



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

“For Such a Time As This” Joint Call to Prayer, Fasting, and Advocacy

We are coming together as leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and The Episcopal Church to oppose deep cuts to programs that are vital to hungry people struggling with poverty. We make this call in anticipation of the May 21 Global Day of Prayer to End Famine. We highlight the importance of foreign assistance and humanitarian relief as members of the World Council of Churches.

We also make a call to pray, fast and advocate not just on May 21, but throughout the 115th Congress. At the invitation of Bread for the World, we join with ecumenical partners and pledge to lead our congregations and ministries in fasting, prayer and advocacy, recognizing the need to engage our hearts, bodies and communities together to combat poverty. As the call to prayer articulates:

We fast to fortify our advocacy in solidarity with families who are struggling with hunger. We fast to be in solidarity with neighbors who suffer famine, who have been displaced, and who are vulnerable to conflict and climate change. We fast with immigrants who are trying to make a better future for their families and now face the risk of deportation. We fast in solidarity with families on SNAP, who often run out of food by the last week of the month.

Domestically, Americans throughout the country are struggling with poverty, and many government-funded programs allow them to care for and feed their families. As we look overseas, we must acknowledge that foreign assistance and humanitarian relief can help address regions confronting famine and food insecurity, including South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and Lake Chad Basin. We will challenge proposals to eliminate or defund proven anti-poverty programs, at home and abroad.

The story of Esther provides encouragement for our fasting, prayer and advocacy. Esther, a Jew, was the wife of the Persian king. When plans were made to slaughter all the Jews in the empire, Esther's cousin Mordechai pleaded with her to go to the king and use her voice to advocate for them, even though this might place her life in danger. He urged her not to remain silent, as she may have been sent “for such a time as this.” Esther asked people to fast and pray with her for three days to fortify her advocacy before the king, resulting in saving the lives of her people.

God's intention is the flourishing of all people, and we are called to participate in God's loving purpose by standing with our neighbors who struggle with poverty and hunger. Following the [Circle of Protection](#) ecumenical fast in 2011 to fortify the faith community in opposing cuts to vital anti-poverty programs, we may have also have been prepared “for such a time as this.” We commit ourselves to and invite our members to one day of fasting every month to undergird our efforts to convince our members of Congress to protect poverty-focused programs.

The Most Reverend Michael B. Curry, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church
The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America