Montana District Reflections

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

I think we all enjoy the words of the first part of this text, how Jesus promises to give rest to those who labor and carry heavy burdens. I'm not so certain we find the second part about taking His yoke and learning from Him and His yoke being easy and His burden light to be so comforting. I think that many misunderstand this verse and that we can all be easily tempted to wonder if His words are true. In a moment we will look at how to better understand this familiar text.

Just a few weeks ago at the Fall Pastors' Conference, we learned from Rev. Zelwyn Heide, a Montana native now serving in North Dakota, some of the wonderful history of the formation of the Montana District. It was a rich and rewarding conference that reminded us that we have plenty for which to be thankful. (If you are interested in this history, there is a nice little booklet titled Missouri in Montana. If you'd like a PDF copy, you can request it with an email to office@mtdistlcms.org)

A number of things struck me during the conference. First, how difficult the work for the pastors who came to MT on foot, horses, bicycles, and on the train, but how hard working and faithful they were in making sure the people of MT received the Lord's gifts. Second, regarding the laymen in these communities where churches were established, how they gathered as soon as they heard the pastor was coming, donated land and supplies to build churches, and recognized the great need for pastors and called again and again for men to come to serve them.



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Giving Summary

One of the stories that Rev. Heide didn't share publicly because it was about a man who served as a "Reiseprediger," a traveling or visiting pastor only in North Dakota coming from the Minnesota District. But this one short story illustrated the difficulties and dangers that a traveling pastor faced as well as giving an idea about their dedication to the task they were given.

Pastor Potratz, who served a large area of North Dakota, was traveling home in his horse drawn sleigh after serving one of his many distant congregations. He became lost and stuck in a snow storm and despaired of his life. With the last bit of his energy, he released his exhausted horses so that they could perhaps save themselves, and he laid down next to his overturned sleigh in order to die. He was awoken by his pony, that had evidently received the horses home without their owner, and had come looking for him. Pastor Potratz was nearly frozen to death and couldn't mount the pony but he grabbed the reigns and his pony drug him more than a mile to his home barn. God saved His traveling pastor by means of his pony. (You can find the story and more information on Pastor Potratz in The Planting Story of the Minnesota District, published in English in 1932.)

God be praised that travel in North Dakota and Montana is a lot easier and safer than it used to be! I don't think that anyone could characterize Pastor Potratz's yoke and work as "easy" or "light." His labor was in fact very difficult and his burden of service heavy. But this leads us back to Jesus' words in Matthew 11 and how we are to understand them.

The Rabbis of Jesus' day talked optimistically about the yoke of the law and how it set free and gave rest. They seemed to think that they were quite good at keeping the law. But beginning in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), Jesus opens their eyes to see that they have indeed not kept the law and He corrects them on the same topic again and again. This was still the argument in Acts 15 at the great Jerusalem Council, where the Pharisees, who had received Christian baptism, were still arguing that unless the Gentiles were circumcised, they could not keep the law of Moses, which was necessary for salvation. Paul and Barnabas had argued against this, then the apostles and elders in Jerusalem took up the discussion, and finally Peter stood up and said, **"Why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?**" (Acts 15:10)

Jesus hasn't promised that the call to faith, the Christian life, our vocations, or our service to His Church will be easy. Clearly, these things are not always easy. The work of a pastor can be exhausting, the sacrifices of a congregation can be costly, and the burdens of life in this fallen creation can sometimes seem nearly unbearable. But Jesus is really talking about the burden borne by those who think that they can be righteous, can be saved, by their keeping of the law. In that context He says that His yoke and burden, which is the Gospel and salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, is easy and light. God Himself has done all the work of your salvation. There is no burden for you to bear.

That is the message that was rediscovered and preached again in the Reformation too! Luther writes, "The yoke that Christ lays upon us is sweet, and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30). When sin has been forgiven and the conscience has been liberated from the burden and the sting of sin, then a Christian can bear everything easily. Because everything within is sweet and pleasant, he willingly does and suffers everything" (AE 26:133)[1].

If you aren't worried about earning your salvation, or to say it better, if you believe that you are saved by grace through faith for Jesus' sake, then everything else becomes so much easier to bear. You can give up house and home, move away from family, and serve in small congregations in Montana, travel through snow storms, and count it a great joy and blessing. Or as a layman, you can sacrificially and joyfully give of your time and talents in order to support and provide for a pastor to come to serve you with the Lord's gifts, and to care for the church building and grounds, so that you and your community can hear the Lord's saving Gospel.

God has promised that His yoke is easy and His burden is light and He is not lying to you. His Word is sure and certain. He hasn't promised that this life in this fallen creation is going to be easy or light. In fact, He has called us to take up our cross and to follow Him.

This life is not easy, but your future is certain and you have been redeemed by the One who took up the yoke of the law and carried the burden of your sins and paid the full price.

God grant you rest in His forgiveness and promises, along with the joy, satisfaction, and contentment of Pastor Potratz in all of the struggles of this life and in everything that you do in service to your Lord and His church.

– Rev. Ryan D Wendt

Montana District President

AE Luther, Martin. Luther's Works. American Edition. General editors Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann. 56 vols. St. Louis: Concordia, and Philadelphia: Muhlenberg and Fortress, 1955–86.

[1] Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). The Lutheran Study Bible (p. 1603). Concordia Publishing House.

CHANGES IN THE DISTRICT

Transfers In: 2

- Rev. Eric Stinnett (installation 8/30/26)
- Rev, Brock Schmeling (installation 9/9/26)

Transfers Out: 1

- Rev. Edward Wright to the South Wisconsin District

Status Changes: 3

- Mrs. Rachel Doucette (Kalispell) applied for reinstatement to the Commissioned Minister Roster and was approved on November 10, 2026
- Mrs. Callie Peterson was granted Candidate status
- Mr. Gideon Schauer was granted Candidate status
- Rev. Edward Wright moved from Active to Emeritus status

Called to Glory: 2

- Mr. Patrick Lewis was Called to Glory on September 24, 2026
- Rev. Raymond Wiegert was Called to Glory on October 5, 2026

Ms. Margaret Skoog, RN BSN, has stepped down from her position as Montana District Parish Nurse. Thank you for your faithful service in encouraging our members to see to their physical well-being and for being a resource to our congregations!

District President's Calendar

Nov 2:	BOD meeting, District Office, Billings
Nov 4-6:	Concordia Seminary, Board of Regents meetings, St. Louis
Nov 8-12:	COP meetings, Concorida University, Wisconsin
Nov 24-29:	District Office Closed
Nov 26:	Happy Thanksgiving
Dec 23-Jan 3:	District Office Closed
Dec 25:	Merry Christmas
Jan 1:	Happy New Year
Jan 18-22:	Symposia at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne
Jan 31-Feb 3:	COP meetings, St. Louis
Feb 4-6:	Concordia Seminary, Board of Regents meetings, St. Louis

Reminders & Notes from the District Office

- Annual Reporting Forms for Emeritus members of our district are due by **January 31st** Instructions will be mailed out in December.
- Rostered workers, please remember to update your personal information at: lcw.lcms.org, and to notify the district office when your contact information changes.
- Voting to ratify Res. 9-14A, "To Amend Constitution Article XII 15 as to Call of Special District Conventions," is now open. To vote, congregations will need to login at: vote.lcms.org by March 15, 2027.

Calls and Positions

- Rev. Jakob Berger has returned the Call to Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Crete, NE, and St. Paul Lutheran Church, Beach, ND.
- Rev. Gideon Pullmann has accepted the Prison Ministry Coordinator position for the Montana District.
- Rev. Justin Herman and Rev. David Mews have been appointed as Montana District Reconcilers, to serve along side Mr. Stephen Jarvis and Mr. Will Warberg.

CURRENT VACANCIES

- Our Redeemer, Anaconda (Vacancy Pastors: Bruce Linderman & Mark Schultz)
- 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. Paul, Ronan (Vacancy Pastor: Kyle Whaley)
- St. Peter, Whitefish (Vacancy Pastor: Tim Christenson-he will be officially installed later this year)

Calling Congregations/Schools

- Our Redeemer, Anaconda: Vacant-served
- St. Paul, Ronan: Vacant-served
- St. Mark, Butte & St. John, Deer Lodge
    - Rev. Michael Meyer, International Center, St. Louis, MO, has returned the Call
    - Rev. Brian Liermann, Rock of Ages Lutheran Church, Minocqua, WI is considering the Call
- Zion, Chinook & St. Paul, Havre
    - Rev. Samuel G Beltz, St. John Ev. Lutheran Church, Oskaloosa, Iowa has returned the Call
    - Rev. William Traphagen, Cross Lutheran Church, Crosslake, MN is considering the Call
- Mt. Calvary, Colstrip & Circle of Life, Lame Deer
    - Rev. John Voelker, St. John Lutheran Church, Akron, OH, is considering the Call.
- Faith, Glasgow/Trinity, Plentywood/Trinity, Wolf Point
    - Rev. Zelwyn Heide, St. Peter Lutheran Church, Hannover, Zion Lutheran Church, New Salem, and St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Hazen, ND has returned the Call
    - Rev. Todd Jerabek, Zion Lutheran Church, Embarrass, WI, St. Peter Lutheran Church, Pella Opening, WI, and St. John Lutheran Church, Belle Plaine, WI has returned the Call
- St. Peter, Whitefish
    - Rev. Timothy Christensen, Emeritus, has accepted the Call, installation date pending
- Trinity Lutheran School, Kalispell-Teacher is in the Call process



Mr. Kyle Barth was installed as principal of Trinity Lutheran School on August 23, 2026.

Getting to Know a Montana District Church Worker



Rev. Kyle Winter

I was born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska, and as much as I have come to love Montana, Nebraska still holds a deep place in my heart. My mother worked for the United States Postal Service, and my father was a power lineman for a communications company in Omaha who later oversaw its construction crews. I was baptized at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in South Omaha, right next door to Stoysich House of Sausage (about as Omaha a start as you can get), but I was raised and confirmed at Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church in West Omaha.

I attended public school from kindergarten through graduation at Millard South High School, where I played baseball, football, and tennis. When I wasn't playing sports or music, I was usually outside: camping, hunting, fishing, and exploring the woods behind our house.

I first wanted to be a pastor when I was eleven years old. I can still picture myself sitting in an Advent service at Divine Shepherd, watching our pastor, Rev. Dave Block, lead the service and thinking, "I want to do that." I didn't yet have much of an idea of what being a pastor really meant, but the desire never went away. It kept growing through my high school years until I finally asked Pastor Block how a person becomes a pastor, and he pointed the way.

After high school I attended Concordia University in Seward, Nebraska, where I studied behavioral science and psychology. It was there, at a lunch table, that I met Lisa Gebauer. I admired her conviction, her kindness, and her firm Christian faith. Our friendship took time to grow, but eventually we became very close friends. In the years after college I worked for the post office and later served as a worship director in a Lutheran congregation. After Lisa finished a three-year term teaching in Indonesia, we decided to get married. We were married on June 30, 2012, and headed to seminary shortly after.

I attended Concordia Seminary in St. Louis from 2012 to 2016. I was blessed to learn from professors such as Drs. Jeffrey Gibbs, Jeffrey Oschwald, Timothy Saleska, David Schmitt, and Joel Biermann. I was grateful for them as theologians, but even more so as men and as pastors.

Getting to Know Rev. Kyle Winter

I served my vicarage at The Church at Creston in Kalispell under Rev. Darold Reiner, a man I deeply admire. He was a wonderful mentor then and continues to be one today. Creston was an outstanding place to serve as a vicar, so it was a great joy when we were called back there directly out of seminary in 2016. Ten years later, Creston remains the only congregation I have served, and I couldn't be more thankful. It is full of simple, unpretentious Christians who desire to love and serve the Lord and one another well. There is a rich culture of studying God's Word, of hospitality, and of generosity toward our neighbors.

The Lord has blessed Lisa and me with five children: Jack Hudson (13), Wesley Clay (10), born on Easter Day and named after Charles Wesley, author of the Easter hymn "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"; Isla Roxanne (8); Samuel Reed (6); Nora Kathryn (4). Lisa is a teacher, and she pours that gift into homeschooling all five of our children.

As a family we love the good, wholesome things of life: cooking, playing music and singing together, going on walks, reading books, camping, and gardening. The Flathead Valley is a wonderful place to enjoy all of them.

It is a privilege now to serve the Montana District on its Board of Directors, and I am grateful for the opportunity to support the congregations, church workers, and ministries of our district as we serve the Lord together.

Getting to Know Pastor Winter

Confirmation Verse: 1 Timothy 4:12 — "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." (ESV)

Favorite Color: Green

Favorite Season: Fall

Favorite Hobby: Walking, playing guitar and cooking

Favorite Book : There are too many! Usually it's whichever one I'm reading aloud to my kids. We recently finished Andrew Peterson's The Wingfeather Saga and loved it so much that I started reading it again as soon as we were done. O. E. Rølvaag's Giants in the Earth is also incredible, and Marilynne Robinson's Gilead is beautiful.

Favorite Vehicle: Whichever one my wife and kids are in.

Favorite Thing About Serving the Lord: Pastors have the privilege of studying God's Word and bringing it into the lives and hearts of their people. We get to journey with our members and share in life's most joyous and most challenging moments. Being a pastor is harder than I thought it would be, but it is also even better than I imagined.

Favorite Hymn: "The Day Thou Gavest, Lord, Is Ended" (LSB 886)

Getting to Know Rev. Kyle Winter

Elaborate on Your Hymn Choice:

Choosing one favorite hymn is nearly impossible, but if pressed, I would choose "The Day Thou Gavest, Lord, Is Ended." John Ellerton, an Anglican pastor serving in Crewe, England, wrote it in 1870 for a liturgy used at missionary meetings. It is usually sung to ST. CLEMENT, a tune whose gentle sway feels like evening itself.

At first glance it is a simple evening hymn: the day is done, the darkness falls at God's command, and our praise sanctifies our rest. But then the hymn turns outward. As the sun sets on us, it is rising on fellow believers on the other side of the world, and they take up the prayers and praises we have just laid down. The Church, Ellerton writes, is "unsleeping." Hour by hour, across every continent and island, fresh lips make the Lord's wondrous doings heard on high.

I love that picture of the Una Sancta, the one holy Christian and apostolic Church, gathered around the globe in one unbroken chorus of prayer and praise. When we close our day in prayer, we aren't finishing the Church's song; we're handing it off. Somewhere the Divine Service is just beginning. The praise of Christ never dies away.

Then comes the final stanza: "So be it, Lord; Thy throne shall never, like earth's proud empires, pass away; Thy kingdom stands, and grows forever, till all Thy creatures own Thy sway." There is a striking irony in the hymn's history. It was chosen for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, at the height of an empire on which, it was said, the sun never set. Yet the hymn confesses that the only kingdom on which the sun truly never sets is Christ's. Earth's empires rise and fall. His throne endures.

That is a deep comfort for a pastor and for every Christian. Our days are short, and our labors often feel unfinished when evening comes. But the work belongs to the Lord, and His Church keeps watch through every night. We can lay down our heads in peace, trusting the One whose kingdom will never pass away.

The Day Thou Gavest, Lord, Is Ended

[1] The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended,
The darkness falls at Thy behest;
To Thee our morning hymns ascended,
Thy praise shall sanctify our rest.

[2] We thank Thee that Thy Church, unsleeping
While earth rolls onward into light,
Through all the world her watch is keeping,
And rests not now by day or night.

[3] As o'er each continent and island
The dawn leads on another day,
The voice of prayer is never silent,
Nor dies the strain of praise away.

[4] The sun that bids us rest is waking
Our brethren 'neath the western sky,
And hour by hour fresh lips are making
Thy wondrous doings heard on high.

[5] So be it, Lord; Thy throne shall never,
Like earth's proud empires, pass away;
Thy kingdom stands, and grows forever,
Till all Thy creatures own Thy sway.

Text: John Ellerton, 1870; public domain

Montana District DCE Intern



Jonathan Dose, DCE Intern from Concordia University Irvine, was recently asked halfway through his internship about his experience at Trinity Lutheran - Kalispell and its family of ministries.

Tell us about yourself:
I am from Algona, Iowa, and I completed my degree in theological studies at Concordia University Irvine in Irvine, California. Attending Concordia Irvine gave me meaningful relationships with peers and professors. The relationships centered around Christ were the framework for my success in the role of Director of Christian Education. If my studies were theology only, I could do my 4 years and find a job in a corporate business. Concordia University - Irvine does a great job in shaping their church workers and students for a life of ministry, churchwork, or not.

What was unexpected about coming to Trinity?
I originally didn't have a huge desire to be a part of a church with a camp ministry, but that significantly changed this summer and proved to be a huge area of growth for me. The Camp provided me with an opportunity to step out into an unfamiliar ministry environment. In my role, I led morning and evening devotions for the campers and served as the staff devotion leader. Unexpectedly, my time at camp gave me greater confidence in my ability to connect with students and serve them more thoughtfully.

Has there been anything added to Trinity Lutheran's Ministry avenues that you have helped kickstart?
Yes, this year, one of the big opportunities we have for growth in Trinity's ministry is connecting with our young adults of our congregation. And being in proximity to Flathead Valley Community College, it's a perfect opportunity to dive deep into creating something new. So, this year for the first time at Trinity, we have started a Thursday night Young Adult Bible Study.

What has been the most encouraging development within this Young Adults Bible Study?
One of the most encouraging developments has been seeing relationships continue beyond the Bible Study itself. A few young adults who attended during the summer have continued to call me after returning to college simply to check in, talk, and maintain the relationship. Relationships and community have begun to take root, and participants appear to see the group as a place where they are known and cared for.

What are you looking forward to for the rest of your Internship year?
As I look towards the next 8 months of my internship, Pastor Brian Lee and Trinity will allow me to experience and learn many things amongst the ministry areas. I am looking forward to serving in our childcare and school. I look forward to school every week because I get to eat lunch with the kids. Recently, one of the 5th grade boys talked to me about football and the taco truck that he and his uncle owned. He then told me, "Hey, I have a football game on Saturday, and you should come to it!" I was able to go, watch him play, and talk with his parents during the game. I'm excited for the other opportunities God has in store for me with the school.

Being here at Trinity has also given me many doors of opportunity to serve our childcare. With approval from our Childcare Director, Josh Holladay, I am excited to go and play games with the kids and do crafts with them. Childcare provides Trinity with an awesome opportunity to serve the kids with a chapel service a couple of times a month. Whether or not I am leading the chapel service, being able to sing with them, sit with them, and build a relationship with those kids is something I am looking forward to.

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

"Winkel" in Lima, Peru!

Team Peru meets weekly on Zoom and monthly in person. Here they met in San Borja, but they rotate the location between the three churches.

Celebrating the Reformation

We celebrated the 509th anniversary of the Reformation in a combined Service in Los Olivos. Gerald was the liturgist and assisted with Communion, Rafael was the celebrant and Tiago delivered the sermon.

Additionally, Rafael had the privilege to confirm two youngsters in their faith in Christ. Truly special! More than 70 people were in attendance, filling both the sanctuary and the overflow seating next door – some people had standing room only. Afterwards we all enjoyed a meal together in a local restaurant who catered a truly delicious two-course Peruvian meal: Causa and Bistek ala Pobre (minus the eggs and fries). Google them both – they're amazing!

Catechesis continues!

Every Thursday afternoon / evening Gerald teaches a Catechesis Class for a local unchurched couple. It's open to anybody else to Zoom in or to attend in person!



(Pictured above: Celebrating the 509th anniversary of the Reformation in a combined Service in Los Olivos)

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

Trintiy Lutheran Church, Billings: God's Work in Uganda

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. ~ Ephesians 3:20-21 ~

For nearly 15 years, Trinity Lutheran Church and School in Billings partnered with LAMP Canada to send VBS mission teams to the remote community of Cross Lake, Manitoba. The prolonged shutdown of the US/Canada border due to Covid, in addition to other complexities, brought a close to this long-term mission. As this ministry door closed, God opened another one as we became aware of a Lutheran Church and School in Uganda that needed support to re-open after Covid. This church is a congregation of the Lutheran Church of Uganda (LCU), which is in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS.

For the first couple of years, Trinity's support of St. John Lutheran Church and School in Makota, Uganda, was primarily financial. Trinity provided a small amount each quarter to help St. John keep its doors open and pay their staff, most of whom earn less than $2 a day. As Trinity considered making the "Uganda Mission" a long-term commitment, we knew that we needed to send a team to learn more and help us evaluate the partnership.

In January of 2025, a team traveled to Uganda and witnessed how the people of St. John are not only equipping people for daily life but also making disciples for Christ. This happens through their Lutheran school, the Word and Sacrament ministry of their congregation, and through other ministries, such as their health ministry. God is moving powerfully in their midst, drawing many to Christ, including Muslims. In fact, their pastor is a former Muslim!

When the mission team made their report to Trinity, God moved hearts and we immediately began exploring ways to further support this vibrant ministry. Teachers are now being paid every month. Their families and students are now being fed on a daily basis. In addition, Trinity is partnering with a 501(c)3 organization called Hearts and Hope for Uganda (HH4U) to help St. John acquire additional land and build permanent ministry facilities. HH4U has staff in both the US and Uganda and has 15+ years' experience building 9 schools and churches working solely with the LCU. HH4U will be coming to Trinity in November to launch a student sponsorship program. Sponsorships will connect our families to children in Uganda and enable them to attend St. John and learn about Jesus each day. Our goal is to sponsor at least 100 primary school students and 10 secondary students. Donors can expect lives to change – the student(s) they sponsor and their own.

Trinity is so blessed to be a small part of the Gospel being proclaimed in Uganda. We are humbled to see the incredible joy and contentment that our Ugandan friends have in Christ, despite having little or no earthly possessions. Our lives are enriched as we get to know brothers and sisters in Christ from the other side of the globe, with whom we will spend eternity.

Please join us in praying that God will continue to use the Uganda Mission to bring people into His family. Our hope is that God will raise up more partnerships that will strengthen His Church on earth. If you would like to know more about Trinity's Uganda Mission, please visit www.trinitybillings.org/uganda



Montana District Board of Directors' Summary

The Montana District Board of Directors met on August 10, 2026, at the district office for the quarterly board meeting. The minutes from the May 4th meeting were presented and approved.

The District ended the second quarter 2026 with an increase of total assets, primarily the result of market increases in investments. Of note in the quarter, roughly $41K was received in support of Faith in Condon for roof repair and roughly $46K was disbursed including $5K from the District in matching funds. $20K additional matching funds remain available in the event that the repairs are more extensive than the estimate. The District has roughly 10.5 months worth of expenses available. The BOD's target liquidity reserve is 6 months. The District is in a positive financial position heading into the preparation the 2027 budget. Chris Wood, Executive Director of Internal Audit, was unable to attend the meeting. From Internal Audit's report, we have received the highest honor of an unqualified audit opinion, thanks in a large part to the work of the District Treasurer, Susan Loomans.

Congregations continue to review and update their constitution and bylaws. Peace Lutheran Church, Great Falls, Zion Lutheran Church, Chinook, and Trinity Lutheran Church, Billings are in the final stages of approval. Zion Lutheran Church, Whitehall, is also in the process of updating their constitution and bylaws.

Advisory delegate, Eric Corneliusen gave a report on the Synodical Convention, including continued fellowship with the AALC (American Association of Lutheran Churches), the strengthening of expectations for RSOs (Recognized Service Organization), the reinstatement of the Commission on Worship, and the Synod's work to remain accountable, transparent, and have appropriate institutional oversight, particularly with regard to sexual misconduct of rostered workers.

The BOD approved a motion to increase the corpus of the school grand fund and awarded all school grant and Church Work Student Scholarship applications presented. $58,000 has been raised to repair the roof of Faith Lutheran Church, Condon, $35,000 from outside of the district. The Pastoral Salary Guidelines were reviewed and approved, with a base cost of living increase of 3.1%. A resolution to reimburse background check costs for colloquy applicants was moved, seconded, and approved.

The following Board of Directors meeting took place at the district office on November 2nd, and the next Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for January 25, 2027.

Around the District-Pastors



Rev. Eric Stinnett, previously missionary to Ethiopia, was installed as sole pastor of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Three Forks, and Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Belgrade, on August 30, 2026.
Back L-R: Rev. Forke, Rev. Merz, Rev. Linderman, Rev. Menagh, Rev. Zoeller, Rev. Lane, Rev. Dewell, Vicar Diercks
Front L-R: Rev. Arlo Pullmann, DP Rev. Wendt, Rev. Stinnett, Rev. Grayl, Rev. Schultz, Rev. Brandt

Rev. Brock Schmeling, was installed as sole pastor of St. John Lutheran Church, Fairview and Trinity Lutheran Church, Sidney, on September 9, 2026.
Back L-R: Rev. Schreibeis, Rev. Behm, Rev. Schultz
Front L-R: Rev. Saunders, DP Rev. Wendt, Rev. Schmeling, Rev. Arlo Pullman, and Rev. Christensen.



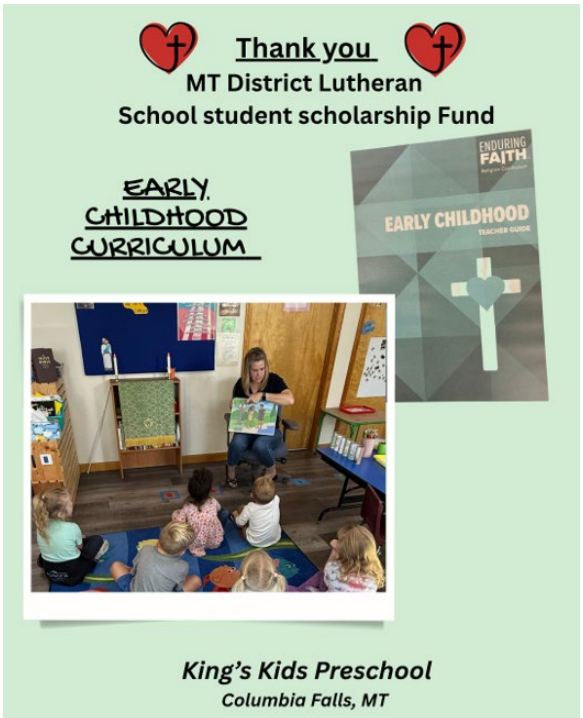


The Pastors Conference was held at The Church at Creston-Lutheran on October 14-16, 2026. Rev. Zelwyn Heide presented on “Reiseprediger : The Planting of the Missouri Synod in Montana”

Around the District-Congregations & Schools



On Sunday August 9th at Holy Trinity Lutheran in Belgrade, MT, Aletta Danielle Reese was brought into God's Kingdom by Holy Baptism. May God Almighty bless her and her parents Tyler and Johanna with growing faith and service to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All thanks and praise be to God for the gift of forgiveness, salvation and eternal life given Aletta.



Four schools submitted and received funds for tuition assistance, curriculum, and Bibles and devotional materials to support their students educational and spiritual development.



Studying the *Fruits of the Spirit* at the Southeastern Zone Rally

This zone includes the Towns/Cities of Colstrip, Fairview, Fallon, Forsyth, Glasgow, Glendive, Hysham, Miles City, Plentywood, Sidney, Wolf Point, and Williston, North Dakota; Belfry, Billings, Bridger, Hardin, Harlowton, Laurel, Park City, Roundup, and Worden

Around the District-Called to Glory



Chief Master Sergeant Patrick A. Lewis died at his home on September 24, 2026, in Great Falls, Montana, at the age of 72 from respiratory issues. Patrick was born in San Bernardino, California, on March 22, 1954. He proudly served his country in the United States Air Force, where he was previously stationed at K. I. Sawyer AFB, Michigan; Mt. Home AFB, Idaho; Griffiss AFB in Rome, New York; Incirlik AB, Turkey; Kisling NCO Academy at Kapaun Air Station, Germany; Malmstrom AFB, Montana; and Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) at Hickam AFB, Hawaii. Patrick later returned to Malmstrom AFB and retired from the United States Air Force in May of 2002. He dedicated his time and talents to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Reconciliation and Dispute Resolution. He also served on the LCMS Montana District Board of Directors and was an Elder, Trustee, and member of the Board of Directors at Peace Lutheran Church. He is survived by wife, Helen (Mentzel) Lewis; children, Brandon (Becca), Jennifer, Michael (Crystal) and his brother, Robert "Bob" Lewis, and grandchildren, Zoe, Isabelle, Rylee, Kirsten, Cole, Aedan, Emma, and Kaylee. Please keep his family in your prayers.



Rev. Raymond Wiegert died in the Christian faith on October 5, 2026, in Lewistown, Montana at the age of 91 of natural causes. He was born August 19, 1935, in Danvers, Illinois, to the Rev. Arthur F.H. Wiegert and Louise (Boesel) Wiegert, the third of nine children. After graduating from Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, Rev. Wiegert was ordained and installed at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Osceola, Iowa in 1959. He then served St. John Lutheran Church, Roselle, Illinois (1964-1975), and Messiah Lutheran Church, Missoula, Montana until his retirement in January 2002. During his service to Messiah, he began serving Trinity Lutheran Church, Superior, Montana, and was formally installed just 10 months after his retirement, in October 2002. He served Trinity until his second retirement in 2014. During his time in Montana, he served as chairman of the Montan District LCMS Missions Committee (1978-1988) and as a Circuit Counselor for the Western Circuit (1991-1997). He was married to his wonderful wife, Dolores from 1958 until her passing in 2025. He is survived by his sons, Neal (Joan) and Mark (Kim), six grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, brother, Paul, sister, Ruth, and numerous extended family members. 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

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.

LCMS Youth Ministry

YouthLead and Youth Workers Conference

Through training and discipleship, YouthLead empowers young people to use their gifts to serve and lead while sharing their Christian faith. In 2027, YouthLead trainings will be held March 13–16 and April 24–27 in St. Louis. Registration is now open. In addition, the 2027 National Lutheran Youth Workers Conference will be held July 14–17 in San Antonio. This conference equips pastors, church workers and lay leaders with practical tools, encouragement and resources for faithful and effective youth ministry.

https://www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/family/youth/youthlead

March for Life 2027

On Jan. 22, 2027, the Body of Christ will come together to value all human life — from conception to natural death. Join LCMS Life Ministry and tens of thousands of other pro-life marchers in Washington, D.C., for the 54th annual March for Life as they speak up for the sanctity of human life and care for people in body and soul. To connect with LCMS Life Ministry to see how you can support and walk with them during the march, contact LifeMinistry@lcms.org

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