



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

January 2021 Newsletter Inserts

From the Bishop's Desk

Siblings in Christ,

Have you ever heard of SAM? No, not your nephew and not the one from Dr. Seuss, but the one from the ELCA and the South Dakota Synod. If you haven't, I would like to invite you to tune in to my little tale about SAM.

SAM is actually an abbreviation for "Synod Authorized Minister". What's that? And why do we need that? How do you become a SAM? Those are all good questions. A SAM or Synod Authorized Minister is a lay person (at times a deacon, I can share about deacons in another month) that has been authorized by the office of Bishop to lead a ministry site and preside over the sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion, in case all venues for finding a pastor have been exhausted.

A SAM displays gifts for ministry in Word and Sacrament. This individual has discerned and later decided to pursue a Masters of Divinity Degree through an accredited institution, which will eventually lead to ordination into word and sacrament ministry in the ELCA. Or, the office of Bishop has learned about a gifted lay person that would be available when all venues of finding a rostered minister have been exhausted and is willing to serve in a ministry context until a rostered minister has been called. In that case, this individual has no interest in pursuing a Master of Divinity degree, but makes a commitment to participate in the Region 3 (ND, MN & SD) Lay Academy, which offers a wide variety of classes that will help to lead a congregation, preach the Word of God and care for God's people in a congregational or parish setting. In short, a SAM is a tool in the Bishop's toolkit that he or she can utilize to fulfill the Bishop's call to be the pastor to the congregations in the synod. And as pastor, Bishop or Parish Pastor, our call is to care for the people and congregations we are entrusted with. SAMs are a care extension of the Bishop, who cannot shepherd all vacant ministry sites themselves.

SAMs are held to the same standards and expectations as rostered ministers, pastors and deacons. The SD Synod and ELCA has high standards for its leaders to protect those who we are called to care for in all of life's circumstances. There are regular evaluations by mentors and paperwork is filled out and filed, expectations for continuing education and personal conduct are laid out clearly before a person is synod authorized. Each SAM is under the direct supervision of

the office of Bishop and will be evaluated annually. If your ministry site is served by a SAM, please know, you have a person serving you when the Bishop cannot personally serve you while vacant. This is the Bishop's way of saying: "I see you; I hear you and I care; therefore, I provide you with a gifted steward on my behalf." Secondly know that just because you are currently vacant and are served by a SAM, doesn't mean that the synod office will cease searching for a suitable rostered leader to serve you. Our constitution reminds us that the goal is that each congregation of a synod is served by a rostered minister. If you should have other questions or would like to know more about SAM, please, reach out and we can have a conversation. Journeying with you in Christ,
Bishop Constanze

Virtual 2021 ELCA World Hunger Leadership Gathering

Dates: January 20-23, 2021

Theme: "And All Were Satisfied" John 6:11-12

You're invited! This signature event gathers ELCA World Hunger's leaders for a time of networking, idea sharing, learning and planning for our common ministry to address hunger and its root causes. We know that our future church will be younger and more diverse — whom do you want to invite to join the conversation and our ministry together? To register, please visit bit.ly/2021WHLG. The event fee is \$20, with sponsorship opportunities available to those for whom the cost would be a barrier to attending. Once you register, you will receive the information needed to join in the event. For questions, please contact hunger@elca.org or 773-380-1749.

Seeds for Nicaragua

The South Dakota Synod Companion Synod ministry helps us to better know our siblings in Christ from around the world—especially in our companion synods in Nicaragua and Cameroon.

The Lutheran Church, Faith & Hope of Nicaragua is one of our companions in faith and service. This year, the people of Nicaragua endured two large hurricanes which devastated over 44,000 homes and drowned the crops of the subsistence farmers in the region. These people are in desperate need of help.

Sixty to eighty percent of the farmers in the region are women and children. Programs from the ELCA have helped these farmers learn how to better tend their land, what to plant and how to use best farming practices like use of irrigation. The small family farms joined into cooperatives to help work and tend their crops together. There are currently 15 cooperatives going in the area. The hurricane totally destroyed the crops and houses of 9 of the cooperatives. That's a couple hundred families' resources wiped out. This catastrophe comes on top of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic hit the area

hard and caused many to miss one of the two harvests this year because of sickness. People were already desperate when the final blows of 2 hurricanes hit.

Our missionary, Rev. Dr. Soliette Lopez Ortega, shared that hunger has already become a problem and a true famine in the area could occur if something is not done to help. They hope to be able to replant this fall when the water recedes or barring that possibility, plant another crop in the spring. But...

THEY HAVE NO MONEY FOR SEED!

As people of the land, we understand the need for seed and soil to harvest. We know the hardship of no harvests. In the United States, we have insurance and farm plans from our government to fall back on. The people of Nicaragua have nothing to help them out of this disaster.

They have nothing but us...their partners in prayer and faith.

We are asking the people of the South Dakota Synod to step up and help our companion synod siblings from Nicaragua as we journey together in Christ to raise money to buy seeds for the future and hope in Nicaragua.

Each cooperative's seed will cost them \$1,445.00. We are setting a goal of raising \$14,000.00 for the farmers in Nicaragua.

Donations can be sent directly to the South Dakota Synod. You can donate online (sdsynod.org/donate) or mail a check made payable to the South Dakota Synod, ELCA (2001 S. Summit Avenue, Sioux Falls, SD 57197). Please mark your donation to be used for "Seeds of Hope for Nicaragua."

Thank you for your financial support and prayers for Nicaragua.

With a 2021 Resolution Makeover, your life can make a difference.

Every New Year's Eve, we determine to make the next year better than the last. We promise ourselves that we'll eat healthier, get more exercise, save more money, and make more friends. Of the top nine New Year's resolutions, everyone is about self-improvement.... inwardly directed. And every year, at least 80% of us fail.

What if we reversed the focus and resolved to make life better for others? Is it possible that generosity might be a resolution with a positive outcome for everyone involved?

According to the authors of *Big Think*^{*}, research suggests that helping others doesn't just benefit the recipient. It pays dividends to your health, happiness, and well-being too.

Just like any other resolution, the best chance at success comes with a specific plan. Know your passion. Give of your time and talents. Be proactive and seek opportunities to make a difference—don't wait for a need to appear on your doorstep. Maybe 2021 really can be the year for a happier and healthier you!

Lutheran Planned Generosity of SD can help you create a personalized resolution of generosity in 2021.

Contact Kathy McHenry at 605.274.5030 or kmchenry@sdsynod.org.

[^{*}<https://bigthink.com/personal-growth/new-years-resolution-help-others/>]

SAVE THE DATE IN 2021!

Lay Leader Kick-Off Night:

February 2 at 7:00 PM CT

Evening of learning, connecting, and resource sharing from the synod office. This invitation is open to all newly elected lay leaders in congregations such as presidents, treasurers, secretaries, and council members.

Region 3 Discernment Retreat:

Session 1: March 9th from 7:00-8:30pm CT

Session 2: March 16th from 7:00-8:30pm CT

Synod Assembly

June 4-5, 2021

Scheduled to take place at Our Savior's Lutheran in Sioux Falls. A final determination on whether or not assembly will be online will be voted on at the March synod council meeting.

Are you signed up for the weekly synod news?

Head over to sdsynod.org and click the sign-up on the homepage to be included on the weekly synod news email. Each week you will find updates and news happening across the South Dakota Synod and in the ELCA.