



South-Central Synod of Wisconsin

Dear Friends in Christ,

A couple of weeks ago my dear friend Donna gifted me with this “Bendable Jesus of Nazareth.” It was truly one of the best presents I have ever received; especially since Jesus is adorned in hockey gear. Bendable Jesus now watches over my desk as I work. I have been staring at Jesus a lot lately. One day while staring at my Bendable Jesus I decided to look up the definition of bendable; I can’t say I was surprised by what I learned:



Able to be bent or flexed or twisted without breaking. “a flexible wire” “a pliant young tree”

In that moment a lot of 2022 came into clear focus for me. As the people of God, we did a lot of bending in 2022. We were finding our way out of the pandemic and into a new space. We were coming back together in our buildings for worship and study. It has all taken a lot of bending. There have been losses. There has been newness. We have twisted and adapted so much since 2020. Somehow, we kept on bending all the way through 2021 and 2022.

Now we enter 2023. The congregations of our South-Central Synod are gathering for annual meetings. Some among us are worried that they will break from all the bending and twisting. Budgets are strained and leaders are tired. Others of us approach this new year with excitement and challenge, ready to take on all the new twists and turns that will surely come.

To all of this, friends, bendable Jesus comes. The real one. Not a plastic one sitting on my desk but the Incarnate one born for you. This Jesus comes to you and to me as hope and as good news even as we live in uncertainty and yearn for a clearer, straighter path. It is this hope, this grace, this Savior who makes us who we are. It is this Jesus who gives us the resilience and flexibility to go forward into the future, always confident that God is in control.

Thank you for the partnership we share in ministry and mission in the South-Central synod. May your meeting be blessed, and your year be full of surprising moments filled with the love of Christ.

Alongside you,

Bishop Joy

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