

Neal F. Fischer



Church Communicator

Hello... My name is Neal.

I am a church communicator with ten years of experience within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent?

Romans 10:14-15a

Objective

To help the Church at all levels live out the call of Romans 10:14-15 through the largest communications shift in 500 years.

About Neal

As the Director of Communication for the South Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Neal supports the Office of the Bishop, assistants, tables, auxiliaries, and congregations to build strong communication between the Synod and pastors, lay rostered leaders, congregational councils, members in the congregations, as well as communicating needed information to congregations from the wider church. He assists in building relationships with and strengthening communities of the South Carolina Synod as well as helping maintain and develop partnerships with external communities to connect the Synod with local and global ministry opportunities. Neal's calling is to guide the Church to increase its use and understanding of digital ministry and communications through social media, presentations, and online video.

Prior to his work in South Carolina, Neal created the position of Director of Communications for the ELCA Upstate New York Synod.

Before his calling to be a communicator for the Church, he worked as a manager in a large retail store, teacher, radio announcer, and professional singer.

As a manager in retail he learned to work within budgets; manage people and inventory; and set priorities to achieve goals. These all contributed to his ability to multitask in an ever changing environment. It also taught him when to invest in the right tools for the job and to conserve everywhere else possible.

He has a teaching certification from Carnegie-Mellon University and a Bachelor of Music Performance from the University of South Florida. His time as a teacher in that Greater Washington, D.C. area and Philadelphia exposed Neal to a broad spectrum of cultures and people. As a teacher, his responsibilities included being a technology coordinator. I administered a network of over 100 computers and developed websites and helped to write a grant for \$100,000 in new equipment.

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Professional Skill

- Ability to envision, create, and manage comprehensive strategic plans for internal and external communications
- Ability to multitask in order to achieve the desired outcomes within the timeframe allowed
- Ability to create and implement brand standards for organizations
- Collaborates with congregations; synod staff, leaders, and partner ministries; our churchwide expression; and ecumenical partners to share vital information and messages
- Experienced in the production of print and electronic media
- Experienced in the creation and use of content management systems for web development
- Focused on improving communications content and presentation through analytics and personal feedback
- Leadership in the use of video and live-streaming events
- Leadership in planning the annual synod assembly in the areas of communication, presentation, and production
- Leadership in Church Social Media
- Proficient with the hardware, software, and cloud-based tools needed for modern communications
- Understanding of basic information technology issues including networking and routing
- Understanding the need for professionalism and confidentiality requirements of working for the larger Church



Software and Tools

- Adobe Creative Cloud (Photoshop, InDesign, Premiere, Audition, After Effects, Dreamweaver)
- Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Publisher)
- Google G-Suite (Drive, Photos, Docs, Sheets)
- Content Management (Wordpress, Joomla)
- Email Marketing (Constant Contact, MailChimp)
- Social Media Management (Loomly, Buffer)
- Video Streaming (Tricaster Advanced Edition, OBS, Streamlabs)

Crisis

Communications:

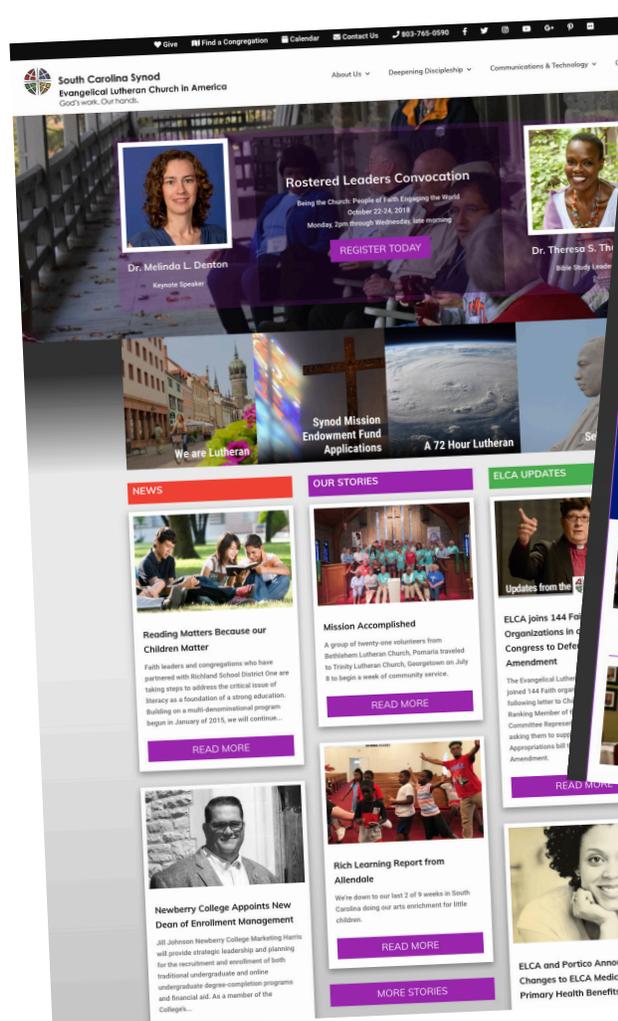
Emanuel Nine Shooting and Flooding in 2015

With the shootings in Charleston, national news outlets descended on our congregations, pastors, and the bishop. Helping them be prepared for some of the questions they would be facing helped to diffuse a number of situations through the early weeks of coverage. During the flood, we turned around quick stories and photographs helping to raise \$200,000 within the synod. Those same stories helped LDR raise an additional \$200,000.

SCSynod.com:

Rebuilt from the ground up to be "mobile first" in design.

The website has moved from a series of static pages to a content management system based site. When I first arrived The website was averaging 1,800 visits a year. Today, it receives 23,000 per year. Visitors have moved from consuming the site completely from their desktop to a place where 50% of the site's visitors come from phones or tablets. Likewise, *The South Carolina Lutheran eNews* moved to a mobile first design which has led to a 50+% open rate and a 20+% clickthrough rate with that growth being led by mobile usage. Both numbers are approximately double the average of most religious institutions according to our provider.



The South Carolina Lutheran Magazine: Rebranded

Print is a declining method of communication. Yet, it remains a main source of information for some members. In the three years prior to my arrival, the magazine was losing 1,100 subscribers per year. After a redesign, and adding writers, we've lost a total of 1,200 over the last three years. A dramatic slowing of loss that is naturally occurring.

ELCA World Hunger "Big Game" Challenge:

Video & Marketing Campaign
The Carolina Panthers played the Denver Broncos in the "Big Game," the North and South Carolina Synods took on the Rocky Mountain and Grand Canyon Synods in the annual challenge. The Carolina synods raised over \$33,000 in ten days helping combine for a total of \$77,000 for ELCA World Hunger.

Special Services:

Christmas Eve and the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation
Each year I work with our NBC affiliate to live broadcast a Christmas Eve service from a Columbia area congregation. Purchasing quality production and streaming equipment, I was also able to webcast a special Reformation service from another congregation. There were over 500 viewers live from as far away as Germany.



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Neal is married to the Rev. Michele C. Fischer, an ELCA pastor and chaplain. Together they have helped each other in their calling and in daily living.

Experience

Director of Communications

South Carolina Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
December 2014 - Current

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Be responsible for the production of The South Carolina Lutheran magazine and synod inserts for Living Lutheran magazine
- Act as the face of the Synod during crisis communications
- Evaluate and continually strategize the kinds of media needed to connect to external and internal constituencies
- Manage the synod website
- Manage AV technology and lead communications through synod assembly
- Develop a consistent brand for communications throughout the synod
- Be a resource to congregations looking for help with communications needs
- Identify and share mission stories from across the synod
- Participate in ELCA-sponsored communication meetings and workshops and other continuing education as needed

Director of Communications

Upstate New York Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
December 2008 - 2014

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Coordinate with staff in the planning of communication strategies
- Manage the development, design, content of the synod website and social media outlets
- Produce and distribute bi-weekly Synod newsletter, Upstate Update
- Produce and distribute press releases to media upon approval of the Bishop
- Produce and distribute Synod supplements, message inserts and publications as requested
- Work alongside technology providers to enhance synodical and congregational leadership skills in communications.
- Assist with planning and execution of events i.e. Synod Assembly
- Build and maintain marketing and branding standards throughout all synod communications
- Assist with the photography, videotaping and webcasting of synod events
- Manage the development, design, content of the synod website and social media outlets

What Others Say



"Neal is an innovative and creative communicator with a deep passion for the future of the Church. He is a dedicated professional who explores the changing boundaries of his field with enthusiasm and wisdom."

Bob Fisher

Assistant to the Bishop
Mission Interpretation and Communications
ELCA Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod



"Neal is a treasured colleague who has a deep understanding of the evangelical call a church communications professional has to share the gospel and to help parishes, organizations and individuals in the Church do the same. His knowledge and skill level with all social media, websites, blogs and AV equipment is top notch. He has a vision for using technology and digital and participatory media to further God's work in the world. He is always willing and ready to mentor others and doesn't hold back when it's time to do the best we can do as Synod and Diocesan Communicators."

Carrie Graves

Director of Communications
The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland



"Neal is a consummate professional. His attention to detail and expert knowledge provided an excellent service to our production. Neal goes beyond the call of duty to make things happen. His friendly and gentle personality make him a pleasure to work with."

Ava Martin

Assignment Manager
WTTW/Chicago PBS "Chicago Tonight"



"Neal has been a valued colleague who has found innovative ways to use Web technology (Twitter, Facebook, blogs, video, and webcasting) to connect the people of the ELCA South Carolina Synod with what's going on nationally in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America."

Ben McDonald Coltvet

Project Manager for Web Resource
Luther Seminary