



South Dakota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

March 15, 2021

Dear Governor Noem:

Grace and peace to you in this season of Lent. I reach out to you today on behalf of the 200 South Dakota congregations, ministry sites and organizations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

As Lutherans, baptized members in the body of Christ, we care about the actions of our government because it is a gift from God intended for the safety and *flourishing* of human life. Yet, as sinners in need of God's grace and forgiveness, the gift and power of government is abused. It is why I am urging you to **veto HB 1217** that claims to promote "fairness" in women's sports.

In the Gospel according to Luke, Jesus asks his disciples, "which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?" After the lost sheep is found Jesus says, "rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." (ref. Luke 15:4-6) Meaning that there is no rejoicing until *all* have found a place in the flock -- including our trans siblings of faith.

Policies and laws that purposely exclude trans individuals contribute to deteriorating mental health. The Trevor Project reports that 40% of transgender adults reported having made a suicide attempt, and that over 90% of those attempts took place before the age of 25. Looking after the lost one means inclusion and compassion.

God the incarnate goes to the far stretches of the Earth to find the lost and calls them home by name, "you are mine." (Isaiah 43:1) As people of faith, we are invited to do the same.

Please, as a beloved child of God, do not forget about the one child, when you have the ninety-nine with you.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Constanze Hagmaier
South Dakota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Rev. Dr. Siri Beckmen Sorenson, Garretson
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Taylor Wiese, Program Director- Lutherans Outdoors, Custer
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Chaplain Marc Anderson, Sioux Falls
Heather Smith, Former Children's Minister, Sioux Falls
Rev. Samuel Kost, Hot Springs
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