



Bishop David B. Zellmer
SOUTH DAKOTA SYNOD, ELCA

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thank you for your generous Mission Support, which brings godly hope and healing around this state and all around the world. As of November 30, 2009, your congregation had contributed (giving to date) toward its 2009-2010 pledge of (pledge total). On behalf of the millions who benefit from your giving, thank you.

We remain committed to the task that Jesus set out for us at the end of his earthly ministry: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing...and teaching..." This is God's mission, and it is our high and holy privilege to be included. You are a beloved and valuable partner in God's mission. Together as synodical, churchwide, and congregational expressions we are engaged in God's Work, with Our Hands.

At this moment in our life together, please consider two images, one from an old TV program and another from the life of Jesus.

Some of you will remember the old program with Walter Cronkite, "You Are There." Through your Mission Support, you are "there." You are there in Cameroon, West Africa, where just last month we installed four new church roofs and funded the education of 240 children! You were present with me at the installation of Bishop Nyiwe with more than 5000 of our African brothers and sisters! You are there in the center of Sioux Falls where we are reaching out to a burgeoning Latino community through the new church Pueblo de Dios ("House of God"). You are there in Pine Ridge, where every day more than 50 children receive a sandwich and gather for play and mentoring after school. You are there at Fort Hood, Texas, where ELCA Army Chaplains Michael Lembke, Richard Brunk, and Paul Dirksmeyer bore witness to God's mercy as they ministered to families, friends, and an entire nation grieving the tragic shootings at the country's largest military base. Your presence is felt all around the world through your partnership with the South Dakota Synod and the worldwide ministries of our Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Next, I would invite you to picture Jesus with his disciples around him. In that group of disciples we see a zealot named Simon and a tax collector named Matthew. Zealots were people who wanted to shake off Roman rule by violent force. Tax collectors were people who collected the money that supported Roman rule. How could those two men stand each other? What was going on here? Two things were going on. First, they were gathered around Jesus Christ, whose living presence dissolved the conflict between his disciples. Second, they were totally committed to the exciting mission that Jesus was laying before them. Today the issues have changed, but the reality is the same. We are still gathered around the living presence of Jesus Christ in word and sacrament, and we are still totally committed to his mission. In this moment when some parts of our church body are ill at ease with others I invite you to join me in looking upon Jesus Christ, the author of our faith, and pursuing the mission that he has placed before us.

Your Partner in God's Mission,

Bishop David Zellmer