

# STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION



## Adding to the Relationship

Missionary work isn't traditionally associated with a knack for business administration.

But for Jim Noss, his talent with numbers led him to Cameroon and the Central African Republic on behalf of the ELCA. He supported these Lutheran partner churches for over 30 years in his multi-faceted roles as treasurer and financial consultant.

His wife, Karen, has a gift for hospitality that made her an essential partner in their work together. She served as facilitator for the local guest house, welcoming and orienting the many volunteer workers and ELCA staff who cycled through the mission post.

Jim and Karen represent the new face of mission personnel who bring vital skills to ELCA partner churches around the world.

Lay people comprise about 70 percent of ELCA mission personnel today, according to Twila Schock, who directs ELCA mission personnel support. They are often teachers, health care

professionals or, in the case of the Nosses, skilled business people.

"Mission personnel are no longer needed to do church planting because many of our companion churches had an amazing harvest," Twila says.

"But they are asking us, nonetheless, to be with them. They may need us to help with church administration, advocacy, communication or assistance with Lutheran schools. Mission work has taken on a very different shape in the last 15 years."

Now Jim and Karen are retired and living in Minnesota. They travel throughout the United States to share their stories with ELCA congregations and to let them know about the work being done with global partners.

"We have a special story," Jim says. "We have witnessed so much and have been blessed in so many ways, having established many very close relationships with our African brothers and sisters. It is a joy to share that with [ELCA members] here."

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