



South-Central Synod of Wisconsin



A Word from Bishop Joy

Dear Partners in Ministry,

What an incredible Synod Assembly! We began by coming together on Friday evening for a time of worship and blessing - a holy reminder that those who are called to proclaim need to hear words of blessing and grace pronounced over them too.

On Saturday, our keynote speaker, the Rev. Dr. Lorenzo Lebrija, Executive Director of the TryTank Research Institute, provided a message that was both concerning and hopeful. We have all witnessed on some level or another the changes and declines in church membership that the Rev. Dr. Lebrija described. And yet, as he also reminded us, the God we worship is still a God of abundance.

I left our assembly feeling energized by not only what I heard from our keynote speaker, but by having had the opportunity to be in community with so many of you that day. Together we processed the uncomfortable truth about declines in church attendance and the rise of distrust toward anyone who calls themselves Christian. Together we heard about God's abundance. Together we were introduced to a new way of approaching our ministry – but one that at its root maybe isn't all that new after all: Just Try Something!

I want to invite you, as you have now returned to your own faith communities, to remember that **we are still in this work together.** You don't have to "just try something" on your own! The Rev. Dr. Lebrija is thrilled to be in conversation with any SCSW congregation or ministry through Cohort Mentoring. (visit www.trytank.org/janesville) for more details.) In addition, as your bishop, I am looking forward to being in conversation with you about where you sense the Spirit at work. The rest of the Office of the Bishop are also delighted to partner with you, dream with you, lament with you, TRY with you. **Part of God's abundance is the gift of each other. Let us rejoice in that gift through partnership, mutual trust, and conversation.**

Siblings in faith – we are in so many ways in uncharted territory as the Church, as God's holy people gathered around Word and Sacrament. Yet the love and abundance of God remain the same. The gift of community in Christ remains the same. The empowerment of the Holy Spirit, who daily calls, gathers, and enlightens us, remains the same.

We are the synod and the synod is us. Together, let us move forward, let us TRY boldly in faith.

Alongside you,

Bishop Joy Mortensen-Wiebe

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