



South Dakota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Dear South Dakota Synod,

Grace and peace to you in Christ's name! This year reminded me that the Church is always a blend of plumbing and poetry. The steady, unseen pipes that keep ministry flowing, and the surprising grace that breaks in when we least expect it.

And together, across South Dakota, you lived both.

Because of your faithfulness:

- The **\$1.1 million** Lilly grant continues to strengthen rural ministry through an expanding rural ambassador program and brings learning to your recliner at home through Pasque (<http://www.sdsynodlearns.org/>). Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMs) experience intentional community with peers, and seminarians get to experience rural ministry through a paid immersion program.
- **1/4** of all SD Synod congregations have received a STAR (Small Town and Rural) grant through funds raised in SD for South Dakota congregations. These grants have helped to cover unexpected expenses across our synod.
- **\$1.3 million** supports children and families through the "Holy Playground" Initiative, reminding us that every child deserves to flourish.
- **Micro-grants** to alleviate hunger in our communities have been a tangible way to multiply Christ's compassion, feeding the stranger, stocking shelves, warming homes, and empowering congregations to respond in real time.
- **New pastors, deacons, and lay leaders** stepped into their callings, shaped by your encouragement and the Spirit's persistence.
- **Congregations in transition** found guidance, courage, and companions on the path.
- **Partnerships with Native, immigrant, and global communities** deepened our witness and expanded our imagination for what the body of Christ looks like.





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These are numbers and facts, yes, but behind every number is a story, a face, a kitchen table, a worshiping community, a moment when the Gospel became flesh again in South Dakota and across our world.

And that is the poetry.

Thank you for granting me the gift of serving another six-year term as your bishop. I receive it with humility and with deep gratitude for the trust you place in me. The work before us is honest and holy, and the Spirit is already ahead of us.

As we enter a new year, may we continue to be a synod that holds plumbing and poetry together, a church grounded enough to meet the needs of today, and bold enough to imagine what God can do next.

With gratitude and hope,

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