

## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

*You're receiving this email because you or your congregation indicated you are a stewardship leader in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). If you'd prefer to unsubscribe from this newsletter, please [let us know](#).*

Dear friend in Christ,

The environmentalist John Muir said, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." I am reminded of this quote when I think about a comment at a recent stewardship conference. One of our counterparts from the Church of the Brethren asserted that for our denominations to be healthy, we need our congregations to be healthy. To me, a logical extension is to recognize for that to happen, we need our households, families and individuals to be healthy too.

Continuing this thought, at the same event leaders from the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving described the current paradigm shift in religious giving away from what they called institutional-centered giving toward donor-centered giving. That is to say that generosity is flowing less out of concern for the needs of the institution (the demand side) and strategies that use themes of duty, obligation or guilt. Instead, more and more, generosity seems to be a response to inspiring, nurturing, cultivating and transforming people (the supply side) to understand the master narrative for their lives as "blessed to be a blessing." Joining these ideas together suggests that the health of our congregations (and denominations) is a function of the transformation of our households, families and individuals.

While all of that might make sense in theory, when resources are needed (and when aren't they?), the temptation always is there to "pick out" narrowly defined stewardship practices and strategies as if they were a stand-alone motivator for resourcing the church. And when we do that, how much of a surprise is it to realize the results will be "hitched" to a broader picture of faith formation, discipleship, evangelism, vision, mission, congregational vitality and so much more? This issue of stewardNet tries to explore some of these relationships and connections.

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!

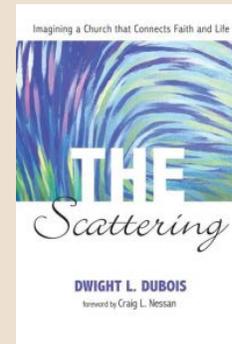
Faithfully,

Steve Oelschlager  
Stewardship Program Coordinator  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## Imagining a church that connects faith and life

"The Scattering" by Dwight DuBois

Lutherans love to talk about the priesthood of all believers and ministry in daily life. The Rev. Dwight DuBois suggests in his [recent book](#), however, that we unintentionally overlook this fundamental tenet by articulating, advertising and celebrating the official ministries of the church to the near exclusion of those ministries God calls us to in our daily lives. For example, what does it mean when we install and celebrate new council members or Sunday school teachers but don't similarly elevate how people make a difference as parents, accountants or citizens? [Watch](#) DuBois talk about how we might better create an environment to equip everyday saints to connect their faith with all of life.



---

## Life of Faith Initiative

Stirring up a culture change

What if we learn to speak of "the expressions of the church" first as the people themselves, as well as the congregations, synods, churchwide, and other agencies and institutions? That is what the Life of Faith Initiative, a grass-roots movement in the ELCA, seeks: a culture change that frees us to make the service by the baptized in the arenas of daily life the central focus of the church's mission. Learn more through the initiative's [website](#) and join the conversation and movement through its [Facebook page](#).



---

## Resolutions for the new year

Growing giving in your congregation

The start of a new year is a wonderful opportunity to pause, think about the year ahead and resolve to make some changes. If you're focusing on your faith community, here are some questions to consider:



- What could you do differently or more intentionally this year to bring more lives to Jesus Christ?
- What are some appropriate resolutions to make if your congregation is seeking greater financial well-being?

Without ignoring that your congregation's financial well-being is symptomatic of a bigger picture of health and vitality, here are four resolutions to grow giving in your congregation. [Read more](#) at Living Lutheran or [download the article](#) as a PDF.

---

## Congregational stewardship resources

Materials for a year-round emphasis

Are you looking for easy ways to implement ideas about keeping stewardship themes on the front burner throughout

the year, not just at pledge time? Here are a few [samples](#) from Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Libertyville, Ill., including a monthly e-newsletter called [Journey](#), print newsletter articles, book titles for a lending library and more. If you would like to share your work and ideas with others in the ELCA, send your files via [email](#) to share them at the same [URL](#).



---

### **An interconnected church**

Stories of greater impact together

Relationship. Connection. The Merriam-Webster dictionary says these words are synonyms, of similar meaning. Both deal with the idea of two or more people or things being linked or "hitched" together.



The different expressions of our church connect more than 3 million members and more than 9000 congregations with 65 synods and a churchwide organization. Each expression, while independent, is also in relationship (hitched) with the other, doing God's work in our communities, nation and around the globe. Through this connection – this relationship – we are able to accomplish above and beyond what we do individually.

Mission Interpreters in congregations tell stories of missions in our communities, our synods and our church's global outreach – stories of how we are the church together. As members hear these inspiring stories of the wonderful mission we do together and meet the people whose lives have been changed, they feel more connected and are often drawn into deeper relationship with God's mission.

If your congregation would like to know more about how we are connected as the church, hear the stories of God's mission in the world, and draw your members into more mission-minded thinking, consider growing a mission interpreter ministry in your congregation. For more information, contact [Denise Ballou](#).

---

### **Other items of interest**

Resources, learning opportunities and more

- The ELCA website has more than 300 resources on a wide variety of stewardship topics, from managing finances to caring for creation and leadership. [Click here](#) to start exploring! Even more stewardship resources can be found at the [Congregational Resource Guide website](#) maintained by the ecumenical Center for Congregations.
- The Executive Certificate in Religious Fundraising training offered by the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving is earning more praise from ELCA participants. The training is a four-day, intensive course that provides the research, tools and customized training to meet the growing needs of leaders in congregations, synods and beyond. The focus is on the cultural, organizational and philanthropic practices unique to religious institutions. [Click](#)

[here](#) for more information, including dates and locations of upcoming classes.

- StewardCast is a free webcast on Saturday, March 4, from 9 to noon Central time to thank, inform, teach, inspire and connect current and new steward leaders with fresh perspectives, practices and skills that address the challenges and issues faced in stewarding our congregational and community contexts. The intended audience includes individual rostered and lay leaders, congregational stewardship committees and teams, and synodical mission support and stewardship tables. [Register here](#) to receive future details.

---

### **Sayings, quotes, thoughts**

Teilhard de Chardin

“Above all, trust in the slow work of God.”

---

### **Biblical foundations**

John 15:5

I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

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

Feb. 14-17

Norfolk, Va.

Association of Lutheran Development Executives

March 4

StewardCast web event on stewardship "bright spots" in the ELCA.

[Sign up for more information.](#)

April 20

StewardTalk with Dr. Leah Schade

3 p.m. Central at 877-820-7831 and participant code 6314685#

[Sign up for more information.](#)

April 25-27

Washington, D.C.

Generosity Now: Stewardship Fusion II

Featuring author J. Clif Christopher

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

**Get connected** | 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](mailto:stewardnet@elca.org).  
If you'd prefer to unsubscribe from this newsletter, please [let us know](#).

[Privacy Policy](#) | [ELCA.org](#) | [ELCA Community member?](#) [Manage your preferences](#)