



“I came that they might have life and have it abundantly.”

— John 10:10



“We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.”

— Nicene Creed

Dear friends in Christ,

God wants all people to know abundant life in Jesus Christ. That is why your congregation exists. This life is known as God's reign comes breaking into our lives right now and as it will come in all its fullness one day.

The Southwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA, is here to walk with you so that the generations today and those yet to come know **Jesus Christ as the life of the world**. That is why synod ministry exists.

As you plan your congregation's Mission Support for 2026, will you prayerfully consider growing that Mission Support for the coming year? We are called to join in God's work in the world using all the gifts God has entrusted to our care. We encourage your church to increase your percentage or level of Mission Support as you begin to make financial decisions for 2026. Whatever amount you share, we are one in our dedication to Jesus, who gave himself for the life of the world. And we are grateful for you.

The enclosed resources make clear the ways the generous Mission Support from synod congregations impacts lives from the southwestern portion of Minnesota and around the world.

It is my joy and a privilege to walk with you in ministry, to meet with your congregational leadership, preach and worship with your people, receive your phone calls, pray with you, and share stories of God's work today. If you have any questions about these opportunities, please reach out. dee.pederson@swmnelca.org. I'd love to connect, listen, learn from you, and share more. **Thank you** for your partnership and for the financial gifts you share as **Mission Support** to sustain our shared ministries. We work together for the life of the world.

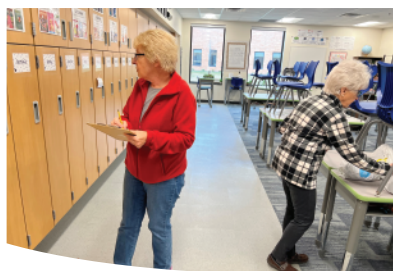
+ grace and love in Christ,

Rev. Dee Pederson, D.Min.
Bishop, Southwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA

Mrs. Maria Lokensgard
Vice-President, Southwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA



Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



What is Mission Support?

"Mission Support" is the portion of offerings that ELCA congregations share with synods and then synods share a percentage of this through the churchwide organization.

Why do we have Mission Support? Because the needs of people of our communities call us to work and give in love, for Jesus' sake, for the life of the world. We are committed to God's life-giving work. We know that we can do more together than we can do alone.



What does Mission Support do? It makes possible ministries close to home, across the ELCA, and around the world. It comes back to equip your congregation to share life in Jesus as it:

- **Expands the capacity of congregational lay and rostered leaders.** If you have attended a training for lay or rostered leaders, consulted with synod staff about a call process or conflict, participated in synod assembly or fall theological conference, or benefited from the work of Luther Seminary or The Continuous Growth Pathway.... your Mission Support makes these ministries possible.

The Synod's E-newsletter featured Joni Seitzer, chair of the call committee at Trinity Lutheran Church in St. Peter. She shared her experience going through the call process. "Synod Minister Heather was super helpful," Joni said. "She really got to know our congregation." Heather reviewed their Ministry Site Profile, helping them best tell their story. The Mission Support you generously share makes it possible for synod staff to work with congregations.

- **Provides grants that truly make a difference for rostered ministers and congregations.** These grants are funded by the Endowment Fund and Gifts of Grace funds and administered by the Endowment Fund Committee, Gifts of Grace staff, and supported by synod administrative and pastoral staff.

"Over the years, I have applied for and received many Gifts of Grace grants. Each one has meant a decreased financial strain on my budget personally, but also for some of them for the church itself. Each gift has made a difference in less stress and worry about how to meet medical, retirement and rest obligations. Thank you to those who have made these Gifts of Grace grants available in these past years. They transform and touch lives." - Grant recipient

- **Connects you to the support of synod and ELCA staff.** Congregations aren't alone! You have real, live human beings here to walk with you in ministry.

People who call in for resources that the synod or churchwide offices make available—whether guidance on roster matters, financials, coaching, audits, record retention, updating constitutions, compensation guidelines, etc., —are benefitting from being part of a larger church system. We hear you. We are here to connect you to resources you need because we are church together.



- **Communication and Administrative Support.** Your synod provides an abundance of learning and growth events to share with leaders, and these events require registrations and answers to questions. We bring a spirit of hospitality and a commitment to listen to you - a welcome contrast to the increasingly automated customer service landscape out there.
- **Grows the faith of youth.** The most frequent concern we hear from congregations is about supporting youth & families and the leaders who work with them.



If your congregation sends young people & adults to the Jr. & Sr. High Youth Gatherings, National Youth Gathering, or connects youth leaders through the Youth Ministry Network....These ministries in the synod and beyond happen because of your Mission Support.



- **Invests in new models for ministry.** Today's new mission field requires equipping lay leaders, Synod-Authorized Lay Ministers (SAMs), who are gifted by God and trained to lead worship and equip the congregations where they serve. Your synod also convenes conversations among congregations who are ready to explore new partnerships to sustain their ministry and serve their larger community.
- **Connects us to ministry partners close to home and around the globe.** Through our ELCA partners, we do together what we could not do as congregations alone. Our Global Companions in South Africa were without a seminary since 2015. Today, we celebrate the rejuvenation of our relationships there through the hard work of our Partnership Committee. Our own Rev. Dr. Hollie Holt-Woehl is one of the long-distance faculty members for Umphumulo Seminary training future pastors in pastoral care.



"Since arriving in January 2024, I've witnessed significant enhancements in our seminary's library....The library's renovation has helped us a lot as students to dig deeper into Scripture. These enrichments have not only enriched our academic experience but also deepened our understanding of God's Word."

– 27-year old Seminarian, Umphumulo Seminary South Africa.



Together, we serve Jesus Christ who came for the life of the world.



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