



South Dakota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

May 2020 Congregation Newsletter Inserts

Congregations of the South Dakota Synod are invited to use any of the following newsletter inserts for their regular newsletter schedules.

These short articles are written by members of the staff and our partners in ministry.

From the Bishop's Desk

Siblings in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of the risen one, the Christ! – Thank you for your faithfulness to Christ's call to love God and neighbor. During this time of pandemic your synod staff faithfully journeys alongside your congregation's ministry. The "Hour of Hope Endowment", for example, has provided the synod with a generous gift, which we quickly converted into micro grants for congregations. These grants allowed your congregation to either buy or update your recording equipment to better share the Gospel in times of physical distancing. The synod staff continues to host weekly Zoom briefings with rostered and lay leaders, where we share best practices, answer questions and pass along information, all so that ministry in your congregation can go on. These are just two of many examples of how my staff and I live out the promise to journey together in Christ.

As we look into the future, we are ready to come and "visit" your congregation through a virtual visit, or by recording or transcribing a sermon for your congregation to use. We are working closely with the synod and churchwide's general counsel to assure that congregations and leaders in transition have what is needed to issue a call in times when congregations cannot gather to vote on issuing a call. A task force has been established that will look at best practices and the future direction of how we live out our faith in worship and fellowship, giving special consideration to the Sacrament of Holy Communion. We are developing an online resource platform to assist you with congregational ministry when how you do ministry has changed overnight.

Thank you for your continued mission support. Your congregation's financial support is essential to providing strong resources to your congregation's ministry. Thank you!

Journeying with you in Christ,
Bishop Constanze

Rejoice!

Rev. Renee Splichal Larson

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- Phil 4.4-7

"Rejoice!" Paul's invitation to rejoice can be met with weary hearts this Easter season with weeks of isolation under our belts, with no guarantee when we all may be allowed to return to any sense of "normal." And yet, the invitation remains: "Rejoice!" What does it mean in our daily life that Jesus was raised from the dead? Do we live and hope in such a way that we actually believe this to be true? Even in the midst of COVID 19 and all of the other realities of life?

The Lord IS near. This is what he promises each of us; that Christ is with us until the end of the age. Therefore, we lift up our worries and anxieties to the One who can bear them with us. Jesus, the one who gave up his life and was raised from the dead for you, guards and holds your hearts and your minds with tender care.

So rejoice! Rejoice in your loved ones. Rejoice in the provision of food and shelter. Rejoice in the gift of forgiveness and reconciliation. Rejoice in the resurrection. Rejoice in the first crocus that pops up out of the soil. For what else do you rejoice? ...

General Ministry Housekeeping

Crystal McCormick

Here to Serve – ELCA Churchwide has reorganized to become project-based in the pandemic and is refocusing on what is needed right now by congregations and Synods. The Here to Serve Campaign has been created as a place to share any concerns or needs. Please watch for information to be rolled out by Churchwide soon.

We are Church Together – You can share photos of how we are church together at listen@sdsynod.org. Our Companion Synods are also being affected by COVID-19. Please keep our missionaries and YAGM's in your prayers who had to either come home or stay as there's no travel allowed. Thank you for reaching out to them to send a message of hope and encouragement. Please

continue to support our siblings in Christ around the world.

Subscribe to the Synod News – a good way to stay informed and updated is to subscribe to the Synod news. This can be done by visiting sdsynod.org/ and inserting your email address into the box at the bottom of the home screen where it says "sign-up for Synod news" and hit the yellow subscribe button. We will keep you informed as postponed events get rescheduled as well as continue to share reliable information and resources regarding COVID-19 and how our ministries are moving forward amidst these times.

Telling your story

Rev. Jonathan Steiner

"Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you." - Matthew 7:7

While Jesus is teaching about how to pray to God, this is also a model for how to approach stewardship. When our ministry needs some resource - time, talent, or treasure - it is our duty as Christians to ask. Imagine having a great gift, and not knowing what to do with it. I find great joy as a leader when I match the right person to the right job.

When I was a camp counselor in Pennsylvania, our camp always had an under-the-radar project, something that was important but didn't get a lot of attention. The director would set the goal, and invite everyone to give what they could - often the rest of the money on their store card, or spare change out of their car. But one evening, in worship during the offering, he asked people to give what they could, and then jokingly said "if you have \$5,000 and want to support this entirely, see me in my office."

We all laughed.

And then he had multiple people stop in his office that evening, some to match his request, and some to give even more. Everyone gave what they could, but by asking to finish the project, it got done.

How do you invite people to dream big about what they can offer? How can you tell the story of your ministry in a way that asks people to be part of the work? Blessings to you, and I trust the Holy Spirit will surprise you with generosity in people's hearts.

Stepping Out

*Kathy McHenry, Executive Director
Lutheran Planned Giving of South Dakota*

One of my favorite daily devotions from Bob Goff reminds us that God is like a parent watching their child's first steps, always a few steps ahead of you with outstretched arms, waiting to see if you'll be as courageous as God thinks you are. No surprise when you stumble; no anger when you fall; just delight in your every move, every brave step. And all the while, "Heaven is leaning over the rails, wondering if you'll be as courageous [and generous] as God thinks you are."

Each of us has felt the loss of social interaction and support. For some, the immediate effects of the pandemic have also been financially devastating. But for others, the economic impact has been much less, or non-existent. If you fall into that category, I'd like to offer some bold encouragement: Have you thought about using your coronavirus stimulus check to support the ongoing ministries of **[insert name of your congregation here?](#)** Maybe it's a portion; maybe a tithe; maybe the entire amount and then some. Your church is ministering in new and exciting ways and needs your support. What steps can you take in faith today?

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