



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

January 2023 Newsletter Inserts

From the Bishop's Desk

New Year's Greetings South Dakota Synod!

Grace and peace to you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! - The majority of you are preparing for your annual meeting at which you will elect new leaders to serve on the council and in other capacities representing your congregation in the community you are planted in. Allow me to say a thank you to those who have concluded their service and a welcome to those who will begin their service. As the Bishop of the South Dakota Synod I am grateful for your willingness to serve in times such as these.

The synod's mission statement is: journeying together in Christ and is based on Luke's narrative of the walk to Emmaus after the resurrection. Jesus joins two disciples on the road as they journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus to clear their heads from everything they had seen and heard these past few days. Jesus joins them on the way, but their preoccupied minds and hearts don't permit them to recognize Jesus. It isn't until Jesus joins them at the supper table, where he breaks the bread that their eyes and hearts are finally receptive to who has been with them all along. And despite the darkness and possible danger, despite being hungry after a day's journey and despite their tired and weary bodies they hurry back to Jerusalem to share the good news that they have seen the Lord.

As you begin your service as a council member I hope you will amidst the weary works of your day and sometimes even in the church discover the risen Christ continues to show up at your council meetings to reveal who you are and who we are as the living and breathing body of Christ. Your work may include mundane decisions such as paying the bills and choosing curriculum, finding soloists and ushers, but never underestimate the power of Christ in your midst. He may just have been journeying alongside you, without you recognizing him. I pray that you are called to carry out your given task with

an open heart, mind and spirit only to discover that Christ has been a part of the church at large and your community in particular long before you.

I also invite you to join the synod staff for an educational event on Zoom titled: "You have been elected to council, now what?" We have done these workshops for a few years now and the number of people participating is growing every year. Together we will learn about what it means to serve on the council, that your constitution is not a weapon, but your missional document, how to utilize the resources the synod has to accompany your congregation, how to create a spirit of generosity and much more. Please register through the registration link in the weekly synod e-news. The event is free and open to all who wish to attend. If you do not yet subscribe to the e-news, please follow this link or insert into your browser: sdsynod.org/subscribe.

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

Faithful Imagination

Beloved partners in Christ,

As I watch my three young children grow, I am awestruck by their imagination and curiosity about God, the world, and their lives. Not as a pastor, but as a parent it is my calling to help them hear the Good News of Jesus, and to help them trust in God's promises.

It's a joy to watch them learn the Lord's Prayer, and say their evening prayers together. But being four and six years old, the oldest like to find ways to make it fun. They ask to pray "dinosaur style," punctuating each line with a "RAWRRRR." Or we might whisper pray, barely giving any breath as we talk with God. Even though this is not how I might choose to pray, for them it is a meaningful and engaging way to grow in relationship with God.

I wonder what our congregations might look like if we give ourselves permission to explore meaningful ways to share our faith with one another, and to grow in relationship with God - even when it might

be surprising. In our ministries we are called to share the Good News of Jesus who died and lives again for us, and to go out into the world to love and serve our neighbors. But lately we are finding the ability to do that work by imagining new ways of doing it, or learning how others are doing the work differently than we might.

The Holy Spirit is up to something in our churches and in our lives. As we continue to share our faith with others, we will be surprised and delighted to see how we grow closer to God. The Gospel promise of Jesus Christ will remain central, but what we surround that with will change as the world does.

May God bless you with creativity and new ways of living together as God's people. Know that God is with us through all things, that the Holy Spirit is pouring blessings into you, and that Jesus will always love you.

Rev Jonathan Steiner
Director for Evangelical Mission and Associate to the Bishop for Stewardship & Outreach

Interested in Coaching?

Coaching is cropping up consistently across the ELCA (alliteration alert)! Synods are attaching and prioritizing coaching support to initiatives and outreach programs as a way to support leaders—lay and rostered alike—in their ministry. Some of these ministries include the Congregations Lead Initiative (<https://elca.org/CongregationsLead>), ELCA World Hunger (<https://www.elca.org/resources/elca-world-hunger>), coaching first call pastors, a coaching partnership with Luther Seminary's Faith+Lead (<https://faithlead.luthersem.edu/>), and many others!

The ELCA has a national coaching director in Jill Beverlin, whose position recently changed to full-time (<https://www.elcacoaching.org/pages/intro-to-coaching>). Jill has two support staff members, and more and more coaching coordinators (like me! <https://sdsynod.org/ministries/coach-network/>) are being raised up across the 65 synods.

The beauty of coaching is that it offers a safe and brave space for people to name current hopes and struggles, set goals, and attach timelines and accountability to those goals. Coaching is a relationship of encouraging and equipping built on the pillars of active listening and powerful, open-ended questioning.

Bishop Constanze, Assistant to the Bishop Pastor Renee Splichal Larson, and DEM Pastor Jonathan Steiner are trained in coaching and use it daily in their ministries. There is an active SD Synod coaching network that is eager to support leaders across the synod.

If you are curious about what a coaching space might look like for you, reach out! (<https://www.elcacoaching.org/pages/what-is-coaching>)

At the very least, you will learn about something new, and at the very best, you just might find a life-changing opportunity!

Jamie Graham Duprey
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If you are a rostered minister, or seminarian and you are wanting to try out coaching, please contact Crystal McCormick (cmccormick@sdsynod.org) in the Synod office, and ask for the "Lifelong Academy Grant Application Form." Each applicant can receive up to \$300 to cover the cost of your first few coaching sessions. Prayerfully consider this opportunity.

There are also opportunities for congregational coaching as well, including grief coaching. Congregations can also apply for the "Lifelong Academy Grant Application."

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

The Beginning of Something New

It's that time of year again – lots of forms with lots of numbers. 1040's and 1099's, W-2s, Schedule A and Schedule C. Time with a calculator and a CPA

or TurboTax and shivering Uncle Sams waving to oncoming traffic during rush hour.

It's also a time of review and reflection. How did I use my resources? How did I share from my abundance? How did my decisions reflect my faith? How did they reflect Jesus? It's all there in the receipts and check registers and bank statements. The same happens in congregations – evaluation of priorities and programs, adoption of a new budget, conversations about how to do more, or be more, or even save more when things look bleak.

Here are some words to consider as you think about what's in store for 2023. You may have heard them before, but they still seem a good challenge for each of us as we make plans for something new in the coming year:

“This is about generosity, not about fundraising. Not budgets or campaign goals. If that's all we're going to achieve, we will have missed something along the way. We believe that following Jesus means learning how to follow him in every area of our lives, including how we handle our money.

“As followers of Christ, our goal in life is not gaining power, possession or prestige for ourselves. We exist to fulfill the Great Commission until Christ's return. When the church acts with generosity to serve others, it is a clear picture of Christ, who at the cross generously gave his life and all he had so that we might have life forever.” (Willard & Sheppard, 2012; pp. 165-166)

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