



South Dakota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

October/Fall 2024 Newsletter Inserts

From the Bishop's Desk

Friends in Christ,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father! **School and harvest are in full swing.** Please pray for students, educators, support staff, and administrators for a school year that is harder on writing utensils than on people. And, of course, we lift prayers for all those involved directly and indirectly in this year's harvest. May the safety of all be a priority and their labor not be in vain.

Fall in the synod office is filled with travel and congregational visits.

- I recently attended the **Fall Conference of Bishops meeting in Chicago**. You can read about it here: <https://elca.org/News-and-Events/8248>.
- The SD Synod also received a **second Lilly grant, focusing on strengthening children's ministry**. You can find the news release here: <https://sdsynod.org/south-dakota-synod-awarded-1-2-million-grant-from-lilly-endowment/>.
- We will be **electing a bishop at the 2025 Synod assembly**, and I have indicated to the Synod Council that I would be honored to see my name on the ballot and be elected to a second term.
- Check out **Pasque**, the synod's digital community and learning hub, to connect and learn with others from across the synod. You will also find the synod's first "Caregiver Devotional," a group effort from caregivers for caregivers. Pasque is free and accessible to you and your neighbor. Please follow this link to sign in or up: https://www.sdsynodlearns.org/users/sign_in.
- To stay updated on synod happenings, please subscribe to the **weekly e-news**. Scroll down to the bottom of the landing page, enter your email address into the space at the bottom, and click subscribe: <https://sdsynod.org/>.

Journeying in Christ with you,

Rev. Constanze Hagmaier
Bishop of the SD Synod

Every Baptized Person Is A Minister

Dear People of God,

In the July synod newsletter, I wrote about a discernment resource titled, "Called to Lead." Since writing, the entire resource is available in the Pasque Learning Community as a discernment course (www.sdsynodlearns.org). 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)."

On page 7, the document focuses on every baptized person as a minister:

One of the images used in the New Testament to describe the church is the "body of Christ." In his first letter to the Christian congregation in the city of Corinth, Paul reminds the people, "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Corinthians 12:27). The crucified, risen and ascended Christ continues to carry out his ministry in the world through the church as his body. Just as the Holy Spirit descended upon the body of Jesus as he rose from the water of his own baptism, so the Holy Spirit also descended upon the extended body of Jesus – the church – at Pentecost. The entire church, including each of its members, shares the same vocation of ministry that was bestowed upon Jesus. To be a Christian, therefore, a follower of Christ, means also to be a minister of his good news in word and deed.

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

Celebrating What God Is Doing

Before too long, the calendar will change over to another year, which means that for many of the congregations in South Dakota, the countdown to the Annual Meeting begins. Those who know me, know of my love of Robert's Rules of Order and parliamentary procedure. Some might think this time of year is exciting for me, and it is. But, maybe not for the reasons we think. The Annual Meeting, at its best, isn't just a list of reports, a few elections, and approving a budget. Those are often the necessary items to include on the agenda. The Annual Meeting is at its best when all of those things are a part of celebrating what God has done and is doing through your community. Sharing the story of how the Good News of Jesus is making a difference in the world today.

This doesn't happen all by itself; it takes a little work to reimagine the mundane work of the church to be a celebration. So, I wanted to time this encouragement far enough beforehand that seeds might be planted for how you will share what God is doing. A few considerations:

- Narrative Budget: In addition to a line-item budget, a Narrative Budget helps to tell the story of your congregation through stories and pictures. They take a little time to create, especially the first time, but there is help. Check out the new course in Pasque on Developing a Narrative Budget to break up the steps in the process.
- Temple Talks: Recruit a few members to share a story of how God has been at work in their lives in the last year.
- Share a story of what God is doing in the world because we do it together. Check out Stories of Faith in Action to learn more about how your Mission Support is impacting lives across the globe.
- ELCA World Hunger celebrates 50 Years in 2025, and if you're looking for an excuse to have cake at your meeting, here's your excuse.

I give thanks for what God is doing around and through us as the congregations of the South Dakota Synod. And I give thanks for the ministries we share for the proclamation of the Gospel.

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



Good things are growing in our Synod's new learning community! Pasque offers free resources, *available to anyone!* We are hosting community discussions, live events and online learning created specifically for YOU. You can find this growing learning community at www.sdsynodlearns.org.

Pasque Learning Community is growing by leaps and bounds. Right now, the [Fellowship Hall](#) is up and running with over 200 members! Sign in to Pasque, and then introduce yourself to join the conversation.

This Fall, we launched several new learning opportunities, including [Foundations of Lutheran Worship](#) and an entry-level bible study on the [Gospel of Mark](#). A new course, "[Called to Lead](#)," is specifically designed to encourage and connect leaders (like you!) as you consider new ways that God may be calling you to ministry.

You can jump in *anytime*.

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

Rural Ministry News

Beloved Travelers,

I am writing to you from Wessington Springs where I get to partner with Pastor Nancy Rieke and the people of Our Saviors Lutheran Church as we craft a youth worship service that incorporates the energies and passions these young people brought back with

them from the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans.

The past month has also found partnerships with Grand Valley Lutheran Church (rural Canton), Dalesburg Lutheran Church, Pleasant Valley Lutheran Church (rural Vermillion), Redeemer Lutheran Church (McLaughlin), Isabel United Church of Christ, Timber Lake United Parish, Trinity Lutheran Church (Mobridge), Trinity Lutheran Church (Rapid City), Resurrection Lutheran Church (Pierre), and the Prairie Rivers Conference. These partnerships are as varied as the places themselves but held one common thread of strengthening our ties to one another as the South Dakota Synod.

This good work will continue in the coming weeks and months in places like Trinity Lutheran Church (Carthage), Langford Lutheran Parish, Crocker Lutheran Church, St. James Lutheran Church (Belle Fourche) and a trip to our Lutheran partners in Nicaragua. I still have a few days open in my 2024 travel schedule. How might we partner together and strengthen one another?

Looking forward,

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