

‘Listen God is Calling’ appeal:

Helping young South Dakota leaders

The South Dakota Synod’s “Listen God is Calling: Never Be the Same” appeal for leadership and mission seeks to raise dollars for seminary debt reduction, seminary scholarships, leadership development and evangelical outreach. The following stories accent the importance of seminary scholarships and debt reductions to help lift the financial burden of the next generation of leaders.

The Rev. Jessica Daum

When my husband Trey and I received the news that we were assigned as first-call pastors to Region 3, we were caught off guard. During our last year of seminary we felt entirely open to wherever God would send us. We imagined “anywhere” to be a faraway, exotic destination: the East Coast, a big city, perhaps a remote island. We were ready for adventure.



The Rev. Jess Daum serves Trinity Lutheran Church, Tea. Her husband, the Rev. Trey Daum, serves Springdale Lutheran, Sioux Falls.

Region 3? This region is made up of North Dakota, Minnesota and South Dakota. I’m from North Dakota, and Trey and I had been living in Minnesota for seminary. Somehow this didn’t sound like the adventure we had imagined.

The call from Bishop David Zellmer to say that we were headed to the South Dakota Synod was welcomed. South Dakota might just present the adventure we craved. It was, after all, the only state in Region 3 in which we hadn’t yet lived.

From that moment on, God’s Spirit has worked through the people of our synod by helping us find calls, each to a vibrant congregation; making us feel welcomed; and showing us how our gifts fit as part of the body of Christ in this place and time. Now Trey and I see a vision of the future as leaders in this synod, and South Dakota is our home.

This December we welcomed a special new member to our congregations of Trinity Lutheran in Tea, where I serve, and

Springdale Lutheran in Sioux Falls, where Trey serves. Our daughter Ruby, born in December 2014, shines Christ’s light as a member of the ELCA in South Dakota. We look forward to the ways her own call as a child of God will blossom and grow here.

Our family is thankful for the support of the good people of our synod. Through prayer, friendship, affirmation of call, and financial support to help us with the challenge of repaying our student loans, we continue to feel loved and uplifted.

The Rev. Ann Rosendale

As a young pastor in the synod, I have benefited greatly from the South Dakota Synod’s seminary debt reduction gifts. I’ve applied for the gift each of my five years in the synod, and have been awed each time at the generosity offered by the people of this state.

I graduated from seminary with \$60,000 of student loan debt, most of which was accumulated during my seminary education. Monthly loan payments of this amount can be burdensome for a new pastor learning to be faithful both to the call of God and to important financial responsibilities. Along with diligent budgeting, the debt reduction gifts from the synod have helped me pay off nearly half of my student loans.

I’m most grateful for the freedom these gifts afford. Because of our synod’s commitment to debt reduction, my pocketbook has not felt so stretched. I’ve felt more free to invest in short- and long-term savings. And I’ve been better able to pay forward the blessings I’ve received through my offerings and charitable donations.

Thank you, people of the South Dakota Synod, for caring so well for your pastors by working together to carry this burden of debt. Your generosity is a true sign of your love and faithfulness. □



The Rev. Ann Rosendale serves as campus pastor of Augustana College in Sioux Falls.

South Dakota

Walking together in God's mission with global companions

By the Rev. Natanael Lizarazo

Cameroon in Africa and Nicaragua in Central America are thousands of miles away, yet this doesn't prevent Lutherans in the South Dakota Synod from participating in God's mutual mission.

As companions with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon, the synod supports such projects as Roofs for Congregations; Train up a Child, which ensures children are enrolled in school; and the Protestant hospital in Garoua Boulai. Working together we build greater capacity for the church in Cameroon to respond to its mission possibilities while we in South Dakota are blessed by the joy for the gospel and vibrant faith that is abundantly present among our companions in Cameroon. Other projects are scholarships for seminarians and pastoral exchanges.

From 2013, when a resolution passed at the South Dakota Synod Assembly, to December 2014, gifts of \$200,000 have made it possible for 25 congregations in Cameroon to receive roofs.

The Rev. Etienne Nganyi of the Lutheran Church in Cameroon said: "I am so thankful. This is work that glorifies God. The support for the roofs from the South Dakota Synod encourages us. The support shows the joy we share, it shows love even when we don't see one another. It's a blessing."

Referring to the hospital in Garoua Boulai, Bishop David Zellmer said, "My favorite part of the church is we sometimes make decisions that have completely unintended consequences. All of [the support for the hospital] got done because we had this idea that we would build 25 roofs. It's the ripple effect. That little town of about 12,000 people is now home to a refugee settlement of a quarter million people."

Solofoniaina Rakotoarivelo, the hospitals' medical director, agrees: "The hospital was the only medical facility that was able to receive wounded from the war in [the] Central African Republic. We took care of the Muslim and the Christian factions. The influx of refugees continued so the hospital was saturated with both Cameroonian and refugee patients."

Our companions in Nicaragua

South Dakota Lutherans are also mission companions with the Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope, which just celebrated its 25th anniversary in July. This young



A new church roof is dedicated in Cameroon.



Solofoniaina Rakotoarivelo (left) and Bishop David Zellmer rededicate the Garoua Boulai Hospital in November 2013.

church was initially born under a mango tree among refugees from the war in El Salvador. Today it's a truly vibrant and growing church deeply committed to sharing the good news of the gospel in holistic ways with and among the poor of Nicaragua.

Three mission projects connect the synod with Nicaragua. The "Cedro Galan Green Project" is a pioneer ecologi-

cally sound agricultural program that has the potential to impact the national church and the whole country. Pastors and lay leaders receive training that they teach and replicate in their communities for greater food security and sustainability.

Another project the synod supports is the National Youth Retreat, which provides skills for the youth who are present in leadership roles at all levels of church life.

Still another critical project that the synod supports is the volunteer missionary who is instrumental in facilitating open communication, mutual hospitality, interpretation of our shared ministry and mutually transformative mission trips.

Other smaller projects are also taking place. Ongoing support for these companion projects is always welcome and appreciated. For specific information, please contact me, the Rev. Natanael Lizarazo, at companion-synods@sdsynod.org or 605-261-7450.

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow.” □



The Green Project of Cedro Galan, Nicaragua.

Author bio:

Lizarazo is the companion synod coordinator for the South Dakota Synod.

Upcoming events

“God’s Work. Our Hands.” Sunday

Sept. 13, 2015

An opportunity to celebrate who we are as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—one church, freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor. Find more information at www.elca.org/dayofservice.

Fall Theological Conference

Sept. 27- 29, 2015

Pierre, S.D.

Susan Marone, associate to the bishop in the South Dakota Synod, will explore the dynamics of emotional intelligence and how it can be applied to ministry both as leaders and in congregational environments. Learn more at www.sdsynod.org/fall-theological-2015.

Is your church website mobile friendly?

By Sawyer Vanden Heuvel

In April 2015, Google made an important update to its algorithm in the way it displays website results on a mobile device. Basically, if your website doesn't have a mobile version (tablet, smartphone, etc.) or is not "responsive," Google will not have your website appear when a user is searching on a mobile device. That's a big deal for your church.

In the Web industry they coined this update as "Mobilegeddon." Now as scary as that sounds, there's still light at the end of the tunnel.

Websites can be designed to be responsive—meaning your site will adapt to any device and screen size it's being viewed with. It's not as hard or as expensive as you think to transition a standard website to a responsive one.

How can you tell if your website is mobile-friendly?

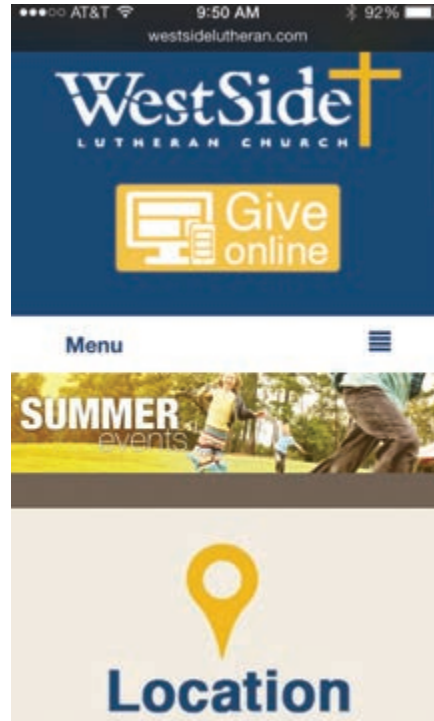
Google has a handy tool that you can use for free that will grade your site for mobile-friendliness. Check it out at www.google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly.

Why is it important for your site to be mobile-friendly? In 2014 mobile device usage surpassed desktop browsing for the first time and will only continue to grow. Now more than ever, people are using smartphones and tablets to access important information—like finding a church in their area or accessing church events and volunteer opportunities.

So if it's been awhile since you've updated your website, now is a great time to refresh it with an easy-to-update backend management. Contact the South Dakota Synod office for resources and ideas or contact 5 J Design for more information.

About Five J Design

Five J Design has worked with the synod on several projects and with ELCA congregations to bring affordable design solutions to the table without compromising any design or Web development standards. For more information, visit its website at www.5jdesign.com, send an email to highfive@5jdesign.com, or call at 605-368-1852. □



Examples of a responsive church website. The same site is shown on two different devices.



Author bio:

Vanden Heuvel is a marketing project manager of Five J Design.