The Nugget



EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, UNITED TO SERVE

August 2026

Gold Hill Evangelical Lutheran Church
934 Placer Street - Butte, MT 59701
(406) 723-4242

We are a Stephen Ministry Congregation and
a Congregation of the Montana Synod of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

WHO IS GOD CALLING INTO LEADERSHIP TODAY?

By Tim Synder

This time last year, I had a remarkable dinner with seven extraordinary people of faith.

The setting fit the celebratory occasion: a restaurant with wood-paneled walls that were decorated with framed 19th-century illustrations. Before the food arrived, we warmly welcomed our two guests of honor, Terrance and Crystal Jacob. The next day, we all gathered again. This time we presented Terrance to the congregation council of St. Andrew Lutheran in Franklin, Tenn., as the preferred candidate to become our next pastor.

Those who have served on a call committee know that the process isn't for the faint of heart. It begins with serious study of the ministry setting and the surrounding community context. It continues with discerning the congregation's priorities, then writing it all up in a long, standardized format, which can be—to put it mildly—quite challenging. It's a process marked by sacred confidentiality and plenty of anticipation. Then there are the twists and turns—the inevitable moments that no one saw coming.

Like most call committees, our group was made up of a diverse group of people, including Brenda, a charter member; Jim, a consultant who had nearly left the congregation months before; Peter, a music executive we called "Switzerland" because of his diplomatic demeanor; Anne, a semi-retired psychiatrist who liked to remind us her family had been Lutheran since the Reformation; Beth, a nurse-turned-health-IT-professional and our steady chairwoman; and me, a religion researcher who had joined the congregation a month prior to the committee forming.

By its very nature, a call committee has one essential task: following the process outlined by the synod and selecting a finalist for a call as a rostered minister. This is serious business, with intense pressure to get it right.

What's driving all this change to the church's leadership landscape?

The eight of us did not agree on much. In fact, the only two things we agreed on during our year together were the final version of the ministry site profile (a divine intervention, I'm certain), and the vote to recommend our finalist. Our meetings were long, difficult and often required further debriefing at the bar a few blocks from church. By the time we gathered at the steakhouse, we were marking a new beginning but also an end to our work together as a committee.

The 89-page call process manual includes lots of details, including templates for communicating with candidates and helpful tips for interviewing. What it doesn't mention is the possibility that the call committee may also become a ministry of mutual care.

Tucked between text messages to our group that dealt with arranging meetings and interview logistics were personal check-ins, birthday texts and prayers. As a committee we shared a lot of life together: three hip replacements, birthday celebrations, health scares, vacation photos and dispatches from an epic college visit

road trip, to name a few. I was especially grateful for these texts after the baptism of my twin daughters and the week my mother spent in the hospital.

It's not an overstatement to say that the call committee changed how I think about leadership in the church. Unlike some other traditions, the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations imagines a partnership between lay leaders and rostered ministers. The call to lay leadership includes supporting rostered ministers, and the call to rostered ministry includes supporting lay leaders. Congregations are best served when these two forms of leadership are balanced and differentiated. This partnership begins with the work of the call committee.

As a member, my experience on that call committee was empowering. As a researcher, my experience surfaced questions about the future of leadership in our church.

A shifting landscape

While serving on the call committee, I was also conducting research across the ELCA's leadership landscape, including major studies of pastoral leadership, synod-authorized ministry and diaconal leadership. The more I sat with the data and listened to rostered ministers across the church, the more I realized the landscape is shifting.

Just a few years ago, most ELCA congregations had an average worship attendance of between 50 and 250. Today the ELCA is composed mostly of small congregations with an average attendance under 50. Between 2015 and 2023, pastoral openings in the ELCA declined by almost 30%, meaning the number of opportunities for our rostered ministers are fewer and fewer.

The openings that do exist are most likely to be solo pastorates at congregations with an average worship attendance under 150. (See "The Future Need for Pastoral Leaders in the ELCA".)

The number of congregations now led by synod-authorized ministers is also changing. These lay leaders are appointed by bishops for service in congregations where a pastor is not available or able to be called. Almost 10% of ELCA congregations are served this way. At first glance, this could be alarming. But forthcoming research on these leaders suggests that the vast majority of congregations served in this way find themselves surprisingly satisfied and confident in the future of their ministries. (See "The Use of Synod-authorized Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America".)

In recent years, the diaconate in the ELCA has undergone many changes. Today they serve in a wide range of ministry leadership, but they play an especially critical role in faith formation, education, administration, chaplaincy and social justice. Still, most of our deacons serve in congregations. (See "The Leadership of Ministers of Word and Service in the ELCA".)

What's driving all this change to the church's leadership landscape? While we may not have all the answers, we do know several important factors.

God is doing a new thing

In the decades since the ELCA's formation in 1988, there has been a profound change in the role religion plays in American society. At that time 80% of adults identified as Christian, whereas only 60% do today. In recent years, every Christian denomination and tradition has seen a decline in membership and participation. The only religious demographic that is growing is the percentage of those who claim no affiliation at all.

Perhaps even more important is that, of those in this group of Americans, 90% say they have no intention of joining a religious organization in the future.

Declining participation in religious life leaves congregations struggling to meet significant challenges with fewer resources. ELCA research estimates that 45% of our congregations cannot afford a full-time pastor without significant consequences for their mission and ministry.

And when communities and congregations change, it only makes sense that our leadership may change.

In the 1990s, a new bridge was built across the Choluteca River in Honduras. Shortly after it was opened, Hurricane Mitch ravaged the country with devastating floods. The bridge survived fully intact—a testament to its enhanced engineering. But the storm had shifted the course of the river such that the bridge now spans dry land. The river itself had moved.

Like that bridge, our leadership landscape has shifted out from under the church. As a theologian and ELCA member, I think there might be something more going on here that may not appear in charts and graphs. That "something more" is perhaps best stated as a question: Who is God calling into leadership now?

Of course, God continues to call people of faith to go to seminary to become pastors and deacons. And of course, God continues to call people of faith to serve in new ways in their congregations, whether on a call committee or a congregation council or volunteering to serve those in need in their communities. Those things aren't changing. Yet it also seems as if God may be doing a new thing. It appears that God may be ahead of us, calling forth new kinds of Christian practice, new kinds of Christian community, new kinds of leaders and new kinds of leadership partnerships.

In the future there may be fewer call committees, fewer ministry site profiles and fewer senior pastorates to discern. But God's mission has never been dependent on particular structures or processes such as these. As always, that mission relies on ordinary people of faith praying together, caring for one another and dreaming about the future God to which is calling them.



Prayer Concerns

Please call the Church Office (723-4242) or email us: (goldhill.elca@gmail.com) with your prayer requests. Only prayers given to the entire congregation will be included here.

Colleen Tamblyn- prayers for health and healing.
Robert McDowell- prayers for health and healing.
Patricia Coleman- prayers for health and healing.

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August Birthdays /Anniversaries:



August 1	Cory Beck
August 2	Danette Fitzpatrick
August 6	Ty Inglis
August 9	Annette Lawson
August 9	Terry Munyon
August 13	Peggy Probasco
August 16	Kathy Hurlbert
August 18	Jack Corbin
August 19	Harold Johns
August 27	Elaine Fuller
August 27	Nora Harvey
August 29	Carol Morrison
August 29	Kelly Bond
August 30	Dave Coleman
August 30	Deborah Brown
August 19	Carol & Larroll Leach

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If your birthday or anniversary is missing, please notify the church

Please help us to stay updated and notify the church office with any address, phone, or Email address changes!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Check it out!

Please make sure to like and follow our Facebook page so that you can stay up to date on announcements!

https://www.facebook.com/Gold.Hill.ELCA/

If you have anything that you would like to have posted on our Facebook page please email the office at goldhill.elca@gmail.com

Important announcements or pictures of the services are always welcomed!

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If you have any announcements or changes you would like to have in the Bulletin please submit them **no later than Thursday morning**.

Blessing of the backpacks will be August 23rd. Please bring your backpacks for a special blessing for the school year. If you are a teacher, you are also invited to bring a coffee mug or water bottle to be blessed.



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End of Summer Youth Lock In

Join the youth of Copper City Parish on Saturday August 15th for food fun and fellowship at Gloria Dei. Potluck- 5:30
Bible Family Feud-6:30 (sign up that night adult/kids will be on teams together)
Group Activities will begin around 7:30.
*Adults are welcome to stay for as long as they would like and children can still come to have fun even if they do not spend the night.

We Deliver-Sack Lunch Ministry



Volunteers for July were: Annette Lawson, Nick Elings, Carol & Larroll Leach, Machelle Keim, Lynn Aniksdal. Thank you!

Food supplies & donations for food provided by: Annette Lawson, Nick Elings, Patty Callaghan, Machelle Keim. Thank you!

We will be meeting August 17th at 9:00 am. If you have any questions, please feel free to call Annette Lawson, at 406-490-7751.

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A Request from the Gloria Dei Service Committee and Gold Hill Outreach Ministry!

Local stores will be offering bargains on school items during July and August! Please take advantage of these low prices and help us shop for school kits for Lutheran World Relief.

The items you purchase will be stored until in the spring when many School Kits will be compiled to be sent to the LWR warehouse in Minneapolis for distribution. Please help us with this very important project if you can!

Here's what we need for each backpack:



***Four 70-sheet notebooks of wide or college-ruled paper**
***One ruler with cm on one side and inches on the other**
***One pencil sharpener**
***One blunt scissors (safety scissors with embedded steel blades work well)**
***Five unsharpened #2 pencils with erasers**
***Five black or blue ballpoint pens (no gel ink)**
***One box of 24 crayons**
***One 2½" eraser**

Please bring ANY of the above items to either church anytime while the items are on sale!! There will be plastic containers at Gloria Dei and Gold Hill for the school items.

Gold Hill Trust Committee-07/08/2026

Members present: Ron Gruss, Annette Lawson, Revonda Stordahl, Chris Ketchum and Dave Stordahl - council president

Ron Gruss called the meeting to order.

Old Business
Annette read the minutes from the last meeting on 4/14/26. Chris(m) and Revonda(s) to approve the minutes. The motion passed. Revonda gave the treasurer's report. The 5/1/26 Memorial checking balance was $11,150.68. The Perpetual checking balance was $9,959.29. The combined checking balance was $21,109.97. The ELCA Endowment Fund on 5/1/26 was $134,885.40. Annette(m) and Chris(s) to accept the report. The motion passed.
One campership request was received for Alan Podgorski. $150(30% of $500) was paid toward his camping cost.

New Business
* No scholarship applications were received.
* Ron said we should all brush up on the "new membership" information he passed out. Ron will be off the Trust Committee by February of 2027.
* The next meeting will be Wednesday Oct. 7,2026 at 5;15 pm at Gold Hill.

The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Annette Lawson, secretary

Gold Hill Lutheran Church Council Minutes – July 14, 2026

Council meeting was held at Gold Hill at 5:30 p.m. MST.

1) **Call to Order**
- President David Stordahl called the meeting to order.

2) Attendance
- David Stordahl (President)
- Ty Inglis (Administrative Director)
- Jim Anderson (Treasurer)
- Kolby Sukut (Secretary)
- Shelly Anderson (Worship)
- Jody Bickford (Leadership)
- Kyleen Fuller (Spiritual Growth)
- Linda Moore (Outreach)

3) Devotions
- Jody shared the devotion.

4) Approval of the Minutes: June 9th, 2026
- It was motioned, seconded, and carried (MSC) to approve the Council Meeting Minutes for June 9th, 2026.

5) Treasurer's Report
- Jim shared the June Financial Report and discussed current accounting practices; it was MSC to approve the report.
- Swim Day cost $1,500 and $2,025 was raised (including $1,345 from the talent show).
- The Council discussed and agreed to provide the Church youth members a pass to Ridge Waters using the extra $500 from the fundraising.
- The Council discussed providing QR codes or other electronic options for in-pew offerings.
- David moved the parsonage money into two new CDs until further financials decisions are made.

6) President's Report
- Dave provided an update on the insurance claim.

7) Administrative Director's Report
- Ty shared that Melissa indicated she would like to renew her lease and has asked for a figure showing the sidewalk maintenance responsibilities.

8) Worship Ministry
- Shelly reported on Worship Ministry activities; the Stodden Park service is scheduled for August 30th. She indicated she would inquire about responsibilities between churches for organizing the event; the Council agreed the responsibility should be Gloria Dei's given it is their month for coordinating services.
- The Council discussed ongoing coordination of music and pastoral services.

9) Leadership Ministry
- Jody reported on church grounds maintenance; mowing and weed spraying the north lot was completed.
- ELCA youth group (18 kids) from Wisconsin will be staying at the Church on July 18th and attending Sundary service; the Council agreed to provide dinner to the group.

10) Spiritual Growth Ministry
- Kyleen reported on Spiritual Growth activities; including the talent show/silent auction, planning a fall fundraiser/bake sale (in lieu of a silent auction) for funding the confirmation service project, and confirmation is scheduled to start in August; Debbie may be willing to help as she has a theology education background.
- Youth Group is ongoing on Wednesdays; the group has expressed interest in continuing activities during the school year; Kyleen is thinking one day a month; and the "Lock-in" is scheduled for August 15th at Gloria Dei.
- Sunday School is scheduled to start in September; Kyleen requested and the Council agreed to move it to during fellowship after the service.

11) Outreach Ministry
- Linda updated the Council on the Outreach Ministry's efforts; including providing the Youth Group swim passes and fundraising (in September) for sponsoring a table at the Rescue Mission dinner scheduled for October.
- The Council discussed setting up a God's Work Our Hands event where congregations served meals at the Butte Rescue Mission.
- Jody made a motion to donate $500 to the Spirit House; it was MSC to make the donation.

12) Other Business:
- Dave provided an update on the Call Committee and related activities.
- Based on recent events, the Council discussed the church's policy on the baptism of persons not part of the church; all requests should be routed through the church office, a minimum of two week notice is required, and they need to meet with a pastor or LMA.

The meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.

August 2026 Prayer Ventures

1 Give thanks for the resources provided by Lutheran Disaster Response, faith-based organizations and community agencies. These resources help us prepare for disasters, develop resiliency and nurture networks of disaster response volunteers, all expressions of our love and care for our neighbors.

2 Ask the Spirit to help us be attentive to our neighbors and siblings in Christ who suffer hunger and to stir us to respond with generosity, compassion and wisdom. Pray that, while responding to their immediate needs, we also work to address the causes of hunger and poverty that plague our society and the world.

3 Pray for God to strengthen families and ground them in the gospel, that they may foster relationships of love and forgiveness, encourage their children, nurture compassion, and accompany one another through the ups, downs and crises of life.

4 Remember in prayer those who are suffering in the aftermath of earthquakes in Venezuela, that they will find comfort as they grieve lives lost and receive support and resources to address their needs for medical care, shelter, safety, basic necessities and spiritual encouragement. Pray for Lutheran Disaster Response, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Venezuela, the Lutheran World Federation and other partners who are responding to immediate needs as well as undertaking the long-term work of recovery.

5 Praise God for being gracious and merciful toward us, present with us throughout life, slow to anger in response to our imperfections and attentive to our human needs and suffering.

6 Give thanks for the generosity of ELCA members, congregations and synods expressed through Mission Support, which helps us do God's work in our country and around the world — accomplishing more together than any one person or congregation can do alone.

7 Remember in prayer those who are incarcerated, imprisoned and leaving prison on parole to reenter our communities and rebuild their lives. Pray for the work of the ELCA Prison Reentry and Advocacy Network and Prison Congregations of America, which help us support, accompany and care for our neighbors and siblings in Christ in ways that exemplify God's compassion, justice and mercy for humankind.

8 "Earth is full of wit and wisdom, woven into harmony. Every creature has a purpose, every flower and bumble bee. Spider, human, redwood, gecko, monkey, chicken, mouse and snake live within a single fabric: cloth that only God could make" (*ACS* 1064). Lift up praise and thanksgiving to God for the wonders, wisdom and beauty of creation! Pray for God to open our eyes to the inextricable and intentional connection we have to creation and the environment.

9 Give thanks and praise to God for *always* being with us on our journey of following Christ, proclaiming the gospel and loving our neighbors, especially when we feel ill-equipped, fearful and even terrified.

10 Give thanks for deacons — rostered ministers of Word and Service — who use their diverse gifts in response to Christ's call to serve our neighbors and embody the gospel in acts of justice, mercy and accompaniment in the church and society.

11 "As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (Romans 10:15). We are invited to share with the world the good news of Jesus Christ, a message of love, forgiveness, reconciliation and renewal. Pray for the Spirit to strengthen our faith in God's ability to use our unique gifts and personalities to touch the hearts of others with the gospel.

12 *International Youth Day (U.N.)* Pray for young people and the challenges they face. Give thanks for their gifts, insights and partnership in doing God's work in the world together. Recognize and lift up the youth in our congregations as valued siblings in Christ.

13 Give thanks and pray for nurses, faith community nurses (parish nurses) and those preparing for vocations in nursing. Pray for the Spirit to equip and sustain them for ministries of healing, wellness and care that attend to the needs of people of all ages in body, mind and spirit and in many different settings.

14 "Let me hear what God the Lord will speak" (Psalm 85:8). Pray for our hearts and minds to be open to the word of God that comes to us through Scripture, siblings in Christ, creation and inspiration stirred by the Spirit, so that our faith may be strengthened and we may be guided, comforted, encouraged and cautioned in our daily lives.

15 Give thanks and pray for teachers, student teachers, custodians, librarians, administrators, counselors, bus

drivers and others who are entrusted to educate, inspire, equip and keep safe students of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. Give thanks for the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association and its ministry of nurturing a community that helps leaders be stronger, wiser and better equipped for the mission of providing faith-based education.

16 Ask the Spirit to help shape our words and actions so that they build up others, reflect sincere love and concern, and convey the good news of Jesus Christ. Ask for God's forgiveness and mercy when we hurt, disrespect and damage the reputation of our neighbors — intentionally or unintentionally.

17 "The proper prayer is not a deed, not an exercise, not a pious attitude, but the petition of a child to the heart of the Father" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *God Is on the Cross: Reflections on Lent and Easter*). Lift up in prayer today whatever is in your heart and mind, trusting that God is attentive and understanding and not confused by imperfect words, emotional rambling or difficulty in expressing yourself.

18 Give thanks and pray for ELCA Racial Justice Ministries and ELCA Ministries of Diverse Cultures and Communities, that their advocacy, resources and work will help us, individually and as a church, understand and repent of our brokenness, seek reconciliation and healing, and strive to change laws, policies and behaviors that marginalize people of color, neglect those who suffer poverty and vilify immigrants and asylum seekers.

19 Pray for those with whom we serve to do God's work in the world, including other denominations and ecumenical ministries, global companions, the Lutheran World Federation, social ministry organizations, the World Council of Churches, interfaith organizations and faith-inspired networks.

20 Persist in praying that the efforts of peacemakers, mediators and world leaders, imperfect as they may be, will bear fruit in lasting peace, justice and an end to the suffering of those affected by war and conflict.

21 Thank God for the ELCA's special relationship with the United Church of Christ, a full communion partner since 1997. Pray for the church, its members and its leaders, that together we will find strength and resources for the work of sharing the gospel and serving our neighbor, especially in these challenging times for the church and society.

22 Remember in prayer faith-based daycare centers and preschools in our congregations and the leaders, teachers and volunteers who care for children, support parents and nurture faith in Christ.

23 "He asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?'" (Matthew 16:13). Who do you say Jesus Christ is? How do you respond when someone asks about your faith? Lift up your questions and uncertainties to God and ask the Spirit to give you confidence and clarity when you share your faith story and proclaim Jesus Christ as the true savior whom you love, trust and follow.

24 Give praise to God and thanks for people, things and experiences that give you hope, joy and strength today.

25 Remember in prayer ELCA missionaries and Young Adults in Global Mission volunteers who accompany global partners in Europe as they serve others in a diverse world and bear witness to the presence and work of a loving and merciful God. Pray that they may be emboldened to work for peace and justice and to care for those who suffer during this time of turmoil in parts of Europe.

26 Pray that our ELCA colleges, universities and seminaries flourish in their ministries of preparing students for lives of faith and vocation, equipping them to use their gifts in response to God's call to share the gospel and love and serve neighbors in need.

27 Give thanks for the impact of congregations that celebrate a long history and presence in their community. Pray for the Spirit to help them grow, evolve and discern what God is calling them to be and do in their community.

28 The Lutheran Campus Ministry Network (LuMin) serves over 175 colleges and universities through ELCA and ecumenical campus ministry organizations, including congregations near campuses. Pray that students, faculty and staff are blessed by the work of LuMin, which builds community, deepens faith, expands minds and inspires service.

29 "When schools flourish, all flourishes" (Martin Luther, *Table Talk*). The Lutheran church has a long, rich history of commitment to faith-based and public

education. Pray that we support and encourage education for all ages, abilities and backgrounds for the sake of nurturing students to become confident, skilled, wise, creative, compassionate and service-minded citizens and disciples of Christ.

30 "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be arrogant, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are" (Romans 12:14-16). Paul seems to have written this for us today. Ask God to help us live by these words, which denounce vengeance, arrogance, indifference to neighbors and divisive conflict. Encourage us to be humble, forgiving, empathetic and to love our adversaries and those who are different from us.

31 Gift thanks for new members of our congregations. Pray that they experience belonging, growth, encouragement and opportunities to use their gifts together with those of siblings in Christ to do God's work in the church, their communities and the world.

August 2026

Church Office Hours: 11:30 AM-2:30 PM, Mon. – Fri. CLOSED Sat. – Sun.
Contact: (406) 723-4242 or goldhill.elca@gmail.com
Gold Hill Lutheran Church: Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Unite to Serve.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 **10:00 am Worship** **11:00 am Coffee Hour**	**3**	**4** **8:30 am** Perkins Bible Study **10:30 am** Women's Bible Study	**5** **10:00 am** LWR Quilters	**6**	**7**	**8**
9 **10:00 am Worship** **11:00 am Coffee Hour**	**10** 6:00 pm Stephen Ministry @ Gold Hill	**11** **8:30 am** Perkins Bible Study **10:30 am** Women's Bible Study **5:30 pm** Council Meeting	**12** **10:00 am** LWR Quilters	**13**	**14**	**15** **5:30 pm** Youth Lock In @ Gloria Dei
16 **10:00 am Worship** **11:00 am Coffee Hour**	**17** **9:00 am Sack Lunches**	**18** **8:30 am** Perkins Bible Study **10:30 am** Women's Bible Study	**19** **10:00 am** LWR Quilters	**20**	**21** **12:00 pm** 55+ Lunch Bunch	**22**
23 **Blessing of Backpacks** **10:00 am Worship** **11:00 am Coffee Hour**	**24** 6:00 pm Stephen Ministry @ Gold Hill	**25** **8:30 am** Perkins Bible Study **10:00 am** Gather Bible Study **10:30 am** Women's Bible Study	**26** **10:00 am** LWR Quilters	**27**	**28**	**29**
30 **Worship at Stodden Park** **10:00 am Worship**	**31**					