

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

Light in the Beartooths ~ Red Lodge, MT

Pastor Ben Cherland

May 2022 Newsletter





Light in the Beartooths

MESSIAH LUTHERAN NEWS

Dear Messiah Lutheran,

As construction begins on Messiah's new church home, we return to the question raised by April's Newsletter: Why were there only nine fluent speakers of the Potawatomi language at Kimmerer's class? What was the process and purpose by which an indigenous tribe had only 9 fluent speakers of its language remaining?

The height of Indian Boarding Schools was between the 1870s and the 1920s, but the philosophical roots that led to residential schools extends back to the 1600s. The now famous statement of Richard Henry Pratt at the Carlyle school in Pennsylvania sums up this philosophy - "Kill the Indian and save the man." In other words, the goal of these schools was to assimilate the indigenous occupants of the land to the "civilized" European model that was sweeping across North America. This model was economically capitalist, religiously Christian, and focused almost solely on obtaining and commodifying land (i.e. making land something that could be bought and sold - an utterly foreign concept to indigenous communities). Private ownership of land was the project of western expansion, badly concealed though it was behind Christian mission.

Unable to eradicate the "Indian problem," the focus became "civilizing" them. The elements that stood in the way of civilization were the close family and communal (tribal) ties of native peoples; deeply rooted cultural identities; religious/spiritual practice and understanding; and the depth of connection between native languages and land.* This shaped the strategy and practice of boarding schools, by which children were forcibly removed from their families; stripped of all possessions including clothes; forbidden to speak in their native tongue or associate with siblings or children from the same tribe; their hair was cut; they were given Christian names; and contact with parents was prohibited.

During the height of boarding schools, there were 367 in 29 states - 17 of which were in Montana - representing 14 Christian denominations. Generally underfunded, they used the children as a source of cheap labor making shoes, clothing, and growing food. Children were also "leased" to local families for cheap labor. Malnutrition was rampant among schools as well as psychological/physical/sexual abuse and abandonment. This system of deprivation and labor kept many such schools operating, even as *school cemeteries* filled with the children that were taken by them. The mass graves uncovered recently in the US and Canadian west are a testimony to the numbers that died.

Residential boarding schools successfully stripped indigenous children of their families, cultural identities, knowledge of the land, and the customs of their people that made them who they were. This forced estrangement isolated them in a culture not their own, rendering them unrecognizable to and unable to communicate with their own people. The Christianizing efforts they underwent left many of them spiritually adrift as adults, disconnected as they were from the land-based spiritual practices of their people. Stripping the land from indigenous identity was the goal and achievement of these schools, but the consequences persist, from one generation to the next.

Pastor Ben

“Comfort, Comfort, O my people!” God announces to the Israelites through the prophet Isaiah. “The Lord is my shepherd...your rod and staff comfort me,” the psalmist prays to God. Comfort is a theme through out the scriptures. We hear the cries for comfort to God. We hear promises of comfort from God. We hear thanksgiving for comfort received from God. But what is this comfort we seek? What does it mean to be comforted by God? And perhaps more importantly for Christ’s followers in these changing and uncertain times, what does it mean to be comfortable in God?



There are actually a couple of different ways we can understand comfort and what it means to be comfortable. Many of us, when we come to worship or engage in church activities, say we want to be in a place or community that is comfortable. And often what we mean by that is the definition that is found in many dictionaries: a state of ease, well-being and freedom from pain or constraint; a feeling of relief or encouragement; a satisfying or enjoyable experience. In other words, to be comfortable for many is to seek a life without pain, suffering, grief, fear, difficulty, challenge. To be safe and secure from all potential harm. To find that warm, fuzzy cuddling-under-a-quilt-with-a-teddy-bear-on-a-chilly-evening, never a care in the world feeling.

Now perhaps some of the more privileged among us have found such moments of this “comfy-ness” in life, as I call it. But for most of us, that type of comfort is rarely experienced, whether in church or not. For most of us, to be comfortable like that, in a life without difficulty or pain or challenge, is a pipe-dream. But what if that understanding of comfort is not the full story? What if being comfortable has little to do with a life of ease or security from all external challenges? What if, instead, comfort is about being fortified with the strength and the resilience to live within life’s messiness and not be overcome by it?

In fact, that’s what the word “comfort” meant in its original language of Latin. (Thanks, Pastor Paul Hanson, for this reminder!) In Latin, “com” means “with” and “fort” means “strong.” Think fortify, fortress, even force. So comfort means to be with strength or to fill oneself or another with fortification.

At a WELCA event several years ago, Pastor Angela T. !Khabebe (currently writing for Living Lutheran) offered this challenging statement to all who would hear: “Christianity is not comfortable. If you are comfortable in Jesus, you are doing it wrong.” When our understanding of comfort is a warm, fuzzy comfy-ness, then Pr. !Khabebe is absolutely correct. While we may have hope and trust in a future realm of God without suffering, right now, here and today, such understanding of comfort is not helpful and is not, I think, what scripture means by the comfort God provides to us.

Instead, the comfort God gives is fortitude – the strength, sustenance, and reinforcement in the promises of faith, hope, and love – that empowers us to withstand and even move forward through the challenges and sufferings of humans experience in this world. God’s comfort doesn’t take our pain away; God’s comfort holds us up (like on eagle’s wings) as we move through the tough stuff of life. God’s comfort gives us the courage and resilience to “keep on keeping on,” perhaps even into a transformed place of growth and new life.

The life of a follower of Christ in this world filled with suffering and death is hardly a comfy one. Both Jesus and Paul make this quite clear when we read their words carefully. (Luke 9:58; Romans 5:1-5) In fact, being a part of the body of Christ should never be comfy. We are always called to face the suffering of the world head on and even dive into it to help fortify, strengthen, and support others in their pain. Perhaps we might even work to ease the worst of the injustice and help bring about a life of basic well-being for those most in need. But in order for us to do that as Christ’s followers, we too must be comforted and fortified in our hope, faith and love. And we do this in part by hearing the Word of new life given to us in Christ again and again, welcoming the resurrection gospel into our whole selves and letting the Spirit of love transform us into fortified people with Easter always in our eyes.

“Comfort, Comfort my people,” says our God. Be strengthened and encouraged to face the many challenges ahead. For we know through faith that we are indeed revived every day through our baptism by the fortitude of Christ and the empowerment of the Spirit.

He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Bp Laurie

Lutherans have an appreciation for the complexity of life. It's a certain willingness to meet the world and then go deeper into what is immediately present. It is the ability to understand that reality has room for being two things at once. Paradox.

We know that we are saint and sinner. We know the word comes to us as law and gospel. We confess: "Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and true human being, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord" (Small Catechism).

Now, consider this paradox from Martin Luther's treatise *On the Freedom of a Christian*: "A Christian is lord of all, completely free of everything. A Christian is servant, completely attentive to the needs of all."

This is what it means to be justified: "They are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). Luther makes the point that God freely chose to redeem the world through Christ's freely chosen obedience to God's will. It is not what we have done or could ever do. It is not up to us. This is God's work alone, which we accept by faith, or in which we trust.

All the time and physical, emotional and spiritual energy I have spent in defensive self-justification could probably power a small city for a long time. This isn't a condemnation of hard work, but the realization that we can never, ever do enough. The human drive toward self-righteousness always results in idolatry and creates a zero-sum world in which someone else's gain is my loss. It's futile and exhausting.

Instead, in God's great gift of grace we are set free. We are the beloved. There is no hierarchy of value placed on people by God. This freedom along with the understanding of justification are two of the greatest gifts of the Reformation.

Luther's understanding of Christian freedom is a rejection of and a corrective to the current cultural message of taking care of one's self or one's tribe first, even at the expense of others.

This is how Luther explains how God affects our freedom: "Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, just as I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what is mine and given me what is yours" (Luther's Works, 48:12-13). No one and nothing can take that away from us. In this freedom we are certainly "lord of all, completely free of everything"!

Here is where Luther makes Christian freedom a paradox. No longer crushed by the weight of self-justification, but gloriously free by being bound to the righteousness of Christ, we are free to serve the neighbor. "I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable, and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ" (*On the Freedom of a Christian*).

Out of joy and gratitude we want to serve the neighbor. In fact, we are bound to serve the neighbor. In love our freedom makes us "a servant, completely attentive to the needs of all."

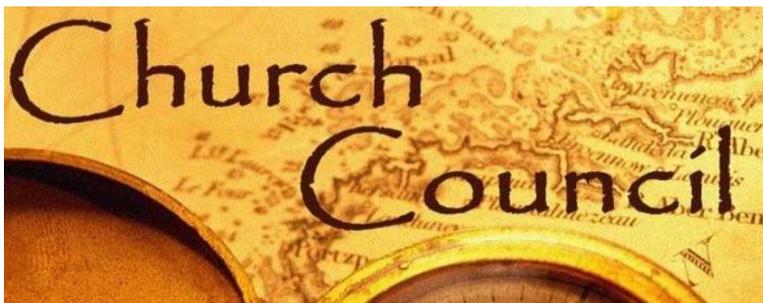
Luther's understanding of Christian freedom is a rejection of and a corrective to the current cultural message of taking care of one's self or one's tribe first, even at the expense of others. We erect boundaries, though Christ's love is boundless.

And here is another paradox: in this boundless love God has bound us to God's self in Christ. In the same way, we are servants to each other and bound to the neighbor.

ELCA theologian Mary Streufert makes the point that just as we now participate in Christ's righteousness and life because we are bound to God through Christ, so, too, we are bound in Christ to the neighbor. She calls this a kind of terrifying vulnerability to the needs of others. Being bound in this way dissolves all boundaries.

There is much in the world that could cause us to disconnect from each other, to lay in enough supplies—literally and figuratively—so we can't be touched by anything. Again a paradox—in constructing our own security we make ourselves prisoners. It is only in the freedom of Christ that is lived in service to the neighbor that we are free.





Your Church Council met on Tuesday, April 26 this month. Please find a full set of minutes and financials on the bulletin board. Below are some of the highlights from this month's meeting

- Decided to purchase Sunday & Seasons online version which will save us money from purchasing bulletin framework and copyrights separately.
- Discussed needs to start a Choirchime ensemble and supported local grant application
- Passed motion to list the current church on or before June 1. Episcopal church is fully in support of us sharing their space, temporarily, if we sell our building before the new one is built.
- Discussed and agreed to determine capacity to borrow through ELCA Mission Investment Fund
- Discussed LIB investment funds and agreed to keep funds where they are for now. Will revisit each month.
- Heard from HRDC regarding childcare needs in Carbon County and how our new building might support that need.

We meet again May 17th at 4:30 PM



Fragrance Free Zone

Please help us to accommodate those who are chemically sensitive to fragrances and other scented products.

**In an effort to make Messiah comfortable and welcoming for everyone we ask that you refrain from using strong personal scents or perfumes.
Thank you.**

If you have something you'd like to be included in our monthly newsletter, please send an email to redlodgemessiah@gmail.com with the blurb you want included, no later than the 25th of the month.





May Special Offering: Christikon Lutheran Church Camp

Since 1951, Christikon has been a special place for spiritual growth and renewal with friends, old and new; an intentional Christian community where all are welcome, chosen, cherished, loved, forgiven, redeemed, and made worthy by none other than Jesus Christ himself.

Worship begins and ends each day. We study the Bible together, take time to reflect and be alone before God. We work hard, play hard, enjoy time together and time apart, with time for worship & prayer, and time for silliness and song.

Christikon is a place of joy that lifts up God's gift of life. A place for you. You don't have to be Lutheran to be at Christikon. Come with your questions, your doubts, your challenges, and joys.

Christikon seeks to provide opportunities for campers young and old to grow as the Body of Christ. We move towards a deeper experience and awareness of Christian community centered in worship, where all are sustained in the covenant of baptism and drawn more deeply into the lives of each other.

Embody the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Grounded in a Lutheran articulation of the gospel, we strive to share the grace of God with all, hoping for it to shape everything we do. We move towards a deeper experience and awareness of Christian community, centered in worship, where all are sustained in the covenant of baptism and drawn more deeply into the lives of each other.

Raise Up Stewards of Creation

We use our majestic mountain setting to encourage a greater appreciation of the natural environment, to develop a deeper sense of gratitude and responsibility for the whole creation of God. We explore the biblical story together, listening for God's Word to us. We try to model Christian character as we face this world's hungers and hopes.

Grow Leaders & Faithful Partners in Ministry

We try to strengthen the work and witness particularly of those who serve as our staff members, offering training and experience for leadership on behalf of the church. We try to maintain the connection between life at camp and life back home. We offer our mountain facilities for congregational retreats.

If you would like to make a special offering to Christikon, please indicate Christikon with your gift.

May 2022

Building Update

WE ARE BUILDING!! If you haven't driven by our new site lately, you are in for a big surprise! Work started on Monday, April 25. The parking lot is laid out and the foundation is dug. We held a groundbreaking ceremony on Monday evening that was very well attended. Materials are coming in and we are making selections on things such as carpet, lighting and chairs. We continue to put materials on the table in the sanctuary so you can get a feel for how it will look inside and out.



Women's Safari Book Club

Date: May 19

Time: 3:00 PM (From now on)

Book: The Indigo Girl

Author: Natasha Boyd

Facilitator: Marla Ebel

Location: DJ Rosekelly's home



Contact host, Marla Ebel, at 426-8277 if you need more info



5/01 Michelle De Boer

5/02 Shirley Overton

5/06 Joan Kyro

5/07 Lynn Sorensen

5/13 Sue Prather

5/14 Linda Daily

5/27 Brooke Flynn

5/28 Lance Franz

5/29 Brooke Feister

5/30 Barb Ostrum



5/29 Jim and Nancy Johnson

SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING May 22, 2022

Dear members and associates, Harry Hollman (Greater Montana Realty) will be listing our current church building in the coming days. In order to be prepared for when any offers come in, we will be holding a special congregational meeting on May 22, following worship. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss and vote on the parameters of a potential sale.

Council, alone, does not have the authority to sell the building unless specifically authorized to do so by a meeting of the congregation. According to our constitution, in order to hold such a meeting, notice must be given on the previous two consecutive Sundays and must be sent by mail (email and newsletter notices are acceptable) at least 10 days prior.

In order to be able to react quickly upon receiving any offers, we would like the voting members of the congregation to grant Council the authority to sell the building. We hope you can join us in person for this very important meeting. If you are unable to attend in person, will have voting options for those attending via Zoom.

AmazonSmile is a simple way for you to support Messiah Lutheran every time you shop at no cost to you. When you want to shop on Amazon, simply type in smile.amazon.com in your web browser and select "Messiah Lutheran Church Red Lodge" as the non-profit organization before you begin shopping.



Bible Study



Every Tuesday
Women's Group
at Messiah

**10:00 a.m. In person and
online via Zoom**

**Contact Andrea Holmen if
interested**

Ongoing Prayer Concerns

Lowell Anderson

Russ Born

Emma Balsam

Manuel Cabanas

Lenny Erickson

Brooke Feister

Larry Fry

Nathan Green

Andrea Holmen

Herb and Myrna Hunt

Jim Johnson

Jim Koski

Rick Koski

Sandy Koski

Neil Laird

Jim & Linda Lian

Ray Loyning

Shilo & Kingston

Moncada

James "Bud" Ridenour

Dick Rosekelly

DJ Rosekelly

Christian Strickland

Josh Wilker

Eva Wilker

Jim Zenz

PRAYER REQUESTS

For prayer requests, contact the church office at

446-2430 or messiahprayers@gmail.com

with specific information and permission from the person you are adding.

May 2022

Messiah Calendar—May

<u>Sunday</u>	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>	<u>Saturday</u>
1 9:30 AM Worship	2	3 10 AM Women's Bible Study	4	5	6	7
8 9:30 AM Worship Mother's Day	9	10 10:00 AM Women's Bible Study Building Committee Meeting 4:00 PM	11	12	13	14
15 9:30 AM Worship	16	17 10:00 AM Women's Bible Study Church Council 4:30 PM	18	19	20	21
22 9:30 AM Worship	23	24 10:00 AM Women's Bible Study Building Committee Meeting 4:00 PM	25	26	27	28
29 9:30 AM Worship	30 Memorial Day	31 10:00 AM Women's Bible Study				

May 2022

HIGHWAY CLEANUP

Saturday, June 11

Meet at the church at 9:30 AM

Bring gloves and black garbage bags

QPR GATEKEEPER TRAINING SUICIDE PREVENTION

Anyone can save a life. Register for free

May 4th—Bridger Civic Center

May 5th—The Roosevelt Center

6:00—8:00 PM

Food served at 5:30

Course starts at 6:00

Register at RLACF.org—Contact Tesla at tesla@rlacf.org with any questions

Messiah's Mission:

“Live by Faith, Share Christ's Love, Be a Voice of Hope”

HOW TO CONTACT US AND STAY IN TOUCH:

Church Office: 406-446-2430

Office Hours: Administrative: Mon-Thurs. 10 am - 2 pm

Pastor's Office Hours:

Monday: 9:00-4:00

Tuesday : 9:00-4:00

Wednesday: 9:00-3:00

Thursday: OFF

Friday: 9:00-4:00

Saturday: 12:00-4:00

Sunday: 8:00-12:00

Pastor's Cell Phone: (646) 708-1389

Church Address: 723 S. Adams
P.O. Box 1330
Red Lodge, MT 59068

Website: www.redlodgemessiah.com

Facebook: Messiah Lutheran

Email: General: redlodgemessiah@gmail.com

Prayer Requests: messiahprayers@gmail.com

Pastor Ben: pastorbencherland@gmail.com

Sunday Worship Service:

9:30 AM



Messiah Lutheran Church

Red Lodge

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