

Spring 2023 Newsletter Inserts

From the Bishop's Desk

Dear SD Synod,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ!

We are people of the Resurrection: "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." (Colossians 3:1) What does that mean to you? What do you hear when you hear those words about being raised with Christ? What are the things above that we should set our hearts on?

As people of the Resurrection, we are people that walk wet, not because of the snow and rain we are having this Spring, but because of our baptismal promises. We continuously live in the tension of 'both and' as Lutherans. We are sinners and fall short of the glory of God. All. The. Time. AND we are saints, set free through the gift of Christ's resurrection to live a life free of fear. How would your life change if you would be completely set free of your fears? How would your congregation's climate and life change, if you would be set free of all fears?

As we gather in June for the SD Synod Assembly at Our Savior's in Sioux Falls, we will gather together as a rural synod, as a diverse people, with various stories from various contexts, but share one baptismal call. And together we will ask the resurrected Christ to accompany us as we cultivate the landscape of today's church with an eye on the future of ministry in the South Dakota Synod and the wider church.

Please, join us at the Assembly to hear keynote speakers that have been long term experts in rural ministry as well as be in community with your neighbor, who shares the land and the life as a member of the South Dakota Synod with you. Registration will open soon. Please watch for the weekly e-news announcement about Synod

Assembly registration and future announcements about the Assembly. If you have not signed up for the weekly e-news you can do so on the synod's website www.sdsynod.org. Scroll all the way to the bottom and there should be a sign up link in the bottom left hand corner. Thanks for journeying together in Christ.

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

Living Out the Pentecost Example

Beloved partners in Christ,

In the story of Pentecost, we are given a model for how evangelism and stewardship go hand in hand for Christians. In the midst of a festival, the Holy Spirit empowers the apostles to tell everyone about Jesus. People are able to hear the Gospel in their own language, so that they might know about the Good News. Then, when people hear about God's amazing work, they are filled with generosity toward their neighbors. They see the needs that are present for one another, and they even sell their possessions to take care of one another. Because of living this way, more people see what is happening, and want to join in.

Although times are quite different from the first Pentecost, we still follow this model for our work as the church. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we preach and proclaim the Good News, making sure that everyone hears. I think of places like Pueblo de Dios and Woyatan, where worship and prayer take place in Spanish and Lakota. We strive to live with generosity, sharing our blessings with one another, especially when there is great need. My mind goes to places like Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center and Church on the Street. Because of the work we do, people want to join the movement. First Lutheran African Ministry and Spirit of Hope come to mind [by the way, these ministries are part of our Neighbors in Solidarity network, and you can learn more about them at sdsynod.org/neighbors].

We continue to live out the Pentecost example of evangelism and stewardship, as we proclaim Christ,

serve one another, and others see the good work and want to be part of it. Thank you for your work and support across South Dakota, and I thank God for blessing us with the Holy Spirit to do this work together!

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

Sabbath and Sabbatical

“Sabbath time is time off the wheel ...” Wayne Muller writes in his book, *Sabbath*. “... Time when we take our hand from the plow and let God and the earth care for things, while we drink, if only for a few moments, from the fountain of rest and delight (p. 8).”

During the month of May, July, and August, I will be on Sabbatical. What is important to know is that the synod staff is committed to continuing the work we all are entrusted with, including candidacy, mobility, and rostered minister care. These ministries will not pause this summer; however, patience will be appreciated when the staff is down one person. I will be checking in with the Bishop and staff as needed, and will be at Synod Assembly June 2-3. I will be back in the office in the month of June when Bishop Hagmaier is in Germany.

More wisdom from Wayne Muller: “Sabbath is more than the absence of work; it is not just a day off, when we catch up on television or errands. It is the presence of something that arises when we consecrate a period of time to listen to what is most deeply beautiful, nourishing, or true. It is time consecrated with our attention, our mindfulness, honoring those quiet forces of grace or spirit that sustain and heal us (*Sabbath*, p. 8).”

May we all find time this summer to be filled, to breathe, to notice, to love, and receive the incredible blessings of God.

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

Spring...is It Ever Going to Come?

If you are like me, this has been a very long and hard winter, as I travel around the synod going about my work the winter roads just made for some very interesting times. I know that churches struggle too, you want to have worship but is it safe and then there's the fact that without worship the offering plate is empty, except for online giving. This winter has just caused too many issues for us all. But then we see the first robin!! And once again we have hope that spring truly is just around the corner. So, we cling to that and wait.

I can relate this to my visits to congregations that are in transition, at times they too lose hope and by being able to walk with them and remind them that the synod does indeed care restores hope for them. If only we had more pastors! But that's where we all come in, I invite you to send anyone my way if you think they should take a closer look at the ministry. Maybe it is to just do more lay leadership in your congregation or maybe it's to explore what seminary looks like for them. Those are the conversations that truly give me so much joy. So, as we wait, sometimes not patiently, for spring and the greening of the pastures and yards and smell the freshly tilled soil we trust that Jesus is with us. And congregations in transition know too that you are not alone.

Blessings,
Pastor Alan Blankenfeld
Rural Ministry Liaison