

**Director of Communications Report
South Carolina Synod Assembly
2022**

2021-2022 continues to bring new patterns to our communications, helping us be connected. For example, the synod's YouTube and Facebook outlets have helped us supply 85 online worship opportunities. In addition, in conjunction with our synodical partners in ELCA Region 9, we are offering weekly sermons by synod staff members. The intent is to provide an opportunity for congregations who cannot find a pulpit supply or enable rostered leaders to have a week off.

We have also brought two new video series online. These are *Lutheran F.A.Q.*, where The Rev. Emily Edenfield addresses some of the frequently asked questions about why Lutherans do what they do and a series based on *Leadership for Faithful Innovation*. This 2021 Synod Assembly was again held online through the Lumi platform. Thanks to our Facebook page and YouTube channel, we allowed more than just voting members to follow the proceedings. All of this is made possible through online communication platforms and the synod's consistent investment in equipment and technology. Please join me in thanking the Bishop, Synod Council, and members of South Carolina Synod who continue to support the development of top-tier communication.

Some quick statistics about our communications outlets over the last year:

- Over 31,000 individuals watch at least one of our videos.
- Our website traffic was about the same as the year before. We had seen a significant spike in use due to the Bishop Election during the 2020 Assembly. So, maintaining that momentum is very good.
- We have added 36% more subscribers to our YouTube channel, and our other outlets show consistent and significant growth.

Our rotating technology replacement plan has completed its first cycle and started a second cycle. Implementing this plan allowed us to even our expenditures over time. One of these concerns was a failing power supply on the server that ran our phone system. The failure took our phone system offline for 36 hours this winter. As a result, we moved to a new phone system that will suit our future needs. This system includes features enabling the office to work from home or remotely during emergencies.

In the past year, working with the synod staff has been fantastic. I am deeply grateful to my colleagues as we have learned new ways of doing things. They had shown tremendous grace and compassion when things did not go perfectly. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,
Neal F. Fischer
Director of Communications

Report of the Director for Stewardship 2021-2022

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 the encouragement to individuals and families to participate in planned giving. Here are a few of the resources available:

- 1) *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
- 2) *Stewards of God's Love* is a tool produced by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) for doing year-round stewardship ministry in your congregation. Copies of this resource are available at <http://resources.elca.org> or www.ELCA.org/growingstewards.
- 3) *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.
- 4) *Abundance: Creating a Culture of Generosity* by Mike Ward, Fortress Press [2020]

Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary Region 9 Council for Stewardship Education

The 2022 Stewardship Symposium was held on January 28. The symposium was held in-person on the LTSS campus and livestreamed. Dr. Dan Bell's presentation was on the theme: *The Gift of Stewardship as the Mission of the Church*. The symposium was sponsored by the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary/Region 9 Council for Stewardship Education. While the symposium was a public event, the symposium also gave seminary students an opportunity for personal growth and learning in the practical applications of stewardship in congregations. There were 98 registrants: 46 in-person; 52 online. There were 25 congregations from the South Carolina Synod with rostered ministers or lay persons participating. The video link is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBpSG0dt-ZQ&list=PLZapPS4bCOJBfm7iTo5pk1-6WT5Xs3n5t>

The 2023 Stewardship Symposium will be held on January 27. Bonnie Ives Marden is the presenter. She is the author of *Church Finances for Missional Leaders: Best Practices for Faithful Stewardship*: a complete guide to church finances and stewardship for congregations of all sizes. Includes guidelines, tools, worksheets, and strategies for pastors, treasurers, trustees, finance, and stewardship chairs and committees as well as reproducible pages with worksheets and sample policies. Wesley's Foundry Books [2019]

A Senior Class Symposium was held on April 1-2, 2022 in-person and livestreamed, which offered seminarians first call orientation and an opportunity to learn about the benefits available from Portico Benefit Services and Stewardship Resources available through the Mission Investment Fund. There were nine seniors and interns participating.

A First Call Theological Education (FCTE) Stewardship Gathering is re-scheduled to be held at Lutheridge, Arden, NC on February 6-8, 2023. The gathering will include rostered ministers, bishops, and leaders from the six synods in Region 9 ELCA. The gathering will be an opportunity for personal growth and learning in the practical applications of stewardship in congregations.

It was an honor to serve as Secretary of the LTSS/Region 9 Council for Stewardship Education during the year 2021. I continue to serve on the council as secretary during 2022.

Networking Congregations for Growing Stewards

Building a Culture of Generosity (BCG) was offered in 2021 to assist congregations planning the annual stewardship drive using 6 virtual live training events led by GSB consultant, Mike Ward between August, and November 2022. The synod provided \$200 to each participating congregation toward the total cost of \$450. The following congregations completed the process in 2021 (4): Second Year – Lord of Life, Bluffton. First Year – St. Michael, Greenville; Bethel, White Rock; and St. Paul, Aiken

A 2022 BCG registration flyer is available to congregations for participation between August and November. BCG will launch on Thursday, August 18, 2022, at 9:00 a.m.

Mission Interpretation

The theme of the 2021 Mission Support Video was: *To bodily go....to proclaim*. The Scripture focus: *Lord...grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness [Acts 4:29]*. The video features Lutheran Campus Ministry, stories on technology infrastructure, a feeding ministry, and *Stewardship for All Seasons*. The video along with a Congregation Council Mission Moment was sent to rostered ministers and lay presidents or vice presidents of congregations. You will find the link to the video in the devotions: YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/Q9hM7gVDA5Q>.

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

The goal of *Electronic Giving Pilot Project #2: Tithe.ly* is to expand ways of giving in congregations. The project kicked off in May 2021 with three congregations and tithe.ly, a preferred vendor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The synod pays the cost of the Tithe.ly fees and transactions for a one-year period. Brandon Swain, tithe.ly representative, is working with the congregations. Tithe.ly will give congregations free access to tools for giving for the first year. The following congregations are participating in the project and joined in online meetings in May: St. Thomas, Chapin; Cross and Crown, Florence; and Bethlehem, Pomaria.

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. The SC Synod provides significant financial support to congregations who use a Guest Leader and incorporate a catered Celebration Luncheon.

Planned Giving, ELCA Foundation

The SC Synod is in partnership with the ELCA Foundation to provide the Regional Gift Planner for the Carolinas, Stephanie Burke, to strengthen the financial health of our congregations, institutions, and the synod. View the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qE8YZ5uz24k>

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 SC 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 synod communications.

Stewardship for All Seasons

The SC Synod offers to partner with congregations in *Stewardship for All Seasons (SAS)*. This process is about *Guiding Congregations into Year-round Stewardship Development*. The returning congregations in covenant with the synod during 2021-2022 included:

Returning Congregations (7) (May 2021 to April 2022):

Fourth Year -St. Matthew, Charleston; St. Luke, Summerville.

Third Year - All Saints, Mt. Pleasant and St. John, Beaufort.

Second Year - Ebenezer, Columbia. Grace, Rock Hill; St. Andrew, Columbia.

First Year (2)- Cristo Rey, West Columbia, and Sagrada Familia in Spanish

The Rev. Mike Ward, a partner with Gronlund Sayther Brunkow (GSB), is the leader of SAS. The synod provides a portion of the cost for the congregations covenanting to share 10% of their increase with the synod through Mission Support until the congregation reaches 10% of regular giving by members to Mission Support. SAS is a Growing in God's Mission Appeal and Lifeline Fund Initiative. View the video: <https://youtu.be/SvjinUH4ap0c>

Lutherans Restoring Creation

A part of the strategy of the Stewardship Network includes the *Caring for Creation Task Force*. This task force seeks to foster the concept and application of creation stewardship within our synod. Working with Lutherans Restoring Creation, the team aims to offer resources and generate dialogue from a Lutheran perspective with the SC Synod, its congregations, and individuals. The Rev. Kris Litman-Koon, Pastor, All Saints, Mt. Pleasant, serves as convener for the task force.

Lifeline Fund

Through a "scaling" grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., synods in Region 9 are participating in the *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. As of April 21, 2022, the South Carolina Synod has paid \$159,392 to education lenders and eliminated 83 years of education debt for eight rostered ministers and a significant portion of the debt of one other rostered minister. The application for Lifeline Fund education debt repayments is found here: <https://form.jotform.com/200215181602035>

In addition to education debt re-payments, the Lifeline Distribution Team has approved grants in the amount of \$30,290 to ten congregations for participation in stewardship education. Because of the synod's partnership, the congregation's fees for participation in Stewardship for All Seasons (SAS) are greatly reduced and more affordable. An additional amount of \$9,710 was designated for SAS on April 20, 2022.

Thank You

First, we give thanks for those with whom we share faith in Jesus Christ. Second, we give thanks to God for your 2021 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 our neighbors, congregations, synod ministries and people around the world 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*.

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South Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
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**Director for Evangelical Mission Report
South Carolina Synod Assembly
2022**

The first time my dad went to synod assembly representing a voting member in North Carolina, I can remember him coming back to the congregation and sharing in summary, “I never knew we did so much.” I know it’s easy to lose behind all the Roberts Rules, spreadsheets, votes, discussions that seem to last too long, and the slow drudge through business all it is that we actually accomplish in our time. As the synod, you do important work, and particularly with our mission congregations, I hope you don’t lose the sense of awe about what it is we are able to accomplish with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Take a moment and reflect on what your church means to you, and how important it is in your life. When you support our mission congregations, you give that gift to other people. Behind all the numbers and spreadsheets, what each of these congregations does is give people a spiritual home, every bit as meaningful to them as your church is to you, where the love and grace of God are felt and shared. These aren’t just ‘congregations.’ These are groups of people whose lives our touched by the work that you support.

I hope you’ll be able to find time at this assembly to talk with our mission developers about all the wonderful work the Spirit is up to in their contexts, because my summary is just a glimpse of the wonderful work they are doing. Cristo Rey is close to worshipping in the new building that you all as the synod supported and helped build. Our Latino ministries in the upstate are working to start their “Gospel on Wheels” program that will be a mobile church that can go into the community to meet people where they are. Christ Community Lutheran of North Charleston is continuing its work with homeless veterans and is partnering with the local community to have a Gullah garden on their property that will be used to both feed and educate. Our newest Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community, Restoration Chapel, continues to walk alongside women in recovery as a spiritual home. All of these are just a glimpse into how these missions that you support, and all of them are ministries that deeply touch the lives of the people they serve. God is clearly at work.

In addition to our mission congregations, I want you to know about the work I do with our existing congregations. Thanks to the gifts of many congregations, we have established the “Faith in Action” fund to provide seed money for congregations who want to take steps out into the community and make God’s love known. I’ve started a newsletter, called “This Month in Mission” for any who are interested in ideas and resources for evangelism and outreach ministries. Most importantly, I am here as a resource for any of you who want to talk through what it might look like for your church to do more outreach, be more intentional evangelists, or reengage your communities as we are coming out of the pandemic.

It is a blessing and joy to serve as your DEM, and if I can ever be a resource, I am just a phone call away. I am deeply grateful for the ways you support our new ministries and our new initiatives, and it is an honor to serve the synod in this capacity.

In Christ,

Pastor James Henricks
Director for Evangelical Mission