



**Montana Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

The Season of Epiphany, 2018

Dear Members of Montana Synod ELCA Congregations,

*“And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds.” Hebrews 10:24*

Greetings at the time of your annual meeting. An annual meeting is a time when we look at the year gone by, and anticipate the year to come. It is a time of budget and property considerations, of staff and committee reports. It is a time when we decide together what our priorities are as a congregation for the next year. It can be a time of difficult decisions. And it can be a time of joy. God has promised not to forsake us, and God will walk with us through our decisions, even the difficult ones.

Your congregation is part of the Montana Synod, which, in turn, is part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. You may be curious as to what a Synod does and why do we need it. The Synod is all of us together—congregations, ministries, pastors, lay people. The Synod is governed by a volunteer board, the Synod Council, elected at the Synod Assembly. The Synod staff do the work of administering the Synod, and serving congregations. We work with congregations in transition, we train LPAs. We raise up and monitor seminarians, we work with congregations in conflict, and in renewal. We organize events for pastors and congregations. We work with Ecumenical partners to find ways to serve small communities. We provide tech help to congregations, and we assist treasurers, presidents and pastors.

And as a Synod, we support ministries that we could not support alone—campus ministries at UM and MSU, Freedom in Christ at the Montana State Prison, our Saviour’s Rocky Boy, Spirit of Life on the Fort Peck Reservation. And we support Lutheran Social Services and Intermountain Children’s Services. All this and much more is possible because we are a Synod and we work together to serve God and neighbor.

The theme is this year’s Synod Assembly and Theological Conference is “Strengthen Congregations.” I hope you will come with a group from your congregation and take in the keynotes and workshops June 1-3 in Great Falls. While you are there you can visit our new Synod House, as well, and see where some of our work is done.

The Synod staff join me in thanking you for your ministry and your partnership. Pastor Jason Asselstine is Associate to the Bishop; Pastor Peggy Paugh Leuzinger is Director for Evangelical Mission; Jenny Kunka is Director of the Northern Rockies Institute of Theology; Susan Hedahl is Executive Assistant; Colter McCarty is Administrator of Information Technology.

May your ministry be blessed,

In Christ,

Bishop Jessica Crist