



LEADING THE WAY AS A DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

Every Sunday after worship, members of St. Paul Thai Lutheran Church in Forest Park, Ill., take part in what might seem like an unusual tradition. They enjoy a potluck meal, and once their food is settled, they engage in some friendly competition—playing badminton.

“Everybody gets to play, no genders or nationalities are excluded from that group,” said St. Paul Thai member Theodore Lietz. The beloved tradition is demonstrative of the congregation’s diverse, inclusive community, which has welcomed people of Thai and other backgrounds since 1985.

More than 30 years later, St. Paul Thai is made up of 70 percent Thai first-generation immigrants, and the remaining 30 percent is a mix of other races, said its pastor, Pongsak Limthongviratn.

In the spring of 2017 the congregation was selected to try out the ELCA’s updated version of One Body, Many Members. This free resource consists of downloadable Bible studies, discussion

questions and activities aimed at supporting congregations on their journeys to welcome every racial, ethnic and class background.

“One Body, Many Members is really just about having us live out our call to go beyond our walls and share the good news and to meet people where they are and how we create worship communities that reflect the wider diversity of this world,” said Judith Roberts, ELCA racial justice ministries director and resource facilitator.

It can help any congregation facilitate conversation about diversity, regardless of its location or maturity. In the case of St. Paul Thai, the resource provided meaningful enrichment to an already thriving community.

“Diversity makes us strong,” said Monta Limthongviratn, a lay minister at St. Paul Thai. “We don’t exist only for Thai people, but because we live as a diverse community, we try to respond to the needs of other people.”

▶ Watch a video of St. Paul Thai’s badminton fellowship and more at ELCA.org/SOFIA.

Your Mission Support dollars are used by the ELCA churchwide organization to create resources like One Body, Many Members (ELCA.org/Onebody), which aid congregations in their efforts to reflect the diverse country the United States is becoming.

To read more stories, visit ELCA.org/SOFIA and download a copy of Stories of Faith in Action.



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