



South Dakota Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

December 2019



Friends in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit!

Little did I know last year, at this time, as I was writing my annual pastor's report to the congregation where I served as the administrative pastor that this year, I would be writing an annual report to all congregations of the South Dakota Synod as the Bishop. Now, a little over 120 days into this new call, I am still filled with a deep sense of gratitude for having been granted this humbling opportunity. Thank you for your trust, grace, and support.

Looking at the life of the synod in 2019, I would like to thank Bishop Emeritus David Zellmer and his associates, Bishop Bill Tesch and Deacon Susan Marone once again for their fine leadership the past twelve years. These were difficult times for the church, but your previous administration did an outstanding job in maneuvering through the difficulties and setting a new course for being church in South Dakota.

I hope to continue this legacy of excellence in leadership. Therefore I called two very gifted associates to lead with me. Pastor Renee Splichal Larson accepted the position for Candidacy, Congregation, and Rostered Minister Accompaniment and Pastor Jonathan Steiner accepted the call to serve as the synod's Director for Evangelical Mission and Associate to the Bishop for Outreach and Stewardship.

For the first time in our synod's history, we will be having staff representation in Rapid City. Pastor Jonathan Steiner's office in Rapid City will be located at "The Garage", an office co-op in downtown Rapid City. When in Rapid, stop on over and check it out!

This Fall, my staff and I traveled the state to stop in all seven conferences for our "Listen, Learn and Care" events where we listened to your joys and challenges as we are being church in South Dakota together. We also learned from each other and gathered insight to determine how we can care for each other. These events were vital for the direction of our work together over the next five years. Please send a strong representation to the **synod assembly at Our Savior's in Sioux Falls on June 4-6, 2020** to hear about the future of how we are church together in South Dakota and around the world.

I am also delighted to invite you to join the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women, the 40th anniversary of the ordination of women of color, and the 10th anniversary of the ordination of our LGBTQIA+ siblings. Please take advantage of the many opportunities commemorating these historic milestones throughout 2020.

Last but not least, I would like to thank you for your faithfulness to the Gospel and it's proclamation. As our rural areas are shrinking, our agricultural communities are facing serious difficulties from this past year. Even though our state is seeing these challenges, in the midst of death, decline, and decay, you continue to faithfully proclaim the good news of Christ's death and resurrection. Thank you! God is faithful and with us always.

To God be the glory,

**Bishop Constanze Hagmaier
South Dakota Synod, ELCA**