask with the Psalmist, **“what is man that You are mindful of him?”** (Psalm 144:3)

Then don’t stop reading at Genesis 2, go on and read about mankind’s fall into sin (a return to chaos, disorder, darkness, and the introduction of death into the creation) and God’s promise of a Savior in chapter 3 (the light that comes again into the world). Consider God’s providing for sinful Adam and Eve, His call to repentance in the days before the flood and His mercy in sparing Noah and his believing family. Genesis isn’t just the story of the creation of all things in six days, but the story of your place in this creation as the crown of God’s creation, and it is the true story of your redemption too. It is no myth; it is all true.

Many reject Genesis as just another myth. They reject that Adam and Eve were real people who disobeyed a real God and brought the whole ordered and beautiful creation under the reign of death. Many can’t find the promise of a Savior in God’s words to the serpent in Genesis 3:15.

They go through this life like my former neighbor, walking in blindness, in the shadow of death, and with no lamp for their feet or light for their path. They are always seeking meaning and purpose and beauty and rest and yet they are never satisfied.

Your meaning and purpose are found in your identity as a child of God redeemed by Jesus Christ. True rest and peace can only be found in Christ crucified and raised from the dead to save sinners, in His forgiveness, mercy, and love. While Jesus is certainly *in* His creation and still sustaining and holding it all together, He has not promised to be found out in the woods or up in the mountain for your forgiveness, life, and salvation. He has promised to be found, to reveal Himself, and to forgive and bless you where His Word is preached and His sacraments are administered, in short, where His church is gathered. We sing, “Thy strong word did cleave the darkness,” and “lo, on those who dwelt in darkness ... broke the light of Thy salvation,” and “from the cross forever beameth, all Thy bright redeeming light.” (“Thy Strong Word,” LSB 578, Martin Franzmann, CPH 1969)

You don’t have to grope around in the darkness, or in the beauty of God’s creation, looking for *something* to believe in and worship. God has opened your eyes and created faith in your heart to know and trust in the One true God. May He also grant you eyes of faith to see in even your unbelieving neighbor one for whom Christ has died, and who desperately needs the light and truth of the Gospel. God also grant you eyes of faith to see that what He gives you each week in His Divine Service to you is more valuable than gold and silver and more beautiful than anything that this fallen creation has to offer.

– Rev. Ryan D Wendt
Montana District President

Calls

- Rev. Willis McCall has returned the Call to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, TN
- Rev. Samuel Grayl has returned the Call to St. Luke Lutheran Church, Cabot, PA
- Rev. Jakob Berger has returned the Call to St. John’s Lutheran Church, Cordova, NE. He is now considering the Divine Call to Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Crete, NE.

CHANGES IN THE DISTRICT

Transfers In: 3

- Mr. Kyle Barth from South Wisconsin District to serve as Principal of Trinity Lutheran Church, Billings
- Rev. Eric Stinnett from the Mission Field (Ethiopia) to serve as Sole Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Three Forks and Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Belgrade.
- Rev. Brock Schmeling from North Dakota to serve as Sole Pastor of St. John, Fairview and Trinity, Sidney

Status Changes

- Mr. Timothy Rehbein (Candidate) has resigned from the Commission Ministers Roster of the LCMS
- Mrs. Rachel Doucette (Kalispell) has applied for reinstatement to the Commissioned Minister Roster (Pending)
- Mrs. Callie Peterson has applied for Candidate status (Pending)
- Mr. Gideon Schauer has applied for Candidate status (Pending)

Called to Glory

- Rev. Walter Synder (Vicarage was at Mt. Olive, Billings) was Called to Glory on June 1st
- Rev. Daniel Rinderknecht was Called to Glory on June 22nd

District President's Calendar

- July 18-23: Synodical Convention, Phoenix, AZ
- Aug 2: Grace Lutheran Church, Hamilton
- Aug 2-8: Continuing Education
- Aug 19-21: Tri-District Administrative Gathering, Sioux Falls, SD
- Aug 23: Installation of Mr. Kyle Barth at Trinity, Billings
- Aug 30: Installation of Rev. Eric Stinnett at Holy Trinity, Belgrade (Grace, Three Forks)
- Sept 13: Installation of Rev. Brock Schmeling at Trinity Lutheran Church, Sidney (St. John, Fairview)
- Sept 17-22: COP meetings/LCEF meeting, St. Louis
- Oct 13: Circuit Visitors meeting, Church at Creston—Lutheran
- Oct 14-16: Fall Pastors Conference, Church at Creston—Lutheran
- Oct 24-26: Reformation Festival: Western Circuit Joint Reformation Service, Missoula
- Oct 28-30: COP Regional Gathering, South Dakota

Reminders & Notes from the District Office

- Annual Reporting Forms for Candidate members of our district were due **July 31st** If you haven't completed your annual paperwork, please do so as soon as possible
- Luther Annual Updates—It's time to log into the LCMS Information Support Network (LISN) for Church Workers website to review your information for The Lutheran Annual 2027. All rostered workers, update your LCMS rostered worker information by **September 1st**
 - To review and update your church worker information, visit lcw.lcms.org
- Student Loan Repayment Grant applications must be received by the Montana District Office by **September 15th**
- **Upcoming conferences**
 - Fall Pastors Conference, October 14th-16th at the Church at Creston—Lutheran

CURRENT VACANCIES

- Our Redeemer, Anaconda (Vacancy Pastors: Bruce Linderman & Mark Schultz)
- Holy Trinity, Belgrade/Grace, Three Forks (Vacancy Pastor: Various)
- St. Mark, Butte (Vacancy Pastor: James Mavis)
- Zion, Chinook/St. Paul, Havre (Vacancy Pastor: Terry Forke)
- Mt. Calvary, Colstrip/Circle of Life, Lame Deer (Vacancy Pastor: Arlo Pullmann)
- St. John, Deer Lodge (Vacancy Pastor: Gideon Pullmann)
- Faith, Glasgow/Trinity, Plentywood/Trinity, Wolf Point (Vacancy Pastors: David Behm, Howard Schreibeis)
- St. John, Fairview/Trinity, Sidney (Vacancy Pastors: Rev. Christopher Brandt, Rev. Dr. Matthew Christensen, Rev. Erik Saunders, and Rev. David Behm)
- St. Paul, Ronan (Vacancy Pastor: Kyle Whaley and Tim Christensen)

Calling Congregations/Schools

- Our Redeemer, Anaconda: Vacant-served
- St. Paul, Ronan: Vacant-served
- Holy Trinity, Belgrade/Grace, Three Forks
 - Rev. Eric Stinnett has accepted the Call. He will be installed on August 30th
- Trintiy Lutheran School, Billings-Principal
 - Mr. Kyle Barth has accepted the Call. He will be installed on August 23rd
- St. Mark, Butte & St. John, Deer Lodge
 - Rev. Troy Peperkorn, Faith Lutheran Church, Silver Bay, MN, has returned the Call
- Zion, Chinook & St. Paul, Havre
 - Rev. Timothy Lorenz, St. Peter Lutheran Church, Huntington, IN has returned the Call
 - Rev. Joshua Jones, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Rapid City, SD has returned the Call
 - Rev. Zelwyn Heide, St. Peter Lutheran Church, Hannover, Zion Lutheran Church, New Salem, and St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Hazen, ND has returned the Call
- Mt. Calvary, Colstrip & Circle of Life, Lame Deer
 - Rev. Brian Bucklew, Zion Lutheran Church, Plainview, NE has returned the Call
 - Rev. Peter J. Haugen, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Chatfield, MN has returned the Call
- St. John, Fairview & Trinity, Sidney
 - Rev. Marcus Williams of Blessed Sacrament Lutheran Church, Rathdrum, ID (Previously served Zion, Chinook & St. Paul, Havre) has returned the Call
 - Rev. Brock Schmeling, Trinity Lutheran Church, Great Bend, ND, and Peace Lutheran Church, Barney, ND has accepted the Call. He will be installed on September 13th
- Faith, Glasgow/Trinity, Plentywood/Trinity, Wolf Point
 - Rev. Kurt Laskowsky, First English Lutheran Church, Centerville, SD and Zion Lutheran Church, Hurley, SD has returned the Call
 - Rev. Zelwyn Heide, St. Peter Lutheran Church, Hannover, Zion Lutheran Church, New Salem, and St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Hazen, ND is considering the Call
- Trinity Lutheran School, Kalispell-Teacher is in the Call process

Vicar Updates

- Vicar-Elect Donald “Wil” Welch was assigned to St. John’s, Laurel and Rev. Pullmann from CSL.
- Vicar-Elect Jacob Diercks (wife Julie) was assigned to First Lutheran, Bozeman and Rev. Samuel Grayl from CSL.
- Vicar Hollister’s final Sunday at Christ the King Evangelical was June 28th. Vicar Hollister will be assisting at various congregations in the MT District until August 16th before returning for his 4th year at CTSFW.
- Vicar Rickords will conclude his vicarage at St. John’s Evangelical in early August and then return to CSL for his 4th year of studies.

Getting to Know a Montana District Church Worker



Rev. Samuel J. Grayl

I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and grew up in Vista, California, until middle school, when my family moved back to the Milwaukee area. I was raised Roman Catholic, but after returning to Wisconsin, my family became Lutheran and joined Hales Corners Lutheran Church. My father often says that worshipping in the Lutheran Church was the first time he truly heard the Gospel. We have been Lutheran ever since.

After graduating from high school, my family and I moved to Florida. I had the goal of studying sharks for a living, but God had other plans. I transferred to a college in Milwaukee, returned to Hales Corners Lutheran, and during that time became serious about following Jesus. I eventually felt a call to be a pastor. Rev. Mike Ernst mentored me, encouraged me to transfer to Concordia University Wisconsin, and then head to the seminary. I graduated from Concordia University Wisconsin in 2000 with a Bachelor of Science in Biology, and then attended Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, where I earned a Master of Divinity in 2004.

While I was a seminary student, I became friends with a special graduate student who later became my wife two weeks before we moved to California for my vicarage. Nadine (DuBois) attended Concordia University Chicago, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Music, a minor in theology, and deaconess certification. She now holds a Master of Arts in Exegetical Theology from Concordia Seminary and a Master of Social Work from Case Western Reserve University.

I served as vicar at West Portal Lutheran Church and School in San Francisco, CA, while Nadine completed her deaconess internship in Clinical Pastoral Education at Sequoia Hospital in Redwood City, CA. She also served for three months at West Portal Lutheran in youth and women's ministry. Our son Samuel Xavier was born preterm in St. Louis, right after my seminary graduation at 32 weeks.

In 2004, I received my first call to St. Thomas Lutheran Church in Eastpointe, Michigan, where I served as associate pastor in a large congregation with a preschool and K-8 school. In 2009, I accepted the call to First Lutheran Church in Bozeman, Montana, where I have now served for 17 years. Nadine has served as a hospital chaplain in Bozeman and now maintains a private mental health practice as a licensed clinical social worker. She also serves as music director at First Lutheran.

Getting to Know Samuel Grayl

First Lutheran has been a loving church family to us, and Bozeman has been a wonderful place to raise our children. As a family, we love camping, staying in Forest Service cabins, and exploring Montana. Our children have been blessed to attend Trinity Lutheran Camp in Bigfork, MT. In 2015, my parents moved to the Bozeman area, making it a true blessing for our family to serve and raise our children here.

We are blessed with three wonderful children:

- Samuel is a junior psychology major at Montana State University in Bozeman.
- Anastasia is a sophomore music major at Concordia University Irvine.
- Josephine is a high school junior.

Confirmation Verse: Galatians 5:6, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”

Favorite Color: Green

Favorite Season: Hunting Season

Favorite Hobby: Hunting, fishing, trail running

Favorite Book (besides the Bible, our Lutheran Confessions, and so many theology books): Fictional book by Robert Jordan entitled “Eye of the World”

Favorite Vehicle: We have three children who all drive, so my favorite vehicle is the one that runs properly.

Favorite Thing About Serving the Lord: It is a profound privilege to serve God’s people, standing alongside them as they navigate the heights of joy and the valleys of sorrow. In moments of celebration and triumph, as well as in seasons of deepest pain and uncertainty, we have the sacred honor of bringing the unchanging promises of Christ—His comfort, hope, peace, and redeeming love. Whether in times of abundance or times of trial, we walk with them, pointing them to the One whose grace is sufficient and whose presence is a constant anchor for the soul. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever!” (Hebrews 13:8)

Favorite Hymn: LSB 763 “When Peace, Like a River”

Elaborate on Your Hymn Choice: 763 “*It is Well with My Soul*”

In my years as a pastor, I have buried hundreds of people. Death is the enemy—an intruder that violates God’s good creation. We confess with the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:26, “The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”

Many of the funerals I have conducted were heartbreaking: suicides, cancer, addiction, and sudden accidents. This is why “It Is Well with My Soul” remains one of my favorite hymns. It anchors us in our sure and certain hope in Christ, even in the face of unimaginable loss.

Getting to Know Samuel Grayl

Horatio Spafford was a prominent 19th-century businessman in Chicago. In 1871, he lost his fortune in the Great Chicago Fire, along with his only son. His wife and four daughters survived. Seeking rest after these devastating losses, the family planned a trip to visit friends in England. Delayed by urgent business matters, Spafford sent his wife and daughters ahead aboard the French liner *Ville du Havre*.

On November 22, 1873, the ship collided with the English vessel *Loch Earn* and sank in just twelve minutes. Spafford's wife was rescued, but all four daughters perished. From Wales, she cabled her husband the heartbreaking words: "Saved alone."

Spafford immediately boarded a ship to join his grieving wife. As they crossed the Atlantic and passed over the very spot where his daughters had drowned, he was moved to write the now-famous lyrics:

When peace like a river attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, "It is well, it is well with my soul."

Some of the hymn's imagery draws directly from Psalm 46. The psalm declares that God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble—even when the earth gives way, and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea. The hymn powerfully teaches that God remains our fortress amid unspeakable tragedy. It offers a peace the world cannot give: a deep stillness and peace in the midst of turmoil.

I have found profound comfort in hymns like this one, written by those who have endured tremendous, incalculable loss yet turned to the Lord in faith. Knowing that truth is why Spafford could pen the triumphant final stanza:

Lord, haste the day when our faith shall be sight, The clouds be rolled back as a scroll; The trumpet shall sound, and the Lord shall descend, Even so—it is well with my soul.

Hasten that day, Lord. The best is yet to come.

Christ is Risen! Which means we do not have to be afraid. As the psalmist says, "Be still, and know that I am God." We can rest in the One who made the world and is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. No matter how great the mountains are that fall into the sea, their collapse is ultimately in vain. Christ is our fortress, our refuge, our strength, and our ever-present help in trouble.

First Lutheran Church's Mission

Showing the Love of Jesus to People Every Day

Love is an action, and Jesus showed love to people in many ways: He fed, He preached, He healed, and ultimately He died for all people because of God's powerful love. At First Lutheran Church our mission is to continue His example in worship, ministry, and fellowship with everyone we meet: Showing the Love of Jesus to People Every Day. We invite you to come and visit First Lutheran and share in worshipping God and serving others.

Montana District Schools

As we anticipate the start of a new school year, please keep our Montana District Schools and their staff and students in your prayers.

Mount Olive Lutheran School	Billings
Trinity Lutheran School	Billings
Kings Kids Preschool	Columbia Falls
Our Savior Promises Preschool	Glendive
Wee Disciples Lutheran Preschool	Great Falls
Grace Lutheran Learning Center	Hamilton
First Lutheran School	Helena
Trinity Lutheran School	Kalispell
Trinity Lutheran Classical School	Miles City
Little Fishes Lutheran Preschool	Park City
Mount Calvary Lutheran Preschool	Polson
Little Lambs Preschool	Ronan
Grace Lutheran Preschool	Three Forks



Montana District Church-Work Students

- Travis Hartmann (wife Monica), (CTK, Billings, CTSFW) was ordained and installed at Faith Lutheran Church, Madison IN on July 26th
- Vicar William Harr (wife Grace), (Trinity, Great Falls, CTSFW), began his vicarage at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Eldora, IA, on July 12th
- Seminarian Noah Olaff, (Trinity, Billings, CSL), successfully completed his vicarage and is returning for his 4th year of seminary studies at CSL.
- Seminarian Alfred "Luke" Heupel, (Church at Creston Lutheran, Creston, CTSFW), 1st year of seminary studies at CTSFW
- Joshua Ebel, (Trinity, Billings, CUNE), 1st year of studies as Director of Christian Education at CUNE
- Luke Kunz, (First Lutheran, Missoula, CUC), 1st year of pre-seminary studies at CUC
- Caleb Nicholls, (Our Savior, Glendive, CUNE), 1st year of pre-seminary studies at CUNE
- Joshua Schultz, (Trinity, Great Falls, CUNE), 3rd year of music education (K-12) studies at CUNE
- Aaron Thomas, (St. John, Libby, CUI), 2nd year of studies as director of parish music at CUI
- Elizabeth Wendt, (CTK, Billings, CUC), 1st year of studies at CUC
- Jered Jares (St. John, Laurel, LCC), 2nd year of pre-seminary studies at Luther Classical College, Casper, WY

God Bless your continued studies and service to His church!

EXCERPTS FROM: SERVING THE LORD IN LIMA, PERU NEWS FROM GERALD AND HEIDI PAUL

Symposium in the DR The theme for the 9th annual symposium was, “Mission from the Cross”, celebrating the translation into Spanish of Rev. Dr. Detlev Schulz’s outstanding book of the same title. His keynote presentation and two workshops framed the week’s theme. In a nutshell: “the church’s mission flows from the cross – God works through the Means of Grace to bring people to faith and grant them the salvation that Jesus won for them on the cross”.

Presenting at the symposium Gerald was one of five further presenters throughout the week. His paper, titled, “Mission as Spiritual and Tangible Reality: focuses on the Apology of the Augsburg Confession Article VII – where we confess the Church as a spiritual reality, but which becomes tangible through the Marks that God has given: Word and Sacrament.

2026 Graduation This year Concordia the Reformer Seminary, Dominican Republic, saw three candidates graduate from the four-year residential pastoral program. Kairo Juarez (Guatemala), Jesus Barcelo (Venezuela) and Oscar Saavedra (Mexico) will each return to their home countries to serve as Lutheran pastors. We thank God for these faithful men! Gerald has appreciated teaching these three and believes they will be solid servants of the Word. May the Lord go with them and bless their toil in the field that it may bring forth a bountiful harvest.



Prayerfully consider partnering with the LCMS to support the work of Gerald Paul. Make checks payable to:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
P.O. Box 66861 St. Louis
MO 63166-6861

OR

Mission Central
40718 Highway E 16
Mapleton, IA 51034

On the memo line include Gerald Paul – Lima, Peru

Give securely from any device: lcms.org/givenow/gerald.paul

Call a donor care representative: 800-930-4438

Montana District Board of Directors' Summary

The Montana District Board of Directors met on May 4, 2026, at the district office for the quarterly board meeting. The minutes from the January 26th meeting were presented and approved.

While a decrease in assets was noted, the Montana District continues to maintain a stable financial position as it prepares to consider the 2027 budget. The decrease was mainly due to negative market returns, convention expenses, and the expenditure of funds for the Wolf Point, Plentywood, and Glasgow parsonage repair and remodel. There was also a decrease in the net income for the quarter. Chris Wood, Executive Director of Internal Audit, will present at the August Board of Directors meeting.

Congregations continue to review and update their constitution and bylaws. Peace Lutheran Church, Great Falls and Zion Lutheran Church, Chinook, are in the final stages of approval.

The district Travel Per Diem has been updated to reflect the reality of the difficulty in meeting the costs for meals with the current allowance. An amendment was moved, seconded, and approved that the SOP reflect this by explicitly including the following changes: *Meal Reimbursement will follow the current standard rate published by GSA (US General Services Administration) for Montana for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. A maximum of one alcoholic beverage will be reimbursed per day.*

School Fund grants are due to the district office by May 31st. Two requests have already been received. Schools will be contacted after the August BOD meeting.

Faith Lutheran Church, Condon, is in need of a roof repair. It was approved to match up to \$25,000 of donations, with a guarantee from the district of \$5000.

Rev. David Mews and Rev. Justin Herman were nominated to fill the District Reconciler position, vacated by Rev. Dennis Bauer. Rev. Herman was appointed to fill the position. Rev. David Mews will also complete the training, to be available if another reconciler is needed.

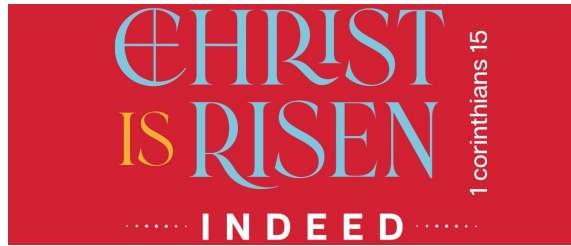
The next Board of Directors meeting will take place at the district office on August 10th.

LCMS Worker Wellness

New Worker Wellness Resources

Church workers are people worthy of being cared for too. They get sick, they struggle, they sin. Sometimes the demanding nature of church work leaves them feeling vulnerable and isolated. The LCMS prioritizes worker wellness, promoting and nurturing spiritual, emotional and physical wellness in its workers. In addition to an ongoing library of resources (<https://www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/mercy/church-worker-wellness>), LCMS Worker Wellness is offering several new resources and their workers.

2026 Synodical Convention



Eight delegates from the Montana District traveled to Phoenix, AZ, July 18th-23rd to participate in The 69th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, along with 1,321 other registered delegates. According to the minutes from day 1, 943 (464 lay and 479 pastors) Voting delegates, 161 Advisory delegates, 165 Advisory representatives (including 4 district youth representatives), and 167 Special guests and others were present. Over five days, these participants heard, discussed, and voted on resolutions from around the Synod. 374 overtures were submitted to the 11 floors committees, out of which, 106 resolutions were brought before the assembly. According to the Lutheran Witness, major topics of these resolutions included: Pastoral Formation/Routes to Ordination, Dispute Resolution/Ecclesiastical Supervision, Lutheran Identity, Demographic Shifts, and Structural Questions.

For all convention related information, please visit:

<https://www.lcms.org/convention/national>

Election Results

Synodical President—Matthew C. Harrison (MO)
First Vice-President — Peter K. Lange (MO)
Second Vice-President — Benjamin T. (Ben) Ball (SI)
Third Vice-President — Alfonso O. Espinosa (PSW)
Fourth Vice-President — Christopher S. Esget (EN)
Fifth Vice-President — Nabil S. Nour (SD)
Sixth Vice-President — Eric C. Skovgaard (SW)
Secretary of Synod—John W. Sias (MO)

Montana District Delegates

Voting Ordained

- Rev. Samuel Grayl (First, Bozeman)
- Rev. Paul Shupe (St. Paul, Bridger)
- Rev. Kyle Winter (The Church at Creston-Lutheran, Kalispell)

Voting Lay

- Mr. Thomas Halvorson (Trinity, Sidney)
- Mr. Joel Kempff (Our Redeemer, Columbia Falls)
- Mr. Christopher Zier (Holy Trinity, Belgrade)

Board of Directors

- Mr. Eric Corneliusen (Williston, ND)
- Mr. Thomas Kosche (Billings, MT)

List of Floor Committees

- 1: National Witness
- 2: International Witness
- 3: Mercy
- 4: Life Together
- 5: Theology and Church Relations
- 6: Pastoral Ministry and Seminaries
- 7: University Education
- 8: Finance
- 9: Structure and Administration
- 10: Ecclesiastical Supervision and Dispute Resolution
- 11: Registrations, Credentials and Elections

Around the District

Miracle of Life

We praise God for the birth of:

- Frederick Peter Bartemeus to Pastor Matthias and Naomi Wollberg (CTK) – born May 22nd, 2026
- Noah Joseph Hartman to Pastor-Elect Travis and Monica Hartman (Faith, Madison, IN) – born May 25th, 2026

*I am Jesus' little lamb,
Ever glad at heart I am;
For my Shepherd gently guides me,
Knows my need and well provides me,
Loves me ev'ry day the same,
Even calls me by my name.*

Call to Glory

Pastor Daniel Rinderknecht died in the Christian faith on June 22, 2026, in Billings, Montana at the age of 71 after a sudden cardiac event. He was born October 15th, 1954, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and baptized at St. Stephens Lutheran Church in Atkins, IA. After graduating from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis in 1983, Rev. Rinderknecht was placed at St. John's Lutheran Church, Beach Corner, Alberta, Canada, where he served for 20 years. He then served as senior pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Billings, for 20 years until his retirement in 2023. He is survived by his wife, Cathy, four children: Kessie Stevens, Holly Hall (Jan), Ditz Hopkins (Nick), and Luke Rinderknecht (Jeremy Durocher), grandchildren, siblings and multiple cousins, in-laws, nieces and nephews. Please keep his family in your prayers.



“Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” Matthew 25:21

In the News



Our Savior Lutheran Church (Glendive) members have been busy stitching 62 quilts, which were blessed on Sunday, May 3, before being packed and picked up as part of the Lutheran World Relief Project. The quilts are part of kits that are delivered locally, nationally and internationally. They are included in layettes and health care and school kits.

Glendive Ranger-Review

Around the District

Ordination Anniversaries (5-year milestones)

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| • Rev. Mark Grunst: June 14, 1981 | 45 Years of Ordained Ministry |
| • Rev. Andrew Eckert: June 16, 1996 | 30 Years of Ordained Ministry |
| • Rev. Justin Herman: June 18, 2006 | 20 Years of Ordained Ministry |
| • Rev. Edward Wright: June 18, 2006 | 20 Years of Ordained Ministry |
| • Rev. Daniel Merz: June 18, 2016 | 10 Years of Ordained Ministry |
| • Rev. Bruce Linderman: June 20, 1976 | 50 Years of Ordained Ministry |
| • Rev. Daniel Jacobs: June 29, 1986 | 40 Years of Ordained Ministry |
| • Rev. Eric Iverson: July 16, 2006 | 20 Years of Ordained Ministry |
| • Rev. James Koss: July 21, 1996 | 30 Years of Ordained Ministry |
| • Rev. Erich Kaelberer: July 24, 2011 | 15 Years of Ordained Ministry |
| • Rev. Christopher Brandt: August 2, 1981 | 45 Years of Ordained Ministry |
| • Rev. Kyle Winter: August 7, 2016 | 10 Years of Ordained Ministry |
| • Rev. David Preus: August 28, 2011 | 15 Years of Ordained Ministry |
| • Rev. Paul Shupe: September 11, 2011 | 15 Years of Ordained Ministry |

Commissioning Anniversaries (5-year milestones)

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Mr. Cameron Heiliger: April 3, 2016 | 10 Years of Commissioned Ministry |
| • Mrs. Laura McCoy: August 12, 2001 | 25 Years of Commissioned Ministry |
| • Mrs. Suzanne Rasmussen: August 24, 1976 | 50 Years of Commissioned Ministry |
| • Dr. Kenneth Kosche: August 24, 1986 | 40 Years of Commissioned Ministry |
| • Mrs. Lynne Erger: August 25, 1991 | 35 Years of Commissioned Ministry |
| • Ms. Erin Johnson: September 12, 2021 | 5 Years of Commissioned Ministry |



Jorie Miller and Timoty Gallus were confirmed at Zion Lutheran Church, Chinook, on June 7th
 Pictured L-R: Jorie Miller, Rev. Terry Forke, Timothy Gallus

Yellowstone Valley Lutherans for Life
 Ch. #331

BBQ & BUNCO FUNdraiser

Please make plans to join us on Sunday, August 30 from 5-7:30pm at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Billings for our annual FUNdraiser. Food, fellowship, laughter and prizes are provided at this multi-generational event. We simply collect a free-will offering that helps us spread God's love of the gift of life with others.

Questions? Contact Angie at
 yvlf1331@gmail.com

Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
From everlasting to everlasting, you are God.
Psalm 90:2

These verses formed the foundation for three Montana District Camps held at the Lions' Club Camp south of Red Lodge in June. We were reminded throughout these camps that we worship a God who exists from everlasting to everlasting; before the mountains existed and long after they are gone, the God who formed them will continue to be with His people. And as God's people, and specifically as Montanans, we were encouraged to come before the mountains in worship and fellowship, marveling at the great gifts He has showered upon us.

From June 22-25, 15 youth representing five congregations came together for 4 days of worship, hikes, games, Bible Study, and Christian friendship and encouragement. This camp was followed by a nearly at-capacity Family Camp on June 26-28; 80 people (44 youth/children and 36 adults) similarly came together to enjoy time in God's amazing creation with morning and evening opportunities to worship, engage with God's word and each other, and close out the day with a campfire and s'mores. One new addition to the camp schedule this summer was a "church-workers retreat" the week of June 29. This was an opportunity for church-workers to disengage from the busy seasons of ministry and to spend time with their families and with each other.

Some highlights from camp this year included bear and moose sightings, lots of time spent hiking and exploring the mountains we are so blessed to have so close, the amazing food provided by the Forkes through all three camps, and many opportunities to read and learn the Word of God together; especially Vespers in the amphitheater on the closing night of family camp.

Looking ahead, be encouraged to keep an eye out for dates at the end of June 2027 as an opportunity to join together with your brothers and sisters from across the Montana District as the current intention is to offer the same camp opportunities next summer.

Cameron Heiliger
MT District Camps Co-director



The Montana District Reflections are back as a quarterly newsletter. Please submit district news to: office@mtdistlcms.org by the 15th of April, July, October, and January, to be included in the subsequent issue.

LWML Montana District Memorial Scholarship Fund

It's that time again, the LWML Montana District scholarship deadline is approaching!

As a reminder, the application deadline for the 2026-2027 school year is **September 30, 2026**. The applicant student must be studying for professional church work within our Synod and be a member of a Montana District Church. More information and forms are available on the LWML website, www.mtdistrictlwml.org. For more information contact the LWML Scholarship Chairman, Linda Reilly, (406) 274-7539 or blr4852@live.com.

"Go into the all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation."
Mark 16:15 (ESV)



First Lutheran, Missoula, has about two dozen of these school desks to give away to any congregation that has use for them. They are in good condition. If interested, please contact us at 406-549-3311 to coordinate pick up

All Access Account

Everyday Access to Your Funds with Competitive Rates

At Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF), we align your investments with your faith, empowering LCMS ministries to grow and serve for the glory of His kingdom. With the All Access Account, you'll enjoy competitive rates and full access to your funds, designed for your daily needs.



Easy access with the
LCEF mobile app



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fees



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Interest accrued
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Open your investment online in about 5 minutes.
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LCEF is a nonprofit religious organization; therefore, LCEF Investments are not FDIC insured, are not a federally insured savings or deposit account or insured by any state or federal agency. This is not an offer to sell investments, nor a solicitation to buy. LCEF will offer and sell its securities only in states where authorized. The offer is made solely by LCEF's Offering Circular. Investors should carefully read the Offering Circular, which more fully describes associated risks. All Access Account is known as "StewardAccount" for investors in Washington. StewardAccount access features are offered through UMB Bank n.a. StewardAccount products are not available to investors in South Carolina. Balance restrictions apply. Rates subject to change. Visit lcef.org for details.