



CALLED AND CONNECTED

Members of St. John Lutheran Church, Dickinson, N.D., cheered when their own Kathi Nygaard was ordained there in 2015, but they weren't the only ones. Present in person or in spirit was a lifelong network of family, friends, mentors, supporters and ministries that helped shepherd Nygaard into ministry.

"The first time somebody said I should be a pastor I was in grade school," recalled Nygaard, who grew up attending worship and Sunday school at Zion Lutheran Church in Noonan, N.D., and was confirmed at Grace Lutheran Church in Wildrose, N.D. It was a comment she heard over and over while participating in other Lutheran activities that deepened her faith.

After college Nygaard took a job as a social worker while involving herself deeply in congregational and synod life in Dickinson. Eventually, God's call to ministry became irresistible. "It just became clearer and clearer that I was being called to equip people to serve," Nygaard said.

But how would she manage the time and financial commitment of seminary? The answer was the distributive learning program at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., which enabled her to work on a Master of Divinity degree while living and working in Dickinson.

Thanks to the generosity of fellow Lutherans, the ministries that had helped form Nygaard in faith also provided financial assistance.

After graduating from Luther, Nygaard awaited her first call. Meanwhile in western North Dakota, two rural congregations were being guided in the search for a new pastor and would eventually call Nygaard.

Looking back at her journey to pastoral ministry, Nygaard is thankful the support she received. It enabled her to answer, at last, the call that God first put on her in the first place.

"God's pretty persistent, no matter how many times we let the call go to voicemail," she said.

Your Mission Support dollars are used by your synod and the ELCA churchwide organization to facilitate the rostering of leaders and the call process. These funds also support the seven ELCA seminaries that train rostered ministers.

