

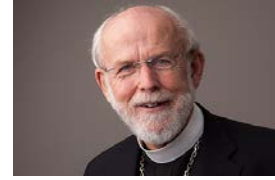
Message on ELCA's 25th Anniversary

from Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"

- 2 Corinthians 5:17

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is the church that shares a living, daring confidence in God's grace. We are a church rooted in Scripture, tradition, the Lutheran Confessions and the rich histories of our congregations. It is through God's grace that we are made new day by day to proclaim Jesus Christ and boldly participate in God's work. As Luther said, this faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing.

As we celebrate our 25th anniversary, we get to look back at the people and events that have shaped us as a church. We celebrate the stories that have made us vibrant and distinctive yet brought us together as nearly 10,000 congregations, 65 synods and numerous churchwide ministries freed in Christ to love and serve neighbors in our communities, our country and around the world.

What God has done through us is indeed worth celebrating. In 25 years, we have:

- Started 435 new congregations
- Ordained nearly 8,000 pastors
- Sent more than 2,000 missionaries to serve around the world
- Contributed more than \$350 million toward the alleviation of hunger and poverty

The year of our 25th anniversary begins Jan. 1, 2013, with the theme "Always being made new." I invite you to join me in celebrating these 25 years together in Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul writes, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"

In Jesus Christ we are not unchanged. It is through our willingness as a church to boldly participate in God's work in the world that we are made new day by day. I am grateful for your leadership, support and prayers in making the work of this church possible.

Thanks be to God!

In God's grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark S. Hanson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America