



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

April 2020 Congregation Newsletter Inserts and Resources

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. We will continue to provide these resources and tips each month throughout these times of pandemic.

Holy Communion in a time of pandemic

Bishop Constanze Hagmaier

Many of you have asked about the sacrament of Holy Communion in a time of pandemic. Communion traditions have and still greatly vary throughout SD. Some of us celebrate Holy Communion once a month, others come to the Lord's Table every Sunday. While communion practices vary from one location to the next, we share common understandings. We believe that Christ is really present in, with and under bread and wine, when we gather around the sacrament of the altar. Following Martin Luther's directive, we also believe that in times of emergency and pandemic, we can celebrate the sacraments (baptism and communion) in the privacy of our homes with those around us. Detailed instructions can be found on the synod's webpage dedicated to everything COVID-19 at sdsynod.org/COVID19. Christ's promise of forgiveness of sins and new life will nourish us just like it does when we physically gather as the body of Christ. In Matthew 18:20, Jesus assures us that where two or three are gathered, he will be among us. If you have questions concerning the sacraments in time of emergency and pandemic, please know that I am only a phone call or email away. God's grace and peace are with you!

Self-Care for Rostered Ministers

Rev. Renee Splichal Larson

Psalm 46.10

After each line, pause and breathe.

Be still and know that I am God ...

Be still and know that I am ...

Be still and know ...

Be still ...

Be ...

Let each of these words from Psalm 46 fill your heart and mind. Know the peace God gives in your very being.

When everything around you seems to be in chaos: Be.

When tomorrow and the week, month, and year after that are uncertain: Be still.

When death seems more real than resurrection: Be still and know.

When you don't know what to do or how to best care for your people: Be still and know that I am.

When you feel like you have failed and you question your call: Be still and know that I am God.

Breathe in ... breathe out ... breathe ...

Be still and know that I am God ...

Be still and know that I am ...

Be still and know ...

Be still ...

Be ...

General housekeeping as ministry goes on in times of pandemic

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 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 share reliable information and resources regarding COVID-19.

Congregational Constitutions – now is a good time to look at your church's constitution and make any necessary changes and updates to bring it in line with the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations. Please contact constitutions@sdsynod.org if you have any questions or if you'd like to receive a copy of the best practices document for amending your congregation's constitution. South Dakota State Law allows for virtual meetings of Church Councils, provided that everyone can participate (listen, speak, vote) in real time. So, unless your constitution says an online meeting CAN'T happen, you are good to go.

Please reach out if there is ever anything you need. We are here for you in the midst of these changing times!

Telling your story

Rev. Jonathan Steiner

How do you tell your story? It is so easy to fall into the trap of talking about numbers – worship attendance, money in the bank, number of hospital visits – that we forget that each of these numbers are a story. Every week, God's Word is proclaimed to people in a way that touches their soul and affects their life. Every dollar given through offering is an act of sacrifice and worship from people who have seen God's love. Every visit is an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to strengthen someone and help them find trust through Christ. In these uncertain times, let's make sure we are putting the focus on how God is still showing up for us, and telling those stories!

Other Tips for Stewardship

- Stewardship is about relationships and God's relationship with us. Stewardship is our response to God's call to be in relationship.
- The Church is not closed -- we are doing church differently. Consider online giving options from the ELCA preferred vendors list (found at ELCA.org) or setup a time for dropping off checks. Remember, your members can still mail in checks.

Generosity in times of COVID-19

Kathy McHenry

When the world doesn't make sense and nothing seems certain, it's tempting to want to close in and shut down, fearing the unknown and expecting the worst. Just wait it out, and hope for the best.

But that's not what God calls us to. The ministry of God's church continues in the midst of chaos and, dare we say it out loud, might even grow as people recognize their need for a faith they abandoned long ago? God's church continues to show up, meeting people where they are, in ways many could never have imagined.

This church is still showing up. [Insert all the ways your ministry continues here.](#)

And so, for many of us, maybe this is the time for which we were created. The time presented as an opportunity for us to be the hands and feet of Jesus, continuing to support the ministry of the church and the people called by the Holy Spirit to lead us and to serve beside us. God has equipped us with everything we need to continue the legacy of the church we call home, the work we have been called to do in whatever way possible, and the faith to make it so. May our generosity be a testimony of a people of faith confident in the future.

If you have questions about how to create a more tax-advantaged gift to insert name of your church here, or how to leave a legacy that will support our mission and ministry in the future, please call Kathy McHenry at Lutheran Planned Giving of South Dakota at 605-274-5030.

2021 ELCA Youth Gathering Updates

Kelsey Lyndoe

To our wonderful leaders here in South Dakota we are continuing to do our work preparing for the gathering even though we know you might have put that idea on hold. Your congregations, families, communities are all being challenged and know that my prayers are with you. One of the amazing gathering team leads shared this with us as coordinators "We can hold onto hope in God's beyond measure, always present, "boundless love" to sustain us, give us compassion for those we know and strangers alike. Grace and Mercy to each of you for whatever you are experiencing." I've been moved by the depth of this cycle's theme and the way it helps create a vision for our young people about all that God is and really how we all need that now more than ever. My hope is that I can be a resource to you whenever you are ready, maybe when you need a break and need to dream of the joy a gathering can bring.

I will be offering a few dates to start in April to invite you or a youth leader in your congregation to join me for a Zoom meeting and introduction to the 2021 gathering and some great resources.

- April 6th - 6:00 pm
- April 8th - 1:00 pm
- April 14th - 8:00 am

LSS Center for Financial Resources

5 Steps to Prepare Yourself Financially for the Uncertainty of Coronavirus

Tips to Reduce Financial Stress and Reduce Recovery Needs

The National Foundation for Credit Counseling offers the following 5 recommendations for financial challenges during the Coronavirus pandemic.

1. **Contact your creditors as soon as possible.** If you anticipate the inability to make your monthly credit card payments, it's important to open that line of communication. Ask for temporary hardship concessions like interest-only payments or forbearance.
2. **Keep priority obligations on track.** First and foremost, it's important to pay your rent or mortgage. If you experience loss of job or income, be sure to maintain open communication with your creditor or landlord.
3. **Develop an emergency spending budget.** This is a leaner much stricter version of your budget. Pause all "fun budget categories" like dining out, extracurricular activities, anything that is more of a want than a need. Set a realistic budget for utilities and food expenses. Make a list of all your current obligations. Circle the things that are wants so you can see how much you could realistically save if you pause subscriptions, limit travel and make affordable meals at home.
4. **Identify community resources and if there are any government assistance programs available.** Government officials are still working through what options and if there will be opportunities for health care reimbursement established in the coming days. Communities agencies may help with food banks, temporary assistance with utilities, etc.
5. **Reach out to a nonprofit financial counselor to find ways to eliminate debt and reduce financial obligations.** Debt is often the roadblock that keeps people from being able to establish financial stability. According to CNBC, the biggest hurdle that is causing people to live paycheck to paycheck and preventing them from building an emergency savings fund is debt.

The full blog can be found at

<https://www.nfcc.org/resources/blog/steps-to-prepare-yourself-financially-for-the-uncertainty-of-coronavirus/>.

Should individuals feel the need for further help, LSS Center for Financial Resources (CFR), an NFCC member organization, offers consumer credit counseling services. In support of current social distancing efforts, CFR's counseling services are offered over the phone or by internet portal.