

Mission congregation stories



Community members Kieran Conroy and Anna Robinson lead GLORY youth in song.

The program offers family meals, games, crafts, and prayer that teach the gospel of God's love through the liturgical year. "It's been inspiring to welcome more and more families, and see parents choosing to stay and join in too," said Kieran Conroy, one of the community's young adults.

Recently they held a superhero themed night, reflecting on Jesus' miracles. After some noisy "minion games," leaders asked about the kids' favorite heroes and what "powers" Jesus showed to people in need.

Leaders thought the kids might remember a few miracles, but one boy stunned them by blurting out: "Jesus' most important power was his love!"

It was a beautiful moment and a reminder that God speaks through these special kids in ways that will always astound us. □

The greatest superpower

As the Young Adult Intentional Community enters its second year, it has grown its youth ministry into a new program called GLORY (God Loves all Our Rosebud Youth), in partnership with a local Episcopal priest, the Rev. Lauren Stanley.

Called to gather, grow and go

WestSide Lutheran Church is a new ELCA mission start in an economically challenged, underserved and diverse neighborhood in northwest Sioux Falls. Started under the leadership of lay mission developers Roe and Pat Eidsness, the congregation has worshiped together for more than two years, has purchased land being held by the Mission Investment Fund, and has begun construction of an 8,000-square-foot building.

WestSide Lutheran's mission is GATHER+GROW+GO.

WestSiders GATHER for worship, WestSide Wednesdays, Bible studies, picnics, potlucks, outreach and evangelism events.

They continue to GROW as a congregation, increasing worship attendance from the mid-50s to nearly 70.

They organized and were officially accepted into the ELCA, broke ground on a building, and kicked off their first stewardship and capital campaigns.

They also GROW in faith and understanding as they unite in prayer for their community and members facing challenges.

They GO out into their community and world. They feed strangers, worship with inmates, teach children and adults, and celebrate with their neighbors.

While their efforts are evident at the local level, their reach touches lives all over the world. From soldiers in Afghanistan to Lutherans in Camer-



Members of WestSide Lutheran, Sioux Falls, break ground for their church building in September 2013.

oon, and from the typhoon-devastated Philippines to South Dakota's devastated ranch families, WestSide is present, providing warmth, support, love and hope.

The Eidsnesses, who came out of retirement to start this mission, say it has been an amazing adventure. At this stage of their lives, they have a front-row seat for watching what God can do!

Please keep WestSide in your prayers and consider it for mission support as members grow into this new ministry. □

Called out of my comfort zone

By Kayla Koterwski

Through my church, the South Dakota Synod and the churchwide body of the ELCA, God has formed and molded me—and continues to do so in many ways. And God has shown me the beauty of being called out of our comfort zones and participating in the call of God’s work with our hands.

The summer of 2009, before my freshman year of high school, I was asked to serve as a youth delegate (along with my parents) to the South Dakota Synod Assembly. I didn’t know what an assembly was, I didn’t know what a “synod” was, and I knew very little about the ELCA. However, I did know that this was an honor and a chance to further explore my newly developed interest in the church.

The process of policymaking and debate in this context was new to me, but I observed and learned.

During discussion on a resolution, I noticed a word that I wanted to propose an amendment on. After some encouragement from my pastor, I apprehensively approached the microphone and waited my turn to speak. Bishop David Zellmer glanced at me and in a booming voice said, “Let’s hear what this young lady has to say!”

My face warmed immensely and I shakily presented my motion. Afterward I quickly retreated to my seat. The walk back was filled with kind smiles from other voting members. An electronic vote followed, and the motion was passed nearly unanimously.

The bishop calls this my “claim to fame.”

Experience sparks a fire

That assembly was a big one for me. The experience sparked a fire in my heart for the work of the ELCA.

I have attended every assembly since, twice as a voting member from my congregation, and twice as a Synod Council member. I have also served on both my congregational council and the SD Synod Council.

Through my experiences within the synod, many incredible doors have been opened for me. I have been blessed to experience new and wonderful relationships and opportunities. Far too many to count!

One of those opportunities was the honor of attending the 2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly where, thanks to the guidance and support of wonderful friends and mentors, I was elected the first female youth voting member to the ELCA Church Council.



Kayla Koterwski on a recent mission trip to Haiti.

I cannot put into adequate words how thankful I am for the experiences and friendships I have made through this journey. I have come to find such a home in this global community of faith we call the ELCA.

Here I have been allowed to grow, doubt, love and question. I have been blessed to experience new people and places, and to have a voice. Here I am valued and wanted.

More than anything else, I have been allowed to witness and experience God at work in both large and quiet ways.

Through the ELCA I have been moved by the grace and love of our creator. For all this, I am grateful! □

Author bio:

Koterwski is a member of Peace Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls.

South Dakota

Synod appeal:

The future is now

“The Future is Now!” That’s the title of a book, several essays and many sermons—and it’s the reality that our South Dakota Synod Appeal for Leadership and Mission seeks to address.

We’ve always said that in the future we would have growing shortages of rostered leaders—that’s happening now. We’ve always said that in the future we would have an increasingly diverse society and an equally increasing need to invest in our local mission efforts—that’s happening now. We now can see the future that we will be living in for quite some time because it’s here. It requires focus on two important things: leadership and mission.

- **Leadership:** We need great pastors, associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, deaconesses and lay leaders for the church today and into the future. We won’t have them without an intense and intentional focus that addresses economics (scholarships and debt reduction), vocational discernment (recruiting) and lifelong learning (career/call development).

- **Mission:** We need new and creative ways of reaching the vast and growing unreached populations in our state. To reach those whom no one is else reaching, we have to do what no one else is doing. This can’t happen without intense and intentional focus on starting new congregations and worshiping ministries, and working hard at renewing existing congregations.

The good news is that this is a wonderful and joyful task to which the Spirit is calling us. There is nothing more exciting than when people discover how they can use their gifts to share the gospel. There is nothing more thrilling when people who hadn’t heard the gospel are captured by God’s love for the first time.

That’s what this appeal is all about. It’s about setting up our church to live fully into the future, and engaging more deeply in this amazing work now. It’s about gathering the necessary resources from the abundance that doesn’t yet exist in the accounts of the South Dakota Synod—but are in the possession of our faithful and committed disciples of the ELCA in South Dakota.

Interviews are happening now around our synod to receive input and wisdom from a wide spectrum of ELCA Lutherans in South Dakota.

Watch for more information about this appeal at www.sdsynod.org/appeal and at our upcoming synod assembly. □

Upcoming events

South Dakota Synod Assembly

June 13-14, 2014

“Unbound to Live” (John 11:44b), with guest speaker the Rev. Keith Anderson (www.pastorkeithanderson.net), and musicians and worship leaders Tangled Blue (www.tangledblue.com). Online registration at www.sdsynod.org/14assembly will close May 30.



Bishop’s Golf Tournament

Save the date: July 14, 2014

Westward Ho Country Club, Sioux Falls

The Bishop’s Golf Tournament supports the continued ministry of Answer the Call, a campaign of the South Dakota Synod that encourages and develops leadership for the future of our church. Funds raised will reduce seminary debt for new pastors serving in South Dakota.

Teams of four are \$600.

Find more information and register at www.sdsynod.org/14golf.





Experiencing Native American culture through camp

To say “All are welcome” in the Lakota language, two of the most powerful words in the Native American dialect are used: “*Mitakuye Oyasin.*” What an invitation!

The new Native American Experience—Woyatan is a mission experience hosted in Rapid City by Outlaw Ranch. It will offer high school youth a close encounter with this unique community that holds fast to their culture and tradition while experiencing Christ in a common setting at Woyatan.

“We need not be afraid of things or people who are different from us,” said the Rev. David Piper of Woyatan Lutheran Church. “This mission project offers an intimate way of looking at how people live on the reservation and in the city and see the interconnectedness between the Native American spirit and Christ.”

The week is packed with activities: a powwow, a hike to the sacred site of Bear Butte, travel to the Pine Ridge Reservation, lessons from the elders, playtime with the chil-

dren, service projects with interactive appeal, and Christian worship Woyatan-style. Lodging is provided at Atonement Lutheran Church.

The Woyatan experience is new, but the Lutheran-Lakota partnership and mission work have a 20-year history through Lutheran Outdoors in South Dakota (LOSD). Today it continues through host camp Outlaw Ranch.

LOSD provides camperships for children on the reservation. Through generous donor support, 12 Lakota children participated in camp at Fort Courage last year.

“It’s wonderful to see how the relationships between all children are formed here and friendships are very intentional,” said Tabby Sanderson, a 2013 camp counselor. “Life at camp is very different from life on Pine Ridge where some, like one of the young campers, are sharing a small home with 17 family members.”

For more information on LOSD camps and mission experiences, visit www.losd.org. □