



THE M-WORD

Marriage?

(No, although I have been proposed to several times in South Africa)

Meat?

(A delicious and nutritious food, sorry Fiona!)

Mexico?

(Topical and politically charged no doubt, also a beautiful country full of beautiful people - looking at my Mexico YAGM's right now)

[If you're my friend Eric who is serving in Argentina as a YAGM, I have a feeling you're thinking of mate (a delicious drink).]

No, sadly this article has nothing to do with legal unions, food and drink, or other countries. Nope, the m-word I'm gonna talk about is **MISSIONARY**.

HOW DO YOU SAY IT IN ATTERIDGEVILLE?

“Nyana” – Small (you could also translate it as “no big deal”)

“Difela” – Songs (the title of my hymn book is literally “Difela tša Kereke”, or Songs of the Church)

“Halala” - Yay! (said as an exclamation of joy or excitement)

MUSIC

“The Truth About the World”

by Andrea Marie

“Hills and Valleys (The Valleys/Acoustic)”

by Tauren Wells

“Almost (Sweet Music)”

by Hozier

BOOKS

Just Finished

“Things Fall Apart” by

Chinua Achebe

“Good Morning Mr. Mandela” by

Zelda La Grange

“Joy Luck Club” by Amy Tan

“I Am Malala” by Malala

Reading

“Americanah”

by Chimamanda Adichi

“Learning to Walk in the Dark”

by

Barbara Taylor Brown

“Quiet” by Susan Cain

Up Next

“Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi

“Dune Messiah” by Frank Herbert



Some local flora at Groenkloof Nature Reserve.

This piece has been writing itself in my head for a while, probably since before I even put in my application for YAGM. One of the funny, or maybe ironic, things is that I haven't really heard the word missionary since I got in country. Most of the time in my receiving community I am referred to as the Young Adult Volunteer from ELCA. It is really only when I bring up the title of the program (Young Adults in Global Mission) that the M-word comes up, and even then it's often only myself using the word missionary.

I find this amusing because we spent a fair bit of time, both at DIP (the discernment event for potential YAGM's in April) and at Orientation in Chicago talking about what it means to be a missionary in the ELCA in 2018 (and now 2019). Being a missionary in 2019 means something quite different than it did 100 (or even 50) years ago. The ELCA has moved away from the old model of mission "to" a place or people, and towards the model of accompaniment.

This whole accompaniment shebang began with the ELCA's sister churches in Latin America. They began a conversation about how the church in the Global North (that is North America and most of Europe) interacted with the church in the Global South (that is South America, Africa, and Asia). It is no coincidence that the church body in the North was also the group sending missionaries to the South. Today the reality is that there are far more Christians in the Global South than North. In fact, in Tanzania, where two of my cohort members are living, the Lutheran church has more than 6 million members, almost double that of the ELCA, and is the second largest individual member church of the LWF (Lutheran World Federation).

RESOURCES ON ACCOMPANIMENT AND MISSION

[2014 GLOCAL Mission Accompaniment PDF](#)

[The Emmaus Story](#)

[2017 Living Lutheran Article Called, Gathered, and Sent](#)

[Three Sides Podcast Episode "Walking Together"](#)

"Being a missionary is not a plane ticket. It's not the color of your skin or your country of origin. We are all missionaries through baptism—called, gathered and sent to participate in God's mission locally and globally."

Philip Knutson, ELCA Representative in
Southern Africa

So knowing that mission “to” isn’t going to get you anywhere, how on earth do I live into a year of mission? The simple answer is that there is no simple answer.

Living in a church community halfway across the world as a missionary, in a country that most Americans associate only with apartheid and Nelson Mandela, and a continent that many people know only from Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and fundraising campaigns full of images of sick orphans, has been challenging to say the least.

A growing edge for me, to use some YAGM jargon, has been the realization that the forces of colonialism, the church, and globalization are at work in complex ways, and all of those things impact how I have been sent and received as a missionary.



The J.S. Mminele Diaconate Ministry Executive Board after the first quarterly meeting of 2019. I had the pleasure of joining them to present a draft newsletter for the ministry!

¹⁷ So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. ²⁰ So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-20

I am not sharing the Good News with people who have never heard it, but rather walking with companions in mutual discernment of God’s word. I am not sent to convert, but to watch, listen, and experience life in God’s church in a different context.

As much as I am volunteering in the Diaconate Ministry, I am also learning from and being changed by the people I am blessed to work with.

One newsletter is nowhere near enough time or space to really get into the nuances of mission, although after this experience I definitely want to pursue missiology as a topic of study. I guess to close I’ll leave you with the words of the Rev. Rafael Malpica Padilla, Executive Director of Global Mission for the ELCA:

“ELCA missionaries are ambassadors. Paul writes to one of the communities, ‘Receive one another.’ We send missionaries today because ‘sentness’ is a sign of being the church, of being part of the body of Christ.”

PHOTO GALLERY



Top Left: Getting letters from home is the best, even if they take 3 months to arrive!



Top Middle: FaceTime with Mom and Dad is one of the ways I stay connected to home.



Top Right: The church crew that helped prepare schoolbags and school shoes for kids in the J.M. Masipa Parish!



Right: Some of the packed bags and shoes, ready for delivery.

Bottom: The MAR Khosa Veterans Choir in action in 2018 at the Confirmation service for a Lutheran Church in Saulsville.

Not pictured is me directing said choir in a rendition of Leaning on the Everlasting Arms, one of my favorite hymns.





My most recent hike in Groenkloof Nature Reserve. Technically inside Pretoria City limits, it is the oldest reserve in all of Africa. My friend Endi, a German volunteer who is working at a nearby primary school, and I took advantage of the photo opportunity with local zebras. (They couldn't care less about the human visitors.)



Want to hear more about the books I'm reading or the songs I'm listening to? Want to hear more stories from my time in Atteridgeville, or just want to chat?

Send me an email at toriyagmsa@gmail.com or drop by my blog at www.toriinsouthafrica.wordpress.com. You can sign up for updates for my blog or let me know if you want to get these newsletters when they come out!



May the Peace of Christ Go With You

-Tori-



RESOURCES ON ACCOMPANIMENT AND MISSION LINKS

[2014 GLOCAL Mission Accompaniment PDF](#)

<https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Accompaniment.pdf>

[The Emmaus Story](#)

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+24%3A13-35&version=NRSV>

[2017 Living Lutheran Article Called, Gathered, and Sent](#)

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/2017/03/called-gathered-sent/>

[Three Sides Podcast Episode “Walking Together”](#)

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