

**Director of Communications
South Carolina Synod Assembly
2020**

I've recently completed my fifth year as Director of Communications for this synod. I am blessed to work with colleagues who are both deeply spiritual and highly skilled. The volume and quality of work that they accomplish are amazing. Thank you to the Bishop, Council, and members of South Carolina Synod who continue to support the development of a top-tier, modern communication system.

The South Carolina Lutheran has continued to grow in the number of contributors from congregations across the state through our Synod Communicators program. Currently, more than one-third (sixty-two) congregations have taken advantage of this partnership. These are wonderful people telling the stories of work happening "outside the walls" of their congregations. Our goal is to have one Synod Communicator from each congregation. I am grateful for the contributions by our Conference Reporters who share stories from congregations in their conference. If you haven't had a subscription to *The South Carolina Lutheran* for a while, please do consider renewing or subscribing.

This year the synod's website had to be updated. The infrastructure of the website was approaching four full years of data which was slowing and slowly breaking the site. Even though the transition had to be rushed and take place soon than expected, our website continues to grow in use. Updates to the website have made it easier to use, especially on mobile devices.

Social media has also been a place of growth for us. We've almost tripled our Facebook page likes since I started here. Thank you. Our Twitter account is showing consistent growth. We've slowly introduced our Instagram and Pinterest accounts. If you are on social media and not already following our accounts, please consider joining us as we share news and information there promptly.

This year has blessed me in some new ways. Working to strengthen our Synod Communicators program, I participated in the ELCA Mission Interpreter Coordinators Conference in Pittsburgh and learn more about how I could apply my communication skills to Congregational Vitality at a conference in Baltimore. I am looking forward to working more closely with The Rev. Rick Carter and the Congregational Vitality Team in the year ahead.

Our investment in equipment is helping us to create more videos than ever before. Projects we have worked on are supporting the *Abundancia Appeal*, helping to increase the understanding of the synod's compensation guidelines, and so much more. YouTube continues to be a valuable tool in our communications plan. We had over 250 people from around the state watch at least some part of the Synod Assembly. That is roughly half of those who were in the meeting space. That number should grow substantially with this year's Bishop's election.

We've also made it easier than ever to involve more members across the state to actively participate in meetings through the use of online meeting software call Zoom, a video conferencing system. In a recent month, the system was used for twenty meetings. We also continue to work through our technology replacement plan to ensure the staff has the tools they need to do their work and serve the synod.

If you are on *The South Carolina Lutheran eNews* list, thank you. If you find any of our publications helpful, please share them. Have you ever asked the question "what exactly is the synod doing?" If so, and you have yet to sign up for the eNews list, I would urge you to do so through our website or visiting <http://scsynod.us/scsynodenewssignup>.

Respectfully submitted,
Neal F. Fischer
Director of Communications



**Director for Evangelical Mission Report
South Carolina Synod Assembly
2020**

“The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...”

Ephesians 4:11-12

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

The last few years, when preparing this report, I have taken the liberty of sharing what had been accomplished over the last fiscal year in the area of new mission starts and congregational vitality. However, I believe this year is the time and season to speak to the ministry opportunities that lie ahead for all congregations of the South Carolina Synod. Over the past four years your churchwide office and synod office have listened to you, as rostered and lay leadership, about the need to be better equipped for ministry in the 21st century.

In 2019 the first cohort was created through the Domestic Mission Unit of the Churchwide office to aid synods in developing Congregational Vitality strategies to strengthen our congregations in ministry. Realizing that ministry is contextual, the cohort, under the leadership of Dr. Dave Daubert and Richard Jorgensen, are supporting participating synods in creating vitality strategies that are unique to their area and most importantly faithful to our Lord Jesus through the lens of our Lutheran identity. From the training we have created a strong Congregational Vitality Network of rostered and lay leadership with a passion for seeing all congregations become fruitful and vital ministries of Word and Sacrament. In addition, MakeAWay.Church, a Holy Innovation Project, is now underway providing resources, i.e., learning communities, processes like Farming Church or Leadership for Faithful Innovation, book reviews, etc. The hope is to create a website where rostered and lay leaders can not only search but share their resources so that we as God’s church can be vibrant communities of Jesus that deepen relationships with God, one another and the world.

Our strategy does not exclude New Starts in ministry. The Synod continues to be a leader in New Starts throughout the ELCA. I believe we have become more focused on making certain that due diligence is exercised in funding and supporting starts. Greater emphasis has been placed on finding the right leaders and making certain that there are multiple partners to support the ministry thereby giving the best opportunity for success. To learn more about our current New Starts, visit scsynod.com.

Lastly, I wish to give thanks to the many persons and congregations who continue to support the valuable ministry of Congregational Vitality. Your Mission Support does make a difference!

Peace,

Reverend Richard T. Carter
Director for Evangelical Mission
South Carolina Lutheran Synod

**Director for Stewardship
South Carolina Synod Assembly
2020**

God calls us in Holy Baptism to be disciples. Everyone who goes to the font is called to discipleship. One of the ways we live out our discipleship is stewardship. Stewardship is about all the ways we live out belonging to God. "The goal of our Stewardship ministry is to help God's people grow in their relationship with Jesus through the use of the time, talents, and finances God has entrusted to them (*us*)."

(*Ask, Thank, Tell* by Charles R. Lane, page 11)

Stewardship Education for Congregations

South Carolina (SC) Synod stewardship strategies focus on stewardship education, annual response, year-round planning, mission interpretation, missional spending plan and encouraging individuals and families to participate in planned giving. Here are a few of the resources available:

Rediscover Macedonia theme materials for education, response and living the mission were launched as a website in July 2012, and are available to all congregations at no cost at www.elca.org/macedonia

Stewards of God's Love is a tool produced by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for doing year-round stewardship ministry in your congregation. Copies of this resource are available at <http://resources.elca.org> or online at www.ELCA.org/growingstewards.

Generosity365 provides the *Giving* magazine, a resource from the Ecumenical Stewardship Center, is available to every congregation online at www.stewardshipresources.org.

Embracing Stewardship: How to put stewardship at the heart of your congregation's life by Charles R. Lane and Grace Duddy Pomroy, published in 2016, can be ordered at embracingstewardship.com.

**Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary
Region 9 Council for Stewardship Education**

A Stewardship Symposium titled, *Messing with the Power of Mammon*, featured Bishop Craig Satterlee, North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the ELCA, at the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (LTSS) on January 31, 2020. The symposium focused on *Preaching and Stewardship; Proclaiming God's Invitation to Grow*. The symposium was sponsored by the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary/Region 9 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Council for Stewardship Education and the Speakers and Events Committee, the Rev. Dr. James Thomas, Chair. While the symposium is a public event, the symposium also gives seminary students an opportunity for personal growth and learnings in the practical applications of stewardship in congregations. There were 82 persons participating in the event including sixteen seminarians. There were fifteen congregations from the South Carolina Synod with rostered ministers or lay persons in attendance. Video links of Bishop Satterlee's presentation are available on the SC Synod Website.

A Senior Class Symposium was held at LTSS on March 6-7, 2020, offering seminarians first call orientation, an opportunity to learn about the benefits available from Portico Benefit Services and to hear about the Mission Investment Fund Stewardship Resources. There were thirteen seniors and spouses participating in the event.

A First Call Theological Education (FCTE) Stewardship Gathering (held every three-years) is scheduled to be held at Lutheridge, Arden, NC on February 8-10, 2021. The event will include include rostered ministers, bishops, and leaders from the six synods in Region 9 ELCA. The gathering will be an opportunity for personal growth and learnings in the practical applications of stewardship in congregations.

Networking Congregations for Growing Stewards

Ventures in Growing Stewards, is offered in clusters of four to six congregations. *Ventures in Growing Stewards* involves pastors and lay persons in a series of four workshops over a one-year period. It includes study of biblical and theological foundations, year-round stewardship, annual response and development of a missional spending plan (narrative budget).

Mission Interpretation

A synod video titled *Stories of God's Abundance* was developed in 2019. Using the scripture verse "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10) the video focuses on stories from Lutheran Campus Ministry, Candidacy Committee, Latino Ministry, Companion Synod relationship with the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, Farming Church, Leadership for Faithful Innovation, Stewardship for All Seasons, and Gift Planning and the ELCA Foundation. A synod video along with a Congregation Council devotion was sent to every congregation inviting a conversation on Mission Support. Each congregation was asked to consider 10% of Regular Giving by Members or Increase of 10% over last year's Mission Support submitted. This is an annual plan to engage congregations in a Mission Support "ask" that is biblically based, attainable, relational, and based on being the church together.

Shepherd Callers

Shepherd Callers are a group of persons in the synod who make telephone calls to key congregational leaders to establish caring connections and to deepen relationships. The callers invite the lay chairs of congregations to use the synod video and devotions.

Expand Ways of Giving In Congregations: Moving toward Stewardship in the Digital Age

Walking together with congregations to move into stewardship in the digital age, an Electronic Giving Pilot Project is scheduled to begin in 2021 with ten congregations and [tithe.ly](#), a preferred vendor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The synod will pay the cost of the [Tithe.ly](#) fees and transactions for a one-year period.

A [Tithe.ly](#) representative will conduct a Congregation Workshop May 16, for voting members at the 2020 South Carolina Synod Assembly titled, *Powerful Digital Church Tools of 2020 for Modern Day Worship*:

The more effectively you can engage with your congregation, the bigger an impact your ministry is going to have. Join Andrew Dalamba from ELCA preferred vendor [Tithe.ly](#) to learn about the most powerful digital tools your congregation can leverage in 2020. Find out how other ELCA congregations are increasing their giving, improving their online presence, freeing up more time for admins, and boosting member engagement, without needing to be a tech expert.

New Consecration Sunday

New Consecration Sunday offers congregations an effective financial response method to build a culture of generosity. "This approach to financing the operational ministries of a congregation teaches stewardship from a spiritual perspective. Directed toward raising the level of stewardship rather than toward raising the church budget, *New Consecration Sunday* (NCS) focuses on the question, "What is God calling me to do?" rather than on the question, "What does the church need in order to pay its bills?", *New Consecration Sunday*, Program Book, by Herb Miller. Congregations participating in NCS in 2019-2020 included: Ebenezer, Columbia; Christus Victor, Columbia; St. John, Lexington; Faith Batesburg; and St. Philip, Myrtle Beach. The SC Synod provides financial support to congregations who use a Guest Leader and incorporate a catered Celebration Luncheon.

Planned Giving - ELCA Foundation

The Synod Council is in partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Foundation to provide a Regional Gift Planner for the Carolinas, Stephanie Burke, to strengthen the financial health of our congregations and the synod.

Synod Communicators

Congregation Councils of the SC Synod are invited to appoint a Synod Communicator to share stories of God's mission in two directions. First, the communicator is asked to share the stories of God's mission in the South Carolina Synod and the Churchwide Organization in the congregation. Second, the communicator is asked to share stories of how the congregation is reaching out with the love of Christ in the community. Neal Fischer, Director of Communications, receives the stories submitted by communicators and publishes the stories in the *South Carolina Lutheran* or *Enews*.

Stewardship for All Seasons

The new look in the South Carolina Synod is *Stewardship is Stewardship for All Seasons* (SAS). A cluster of congregations in the Coastal and Amelia Conferences participated in a pilot project in partnership with the South Carolina Synod introducing *SAS: Guiding Congregations into Year-round Stewardship Development*. The congregations in covenant with the synod included: St. Matthew, Charleston; St. Luke, Summerville; Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Charleston; St. Peter, Pawley's Island; All Saints, Mt. Pleasant and St. John, Beaufort. The Rev. Mike Ward, Partner, Grondlund Sayther Brunkow, is the leader. The synod provides a portion of the cost for the congregations covenanting to share 10% of their increase with the synod through Mission Support. SAS is a Growing in God's Mission Appeal Initiative.

Fruit of the Spirit Plates and Mission Support Visits

A Gratitude Luncheon hosted by Bishop Herman Yoos was held at the 2018 South Carolina (SC) Synod Assembly. Voting members from congregations in the top 10% of giving to Mission Support were in attendance. Members of the Synod Council are in the process of visiting fifty congregations to express thanks from the SC Synod for Mission Support. A "Fruit of the Spirit" plate will be given to each congregation. Believing that all the Fruit of the Spirit are important, each one is etched around the circumference of the plate: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* (Galatians 5:22). On the back of the plate is the inscription: *With joy and thanksgiving for our partnership in the SC Synod and the ELCA*. The "Fruit of the Spirit" plates were crafted by Marquerite Palmer, Founder and Director of the Newberry Arts Center. The visits began in September 2018 and continue into 2020.

Lutherans Restoring Creation

A Lutherans Restoring Creation Retreat, *Communion with Creation*, was held on November 15-17, 2019 at the Coastal Retreat Center, Charleston. The *Caring for Creation Task Force* invited college and university students, Rostered Ministers, and lay persons. The task force was awarded \$1,000 from the SC Synod Mission Endowment Fund. The Rev. Kris Litman-Koon, Pastor, All Saints, Mt. Pleasant, serves as convener for the Task Force and as coordinator for the retreat.

Lifeline Fund

Through a “scaling” grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., awarded to the North Carolina Synod, synods in Region 9 are invited to participate in *Faith + Finance + Freedom* initiative. This is a part of the *National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders*. The SC Synod entered into this partnership in June 2019, appointed a distribution team and agreed to collaborate by raising matching funds. Grants to Rostered Ministers for education debt relief, and grants to congregations for stewardship education are now available. See the SC Synod Website for an application form.

Thank You

First, we give thanks for those with whom we share faith in Jesus Christ. Second, we give thanks to God for your 2019 Mission Support. Mission Support is the portion of your regular giving by members that your congregation shares with your synod and churchwide ministries. God is making a difference in the lives of people through your Mission Support dollars.

I am available to congregations to assist in equipping steward leaders in year-round stewardship, conducting an annual response, developing a missional spending plan or meet with pastors to share the best stewardship practices and principles.

For additional stewardship resources, go to the South Carolina Synod website, www.scsynod.com. Select *Deepening Discipleship Table* and choose *Stewardship*.

Rev. W. Osborne Herlong Jr., Director for Stewardship
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