



ADVOCACY IN SERVICE TO OUR NEIGHBOR

**“Our charity is essential to help that child receive their daily bread after going without it. ... The reality is justice-work is only one or two steps beyond what we are already doing. By *listening, learning, and opening ourselves for change* we can modify existing service to both meet the immediate need in front of us while looking to address the root causes of hunger, division, and fear in our world.”**

—Advocacy [resource](#) from Hunger Network Ohio, an [ELCA-affiliated state public policy office](#) (SPPO)

Thank you for considering advocacy in service to our neighbors with your “**God’s work. Our hands.**” activity, expressing your congregation’s love and community presence.

## LETTER-WRITING

People of faith can advocate in many ways. Perhaps your congregation’s involvements and coalitions, or an [ELCA-affiliated state public policy office](#), suggest something you can do in your locality. Or perhaps you’d like to invite your congregation to write a letter to a policymaker on a timely matter advancing in our society.

When an elected official hears from constituents, your personal convictions and local experiences can have an impact.

- Visit the [ELCA Action Center](#) for digital Action Alerts reaching lawmakers regarding current priorities in the federal legislative dialogue.
- Some of us prefer to express ourselves using pen and paper. The accompanying “**God’s work. Our hands.**” template letter can be customized to include what you want to share with your elected official.



## GETTING STARTED

Start by identifying elected officials in your area. You can find federal legislators using [govtrack.us](https://govtrack.us) and state and federal legislators using [openstates.org](https://openstates.org). You may want to go to the legislator's website, explore their committee assignments and legislative priorities, and maybe even refer to them in your letter.

We've provided a basic template to get you started, but it does not have much information on it – on purpose. When you reach out to your elected officials, what carries the most weight is what you know about your own community and from your own experience.

- Themes to reflect on in your letter might include **hunger and nutrition (local and global), environment and creation care, and voting rights**.
- What will **set your letter apart** is your personal story and values, the experience and ministries of your congregation (such as a food pantry or meal program) and your own reflections on how the issue at hand impacts your community. Andrew Fuller, ELCA program director for economic policy, explains, “With members of Congress now receiving an overwhelming amount of generic petition correspondences by email, unique and personalized messages from their direct constituents carry more value, priority and influence than ever before, according to surveyed congressional staff. Taking time to write your own message, including local stories, district-level statistics and personal faith values demonstrates to lawmakers that this is an issue you care about and that it warrants their concern.”

The SPPO Lutheran Advocacy–Minnesota confirms this:

“It is in relationship with their constituents that our legislators know what we care about, and why. ... Letters can be written during a special time in worship, before or after a meal, as part of a forum or in small groups. It is effective to collect the letters as an offering to God, and to pray that legislators will be moved by them. Remember that we do this as part of our faith, acting as God's advocacy ambassadors for love of neighbor and creation.”

## DELIVERY AND THANKS

Send your collected day-of-service letters to ELCA Witness in Society to be delivered to lawmakers:

**ELCA Washington Office**  
**10 G Street Northeast, Suite 490**  
**Washington, D.C. 20002**

The Rev. Amy Reumann, senior director of ELCA Witness in Society, reminds us, “As the people of God called and sent to the world, our public testimony is always an opportunity to proclaim a hope-filled witness to the good news of Jesus Christ through civic engagement in our communities.”

Thank you for your advocacy, and have a wonderful “**God's work. Our hands.**” day of service!



## LETTER TEMPLATE

Here's a sample – and some of the elements – to guide what YOU want to write! Use the following blank page to write your letter, then send it to ELCA Washington Office, 10 G Street NE, Suite 490, Washington DC 20002 for delivery to lawmakers.

Date	● —	Month, Day, Year
The Honorable [name] United States Senate 123 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510	● —	Use proper title; if you're not sure, look it up online: <a href="http://emilypost.com/advice/official-forms-of-address">emilypost.com/advice/official-forms-of-address</a> .
RE: ???	● —	List subject you want to discuss
Dear Senator [name]:	● —	Use proper form of address
As a Christian, your constituent and a resident of [town], I am writing to you about...	● —	Begin by clearly stating your strongest point or position.
My congregation in your district, [name], operates a food pantry that serves over 200 of our neighbors and members every week...	● —	Include a personal story or experience to illustrate why the issue is important to you and how it affects you, your neighbors and your community.
Sincerely,		
[signature]	● —	Ask for a response if you desire one, being sure to include your contact information with your signature.
[Name] 123 Main Street Our Town, WI 12345 abc.xyz@email.xyz		Sign, then print your name, and be sure to include your address.



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