



1K CHURCHES INITIATIVE PILOT PROJECT: AN OVERVIEW

Thank you for your interest in the 1K Churches Initiative! This program is a pilot project of ELCA World Hunger, and we are excited to extend an invitation for you to participate. 1K Churches Initiative, developed by Criterion Institute, begins with a five-session Bible study designed to foster conversations within congregations about our role as faith communities in our local economy.

Congregations regularly engage in different economic practices. The 1K Churches project helps ELCA congregations examine how this engagement happens and what it all means for us as people of faith and for our communities. At the end of the Bible study, groups can practice intentional engagement in the economy by providing a small, community-based loan to a local business that aligns with their ministry focus around hunger, poverty and justice. This type of lending, called microlending, is a practice ELCA World Hunger has supported internationally through our partners and companions. The loans provided to participants through these projects can help them grow or launch a business that will help them support themselves and their families. Such loans can be a source of financing for individuals who may not have access to funds through formal financial institutions.

From this process, congregations will be equipped to consider the ways in which community members have access to the resources necessary to earn a sustainable income. This project reflects ELCA World Hunger's commitment to conversations about the larger, systemic circumstances in which hunger and poverty exist, using Criterion's model to continue building faithful and just practices of economic engagement.

Spotlight story of an ELCA congregation from Criterion Institute: Circle of Caring Investors at Our Savior's Lutheran in Lafayette, Calif.

In Lafayette, Calif., members of a suburban Lutheran congregation were inspired by 1k Churches to form a "Circle of Caring Investors" that would regularly invest in local microbusiness. After reaching out through a community development organization to find possible borrowers, the Circle made its first loan directly—via the "Angel Investment" model—to an immigrant-owned landscaping business. The experience has sparked new relationships and deepened the congregation's connection with the surrounding community. When the business owner met with the [congregation's] church council to express his thanks, he said, "I don't know why you trusted us, when no bank would." The loan has been repaid in full and on time. By the time of writing, the Circle planned to make a second loan to a tailoring business run by a woman from Mexico, after a period of consultation during which members with business experience helped her refine her business plan.

1K CHURCHES INITIATIVE: NEXT STEPS

Your congregation is interested in the 1K Churches Initiative. Now what?

- By reading this, you have already started the process! Share this information widely with your congregation and your congregation council and find a committed group of individuals to participate in the Bible study and lending process. Throughout the process, keep the larger congregation engaged and aware of next steps.
- Let ELCA World Hunger know of your interest. Please contact Megan Neubauer at Megan.Neubauer@ELCA.org or by phone at 773-380-2423. She will provide additional program materials, including the 1K Churches Bible Study leader's guide.
- Go for it! Go through the Bible study and use this time to explore this conversation of economic relationships as communities of faith.
- Share your story! We want to learn from your experiences and may ask you to fill out a survey or share your experiences so others can learn from you. However, you don't have to wait until you've completed the process to share your experiences or to ask for additional resources. Reach out to Megan Neubauer at Megan.Neubauer@ELCA.org or 773-380-2423.

We have a tendency to describe our economic systems as though they are outside of our control and unchangeable. We talk about economic forces, upturns and downturns as if they are naturally occurring phenomena. In fact, the rules of these systems are created by humans. And, since we made them up, we can make up something different.

This is why we started the Bible Study with Creation. We wanted to create a space for openness and discovery. We wanted to spur imagination rather than reinforce the belief "but that is how it works."

Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann reminds us: *"The prophet engages in future fantasy. The prophet does not ask if the vision can be implemented... The imagination must come before the implementation. Our culture is competent to implement almost anything and to imagine almost nothing. ... It is the vocation of the prophet to keep alive the ministry of imagination, to keep conjuring and proposing alternative futures."*

Criterion Institute - 1K Churches Bible Study