



South Dakota Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Dear South Dakota Synod,

Grace and peace to you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! On behalf of the 200 partner congregations and worshipping communities in South Dakota, your two companion synods, Cameroon and Nicaragua, and your 64 synod partners across the ELCA, I would like to thank you for your partnership. Together we have faithfully shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ with “all nations” (Matthew 28:19).



Please know that your local ministry has touched people's lives and hearts. Every item you donated to your local food ministry, every Sunday school lesson you prepared and taught, every quilt you assembled, every cup of coffee you poured at a funeral luncheon, and every other way you served your neighbor in Christ's name has touched someone else in Christ's name. You may not think much of it, but be assured that every kind gesture, every caring act, and every kind word is a faithful response to the faith God's Holy Spirit ignites in you. Thank you, for living out your faith in these various ways in your local context.

Together with the 200 partner congregations and worshipping communities in the South Dakota Synod, we also continue to be able to reach even farther than anyone's own local context, and, together, make a positive impact in Christ's name in all parts of our Synod. Please take a look at the “Ministry Celebration” insert that was included in our annual year end mailing. It will give you a numerical snapshot of the many things we have accomplished together as the South Dakota Synod. Thank you for being a partner in this journey.

Personally, I am grateful for your support of my rural ministry emphasis. Because of your generosity and your synod council's courage, I was able to extend a call to Pastor Alan Blankenfeld to serve as the first “South Dakota Synod Rural Liaison”. This position is not funded through the synod's mission plan but instead through your generosity and in part through “Listen God's Calling” capital campaign resources. Because of your generosity, Pastor Alan has impacted and continues to impact rural communities in big ways. You may want to be careful if he asks you out for coffee, though, because he is known for planting and cultivating the seed of answering the call to ordained ministry.

We are also able to look back on a successful inaugural “Farm to Table Dinner,” at which we raised over \$100,000.00 for Rural Ministry support. Through these gifts, and your synod council's support of Pastor Greg Johnson in his sabbatical project, we are now also able to offer you a free five-part study called “A Life of Faith,” which can be used in a variety of ways. You can check out the series on the synod's webpage www.sdsynod.org. And finally, I am delighted to announce to you that, because of a generous donor, the South Dakota Synod was able to establish the first “Rural Ministry Sustainability Endowment.” As it grows, it will assure that the Gospel of new life in Christ can be shared for generations to come.

In closing, let me share with you my deep sense of gratitude for the opportunity to serve the synod as your Bishop with a deep passion for rural ministry in times such as these. I am grateful for the call, your partnership in ministry and the grace of God, which sustains us in our daily life. Thanks be to God!

Journeying with you,

Bishop Constanze Hagmaier