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Companions with The Mbulu Diocese, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania  
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Holy Land and Jordan  
The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

October 28, 2024

Dear Friends of Southeast Michigan,

Grace to you and peace, from God our Creator and our Lord Jesus Christ!

The Church is very different than when I was formed in seminary and ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament 32 years ago. As I expect you have noticed, for at least the last 10 years the Christian Church in North America has been in a time of significant transition; what we are becoming is yet to be revealed. This moment of uncertainty invites us to ask the great Lutheran question, “What does this mean?”

I tell you this not to be alarmist, but rather to name a truth about where we are in the life of the Church. Research by our Director for Evangelical Mission, Mr. C.J. Clark, shows a pattern of decline in membership over the past ten years matching a pattern set in other synods in our region. Further, the number of folks discerning a call to ordained ministry as pastors or deacons is also decreasing and we are finding new and unique ways of doing ministry in our communities and the world.

These truths are hard but they are real – AND -- I have not lost hope. For this is Christ’s church, not mine or yours or your pastor’s. I have seen with my own eyes the ways we have responded faithfully to rapid change. I rejoice in the resilience of the people of God as we find new and unique ways of doing ministry to proclaim the good news of God’s love. Whatever the church looks like in the next ten years, I believe it will be strong and still faithful, even if it looks very different than the church that we have long known and loved.

As the world and the church are living into this transition time, it is good to remember we are Resurrection people of a particular Lutheran flavor. As the Southeast Michigan Synod, we get to go out into our communities and the world and share the good news of the Gospel. Especially in this time of national anxiety, it is our task to proclaim mercy, love, and grace to our neighbors and to repair the social fabric of communities torn by fear and violence. This is work best done when we do it together as the body of Christ. We need each other, dear ones.

So, with all that in mind and grateful for your partnership, I ask you to complete the short form included in this mailing. The form asks each congregation to share goals for stewardship this year, and to indicate how you hope and intend to be partners with us in the Southeast Michigan Synod and the larger church by indicating the number of dollars you will send this way. Also included in this mailing is your congregation’s Giving Statement for 2023 and a year-to-date statement.

Moving into the new realities that we face as a church, we are unwavering in our commitment to being a Church that journeys together for the sake of the Gospel. As members of the ELCA, we are committed to a distinctive way of welcoming, of worshipping, and of engaging with the world. We speak of grace. We study scripture. We love Jesus and the world he died to save.

So, thanks for your partnership. Thanks for letting us know your plans so we can make our plans more responsibly. And please know that here at the Synod Office we keep you in our prayers.

Grace and peace,

*Donald P. Kreiss*

Bishop



Southeast Michigan Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.