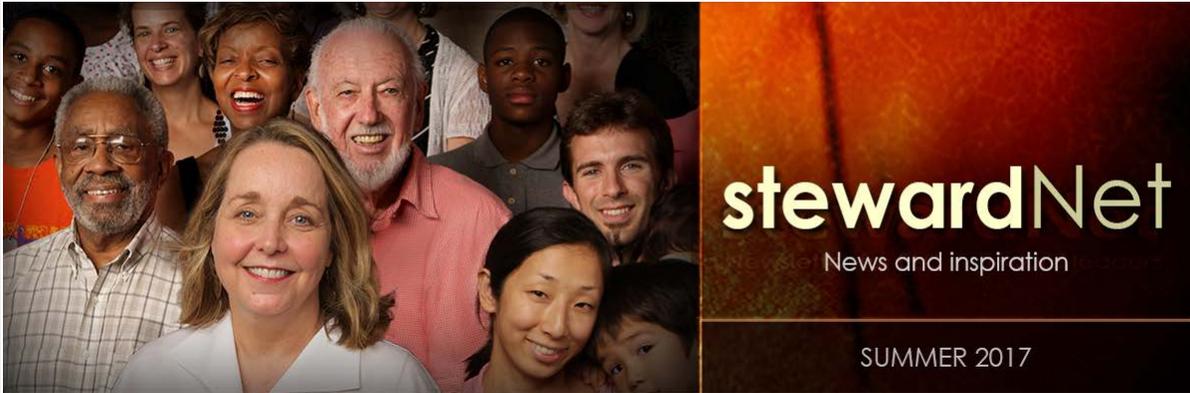


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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



Dear friend in Christ,

At the end of last year, I was attending my congregation's council meeting at which the proposed 2017 budget was presented for the first time. As we were going through the various line items, first on the income side and then later expenses, we came to the line for Mission Support. "This is the 10 percent that goes to the ELCA." It was an easy entry to cover because for years my congregation has given 10 percent of our regular member giving to Mission Support.

As we moved on to other items in the budget, I wondered how many council members sitting around the table understood what that meant. Was that 10 percent a tax we had to pay for being Lutherans? Maybe it was something like a franchise fee for being able to participate in the ELCA? When the narrative isn't obvious, our minds kick into gear and create an explanation of our own, correct or not.

I decided at the end of the presentation to speak up. I said that while we are going through this I would like to go back to the line about Mission Support and talk about that a bit more. I stated there is a whole ecology of Lutheran ministry and mission that our congregation participates in beyond what we do directly. After mentioning a few things like world hunger, missionaries, campus ministry, Lutheran colleges and universities and seminaries, I concluded by saying that most likely the Lutheran church is the most important organization that we belong to for changing the world as Jesus would have us do, and this is how we make that possible. As leaders in stewardship, we need to always be connecting the flow of funds to the mission and impact those dollars make possible.

Hopefully, this issue of stewardNet will give you some ideas and resources to help you inspire others and advocate for the ministry we do together as made possible by Mission Support.

We are a church that is energized by lively engagement in our faith and life. Thank you for doing God's work with a faithful, generous heart!

Faithfully,

Steve Oelschlager
Stewardship Program Coordinator
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Mission Support
It's all about mission!

Yes, it's true. Mission Support is a dollar amount shared from congregations with the synod. Synods and the churchwide organization steward Mission Support to fund ministries within the ELCA and to share with partner ministries such as Lutheran Social Services, campus ministry, outdoor ministry, and ELCA colleges and seminaries. But Mission Support represents so much more than a dollar amount. Mission Support represents our connectedness as a church and our desire to respond to God's call to love and serve our neighbor in as many places as we can across our nation and around the world. In other words, it's all about mission! Here are some [tips, talking points and discussion questions](#) you can use in your



congregation to make the connection between Mission Support and how we, as a church, respond to God's call and participate in God's mission. For more information about Mission Support, please contact [Victoria Flood](#) or [Nick Kiger](#) from the ELCA Mission Support Team. You can listen to Victoria during stewardTalk on Aug. 24 at 3 p.m. Central discuss "How Mission Support Supports Our Mission" (connection information is below under Upcoming Events.)

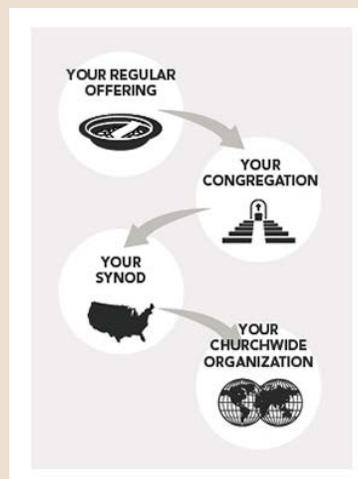
#1 Mission Support question

Where does my offering go?

When talking with people about growing Mission Support, the most frequently asked question is, where does my offering go? This question shouldn't be surprising; we want to be responsible and accountable stewards. Many households regularly budget to understand where their money goes. Similarly, your church, the ELCA, provides a detailed analysis of where dollars received are spent.

[See that breakdown](#) for the most current year available. Many households also want to know how their contributions are making a difference in the lives of others.

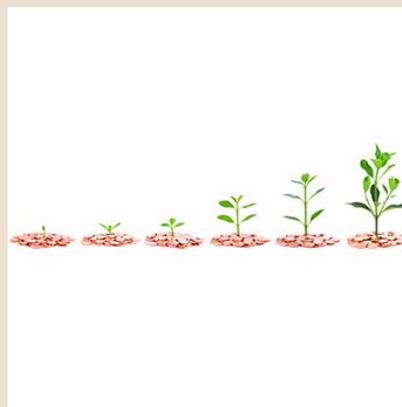
[Read some stories](#) of faith in action.



Growing in our generosity

Approaches for member and congregational giving

How did the new coach, Dave Brailsford, lead the British cycling team to a win at the Tour de France in three years when they had never had a cyclist win the race before? He used a strategy of incremental improvement, looking for 1 percent gains in a variety of areas. Instead of focusing on a result that seemed impossible, Brailsford switched the emphasis to the decisions, choices and habits that accumulate in the long run to make a significant difference.



Interested in growing giving and Mission Support? For many, the idea of tithing or something greater seems insurmountable. So, what about looking for 1 percent

improvement instead? How might this give individuals and congregations a workable plan to grow in their generosity? Read more about the Dave Brailsford [story and strategy](#). [Click for ideas](#) on how to grow Mission Support.

The power of story

Mission interpreters tell

Literature professor and noted author Jonathan Gottschall once said, "Humans simply aren't moved to action by 'data dumps,' dense PowerPoint slides, or spreadsheets packed with figures. People are moved by emotion, and the best way to emotionally connect other people to our agenda begins with "Once upon a time ...".

It follows then that as we try to do more of God's work with our hands we need to be telling more stories. Stories about how members of ELCA congregations make a difference in the lives of others by what they do and what they give toward that mission. Telling stories about how our Mission Support dollars shared among congregations, synods and the churchwide organization keep us connected and help make more God's mission in the world possible.

One way we try to tell more stories is through the ELCA Mission Interpretation ministry. When congregations have a mission interpreter, a storyteller, sharing stories on a regular basis, it helps members feel more emotionally connected to the work we do together as the church.

If you'd like to grow this ministry in your congregation, take a look at this [sample congregational plan](#) for mission interpretation. Please contact [Denise Ballou](#) for more information.

Other items of interest

Resources, learning opportunities and more

- ALDE is an international community of fundraising and communication professionals that is rooted in the Lutheran tradition of the Christian faith and dedicated to serving God's people in the church and the world. ALDE offers a variety of benefits including [webinars](#), [events](#), networking, mentoring and more. As you strive to inspire your constituents to grow in their faith and generosity, perhaps ALDE can help you with some new ideas and approaches.
- The ELCA Federal Credit Union was created by the ELCA to provide additional financial services to ELCA members, employees of synods, congregations or any other ELCA-related ministry. Family members of current members of the credit union are also eligible to join.

The credit union is the first of the ELCA's financial ministries to offer individual consumer loans, so, as an ELCA member, you now have access to a wide range of financial services.

With the church as its sponsor, the credit union operates in ways that are consistent with the church's values, making it a socially responsible way to do your banking. [View a video](#) or [get more information](#).

- StewardTalk is an interview series from the ELCA with authors and thought leaders on stewardship topics. [Listen](#) to past recordings, including the June conversation about planned gifts with Darren Walloch from the ELCA Foundation. Join stewardTalk on Aug. 24 at 3 p.m. Central for Victoria Flood on "How Mission Support Supports Our Mission" (connection information is below under Upcoming Events.)
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Sayings, quotes, thoughts

African proverb

If you wish to go fast, go alone. If you wish to go far, go together.

Biblical foundations

John 15:8

My father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

Upcoming events (watch the [calendar file](#) for details)

Aug. 24

stewardTalk

Victoria Flood on "How Mission Support Supports Our Mission".

3 p.m. Central on [Zoom](#) or dial 408-638-0968 with meeting ID 486 825 786

Nov. 29 – Dec. 1

Nashville, Tenn.

[Generosity Next: Are We Doing All We Can?](#)

April 3-5, 2018

Dallas, Texas

Pathways to Generosity: Signs of Hope

[Full calendar](#) | Subscribe to [Our Calendar File](#)

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Find ELCA stewardship resources online



We'd love to hear from you! Have a link or idea you want to share in our next issue? Email stewardnet@elca.org.

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