



**South Dakota Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

*"I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now."*  
- *Philippians 1:3-5*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The words of St. Paul to the Christians in Philippi express what I also feel as I pen what will be my last of twelve letters for your inclusion in your congregation's annual report – that feeling is gratitude. I am grateful for the privilege of having served as your Bishop. Thank you for entrusting this holy office to me. What a joy it has been to partner with you in this special way for these 12 years! I've loved the ordinations, anniversaries, installations and all the in-between visits along the way.

Most of all I am grateful for your partnership in God's mission. Because of your faithful daily work of ministry, the word of God is proclaimed, people are washed in the waters of Baptism. Through your hands, people are fed with God's forgiving love at the table of Holy Communion every week all around our state.

It is also my privilege to express gratitude to you on behalf of the tens of thousands of people across the state and around the world who are served by your generous mission support. Because you give, the Gospel goes out not just from your congregation, but from countless other faithful ministry partners who could not do it without you.

Now, I know that this is a different kind of year we are facing, especially in our rural communities where a variety of forces are depressing farm incomes and making life difficult for many of our families and, in turn, congregations. Know that I will do what I can in this office to continue to advocate for just policies that respect the holy work that our farmers do to feed the world. I know that God will continue to do amazing things through your work and generosity in the worst of times just as God has in the best of times.

As you meet in your annual meetings, I am holding you in prayer. Please also hold me and your entire synod staff in prayer as together we discern what God is calling us to do next. We've been well-served, I believe, here in South Dakota with fine synodical leadership over the years. I do not doubt that God will continue to be faithful in this regard by calling a new Bishop and Synod staff who will serve you and the Gospel with faithfulness, creativity and joy.

Thank you and may the of light of Christ shine on you all!

Your Bishop,

Pastor David B. Zellmer