

2023 MINISTRY CELEBRATION



Our Synod's vision of Journeying Together in Christ has continued to focus our work. We invite you to take a few moments to review the list below which celebrates some of the ministry we shared together in 2023. **Journeying together in Christ as the South Dakota Synod, in 2023 we:**

- Applied for and received a grant of **\$1,137,384** from Lilly Endowment Inc. through its Thriving Congregations Initiative for new initiatives that are not included the Synod's Mission Plan. Please reach out to Synod Staff for **more information!**
- Completed explorations for two new potential church plants, with plans to start a worshipping community in **Box Elder** and **Shepherd's Table in Sioux Falls**.
- Walked with the **40** people in various stages of **Candidacy** and have **4** new entrance interviews scheduled in 2024!
- Received **3 new first call candidates**.
- Completed **23 Ministry Site Studies** and extended **28 calls!**
- Ensured that nearly every congregation has a called pastor, interim pastor, Synod Authorized Minister, or lay leader to care for God's people (thank you to all of you who are helping out with area congregations and filling in!).
- Distributed **\$77,137** to date through the Seminary Debt Reduction Program.
- Granted **\$123,000** in scholarship funds to seminary students, **\$11,400** in internship site assistance, and **\$82,990** to Luther and Wartburg Seminaries, for a total of **\$217,390** in support of seminary education.
- Created a **pilot rural J-term** program with Wartburg Theological Seminary, which will begin in January 2024.
- Received **\$113,635** in grants from ELCA Christian Community & Leadership.
- Held a **Synod Assembly**, where we gathered again as a community to conduct the business of the synod.
- Hosted **Spring and Fall Theological Conferences**, where we continued to support the continuing education of our Rostered Ministers either online or in-person.
- Supported the congregations and ministries of the synod through **visits** by synod staff, both **digital** and in-person.
- Hosted a "**Lay Leader Night**" to support congregational lay leaders and supported rostered leaders with regular **in-person and virtual meetings**, such as monthly rostered minister virtual check-ins, Synodically Authorized Minister, Senior Pastor, and Interim Pastor check-ins, and a First Call and Senior Pastor Retreat.
- Pr. Alan Blankenfeld, Synod **Rural Ministry Liaison** continued to journey with our rural ministry sites. In the past year, Pr. Alan has worked directly with **34 communities and congregations in transition**.
- Continued the work of the Rural Ministry Table, which is currently working on **Small Town and Rural (STAR) grants**, grants funded by the generous donations to rural ministry in the Synod.
- Partnered with **Bergen Lutheran** to hold a **Threshing Bee** which resulted in gifts of **\$51,324** to support rural ministry in South Dakota.

Thank you for all the ways you have supported the ministry of the South Dakota Synod this past year! God has called us to be the body of Christ together, and this is an active and healthy body. We look forward to continuing our journey with you in 2024 and beyond!