

FOR FAITHFUL SUPPORTERS OF ELCA MINISTRIES

CIRCLE

Leadership

Fall 2022

NEWSLETTER

ELCA.org



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me”

(Matthew 25:35-36).

Dear friends in Christ,

As members of the ELCA, transformative service is one vital way that we express our faith. Whether you help at your church’s soup kitchen, provide pastoral care for a congregation, volunteer as a Sunday school teacher, organize for justice in your community or welcome your neighbors around you, your service to others is part of God’s call to a healed and reconciled world. In addition to your local work, every time you support ELCA ministries, you offer food to the hungry, welcome to a stranger and care to the sick.

As one of the most generous and steadfast supporters of ELCA ministries, you are a member of the Leadership Circle. The Leadership Circle is composed of committed, faithful and generous ELCA members who care deeply about the ministries the ELCA does as church together. As such, we want to make sure you have access to important and timely updates about these ministries directly from program directors.

Flip through these pages, and you will hear the latest updates on our response to the crisis in Eastern Europe. You will learn about the expanded work of ELCA World Hunger in response to rising challenges. You will celebrate with ELCA Fund for Leaders as the program observes its 25th anniversary. You will read about the new cohort of Young Adults in Global Mission that left for service recently after a two-year hiatus in the program. In these ministries, God’s generosity flows through all of us into the life of the world.

For your steadfast faith and the privilege to steward your abundant gifts, we thank you. Your generosity makes the dynamic work of this church possible.



In peace,

Rachel Wind

Rachel Wind
Executive for Development
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

On the cover: Staff and volunteers from Hungarian Interchurch Aid distribute water and diapers to a refugee shelter close to Lviv, Ukraine. The shelter serves about 150 refugees — some staying for just a couple hours and some staying for extended periods — most of whom are women and children who have fled the war in other parts of Ukraine. With your gifts, Lutheran Disaster Response is accompanying Hungarian Interchurch Aid and other companions in Eastern Europe by sending funds to ecumenical partners.

Credit: Antti Yrjönen, Finn Church Aid

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HOW TO GIVE

ONLINE:
[ELCA.org/donate](https://elca.org/donate)

PHONE:
800-638-3522

MAIL:
Make checks payable to “ELCA” and mail to:
ELCA, P.O. Box 1809,
Merrifield, VA 22116-8009

This year ELCA World Hunger-supported programming is budgeted to expand project spending by almost 13% over last year. This expansion comes as the world faces challenging levels of food insecurity. However, this is just a temporary increase made possible by special gifts over the past 18 months. Our program staff are prepared to work at this higher level permanently, but that depends on whether the increased giving to ELCA World Hunger can be sustained.

Better equipped and better resourced, we are responding together to neighbors that face greater challenges and decreased opportunities. The church and our partner organizations are helping people in communities support one another. Using time-tested approaches adapted to new realities, we are often sought out because, as our partners say, "Lutherans can be trusted. They care, and they know how to get things done right."

This program expansion is made possible through the increased generosity of thousands of donors, including you. We are incredibly grateful to all donors, but this growth was made possible by those of you who expanded your gifts of \$1,000 and above, either once or collectively throughout the year.

Some give through a special offering in their congregation. Many give by mailing in gifts or going online to contribute to ELCA World Hunger. Many of you "top off" your general gifts with ELCA Good Gifts that support our work to address hunger. For all these types of gifts and more, we thank you. None of this is possible without your faith and God's abundant love.



Daniel Rift

The Rev. Daniel Rift

Director, ELCA World Hunger and
Lutheran Disaster Response Funding



ELCA WORLD HUNGER MARKS WORLD FOOD DAY



We had a wonderful time celebrating World Food Day on Oct. 16 with our special virtual host, Rick Steves! Thank you so much to everyone who was able to join us and celebrate together. Did you miss the event? You can view the recording at [ELCA.org/LeadershipCircle](https://www.elca.org/LeadershipCircle).

GET TO KNOW

MARIE ANNE SLIWINSKI



Marie Anne Sliwinski is the new senior director for Building Resilient Communities (BRC) in the Service and Justice home area of the ELCA. Marie Anne has 20 years of experience working in the nonprofit sector, 14 of which she dedicated to international humanitarian and development programs. She holds a master's degree in international relations from the University of Chicago and currently resides in the Chicago suburbs with her husband and two children.

BRC integrates ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response to accompany Lutheran ministries, synods and congregations in the United States as well as companion churches and ecumenical partners around the world. Their goal is to help these ministries fulfill their diaconal missions to meet human needs, enhance human dignity and support sustainable development and humanitarian assistance programming.

"I believe that Future Church has given us the opportunity to take courageous steps toward nonconformity — to dream alongside people and communities who have been historically minoritized, and to cross the imaginary line in the sand that separates our international and domestic programs, as well as disaster and development work. The changing climate and the pandemic have taught us time and time again that we are all humans living in one precarious yet robust world, where we strive to hold on to faith, hope and, above all, love. My team and I are committed to serving vulnerable communities through the trust and generous contributions of our Lutheran constituents."

*Best,
Marie Anne*

BETTER EQUIPPED ...

About two years ago, churchwide staff for ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response, both national and international, were brought together into one team called Building Resilient Communities. As challenges in the world became more complex, we streamlined our structure for greater synergy and efficiency between our programs.

FOR GREATER IMPACT

This year ELCA World Hunger has approved 187 international grants, ranging from \$5,000 to \$340,000, to support the dynamic work of this church, our companions and our partners. In the United States, we collaborated with synods to support projects at congregations in 35 states. We expect that your generosity will make 2022 the largest-ever program year for ELCA World Hunger, with expenditures that will exceed the rate of inflation.

WHO SITS AT THE TABLE?

The intentional commitment of the ELCA toward engaging a younger and more diverse community of participants in the mission of this church has been a guiding star for the work of ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response. At the same time, our work addressing hunger and disasters has been a unique avenue for building community with those who have often felt unwelcome or out of place in the church. By uniting the work of ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response into the Building Resilient Communities team, we have an opportunity to engage vulnerable communities around the world. This has allowed for a deeper and broader engagement toward the flourishing of human community and creation through network-building, sustainable development and humanitarian assistance programming. Together we are focused on better knowing the communities we are called to serve, and being better known by them in return.



EASTERN EUROPE CRISIS RESPONSE

As ready as we are for the unexpected, we can hardly believe how much the world has changed. When we began this year, no war raged in the Ukraine. Now, because of steady work, millions of people uprooted by war and instability are finding new hope.

We are yoked together with others who are committed to serving their local neighbors. Never have we been more confident of these treasured relationships. The flow of people within Ukraine and past its borders has presented unique challenges, yet the Lutheran churches and community organizations in Poland, Slovakia, Romania and Ukraine itself have boldly faced these challenges, expanding work in line with their gifts and expertise.

Without missing a beat, we were able to extend financial support for this work, confident that we would receive donations to cover these initiatives. We knew we could count on you to show up for your neighbors in Ukraine, and show up you did – more than \$11 million has been raised by the ELCA to support work in Eastern Europe, and that number grows day by day.

Those gifts have been hard at work, showing our neighbors in Eastern Europe that we care. Building on the very first response efforts, work has now expanded in Ukraine and other neighboring nations due to our connections to churches of other denominations and partners through ACT Alliance. Implementing partners provide food, temporary shelter, cash assistance, hygiene kits, medical care and pastoral counseling to those recently arrived from Ukraine. Though we ready ourselves for the unknown, we also commit to continued support in and around Ukraine for years to come.

CONFLICT IN NORTHERN AND EASTERN AFRICA

While the world looks to the terrible conflict in Ukraine, a potentially even more devastating crisis is unfolding in northern and eastern Africa. Drought, conflict and economic change are driving what could be widespread famine. This is the worst drought in more than 40 years, and millions of people face food insecurity, declining hygiene and the loss of crops and livestock. There has been a significant uptick in migration. Lutheran Disaster Response is supporting ACT Alliance's Horn of Africa drought appeal to bring relief to people impacted by severe drought in Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia. Though Lutheran Disaster Response is accompanying partners to address immediate needs, the coordinated work of ELCA World Hunger has greater potential to prevent a wider crisis and address long-term solutions.

Daryna (name changed) plays at an aid station at the Ukrainian-Hungarian border where Hungarian Interchurch Aid is assisting Ukrainian refugees. Her family fled from near the Crimean Peninsula.

Credit: Antti Yrjönen, Finn Church Aid



DOMESTIC DISASTER RESPONSE

During the first half of 2022, Lutheran Disaster Response—U.S. supported synods, congregations and Lutheran Social Services as they provided immediate relief to people affected by severe storms and tornadoes in the Midwest, and long-term recovery support to address shelter needs for families in Florida and Colorado. When violence occurred in Uvalde, Texas, and Buffalo, N.Y., Lutheran Disaster Response assisted synods in providing pastoral care and counseling to communities affected by the tragedy. In the aftermath of Hurricanes Ian and Fiona, Lutheran Disaster Response is working with partners and synods to support communities with water, food supplies, clothing, gift cards, tarps and other needs, as well as preparing for long-term recovery ahead. By the time of this publication, many more responses had been initiated. You can find more information about the most immediate disaster-response efforts at [ELCA.org/disaster](https://www.elca.org/disaster).



POLAND

Kornelia Rudkowska, an International Women Leaders student from Poland, was finishing her first year at Newberry College in Newberry, S.C., when she learned about an opportunity to work with Ukrainian refugees back in her home country. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) operates a cash assistance program in Poland for new arrivals from Ukraine, and Kornelia began working for it this summer with her friend Klaudia.

“This job isn’t simple – I needed to learn the basics of Ukrainian language and get to know their culture,” Kornelia says. “We are helping them by registering them in our program and giving them a little bit of money to help them to accommodate in our country. Every day, I am back at home super-exhausted, but happy because I’m making a world a little bit better than yesterday for them.”

Kornelia has since returned to the U.S. for the fall semester. Her experience illustrates one of many reasons the International Women Leaders program exists: When you give, you not only form future leaders – you support and cultivate current leaders.



EASTERN INDIA

Asia Regional Representative Chandran Paul Martin listens to the stories of displaced people from Myanmar in a camp in eastern India. Thousands of people, many of them from the ELCA companion Mara Evangelical Church, have fled their homes and villages due to oppression and fighting with the military regime that took over the country in 2021. Lutheran Disaster Response is providing continued assistance to these displaced people, both within Myanmar and in neighboring countries.

CAMBODIA

Bon Ma and her husband received training in vegetable production and climate-resilient growing techniques through an ELCA World Hunger partner in Cambodia supported by your generosity. They are now vegetable suppliers of a local market and can afford to send their two daughters to school, with dreams of their daughters being teachers one day. Life With Dignity, a Cambodian-led organization, accompanies rural households susceptible to poverty, especially women and youth, to increase their agriculture-based livelihoods and vocational skills capacities through a combination of technical skills training, sustainable agriculture techniques and micro-enterprise development.



innovation

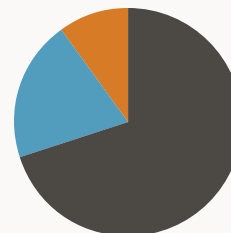
In spring 2021, the ELCA churchwide office was restructured in alignment with a new "Future Church" design, which refocused our collective efforts on the goal of engaging 1 million new, young and diverse people. Innovation is a top priority as we embark on this journey together, and we are already tackling this goal from many different angles — including the creation of a unit specifically focused on innovation. The Innovation team is tasked with helping the ELCA think about new ways to live out our shared purpose: to activate each of us so that more people know the way of Jesus and experience community, justice and love. The emphasis on innovation encourages the organization to ask important questions, learn from one another and dream big.

One such project began in fall 2021: the Innovation team conducted a research study to explore the question: "How do Generation Z people (about 10 to 25 years old today) who do not know the ELCA experience and understand meaning, purpose and belonging?" The insights from the study have informed the work of the Innovation team throughout 2022.

The goal of engaging 1 million new, young and diverse people also requires us to think differently about our budget and make a strong commitment to innovation across the ELCA churchwide structure. Over the next three years, we aim to migrate 30% of our time, energy and resources to reaching new people.

By 2025, the goal is for our churchwide budget to reflect the following:

- **70%** of our resources committed to the core work of the church.
- **20%** of our resources committed to reimagining existing ministries to reach new people.
- **10%** of our resources committed to new ministries to reach new people.



As one of our most generous supporters, you make this bold exploration possible. You are a vital part of building the innovative church of the future. Thank you!

1997 **25**th 2022 Anniversary

FUND FOR LEADERS CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

This spring we kicked off the Fund for Leaders anniversary celebration with a special matching-gift campaign. Thank you to all those who made a special gift to honor this milestone! During this time 350 new supporters joined the cause. With each gift, we grow closer to our ultimate goal: fully supporting all our candidates for rostered ministry in their study at ELCA seminaries.

Over the summer Fund for Leaders released a new video series. These stories showcase ministries across the country — Virginia, North Dakota and Arizona — that are thriving under the leadership of Fund for Leaders students and alums. Congregations were encouraged to share the videos and pray for the ministry on Sunday, Aug. 14. These videos are available on the 25th anniversary webpage, ELCA.org/FundforLeaders25.

In addition to returning to our in-person scholarship award celebration, we're also hosting smaller 25th anniversary celebrations in several locations this fall. It is a true joy to celebrate all we've accomplished together with students, alums and those who have made significant investments in our future leaders. Thanks to the generosity of so many across this church, we gave away over \$1 million more in scholarship support this year than we did just five years ago! With God's help, and yours, we look forward to similar growth in the years to come.

Marissa H. Krey

The Rev. Marissa Krey
Director, ELCA Fund for Leaders



"The Fund for Leaders 25th anniversary celebration overflowed with gratitude, faith and promise. Scholarship recipients, donors and leaders alike delighted in an inspiring 'feast of victory.' Thanks be to God for the real and timely impact the fund is having on our beloved church!"

**—Rev. Mark Bernthal, chair,
Fund for Leaders Leadership Table**

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE SPOTLIGHT: MEET BETH WILLIAMSON

Beth Williamson has supported Fund for Leaders since the early 2000s and has established named scholarships in memory of both her mother and her husband.



My late husband, Bob, was a career U.S. Air Force officer and physician. During assignment in Florida, the Tampa conference of Women of the ELCA decided to establish a Fund for Leaders scholarship. As part of the campaign, I heard that most seminarians graduate with more student debt than medical students and yet have no prospects of large salaries to pay back the debt in a reasonable time. Because I was the wife of a physician, that struck a chord with me.

As a result, when my mother passed away, I used most of that money to endow a Mission Developer scholarship in her memory, the Delilah (Dee) E. Ross fund. When Bob died in August 2021, our children and I discussed what we should do to honor his legacy. The military was an important part of his life, so it was an easy decision to begin a Federal Chaplaincy scholarship in his memory.

Bob was always willing to be a lector or worship assistant wherever we were stationed, either at a local congregation or at the base chapel when we were in England and Germany. He was even the worship assistant while deployed to Balad, Iraq. Because our family knows from his experience how important chaplains are to those who serve in the military, this scholarship fund in his honor brings us great joy.

NEW TEEM SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORTS 80 CANDIDATES

Fund for Leaders is thrilled to expand scholarship assistance to TEEM (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries) candidates for the 2022-2023 academic year. The TEEM program is for students already serving as leaders in their worshiping communities. Their ministry formation is accelerated and highly contextualized. Rather than leaving their congregation to be trained at seminary and sent anywhere in the church, TEEM candidates commit to theological education and formation while simultaneously serving the communities that nurtured their call. TEEM students study at home with local pastors serving as mentors, coming together for on-campus learning three times a year.

In the program's inaugural year, Fund for Leaders is awarding \$5,000 to each of these 80 students! This represents approximately 62% of their tuition cost and can be used to help with travel or lodging expenses if their tuition is already covered by other sources. The TEEM program is an invaluable tool as our church strives to raise up leaders who both reflect and can speak to the cultural diversity of our communities. Gifts received for this new scholarship will not be invested in the Fund for Leaders endowment but will go immediately to support current students.

faith

MEET THE FUND FOR LEADERS' NEWEST CLASS

This year Fund for Leaders is thrilled to support 52 new students with Full-Tuition, Mission Developer and Federal Chaplaincy awards. These students come from 28 synods across our church. Among this year's Full-Tuition recipients, the average age is 36 and the majority (68%) will attend classes remotely rather than relocate to a seminary campus. This year's class also includes 11 deacon candidates.

In total, Fund for Leaders will distribute nearly \$3.5 million in scholarships to 375 students over the course of the 2022-2023 academic year. After 25 years Fund for Leaders now supports nearly one out of every three ELCA seminary students!

Wanda Frenchman is a TEEM scholarship recipient and leads the Native American Urban Ministry in Phoenix, Ariz., with her mother.

In the face of many global crises, we might have trouble seeing God's grace, mercy and love at work. Nevertheless, your support to the global church is a reminder that God's faithfulness to God's children is endless. A strong church community is a steady presence to those facing challenges around the world. Just as our own home congregations offer a warm embrace when we need it most, our global companion churches show God's love to members and neighbors every day. Let us not grow weary in doing good, for the God who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion — in due time, we will reap a harvest of joy, hope and love.

Asanteni sana — thank you very much — for this partnership in caring for and serving God's people.



Rahel Mwitula Williams
Director, Global Mission Funding



Left to right: Marta Ndimulunde of Namibia, Dinah Murekatete of Rwanda, Sophia Chung of Malaysia and Beulah Yusuf Amos of Nigeria are current and former IWL scholars who have studied at Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory, N.C.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN LEADERS

The International Women Leaders program is excited to welcome a new incoming class of scholars for the 2022-23 academic year. Based on their leadership and commitment to service, these new scholars were selected to receive shared financial support from the ELCA and the colleges or universities they will attend. They join three other classes of current IWL scholars in the program. Please join us in welcoming:

- **Allanah Carron**, representing the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Suriname and studying economics and statistics at St. Olaf College.
- **Blessing Nozipho Dlamini**, representing the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe and studying peace and justice at Wartburg College.
- **Ingrid Kurtz**, representing the Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Unida in Argentina and studying environmental science at Lenoir-Rhyne University.
- **Limakatso Ramokoena**, representing the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa and studying psychology and theater at Augsburg University.
- **Naghm Boulos**, representing the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and studying psychology at Luther College.
- **Ninelihle Dube**, representing the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe and pursuing global studies at California Lutheran University.
- **Sthandiwe Mhlongo**, representing the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa and studying nursing at Concordia College.

YOUNG ADULTS IN GLOBAL MISSION

We are excited to welcome new volunteers into the Young Adults in Global Mission program after a two-year hiatus!

The newest group of Young Adults in Global Mission volunteers recently left for service. In August, 24 young adults embarked on a journey to walk alongside communities in four country programs: Senegal, the United Kingdom, Argentina/Uruguay and Jerusalem/West Bank. Our group is small compared to what we have experienced in the past, but we believe that with your love, prayers and support, God will return the program to its previous abundance.

"Thank you for investing in the Young Adults in Global Mission program. Thank you for investing in young adults like me. Together, we are changing the lives of young people. We are deepening the relationships with our global companions, and we are transforming the world."

—Chelsey Johnson, Young Adults in Global Mission alum, Cambodia



The 2022 cohort of Young Adults in Global Mission gather together for a retreat in August before leaving for their country programs.

generosity

CONGREGATIONAL STEWARDSHIP AND GENEROSITY

ELCA WHERE NEEDED MOST

Your financial support of the ELCA Where Needed Most fund has been a blessing, whether we're striving to live into the new Future Church design or carrying out our shared mission to activate the entire church so that more people might know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love. The new design is based in the strong belief that all expressions of our Lutheran faith must work together to share a powerful witness of the gospel in the world — inviting more new, young and diverse people to experience God's grace in action while engaging our current members in new, innovative ways.

In the last year, many ideas have been birthed out of the creative and innovative ways our communities and congregations are engaging in Future Church. One example is the exciting work unfolding in our Young Adult Ministry, which has launched two new programs — ABIDE and Gather. ABIDE is a digital faith community for young adults in the church. It follows a community-led model in which members meet in small groups every week for a month of discussions shaped by their small-group leaders. Gather was created in response to young adults who sought in-person gatherings with others near them; it offers grants to these gatherings, giving them the resources to invite friends into community for meals, fellowship, prayer and worship.

This is one of many program areas supported by the generosity of our partners and donors to ELCA Where Needed Most. Your gifts are realizing the mission of the ELCA in amazing ways. I personally invite you to continue to pray for the next generation of Lutherans and to check out what they're doing by visiting linktr.ee/ELCAYoungAdults.



DeWayne Cook

DeWayne Cook
Senior Director, Mission Funding



Mark W. Olsen

The Rev. Mark Olsen
Senior Director, Congregational Stewardship and Generosity

As generous as Leadership Circle partners have been to ELCA churchwide ministries, your participation in and support of ELCA congregations is also critically important. The generosity expressed in turn by congregations in their communities through their synods and often directly to ELCA churchwide ministries is likewise impactful and funds the mission and ministry of our church.

In recognition of the vitally important role of ELCA congregations, our Congregational Stewardship and Generosity (CSG) team was established last year as a next step in the ongoing progression of our partnership work with congregations. Part of the Development team, the CSG team assists congregations and synods with resources, training and education to help strengthen their stewardship ministries. The CSG team engages with congregations toward strengthening all aspects of their generosity to include ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response, ELCA Global Mission (including missionary sponsorship) and the ELCA Fund for Leaders, as well as through Mission Support sharing and ELCA Foundation participation.

Our CSG team invites and celebrates the generosity of congregations and, because we recognize the crucial role members of our Leadership Circle play in helping to make ELCA congregations the vibrant and faithful communities of faith that they are, we also know that we work in partnership with you!

For the leadership, faithfulness and generosity that you share with your congregation, thank you! Your active involvement with your congregation is what helps make Christ known and enables the ministry of our church to change and transform the lives of people around the world.

CIRCLE Leadership

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FALL 2022



Thank you for your partnership!

Your ELCA Mission Funding team.



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
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[ELCA.org/LeadershipCircle](https://elca.org/LeadershipCircle)

Visit the Leadership Circle website to access the latest updates from the ELCA's churchwide ministries.