



South Dakota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Dear South Dakota Synod,

Grace and Peace to you from the Triune God! Thank you for another year of "Journeying Together in Christ," the Synod's mission statement based on the story in Luke 24. As a synod, we are committed to intentionally relate to each other, network across the church, equip leaders for ministry, and share leadership on all levels. We can look back on another impactful year of ministry together, adhering to these shared commitments.

Thank you, congregations of the South Dakota Synod, for your financial gifts to support our joint ministries in South Dakota, the ELCA, and the Global Church. Your benevolence impacts lives close to home and worldwide in ways you may never know. I am grateful for your ongoing commitment. The South Dakota Synod is financially healthy because of your dedication and faithfulness. Thanks be to God!

I would like to use the remainder of this letter to highlight a few areas of interest. In addition, I invite you to look at the 2024 Ministry Celebrations annual report insert to get a complete picture of the Synod's ministry.



Lilly 2.0: The "Holy Playground" Initiative: the South Dakota Synod received another \$1.2 million grant from the Lilly Endowment. Your Synod team continued to listen to your joys and challenges and identified that the majority of congregations long for strategic support of their ministry with children. This grant will directly benefit your children's ministry. Details on how are expected to be released in early spring 2025. Stay tuned and excited!

Pasque is the Synod's digital hub for community and learning. Because of Lilly 1.0, the "Journeying Together in Christ" Initiative, we could hire Pastor Kari Webb as the Director for Digital Community and Learning. She has created Pasque, named after our state flower, for every member of the South Dakota Synod to connect and learn with and from each other for free. Pasque offers you congregational resources, courses, bible studies, and community. Please take the time to register for free, look around, stay a while, and invite others to do the same. You can access Pasque here: <https://www.sdsynodlearns.org/>.

Box Elder is one of the fastest-growing communities in South Dakota, and we are committed to showing up. Pastor Jonathan Vehar, the Synod's Director for Evangelical Mission, and Kathy McHenry, Executive Director of Lutheran Planned Generosity, are working diligently to build relationships with personnel from Ellsworth Air Force Base and the members of the Box Elder community. They continue to intentionally listen to the needs of the community and how to best partner in new and innovative ways to be the church for all people there. We always seek donors who help lay a sure foundation for this new mission to start in the beautiful Black Hills. Also, if you want to be a missionary but want to stay close to home, this is an opportunity to reach people in Christ's name here in South Dakota. Please contact Pastor Vehar at jvehar@sdsynod.org or Kathy McHenry at kmchenry@sdsynod.org if you want to learn more about becoming a partner in this endeavor.



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The 2025 Churchwide Assembly will gather in July in Phoenix, AZ; besides prayers and sending your Synod voting members and officers, you can actively participate by engaging in the public hearing and response process to the proposed revisions of the Social Statement of Human Sexuality: Gifts and Trust. Following this link: elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Current-Social-Writing-Projects/Human-Sexuality-Gift-and-Trust-Reconsiderations will get you to the landing page. You can access all resources and learn how to make your voice heard to the task force and broader church. Please engage in this conversation and let your voice be heard. The church is listening!

The 2025 Bishop's Election will occur at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, SD. We will gather May 30-31, 2025, to conduct business, welcome Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton to preach, deliver the churchwide report, and preside over the bishop's election. Many of you have asked me if I would consider serving another term. I have shared with the Synod Council that I would be honored if the Synod would call me to serve a second term. The bishop's election survey is completed and can be accessed here: <https://sdsynod.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/2025-sd-synod-study-full-report.pdf>. In this time of discernment, I invite all to pray for the Holy Spirit to stir our hearts and minds and gain understanding and wisdom for the ministry Christ has called us to. A pre-identification process will begin at the conference assemblies, held simultaneously at all conferences on February 23rd. Please stay tuned through your church's communication or the Synod's e-news. Sign up at the bottom of the Synod's website, www.sdsynod.org, for weekly correspondence directly in your inbox.

Thank you for your trust in my leadership, your support of our shared ministry, and the call to serve as the Bishop of the South Dakota Synod. It has been and continues to be a great honor, and I serve with deep gratitude.

Journeying together in Christ,

Rev. Constanze Hagmaier
Bishop of the South Dakota Synod, ELCA