



South-Central Synod of Wisconsin

Dear Youth Ministry Directors, Volunteers, Leaders, Parents, Siblings, All of you:

How are you all holding up? The “lazy, hazy days of summer” don’t seem to apply when it comes to student ministry (well, maybe this year “hazy” did). The camps, the retreats, the fun events all compound to leave leaders feeling more than a little depleted. **In the midst of exhaustion, it can be hard to remember that what you do matters.** The endless pizza, the awkward conversations, the lost sleep, all of it matters. It matters to the students, to your churches and most importantly, to God. The time you spend, the love you extend all create safe places for students to encounter the love of God in powerful, life-changing ways.

This week, spend some time reflecting on your own sacred moments – those moments in your walk with God that confirm that you are seen and loved, just as you are. Thank you for your continual work to provide opportunities for our students to experience these moments for themselves.

Of course, the end of August means that fall is quickly closing in. Now it is time to look ahead to all the ministry beginnings the new program year provides: inviting families to worship and faith formation opportunities and enjoying time together in fellowship. The South-Central Synod Youth Team and Youth Gathering Champion, Jason Poole-Xiong, are also gearing up for a new program year. **We are so excited to bring you our fun Alive Nights, Retreats, Trainings, all the things for not only YOU but also for your students and congregation.**

Enclosed in this mailing are flyers and information sheets about all the activities we have planned for the 2023-2024 program year. **Please feel free to share with fellow staff, volunteers, parents, students – anyone who might be blessed by attending one or more of these events.** You will also see that we have planned a number of training opportunities for youth leaders, including a Zoom “Beyond the Policy” workshop regarding abuse prevention on September 22 for anyone and everyone who works with young people.

It is our prayer that these opportunities will be a blessing for you and for the students with whom you work. We are in this together and are grateful for your partnership.

If you have any questions about any of the events or activities, please contact Marie Leafblad, Associate to the Bishop for Leadership Support at mariel@scsw-elca.org.

If you have questions specific to the 2024 Youth Gathering, please contact our synod’s Gathering Champion, Pastor Jason Poole-Xiong, at jasonx@scsw-elca.org.

Alongside you,

The SCSW Youth and Family Ministry Team