



*Especially*

# Walking Together – ~~Even~~ When We're Apart

“For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.” – Romans 12:4-5



**Southwestern Minnesota Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

→ **Synod** – syn-od (si'-nəd), from Greek *synodos*, syn + way, journeying, meeting, walking with.

Thank you for walking together with the other 233 congregations who are the Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA. We knew we were “church together” before, but as COVID-19 continues to keep us apart, God is showing us how connected we truly are.

During these difficult months, our churches and your synod have not been “closed.” Bishop Anderson and your synod staff continued to walk with you so that congregational ministries remain vital:

- guiding candidates for ministry and supporting call processes;
- giving support in times of life or ministry crises;
- providing consultation on healthy communication in times of change;
- facilitating missional planning for the future;
- equipping congregational leaders in ministry basics;
- strengthening relationships with ministry partners like camps and campus ministries;
- enabling the development of new ministries; and
- ensuring that our synod governance is well-led and managed with care.



Ministry in a time of pandemic stretched us to continue these ministries in new and creative ways! And so, during the last 8 months, your bishop and synod staff have adapted and pivoted, just as your congregation has. Thanks to your financial support, we have been able to continue these ministries with vitality. And thanks to the God-given gift of technology, we are walking through this time together, sustaining and building relationships even stronger than before!

- Regular check-ins with Bp. Jon provide information updates, encouragement, prayer, and equipping for rostered and lay leaders.
- Online Zoom meetings enable the safe formation of groups around racial justice and growing younger as a church.
- Online worship reaches out to people near and far, helps us to learn from each other, and allows us to experience our connections as the body of Christ and as a synod.



→ over →



It's a new and different time! But we believe that just as God brought us together as a synod and walked with us in the past, surely God will continue to walk beside us now. In fact, God is providing the very means we need to stay connected and walk with each other today.

**Because we walk together *especially* while we are apart,**  
we ask for your prayerful discernment as you consider your Mission Support commitment for 2021.

### Mission Support

Your offerings become Mission Support as you share a portion of those gifts to fund and invest in the ministries of our synod locally, across the ELCA, and around the world. Mission Support enables congregations and synods to pool resources to love and serve our neighbors in ways that no individual or congregation can do alone. It is one way we walk together. Through Mission support, we expand our participation in God's life-changing mission. Your intention to support an estimated \$1.65 million dollars in Mission Support for 2021 makes it possible for us to live out our synod's mission statement: Embrace God's Mission + Equip God's People.

### Embrace God's Mission

Our synod's financial support for national and global ministry is 51.5% of the Mission Support your congregation sends on to the synod. Through these financial gifts and your prayers, we plant new congregations like Reborn Lao Lutheran in Waite Park, support missionaries and Lutheran partners around the world, and see the fruits of Young Adults in Global Mission. Your generosity allows us to support shared ministries like Luther Seminary, Campus Ministries, and partners like the Minnesota Council of Churches and Lutheran Advocacy.

### Equip God's People

God's mission requires people – the hands and feet of Jesus today. And so together we support, develop, and call rostered leaders. We equip lay leaders like congregational officers, and call forth the gifts of youth and young adults. The annual Equipping Congregations Day was again one of the largest in the ELCA. We provide guidance through pastoral transitions and planning for the future. And this year our synod is engaging in the prayerful process of calling a new bishop – something that will require the involvement of all of our congregations.

### Together With You

All of these ministries are sustained by the work of synod staff and ministry teams, providing for our communications via phone, the Web site, social media, and yes – mail! Administration, accounting, record-keeping, and governance are essential to ensuring that we truly are walking together as we Embrace God's Mission and Equip God's People together.

*2020 has been a challenging year!*

Together we look to God's leading us into the future.



**Thank you** for your generous support throughout 2020 and into 2021. We are so grateful for the privilege of being “synod” and walking together with you as members of the one body of Christ – especially when we’re apart!

*“Now to God, who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish far more than all we can ask or imagine, to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” – Eph. 3:20-21*

† Grace and peace in Christ,

**Rev. Jon Anderson**, Synod Bishop

**Rev. Dr. Kathryn Skoglund**, Synod Minister

**Rev. Stephen Cook**, Synod Minister

**Rev. Dr. Dee Pederson**, Director for Evangelical Mission

**Sister Sarah Hausken**, Youth Ministry Coordinator



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### **How to register your Mission Support budget amount:**

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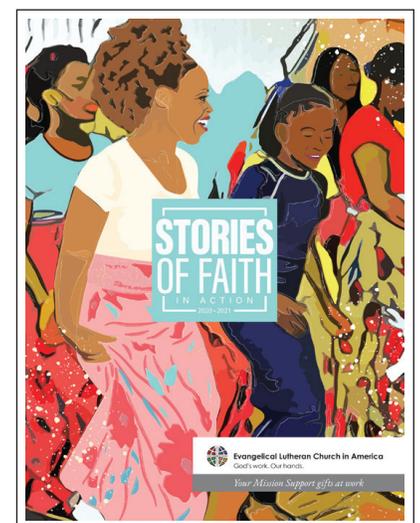
1. Go to [www.swmnelca.org](http://www.swmnelca.org)
2. Click on Annual Meeting Resources under Quick Links on the homepage.
3. Register the proposed amount you believe will be approved in your upcoming annual meeting.
4. Contact the synod office (507) 637-3904 if your proposed amount should change after your annual meeting.

## Stories of Faith in Action

Stories of Faith in Action is a free, annual publication highlighting how God is changing lives through the ministries funded by your congregation's Mission Support offering, which it shares with your synod and the ELCA churchwide organization. Together, the ELCA serves God's people across the United States and globally through our 9,100 congregations, 65 synods and one churchwide organization.

Visit **[ELCA.org/SOFIA](http://ELCA.org/SOFIA)** now to:

- Download a color PDF or black and white printable PDF of Stories of Faith in Action for use at your next council, finance or congregational meeting.
- Download one-page black and white printables of stories from this publication.
- Download a copy of “Where does my offering go?” to share with your congregation.
- Find video resources connected with Stories of Faith in Action.



# Shaping Your Congregation's Plan for Mission Support

As your congregation prepares a spending plan for 2021, please use this worksheet with your council to reflect and discern. **We ask that you register your Mission Support budget amount using the online form.**

1. Go to [www.swmnelca.org](http://www.swmnelca.org)
2. Click on Annual Meeting Resources under Quick Links on the homepage.
3. Register the proposed amount you believe will be approved in your upcoming annual meeting.
4. Contact the synod office (507) 637-3904 if your proposed amount should change after your annual meeting.

As you discuss your Mission Support commitment for the coming year, please consider how your offerings reflect your calling and build up the body of Christ. As a church together, we can have a greater impact in your community and beyond, sharing God's abundant grace with others. **Please reflect on the following questions:**

- How is your congregation courageously exploring the challenges of a changing world and today's economy?
- In what ways has the Holy Spirit led you to respond creatively to the ministry opportunities and urgent needs facing your congregation, community, and beyond?
- How do your regular offerings and Mission Support connect you to the efforts of the synod, other partners, and the ELCA to Embrace God's Mission + Equip God's People?

## Use the columns below to indicate your congregation's current level of Mission Support and your 2021 Mission

	2021 Projected Intent	Projected Intent Percent
Regular offerings received from members	\$	%
Mission Support* budgeted for sharing with the synod and churchwide ministries	\$	%

\* Mission Support is the portion of regular offerings that your congregation shares for synod and churchwide ministries for God's mission beyond the local congregation. For specific information about the ELCA churchwide budget, visit [ELCA.org/resources/financial](http://ELCA.org/resources/financial).

### How Register your Mission Support budget amount:

Follow the instructions above or visit

[https://swmnsynod.formstack.com/forms/mission\\_support\\_2021](https://swmnsynod.formstack.com/forms/mission_support_2021)

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