



Storytellers: An Overview

By nature, Christians are storytellers. We model our storytelling after Jesus, who used parables and stories to teach God's people about God's mercy, forgiveness, and love. For Mission Interpreters, also known as Synod Storytellers, telling the stories of 'Our Hands' doing 'God's Work' holds center stage. Whether that work takes the form of working together to serve lunch to our neighbors, building a water pump in a place where clean water is precious, or sharing God's redeeming grace in a prison - we Lutheran Christians call it mission.

Mission. Reaching out to the communities surrounding our churches, or the communities on another continent, serves God's call. Mission Interpreters - Synod Storytellers - help their congregations understand the beauty of this work and help them understand that this work serves God.

In this brief introduction to Mission Interpretation, some strategies for telling the stories of congregations in Sierra Pacific Synod, as well as throughout the ELCA, will be offered. Other material on the synod website offers more detailed information which we hope you will find useful as you begin telling the stories of God's Work, Our Hands.

A quick note before proceeding: some people find the term Mission Interpretation a bit obscure. For that reason, Sierra Pacific Synod also uses Synod Storytelling. Use what will work in your congregation. The point is to tell the story of 'Our Hands' doing 'God's Work.'

Some Examples of Stories

Below are three mission stories, each telling a story from a different source and coming from a different region. The first is from the northern part of the synod, the second from the Rocky Mountain region, and the third from India. Each story reflects the distance that our mission support travels and the wide range of needs addressed.



The Garden of Eatin' in Eureka

When Calvary Lutheran Church started planning a community garden, Peg was there from the first meeting. Food security was an on-going issue for her and she wanted a garden plot. After the garden opened, Peg spent hours at the garden's picnic table, writing letters to family members. The garden gave her the peace she needed to reconnect with her children and their families after decades of anger, confusion, and alienation.

She and her family members, who lived in North Dakota, talked about getting together, but had not settled on dates. Peg died before their reunion. Her children went to Calvary to see Peg's garden plot and to thank the congregation for the peace the garden had brought their mother. *(Look for more stories like this one on the Sierra Pacific Synod website in the near future.)*

Project Angel Heart in Colorado

A breast cancer diagnosis put Coloradans - Ellen and her husband - in financial jeopardy. They were living in their car in order to pay for medical expenses. Project Angel Heart helped them get back on their feet, but perhaps more importantly, provided her with nutritious meals, which helped her recovery. "I just can't express how grateful I am. No words can express it. Thank you for saving my life," Ellen said. Ellen and her husband have found an apartment and gotten back on their feet.



This story, and others like it, are downloadable at:

[http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Reproducible Stories 2013-2014.pdf](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Reproducible_Stories_2013-2014.pdf)

International Scholarships



Sanchita Kitsu of India received a scholarship from ELCA members to complete her Ph.D. at Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. Her research topic: uncovering the reasons behind the small number of women leaders and pastors in the church. According to Kitsu, women in India fill tribal leadership roles, but not in the church. To her, it is important because: "If you give leadership to women the church will grow." After she completes her studies, Kitsu will return to Santal, and help build the credentials of a seminary there.

These are only three of the many stories available to tell the stories of *Our Hands doing God's Work*. These stories, or others like them, are downloadable at: <http://elca.org/Resources/ELCA-Global-Church-Sponsorship>

THE MISSION STORYTELLER'S JOB

Synod Storytellers bring these, and stories like these, to their congregations. The goal is to tell one story a month. It may take many forms. For example, a story from the DVD titled, "*Living, Daring Confidence*," could be the basis of an adult forum discussion. The downloadable handouts (described above) could be used as bulletin inserts. A story from your congregation could be used in the newsletter. Each congregation has its own personality and Synod Storytellers listen to congregational responses in order to find the best ways to raise up stories we tell.

Gathering Stories

One of the more intriguing parts of the Mission Interpreters' commission is finding stories in their own congregations. Perhaps the congregation has a community garden or serves meals to hungry people or has a preschool. Or maybe your congregation has an art program that attracts students and artists from around the area. Maybe your congregation sponsors a missionary. Maybe your members have an intentional visitation program, taking communion and/or fellowship to people who are unable to come to church.

Getting Started

With so many resources, it may take some time to find what will work in your congregation. Explore the Mission Interpretation Ministry Resource page. After becoming acquainted with the resources, it is time to introduce them and your suggestions for using them, to your congregation's leadership. Talk to your pastor and your congregation's leaders about Synod Storytelling.

If you have questions, please send them to MIC@spselca.org. We would appreciate hearing from you.

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