



South Dakota Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## Fall/Winter 2023 Newsletter Inserts

### From the Bishop's Desk

Dear SD Synod,

Grace and peace to you in the name of the Holy Trinity!

I would like to begin by extending a heartfelt 'thank you' to you. Your generosity has allowed a group of five individuals to be guests in our companion synod in Cameroon. The EELC celebrated its centennial this year. What began as the "Sudan Mission" a hundred years ago are now two church bodies, one in Cameroon and one in the Central African Republic.

Please, know that the group would be delighted if your congregation would like to hear about the rich ministry that happens in the EELC as well as how we can partner and learn from each other. Feel free to reach out to Rev. Dr. Aaron Matson in the synod office to schedule any one of the group members to share in conversation with your context.

One of the many treasured memories I bring home with me is the deep and abiding joyful almost childlike faith I came to experience in the church in Cameroon. The untamed dancing and singing from memory were contagious, even for an introvert like me. Throughout my entire time in Cameroon, I was reminded that when we entertain and welcome the stranger, we might just as well entertain angels and God's provision is written all over our lives, if we open our eyes and hearts to the possibilities.

Finally, please, know that I recognize that times for many faith communities are challenging, but hear the affirmation that in the midst of our challenges are opportunities for God to shine and work among us in mighty ways. I invite you to trust the first line of the Apostle's Creed that "I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth." No matter how hard times will get, God will not forsake or forget us. That's a promise we can respond to with great joy.

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

### FYI: Updates to the Call Process Webpage

If you have been to the Call Process page on the SD Synod Website this fall, you may have noticed a change. In the past we have had the "Congregations in Transition" section immediately accessible. This portion of the page is still viewable, but now password protected. If you would like to see the "Congregations in Transition" section, simply visit [www.sdsynod.org](http://www.sdsynod.org), click on the upper right-hand corner of the webpage that says "call process." Once on the page, scroll down to the bottom and you will see this line:

"To receive the password to view the page, please fill out [this form](#)."

Click on "this form" and it will take you to a **short** form. After filling the form, you will receive a password that will give you access to the "Congregations in Transition" that will remain the same until the password changes (about once every 3 months). When it changes, simply fill out the form again and receive the new password to access the page, which is updated weekly.

Please continue to pray for and remember our congregations in transition.

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

### You Are Not Alone

I am writing this very early this morning, October 26, 2023. I was awoken early with a message from our daughter that said, "we are safe, no school, sheltering in place." I immediately went to a news source and found out the mass shooting in Maine was in a neighboring town to where our daughter and her family live. Needless to say, my sleep was over for the night. My heart and prayers go out to the families that find themselves in a place they never wanted to be, but I know that Jesus is with them.

As saddened as I am from this senseless shooting, there is something just as senseless going on in this country and yet it's only mentioned in small town papers obituary section. I am referring to the large number of farm suicides. In the USA, two farmers die by suicide every day! Think about that for a moment and let that sink in, two farmers die by suicide every day! Now take a look at the churches you worship in

and ask yourselves, are any of the people gathered here this morning headed that direction? Staggering thought isn't it?

I invite you to be aware of the people in the pews and let them know that they are not alone in their struggles and that help is available. With the rising costs of farm inputs that I am hearing about for next year, we may find ourselves and our congregations caught up in this statistic. Please provide resources for everyone, such as the 988 the national suicide hotline and also local resources. Our farmers and ranchers need to know that we as the brothers and sisters of Christ care about them and want them around! The Synod staff have resources too and are walking with you.

Blessings,  
Pastor Alan Blankenfeld  
Rural Ministry Liaison

### **3.5 Reasons to Consider a Special Year-End Gift**

Year-end giving is a great way to support your church or favorite ministry, and an opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of those who need it most. Here are some reasons to think about a special gift as a part of your Christmas generosity:

1. **Meet Budgetary Needs**: Year-end gifts play a vital role in helping churches meet their financial goals by closing budget gaps and ensuring the mission and ministry of the church continue. Financial contributions cover essential expenses, including staff salaries, building maintenance, utilities, and outreach programs. Insufficient funds make it difficult to meet these basic needs.
2. **Celebrate Achievements**: A year-end gift can be made to recognize and express appreciation for the hard work of volunteers and staff members who have dedicated their time and energy to the church throughout the year.
3. **Build Financial Stability**: Your generosity can help your church or favorite ministry to build financial stability by creating

a reserve fund to provide resources during lean times or fund a new mission project.

- 3.5. **Tax Savings and Income**: A year-end gift can create a charitable tax deduction or lower your taxable income and also generate tax-advantaged income for the rest of your life. Whether it's a gift of cash, stock, grain or a qualified distribution from your IRA, the options are endless.

For more information about how you can make a difference with your year-end gift and receive tax-advantaged income for life, contact Kathy McHenry, Executive Director of Lutheran Planned Generosity of South Dakota at 605.274.5030 or [kmchenry@sdsynod.org](mailto:kmchenry@sdsynod.org).

Kathy McHenry  
Executive Director, Lutheran Planned Generosity