

ELCA Macedonia Project

Making a Plan for Giving

Do adults age 30 and under have the capacity to think about making a planned gift? This is a question the Rev. Sara Yotter, assistant to the bishop in the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin, has thought a lot about. Her answer? A resounding “yes.”

In undertaking the Macedonia Project, a key audience in Yotter’s synod and its plans to engage pastors in stewardship, is people age 30 and under. A key emphasis in this work is to train pastors to become planned giving advocates.

“There is not a lot of research on statistics of planned giving for people who are 30 and under,” says Yotter. “Many say they are not an audience open to, or interested in making planned gifts. I think that’s wrong, because I’m one of those people who decided to make a planned gift at that point in my life when a pastor encouraged me to do so.”

Yotter and fellow Macedonia planners are encouraging pastors of all ages to gather in coaching relationships with each other to help them meet their stewardship and generosity goals. To inform this work, participants are reading two books by J. Clif Christopher. In one book, Christopher suggests 10 stewardship-related actions every pastor should take immediately.

“One of those actions is working with planned giving and asking for larger gifts,” said Yotter. “I believe many of them will choose planned giving as one of their initiatives they want to work on. We’ll have a teaching session early next spring with an ELCA Foundation staff member to coach, guide and train our pastors about how to ask for major gifts. Many are nervous because they’ve never done this before. They want someone to walk them through how this should be done.”

In a related approach, the synod is introducing the idea of planned giving to congregational members looking to baptize their children. During baptismal training, pastors are encouraged to discuss planned giving as parents think ahead and plan for the future.

“When there’s a new baby, people often believe it’s time to change or write a will,” said Yotter. “That’s a key milestone opportunity to invite a family to be generous.”