



Brothers and sisters in Christ of the Western North Dakota Synod, grace and peace to you from our savior Jesus!

As I write my first *Gospel Seeds*, it is September 19, 2020. I'm late for the deadline. I am telling myself that missing my first deadline after serving only 19 days as bishop is the result of all the amazing things I've already experienced in this new call. I haven't had a chance to sit down and write.

Visits and Travel

I have already logged nearly 1,000 miles across the synod in order to gather for worship, spend a few days with several of our seminary students at a candidacy retreat, attend the fall Rostered Ministers gathering, meet with several church councils, and experience in new ways the incredible beauty of God's good creation in western North Dakota.

It is my hope to be able to visit as many congregations and parishes as possible over the next year. In many places, it might be best to do this via digital platforms like Zoom. However, if it is safe to do so, I'd love to join you in-person. Even though I've spent my entire life in western North Dakota, there are many corners of our synod that I have yet to see.

Rostered Minister's Gathering

Every September the Rostered Ministers Gathering takes place in Medora. It is a few days set aside for prayer and continuing education, networking and worship, and most importantly – rest.

This year's gathering was different with leaders gathering in-person and online across the synod. The important part of the event this year was not where our leaders were gathering, but that they were able to gather. I'm very grateful for that.

Joel Friesz with the Restorative Justice program at Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota was our guest speaker. He was invited to be part of this year's gathering by the Cultural Competency Committee of our Synod Council.

COVID-19 & In-Person Gatherings

COVID-19 continues to be part of our life together. The COVID-19 page of the synod website (<http://wndsynod.org/covid19/>) has dozens of resources that will be helpful for congregational leaders. Whatever decisions your congregation is making regarding in-person gatherings and events this fall, may Jesus' teaching to "love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:39) guide your process and decisions.



Synod Staffing

Your synod staff continue to serve on your behalf. I'm grateful for Beth, Sherie, Faith, Murray, Matthew and Carrie! They are a gift and I'm glad they will be continuing to serve, even if it is with me.

Laurie Jesz, the synod's Office Assistant, is no longer with us. We wish Laurie well and thank her for her service to the synod. We are currently developing an updated job description for a part-time Administrative Assistant. It is our hope to begin interviewing for this position soon. In the meantime, there may not always be someone answering the phone when you call the synod office.

Finally, thank you! Thank you for your continued prayers for Wendy and me. Wendy's recovery continues to move forward, slowly but surely. Her surgeon told us recently that "we're going to win this one." I believe he is right. But the journey to the win sure feels like a long, long road to travel.

Serving in Christ together,
Bishop Craig Schweitzer

