

# South Santiago Lutheran Church

## The Story of Our Giving

**Our mission:** *Teaching the Word. Reaching the World.*

### **Our values & purpose:**

- We seek changed lives through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- We believe that change happens through forming and sustaining life-long personal faith in God through Christ Jesus.
- We implement this by engaging in cross-generational ministry and radical hospitality as it is revealed by God's Word and by connecting to others within our congregation, our community and the world.



### **INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS THIS THING?**

What you hold in your hands is called a “narrative budget.” A narrative budget is a representation of the line item budget in simple, easy-to-read, descriptive terms. It seeks to transform a line item of money and expenses into what is hopefully a bit more exciting and enlivening picture of ministries and missional expressions of the congregation. A line item budget is an effective tool for a council or committee to manage and track financial resources. But it is not an effective means for *interpreting* those ministries; *their meaning* to our mission; or *their impact* on individual lives.

**That interpretation is the purpose of this tool. This narrative budget seeks to help members of the congregation understand what the church is doing in its ministry; how its mission statement, values, and purposes become visible; and how sharing of ourselves support all of that.** At its best, our narrative budget tells the story of what God is up to in and through our congregation. At its best, our narrative budget connects US with that story of what God is up to!

God's revelation of love for us and intended purpose for us to share that love through our mission and ministry first comes to us in the form of a story. At its heart, in all its complexity, that is what the Bible is all about. As we engage and are engaged by that biblical story, we find purpose, meaning, and direction both for our individual lives, and for our shared lives within our congregation. The Bible's story *becomes* our story.

**This tool, then, seeks to tie our stories together—the biblical one and the one that is unfolding around us through the mission and ministry of the congregation. It seeks to integrate our God-given mission, ministry, and the way we offer ourselves, our time, and our money into a compelling invitation to be a part of that on-going story through sharing.** The Bible isn't just an ancient, historical story. The way that God is at work on, with, and through his people continues to this day! We want this tool to be a link between you the contributor, and the church's story, mission, purpose, values, and ministries! **Moreso, we want this tool to be a link between you and your part in God's love turned loose in this world!**

What is contained here, then, is both some reflection on 2014 and some hopeful projection into 2015. That story is conveniently divided between 5 major areas of mission and ministry within our congregation. Those areas are (in no order of particular prioritization):

- **Our Shepherding Ministry** (p. 3)
- **Our Building Ministry** (p. 5)
- **Our Ministry of Generosity & Care** (p. 8)
- **Our Education & Growth Ministry** (p. 10)
- **Our Worship & Music Ministry** (p. 12)

**This is a story...**

**...about how God has been at work in and through our congregation in the past;**

**...about how God is currently at work in and through our congregation today;**

**...and about how your church leadership believes God will continue to be at work in and through our congregation in the future.**

The future piece of that story, such as it pertains to us, is far from certain, however. Our congregation has changed through the years. It is in the process of changing. It will continue to evolve and change, mainly because the world around us has changed in staggering sorts of ways. **By your future actions YOU will have much to say about the changes our congregation might be facing in 2015.**

So what do you say? Will you be a part of God's unfolding story here at SSLC and in the community in which we are planted? Read on, and let's find out.

# 1. Our Shepherding Ministry:

## **Bible Story(ies):**



Exodus 18:5-26 Moses is overwhelmed in overseeing and serving the Children of Israel. His father-in-law Jethro suggests that he divide up that oversight among some of the elders of the tribes. And that is what Moses does.

*Key verse:* <sup>25</sup> *Moses chose able men from all Israel and appointed them as heads over the people, as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.* <sup>26</sup> *And they judged the people at all times; hard cases they brought to Moses, but any minor case they decided themselves.*—Exodus 18:25-26

Acts 6:1-7 A disagreement arises within the early church and is brought to Peter and the Eleven to be solved. It is determined that for Peter and the Eleven to drop what they are doing to solve the issue would hinder the total ministry of the congregation. Instead, they appoint “deacons” who will oversee the caretaking of the widows of the congregation, while the apostles attend to teaching and prayer.

*Key verse:* <sup>5</sup> *What the apostles suggested pleased the whole community. ...*<sup>7</sup> *The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem...--Acts 6:5, 7.*

Most people have never heard of a man named Joergen Vig Knudstorp. But they HAVE heard of his company for which he is CEO. Knudstorp became the CEO of Lego in 2004 at a time in which the very survival of the company was very much in question. Sales had declined precipitously, and the company was carrying a huge amount of debt. Early on in his tenure, Knudstorp gathered the management team, and they adopted two important strategies. **First, they revisited their mission, their purpose, and their values.** Knudstorp said, *“We had to ask, ‘Why does Lego Group exist?’ Ultimately, we determined the answer: to offer our core products, whose unique design helps children learn systematic, creative problem solving—a crucial twenty-first-century skill”* (Harvard Business Review, Jan. 2009). **From there, the Lego leadership flexed out of old styles of top-down, slow, hierarchical decision making into a much more ground-level, nimble style of decision making, something along the lines of using Legos to create something, simply out of one’s imagination.** *“In Danish, we have an expression that literally translates as ‘managing at eye level,’”* he said. *“While we have 120 staff designers, we potentially have probably 120,000 volunteer designers we can access outside the company to help us invent. Customers can now even design their own products—which we will sell for them, or in some cases to others, on Legofactory.com, where we offer our digital-design software for free.”* Today, of course, Legos continue to be one of the most popular toys in the world. **This has everything to do with Joergen Vig Knudstorp’s skill at administration by focusing on mission, purpose, and values.**

In the Biblical story, there are key junctures when administration and oversight for the sake of the mission are called for. Often, these daily tasks appear so common and mundane that they hardly appear to be “ministry” at all. **But without a ministry of oversight, administration, organization and leadership that guides the community from the standpoint of mission, the community, its mission and the ministry to which God has called it are all in jeopardy.**

Our **Shepherding Ministry** is the part of our congregation’s budget that supports and takes in the bulk of our personnel's salary and benefits, as well as the day-to-day operations and communication tools from within our office. It is one of the bigger numbers in our budget.

Part of **Pastor Mike’s** position is one of coordinating and supervising the ministry staff and its weekly, monthly, and annual focus and providing pastoral care to those we know to be in need. The staff meets at least a couple of times a year to set the schedule for the year; to develop themes (Advent or Lent, for example); and to set goals for the congregation’s ministry. In addition, the staff gathers on Wednesday mornings for Bible study, prayer, and weekly coordination across the board. It is at this weekly meeting that we are praying for YOU.

It is at this weekly meeting that we determine who needs to be visited and who needs to be contacted for pastoral care. It is at this weekly meeting that we are examining what kinds of servants will be needed for our worship services. It is at this weekly meeting that we tweak what needs to be tweaked and bless what needs to be blessed.

Our office administrator and bookkeeper **Shelly Bluhm** carries a significant portion of this responsibility and ministry of shepherding, as well. She...

- ...is usually the first face encountered by anyone who enters the building during the week.
- ...is usually the first voice you hear when you call the church office.
- ...fulfills major pieces of communication within the congregation, including announcements in the bulletin; publication of the newsletter; official correspondence from the church office; coordinating home visits for Pastor Mike; and publication of the annual report.
- ...maintains our office supplies and equipment.
- ...as bookkeeper, stewards the congregation's finances.
- ...has assumed the responsibility to become the volunteer coordinator who fills in the NUMEROUS gaps when people do not sign-up to serve; when people do sign up but do not show up; or when people do not find their own replacement when they are unable to be present.

Our Youth & Family Minister, **Jeremy Hallquist**, also shares in the ministry of shepherding and oversight with the particularities of our youth ministry. He coordinates our Wednesday evening worship services; our confirmation ministry (including the recruitment of small group mentors); and our high school ministry events. Aided by our Youth Board, Jeremy plans the summer trips; recruits the adults who go with our youth; and helps to coordinate all of the fundraising that goes into making that ministry happen.

Even our custodian, **Sandy Empting**, has a share in the shepherding of our building ministry. She is usually the first to notice maintenance and up-keep items that are beyond her job description. In passing those on to our Building & Property Committee, she helps provide oversight and administration. (See p. 5 for more details about that ministry.)

Finally, we have chosen to describe this portion of our budget as "Shepherding Ministry" (as opposed to "Staffing" or "Administration") so that we do not become complacent in a robust understanding that **one of our ministry team's primary functions is to "shepherd" our congregation as a whole and the individuals of it in understanding and carrying out their own ministries in being a part of God's mission in the world both as a part of the congregation, as well as in their daily lives.** A huge part of that shepherding ministry is to encourage YOU to experience God's love in your daily life. A huge part of that shepherding ministry is to invite YOU, not simply to volunteer or to complete tasks, but to see yourself as a part of the welcome and love God offers through this congregation.

AMOUNT SPENT IN 2014:           \$80,747          

AMOUNT ANTICIPATED IN 2015:           \$81,757          



## 2. Our Building Ministry:

### Bible Story(ies):

1 Kings 6:14, 8:22-62 King Solomon, David's son and Israel's 3<sup>rd</sup> king, builds a beautiful Temple in Jerusalem which came to be understood as the earthly dwelling for God himself. But Solomon intended from the very beginning that the Temple would also be for the well-being of all God's people's hearts and souls and as a beacon for all people of good faith.

Key verse: *King Solomon prayed at the dedication of the Temple, "27 Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built! 28 Regard your servant's prayer and his plea, O Lord my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you today." –2 Kings 8:27-28*

Psalms 122 One of the Psalms of David, the City of Jerusalem is praised as "the house of the Lord," where security, peace, and joy are to be found.

Key verse: *I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!" –Psalm 122:1*

1 Peter 2:4-6 The apostle Peter writes to his flock, describing the church as a gathering of "living stones" built around Jesus, the cornerstone.

Key verse: *The apostle Peter writes, "5 Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."*

An important key principle of Christian stewardship that we can find expressed throughout the Bible is an assertion of faith that **everything we have ultimately belongs to God but has graciously been given to us to use**. For this reason, this part of our congregation's story is described as "Our Building Ministry." It is not just "a place." However it is that we have come to have such a well-cared for, flexible, useful building, we should see this as a gift from God. And, we should receive this gift with the understanding that **God wants us to use this building for God's glory and as tool for spreading God's love throughout this community**.

A family once inherited a set of china from the wife's grandmother; but it was far from a complete set. There was a coffee cup or two missing. A couple of the plates had chips in them. A salad plate or two had disappeared. You see, Grandma had **USED** that china! It didn't stay safely locked away in a cabinet somewhere, pretty to look at but fretful to use. No, she would set that china out and bustle around, sitting at the end of the table on a stool, ready to serve and offer the hospitality that went with those beautiful dishes. God's love was made visible at that table and on those plates and through Grandma's cooking and hospitality and service. **This is a story that helps us understand what "Our Building Ministry" is, as well.**

**Sunday morning** is probably the center piece of our building ministry, simply because it is the time when the building is most frequently full.

**Some day when you come to church, try to pretend you are a guest, visitor, or newcomer to South Santiago: what is "the vibe" you feel from the moment you roll onto our grounds?**

Visitors and guests find that we have a "surprising" facility out here "in the relative middle of nowhere." It is well-kept, thanks to our custodian Sandy Empting and a number of volunteers who clean the building and mow the lawns and provide maintenance and up-keep and take care of the flower beds and shovel the snow. That goes a long way in providing welcoming hospitality.



That welcoming, hospitable vibe does nothing but increase as one enters the building! The public spaces in our building are always SPARKLING clean, free from clutter, comfortable, and inviting. (It is the cleanest, least-cluttered church building in which I've ever had the privilege of serving.) The light and space throughout is bright and flowing.

**The kitchen and fellowship space** are the first rooms to be encountered once one is in the door as a visitor. The kitchen will already be getting food and drink ready, and there are tables and chairs set up, all of which says something about who we want to be as followers of Jesus. Our values and purposes stated on p. 1 of this document remind us that the "changed lives" we believe happens through Jesus flows through our mission of teaching the Word and reaching the world and are connected through the hospitality we offer.

**The sanctuary** is majestic with its soaring beams and ceiling, but modern and approachable. The windows let in natural light and give us seasonal glimpses of the beauty of God's creation. The addition of the art work this year catches the eye and might communicate a connectedness between individuals of all ages, the congregation, and the story we hear and live. The changing banners and well-cared for tools of our worship remind us of God's on-going presence and love that flows through this space and the people who occupy it, out into the world in which we live. The acoustics and open lines of sight have been designed so that speaking, singing, listening, hearing and seeing are some of the most important actions on Sunday morning.

**Our classrooms, nursery, library, music room, and youth room** continue the themes of welcome, hospitality, warmth, and ease of use. Each is a part of our mission. Every single one of these spaces help us live out our mission, our purposes, and our values.

**And, of course, it's not just the building and the rooms but THE PEOPLE who fill those rooms and the activities those people carry out in those rooms that are the living stones of Christ's church.**

It is not just that communion "gets set up" in the sacristy, the room behind the altar; rather, it is that God's people offer their time and effort for the mission of God's love that happens through Holy Communion. It is not just that kids have a space and teachers "to do arts and crafts" in those classrooms; rather, it is that they participate in activity with other adults who end up embodying God's love to them. It is not just that we have a room with a keyboard where people can gather to sing; rather, it is that the words and music that are sung lift their hearts and our hearts heavenward in devotion to God.

That mission and ministry also happen at other times and in other ways in and around our building. The **Sunday School garden** that is planted each spring provides at least a little bit of fresh produce to the food shelf. We have **plenty of room outside** to run around and play, and the **fire ring** and **outside worship site** are unique opportunities for fellowship and worship. Our loft up above the fellowship area houses our **quilters' ministry**, as they make God's love visible through the handcrafts they make for our high school graduates and veterans. We have dedicated a significant amount of space for **storage for Back Pack Buddies**. **Wednesday evenings** see our building packed nearly to the rafters with adults and youth who gather for worship, fellowship, study, and growth.

***A History of South Santiago's Building:***

***South Santiago Lutheran Church was organized in 1882 by three pioneer families. A log church was built in 1888 and served the congregation until 1904 when a clapboard structure was built. This structure was lost to fire in January 2000. The congregation worshipped at St. Lawrence Catholic Church in Duelm until May 2002, while the construction of a new 15,000 square foot church facility was underway. We worshipped in our new building for the first time on June 2, 2002. The building includes: worship space, classrooms, nursery, offices, kitchen, fellowship hall and gathering space.***



And at any given time during the week there may be a small group of some kind gathering for **Bible study**. Our kitchen has also been used for **making freezer meals** for families and individuals who experience a variety of needs. Some of the most vibrant and visible aspects of our congregation’s mission and ministry are tied directly to this building.

It is also distinctly possible that our building might be used by outside groups, who, even if they aren’t gathering in our building for any particularly Godly or spiritual reason, are still being welcomed by the people of God. In fact, our up-dated building use policy designates a percentage of the building use fee paid by those outside groups toward a mission or ministry beyond our four walls and invites those outside groups to choose where that percentage might be directed. **In so doing, our building continues to be a radiant a source of mission and ministry in this world.**

Finally, our special events that take place throughout the year very well might serve this purpose of welcoming newcomers and guests, as well. **Any time we have someone in our building, who might not otherwise may have entered our building—say, for the Pig Roast, the Craft Bazaar, or Thanksgiving meal—we are potentially welcoming the stranger in our midst.** (And Jesus reminds us that we welcome HIM when we welcome the stranger—Matthew 25). **Are there other ways our building might be used for God’s unfolding mission of love in this world? What do you think?**

The numbers, then, that stand behind this heading, “Our Building Ministry,” supports anything and everything related to this part of the story, including...

- the building’s mortgage principle, interest and insurance;
- utilities, maintenance, repairs, and up-keep, both inside and out, including the garage and the prayer garden;
- Sandy Empting, our custodian’s wages and her supplies.

**AMOUNT SPENT IN 2014:**           **\$94,155**          

**AMOUNT ANTICIPATED IN 2015:**           **\$77,976**

### 3. Our Ministry of Generosity & Care:

#### **Bible Story(ies):**

Deuteronomy 24:17-22 Before entering the Promised Land after being lead out of Egypt and 40 years of wandering in the Wilderness, Moses expands upon the Ten Commandments and gives the People of God more detailed commentary about their life together as God's people. Included in that teaching are frequent words about taking care of the powerless and poor, most often described as the "resident alien, orphan, and widow."

Key verse: <sup>19</sup> *When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings.* <sup>20</sup> *When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. – Deuteronomy 24:19-20*

Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus tells a parable in which his presence is made known through the care of the hungry, thirsty, the alien stranger, the needy, the sick, and the imprisoned. Blessings are heaped upon those who respond, even without recognizing Jesus' presence, while curses and rejection are heaped upon those who didn't even lift a finger.

Key verse: <sup>40</sup> *"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." –Matthew 25:40*

Acts 11:19-30 &

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

On at least two separate occasions, the apostle Paul is part of an offering that is collected in Antioch and in Macedonia (Greece) and taken to Jerusalem for the congregation there. From the earliest days of the church, Christians realized their interconnectedness, their reliance on one other even across distances, and the ability to do mission and ministry with shared resources.

Key verse: *The apostle Paul writes, "We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; <sup>2</sup> for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. <sup>3</sup> For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means."*

In the book of Acts, the historical record of the earliest church, we are told time and again that it was the outpouring of Christian love in addressing material needs that often made the biggest difference in their outreach to those who were not yet believers. (See Acts 2:42-47, for example.) **Even and especially when times got hard for the earliest Christians, it was their love outpoured for people that set them apart.** An early Christian historian and lawyer named Tertullian (160-220 AD), reported that even as Christians were being burned at the stake, fed to the lions in the arenas, or worse, their pagan tormentors commented, and saying, "Look . . . how they love one another (for they themselves [pagans] hate one another); and how they are ready to die for each other (for they themselves [pagans] are readier to kill each other)." **As Jesus poured himself out in his ministry and death on the cross, so these early Christians did the same.** And that mattered.

Our congregation's story of its money includes a mixed bag when it comes to our generosity and interconnectedness with Christians across the globe.

We are given regular opportunities to serve and to reach out to those in need, and we respond graciously and generously.

- The **Back Pack Buddies** weekend feeding program that is channeled through the Becker schools was founded out of this congregation and continues to be vibrantly led by members of this congregation.
- Every **1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month** brings an invitation to give to the **Food Shelf bin**.



- Every 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month invites us to give through our **Noisy Offering**, and we have tweaked how those offerings get directed by trying to spread them between other Local, State-/Nationwide, or Global causes, missions, or ministries.
- Our congregation has participated with feeding ministries like **Kids Fighting Hunger**.
- SSLC continues to live out an ethos of generosity through its **youth ministry summer mission trips**.
- It doesn't take too much creativity, either, to think of our participation in **blood donation** through the Memorial Blood Center's blood bus as, literally, giving of ourselves.



- Our women lead and connect us at Christmas time to the residents at **Lange Home**.
- Our **giving tree** at Christmas time is usually emptied on the first day.
- The regular gathering of **quilters and prayer shawl knitters/crocheters** create visible gifts of love for our high school graduates, our military veterans, and really, just about anyone whose heart and spirit might be lifted by their crafts.

- We have folks who are regularly **providing meals** for others in times of need.



There are probably more opportunities, as well. They are broad. They matter to people. They are "organic" in their efforts, meaning that they simply bubble up from within the generosity of our individual members. They invite people of all ages from our congregation to be engaged in generosity **because we believe that's what being the presence of Jesus in this world is all about.**



But there is another aspect of "Our Ministry of Generosity & Care" that is lacking, and that is our financial support of our synod, the Southwestern Minnesota Synod and our churchwide participation in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. One can say, "*We need to keep our money close to home. There are people here that need help too.*" **But one simply cannot say that and rectify it with the New Testament.** (Truly, all the material above is all about "money close to home" and "people here that need help too.") When Jesus sends out his disciples on the mission of living the story of death and resurrection, he sends them out to "all nations" (Matthew 28). The entire book of Acts tells the story of the growing and needful connectedness between Christians across regional, national, and international borders. Most of the New Testament is a compilation of letters sent to congregations that were not "close to home." The readings from Acts and 2 Corinthians bear witness to the earliest Christians being direly concerned with the welfare of their brothers and sisters in far-away places and giving accordingly.

**Unfortunately, part of our congregation's story this past year is that we suspended our giving to the SWMN synod and ELCA.** That was not a response the council, our bookkeeper, or treasurer preferred. It was a response that Pastor Mike spoke against. It is not a response that we find to be particularly God-blessed. **But it was a response we took because of the ever-shortening ministry dollars that we have been receiving.**

Is that a big deal? Well, it is a big deal that we have gone from one of the most proportionately generous congregations (for our size) to giving nothing at all. In addition, our shorted gifts means that we are not supporting and possibly are even jeopardizing other ministries that we could not do ourselves:

- The synod staff is vital for congregations (ours and others) seeking to fill vacant calls and negotiating significant transitions.
- The synod staff is vital in creating and providing great leadership development resources and events.
- Our money that gets passed along to the ELCA churchwide expression supports our malaria initiative in places where that disease ravages human life.

- Through the ELCA’s sponsorship of clean-water initiatives like wells and water boxes, thousands of lives are saved from water-borne illnesses. We are not a part of that right now.
- We even have a participant—**Kelly Bergman**—in one the ELCA’s development ministries for young adults (YAGM—Young Adults in Global Ministry). We have supported Kelly through individual donations and noisy offerings. But we are not insuring that this sweet ministry can continue for others.



In our culture, dollars express meaning and value. **We are not doing that as a congregation right now.**

**AMOUNT SPENT IN 2014:**     **\$3,733**    

**AMOUNT ANTICIPATED IN 2015:**     **\$8,250**

## 4. Our Education & Growth Ministry:

### Bible Story(ies):

Deuteronomy 6:1-25 Before entering the Promised Land after being lead out of Egypt and 40 years of wandering in the Wilderness, Moses expands upon the Ten Commandments and gives the People of God more detailed commentary about their life together as God's people. Passing on the faith and the stories that give them identity as "the People of God" is high on the priority list.

Key verse: <sup>6</sup> *Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.* <sup>7</sup> *Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.* —Deuteronomy 6:6-7

Matthew 19:16-30 A rich young man comes to Jesus, looking to learn from him. Jesus connects with the man and with Jesus' own disciples, that they may learn and live God's grace, mercy, and generosity.

Key verse: *Jesus said, "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."* <sup>18</sup> *The rich young man said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness;* <sup>19</sup> *Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* <sup>20</sup> *The young man said to him, "I have kept all these; what do I still lack?"* <sup>21</sup> *Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."* —Matthew 19:17-21

Acts 8:26-40

One of the disciples from the Jerusalem congregation encounters on the road a royal official from Ethiopia. The official is reading a scroll from the prophet Isaiah, but he has many questions about what he is reading. Philip engages him as a teacher, and both men grow.

Key verse: *So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"* <sup>31</sup> *He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him.* —Acts 8:30-31

What is your favorite movie and why is it your favorite? Chances are, somewhere along the line of describing why that movie is your favorite, you're going to have something to say about "the story"; its twists and turns; the compelling characters; and so on. A teacher once said to his 3rd grade students, "Do you want me to read you a story or tell you a story?" "Oh tell us a story," they exclaimed, "because then we can see into your eyes." Stories invest our lives with meaning, they develop and express our creativity. They help us to laugh at ourselves. They give us the strength to face life's difficult moments. They connect us more vitally with ourselves and each other and they turn ordinary moments into extraordinary ones. Which means, **stories are not just for kids.**



From the outset of our mission statement, we express our value and purpose as a congregation: **TEACHING** the Word. *Reaching the World.* The story of our congregation includes vibrant ministries of teaching, learning, and growth.



Our **Sunday School** and Vacation Bible School led by volunteer Karla Zerwas engages our children with lessons and activities that draw them into the story. This year, our Sunday School adopted a lesson curriculum the followed along with the weekly readings in worship. This meant that our children were being immersed in the Biblical story both in Sunday School, as well as in worship. In addition, the curriculum provides take-home material for our households, giving them another option (in addition to our weekly *Sharing God's Story @ Home* insert) for living the story at home.

One need only come and see and be a part of the raw energy that is **Vacation Bible School** to see the value in that ministry. Plus, maybe because of the shorter duration of that program, we tend to have a greater outreach beyond our usual families and households.

Jeremy's ministry with our **youth** is also part of our congregation's story of money. As listed previously under "Our Shepherding Ministry," Jeremy coordinates our Wednesday evening worship services; our confirmation ministry (including the recruitment of small group mentors); and our high school ministry events. Aided by our Youth Board, Jeremy plans the summer trips; recruits the adults who go with our youth; and helps to coordinate all of the fundraising that goes into making that ministry happen. **None of the trip ministry is budgeted through our congregation's regular giving at all, which means the tens of thousands of dollars that make that happen are completely fundraised.**



A significant chunk of Pastor Mike's time is spent in preparation for **adult education**. Our weekly *Sharing God's Story @ Home* insert, and Pastor Mike's frequent referencing of "4-Key Faith Practices" reveals the core of his sense of Christian teaching and education. It's not just about learning data—names, places, dates, etc. **Christian teaching and education, especially for adults, is a matter of being engaged by God through the story of Scripture and wondering how that story is still living in our daily lives.**

This past year saw some increased opportunities for adult education.

- Our **Pathfinders** ministry that began in September has been an engaging way to connect with people who are investigating membership at SSLC; preparing for marriage; or preparing for baptism. While it is still an ever-evolving experiment, its ability to connect people over a meal has been good. It has invited people to grow in ways that our former practice of bringing in new members never did. **And, while Pathfinders might have initially been advertised as "for new members," it really is an opportunity for ANYONE to grow in relationship with people; knowledge of our congregation; and basic practices of our Christian faith.**
- Our **Saturday morning men's breakfast** has happened in fits and starts, but beginning this month, we have had the commitment of a couple of guys to make it a regular happening.
- Our **children's milestones** are important touchstones for adult education, as well. First Bibles, First Communion Instruction, and beginning this year with the First Year of Baptism milestone celebrated in January on the Sunday of the Baptism of Jesus, each of these is an opportunity to engage, encourage, and equip the adults of our households in practicing and living faith in their homes.



**How will you as an adult grow in being engaged by the Jesus Story and/or in your personal practice of faith?**

**AMOUNT SPENT IN 2014:**         \$62,364        

**AMOUNT ANTICIPATED IN 2015:**         \$59,603

## 5. Our Worship & Music Ministry:

### Bible Story(ies):

Psalm 95

In some sense, the entire book of Psalms could be considered a hymn book!

Key Verse: O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! \ <sup>2</sup> Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

Psalm 100

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

<sup>2</sup> Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing.

<sup>3</sup> Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

<sup>4</sup> Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name.

<sup>5</sup> For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.



In her collection of meditations called *Teaching a Stone to Talk*, writer Annie Dillard observes about worship:

*Does any-one have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping God may wake some day and take offense, or the waking God may draw us out to where we can never return."*

**Worship is the time and place we come into the presence of the living God, and while the promises of mercy and love that we have received through Jesus make that experience less "dangerous" than Dillard describes, it is nonetheless a powerful reality that God's presence is actually there in our midst!**

The story of our congregation's money in worship is largely divided between salaries and supplies. A significant portion of Pastor Mike's salary could be considered worship preparation and leadership. Likewise, our accompanist and choir director Heidi Hansen's wages connect directly with worship and music. Jeremy has stood in as our interim contemporary director and is our regular Wednesday evening worship coordinator.



The supplies include everything we need to make worship engaging and accessible: including wine and bread; oil for the candles; paper for bulletins; projection; sound board; lights; music licenses and more. The point is, there are a lot of moving parts when it comes to our worship ministry.

In the past, most of that has been covered by the women's ministry through their soup supper in Lent and Thankoffering in the fall. They will continue that fundraising and use that money for special items like banners and altar cloths. We are grateful for their past and on-going tending to the worship of our congregation. **But this year, the congregation's budget will absorb our regularly needed and used supplies for worship.**



**Needless to say, the biggest need on any given Sunday morning is YOU.** It is good for our hearts and souls to come into God’s presence. It is good for our lives to acknowledge that we and our wants, needs, and desires are not the most powerful things in the universe. It is good for our hearts and souls to give of ourselves, to gain a sense that we have contributed in meaningful and purposeful ways for the sake of our congregation’s gathered worship and for what might happen to individual lives who are present. Greeting; acolyting; ushering; serving communion; reading; helping with sound, lights, and projection; singing in the choir; or offering your musical talents—**all of these are priceless beyond whatever dollar amount you see below.**

**AMOUNT SPENT IN 2014:**           \$41,371          

**AMOUNT ANTICIPATED IN 2015:**           \$39,861

## **Conclusion:**

As was offered at the outset of this document, **this is a STORY. It is a story...**

**...about how God has been at work in and through our congregation in the past;  
...about how God is currently at work in and through our congregation today;  
...and about how your church leadership believes God will continue to be at work in and through our  
congregation in the future.**

The story contained in the Bible invites us to draw some conclusions about God; about God's goodness in this world; about promises that God makes to this world; about how those promises are given to us in Jesus. There are a couple of conclusions that your congregational leadership would hope that you might draw, then, from **this story about our congregation's ministry, mission, purpose, and money**, most of them not necessarily having to do with the actual numbers, which you will notice change very little on a percentage basis. **The conclusions we hope you draw are mainly about what God continues to be up to in and through our congregation, its mission and ministries, and its people:**

- 1. There are some BEAUTIFUL pieces of ministry that are happening here by God's grace and action in and through our congregation.**
  - These pieces are happening, often, across the board and in all the categories listed above and by people BEYOND our paid staff.
- 2. Those pieces of ministry are happening best when individuals within the congregation are engaged, respond, and share.**
  - That sharing happens in every aspect of what could be and is shared—time; effort; knowledge & know-how; money; and a willingness to learn.
  - Often, that sharing is happening (and NEEDS TO HAPPEN) in ways that cannot be tracked in a financial budget.
- 3. Our actual financial budget has been trimmed to the point of being completely lean.**
  - Our 2014 spending came in under budget. But our giving and sharing was less than anticipated, as well.
  - This means we experienced some significant stress and shortfall during the year.
  - Council leadership was able to refinance our mortgage to give us some flex in our cash flow.
  - **We are at a point that any other financial cutting will result in a significant change in the way that we staff our mission and ministry.**
- 4. WE WANT TO INVITE YOU TO GENEROUSLY BE A PART OF THE ENGAGEMENT, THE RESPONSE, AND THE SHARING THAT MAKES GOD'S LOVE KNOWN IN AND THROUGH THE MISSION AND MINISTRIES OF OUR CONGREGATION.**

We close with the prayer we offer week-in and week-out within our congregation's worship service, having collected the gifts given to make our budget ministries happen:

**Merciful Father, we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us—our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

On behalf of the South Santiago Lutheran Church Council,  
Your 2014-15 Stewardship Committee—  
Sam Stone (chair); Mark Swanson; Joy Hurd; Marlene Olson; and Pastor Mike