

2018 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

Churchwide report in detail



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

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500th anniversary of the Reformation

The ELCA's Reformation anniversary commemoration, *Freed and Renewed in Christ: 500 Years of God's Grace in Action*, gave a confident and joyful witness to the life and freedom in Jesus Christ that is for all. A heartfelt appreciation to the many congregational and synodical coordinators, committees and leaders who collaborated to build and sustain anniversary momentum.

In 2017, the ELCA joined global Lutheran companions in hosting topical events around the country that engaged people of all ages and backgrounds – both within and outside of this church. Many of these focused on acknowledging what Martin Luther did to spark the Reformation, revisiting the roots of our Lutheran beliefs and articulating what those roots mean for us today and in our engagement with others.

The commemoration year that began on Oct. 31, 2016, as Pope Francis and The Lutheran World Federation leaders co-hosted worship and common social engagement in Sweden, culminated a year later with a national commemoration event in Washington, D.C. hosted by the ELCA's Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton. More than 6,000 viewers participated in that event in person or online as we honored the first centennial anniversary in the ecumenical era. Ministries of reconciliation featured ecumenical and inter-religious partners and stories of congregational vitality and leadership highlighted how we are called forward together in Christ.

Results from the anniversary communications engagement survey (February and November 2017) revealed an increase in respondents' knowledge and participation with double-digit increases in several areas. More importantly, 91 percent of respondents stated they participated in one or more anniversary activities.

Lastly, many engaged with the anniversary online through social media platforms and ELCA500.org. Thanks to those who utilized, recommended and shared the online resources resulting in more than a 50 percent increase in social media followers and nearly a 10 percent increase in website traffic in 2017. Many of these resources continue to be available through 2018 at ELCA500.org.

Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA

We are now in the final year of the ELCA's first comprehensive five-year campaign, *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*. **As of Jan. 31, we have raised more than \$144 million – 73 percent of our goal** – in cash and multi-year commitments for churchwide ministries and are so grateful for the continued support and partnership of ELCA synods and congregations.

Since the campaign's launch in 2014, we have accomplished amazing things with the help of ELCA members, congregations and synods.

- More than 300 Domestic Hunger Grants support sustainable solutions that get at the root causes of hunger and poverty across the U.S. In addition, nearly 60 countries around the world have ELCA World Hunger supported programs.
- The ELCA Fund for Leaders provided 251 students with more than \$2.1 million in seminary scholarships during the 2017-2018 academic year.
- With more than \$1 million in support from the campaign, Renewing Congregations grants are being implemented across the ELCA, including 16 Synodical Renewing Congregations Strategies, six Area Ministry Strategies and four Fast Growth Congregations Initiatives.



- Funding from the campaign has expanded the work of ELCA congregational new starts by funding 18 additional ministries in a variety of contexts and with creative strategies.
- The International Women Leaders initiative has reached 115 international Lutheran women with access to academic scholarships, training and networking opportunities.
- Eleven global ministry evangelism projects were initiated by companion churches in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America.
- Twenty-one new or enhanced youth and young adult ministries have received a grant to grow existing programs or start new ones.
- Young Adults in Global Mission launched four new country programs – Rwanda, Cambodia, Australia and Senegal – with 93 young adults sent into service during the 2017-2018 year. This represents a nearly 48 percent growth since the campaign’s launch four years ago.

The 2018 campaign theme, Leadership, includes a focus on ELCA Fund for Leaders and Youth and Young Adults. Congregations and synods received a kickoff packet in early January with materials to get started. In June, congregations and synods will receive information on a new initiative, launching in September, to help us celebrate the leaders in our congregations while supporting the next generation of leaders through these ministries.

For additional resources, including the campaign case statement, videos and more, visit the campaign resources website at ELCA.org/Campaign-for-the-ELCA/Resources. For more information as you plan your involvement in the campaign, please contact us at 800-638-3522 or email us at campaignforELCA@elca.org.

Advocacy

Living out our baptismal identity

ELCA Advocacy works for change in public policy based on the experience of Lutheran ministries, programs and projects in communities throughout the world, and on concerns that the ELCA has identified and spoken about through its social teaching documents. ELCA Advocacy invites Lutherans to live out our baptismal identity through participation in opportunities to learn and act with and on behalf of our neighbors with the ELCA Advocacy network.

We are excited to have welcomed over 5,000 new advocates to the national Advocacy network in 2017 alone. Join these Lutherans and thousands more as we advocate together for a just world where all are fed. [Visit ELCA.org/advocacy to learn more.](http://ELCA.org/advocacy)

We are called “For Such a Time as This” to #PrayFastAct!

In May 2017, ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and the Most Rev. Michael Curry, presiding bishop of The Episcopal Church, issued a joint invitation to a season of prayer, fasting and advocacy out of concern for proposed deep cuts to programs that are vital to hungry people struggling with poverty. ELCA Advocacy supports this call with #ForSuchATime, an advocacy opportunity on the 21st of each month that joins spiritual disciplines with action to address hunger, poverty and environmental degradation. [Find more at ELCA.org/prayfastact.](http://ELCA.org/prayfastact)



Farm bill advocacy

In 2018, ELCA Advocacy is working to pass the farm bill that funds agriculture and food programs and helps to support American farmers in their vocation to steward the land. With the renewal of the farm bill every five years, we are offered an opportunity to reduce hunger and poverty in the U.S. and around the world and encourage sustainable stewardship. Advocacy staff have held listening sessions in North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Texas and California to inform policy work and hosted 150 hunger leaders in January for advocacy together. [Follow @ELCAadvocacy on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for information on how to take action.](#)

Building new advocacy leaders

In 2017, ELCA Advocacy launched the ELCA Hunger Advocacy Fellowship program, a year-long transformative experience that combines leadership development and faith formation with impactful advocacy for economic, racial and gender justice. The inaugural class of ELCA Hunger Advocacy Fellows currently serve in ELCA Advocacy network offices in Texas, Minnesota, Virginia and Washington, D.C.

AMMPARO

Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO) accompanies Central American unaccompanied migrant children forced to flee their communities due to horrific violence, lack of opportunities or environmental problems. Although faith communities work in different ways on issues of immigration, we are still the only church with a comprehensive strategy that has a regional focus of addressing the root causes of migration in Central America and of accompanying immigrant children and families in the U.S.

A significant percentage of funds for AMMPARO are used by ELCA partners in Central America to address the issues that drive people to flee and to offer safe alternatives to migrant youth and families who have been deported. Our companions have experienced great success in providing these individuals with the opportunities for new lives that remove the need to migrate.



In two years, 76 congregations have become welcoming and sanctuary congregations in 26 synods, committing to accompanying migrants in their communities. Today, 18 synods have an organizational structure with either AMMPARO, Welcoming or Sanctuary task forces. And five ELCA synods are now sanctuary synods.

These congregations and synods have overcome the fear that many of our communities experience daily, have moved beyond their walls and have a new sense of vitality through their work.



How do synods and congregations and ELCA members accompany migrant children and families? Here is where the AMMPARO letters P-A-R-O come in – Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities.

Protection – This means accompanying children and families in their communities. One example is Ascension Lutheran Church in Milwaukee; it rehabbed an old youth room that had a bathroom and turned it into a sanctuary suite. And Lutherans in Los Angeles, Chicago, Omaha and Denver are observers in immigration court through our Guardian Angel programs. They provide support and accompany children and families during one of the most difficult moments in their lives.

Advocacy – Last year, the AMMPARO network and leadership of the ELCA sent 2,582 messages, 390 letters, 2,192 electronic messages and made many phone calls calling for protecting vulnerable children and families as well as sound and compassionate ways to address the root causes of migration.

Representation – Today, children and families seeking refuge in the U.S. have to represent themselves in court. The ELCA now has a small network of AMMPARO pro bono lawyers that accompany them. We also have lawyers who are representing sanctuary congregations.

Opportunities – In addition to the accompaniment by Lutheran Social Services organizations, congregations are helping immigrants in their communities make new lives. In some cases, this includes finding short- and long-term foster families for them. It also includes helping parents get their kids enrolled in school and helping them find health services and employment.

In 2018, AMMPARO is aiming for 150 ELCA congregations that are welcoming or sanctuary and engagement in 33 synods. You can be part of this movement by connecting to them through ELCA.org/ammparo.





Getting the *Word* Out

We give thanks to God for all of the individuals, congregations, synods, and churchwide ministries and institutions for their deep and abiding commitment to God's transforming word in Christ, in proclamation and in Scripture!

The Book of Faith Initiative is a continuing priority of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, dedicated to encouraging all ministries and people of the church to continually renew and enrich our broad and deep engagement with Scripture for our own sakes and for the sake of the world.

The Book of Faith Initiative has operated using a decentralized, grassroots approach centered on our common vision in which all are invited to *open Scripture* and *join the conversation*. We invite leaders to continue and boldly further this effort in their places of involvement.

From the beginning, the goal of the initiative has been two-fold:

1. to meet the continuing challenge of widespread biblical illiteracy and
2. to renew the teaching of our rich theological heritage of scriptural understanding, interpretation and engagement.

To help realize the above goals and address the challenges listed below, we want to further encourage engagement of Scripture, especially using the "multiple lenses" approach. We seek your help and support as partners in this effort, in addressing the challenges that are currently serving to shape our calling. Some of the larger challenges are:

- The growing number of people in society claiming to be "spiritual but not religious"
- The need to address and learn from the great variety of cultures that make up this church and world
- The role of the Bible in mission outreach
- The importance of family and home as centers of faith development
- The need for creative use of social media
- Continued biblical illiteracy

Despite the challenges, Christ is present as we engage Scripture and this promise calls us forward together. Please join us in getting the word out and in encouraging all to *open Scripture* and *join the conversation*!



Four lenses for engaging Scripture.

Open Scripture. Join the conversation.

The initiative has emphasized that biblical engagement is greatly enriched by the use of multiple lenses in conversation with Scripture and other people. This suggested method is centered on four ways of reading the Bible and asking questions: devotional, historical, literary and theological reading.


DEVOTIONAL



The Devotional lens graphic features four icons: a church, a community of houses, an office building, and a family. Below each icon is a label: 'AT CHURCH', 'IN THE COMMUNITY', 'AT THE OFFICE', and 'AT HOME WITH FAMILY'. A central text reads 'Where are you today?' and 'Our Devotional book of faith'.

We begin. We read, ask questions, reflect on the meaning of the Bible from wherever we are – in place, time or state of mind. No matter where we are, our Book of Faith meets us there.

LITERARY



The Literary lens graphic features four icons: a mountain landscape, a person reading, two masks, and a scroll. Below each icon is a label: 'EPIC JOURNEYS', 'LETTERS OF ENCOURAGEMENT', 'TALES OF TRAGEDY', and 'BOOKS OF POETRY'. A central text reads 'The library that's always open' and 'Our Literary book of faith'.

We pay close attention to how the passage is written. We notice what kind of literature it is. We notice all the details, themes, characters, storyline, poetry and logic. We compare and contrast these with our understanding and experience of life. In this process we discover meaning.

HISTORICAL



The Historical lens graphic features four icons: a temple, Roman soldiers, pyramids, and King David. Below each icon is a label: 'THE TEMPLE', 'THE ROMANS', 'THE EGYPTIANS', and 'KING DAVID'. A central text reads 'Meet yesterday's story today' and 'Our Historical book of faith'.

We seek to understand the world of the Bible. We explore the world of the writers and the original readers, the rulers, slaves, women, men and children. All the people in our Book of Faith. How do we understand their social and cultural contexts? How were their lives different from or the same as ours today?

THEOLOGICAL



The Theological lens graphic features four icons: a sun and clouds, a question mark, a person under a rain cloud, and two hearts. Below each icon is a label: 'HOW DO I FIND HOPE?', 'WHO IS GOD?', 'WHY IS THERE SUFFERING?', and 'WHAT IS LOVE?'. A central text reads 'What are the God questions?' and 'Our Theological book of faith'.

As we open Scripture and join the conversation, we ask our deepest questions and listen for God's voice. We hear God's demands as well as God's words of comfort and promise. We see Christ alive yesterday and today. We feel the movement of the Spirit and are moved to respond. God is present in the word.

Congregational Vitality

In each synod, directors for evangelical mission (DEMs) engage lay and rostered leaders in the formation and development of congregational vitality. The congregational vitality working description:

“Communities of Jesus that nurture life-changing relationships with God, one another and the world.”

DEMs are the “vitality organizers” who help make connections as the ELCA in congregations, synods and the churchwide expression to be catalysts for new mission starts, vital congregations, stewardship ministries, and Mission Support. They build upon ELCA commitments to ethnic-specific communities, communities of color and the young-adult population, as well as people and communities experiencing poverty, so that we might be a thriving, equipping and inviting church that embraces diversity and strives for justice and peace throughout the earth.

Domestic Mission has a new Congregational Vitality Team led by the Rev. Ruben Duran. This team will partner with synods, bishops, directors for evangelical mission, pastors and congregations across the church to foster and nurture congregational vitality. Vitality is described by the Conference of Bishops as “communities of Jesus that nurture life-changing relationships with God, one another and the world.” Seeing ministry through the prism of vitality is an exciting and promising direction for this new team and a central goal of the ELCA. Certainly, vital communities of Jesus exist in many places in our church and indeed go back to the life-changing communities of the early church. We envision that this work will support vital communities that are in place and foster and promote new vital communities.

Vitality ministry will be deeply rooted in relationships, collaboration, creative and repeating innovation, and a passion for learning and sharing that learning throughout the church. Local leaders will be encouraged and expected to discover their God-given vitality in diverse contexts, especially among emerging generations, ethnic and multicultural communities, and among leaders in ministry among people experiencing poverty. Creating the Congregational Vitality Team is a proactive response to the ELCA priorities expressed in the Future Directions 2025 initiative.

An example of vitality ministry is found in new starts:

We share Christ’s love by extending our welcome through new congregations and by supporting them as growing centers for evangelical mission. We are worshiping in pews, city parks, cafes and libraries; we are breaking bread in homes and in shelters, and we are equipping our neighbors with both spiritual and physical sustenance. With our hands, we are doing God’s work of restoring and reconciling communities in God’s name.

There are 431 ELCA new ministries under development in the United States and the Caribbean through the work of synod mission tables made up of local leaders, directors for evangelical mission and bishops. But there is more work to be done and communities to reach. To reflect the diversity in our country, we are engaged in God’s mission with the goal of becoming an evangelizing, multicultural, multigenerational church.

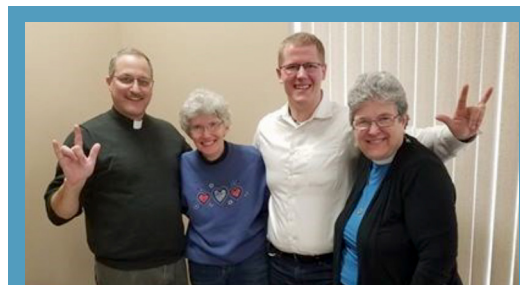


Celebrating Congregational Vitality stories from across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Deaf ministry in Allegheny Synod: Following the signs

“Sorry, I’m deaf,” said the sign on the back of Kory’s shirt, as he tended to his duties in the garden center at the Home Depot in Tacoma, Wash. The sign indicated that customers should face Kory directly to ask for help. But the sign soon became a call to ministry for the Rev. John Telyea, Kory’s coworker and a student at Seattle University at the time. Telyea initially befriended Kory partly as a practical matter. He wanted to learn about the garden center of the store to help customers.

Telyea planned to learn Kory’s language so that he wouldn’t have to keep writing notes to communicate with him. He learned the American Sign Language (ASL) signs for different types of flowers and plants. Soon he was conversing with Kory and his deaf friends who passed through the store. He enjoyed the beauty and depth of the language. As he got to know Kory, Telyea began to understand some of the problems deaf people encounter: “So often the hearing community conveys the message to the deaf community that ‘there is not a place for you,’ or ‘you don’t use my language,’” he said.



In early February 2018, the Rev. John Telyea and Rev. Timothy Knauss met with three ministers of deaf congregations to gain insight into the process of forming a deaf congregation. **Left to right:** the Rev. Russ Rockwell, Word of Life Deaf Lutheran Church, Lancaster, Pa.; Deacon Dor-othy Sparks, BOLD (Bread of Life Deaf Lutheran Church), Minneapolis, Minn.; Telyea; and the Rev. Beth Lockard, Christ the King Deaf Church, West Chester, Pa.

Building faith and understanding

His time with Kory helped shape Telyea’s ministry interests, particularly in his present call in west-central Pennsylvania. Pastor at Geeseytown/Newry Evangelical Lutheran Parish in Hollidaysburg, Telyea has been leading the Allegheny Synod Deaf Ministry group since fall 2016. The group gathers members of the deaf community from Blair and surrounding counties for fellowship, Bible study and conversation.

Fewer than 10 deaf congregations exist across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), according to the Rev. Timothy Knauss, assistant to the bishop of the Allegheny Synod and director for evangelical mission of the ELCA. Today, the synod is seeking to develop a deaf congregation in the Altoona area of Pennsylvania. Telyea is leading the way, with support from Knauss and other leaders involved in deaf ministries from around the country.

Plans include starting a monthly evening worship service (on March 25, 2018) at Geeseytown Lutheran and working from there to engage in faith building. Telyea hopes this ministry will help the hearing community become more comfortable interacting with the deaf community. “It’s OK to say ‘hi’ to someone who may seem different or speak another language,” he added.

Telyea also participates in a weekly lunch gathering for members of the deaf community and hearing people who are studying to be interpreters for the deaf at a local college. Conversation covers life issues affecting both the deaf and hearing communities.



Same gospel, different language

Knauss is an enthusiastic resource for Telyea. He is excited to follow his own desire to develop a deaf ministry as he brushes up on his ASL skills and follows God’s call to “gather in this community.”

Knauss hopes that through this ministry, “congregations will continue to grow in their communication of faith regardless of the language of our senses.” He added: “Through Pastor John’s compassionate leadership, we feel that the deaf community will see the welcoming body of Christ throughout the Allegheny Synod.” Trusting in God, Telyea and Knauss are simply following the signs.

Multicultural ministry in Florida Bahamas Synod: Empowering leaders

Diana Fajardo has a gift for building up people. Her passion is to serve the Latino immigrant community in Fort Lauderdale and the greater Broward County area of South Florida. Working in partnership with the ELCA and the Florida Bahamas Synod, she is the mission developer for Comunidad Luterana Todos los Santos, a Reconciling in Christ (RIC), Spanish-speaking community of faith growing as a mission of Abiding Savior Lutheran Church in Fort Lauderdale.

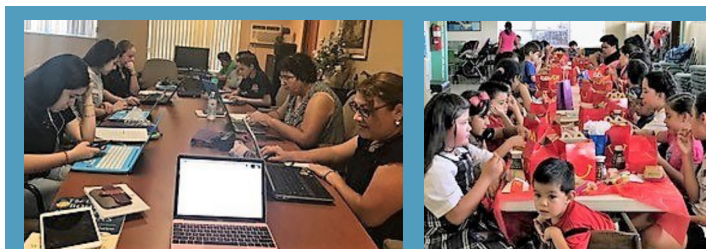
Todos los Santos officially began in 2015 and is housed in the Abiding Savior building. It has a unique origin, having grown organically among the people served by and/or serving others through a local community center called El Centro Hispano de Todos los Santos. El Centro assists and empowers low-income, underserved immigrant families from Latin America. For the past three years, El Centro, too, has operated at Abiding Savior.

Fajardo is the link connecting Abiding Savior, Todos los Santos and El Centro as they work together to grow faith, build relationships and serve the needs of the larger community. Fajardo cofounded El Centro 14 years ago, and until recently she served as its executive director. In her role as mission developer for Todos los Santos, Fajardo continues to oversee El Centro, working with a coordinator and board of directors.

Neighbors helping neighbors

Members of the Todos los Santos congregation actively connect in ministry with El Centro’s multiethnic community. They are key partners—neighbors help neighbors—raising up leaders in the immigrant community, training church and community volunteers and mentoring those who have been served so that they may serve and empower others in the community.

El Centro engages, nurtures and encourages Latino immigrant families through a variety of activities and educational programs for families, children, youth and young adults.



Above left: “Thanks to the part-nership among ELCA New Start Program and Hunger Program, Todos los Santos and El Centro Hispano, we are able to respond as the church together to social issues,” said Diana Fajardo. The Hunger Grant enabled students from Cuba to enter a special GED literacy program through the Florida virtual home school program. The same grant helped El Centro offer certification opportunities for adults to improve their household incomes, reach financial independence and change their lives. **Above right:** The communities of Todos los Santos and El Centro Hispano are constantly in contact, sharing culture and traditions as well as celebrating and encouraging children’s education.



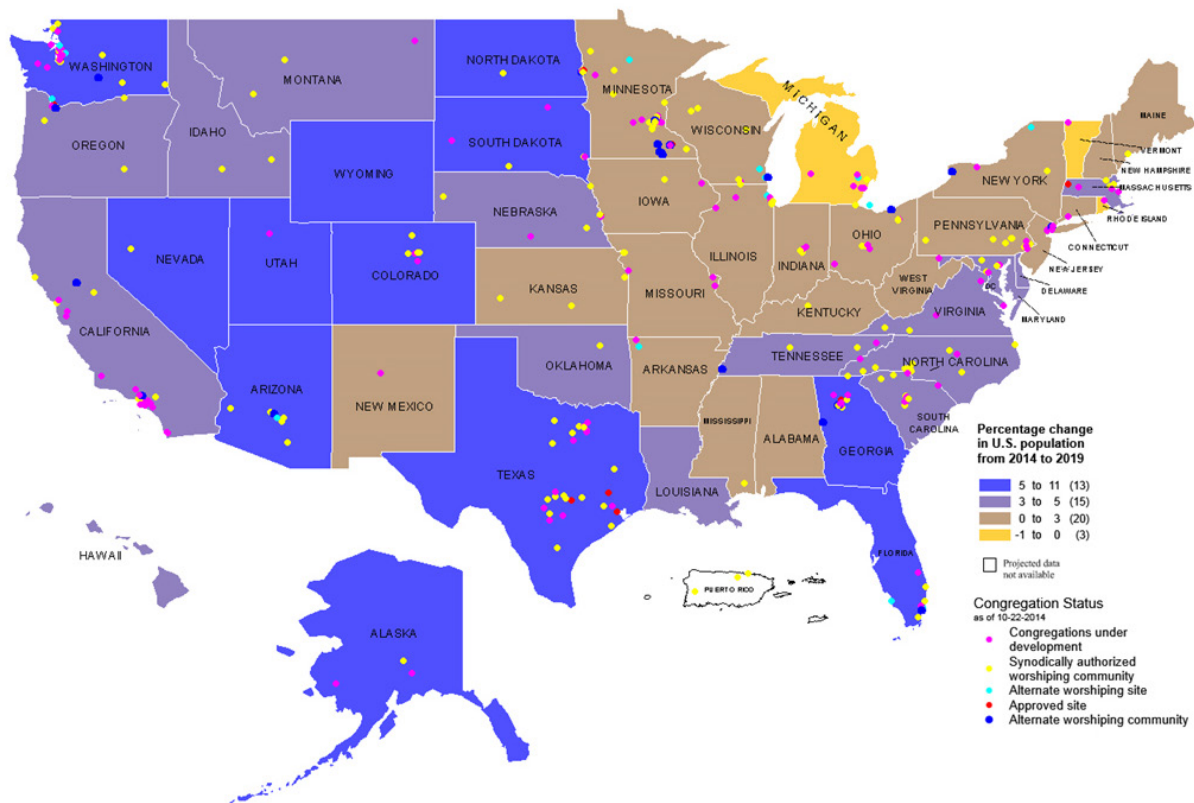
Another very important goal is to equip adults to become self-sufficient, helping them to adapt to their new culture so that in turn they can support their families and the larger community. “Parents and guardians must have the necessary skills to support their children’s education and help them to achieve school success and to be models of behavior,” Fajardo said.

Adults can take career- and life-skills classes and even earn certifications in food handling and beauty, thanks to partnerships with local organizations. Participants feel God at work through El Centro. “We receive the word of God that nurtures our lives and prepares us to serve God’s creation,” said certification student Carmen Martinez.

Raising up leaders also involves building relationships with local agencies, including the police department, United Way and several government agencies. “The multigenerational community gets the benefit of healthier families, individuals and professionals, all contributing to build an inclusive and equal environment for the new generations,” Fajardo said.

Fajardo is a TEEM (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries) program participant through the Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest (LSPS), Austin, Texas, a program of Wartburg Theological Seminary (Dubuque, Iowa). As she looks ahead toward ordination and the future of the ministries she shepherds, she is filled with hope. She knows Todos los Santos and El Centro will continue to impact the community, growing faith and changing lives. “I believe that God’s grace heals and prepares us to share the good news with all the people. The more I witness our society being restored, the more I rejoice, with the hope of a better world for the new generations.”

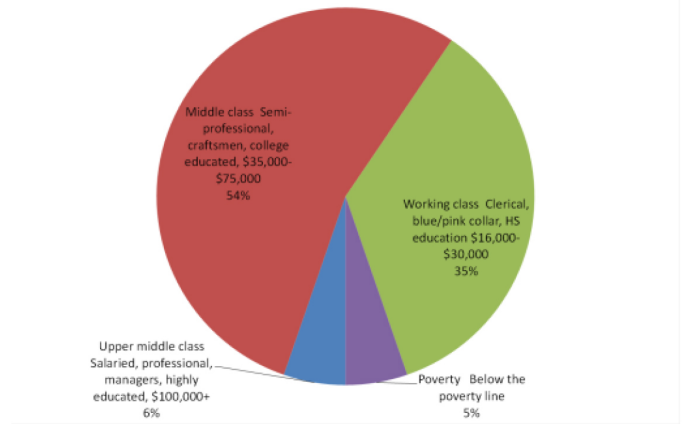
Map of ELCA congregational development



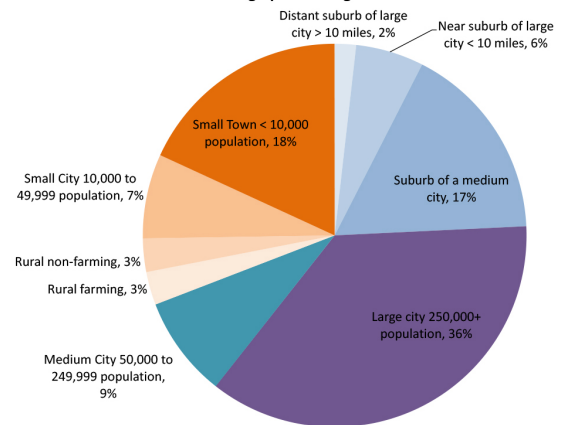
ELCA congregational vitality key statistics:

- **431 new ministries** are under development.
- **59 new starts** were approved in 2017.
- **238 total new starts** approved over the last four years.
- **515 new ministries** have been organized as congregations since the birth of the ELCA in 1988.
- **56%** of all new starts are among ethnic-multicultural communities.
- **18%** of 2016 new starts are with ecumenical partners.
- **21%** of 2016 new starts are young adult-millennial leaders and communities.
- **151 ministries**, including strategic renewal, ethnic-specific, ministry with and among people living in poverty, and specialized ministries (prison ministries, people with disabilities) were supported with Congregational Vitality Partnership Support totaling \$2.4 million in FY 2017.
- **29 projects** are being supported with more than \$1 million in the ELCA Campaign Renewing Congregations Initiative approved during the past three years, including:
 - **19 synodical renewing congregations strategies**
 - **6 area ministry strategies**
 - **4 fast-growth congregations**
- **72 practitioners trained as facilitators** for Congregational Development Trainings in the last 12 months.
- **670+ leaders** participated in Congregational Development Trainings in the last 12 months

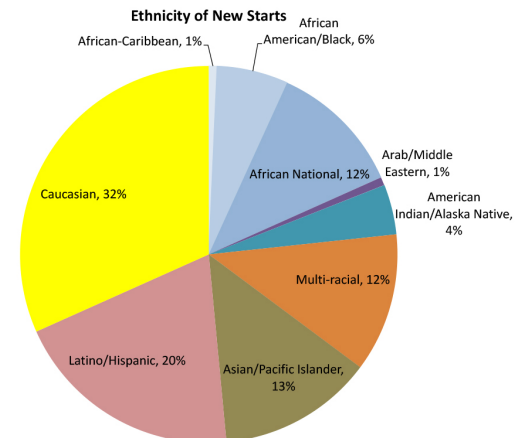
New Starts by Economic Group Type



Geographic Setting of New Starts



Ethnicity of New Starts



What YOU can do ...

SHARE AN IDEA: If you have an idea for a new congregation, contact your synod office. Ask for the director for evangelical mission or your bishop.

PRAY: Be a prayer partner for the new starts, mission developers and vitality work.

GIVE: Share your resources to propel ELCA Congregational Vitality today by making a gift online at ELCA.org/newcongregations/donate or ELCA.org/campaign.



Congregational Vitality: Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)

In 2017, Global Mission introduced the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to directors for evangelical mission to strengthen their abilities to accurately understand and adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities. In 2018, this proven tool will be used for two synod assembly Global events. The IDI is an essential tool for congregational vitality as we seek to become a more inviting and welcoming church that reflects, embraces and identifies the gifts of the diversity of the communities where our congregations are or could be located.

Ecumenical & Inter-Religious Relations

Draft of inter-religious policy statement

The draft ELCA policy statement, “A Declaration of Our Inter-Religious Commitment,” has been released for public review and comment until June 30, 2018. [ELCA.org/Faith/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Inter-Religious-Relations/Draft-Policy-Statement](https://www.elca.org/Faith/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Inter-Religious-Relations/Draft-Policy-Statement)

Individuals or groups are welcome to participate. The document can be downloaded from the website; input can be shared through the online survey link. Detailed information describing the background and process is also available online. The Inter-Religious Task Force, appointed by Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton in 2016, will receive the input and revise the document for consideration by the Church Council and the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. All questions can be directed to Kathryn Lohre.

500th anniversary of the Reformation: year in review

The 500th anniversary of the Reformation and its call to mutual understanding, dialogue and reconciliation, shaped our church's ecumenical and inter-religious relations in 2017.

Lutheran-Catholic relations

Recalling the joint ecumenical commemoration in Lund, Sweden, jointly led by The Lutheran World Federation leadership and Pope Francis, the ELCA Conference of Bishops' Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Liaison Committee and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs co-hosted a similar service on March 2, 2017, and signed a joint statement. [ELCA.org/service-of-common-prayer](https://www.elca.org/service-of-common-prayer)

This was bookended by another service of common prayer on Nov. 5, 2017, held at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at the University of Notre Dame. Presiding Bishop Eaton preached and co-pressed with Bishop Denis Madden, auxiliary bishop emeritus, Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore, and co-chair of the U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue. Other judicatory leaders and pastors also participated. news.nd.edu/news/ecumenical-prayer-service-affirms-christian-unity-in-challenging-times/

In between, many events, initiatives and services occurred in synods and congregations across the church. Please invite synods to share records of these events with the Office of the Presiding Bishop.

The current round of U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue on Faithful Teaching is at the point of working intensively on the report. Internationally, The Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity have committed to finding pastorally significant ways to take



up questions of church, Eucharist and ministry, as were addressed in the “Declaration on the Way” affirmed by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.

The Lutheran World Federation

In May 2017, the 12th Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) took place in Windhoek, Namibia, under the theme “Liberated by God’s Grace.” A service commemorating the 500th anniversary was held in Sam Nujoma Stadium, providing a focal point for the assembly. Namibia, a beautiful country with a rich Lutheran history, provided a remarkable context for this forward-looking assembly and symbolized the ways in which the global Lutheran movement is growing most strongly in the global south, especially in Africa and Asia. Archbishop Musa Panti Filibus of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria was elected by the assembly to serve as LWF president and Bishop Eaton was elected by the new council to serve as the LWF vice president for the North American Region.

Reformation Day 500

On Oct. 31, 2017, Bishop Eaton co-hosted with ELCA Vice President Bill Horne, Chair of the Conference of Bishops Bill Gafkjen, and Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod Bishop Richard Graham a daylong program of public witness. “Looking Back and Called Forward: A Commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation” was hosted by Lutheran Church of the Reformation on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. The first segment of the program focused on ministries of reconciliation: 500 years of division and 50+ years of dialogue, lifting up Lutheran-Catholic, Lutheran-Jewish, and Lutheran-Muslim relations, and racial justice and reconciliation. The second segment of the program explored leadership and congregational vitality. The day concluded with worship building on the liturgy used in Namibia by the LWF and a celebratory reception. The complete program, as well as videos and other information can be found at ELCA500.org/resources/october-31-commemoration/.

Lutheran-Jewish relations

The ELCA Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Jewish Relations developed a Litany of Confession for the occasion of the 500th anniversary, based on the “1994 Declaration to the Jewish Community.” This public act of confession and commitment took place in the presence of our Jewish partners in the context of Reformation Day 500. The litany can be found on pages 6-7 of the program booklet linked below; it can be adapted for use across the church. ELCA500.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Final-Program-Booklet_web.pdf

The ELCA participated in the national Jewish-Christian dialogue on pastoral issues co-convened by the National Council of Churches and the National Council of Synagogues and hosted by the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 1, 2017. The theme was “Religious Reformation – Past, Present, Future.”

Lutheran-Muslim relations

As part of our commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the ELCA had a significant presence at the annual Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) Convention. Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton addressed the assembly. By design, the interfaith unity banquet on July 2, 2017, spotlighted Lutheran-Muslim relations and was attended by nearly 70 ELCA Lutherans. Bishop Richard Jaech (Southwestern Washington Synod); Bishop Claire Burkat (Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod) and her colleague from the Council of Religious Leaders of Greater Philadelphia, Imam Anwar; and Bishop Wayne Miller (Metropolitan Chicago Synod) shared about Lutheran-Muslim



relations between congregations and mosques, city-based inter-religious councils, seminaries, non-profit organizations and individuals. Bishop Eaton was honored with ISNA's interfaith unity award.

The ELCA participated in the national Christian-Muslim dialogue co-convened by the National Council of Churches and the Islamic Circle of North America, which focused on re-invigorating the dialogue and common public witness.

Full communion

The ELCA tends to relations and reception with our six full communion partners through the ongoing work of coordinating committees, which meet at least annually.

Notably, this year, for the first time the biennial assembly of the African Descent Lutheran Association (ADLA) was held jointly with the Union of Black Episcopalians in Cherry Hill, N.J., and Philadelphia. ADLA President Lamont Anthony Wells was the visionary behind this ecumenical convening. This gathering also honored 30 years of ADLA presence within the ELCA and its predecessor bodies. The theme was, "Like a Mighty Stream, Let Justice Roll: Absalom, Jehu, and Beyond," honoring the forbears in the faith, especially those pioneers of African descent within each tradition, current leadership and the call to ongoing formation and support of future leaders.

National Council of Churches' Act Now: Unite to End Racism initiative

Building on its history during the civil rights movement, the National Council of Churches (NCC) will launch a truth and racial justice initiative, Act Now! Unite to End Racism, in Washington, D.C., April 3-5, 2018. A rally will take place on the National Mall on April 4 honoring the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. Bishop Eaton will be one of the main speakers; ELCA participation is currently building across the church, including synod bishops, pastors, deacons and lay people. rally2endracism.org/

Historic Black Church relations

For the third year, the ELCA participated as a sponsoring partner in the Conference of National Black Churches National Consultation, held Dec. 12-14, 2017, in Memphis on the theme, "Overcoming the Burden of Bias." Our presence at this gathering has been helpful for tending to both the internal and external/ecumenical dimensions of our work to address racial injustice and white supremacy. It has also been important as a space for building and nurturing relations with our bilateral dialogue (AME) and discourse (AMEZ) partners.

Global church relations: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

In January 2018, Bishop Eaton led a delegation to participate in the consecration of Bishop Ibrahim Azar as the new bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. Elected one year ago, Bishop Azar succeeded Bishop Munib Younan, who also completed this year his service as president of The Lutheran World Federation. The ELCA delegation participated in events honoring Bishop Younan, the consecration of Bishop Azar, and made church to church visits with the six congregations and the baptismal site at Bethany Beyond the Jordan. Included were five synod bishops, including Bishop Don Kreiss of the Southeast Michigan Synod (companion synod) as well as the Rev. Khader El-Yateem, the president of the Association for Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage, and staff.



ELCA Credit Union

The ELCA Federal Credit Union has had a tremendous response since its grand opening in 2016. We are delighted to be serving ELCA members, congregations and synods nationwide and the Caribbean.

A few highlights:

- We offer consumer loans, credit cards, deposit accounts and more.
- Those who have refinanced or consolidated existing debt have saved an average of over \$1,500 in finance charges.
- We also offer ministry deposit accounts, and coming soon in 2018, we will offer small loans for our congregations/ministries.
- We provide full account access via desktop and mobile app.

Find out more about your credit union at elcafcu.org or by phone at 877-715-1111. We look forward to serving you!

ELCA Foundation

The ELCA Foundation: Your life. Your faith. Your gift to the future.

We are pleased to announce that effective Jan. 1, 2018, the Endowment Fund of the ELCA, a separately incorporated ministry, began doing business as The ELCA Foundation. This follows action by the ELCA Church Council last November to assign additional responsibilities to the Endowment Fund corporation for all work historically associated with the ELCA Foundation.

- The new structure anticipates an expanded role for the endowment fund board of Trustees in overseeing the work of The ELCA Foundation. To accomplish this goal, four sub-committees of the board of trustees, in addition to the executive committee, have been created: audit, finance, investment and resource development.
- We have moved several positions, previously in the Office of the Secretary and the Office of the Treasurer, to the foundation: compliance, investment administration and chief financial officer.
- This year will be a time of transition as we review processes and procedures around the management of the gift pools. To ensure uninterrupted services as systems are transitioned, we are entering into a service-level agreement with the Office of the Treasurer for financial and trust administration.
- The work of the regional gift planners will not change much in terms of the day to day interaction with your synod and its ministries. The ELCA Foundation will continue to work in coordination and cooperation with the ELCA churchwide organization, particularly through its Mission Advancement unit.

The ELCA Foundation supports 21 regional gift planners throughout the U.S. These gift planners provide a number of services:

- They help congregations, synods and other Lutheran ministries identify their financial needs and wants and develop a Ministry Funding Plan.
- They help members of the congregations align their passions with the ministry funding needs through planned giving.



- Gift planners help donors make decisions about whom they want to help.
- Gift planners make sure everything is in place to fulfill the donor's wishes.

In 2017, the 17 ELCA Foundation regional gift planners completed \$34.7 million in planned gifts and \$800,000 in current gifts. Congregations will receive \$11.2 million and synods \$3.4 million when those planned gifts are realized. In addition to the new written gifts, the foundation stewarded \$11.3 million in gifts written in previous years, meaning a call was made to the previous donor to confirm that the gift was still in place and fair market value was updated. The foundation opened 56 Fund A accounts with \$7.8 million of deposits and added \$20.1 in net deposits to existing accounts, while writing \$5.1 million in planned endowment deposits.

- Our gift-planning partner in Nebraska completed \$3.5 million in planned gifts and \$115,000 in current gifts but left our network in August. The position is currently open. Our South Dakota partner hired a new gift planner in 2017.
- Our Texas partner, Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest, which consists of four gift planners, completed \$9.6 million in planned gifts and \$288,000 in current gifts.
- Our total network of 23 regional gift planners completed \$47.8 million in planned gifts and \$1.2 million in current gifts in 2017.

ELCA Fund for Leaders

In 2017, Fund for Leaders marked 20 years of ministry, and there was much to celebrate! As of Dec. 31, the Fund for Leaders endowment had reached \$57.3 million, allowing Fund for Leaders to provide more than \$2.1 million in scholarship assistance to 251 seminary students during the 2017-2018 academic year. Synodical scholarships represent almost \$500,000 of the \$2.1 million distribution, disbursed in 152 awards by 41 synods.



Among the funds awarded in 2017 were 20 new full-tuition scholarships (of the 40 total) which were awarded thanks to a generous three-year, \$3 million gift from Dean and Rosemarie Buntrock. Other scholarships were awarded for new mission developer/ redeveloper candidates, and scholarships for seminarians pursuing chaplaincy ministry in military, prison or Veterans Affairs hospital settings.

For fiscal year 2017, Fund for Leaders raised more than \$4 million. Of this amount, more than \$1.5 million came from partner synods giving directly to Fund for Leaders, and the remainder came from donor gifts through *The Campaign for the ELCA*.

In 2017, Fund for Leaders staff worked with students, seminaries, synods and our new ELCA GrantMaker software to initiate a fully online application process for all full-tuition scholarships, allowing all eligible students entering ELCA seminaries to apply directly to Fund for Leaders to be considered for a scholarship. The 2018 award process is currently underway.



As of Jan. 31, 2018, ELCA Fund for Leaders can celebrate reaching its campaign revenue goal of \$15 million in gifts and commitments to this ministry! For 2018, Fund for Leaders will be concentrating on three primary goals: 1) continued development work with new and existing donors to expand the reach and impact of ELCA Fund for Leaders; 2) the implementation of our new direct application and award process; and 3) planning with the ELCA campaign team for events and strategies connected to the campaign's 2018 focus on leadership, including the Fund for Leaders. Focusing on these strategies will allow the Fund for Leaders to continue to grow in its ability to support as many future ELCA ministers as possible, toward our mission goal of fully funding tuition for all rostered-ministry candidates at ELCA seminaries.

ELCA World Hunger



Generosity: Even in the wake of disastrous hurricanes and unprecedented generosity to Lutheran Disaster Response this year, donors continued to give generously to ELCA World Hunger – more than \$21.3 million in 2017! Giving from donors (directly, through congregations, and through synods) to ELCA World Hunger continues to grow every year and is now significantly higher than it was previous to The Campaign for the ELCA. This increasing generosity allowed ELCA World Hunger to distribute more funds to programming in 2017 than in any previous year.

Hunger leaders: A network of synod and congregational hunger leaders represents the local hands and hearts of ELCA World Hunger. In January, ELCA World Hunger convened the 2018 ELCA World Hunger Leadership Gathering in Washington, D.C., under the theme “Until All Are Fed” –150 representatives from more than 50 synods and 30 states came together for a focused training on farm



bill-related advocacy as part of ELCA World Hunger's comprehensive approach. As the government shutdown lifted, our Lutheran leaders met in over 120 Capitol Hill visits, supported by over 300 online actions from the network across the nation. Thank you, ELCA synods, for your commitment to turning out your hunger leaders for this important work we do together – until all are fed!

Domestic Hunger Grants: ELCA World Hunger Domestic Hunger Grants are in transition. We give thanks for the leadership and work of Josselyn Bennett, the now-retired former director of Poverty and Justice Ministries, and wish Joe Young the best in his new responsibilities as her successor. Within that transition, the newly formed Domestic Hunger Strategy Team, led by Mikka McCracken, will take leadership for the ELCA Domestic Hunger Grant process and affiliated training. We will share important updates through synod offices and our network of hunger leaders. We expect the new cycle to take effect in 2019.

ELCA Youth Gathering: Why are many of the people who produce much of the world's food hungry themselves? We are excited to explore this question with you through ELCA World Hunger's Global Farm Challenge. Learn more and download congregational toolkits at ELCA.org/globalfarmchallenge. In this final year of *The Campaign for the ELCA*, if we all work together, alongside our companions around the world, to ensure that all are fed ... well, that changes everything!

ELCA Youth Gathering

Every three years, youth from across the ELCA and the world gather for a week of faith formation. On June 27-July 1, the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering will bring together in Houston more than 31,000 youth and their adult leaders from every synod in our church. Through worship, interactive learning, Bible study, service learning and fellowship, youth will grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ, experience new perspectives, learn about the ELCA, deepen passions and explore vocation.

The theme for the 2018 Gathering is "This Changes Everything," focusing on the gift of grace God bestows on each of us. This gift, undeserved and freely given, changes lives and perspectives as people realize they are enough because of what Christ has done and are called into the world to serve their neighbor and share the good news. The primary Scripture will be Ephesians 2:8 *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."*

Immediately preceding the Gathering are the tAble and the Multicultural Youth Leadership Event (MYLE). The tAble blesses and empowers young people who live with a wide range of physical, cognitive and emotional disabilities so that they might grow as faithful, wise and courageous witnesses. MYLE gathers young people of color and those whose primary language is other than English to explore culture, form leaders, claim identity, deepen faith and make friends.

You can learn more about the Gathering, MYLE and the tAble at ELCA.org/gathering or find us on social media.



Entrance Rite Discernment Group

The Entrance Rite Discernment Group has been tasked to bring a recommendation to the Church Council for action by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly regarding the entrance rite for the Roster of Ministers of Word and Service. The Church Council also requested that the group provide recommendations on appropriate diaconal symbols and whether constitutional language on representational principles should be altered.

To find FAQs and resources related to this work go to:
[ELCA.org/Resources/Word-and-Service-Roster](https://www.elca.org/Resources/Word-and-Service-Roster).



Ethnic Specific Multicultural Ministries & Racial Justice Team

March 14-15, 2018: The 2016 Churchwide Assembly called for the convening of a Task Force for Strategic Diversity. The task force is intentionally composed of people of color. The participants are diverse in race, ethnicity, gender and regional representation. The task force will include mapping anti-racism, racial inclusivity and multicultural relationship building, resources and initiatives happening across the ELCA. Reports on its progress and recommendations will be prepared for the 2019 Churchwide Assembly, with interim updates and reports given to the Church Council.

March 16-17, 2018: The Ethnic Specific, Multicultural Ministries and Racial Justice Team convened a follow-up to the 2016 Multicultural Leadership Summit called “The Power of Connection.” Each caucus group present at the 2016 summit reviewed action steps in monitoring progress and offered recommendations in areas in need of resourcing or reprioritizing. Representatives received updates on churchwide assembly actions and the strategic direction of the churchwide organization.

The spring 2018 Conference of Bishops implemented a continuing resolution on diversity goals. The 2016 Churchwide Assembly asked this church to report on synodical efforts in becoming a more diverse denomination. The continuing resolution states, in part: “This church commits itself to ethnic and racial diversity. Each expression of this church shall annually assess its ethnic and racial diversity when compared to the demographic data of its community or territory.” During the session, the bishops were asked to identify priorities in their synod and the ways in which increased diversity can be addressed. An assessment of their efforts and a progress report will be shared during the October 2018 meeting. This work is facilitated by Domestic Mission and Research & Evaluation.

The International African Lutheran Conference will convene in Moshi, Tanzania, Aug. 9-13, 2018. The conference theme is “UBUNTU, I Am Because We Are: Reconnecting, Re-rooting and Growing.” The gathering will engage participants in a worship service, educational workshops, community connections with emphases on women and young adult leadership. The event is co-sponsored by Domestic Mission, Global Mission and The Lutheran World Federation.

The ELCA ethnic associations foster a collective voice and the involvement of people of color in the ELCA with special attention to the equitable participation in the life of our church. Each association is working on several initiatives to increase the visibility and involvement of the associations, particularly among people of color, in the synod and churchwide expressions, and various agencies. Wider engagement of the representative communities requires each association to increase the number of participating members and calls for deeper support for the growth and work of the associations.



Global Church Sponsorship

Global Church Sponsorship consists of four priority ministries:

- Young Adults in Global Mission
- Missionaries
- Global Ministries
- International Women Leaders

2017 was the global church annual theme year for *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*. Many wonderful resources were created for congregations to use to lift up the work of global mission in their congregations. Those resources are still available for use, and we encourage congregations to continue lifting up the global church as we celebrate being church for the sake of the world.

Pentecost Sunday

Pentecost Sunday is the opportunity to reflect on the global community of which we are a part – a community of people living out our faith, serving our neighbors and sharing God’s love with the world. This Pentecost Sunday we will lift up life-changing ministries with our global companions working to grow the global Lutheran church. *The Pentecost Sunday packet arrived at your congregation in mid-April.*

Global Church Sunday – pick a Sunday in October!

Global Church Sunday is about celebrating our church’s connections and common mission within Christ’s global church. It is a day to rejoice in our relationships with companions around the world, to learn more about how the ELCA is connected globally and to support our church’s missionaries who work in partnership with our companions in Christ. *The Global Church Sunday packet will arrive at your congregation in July.*

Other resources (available at ELCA.org/resources, click on “ELCA Global Church Sponsorship”)

- Global Church Minutes: prayers to be incorporated in weekly worship
- Global Church Passport: educational activities for youth and young
- Church Story Series: 12 stories from our global companions
- International Women Leaders: Stories, video and booklets to help lift up the International Women Leaders program and International Women’s Day



Global Mission

Glocals and Mission Formation

As the education and interpretation team within Global Mission, Mission Formation creates events, trainings and resources that equip members in the re-forming of global mission. This has meant fruitful partnerships with not only congregations and communities around youth programming, advocacy, cross-cultural competency training and congregational development but also with synods through their yearly assemblies. In 2017, as a key part of over 20 Mission Formation events, we were privileged to be a part of the programming of six synod assemblies – stretching from North Dakota to Texas.



When Glocal partners with a synod, we offer a wide range of plenaries, workshops, music and worship leadership that are rooted in accompaniment as a way of better *seeing, being and doing* mission abroad and in our own neighborhoods. Over the course of the last five years, Glocal has participated in assemblies in 25 of our 65 synods, connecting congregational leaders from around the country to issues and values of mission in new and deepening ways.

In the coming five years, we look forward to partnering with 25 more synods as we continue to engage and deepen our understanding and practice of mission, to collectively receive the gifts of the global church, as well as to share resources that leaders can take home to their ministry and impact their home communities.

Evangelism

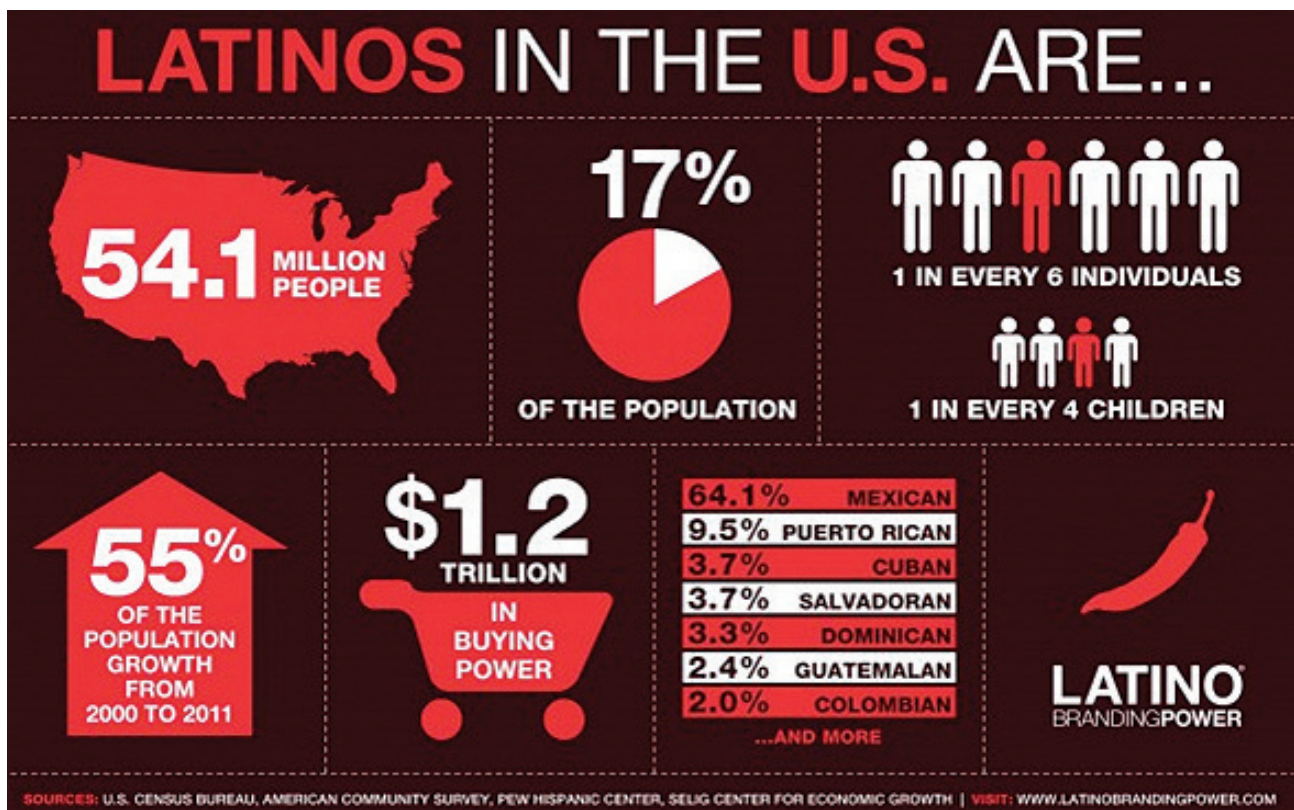
Mexico:

ELCA Lutherans are excited to know that our church is in relationship with the Mexican Lutheran Church (ILM), a church body of 11 congregations and a member of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). This is extremely important not only because of its geographic proximity but also because of the 54.1 million Latinos in the United States (see attached graphic from 2015), 64.1 percent are Mexican or of Mexican origin. In companionship with the ELCA, the ILM is investing in leadership development and theological formation and has a deep commitment to gender justice as a way of transforming a society that is “machista” and violent toward women.

Nigeria:

The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN) is a strong and growing church with about 2.7 million members, many of whom are under 20 years old. With support from *The Campaign for the ELCA*, the LCCN is hoping to harness the energy of the large youth population in the church and communities, evangelizing through music, intentional conversation and educational opportunities. These evangelism efforts will strengthen the goal of the church to be a bulwark against youth radicalization, will teach the freely given liberating grace of God and empower Nigerian youth to live out their faith amid many challenges.





Siberia:

With support from *The Campaign for the ELCA*, we are equipping women and men in Russia and other former Soviet states for leadership and service in the church. In 2017, a Clinical Pastoral Education initiative was created to provide lay and clergy members with skills and formation in pastoral care. Participants said: “I learned how to listen. ... I realize that empathy is at the center of pastoral care.” and “After this seminar I feel healthier spiritually and physically. ... Many thanks for accompanying me on the way, for caring for the healing of my soul.”

Zambia:

With support from *The Campaign for the ELCA*, Global Mission is helping the young, vibrant Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zambia (ELCZ) to grow. Of their 40 worshipping communities, only four have sturdy, weatherproof buildings. In 2018, the ELCA is investing in brick-and-mortar structures that will house worship spaces for the congregations of the ELCZ. Join us in this holy work of building permanent church buildings across the ELCZ.

Health care

Global Mission is exploring new ways to integrate a holistic perspective into its health care work, supporting projects that incorporate many aspects of life – food security, peace, livelihoods – into preventive and curative health care programs.

In South Sudan, for example, the Evangelical Lutheran Church Africa Mission in South Sudan (ELCAMSS) opened a clinic at the Reconciliation Lutheran Church Community Center and Clinic in February 2018. The center and clinic create a holistic space that includes community worship,



educational opportunities and healing for people of many ethnic and religious backgrounds. Clinic services recently began with antenatal visits for pregnant women and well-child visits. In addition, spaces for training in computer, sewing and the English language are set up with instructors and ready to start working with students in the coming weeks.

Overview and resources

The ELCA has relationships with Lutheran companions in more than 120 countries through companion synod relationships, your offerings and prayers. Thanks to the generosity of ELCA members, the ELCA funds missionaries and projects in more than 90 countries. Receiving the gifts of the global church opens ELCA congregations to strengthening their proclamation and service.

Individual congregations can enhance their connection with the witness of the ELCA's companions around the world with the 2018 Global Mission map brochure (available as a digital download or paper copy from the ELCA Resource Catalog).

This brochure provides some highlights of the ELCA's global engagement and partnerships in 2018. This educational resource showcases a variety of ways in which we and our global companions walk alongside one another in Christ. This resource unfolds into a world map, which is wonderful for displaying in your congregation's foyer, narthex and literature racks.

ACCOMPANIMENT

Your gifts support the ministries of our global companions

REGIONAL EMPHASIS - NORTH AMERICA: ELCA members find inspiration and are inspired by receiving the gifts of the global church. Collaborate with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada concerning missionaries, global events and companion synod relationships.

NEW YORK CITY: The Rev. Susana Delgado (left) from the Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras and Rita Flores from the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church are committed to advocacy and justice in their churches and countries. With 48 other leaders, they participated in a women's human rights training organized by the Women's World Federation with the assistance of the New York-based Lutheran Office for World Community. The workshop focused on understanding and linking national mechanisms and leaders, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

REGIONAL EMPHASIS - LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: Accompaniment of churches as they train new leaders, explore new ministry frontiers and address social, economic, gender and climate justice. Just and humane treatment of migrant workers and families through the work of AMARCOS companions in Central America, Mexico and the United States.

MEXICO: As a young leader in the Mexican Lutheran Church, Elia Reyes-Díaz has been nominated to receive an international Women's Leadership Scholarship from the ELCA to pursue a bachelor's degree in International Studies with a concentration in English at Newberry College. After competing her studies in 2019, Elia plans to return home and dream of starting a nonprofit to help children who live in bad situations and give them a new... life through art, sports, psychological therapy, an integral education, a place without violence, and an oasis in the middle of the chaos.

HONDURAS: Like many Central American youth, Pedro tried to go north but was arrested back home. Today, he bakes and sells fresh bread and sweet rolls daily. Support from AMARCOS and the Mesoamerican Social Action Commission helped Pedro get started. Business is good, and Pedro has no plans to take the perilous journey ever again. "I thank my life and am grateful that God protected me every step of the way. Now I can contribute to my family with my income from this bakery."

REGIONAL EMPHASIS - EUROPE: Recognition and best care of minority Lutheran churches re-emerging in a post-communist era for leadership development, recovery and restoration of Lutheran identity in context 500 years after the Reformation.

EGYPT: "I will not remove my shoes because we go to school now," said Yasmine to her brother, Louwan, "you have to bring me." For four months, she has a package from Sudan sent to El Gharbiya, visited St. Andrew's Refugee Services in Cairo to talk the Montessori Project to accept her daughter. When school finally opened, Yasmine had confidence and knows some English words. Through your ELCA Mission, God's Spirit is also leading to a time from a cup and is enjoying nutritious breakfast and lunch.

SLOVAKIA: By watching how others shop, order in a restaurant and run errands, Jay and Kelsey Meservey are learning how to live in a new culture. Students and teachers at the Lutheran high school in Lutosky Malokous - where the bell that starts and ends classes rings continuously 24/7 - are also a rich source of wisdom. The Meserveys are among the 10 teachers in the ELCA Central Europe Teaching Project providing English language instruction in six Lutheran schools in Poland and Slovakia.

NEPAL: Tara Badi and her neighbors earn a living growing tomatoes and eggplants in a greenhouse. Before no land, little money, and deeply seated discrimination against the indigenous Badi people left them with few options to support themselves. Through your gifts to ELCA World Hunger the Palwardians Manila Community Empowerment Center sustains seedlings, the greenhouse, and technical skills as a former adviser. Her members other had finished to break social misconceptions through tailoring, goat farming, and other livelihood activities.

JAPAN: For 100 years, the Japanese Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) and North American Lutheran Church (NALC) and North American Lutheran Church (NALC) Synod deepened their companion synod relationship through mutual work. Through your gifts to ELCA World Hunger, SCOV Lutheran visited their campus in the pasturing Kumamoto earthquake of 2016. A few months later, Japanese youth attended the South Carolina Bishop's School. These long-lasting friendships are nurtured by presence, prayer, and financial assistance to specific projects.

REGIONAL EMPHASIS - MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AMERICA: Accompany companions in their efforts to address social, economic, gender and climate justice and respond to humanitarian needs.

REGIONAL EMPHASIS - AFRICA: Strengthen mutual relationships and support programs of companion churches addressing conflict prevention, peace and reconciliation, theological education, food security, sustainable livelihoods and health.

SENIGAL: During a visit to the Lutheran Church of Senegal, visitors from the ELCA Grand Canyon Synod were fed, guided, laughed and served by Lutheran and Muslim alike. In the nearby Muslim nation, the small church's faith is not hidden but is through actions of love. "I said one visitor, 'Oh, you are a Muslim!' that celebrates as we share in common, whatever we are in our congregations on the suburbs of Dakar. So you know for daughter, Rahim said, 'I am a Muslim'."

MALAWI: When 5-year-old Charles came to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi (ELCH) Feeding Center, he weighed only 7 pounds. "He was miserable, and had no appetite," remembers long-time volunteer Chikondi Namadanda. "I give him special attention by feeding him personally because he was refusing to eat regularly. Charles started gaining weight." Feeding 100,000 children in 100 congregations supports 100,000 children - including 100,000 children 5 and under and young children like Charles who are at greatest risk of malnutrition.

ZIMBABWE: Leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe know that for the gospel's call for peace, justice and reconciliation to be credible and effective, churches and communities need to work together. In a three-day workshop in conflict prevention, management and resolution, they learned that live a free, the root causes of bitterness, anger and trauma that fuel conflict often lie beneath the surface. Pressing Bishop Cherril Fandi and others are using their new skills to help manage conflicts and work together across different political parties, churches and ethnic groups.

SWAZILAND: Nonhlanhla Dlamini grows cabbages to feed her family and generate income. She learned about backyard gardening from a training program offered by the former board caregivers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) Eastern Districts. The 4-empowerment encourage and inform people about the transmission, prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS - a critical task as a country with the highest rate of HIV-infected adults. They also emphasize the importance of home gardening and good nutrition to boost the immune system.

CAMBODIA: Pastor Lot Sun Hoo and members of the Lutheran Church in Cambodia are growing their new ministry by engaging in their generosity. The ELCA's newest companion has two congregations, a community center and an outreach post in Phnom Penh. Computer and English classes for children, parent groups and worship opportunities are all tools for evangelism. So is a former translation of Luther's Small Catechism. Keep up with their ministry on Facebook at Lutheran Church in Cambodia.

AUSTRALIA: "I was shocked how at home I suddenly felt," says Eleni Georgakou, part of Young Adults in Global Mission, after two five-year-old girls helped her settle into the aboriginal community of Hopevale, Queensland. "They took me to their door, but I was nervous. If every night, the girls said, 'We brought Mrs. Eleni to show her around the village because she doesn't know anyone or where they live. Homebushers are so helpful. We'll take care of her now and have fun.' They really were taking care of me!"

REGIONAL EMPHASIS - ASIA/PACIFIC: Accompany churches as they show their Lutheran identity and find challenges of relations parity in today's context. Increase the capacity of churches and companion organizations to address critical issues of sustainable development and care.

2018 estimated ELCA spending plan for global mission
\$23.8 million (excludes disaster and other special funds)

Source of support	Expenditures
\$18.6 million Gifts for Global Church Hunger	\$16.6 million alleviates poverty and meets human needs through long-term sustainable development
\$134 million Endowment and restricted funds	\$522,000 develop and educate leaders for companion Lutheran churches
\$3.04 million Gifts for ELCA Global Church Sponsorship	\$407,500 help ELCA members receive the gifts of the global church through events, education, resources and the companion synod program
\$8.0 million Mission Support and other revenue	\$7.4 million supports over 230 missionaries in 40 countries
\$4.46 million supports the ministries of companion churches and organizations	

Your gifts in action

Thank you for your generosity! As part of the body of Christ, we participate in God's work in the U.S. and around the world through relationships, prayer, and financial exchange of gifts and resources. Mission Support dollars - weekly, unrestricted offerings from ELCA congregations to synods and the ELCA Churchwide organization - are used to fund scholarships and to help build capacity among companion churches by supporting evangelism, Christian education, theological training and other ministries that grow their capacity to proclaim and serve. See ELCA.org/mission/support.

Your ELCA World Hunger contributions are used to support long-standing partners, such as the Lutheran World Federation, Lutheran World Relief, Church World Service and our companion churches, as they respond to human need through food security and agriculture, water access and health care, education, training and income generation. In 2018, donations to ELCA World Hunger will count toward Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA. See ELCA.org/hunger.

Your gifts to ELCA Global Church Sponsorship help grow the Lutheran church around the world. Your donations sustain missionaries and young adult volunteers to work alongside our global companions, train international leaders, plant new churches and grow existing ones. All gifts to ELCA Global Church Sponsorship in 2018 will deepen our outreach through Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA. See ELCA.org/globalchurch.

The global mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Thanks to your generosity, the ELCA funds missionaries and projects in more than 90 countries. See color key below.

- Latin America and the Caribbean
- Europe
- Middle East and North Africa
- Africa
- Asia/Pacific

Learn more: ELCA.org/globalmission

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



Sustainable development

Global Mission continues to expand support to projects that focus on peace, justice and human rights, as this sector represents some of the most potentially transformative work the ELCA supports. Half of the new projects beginning in 2018 are rooted in such work, including a number of projects that focus on gender justice and a new project working with ex-bonded laborers (Haliya) in Nepal.

While the government of Nepal officially ended the Haliya slavery system in 2008, members of the freed Haliya community are often homeless and subjected to a range of human rights abuses. In this new project, LWF-Nepal will work with members of the freed Haliya community to increase the livelihood opportunities of families, promote children's access to quality education, and enhance advocacy and leadership skills within the community. Activities include nutrition education, high-value crop production and market distribution, water access, education and vocational training, mobilization of freed Haliya human rights defenders and advocacy for the rights of freed Haliya at all levels of government toward creation and implementation of more just policies.

“God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday

This year, we will observe “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday on Sept. 9. Across this church, over 36 percent of all ELCA congregations participate annually in this special day of service. Thank you to all who participate, and we look forward to having even more congregations join in this year. There are many resources currently available at ELCA.org/dayofservice and more will be added in the coming month. They include videos, social media memes, customizable door hangers and postcards, T-shirts and graphic resources. Watch for an updated planning toolkit, bulletin insert, worship resource and customizable posters. Promotion will include emails to congregations and leaders, notices in Living Lutheran, Seeds for the Parish and Seeds Monthly, and numerous social media posts. Congregations are invited to share photos and stories through social platforms and LivingLutheran@ELCA.org. This is work you do in your communities every day, and we look forward to working together again this year on our dedicated day of service on Sept. 9.

Leadership

Leadership for Mission Team:

The Leadership for Mission Team, in collaboration with all its educational networks, is committed to formation, education, and the continuing development and care for all lay leaders and rostered ministers.

Candidacy Team:

The team is collaborating with the Conference of Bishops on the document that will replace “Vision and Expectations.” In March, the team reviewed the sections of the “Candidacy Manual” that committees have identified as needing more clarity to help synod candidacy committees accompany candidates in their candidacy journey. Below is a chart with the information submitted by synods and entered in ECIS that shows the total number of candidates preparing for rostered ministry.



TEEM Candidates	116						
Ethnicity	Minister of Word and Service			Minister of Word and Sacrament			Grand Total
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	
African America/ Black	4	3	7	32	36	68	75
African National	0	0	0	1	2	3	3
American Indian/ Alaska Native	0	0	0	4	6	10	10
Arab/Middle Eastern	1	0	1	3	1	4	5
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	1	3	8	26	34	37
Caucasian	165	50	215	552	546	1,098	1,313
Latino/Hispanic	1	2	3	20	28	48	51
Multi-racial	1	1	2	4	14	18	20
Other	3	2	5	10	15	25	30
Blank	7	2	9	38	30	68	77
Total	184	61	245	672	704	1,376	1,621

Lay School for Mission:

An asset map that identifies all the lay school programs across the country is almost complete and will be available soon on our ELCA website. Also included on the site will be contact information for each of the programs and their course offerings. This information will provide resources for synods and congregations as they begin their lay schools.

The Latino Academy:

The eight Spanish courses developed to equip Latino(a) leaders for service in their congregations is now available on the Select website. A new website being developed will offer an easy link to these resources.

Theological education:

We continue to work with the Theological Education Advisory Committee to develop strategies to increase the number of people discerning a call to rostered ministry. An important area being addressed by our theological education network is building alliances that will continue to focus on the best formation programs for equipping leaders for service in the church and in the world.

International Leaders Program

Global Mission's International Leaders Program provides academic scholarships to individuals endorsed by our global companions. The scholarship program is one of several ways in which the ELCA through the Global Mission unit accompanies our companions. The focus of the scholarship program is to increase the leadership capacity of global companions in areas of need that they identify. Scholarship awards are granted for a variety of fields of study, including theology,



business, education, medicine and science. Global Mission currently provides financial support to approximately 130 students who are engaged in programs of study in the U.S. and in or near contexts closer to their countries of origin.

In order to achieve greater gender balance, a new scholarship initiative was implemented in 2015 through *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*. The International Women Leaders (IWL) initiative provides four-year scholarship awards for bachelor's degree study at ELCA colleges and universities. This critical initiative for women is thriving, thanks in large part to the generous support of donors to *The Campaign for the ELCA* and the faithful partnership of our excellent ELCA colleges and universities. Educational partners now include: Augsburg University, Concordia College, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Luther College, Newberry College, St. Olaf College and Wartburg College. California Lutheran University and Wittenberg University have joined this list of partners and will receive their first IWL scholar in the fall. We also depend on the program's partnership with the ELCA global companion churches who have raised up these scholars and who will welcome them back after graduation. We're grateful to now partner with 10 companions in the work of the IWL initiative, spanning Cameroon, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Rwanda, Suriname, Thailand and Zimbabwe.

The International Leaders Program staff invites synods to engage these international scholars during their time of study in the United States. We would be pleased to share the list of U.S.-based students with staff who are serving as churchwide representatives to synod assemblies this year.

In addition to scholarships, the IWL initiative has provided leadership development seminars in Wittenberg, Germany. Nearly 100 women representing 38 of our global companions have participated in six week-long gatherings to learn about women of the Reformation era, to talk about women's empowerment, to network and share resources. The next generation of leadership seminars will take place in diverse contexts allowing for historical and contextual learning and cultural development. The first of the new-leader seminars is scheduled to take place in India later in 2018.

Under the leadership of the International Leaders Program staff, Global Mission is currently engaged in a process of renewing its commitment to gender justice. Drawing on 30 years of experience and looking toward the future, all of Global Mission's sections are contributing to a comprehensive Gender Justice Strategy that will strategically shape our work in the coming years.

Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) and leadership

With generous support from *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*, the Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) program sends 20-somethings into the world to be globally formed and globally informed by the visions, hopes and struggles of our companions around the world. Through its discernment and orientation, the YAGM program intentionally pushes hard against the volunteers' understandings of God, sense of self, sense of vocation and sense of place in the world. That process is difficult and sometimes even painful, but it also opens a liminal space in which deep connections with God and with other people are created. These young adults then can return to the United States and push hard on the church and on the society in which this church is situated. Having been radically re-formed by the global context, our volunteers return with a renewed vision and commitment to the new reformation that we believe the Holy Spirit is trying to work within us.



Since 1999, more than 700 young adults have been shaped by this powerful program. They are now infiltrating the ELCA and the broader U.S. culture as pastors and deacons, as physicians and social workers, as activists and change-makers, and as people rooted in a vision that places restored relationships at the center of life and work.

Glocal Musician Educators: A space that opens the ELCA to new leaders

The Glocal Musician Educators program is an example of creating new spaces for musicians/artists/educators to gather and learn so their stories and expertise can serve the wider church. This program receives the gifts of story, song and witness of our global and local companions and then translates them into competencies for proclamation and service in the U.S. context. The program started with 15 musician-educators and has grown to 170 members as of January 2017. This community is intergenerational, diverse in terms of ethnicities, orientations and socio-economic backgrounds.

This community is generating a new profile of leader in the ELCA. These leaders:

- represent today's demographics and context of this country;
- are new to ELCA circles;
- represent perspectives, approaches and skills for community organizing, worship, theology, justice and advocacy of people of color and languages other than English;
- bring competencies in and a commitment to worship that is transcultural, contextual, counter-cultural and cross-cultural. (Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture); and
- are trained in the accompaniment as a narrative, lens and methodology.

Lutheran Disaster Response

Domestic

In 2017, Lutheran Disaster Response U.S. responded to about 11 disasters in 11 states, including flooding in Minnesota and legal support for unaccompanied minors from Central America in New York. The most notable responses were to the hurricanes of 2017.

The 2017 hurricane season had 17 named storms that caused widespread destruction across the Atlantic region. Five of these hurricanes hit the U.S. mainland and/or territories, causing large-scale damage across Texas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Our response:

Hurricane Harvey

Texas

Lutheran Disaster Response, in partnership with Portico and LEAD of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod, hosted a respite retreat for rostered leaders and their families who were affected by Hurricane Harvey in the Houston area. Lutheran Disaster Response is also a part of a consortium of four other Texas-based voluntary agencies that will be providing disaster case management to families and individuals recovering from the hurricane in 10 counties. This service will help survivors access resources, financial and other, to rebuild their homes and their lives.



Hurricane Irma/Maria

Lutheran Disaster Response is working with the Florida-Bahamas Synod, the Caribbean Synod, affiliates and other International companions and partners to provide relief to the most vulnerable individuals and communities in the U.S. and around the world.

Florida

Lutheran Disaster Response provided early support to Lutheran Services Florida (LSF) to provide \$100 gift cards to LSF staff and grants up to \$5,000 for staff most severely affected to help with high deductibles and other expenses not covered by other funds. Also, through LSF, crisis counseling was provided to thousands in 20 Florida counties. In addition, LSF attorneys, through partnership with the Florida-Bahamas Synod, is helping congregations navigate insurance claims for hurricane damage.

Georgia

Lutheran Disaster Response, through a partnership with Lutheran Services of Georgia, is planning to launch a multiyear volunteer rebuild and repair program accompanied by construction management and other services.

Puerto Rico

Lutheran Disaster Response worked with the synod to establish Lutheran Disaster Response–Puerto Rico (LDR–PR), now a ministry of Lutheran Social Services of Puerto Rico. Partnering with LDR-PR and the Caribbean Synod, Lutheran Disaster Response distributed critical relief supplies, such as food, water, formula and diapers, during the days and weeks immediate following the storm. Also, 125 mattresses were given to families and individuals. Through our continued partnership, we are providing case management to 190 families and individuals to identify other unmet needs.

Lutheran Disaster Response continues to work with LDR-PR to build its capacity to respond to this disaster. Through our partnership, we are planning to launch a multiyear volunteer rebuild and repair program.

U.S. Virgin Islands

Lutheran Disaster Response, through Lutheran Services of the Virgin Islands, is providing a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-funded crisis counseling program on the islands. In addition, we will launch a major, multiyear repair and rebuild program on St. Croix and will assist residents in building and implementing their recovery plans.

Because of your generosity, about \$15 million was raised to respond to the 2017 hurricanes. Because of this, Lutheran Disaster Response is able to provide significant, multiyear funding and other forms of support for years to come, including ongoing support to help survivors create their recovery plan and secure much needed resources, continued emotional and spiritual care for survivors and leaders in the response, and continued capacity building for our partners and affiliates.

Lutheran Disaster Response received an extraordinary \$22.9 million from donors in fiscal year 2017, including more than \$14.7 million to support the ELCA's hurricane response efforts.



International

In 2017, Global Mission responded to 23 disasters in 15 countries. The majority of these disasters were sudden-onset, natural disasters (primarily flooding and mudslides) wherein we provided immediate relief (e.g. food and non-food item distribution) through our companion churches, implementing partners and the ACT Alliance.

In Cuba and Haiti, we responded to the 2017 Atlantic hurricanes through companion churches and ecumenical partners, and in December, Global Mission staff visited Cuba to discuss ongoing disaster recovery and preparedness efforts with the Cuban Council of Churches.

In Nepal, our response to the earthquakes that affected nearly 8 million people continued in 2017. Last June, Global Mission staff visited companions and partners in Nepal where recovery projects have assisted over 40,000 people through shelter/home reconstruction, reconstruction of schools and a health center, new potable water sources, livelihood opportunities and community-rights training for Dalit communities.

In Mexico, after an 8.1-magnitude earthquake struck off the Pacific coast in September, we responded through our local partner, Amextra, to provide immediate relief to families in Chiapas, which included food, water and personal hygiene kits. Additional support is being directed toward longer-term response efforts; with this support, we are accompanying local communities through activities such as re-opening businesses, building temporary and permanent housing for women-headed households, the elderly and other vulnerable communities, and post-traumatic stress management workshops for children and adults.

Missionaries

ELCA missionaries, through their witness and service in more than 40 countries, are a mark of this church's vitality – an embodiment of the relationship we have in Christ with our sisters and brothers around the globe. The ELCA sent 113 new missionaries and Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) volunteers into service this past year. These new missionaries include people like the Rev. Dr. Cynthia Holder Rich and the Rev. Dr. Mark Rich, who are educating a new generation of East African pastors and evangelists as professors at Tumaini University Makumira in Tanzania. They include the Rev. Viking Dietrich and Marissa Dietrich, who are strengthening relationships between the ELCA and our companions in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa in their role as ELCA regional representatives. They include English as a second language teachers serving in Lutheran schools in Slovakia and Poland, who are equipping young people to become faithful leaders in their post-Communist countries. And they include vibrant, passionate ELCA young adults serving in 13 countries, who have opened themselves to be shaped and transformed by our global companions through the YAGM program.

To learn more about ELCA missionaries and YAGM volunteers, or to support their ministries, visit ELCA.org/globalchurch. Follow their journeys on social media @ELCAGlobalChurch.



Mission Investment Fund

The Mission Investment Fund (MIF) is the lending ministry of the ELCA. MIF makes low-interest loans to ELCA congregations and ELCA-related ministries for building and renovation projects. With MIF loans, congregations and ministries can purchase property, construct new buildings, and expand or renovate existing facilities.

MIF loans expand the capacity for ministry. MIF loans help create expanded worship spaces, updated space for education and youth ministry, new kitchens for community meals and soup kitchens, affordable housing units for the community and much more.



At year-end 2017, MIF had **888 loans** outstanding, totaling **\$539.1 million**.

To fund these loans, MIF offers a portfolio of investments for congregations, their members, synods and ELCA-related ministries to purchase. At year-end 2017, MIF investments totaled \$506 million.

MIF is a financially strong and stable organization, with a record of steady, controlled growth. With total assets of \$715.7 million and net assets of \$203.9 million at year-end 2017, MIF maintains a capital ratio of 28.5 percent—positioning MIF in the top tier of well-capitalized church extension funds. For more information, visit mif.elca.org.

The Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities

The Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities (NECU) is the vehicle for churchwide ministries in higher education. The NECU is an unincorporated, missional, collaborative association whose members are the churchwide organization and the 26 colleges and universities related to the ELCA. As of June 2017, the network's membership expanded to include Luther College in Regina, Saskatchewan, which is the only college formally related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. The NECU is managed and supported financially by the colleges and universities and by the churchwide organization through the Domestic Mission unit. It is overseen by a board, whose directors are the presidents of member institutions, plus an executive director, whose service fulfills the duties of program director for colleges and universities in the Domestic Mission unit. The churchwide organization and the schools agreed to form the network in 2015. During 2016 and 2017, Lutheran identity in higher education was the NECU's focus, culminating in the reception of the statement "Rooted and Open: The Common Calling of the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities." The network will focus in 2018 and 2019 on enhancing ties between higher education and other churchwide ministries.



Office of the Treasurer

ELCA total operating revenue and support for 2017:	\$68,947,647
ELCA total expense and allocations for 2017:	\$66,190,185
ELCA World Hunger total income for 2017:	\$21,355,536

Campaign-to-date

Congregations:	\$2,552,502
Leadership:	\$15,390,965
Global Church:	\$19,029,986
Hunger and Poverty:	\$100,849,769
"Where Needed Most":	\$6,183,596
Total revenue and commitments:	\$144,006,818

Key information technology accomplishments during 2017

- Launched ELCA Digital Directory replacing ELCA Yearbook
Directory.elca.org
- ELCA granting process improvements and ELCA Grant Maker system implementation
ELCA.org/grants
- Centralized and simplified churchwide electronic newsletter subscriptions
community.elca.org/elca-email-subscriptions
- Information security program and technology enhancements to protect sensitive data and systems

Refugees and migrants

In 2017, Global Mission continued to accompany refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in both emergency relief efforts and through ongoing development work. Support was directed through partners and companions to respond to the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe and the Middle East, as well as with Rohingya IDPs and refugees in Myanmar and Bangladesh. We also responded to the conflict and famine within South Sudan and supported South Sudanese refugees in refugee camps in Kenya. In addition, we worked with repatriated refugees who have returned to Somalia in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) promotion. Projects continue to provide refugees with resources and assistance throughout all phases of their journey.

For instance, the work of St. Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS) in Egypt provides the most vulnerable refugees in Cairo with protection services, adult education programming, early childhood development and education programs, connections with higher education and work opportunities, psychosocial support and links to care providers, and legal aid. In 2017, StARS provided 350 nutritious meals per day for children in their programs to enable concentration and success at school.



Systems Academy

The ELCA Systems Academy began its third academic year last fall. The academy is a four-year commitment to the study of family systems theory and theology combined with clinical work. The appeal of natural systems thinking about human behavior and leadership functioning has taken on more relevance in addressing the larger and deeper processes that resist quick fixes. Among ministers, the natural systems theory of Murray Bowen, M.D., and his student, Rabbi Edwin Friedman, has gradually become a more effective resource and way of thinking about emotional processes in families and congregations. In the therapy field, a major shift in the study of human behavior has occurred and is still in the early stages where the focus is on the relationship system as an emotional unit instead of the focus being just on the individual. Each individual is understood as being part of a larger field of interaction in natural family systems thinking.

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton found this natural systems orientation especially helpful when she was a synod bishop responding to her responsibilities to rostered ministers and congregations. She saw a more comprehensive frame of reference for leaders stemming from natural family systems research and application. After her election as presiding bishop, she encouraged a family systems orientation in the synods and in the churchwide organization. As a result, an academy process was designed that would present natural systems concepts along with family of origin work, case studies and noteworthy presenters.

Since the fall of 2015, eight to 10 synod bishops have been invited prior to the start of a new academy year to select a staff or synodical representative to be part of a four-year commitment to the academy's goals. The ELCA Systems Academy meets four times a year for three days. Depending upon their years of academy study, synodical appointees are in a variety of stages in the development of their synod work utilizing the lens of systems theory. The academy participants now include a total of 24 bishops' appointees and seven churchwide staff.

The ELCA Natural Systems Academy is a pathway initiative. Bowen's theory and Rabbi Friedman's application of this thinking has become a path to effective capacities of leadership beyond therapy and technique. Toward this effort, the academy curriculum aims include:

1. The ability to observe how things work in a relationship system
2. An understanding of how anxiety affects relationships
3. The impact of "mature" behavior on institutions and ministry
4. The challenge to think differently
5. An understanding of the challenge and the importance of how we treat one another
6. The practice of taking time to think
7. The way theory makes theology concrete

Deacon Mary Ann Schwabe serves as the natural systems coordinator in the churchwide organization and as one of the coordinators of the ELCA Systems Academy.



Theological Discernment

Human rights social message

The Church Council adopted an ELCA social message on human rights during its November 2017 meeting. Drawn from experts in the field of human rights and Lutheran ethics, the message will be used to guide ELCA investment and social policy.

Acknowledging that human rights do not fully encompass God's intention for abundant life, the message states that, "The recognition of fundamental human rights, however, serves as a safety net of critical, baseline commitments."

The message can be found at [ELCA.org/socialmessages](https://www.elca.org/socialmessages) and will be released in Spanish in 2018.

Women and justice social statement draft

The ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ has released a draft social statement for public comment. People are encouraged to study the document individually or in groups and to respond via a response form or by attending a synodical hearing. Questions and comments can be directed to womenandjustice@ELCA.org.

You can find more information at [ELCA.org/womenandjustice](https://www.elca.org/womenandjustice), including:

- Digital copies of the draft
- Online response form
- Instructions for ordering paper copies
- Schedule of hearings
- Tips for discussion groups and hearings

