



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

## **July 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**

*"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)*

These are the prophet Micah's words to his contemporaries, and these are Micah's words to us as well as it speaks into our daily life as people of God living in uncertain times. Many of you have reached out to me with a deep concern about the storms of life encircling us, they are manifold from the ongoing uncertainty of agriculture, to the threats of COVID-19, to the unrest that fills our life. The call of the prophet Micah continues to lead us, dear Church until the day, Christ will return. And so, we went to work, trusting that God's in the midst of all of this, leading us into the future he has prepared for us.

During our fall "Listen, Learn and Care" events in all seven conferences of our synod we learned that you seek your synod staff to be a resource to you, that you are deeply concerned about the polarization in our nation and that you seek to live out your faith boldly. We have listened to you and offer you a synod-wide opportunity to create a space where various voices are heard, where justice and love for mercy guide the conversation as we journey together humbly with God. The "SD Synod Justice Table" will begin a conversation around topics of diversity, justice, and reconciliation. This conversation will invite partners around the table that are of very different walks of life and bring various experiences to the table. This group will model what it means to "holy wrestle" with the tough issues and how we live our faith boldly in times such as these heading Micah's call. Welcome to the table, SD Synod.

Bishop Constanze  
#JourneyingTogetherinChrist

## **In Times of Conflict**

*Rev. Jonathan Steiner*

Ephesians 2:14-16

For [Christ] is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.

In the middle of all this tension and conflict, it can be easy to demonize those we disagree with. When we say things like, "those are evil people," we lose sight of who God knows us to be: broken people. Every one of us has flaws, sins that we know and even ones that we are blind to. God forgives each of us, out of the grace that is the gift from Christ. We are called to love our neighbors, to call out injustice, and to work so that everyone has a place at the table. But we must do so in the pursuit of peace, rather than trying to win. Jesus breaks down our hostility, and brings us peace.

## **General Ministry Housekeeping**

*Crystal McCormick*

### **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 <https://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.

## **2020 Generosity**

Our grandson was born on 02.02.2020. For numbers nerds like me, it was the first eight-digit palindrome of its kind since 11.11.1111, over 900 years ago. It's not an event that required such a special date for us to remember—his entrance to this world and our family was more than enough, but it's a fun addition to the story. The entire year of 2020 seems the same—it's as though the world is determined to become so memorable that we'll never forget those numbers, but for very different reasons. Physical, emotional, financial and social pains have bombarded us with challenges of

mourning and yearning, adapting and changing, listening and reacting, and never, ever forgetting.

2020 is a year of people and ministries in great need, but also of people well-equipped by God to meet those needs. Have you thought about how and why God has entrusted you as a caretaker and steward? Have those resources placed you in a unique position to make a difference in the world in 2020? What legacy of your faith will live on as an example beyond 2020 to those who mourn your passing?

This year will be unforgettable for a multitude of reasons. Maybe a decision to move away from excess toward intentional, planned generosity for our hurting brothers and sisters is another reason to remember 2020. If so, Lutheran Planned Giving of South Dakota is here to help.

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## **Church Online**

*Sawyer Vanden Heuvel*

There is no doubt that COVID-19 has caused a huge shift for our churches in South Dakota, but it has also opened up a new opportunity for churches to continue to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. How many of your congregations have seen new people online in worship with you? For some, checking out a church for the first time seemed like a daunting task. "Will I feel welcome? What is the music like? Will I like the preaching?" These are all questions that people ask when checking out a church. Now, with many of our congregations online, that barrier has been removed and the pressure of visiting has been lifted.

If your congregation is looking to take a step further in your church online, we invite you to check out a new partnership we have with Red River Worship. Created by two ELCA Lutheran worship directors, Red River Worship's mission is to equip congregations with resources, video services, and even a recorded hymn library! Check out the work of Jon and Nolan at **redriverworship.com**.