



South Dakota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Summer 2024 Newsletter Inserts

From the Bishop's Desk

Friends in Christ,

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

Traveling around the state and speaking to you this year has been challenging. It doesn't matter whether it's wind, rain, or hail that puts a damper on our hope, the matter of fact is that we find ourselves with the psalmist asking; "how long, oh Lord?" (Psalm 13:1). And as we take stock, count our losses and try to save what there is, we buckle down, pull ourselves up by our bootstrap and work harder. That's the kind of people we are. But what happens when our bootstraps reach their end or break?

That's one reason for Christ's vision for the church to be a community. In Acts, we hear about the formation of the early church and how they came together to support each other (Acts 4:32-35) for the sake of ministry. Many of you have been recipients of STaR (Small Town and Rural) grants, which range between \$1500 and \$5000, depending on the unexpected expense your congregation incurred. These STaR grants are meant to support your ministry in need. They are how your community, the SD Synod team, and the almost 200 congregations, show up when you are close to running out of bootstraps. Where does the money come from?

The simple answer is YOU! Annually I invite you in the summer to gather for a fundraiser to support rural ministry in the South Dakota Synod. I would love to welcome you to this year's "Farm To Table Dinner" on Sunday, September 8th at Grand Valley Lutheran Church, rural Canton. I promise you an evening of delicious food and drink, delightful entertainment, and first-hand testimonies of how the STaR grants make a difference. The people of Grand Valley are excited and ready to host us that evening despite the high water in their community. Please, consider attending this dinner event with your friends, parishioners, or anyone who cares about our rural communities and the proclamation of the Gospel.

Tickets can be purchased through the synod office or on the website www.sdsynod.org/dinner. If you

cannot come but would love to sponsor the event, please call me at (605) 274-4020. I look forward to welcoming you that evening.

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

What Gifts Do You Have?

Dear People of God,

Discernment: it's a big word. Essentially it means: "Perceiving the will and way of God in the church and in your life ... The question is not, 'Do I have gifts for ministry?' The question is, 'What gifts do I have, and for which ministry are they best suited?'" (*What Shall I Say? Discerning God's Call to Ministry, P. 5*)

There is a discernment resource called, "Call to Lead." Not only is it a great document for people who are considering public, ordained ministry, it has wonderful and thought-provoking questions throughout the whole resource. Over the course of the next several synod newsletters, I will include language and questions from the document in order that we can be in self-contemplation, as well as conversations of faith with others synod-wide. Invite someone to coffee and put these questions in front of you. Christ promises to be present: For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them (Matt. 18.20)."

Should you wish to see the whole resource, you can find it on the Pasque Learning Community (www.sdsynodlearns.org).

Starting on page, 5, the document focuses on baptismal language and vocation:

Baptism connects us to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in particular and public ways, forever joining our story to his, and his story to ours. In baptism we are clothed in Christ so that we become representatives of his presence and ambassadors of his good news. To live one's baptism involves responding to Jesus' call both to follow him and to go forth in his name, engaging in his own ministry to the world ...

God's richest blessings be upon your reflections and conversations!

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

Grant Writing for Congregations

Rev. Jonathan Vehar, Associate to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission, wanted to pass along this opportunity found in the ELCA July 2024 Mission Support Memo:

“As communities work to find ways to fuel their ministries that incorporate other streams of funding, grant writing can be confusing and intimidating. Though not all communities of faith are eligible for all grants, there are some grants for those who are doing new and innovative ministry, especially with communities on the margins and vulnerable populations.

“This webinar will explore both the technical side of grant writing (what are you funding and why?) as well as the process of finding grants and deciding if you fit the criteria. Though finding and writing grants can be intimidating, it can also be rewarding, as you’re able to bring something new to life in and for your community through outside fueling.”

Here is the Zoom meeting information:

"Grant Writing for Congregations"
Monday, Aug. 19 - 6-7 p.m. Central time
Meeting ID: 847 9500 8544 | Passcode: 869038

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

Celebrate National Make-A-Will Month with LPGSD

As you continue to support your church and other ministries that best represent your family’s faith journey, we’re excited to share another step you can take during **National Make-A-Will Month this August**.

Each of us is called to play an active role in the stewardship of our time, talents, and resources as we

journey with Christ. As a gift of appreciation for your generous support, Lutheran Planned Generosity of SD, a ministry of the South Dakota Synod, recently introduced a **new will-writing tool** at www.lpgsd.org that we’re highlighting again this month.

- **What is Make-A-Will Month?** This month is designated in recognition of the importance of making a will as an act of faithful stewardship.
- **How can I participate?** In thanks for your support of the ministry partners of LPGSD, we’re offering an online tool to make it simple, accessible, and 100% free to create a will, powers of attorney and funeral directives.
- **Why does it matter?** Most adults don’t have a will, missing an opportunity to protect their loved ones and their blessings. This month is the perfect time for everyone to complete this important process. It only takes a few minutes to complete – visit www.lpgsd.org today.

We are called to protect the family, finances, and faith God has entrusted to our care. **We hope you’ll take this step during Make-A-Will Month and put your faith into action.**

Kathy McHenry
Executive Director and Generosity Coach
Lutheran Planned Generosity of SD
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Have you heard the news!?! The South Dakota Synod is launching its very own Learning Community! This free resource is available to every ELCA congregation in our Synod, hosting community discussions, live events and online learning created specifically for YOU. You can find this brand-new site at www.sdsynodlearns.org.

Pasque Learning Community is named after the South Dakota state flower—a resilient little perennial

that blooms every spring, no matter how long or cold the winter. We trust that the Pasque Learning Community will be the same—a digital space that will bring new growth as we build confidence, capacity and courage among God’s people in South Dakota.

Right now, the [Fellowship Hall](#) is up and running with over 150 members! Sign in to Pasque, and then introduce yourself to join the conversation. Last week, we launched our first “Deeper Learning” course, [Foundations of Lutheran Worship](#). We will offer this course again with live sessions and group learning in early September. Our new bible study on the [Gospel of Mark](#) will be released in August.

This platform is just emerging, like the pasqueflower pushing through the snow. Watch for a wide variety of new resources as we grow! You will soon find learning opportunities like “Word and Watercolor,” a weekly text study for sermon preparation, and “[Called to Lead](#),” a course specifically designed to encourage and connect leaders (like you!) to consider new ways that God may be calling you to ministry.

God is at work among us, stirring us to love and to good work. Please reach out with questions and ideas as we *Journey Together in Christ*.

With Good Courage,

Rev. Kari Webb
Director of Digital Community and Learning
Project Director, *Journeying Together in Christ*

Director for Rural Ministry Column

Beloved Travelers,

I am writing to you from the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans. I mention this because I would not have known about an especially helpful resource without the experience of “the tAble.” This is our church-wide gathering of youth and their accompanying adults who are under the umbrella of ELCA Disability Ministries. Here we put into practice the ever widening welcome for people of all abilities, and especially for young people of physical, cognitive and emotional disabilities.

This past week I had the privilege of working at the tAble with its Director, Pastor Jonathan Vehar (yes, he’s also our synod Director for Evangelical Mission)

and USD Campus Pastor Lisa Heffernan. In the course of our work Lisa and I engaged in a conversation about funding resources. She let me know that funds are still available in the 2024 Disability Ministries Grants. These are designated funds for ELCA congregations that have identified a need that “would be of a benefit to the disabled people in your setting and your ministry.” Applications are being accepted through July 31, and more information can be found at <https://blogs.elca.org/disabilityministries/disability-ministries-grants-2024/>.

I fly back to South Dakota tomorrow, and I am eager to hit the road and begin the work of partnering with our South Dakota STaR congregations where we love to tell the story (as the lines from that much-loved hymn call out) because we know it’s true... that when fellow travelers of all backgrounds and abilities come to a STaR congregation we put into practice the ever widening welcome of Christ “which satisfies our longings as nothing else would do.”

See you soon,

Pastor Joel Pakan
Director for Rural Ministry
jpakan@sdsynod.org