



South Dakota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Spring/Summer 2024 Newsletter Inserts

From the Bishop's Desk

Dear South Dakota Synod,

Grace and Peace to you in the name of the Risen One, Christ our Lord!

This year's Synod Assembly theme is "Connect(ed)". Every year post-assembly I talk to God's people one theme stands out; "I didn't know how connected we are as the ELCA." We took this discovery and made it our theme for this year's assembly.

The spotlight will be on our partners across the state, nation, and world. Instead of keynote speakers, we will offer thematic panel conversations. The sit-down dinner will give way to a Peter Mayer concert on the Augustana University campus, where simultaneously food trucks will offer culinary choices complete with SDSU ice cream. This open concept of gathering will allow visitors from the community, maybe even your community, to join in the fun and provide a relaxed atmosphere to connect with those partners you had heard in the panel conversations earlier that day. The planning team hopes you will leave the assembly with a deeper sense of connectedness across the church and inspire your community to seek out or strengthen an intentional partnership with those you have met.

Of course, we will have business to take care of and resolutions to vote on. This brings me to the last newsworthy item. We will change how we vote. Instead of renting voting devices, we will switch to electronic voting via phone, tablet, or laptop. This can cause anxiety amongst those attending the assembly as voting members. I assure you that before the assembly we will have online training sessions. Once we are in assembly we practice until everyone confidentially participates.

I look forward to welcoming you to the assembly as a visitor or guest. A registration link for those

attending will open shortly. Check on assembly-related news in your weekly e-news.

Journeying in Christ with you,
Rev. Constanze Hagmaier
Bishop of the SD Synod

Three Things I Have Learned as Associate to the Bishop

"...remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

-Jesus in Matthew 28.20b

The promise we can trust, no matter what, is the promise from Jesus to be with us always. Whether we experience a bountiful harvest or barren fields, a death or a birth, joy or sorrow, and anything in between, Christ is with you and with me.

This Good News matters. It sustains us in times of uncertainty. We trust that Christ has died and risen from the grave for YOU! Christ has given you and your congregation the Holy Spirit of God, so that you may witness to Christ crucified and raised, so that you may be a dwelling place for God's love, mercy, forgiveness, and grace.

I have learned a great deal these last 4-5 years serving as an associate to the bishop in the SD Synod, especially when it comes to congregations in a time of transition. Here are 3 things I have learned without a doubt:

1. God is faithful.
2. God's Spirit leads the call process.
3. Times of transition are part of the normal life of every congregation.

When congregations don't know who their next pastor (or deacon!) will be, or how long the call process might take, or whether or not they can "afford" their own full-time pastor anymore, naturally, anxiety rises.

As people of faith, when we worry about what may or may not happen, we are called to turn back towards God, our source of life; and remember, Christ is with us always, to the end of the age.

“O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, still be our guard while troubles last and our eternal home.” ELW #632, vs. 6

Rev. Renee Splichal Larson
Associate to the Bishop for Candidacy,
Congregation, and Rostered Minister
Accompaniment

It's Stewardship Season

It's ALWAYS stewardship season. And what I mean about that, is that it is always appropriate to talk about what God has done in the death and resurrection of Jesus, how God blesses all of creation, and how we are called to be good stewards in all we do.

Stewardship *can't* be limited to a fall pledge drive. To assist congregations in their stewardship, there are a few upcoming opportunities, including the South Dakota Synod partnering with Augustana University to provide a “Stewardship in a Box” workshop for congregations wanting to take a four-week stewardship season deeper without making it more work. This workshop will take place on a summer or early Fall date TBD. More will be coming all year long, so keep watching the Synod News for details.

Rev. Jonathan Vehar
Associate to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical
Mission

Who Is Your Generosity Hero?

he·ro/'hirō,'hērō/ *noun*

- 1) A person admired for achievements and noble qualities
- 2) One who shows great courage.

As you think about the people who have inspired you in your life journey, who stands out as your **generosity hero**? Who have you known to consistently step in the gap and meet the needs of

others, often in quiet and unexpected ways, but sometimes as a challenge for others to join the effort to make a difference? Who best demonstrates an understanding of their role as the temporary caretaker of resources provided by God? Is there someone whose courageous spirit of giving has surprised and inspired you?

Share these questions over dinner or coffee. Consider taking a few minutes to write a note of thanks to your hero. Think about how you might become someone else's **generosity hero**. The world could use a few more today.

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