

God's work. Our hands.

ELCA 2018 Annual Report



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

ELCA MINISTRIES

ADVOCACY

The [2018 ELCA Advocacy Policy Priorities](#) focus the work of the Washington, D.C., office on issues central to God's vision of a just world where all are fed, shaped by the ELCA's social-teaching documents and the experiences of its congregations, ministries, and partners. Lutheran engagement in public discourse and action is reflected in advancement of identified priority areas.

2018 by the Numbers:

- 19,128 = email messages sent through the ELCA Advocacy Action Center from Lutheran advocates/constituents to the U.S. Congress and presidential administration
- 4,950 = advocates who joined the ELCA Advocacy network (includes the national center and ELCA-hosted state and Peace Not Walls networks) Join the network at ELCA.org/advocacy/signup.
- 14 percent = increase in membership of the ELCA Advocacy network
- 101 = meetings with congressional/administration contacts by ELCA Advocacy national staff members
- 115 = visits with congressional/administration contacts during the Hunger Leadership Gathering
- 12 percent = increase in followers on Twitter @ELCAadvocacy, as of December 2018
- 31.6 percent = increase in followers on Facebook @ELCAadvocacy, as of December 2018

Farm bill

Our sustained advocacy played a critical role in passage of a bipartisan farm bill free of harmful cuts or ineffective job provisions, one that expands support for the farmer safety net, environmental opportunities, and international food aid.

Migration

Through the AMMPARO strategy, we worked to increase U.S. government funding for economic development programs and anticorruption mechanisms that are culturally appropriate for Central American communities. We opposed U.S. foreign policies that increase the militarization of Central American countries or prevent their people from seeking protection in a country where they feel safe.

Care for creation

The ELCA brought a faith voice to discussions about implementing the Paris Climate Change Agreement, the topic of the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24) in Katowice, Poland. The ELCA's new collaboration with ecoAmerica's Blessed Tomorrow program yielded impact-tested resource development, including production steps toward cobranded video and print pieces.

Affordable housing/homelessness

ELCA advocacy focused on housing as a federal budget priority, advocating for funding increases in homelessness programs, senior assistance, and affordable housing.

Criminal justice reform

ELCA Advocacy's sustained focus on sentencing reform culminated in the December 2018 passage of the First Step Act, itself a first step toward meaningful criminal justice reform.

International policy

The ELCA and its partners worked together to ensure robust funding for foreign assistance in the 2019 federal budget. ELCA Advocacy worked to reauthorize the Global Food Security Act of 2016, and the measure passed with overwhelming bipartisan support. Work continued on the proposed International Violence Against Women Act; ELCA Advocacy supports this or similar legislation that would address gender-based violence and women's equality globally.

International peacekeeping

In other good news, Congress passed the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act, which addresses genocide and other grievous violations of human rights and defends the human rights of groups susceptible to violations.

Current events created several opportunities for advocacy, these among them:

- ELCA Advocacy acted to protect the Johnson Amendment from repeal. Enacted in 1954, the amendment allows houses of worship to remain independent from partisan electoral activity while also permitting them to speak out on political and social issues.
- After yet another tragic mass shooting, this one at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, student activists changed the narrative surrounding gun violence in the U.S. Through an Action Alert in March 2018, the ELCA responded in support of their moral outrage and their call for a better and just world.
- In collaboration with ELCA Racial Justice Ministries and ELCA Young Adult Ministry, #ELCAvotes urged action to guarantee all citizens the right to vote and promoted conversation and prayer to ensure that our election systems promote dignity and respect for all.
- On "God's work. Our hands." Sunday, ELCA congregations were invited to add advocacy to their community witness. Many chose to do this by letter writing, urging members of Congress to pass the Voting Rights Advancement Act to restore the voting rights of all Americans.
- Together with The Episcopal Church, the ELCA concluded the 18-month "For Such a Time" campaign. Anchored by the presiding bishops' call to pray, fast, and advocate for change, the two churches provided background and advocacy action on issues of equity and justice in the federal budget process.

ALWAYS BEING MADE NEW: THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE ELCA

We are now in the final months of the ELCA's first comprehensive fundraising campaign, *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*. As of Jan. 31, we have collectively raised more than \$226 million for churchwide ministries, including \$181 million in cash and multiyear commitments and \$45 million in planned gifts. We 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 190 established and emerging women leaders from our global companions program have accessed educational opportunities designed specifically for them, including four-year scholarships to ELCA colleges and universities.
- This year, 26 ministries will receive grants to further their work through the campaign's Youth and Young Adults initiative. Forty-seven grants, totaling more than \$1.2 million, have been distributed to programs across the ELCA through this initiative.
- With campaign support, ELCA World Hunger provided more than \$3.2 million in new funding to 47 growth projects in 27 countries last year. This is above and beyond our ongoing support of existing projects and programs.
- The ELCA Fund for Leaders is providing 254 students with more than \$2.6 million in seminary scholarships during the 2018-19 academic year. This includes 50 *new* full-tuition scholarships—the highest number ever awarded.
- With more than \$1 million in support from the campaign, Renewing Congregations grants are being implemented across the ELCA, including 19 synodical Renewing Congregations strategies, six Area Ministry strategies, and four Fast Growth Congregations initiatives.
- A total of 258 new-start congregations have been approved during the campaign—a record growth in ELCA new starts.
- Through the campaign, Disability Ministries has distributed 17 gathering and inclusivity grants, 18 equipping congregations and synods grants, and 12 preparing leaders grants. An additional \$250,000 in grants will be distributed to mental health ministry projects by January 2020.
- Seventy-six Young Adults in Global Mission volunteers are currently serving in 14 countries around the world. An additional 315 young adults have served in the program since the campaign began.

We have accomplished so much, and we couldn't have done it without your partnership. As we enter these final months, we ask each of you to help accelerate the successful completion of this effort. Our continued collaboration is important so that we achieve all we set out to do together by June 30. Let's finish strong as church together!

For campaign resources and additional information, please visit ELCA.org/Campaign. Please also feel free to contact us at 800-638-3522 or campaignforELCA@elca.org.

AMMPARO

AMMPARO is the ELCA's strategy to Accompany Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities. The ELCA developed this strategy based on commitments to uphold and guarantee the basic human rights and safety of migrant children and their families; to address the root causes of migration in Mexico and countries from Central America's Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) and the treatment of migrants in transit; to work toward just and humane policies affecting migrants in and outside the U.S.; to engage as a church with all of our companions, affiliates, and partners to respond to the migration situation and its causes; and to advocate for migrant children and their families.

Although many of our ecumenical partners are engaging in migration work, the ELCA is unique among mainline denominations in directing our work through a comprehensive strategy that covers the migrant journey from countries of origin through transit countries and in the United States as well. AMMPARO is funded through Lutheran Disaster Response and ELCA World Hunger.

The AMMPARO network includes programs directed by ELCA companions in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala that provide opportunities for a new life to migrants deported from the United States and Mexico. In Mexico, the ELCA supports the work of advocacy to protect the human rights of these very vulnerable migrants planning either to remain in Mexico or to continue their journey. There are currently 120 welcoming and sanctuary congregations in the ELCA that have agreed to accompany migrant children and families in their communities in the U.S. The Guardian Angel program invites volunteers in eight cities across the U.S. (Boston, Atlanta, Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis–St. Paul, Omaha, Denver, and Los Angeles) to be the physical presence of the church accompanying migrant children and their families during their court proceedings.

Advocacy for justice and fairness for migrant children and families has mobilized people from across the ELCA to pledge to stand with asylum seekers and reunite separated families. ELCA members who are lawyers are joining forces with legal organizations to protect migrants through volunteer service in family detention facilities.

You can learn more about this work at ELCA.org/Resources/AMMPARO. Get involved! Encourage your congregation to join the AMMPARO network by becoming a welcoming congregation. Information is available from Mary Campbell at mary.campbell@elca.org.

2018 highlights included:

- international engagement to protect migrant children, youth, and families;
- 116 welcoming and sanctuary congregations in 30 synods in all nine regions of the ELCA;
- eight Guardian Angel programs—six new this year (in Omaha, Denver, Boston, Atlanta, Detroit and Minneapolis–St Paul);
- national advocacy leadership in the Interfaith Immigration Coalition and regular consultation with Congress on conditions in Central America;
- accompaniment of the exodus of Central Americans;
- a presentation at the World Vision Global Partners Forum in Rome; and
- legal pro bono work

Work done in Honduras in the last 18 months:

- 321 returned migrants enrolled in vocational training programs;
- 115 returned migrants started microenterprises, and 12 started a savings and loan co-op;
- 321 returned migrants received group counseling, and 184 of those received individual psychological attention for traumas experienced during the migrant journey;

- 718 families received humanitarian assistance during repatriation; and
- 50 returned migrants have organized their own network for public communications and advocacy.

CANDIDACY

In the past year (March 2018–February 2019), we assigned 247 candidates. Of those, 222 were candidates for the Word and Sacrament roster and 25 were candidates for the Word and Service roster. Based on synods’ reported vacancies of calls that would be appropriate for a full-time, first-call pastor, we need about 150 more candidates of Word and Sacrament ministry to be assigned and called.

In fall of 2018, we offered an in-person and webinar candidacy manual training, intended for synod staff working with candidacy. In January 2019, we offered two webinars on assignment, intended for candidacy committee members, synod staff, seminary staff, and candidacy-and-leadership managers. All of these offerings were very well attended, so we are looking to produce more learning opportunities in the coming year.

The candidacy team attended the Youth Gathering in partnership with Fund for Leaders. We had a booth in the Interactive Center titled “Called to Lead” and based on a *Star Wars* theme. More than 3,000 people came through the booth over the three days. They completed a spiritual gifts inventory, found out which type of intergalactic hero they were, based on their spiritual gifts (to give them a better understanding of their leadership style and how that might be used in ministry), received a light-up mini light saber, and joined a photo booth.

CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY

Domestic Mission announces 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. Vital congregations are defined 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 date back to the life-changing communities of the early church. We envision this work as supporting vital communities already in place and fostering and promoting new vital communities.

Vitality ministry will be deeply rooted in relationships, collaboration, creativity, innovation, and a passion for learning and for 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, among ethnic and multicultural communities, and among leaders who minister to people experiencing poverty. The creation of 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 worshipping in pews, city parks, cafes, and libraries; we are breaking bread in homes and homeless shelters, and 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. Through the work of synod mission tables, made up of local leaders, bishops, and directors for evangelical mission, there are 459 new ELCA ministries currently under development in the United States and the Caribbean, but there is more work to do and there are more communities to reach. To reflect our nation's diversity, we are actively engaged in God's mission with the goal of becoming an evangelizing, multicultural, multigenerational church.

Key statistics

Our Congregational Vitality team is now ready to offer support to all 65 synods in developing synod vitality initiatives that will promote vitality within our 9,300-plus congregations and new starts. Specifically:

- 459 new ministries are currently under development;
- 519 new ministries have been organized as congregations since 1988;
- 750-plus leaders have participated in congregational development training in the last 12 months; and
- 350 leaders are expected to participate in such training in Baltimore on Aug. 21, 2019.

Entry points

Here are five ways in which synod leaders can partner with the churchwide Congregational Vitality ministry.

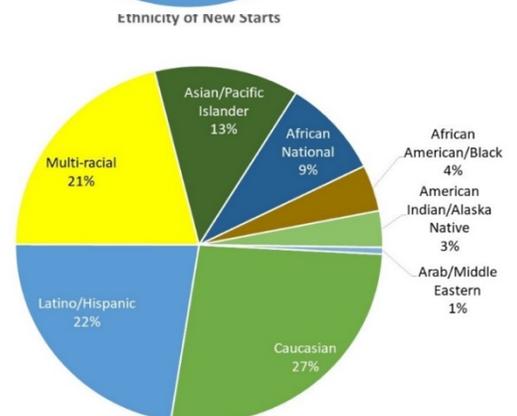
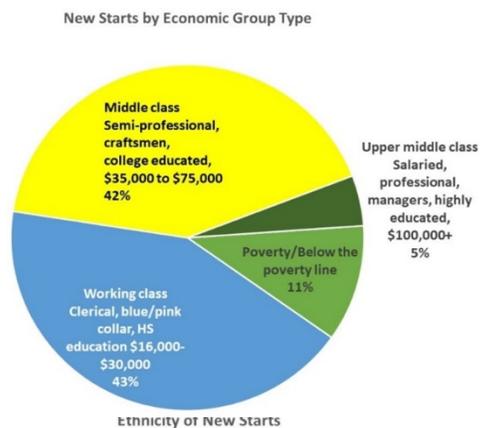
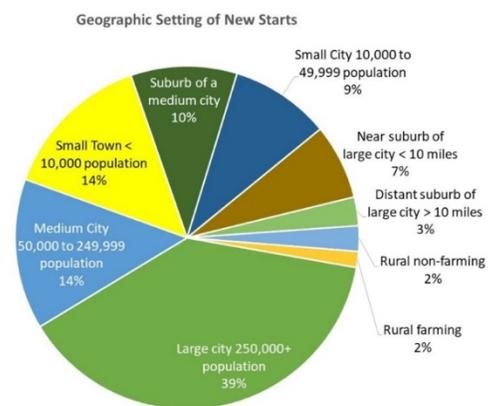
NEW STARTS: Plant new, synodically authorized worship communities and explorations.

SYNOD VITALITY GRANTS: Collaborate with your synod and other groups of churches for revitalization and greater impact in your communities. Multiply your church's vitality to involve more and more churches and new people.

STRATEGIC MINISTRIES: Partner with churches in ethnic communities and communities experiencing poverty to strengthen strategic, innovative, resourceful ministries that will enrich the whole church.

ANCHOR CHURCHES: Foster strategic relationships between healthy, growing, resourceful congregations and other, more challenged congregations to multiply the vitality of all.

HOLY INNOVATIONS: Drawing on ELCA Campaign special offerings of \$1 million so far, partner with multiple synods in pursuit of innovation and new learning for congregational vitality across the whole ELCA.



What you can do

- **SHARE AN IDEA:** If you have an idea for a new church or vitality work, contact your synod office. Ask for the director for Evangelical Mission (DEM) 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 www.elca.org/newcongregations/donate or www.elca.org/Campaign.

Rev. Ruben Duran Director, ELCA Congregational Vitality
Ruben.Duran@elca.org or 630-440-8591

ECUMENICAL AND INTER-RELIGIOUS RELATIONS

Inter-religious policy statement

In November 2018, following a six-month public comment period and subsequent revisions, the Church Council unanimously recommended the proposed “A Declaration of Inter-Religious Commitment: A Policy Statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” for adoption by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

The proposed policy statement, called for in the 1991 “A Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment,” details the historical and theological underpinnings of our inter-religious commitments and provides a practical framework for seeking mutual understanding and cooperation for the common good.

Details regarding the process to date, a forecast of what lies ahead, and the downloadable document can be found at: <http://bit.ly/elcainterreligious>. Questions should be directed to Kathryn Lohre, executive for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations, at Kathryn.Lohre@elca.org or 773-380-2613

Other significant ecumenical developments include:

- continuation of the current round of Lutheran-Catholic dialogue on “teaching authority”;
 - advocacy with ecumenical (especially Episcopal, Catholic, and Armenian) partners, related to Israel/Palestine and the East Jerusalem Hospital Network (Augusta Victoria Hospital);
 - exploration of new models for local/national collaboration with full communion partners;
 - updating of orderly exchange documents that provide guidelines for the implementation of exchanging clergy through our full communion agreements;
- strong ELCA participation in the National Council of Churches’ “Act Now: Unite to End Racism” rally in D.C., which commemorated the 50th anniversary of the martyrdom of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and launched the ongoing initiative <http://rally2endracism.org/>; and
- continued work to strengthen relationships with Historic Black churches, including participation in cross-racial dialogue with the Conference of National Black Churches.

Other significant inter-religious developments include:

- participation in new tables for Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh inter-religious dialogue, co-convened with the National Council of Churches;
- hosting the national Jewish-Christian dialogue immediately following the anti-Semitic massacre at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh;
- participation in and leadership of the 2018 Parliament of the World's Religions in Toronto;
- participation in the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, an interfaith forum uplifting the common commitments of people of faith based on an "alliance of virtues"; and
- leadership through the Shoulder to Shoulder campaign "Advancing American Ideals," including participation in several local and regional "Faith Over Fear" training sessions (visit shouldertoshouldercampaign.org).

ELCA FUND FOR LEADERS

As of December 31, 2018, the ELCA Fund for Leaders endowment has reached \$52.5 million, allowing the fund to provide more than \$2.6 million in scholarship assistance to 254 seminary students during the 2018-'19 academic year. Synod scholarships represent almost \$508,000 of the \$2.6 million distributed, which was disbursed in 141 different awards by 41 participating synods. Fund for Leaders has exceeded its ELCA campaign goal of \$15 million!

Fifty full-tuition scholarships were awarded to incoming students from 31 ELCA synods. In addition, six scholarships were awarded for new mission developer/redeveloper candidates, and one scholarship for federal chaplaincy ministry.

Fund for Leaders staff worked with students, seminaries, and synods, and implemented our new ELCA GrantMaker software to create a direct, online application process for all full-tuition scholarships. This will permit all eligible students entering ELCA seminaries to apply directly to Fund for Leaders for a scholarship.

For 2019, Fund for Leaders looks forward to establishing new partnerships with synods to support the fund and continuing to partner with synods that have already established synodical FFL endowments.

ELCA WORLD HUNGER

In this final year of *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*, this church's response through ELCA World Hunger was record breaking. Thank you for your generous support of our work together toward a just world where all are fed. In 2018, gifts to World Hunger totaled more than \$23.5 million, the largest annual income in the ministry's 44-year history. This represents a 24 percent growth in annual revenue during the five years of the campaign.

Spurred by a spirit of cooperation and celebration across the church, support grew throughout the year at all giving levels. The greatest boost came through the Global Farm Challenge, launched in association with the Youth Gathering.

World Hunger is one year into a renewal and refocusing of its domestic strategy and program. In this second year, World Hunger's domestic program will offer at least three diversified granting opportunities to accompany the various models and sizes of antihunger ministries throughout the ELCA.

Seventy-seven ministries across 63 synods of this church have been awarded 2019 ELCA World Hunger Domestic Hunger Grants, for a total three-year (2019-21) investment of more than \$1,187,000 and an average three-year total award of \$15,400 per ministry.

- This year's investment was \$471,265, with an average award of \$6,120.
- All synods with applicants received at least one award, and 45 of the 63 synods participated in ministry conversations with applicant ministries in their area.
- An estimated 382,012 people will be directly affected by these 77 ministries in 2019.

Five ELCA World Hunger Big Dream Grants were awarded in 2018, for a total investment of \$200,000. The ministries that received grants represent the diversity of approaches and communities across this church; they are the church in action. From Ferguson, Missouri, where young people attended a camp geared toward farming, to Charlotte, Virginia, where congregations are organizing around senior housing, God creates abundantly, and leaders across this church are answering the call to serve with courage by dreaming big dreams.

In early 2019, World Hunger is launching a small pilot program of "crowd-funded" matching grants. Aimed at supporting and sustaining vital congregational feeding ministries, such as food pantries and meal programs, the program is ongoing, and World Hunger anticipates sharing more about this innovation opportunity soon.

Special thanks go to those who participated in the annual Big Game Synod Challenge in conjunction with the Super Bowl. This event raised nearly \$9,000 in support of World Hunger's work around the world, including \$4,500 from Team New England, \$3,000 from Team Los Angeles, and an additional \$1,300 in general gifts.

Held every 18 months, the ELCA World Hunger Leadership Gathering will take place July 18-21 in Minneapolis, co-hosted by World Hunger and the Minneapolis Area Synod and organized around the theme "Creative Congregations. Creative Leaders." New this year, World Hunger will begin biannual check-ins with synod hunger-team chairs and launch a partnership pilot with the ELCA Coaching Network to better support synod hunger teams in their efforts.

Staying engaged and informed with ELCA World Hunger has never been easier; you can follow its activities on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. World Hunger continues to provide educational formation resources for congregational life, including materials geared toward Lent and Advent. "Who's My Neighbor?" the second of three vacation-bible-school curricula developed by World Hunger, will be rolled out this year; the third installment, "The Forgotten Lutheran," will follow in 2020 and will focus on the global church.

ENTRANCE RITE DISCERNMENT GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

Voting members of the 2019 Churchwide Assembly will consider the following recommendations of the Entrance Rite Discernment Group to revise the ELCA constitution:

- Currently, ministers of Word and Service are counted as “laypersons” for all purposes related to the “representational principles” of this church. The discernment group recommends that neither ministers of Word and Sacrament nor ministers of Word and Service be counted as “laypersons.”
- The discernment group recommends that ordination be the rite setting apart both ministers of Word and Sacrament and ministers of Word and Service.

The final recommendation and answers to frequently asked questions are on the ELCA website: <https://www.elca.org/Resources/Word-and-Service-Roster>

FIVE GIFTS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Mission

Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered, and sent for the sake of the world.

Vision

CLAIMED by God's grace for the sake of the world, we are a new creation through God's living word by the power of the Holy Spirit;

GATHERED by God's grace for the sake of the world, we will

Live among God's faithful people

Hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper;

SENT by God's grace for the sake of the world, we will

Proclaim the good news of God in word and deed

Serve all people, following the example of Jesus

Strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

Baptism

At baptism, the presiding minister addresses parents and those who bring children who are not yet able to answer for themselves, and entrusts them with the following responsibilities:

to live with them among God's faithful people, bring them to the word of God and the holy supper, teach them the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, place in their hands the holy scriptures, and nurture them in faith and prayer, so that your children may learn to trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace. (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 228)

Living our baptism

When a baptized Christian affirms the faith (often called confirmation) the presiding minister addresses those making public affirmation of baptism and asks the question: Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

to live among God's faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?

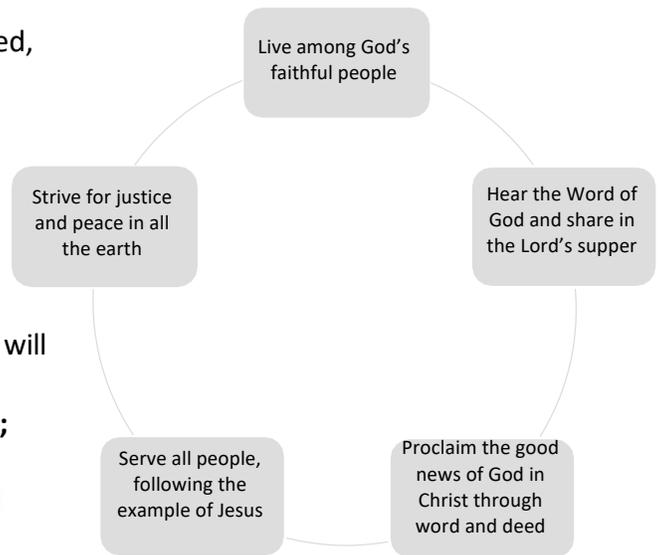
(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 236)

RESPONSE: We do, and ask God to help and guide us.

And so begins a daily claiming and re-discovering of the God-given gifts of discipleship.

Unwrap these five gifts of discipleship!

FIVE AREAS OF DISCIPLESHIP



LIVING OUR BAPTISM...*Five gifts of discipleship*

The five gifts of discipleship are rooted in both the liturgy of baptism as well as the affirmation of baptism found in the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* hymnal.

When we affirm our baptism, we ask God to help and guide us as we commit to the five faith practices listed below. Each of the following has the potential to be “a gift” of immeasurable value in our lives. As with many gifts, we first need to open the gift, prayerfully ponder it, and discern a place for that gift in daily life. Thanks be to God who sends the Holy Spirit to be our guide.

Use the following questions for small group discussions or for personal devotions. Take your time reflecting on each gift, so you might claim and rediscover these five gifts of discipleship.

To live among God’s faithful people.

- a. What does it mean for you to live among God’s faithful people?
- b. Name someone who influenced your faith journey. Describe that person’s faith.
- c. How might “living among God’s faithful people” be considered a gift? What are the consequences, if any, if we do not allow this gift to be part of our life?
- d. **Challenge:** List seven reasons to be part of a church family.

To hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s Supper.

- a. What does it mean for you to hear the word of God?
- b. Describe what it feels like to receive the Lord’s Supper.
- c. When did you first experience the word of God and/or Lord’s Supper as a priceless gift from God? Explain.
- d. **Challenge:** Take a few minutes for silent prayer. Listen for a phrase, verse, or image from scripture. Share.

To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed.

- a. What does it mean for you to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word *and* deed?
- b. What prevents you from freely sharing the good news of God in Christ?
- c. How might the opportunity to proclaim the good news of God in Christ become a gift to the proclaimer and even transform the proclaimer?
- d. **Challenge:** Turn to someone and share part of your faith story in less than five minutes.

To serve all people, following the example of Jesus.

- a. What does it mean for you to serve all people following the example of Jesus?
- b. Describe the example of Jesus as he served others. Describe what it feels like to serve others.
- c. How might the act of serving others (like Jesus) become a gift to both those served and the server?
- d. **Challenge:** Brainstorm potential partners in order to deepen and widen your service to others.

To strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

- a. What does it mean for you to strive for justice?
- b. What can we do as individuals to promote peace in the earth?
- c. What advice would you give to someone exhausted from striving for justice and peace—one who can no longer embrace working for justice and peace as a God-given gift and opportunity?
- d. **Challenge:** Select a sin of injustice or a sin of strife that concerns you. Identify one thing you will commit to do to make a difference.

GLOBAL MISSION

ELCA missionaries serve as ambassadors of reconciliation

In 2018, the Rev. Stephen Deal, an ELCA missionary serving in Costa Rica, was accompanying the migrant caravan traveling north from Central America and wrote the following: “What I personally observed over the supper hour in [southern Mexico] confirmed the reports that we have been receiving about the spontaneous generosity ... along the caravan route.” The ELCA has 220 pastors, doctors, nurses, teachers, theological educators, communicators, community organizers, and Young Adults in Global Mission serving as missionaries in 40 countries across the world. They are ambassadors of God’s reconciling love and witnesses to the holy generosity touching lives all over the world for the sake of the gospel.

Rwanda: Lifting up leaders and upgrading church buildings in the face of adversity

In 2019, the Lutheran Church in Rwanda (LCR) will reach an important milestone—its 25th anniversary. Founded only six months after the Rwandan genocide ended in 1994, the LCR knows incredible adversity. In February 2018, 24 LCR congregations were shut down when the Rwandan government began to close mosques and church buildings that had been deemed unsafe. With financial support from the ELCA, ten of these congregations quickly upgraded their buildings, which now comply with government standards; renovation of the other 14 structures are now in progress. In July, the government enacted regulations for the training of pastors. Now all pastors must obtain a theological degree from an accredited institution within five years. Working with a university in the Iringa diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, the ELCA came alongside the LCR and developed a plan to train and accredit these pastors.

Cambodia: Expanding outreach for a growing church

Some of the youngest, fastest-growing Lutheran churches in the world are found in the Asian countries of Indonesia, India, Nepal, Cambodia, and Myanmar. The Lutheran Church of Cambodia (LCC) continues to grow its capacity for outreach and evangelical witness, and funds from the *Campaign for the ELCA* have been used to purchase land for a new mission (the current property is a rental) and to secure property around the LCC’s existing church building in downtown Phnom Penh. The latter parcel will be used to generate income, train congregation members in financial matters, and prepare pastors in Lutheran theology and practice. All these are helping the LCC build itself up for the future God is calling it into.

Russia: Equipping for service across a vast and fertile landscape

ELCA Global Mission accompanies minority Lutheran churches re-emerging in postcommunist Russia and neighboring countries, building their capacity for evangelism, mission, and lay and pastoral leadership development. Decades of communist rule resulted in a lost generation of pastoral leadership. After 1990, as German-descent Russians returned en masse to their homeland, the Lutheran church in Russia lost its capacity to send enough people to seminary in a central location. This capacity is now being expanded through the “Equipping for Service” strategy, a program of off-site theological education supported by the *Campaign for the ELCA* and led by ELCA Pastor Bradn Buerkle and the bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia. Every year, the program partners with local leaders in at least six deaneries (in

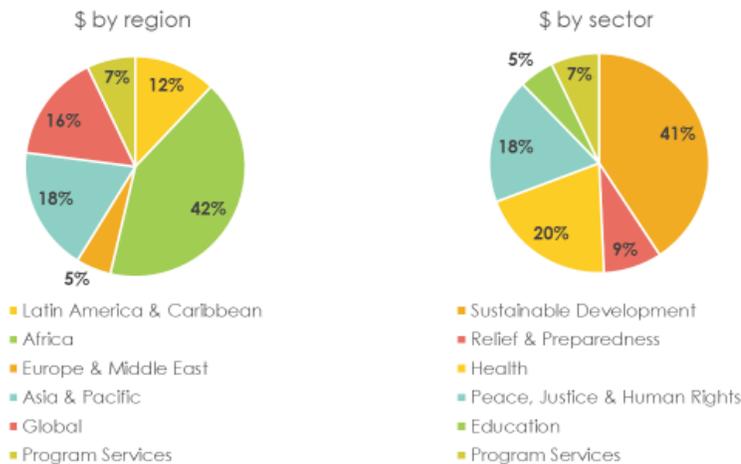
five or more time zones!) to present seminars, with a special focus on visiting outlying areas. Current seminar topics include: lay preacher training, pastoral care, and strategic congregational development. Two additional seminars are planned for 2019, one for Sunday school teachers and one for men’s ministry.

Fostering peace and reconciliation in Southern Africa

Church leaders in Zimbabwe, South Sudan, and South Africa have come together to proactively address root causes of the conflict and violence that threaten human security and create political instability across the region. As a result, local peace committees were formed in Zimbabwe in 2018 and trained to create and implement a conflict-prevention and developmental strategy at the community level. The committees’ work includes creating spaces for community members to process painful memories. The resulting healing and reconciliation is a powerful testimony to the church’s role in societies emerging from conflict.

Promoting peace, justice, and human rights through sustainable development for all God’s people

In 2018, ELCA Global Mission provided 247 sustainable-development grants in 61 countries. This far-reaching impact was made possible with over \$16.8 million provided through ELCA World Hunger, a priority under the Campaign for the ELCA. An overview of the grants follows, along with two specific stories of the lives being transformed.



Serbia: Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO)

EHO is a diaconal ministry of five Serbian churches, including the Slovak Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Serbia, the ELCA’s companion church in Serbia. EHO offers services ranging from housing for the elderly and vocational training for people living with disabilities to advancing the rights and well-being of the Roma people and of refugees in Serbia. The ELCA supports several EHO sustainable-development programs. The Roma

mobilization program aims to develop sustainable, community-based organizations within Roma communities. The Sombor Center project enabled the construction of an educational resource center at the Sombor refugee camp and will now support educational programs for children and women at this transitional center. The MISAR project brought flood relief to the village of Sabac, enabling the reconstruction of 15 homes and the development of income-generating activities for each family. With ELCA financial support, the village now has access to clean water. The Tailoring Project gives women living with disabilities the chance to improve their tailoring skills and earn a livelihood. In all these efforts, Christians in Serbia are growing in their diaconal ministry and witness.

Nepal: Harvesting freedom's fruits among formerly bonded laborers

The Haliya, or bonded laborers, of western Nepal were legally freed ten years ago but not necessarily freed socially or economically. Through the Nepal office of the Lutheran World Federation, the ELCA has provided support for transformative work that includes literacy instruction, vocational training, and capacity building. Human dignity is now flourishing among individuals, families, and whole communities who are no longer trapped by what amounted to modern-day slavery.

Responding first when tragedy strikes, and staying put to rebuild

Thanks to the generosity of ELCA members, Luther Disaster Response was able to provide \$3.4 million in immediate relief in the face of a dramatically increased number of disasters: from 19 emergencies in 17 countries in 2017 to 47 emergencies in 33 countries in 2018. The growth in our response is due partly to the growth in rapid-onset emergencies at the local level, as well as more church-to-church relationships we can call upon for an immediate response. Our contributions have helped us to further solidify our relationships with companion churches and to accompany our brothers and sisters during difficult times. Here are just two examples:

Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

On August 25, 2017, extreme violence broke out in the Rakhine State in Myanmar, driving more than 700,000 Rohingya refugees across the border into Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Over a year later, Rohingya refugees continue to arrive in Bangladesh, but in fewer numbers. Since 2017, LDR has been contributing to the relief operation in Bangladesh. A total of \$174,500 has been provided so far through the ACT Alliance. Our contribution supported ACT members' work providing food and cash to more than a thousand households, installing streetlights at the camps, arranging psychosocial counseling for 200 children, and constructing 78 multipurpose community kitchens for almost two thousand households.

Tsunamis and earthquakes in Indonesia

Indonesia suffered three deadly natural disasters in 2018: a tsunami that struck the western coast of Java, a 6.9-magnitude earthquake in Lombok, and a 7.5 earthquake and subsequent tsunami in Central Sulawesi. Between the three disasters, more than 3,600 people perished, thousands of homes were destroyed, and many people's livelihoods were severely affected. LDR contributed almost \$50,000 to ACT Alliance-Indonesia members and Huria Kristen

Batak Protestan (HKBP) toward immediate relief and health care for families affected by the disasters.

International Leaders Program and International Women Leaders

The International Leaders Program (ILP) continues to accompany global companion churches and institutions in creating opportunities for education, training, and leadership development for the sake of mission and ministry. A highlight of this work was the first-ever Global Leadership Academy, a leadership and networking event for women from companion churches and institutions that was held in Hyderabad, India, in November 2018, thanks to generous support from the *Campaign for the ELCA*. The event brought together women from 12 companions (as well as from the ELCA) for a week of learning, networking, and capacity building, grounded in faith and a common commitment to gender justice. Built around the themes of interculturalism, gender justice, leadership, and accompaniment, the academy created spaces for women from diverse contexts to share their own stories and best practices. Participants left the event with concrete plans to implement gender-justice projects alongside their sending churches, many of which are now being funded through ELCA World Hunger.

Providing durable solutions for migrants and refugees

ELCA Global Mission has broadened its response to the worldwide global migration crisis. Through relationships with global companions and partners, we provide humanitarian assistance, extend a welcome to the stranger, and encourage those in power to work for peace with justice. In 2018, 25 percent of our Lutheran Disaster Response grants went to projects that assist people on the move (refugees, migrants, and internally displaced people) through immediate relief, temporary shelter, psychosocial counseling, and information about their rights. Here are some examples:

Serbia: Asylum Protection Center (APC)

The Asylum Protection Center in Belgrade, Serbia, touches the lives of more than five thousand people a year fleeing Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan. APC offers legal, psychological, and integration support to migrants while fighting prejudice and xenophobia and advocating to improve the country's treatment of migrants. In service for almost 10 years, the APC became nationally recognized as a leader in matters pertaining to refugees and their rights during the 2015 crisis, when almost 600,000 refugees moved through Serbia. Through one-on-one consultations, APC helps migrants obtain proper documentation, understand their rights, and, increasingly, gain access to health care, schooling, and employment. In 2019, the ELCA will support a new APC initiative—a bakery project—which will train and engage asylum seekers and refugees in pastry and catering production and support them as they look for employment and start their own businesses.

Lutherans in Mexico come alongside the “migrant caravan”

The Mexican Lutheran Church is actively responding to the Central American refugee crisis by providing food, clothing, and shoes to the migrants temporarily sheltered at a stadium in Mexico City. Lutherans in Mexico joined the “Migrant Chaplaincy” prayer and

worship network and took part in a cross-border delegation—which included representatives of ELCA Global Mission and the Pacifica Synod—to visit several migrant shelters in Tijuana.

Humanitarian crisis in Yemen

The humanitarian crisis created by the civil war in Yemen has reached an unprecedented scale. Seventy-five percent of the population (22.2 million people) are in critical need of assistance. Food shortages and limited family income have made 17.8 million people food-insecure, and the country is likely headed toward famine. The crisis has resulted in more than 2 million internally displaced people. Lutheran Disaster Response provided an initial \$75,000 to assist Great Britain's Christian Aid and France's Action Contre La Faim in establishing a water, sanitation, hygiene, and cholera-treatment program for nearly 30,000 people in the conflict area, near the town of Hodeidah.

Venezuelan migrant crisis

Venezuela is suffering the worst economic crisis in its recent history. UN figures suggest that 2.3 million Venezuelans (7.5 percent of the population) have left the country, 1.6 million of them (5.2 percent) since 2015. In 2017 and early 2018, more than 4,000 people were leaving every day, the majority crossing over into Colombia. Several congregations in companion churches across Latin America are assisting, mostly in poor neighborhoods where congregations are found and migrants are seeking shelter.

LDR's multicountry/multipronged approach is based on guaranteeing safety and basic human rights for families in Venezuela or families that have emigrated. In 2018, LDR contributed almost \$220,000 to programs located in Venezuela, Peru, Argentina, and Colombia. In Venezuela, through St. Stephen Evangelical Lutheran Church in Florida and the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en Venezuela (IELV), we are providing nutritious food for children and their families in a shelter home and preschool, as well as replenishing the congregations' food pantries. In Peru and Argentina, migrant families seeking assistance at Lutheran churches or from local community organizations are provided with temporary shelter, food, nonfood items, psychosocial counseling, pastoral care, and information about their rights and legal situation. In Colombia, Venezuelan migrants and host communities along the border are provided with vouchers for food, hygiene and sanitation, and supplies for livelihood, as well as pastoral care.

In addition, LDR is supporting a network of local journalists in Colombia and Venezuela to develop an alternative migration narrative, anchored in human rights and intercultural dialogue, that will facilitate the integration of migrants and promote peaceful coexistence with host communities.

Increasing intercultural competence through a global lens

In 2018, Global Mission launched an intercultural competency program to build leadership skills in diverse contexts. The program, which reached some 650 people last year, provides intercultural training, administers the Intercultural Development Inventory, and implements the IDI's educational plans. Among the groups participating in the program are the Multicultural Youth Leadership Academy, Latin America and the Caribbean companion churches and synods,

and six synods of the ELCA (Saint Paul Area, Western North Dakota, Western Iowa, Southwestern Minnesota, Southwestern Texas, and Northwest Washington).

GLOBAL MISSION DEVELOPMENT

Missionary sponsorship

The campaign goal for missionary sponsorship—\$16 million over five years—was met and exceeded in December 2018. New resources are being developed to equip missionaries to raise sponsorship dollars and establish covenants with sponsoring congregations, including a home-assignment toolkit and a peer-to-peer online platform.

Young Adults in Global Mission

While the 2018-'19 cohort of 76 Young Adults in Global Mission are currently engaging in 14 countries around the world, work is underway to prepare for the upcoming program year. The application window for the 2019-'20 program is now closed, with 109 applications received. As in past years, discernment and placement interviews will occur in early spring and assignments will be made in April. The United Kingdom program, suspended this year because of visa issues, will resume in 2020-21. However, due to continuing visa issues, the South Africa program will move to Tanzania for future years.

International Women Leaders

The program, which has received gifts totaling \$3.3 million as part of the *Campaign for the ELCA*, continues to be a top priority as we try to reach our \$4 million fundraising goal by the campaign's conclusion on June 30. On March 8, we once again commemorated International Women's Day with a \$100,000 match provided by a generous family in the ELCA. Texas Lutheran University, a school of the ELCA, will accept students from the program for the upcoming year, bringing to 10 the total number of participating colleges and universities.

Global Ministries

The campaign is also working to meet the fundraising goals of its Global Ministry projects by June 30. Included are projects based in South Sudan, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Zambia.

LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

Last year brought an increase in the number of natural disasters requiring a humanitarian response. LDR has responded to 47 emergencies in 33 countries overseas and 32 emergencies in 19 states/territories here at home.

These disasters included:

- the Venezuelan refugee crisis,
- Indonesian tsunamis and earthquakes,
- the 2018 California wildfires, and
- the 2018 hurricanes.

RACIAL JUSTICE

In 2016, the ELCA churchwide association acknowledged 2015-'24 as the UN International Decade for People of African Descent. The observance provides a solid framework for the ELCA to join people of African descent in taking effective measures to eliminate racism and other forms of discrimination, to acknowledge the contributions of people of African descent, and to promote socioeconomic equality globally.

African-descent communities remain largely invisible to a society indifferent to black life. The legacy of slavery, post-Reconstruction 'Jim Crow' laws, and racial subordination in the United States remain a serious challenge because there has been no real commitment to recognition of, or reparations for, people of African descent. The ELCA will issue an apology to people of African descent regarding Christian communities' complicity in slavery and its legacy of racism.

The "Act Now to End Racism!" initiative, launched by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC), calls on faith communities to tell the truth about their complicity in, and complacency toward, the history of slavery and the legacy of racism within both church and society, and to seek opportunities to advocate for racial justice. In recognition of the UN proclamation, and as a communion member of the NCC, the ELCA commits itself to being a visible witness to confront racism.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

"God's Work. Our Hands." Sunday

This year, we will observe "God's work. Our hands." Sunday on Sept. 8. Across this church, thousands of ELCA members participate annually in this special day of service. There are many resources currently available at ELCA.org/dayofservice, and more will be added in the coming month. Watch for an updated planning tool kit, bulletin insert, worship resource, and customizable posters. Promotion will include emails to congregations and leaders, notices in *Living Lutheran* and *Seeds Monthly*, and numerous social media posts.

Living Lutheran

The magazine has a monthly circulation of 129,087, with 97,943 copies going to congregations, 11,792 individual subscriptions, and 19,455 gratis copies. Individual subscriptions are holding steady, and three-year subscriptions are growing due to a fall promotion. In 2018, LivingLutheran.org had a total of 783,989 page views.

Marketing and digital

In 2018, the Strategic Communications team managed 225 mailed and emailed communications efforts in support of the ELCA and its ministries. From newsletters to event announcements, fundraising appeals to pastoral messages, these communications keep leaders and members informed of our work and invite them to participate. In 2018:

- more than \$7 million was raised from direct-marketing efforts and more than \$5 million from online tools,
- 150,000 resources were ordered from resources.elca.org,

- more than 330,000 members and leaders were reached with email messages from the churchwide organization,
- more than a million people visited ELCA.org, and
- 75 published YouTube videos drew more than 500,000 views.

Social media presence, news stories

Social media posts accounted for 88 percent of the ELCA's "voice" in 2018, with more than 28,000 posts. News mentions accounted for 12 percent, with more than four thousand mentions. This represents a 536 percent increase over 2017, with a potential news reach of 1.1 billion.

In July 2018, the *Three Sides* podcast launched. Currently, *Three Sides* has almost 17,000 unique downloads over seven episodes. According to Libsyn, the largest distributor of podcasts, *Three Sides* is consistently averaging downloads higher than national averages.

Follow along with the ELCA on social media, where our presence continues to grow:

- Facebook (facebook.com/lutherans): 125,000 followers (7 percent increase from 2017)
- Twitter (twitter.com/elca): 24,000 followers (20 percent increase from 2017)
- Instagram (@elca): 10,000 followers (800 percent increase from 2017)

THEOLOGICAL DISCERNMENT

Women and justice social statement

The ELCA Church Council has approved a proposed social statement entitled "Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Lutheran Call to Action." The proposed statement will be voted on at the Churchwide Assembly this summer, needing a two-thirds majority for adoption. The statement covers issues of gender justice in the church and U.S. society. To learn more, visit elca.org/womenandjustice.

Human rights

The ELCA's 2017 social message "Human Rights" is now available in print (in English) and online (in English and Spanish). This new economic social screen for civil and political rights, rooted in ELCA social teaching, was adopted this past year and will go into effect soon. Email your questions to Roger.Willer@elca.org.

Luther's Small Catechism

Inspired by the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, two new treatments of Luther's Small Catechism have been released, one from an Asian perspective and the other from an African-descent perspective. For more information on the former, from the Asian Lutheran International Conference, contact Pongsak.Limthongviratn@elca.org. The African Descent Small Catechism Project will be available to order from Augsburg Fortress; for more information, contact Joseph.Bocko@elca.org.

Justice for Women

The Justice for Women program continues to engage with many different partners to address sexism in church and society through networking, collaboration, presentations, and study

resources. Two main focuses this year have been the aforementioned social statement “Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Lutheran Call to Action” and the ELCA Youth Gathering, where the Justice for Women program hosted an interactive booth titled “#MeToo Hurting and Healing as the Body of Christ.” For more information on the program's ongoing work, visit elca.org/justiceforwomen or contact justiceforwomen@elca.org.

Theological Roundtable

The Theological Roundtable gathers theologians from eight different theological networks in the ELCA to exchange ideas and learn together. The group meets once a year; this year's theme was theological education.

Journal of Lutheran Ethics

The *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* publishes six online issues a year, each focusing on a particular topic. Articles are written at a popular-reading level, with deep Lutheran ethical thinking, and augmented with book reviews. Topics in 2018 included theological education, inter-religious relations, and ELCA social teaching. To explore articles and subscribe, visit elca.org/jle or email jleinfo@elca.org.

YOUTH GATHERING

The ELCA Youth Gathering was held June 27–July 1, 2018, in Houston, Texas. The Multicultural Youth Leadership Event and the tAble (formerly the Definitely-abled Youth Leadership Event) preceded the gathering. Approximately 32,000 people, representing all 65 synods, attended the gathering; 600 people attended MYLE, and about 80 attended the tAble. We had approximately 1,200 volunteers and team members. The theme was “This Changes Everything,” focusing on the life-changing reality of God’s call, hope, grace, and love, and ultimately on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Synod days, hosted by bishops, included bible study, worship, and fellowship. Sixty-seven partners brought an exhibit hall to life with interactive learning opportunities about being church for the sake of the world. Each day, ten thousand people were sent into the city to serve alongside more than 200 community partners.

SEPARATELY INCORPORATED MINISTRIES

ELCA FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

The ELCA Federal Credit Union provides a wide variety of financial services to ELCA members and employees of synods, congregations, and other ELCA-related ministries. More than half of our members are ELCA rostered leaders.

Because the ELCA Federal Credit Union is a financial cooperative, any earnings are returned to our member/owners in the form of lower rates on loans, higher rates on savings, reduced fees, and enhanced services.

Look to the ELCA Federal Credit Union for:

- consumer loans, credit cards, and deposit accounts;
- ministry solutions, including deposit accounts, small loans, and credit cards; and
- full account access via desktop and mobile app, as well as a nationwide, surcharge-free ATM network.

We continue to save our members an average of \$1,500 on loans by refinancing or consolidating existing debt. And we are a proud participant in the ELCA's "Resourceful Servants" initiative, encouraging financial wellness for the church's rostered leaders.

For more information or to become a member, visit elcafcu.org.

ELCA FOUNDATION

The ELCA Foundation has a network of 17 regional gift planners, located across the U.S. and supported by centralized donor and investor services, that provide complementary assistance to the members and ministries of the ELCA, including:

- assistance to ELCA members in creating wills, estates, and other life-giving plans that include a planned or current gift for a ministry of the ELCA;
- investment management services and gift-planning education and resources to support and strengthen ELCA congregations, synods, and ministries; and
- opportunities for ministries of the ELCA to invest in the ELCA Endowment Fund Pooled Trust (Fund A).

Throughout 2018, the ELCA Foundation distributed \$62.9 million to ministries, and the gift planning network assisted ELCA members in establishing \$62.1 million in planned gifts (a 30 percent increase over 2017 results). In addition, \$3.6 million in endowments, charitable remainder trusts, charitable gift annuities, and donor-advised funds were established and \$1 million in current gifts was received through the foundation. Seventy-one new endowment accounts were opened for outside participants, including 66 congregations and two synods, and new assets gathered (from both new accounts and additions to existing ones) totaled \$45.5 million.

MISSION INVESTMENT FUND

The Mission Investment Fund is the lending ministry of the ELCA, making 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, helping to 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's end, MIF had 917 loans outstanding, totaling \$556.6 million.

To fund these loans, MIF offers a portfolio of investments for purchase by synods, congregations, members, and ELCA-related ministries. At year's end, MIF investments totaled \$499.1 million.

MIF is a financially strong and stable organization, with a record of steady, controlled growth. With total assets of \$705.4 million and net assets of \$200.8 million at the end of 2018, MIF maintains a capital ratio of 28.5 percent, which positions it in the top tier of well-capitalized church extension funds. For more information, visit mif.elca.org.

WOMEN OF THE ELCA

Women of the ELCA's Triennial Gathering 2020 will take place in Phoenix, Ariz., July 16–19. The theme, "Just Love," points participants toward mercy, justice, and love. The logo, representing a mural with broken pieces, reminds the church that we are all parts of one body. Information about registering for the event will be posted on welcatg.org later this summer.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly
- 2020 Rostered Ministers Gathering
- 2020 Women of the ELCA Gathering



2019 ELCA CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

August 5-10, 2019 • Milwaukee, Wisconsin



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