

# WE ARE CHURCH TOGETHER

2024



## SEPTEMBER 2024 Mission Support Memo

### STORYTELLING ENGAGEMENT

#### Surprising Support, Faithful Following

A story from the North Carolina Synod by the Rev. Jennifer Shimota [https://nclutheran.org/special\\_posts/surprising-support-faithful-following/](https://nclutheran.org/special_posts/surprising-support-faithful-following/)

As you read this story, what inspires you?

How are candidates in your synod being supported?

When Rahim Brown was hired as a youth minister at Abiding Presence Lutheran Church in Fuquay-Varina, N.C., in 2021, he was finishing up a Master of Divinity degree at St. Paul School of Theology in Leawood, Kan. Rahim had been a candidate for ministry in the United Methodist Church but had left the ordination process in 2015. As he worked in his new position and served among the faithful people of Abiding Presence, he began to discern a call to ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). True to his Methodist tradition, he felt “a warming in my heart when Abiding Presence welcomed me wholeheartedly even when I was the only African American person there.” The Rev. Kim Carlson, pastor of Abiding Presence, became a trusted mentor, encouraged him in his discernment and connected him with the North Carolina Synod candidacy coordinator at the time, the Rev. Sara Ilderton.



This tug toward Lutheran ministry meant some shifting in the lives of both Rahim and his wife, Cecelia. After some great conversations with Pastor Sara, he understood that since his degree was not from an ELCA seminary, he had some courses to take in Lutheran worship, polity, history and theology. An extra year of graduate school was going to cost time, energy and money. They had been counting down the days and dollars until seminary was finished, and now God seemed to be calling them to extend that expensive chapter of their lives.

Learning that the synod provides candidates for ministry with a yearly stipend of \$5,000 brought an immediate sense of relief to the Browns. These funds may be used for tuition, books, housing, food or other expenses like travel, easing the financial burden of saying yes to God’s call to rostered ministry in the ELCA.

*“Having a church financially support my discernment and study means the North Carolina Synod really supports me in my call,” Rahim said. “They have my back in very real ways. It solidifies for me that this is where God wants me to be. I feel it all the time.”*

When Rahim called Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (LTSS) to inquire about admissions, tuition costs and available financial aid, God surprised him once again. The seminary had a streamlined admissions process for “Lutheran Year” students and significant scholarship funds to offer him. While Cecelia worked full time, Rahim worked part time and studied full time. “I think the biggest thing for me is understanding the call on your life. It was difficult to watch my wife pay most of the bills, and me not being able to support us was difficult. Seeing God open up the doors for the calling on my life has been a fresh understanding of God’s grace. Cecelia and I were able, as a team, to see that God was opening doors for us. So working hard is manageable.”

Currently Rahim is serving his internship year at Lutheran Church of the Atonement in Atlanta, Ga. In August he will complete his year there in time for his approval panel, the final step in the synod candidacy process. Rahim and Cecelia trust God to continue to open doors they are to step through as they move forward in faith. When congregations send synods their Mission Support dollars, a portion of that money funds stipends like the one Rahim received, as well as financial scholarships at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. If an individual, small group or congregation feels called to financially support candidates for ministry in our synod, they can give a gift designated to candidacy. Together we support the unbroken chain of people who have answered God’s call to public ministry throughout the generations.

## ENGAGE WITH US

### [Updated “Mission Support: A Deep Dive” is now available](#)

We are happy to share that an updated version of “[Mission Support: A Deep Dive](#)” is now available to download and share. This resource is helpful in sharing how the churchwide organization stewards Mission Support dollars in a concise, narrative way. We hope you will share it widely and that you find it helpful when talking about Mission Support.

## GRATEFUL

This month we celebrate the generosity of so many congregations across the ELCA as they carry out “God’s work. Our hands.” activities on Sunday, Sept. 8, a day that allows us to be one church, together in Christ. We believe that “service activities offer an opportunity for us to explore one of our most basic convictions as Lutherans: that all of life in Jesus Christ — every act of service, in every daily calling, in every corner of life — flows freely from a living, daring confidence in God’s grace.”

<https://www.elca.org/dayofservice>

In deep gratitude,

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