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***Empowered by the Holy Spirit,
United to Serve***



The Nugget E-News

April 27, 2020

Montana Synod News

LINKS:

The Montana Synod is curating information and resources on the Montana Synod Website

[Click here to visit our growing website](#)

Click [HERE](#) to be taken to the COVID-19 resource page.

There you will find information released by the Synod office, resources, and tools for your congregation.

[Click here to visit our FB page and "like" us](#)

**Words from the Bishop:
New Life on the
other side of Grief**



"But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel."

Lk 24:21a

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How many of you are feeling like your hopes have been dashed? Like you've lost something important - an opportunity, an experience, an event, a plan, a person?

Many of us may be feeling this way right now. Losses of jobs, of livelihood, of lives. Losses of our plans for Easter or a birthday or graduation. Loss of a vacation or some time with far-away family or gathering for Sunday worship. Even the loss of the normal, of stability, or of the way things were. All of these losses are being experienced by people as our lives are inevitably changed due to Covid19. And as we experience these losses, it is normal to feel grief. Everything has changed and our hopes feel shattered. With such loss naturally comes grieving.

That's what the two disciples on the road to Emmaus were feeling when they came upon the risen Jesus they didn't recognize. Confusion, dashed hopes, grief. "We had hoped that he was the one," they say in their sadness. When people go through a traumatic loss, they often have a hard time remembering details or making decisions or seeing the truth in front of their eyes. Jesus' travelling companions on the road to Emmaus were no different. Despite the promise of the empty tomb, the disciples felt loss and grief and simply couldn't recognize Jesus among them.

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We too are experiencing loss. We had hoped we'd been able to worship by now; we had hoped for healing by now; we had hoped that things would be different, normal, predictable. But things haven't gone as expected. Right now, despite the Easter promise of the empty tomb and whether we know it or not, many of us are suffering loss and grieving. And it's important for us to name that, to take stock of our emotions and thoughts, and to recognize that we are walking on a journey of grief and all that comes with it.

Think of the various experiences of grief people go through: the shock that may still not have worn off; the denial while trying to avoid the inevitable; the anger and frustrated outpouring of emotions we've kept bottled up. Then there's the bargaining, searching in vain for ways out, no matter how impossible. At some point we realize that the inevitable has happened and depression hits. Then, hopefully, we can start to seek realistic responses and find the way in our acceptance that what has happened is real and moving forward is our only possibility for life.

All of these apply to our lives now and can be easily seen in ourselves and others as we struggle to face the reality of the COVID-19 virus and its consequences. And since each of us is different we may be in different places in our experiences of grief, sometimes dealing with more than one of these experiences at a time, sometimes bouncing back and forth between them depending on the day, the hour, the minute.

It is because of this grief and the ways we experience it that we need to take some time to care for ourselves spiritually, mentally and emotionally right now. And we can start by inviting Jesus into our homes and lives. "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is nearly over," the disciples ask of the risen Jesus they still don't recognize yet, even though he told them all about himself on the road.

"Stay with us," we can pray to the risen Christ so that our frustration doesn't turn into anger or our sadness doesn't become debilitating. "Stay with us" so that we can face the inevitable changes with courage and hope. "Stay with us" so that we can take responsibility for our neighbors instead of simply bargaining for our own rights. "Stay with us" so that in our need to get back to a normal that will never be again we don't rush back to life expecting it to be as it was before.

And when, in prayer or meditation or devotions, we can invite the risen Jesus into our homes and break bread with him and open our hearts to the work only the Spirit can do, it is then that our eyes will be opened to see Christ's new life working in us and our hearts will burn with the promises given to us on the road of our faith. It's then, when Christ's new life enters us, that we can move through the experiences of grief rather than around them and let the Spirit comfort us in grief, calm our fears, and lead us toward acceptance. It's then that we can be transformed into Jesus' disciples who see the risen Christ and follow him into new life on the other side.

For there is new and abundant life on the other side of grief. We may not know what it looks like yet, but God has promised it, and in faith we trust that promise as true. Our calling is bigger than any immediate freedom to worship we might demand. It is the call to live even now,

even in our grief, in Christ. Until we reach that other side, we can cling to Christ on our road to Emmaus living out the fruit of the Spirit by practicing in all that we do for our neighbors "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." (Gal 5:22-23)

So, hang in there, beloved, and take some time to grieve what you've lost. [Here are some ideas](#) from my fellow Bishop Laurie (Oregon Synod) for grieving while social distancing. But in your grief, never forget that Christ is walking that road with you to new life and love for your neighbor.

In Christ's love,
Bishop Laurie

How you can help



Dear partner in ministry,
Weeks may have passed since you last walked in the doors of your congregation and worshiped, face-to-face, with your community of faith.

To be sure, being the body of Christ looks and feels differently than it ever has before.

Despite all of this, we are called to be church - together. The ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) looks different now, but it has not stopped. Nor have the needs of our communities and the world. Our church and its leaders continue to minister to its members, to those who are hurting and searching for peace, and to those in need.

The congregations and ministries of this church rely on your weekly offerings and gifts. Without in-person worship services for many weeks or even months, the financial impact could be devastating.

Please continue to give to your congregation and give regularly. Your congregation and its leaders continue to minister to your community of faith. This ministry relies on your weekly offerings. Find out how you can continue your pledge or regular offering through online giving, automatic monthly giving, or mail.

I know that, for many of us, this is a time of uncertainty and financial hardship. However, for those of you who are in a position to do more, the needs are great.

In the United States, unemployment has soared. We are already seeing rising demands on our food pantries, homeless shelters, and social services. Around the world, millions of people living in poverty are facing this pandemic without reliable access to sanitation and health care.

With congregations and ministries across the country, and a network of companion churches and partners in over 70 countries around the world, we anticipate this crisis will affect us all. Your gifts to the ELCA's COVID-19 Response Fund (click [HERE](#) to donate) will provide funds to the ministries of the ELCA most in need and best positioned to help. This includes our congregations as well as local and church-wide ministries capable of reaching and assisting those in need. If you are able, please help with a gift today.

I have been reflecting on the words of Peter: "Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received" (1 Peter 4:10). Now is a time when we need one another.

Now is a time to live and act as faithful people of God.
Be of good courage, dear church, and remember that Christ is with us
now and always.

In Christ,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton

Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Gold Hill Lutheran Church Welcomes You!

Are you looking for a place to connect with a faithful community, grow in faith, and put your talents to work in serving others? Look no further, we welcome you at Gold Hill Lutheran Church! To learn more about the mission and ministry of Gold Hill Lutheran Church, please contact us at 406-723-4242.