



South Dakota Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## Summer 2023 Newsletter Inserts

### From the Bishop's Desk

Dear South Dakota Synod,

Grace and peace to you in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

THANK YOU for sending your rostered leaders and voting members to the 2023 synod assembly. Almost 400 people gathered under the theme of "Cultivate" with a focus on rural ministry. Our two keynote speakers, Rev. Mark Yackel-Juleen from Wartburg Seminary and Rev. Jon Anderson from Luther Seminary, shared hard facts and data as well as hope and future vision. Did you know that Region 3, Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota, are the largest region in the ELCA? Did you know that 75% of the members of the ELCA live rural communities? And did you know that the average worship attendance across the ELCA is 50-75 people?

When I travel and visit congregations across our synod I either hear directly or in between the lines that ministry can feel lonesome as a rostered leader as well as a congregation. I hope you heard at the synod assembly that you are not alone, but that you have partners that care and are standing by to accompany you. Rev. Phil Hirsch was our churchwide representative at the Synod Assembly. While I give thanks for his report, what I want to share with you, that you do not know, is that you have left an impression on him. Once the synod assembly concluded on Saturday, he took off with our Rural Ministry Liaison, Pastor Alan Blankenfeld, and Kathy McHenry from Lutheran Planned Generosity to experience rural South Dakota. I know that he enjoyed his experience, both at the assembly as well as the tutoring from the synod, because he said so. It has sharpened his understanding of rural ministry and our place in the life and ministry of the ELCA. Thank you, South Dakota Synod, for your hospitality, your welcome, and for your ministry.

I pray for adequate moisture, farm and ranch safety, energy as you plan for fall ministry, and fun and growth during your summer ministry programming. Please know that I am always happy to come and visit. Crystal McCormick at the synod office will be delighted to schedule a visit with you; just reach out

to her via email [cmccormick@sdsynod.org](mailto:cmccormick@sdsynod.org) and she'll get us together.

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

### From the Director of Evangelical Mission

Beloved partners in Christ,

As I write this, my time with you in South Dakota grows short. I cannot help but think on Paul's words in Philippians 1, "I thank my God for every remembrance of you, always in every one of my prayers for all of you, praying with joy for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (v 3-5).

Just as Paul was thankful in prayer for the church in Philippi, so I am thankful for all the ministries I have witnessed across South Dakota. I have seen deep relationships where people care for one another. I have experienced the welcome and hospitality of so many communities. I have celebrated the generosity we have toward one another, making incredible ministry possible. And I know all of this is rooted in our shared faith in Jesus Christ, and propelled forward by the Holy Spirit.

I will continue to pray for you, and for the work that is shared in the South Dakota Synod. Know that it has been a blessing to me to Journey Together in Christ with you, and I am thankful for the work we have accomplished through our partnership.

Peace and blessings to you!

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

### Back on the Road!

What an exciting time in the SD Synod! I am still energized from the Synod Assembly's focus on rural ministry, and being able to see the fruits of our labors is incredible. I think that people from all parts of the synod and all walks of life know that there are benefits and struggles of rural life, not to mention rural ministry. But when we approach the fears and struggles together, we are able to make our way through them; sometimes it's not easy but yet we can do it. Rural ministry can be so rewarding if we can get

rostered ministers to realize this and embrace these small rural communities.

I am also very thankful for Bishop Constanze and her vision of raising up lay leaders – this is also a very exciting part of my call. I get to help lay leaders look at the educational possibilities available to them that weren't there before; whether they just want to take lay classes or are ready to explore what seminary may look like for them. Some of the people that I have coffee with will be in seminary but they just don't know it yet! If you or someone you know would like to have coffee with me, please let me know.

I would also like to thank Bergen Lutheran church for their commitment to rural ministry as they are hosting a Threshing Bee to benefit Rural Ministries in the South Dakota Synod on Sunday July 30!! I hope to see many of you there!

Rural ministry is rewarding and difficult all at the same time but what a wonderful ministry it is!

Blessings,  
Pastor Alan Blankenfeld  
Rural Ministry Liaison

## **40 for 40 – A Reason to Celebrate**

Three milestones of generosity in the South Dakota Synod were celebrated at this year's assembly: the **40<sup>th</sup> anniversary** of a gift planning position in the synod, created by Bishop Norman Eitrheim and filled by Rev. Franklin Pudas; the **30<sup>th</sup> anniversary** of the establishment of the Synod Endowment; and the **20<sup>th</sup> anniversary** of the Lutheran Planned Generosity of South Dakota (LPGSD) partnership and ministry. Lots of reasons to celebrate and to be extremely thankful.

The gifts made because of this work have impacted congregations, rostered leaders, and ministries across our synod and around the world. Because of the way an endowment continues to make gifts, that impact extends far into the future and continues to grow.

Can you help us celebrate this milestone? LPGSD hopes to create and/or document **40 planned gifts** by the end of 2023 to recognize **40 years of intentional generosity**. You may have already named your church or another ministry as a

beneficiary of your will, a life insurance policy, or an IRA/investment. Or maybe you've talked about creating a legacy plan but aren't sure how to make it happen, or whether it's possible.

Thank you for helping us honor those who paved the way by ensuring that generosity and ministry continue in the future. To learn more about how you can be a part of **40 for 40**, or if you have questions about how to make a plan to make a difference, contact us at 605.274.5030 or [LPGSD@sdsynod.org](mailto:LPGSD@sdsynod.org).

Kathy McHenry, LPGSD Executive Director