

**Director of Communications Report
South Carolina Synod Assembly
2023**

Top 10 Videos from the past year.

1. Lutheran F.A.Q. | Communion: How Do Lutherans Celebrate Communion?
2. Lutheran F.A.Q. | What Does Baptism Mean?
3. Lutheran F.A.Q. | How Do Lutherans Read the Bible?
4. Lutheran F.A.Q. | What Does Communion Mean?
5. Lutheran F.A.Q. | How Do Lutherans Baptize?
6. 2022 South Carolina Synod Assembly - Sessions
7. 2022 South Carolina Synod Assembly - Worship From St. Matthews
8. Lutheran Living in South Carolina | January 2023
9. Lutheran Living in South Carolina | September 2022
10. Lutheran Living in South Carolina | November 2022

A new year but a continuing trend.

The 2022-2023 year saw our YouTube subscriber base grow by 35%, Facebook page "likes" increase by just under 13%, and Instagram followers are up by more than 25%. Twitter growth is slower but still increasing. The increased use of video and a series of social media posts by Deacon Sarah Bowers have contributed to this. Our top five performing videos on YouTube and Facebook come from the series *Lutheran F.A.Q.* which is hosted by The Rev. Emily Hartmann. Rounding out the top ten are the 2022 South Carolina Synod Assembly and our new video magazine. These insights show that resources and live event streams get higher interaction.

Morning Consult, a data-decision intelligence company, recently conducted a survey to learn more about Gen Z's social media usage. The main takeaway? Video is here to stay. This age group's number one social media outlet is YouTube, followed by Instagram.

Much of our growth through social media has come in the younger demographics of 18-24 and 25-40. Therefore, this modern video communication style is critical in growing the next generation of active Lutherans.

Continuing to learn

Late in the Summer of 2022, I completed a certification program in digital marketing from the Digital Marketing Institute and the American Marketing Association. I am doing my best to implement what I've learned. So far, it is showing up in a few tangible ways. For example, I better understand when and why to post our content for maximum impact. This class also affirmed some of my own insights and refined my skills to do those items better.

Equipping Leaders

Our rotating technology replacement plan continues to provide the tools needed to support the synod's work. In addition, this plan allows for a more exact budgeting process. The synod's consistent investment in equipment and technology ensures we have the proper tools for our work together. Please join me in thanking the Bishop, Synod Council, and members of the South Carolina Synod who continue to support the tools necessary to fulfill my calling as a church communicator.

Respectfully submitted,
Neal F. Fischer
Director of Communications

Director for Stewardship **South Carolina Synod Assembly** **2023**

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]
- 5) *Church Finances for Missional Leaders: Best Practices for Faithful Stewardship*, by Bonnie Ives Marden, Wesley's Foundry Books, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church [2019]
- 6) *Six Weeks of Money* is an ELCA stewardship resource that helps people grow a healthier relationship with money. It's for people of all ages and situations. <https://start.sixweeksonmoney.com/courses/elca>

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

The Stewardship Symposium was held on January 27, 2023, in-person on the LTSS campus and livestreamed. Bonnie Ives Marden was the presenter on the theme: *Financial Accountability and Empowerment for Missional Leaders*. 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].

There were 58 persons, including rostered ministers and lay persons, attending in person, 38 in person and 20 online. There were 13 seminarians registered. The video link is: <https://scsynod.com/news/what-did-we-learn-at-this-years-stewardship-symposium/>

A Senior Class and Fourth Year Seminarian Symposium was held on February 24-25, 2023, in-person and livestreamed, which offered seminarians first call orientation, an opportunity to learn about the benefits available from Portico Benefit Services and Stewardship Resources available through the Mission Investment Fund. There were twelve seniors and interns participating, eight in person and four online. Pr. Cathy Schibler, Deacon Jerry Johnson and Pr. CeCee Mills served as presenters.

The First Call Theological Education Stewardship Gathering was held at Lutheridge on February 6-8, 2023. The gathering was an opportunity for learning about personal finances, being a steward leader, understanding church finances and preaching and teaching stewardship. There were 73 attendees; including 51 first call rostered ministers; 22 synod staff, leaders, and presenters. There were ten first call rostered ministers from South Carolina Synod present at the gathering. Bishop Pedro Suarez, Florida-Bahamas; Bishop Tim Smith, North Carolina; and Bishop Kevin Strickland, Southeastern provided leadership and gave presentations on stewardship.

It was an honor to serve as Secretary of the LTSS/Region 9 Council for Stewardship Education during the years 2020 to 2022. I continue to serve on the council.

Financial Management Education: New Initiative

Joint Ministries of Region 9 and the LTSS/Region 9 Council for Stewardship Education collaborated to offer two Financial Management Education Workshops, one for Candidates for Rostered Ministry and one for First Call Rostered Ministers in Region 9 led by Kim Miller of LSS Financial Counseling. The workshops are interactive zoom meetings held twice a year for each group and can include up to 50 participants in each workshop. The workshops will not be recorded and confidentially will be preserved. The goal is to help participants feel heard regarding their financial concerns, receive financial tips geared toward their situation and provide an opportunity to share tips and ideas with each other. The cost per workshop is \$400 which was funded by Joint Ministries of Region 9. After each workshop, each participant can engage with a financial counselor for up to six sessions following the workshop at no cost to the participant to help with specific financial questions and concerns.

The first workshop for Candidates for Rostered Ministry was held Wednesday, February 15, 2023 with 26 participants. The registration link was sent to all Region 9 candidates for rostered ministry.

A workshop for First Call Rostered Ministers did not have enough participants. However, Kim Miller, LSS Financial Counseling, offers six sessions of counseling to eligible rostered ministers.

Networking Congregations for Growing Stewards Building a Culture of Generosity

Building a Culture of Generosity (BCG) guided congregations through the fall stewardship appeal with a basic stewardship resource led by GSB consultant, Mike Ward between August, and November 2022. The synod provided a portion of the cost from the budget of the Steward Leader's Network. ELCA also provided \$200 each. The following congregations participated: Bethel, White Rock; Crossroads, Indian Land; Pisgah, Lexington; and Christ, Hilton Head

A 2023 BCG registration flyer and covenant is available to congregations for participation between August and November. BCG will launch in August 2023.

Mission Interpretation

The theme of the 2022 Mission Support Video is: *I Love to Tell the Story*. The scripture text is Joel 1:3: *Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation*. The video features stories on Camp Hugg and Lutheran Church Youth; a Companion Synod story; Restoration Chapel, Greenwood; and the Coffee House Ministry, Messiah, Mauldin.

The video was sent to rostered ministers and Congregation Council presidents and vice presidents along with a Mission Moment devotion. You will find the link to the video and the devotions: Link to devotions - <https://scsynod.com/wp-content/uploads/documents/stewardship/Mission-Moment-Congregation-Council-Devotions-2022.pdf>.

Link to video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTkGYhDRIWU>

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* is to expand ways of giving in congregations. There are a lot of giving options available. Tithe.ly and Vanco are preferred vendors of the ELCA. The South Carolina Synod uses tithe.ly. Your congregation will receive a significant discount if you use this address and sign up with this Website: <https://get.tithe.ly/elca>

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

Stewardship for All Seasons

The South Carolina 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 May 2022 to April 2023 included:

Returning Congregations: Fifth Year - St. Matthew, Charleston; Fourth Year - St. John, Beaufort; Third Year - Ebenezer, Columbia and Grace, Rock Hill.

New Congregations in 2022-2023: First Year – Immanuel, Greenwood and St. Michael, Greenville.

New Congregations in 2023-2024: Pisgah, Lexington; Zion, Lexington; and St. John, Walhalla

The Rev. Mike Ward, a partner 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/SvjnUH4ap0c>

Start Date: May 23, 2023, 11:00 a.m. EST

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 South Carolina Synod entered this partnership in June 2019, appointed a distribution team and agreed to collaborate by raising matching funds. Since 2020, through the Lifeline Fund, with matching grants from the Lilly Foundation, the Lifeline Fund has paid \$164,989 to education lenders to eliminate the education debt of nine rostered ministers and a significant portion of debt for two other rostered ministers. Good news! In fact, the cumulative reduction in educational debt for our pastors and deacons provided by Lifeline grants is over 85 years of education debt payments eliminated.

Grants to rostered ministers for education debt relief, and grants to congregations for stewardship education are now available. 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.

The offering received at worship at the 2023 South Carolina Synod Assembly is designated to the Lifeline Fund. Thank you for blessing this ministry with your good gift.

Anchor Storytelling: New Initiative

The purpose of the Anchor Storytelling Training is to use impact stories to anchor people to God’s mission living out in the context of the congregation. During the Anchor Training, the focus is on “donor first” and telling the story of the impact the work has on the lives of those who are served. The anchor model is designed specifically to increase giving. A grant from Mission Endowment Fund in the amount of \$3,000 funded a portion of the cost. Participating congregations were asked to pay \$400 each or be enrolled in Stewardship for All Seasons. There were four congregations in the SC Synod Cohort: Ebenezer, Columbia; Immanuel, Greenwood; St. Matthew, Charleston; and Living Spring, Columbia. Deacon Mitzie Schafer, GSB, led the storytelling model in February and March 2023.

Thank You

First, we give thanks for those with whom we share faith in Jesus Christ. Second, we give thanks to God for your 2022 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*.

Rev. Ozzie Herlong, Director for Stewardship
South Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
ovherlong@aol.com

Report of the Director for Evangelical Mission

Ephesians 2:10 - For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Paul writes in his letters of a collection for the saints in Jerusalem. Scripturally, we know that the church has always been better when we are mutually supportive for our fellow believers whose faces we may never see. Your mission support – in all of its forms – are not just dollars that disappear into a Chicago-shaped hole, or go off to support a church in a far-off place. The work you do and the dollars you give support ministries here in South Carolina that are, in turn, making a difference in our communities.

While we are at our synod assembly this year, I hope you will be able to have conversations with our mission developers so they can tell you the stories of their ministries themselves. All of the stories I have collected this year are too many to fit in this report, so all I want to say: Through your support of leaders and ministries, you are changing people's lives.

You support Pastor Martin Lopez, who is using Parroquia el Mesias' Gospel on Wheels to bring the gospel to a new community that held its first worship service earlier this year. You support his work at Nuestro Salvador which brings the gospel in Spanish to Spanish-speaking Lutherans in the upstate.

You support Pastor Jorge Leone and the congregation of Cristo Rey, who has its occupancy permit for the building you supported building for the congregation. This congregation is one of our youngest in the synod.

You support Pastor Chris Christopher in his work as the developer of Restoration Chapel, and all the work that he has done for the community in recovery, and you support a new iteration of this ministry we hope to open later this year that replicates this ministry to walk in spiritual accompaniment for people in recovery from addiction.

You support Pastor Josh Knutson and the community of Christ Community Lutheran Church of North Charleston – back in their sanctuary for

In support of these ministries, you are following the lead of the saints from Galatia, from Rome, from Corinth, and those earliest of churches who through their generosity grew the church through their support and who laid the foundation for the faith we share today. Your support in all of its forms doesn't simply add to the ministry, but multiplies through your generosity the impact that the Gospel is able to make throughout our synod in transformation of real lives. Thank you, and I hope you continue to be proud of the work you are doing as a synod in Jesus' name.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. James Henricks