

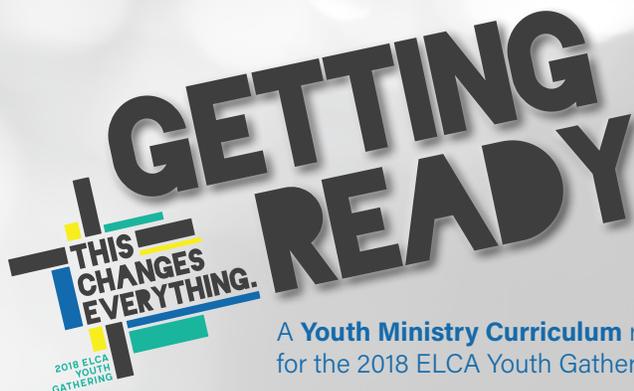
APRIL:

GATHERING FOR **ADVOCACY**

PART 1



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



GETTING READY

A **Youth Ministry Curriculum** ramping up
for the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering

Shishmaref is a fishing village in Alaska that is on an island only 3 miles long and a quarter-mile wide in the Chuckchi Sea, just north of the Bering Strait. The village has 560 residents and one church, an ELCA congregation. It's the type of place where nothing seems to change; for generations, the people have been hunting and fishing for food like their ancestors did. But slowly, and without the consent of the Alaskan Native Inupiaqs who live in Shishmaref, the island has been changing.

"Over the past 35 years, we've lost 2,500 to 3,000 feet of land to coastal erosion," said 20-year-old Shishmaref native Esau Sinnok in a letter to the U.S. Department of the Interior. "In the past 15 years, we had to move 13 houses – including my dear grandma Edna's house – from one end of the island to the other because of this loss of land. Within the next two decades, the whole island will erode completely."

On Aug. 16, 2016, by a narrow majority of 11 votes, the residents of Shishmaref decided to move the village inland after homes began falling into the sea due to land erosion from the lack of barrier ice.

According to the United Nations, an estimated one person every second has been displaced by a natural disaster since 2009. From droughts in Somalia to floods in Pakistan and Superstorm Sandy in the United States, there isn't a part of the world that hasn't been affected by the extreme weather events and shifting climate patterns attributed to global warming.

In 2013, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly passed a memorial to evaluate investment in fossil fuels, saying, "The increase in trapped heat changes the climate, causing altered weather patterns. These changes in weather are already measurable. They range from multi-year droughts to extreme storms and flooding and rising sea levels." With all this information, we need to be better informed about these effects on people and what this means for their displacement.

This session will focus on climate migration and how it affects people's lives as well as migration brought on by violence and strife in people's countries.



GATHERING CONNECTION:

The Gathering will feature migration in Service Learning, Interactive Learning and post-Gathering resources. Texas is a hub of human migration from Central America and Mexico. There is an Immigrant Detention Center close to Houston in Texas. As a church, we respect all human life and strive for justice and peace in all the world. At the Gathering, there will be opportunities to learn about human migration, so you can make a difference in your community and beyond.

HANDBOOK TIMELINE:

April 2017 | Collect Gathering liability and medical release forms from participants. Acquire necessary information for tax-exempt status in Texas.



MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Bible
- Christ Candle
- warm-up sheet in large print
- markers or sticky notes
- match game sheet copies

GATHER (15 MINUTES):

Warmup

As the youth enter the space, encourage them to use the large-print version of the question "What does migration mean to you?" and markers (or sticky notes) to write their answers. (Expect answers that relate to birds or animals.)

Call the group together when you are ready to begin the session. Ask them to share what they wrote and why.

The Intro

There are many types of migration – animals migrate seasonally. In our media today, we hear a lot about human migration, particularly people from the Mediterranean migrating west and people from Central America migrating north. Human migration is the movement by people from one place to another with the intention of settling temporarily or permanently in the new location. Typically, it involves movements over long distances and from one country or region to another. Migration can be voluntary or involuntary.

Gathering Prayer

Ask a volunteer to lead the gathering prayer.

Prayer for Welcome from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services.

Lord, please remember all who come to America as refugees, especially children separated from their families. Lead them to safe homes, that they might live in peace and be reunited with loved ones. Amen!

Lord, please remember all who have fled their homelands to seek asylum in the United States, especially those in detention. Grant them strength and hope to endure, and grant them protection in our country. Amen!

Lord, please remember all who have found refuge or asylum in the United States. Bless and prosper their families in their new homeland, and inspire their new communities to embrace them and the gifts they bring that enhance our communities. Amen!

Lord, please remember churches, agencies and individuals that serve vulnerable newcomers. Give them wisdom, patience, perseverance and love to minister effectively. Amen!

Lord, thank you for opportunities to welcome newcomers. Guide me that I might continue to be a blessing for their lives as you have been for mine. Amen!

Experiential Learning: Migration Game

(attachment – will take about 20 minutes)

To explore migration a bit more, we are going to participate in a Central American learning experience called a “dinámica.” All the children and families mentioned in this dinámica are real, though their names have been changed for their safety. Their situations were shared directly with the creators of this curriculum.

This experience is a basic matching game. The leader should print out the table below and cut out each of the family situations and outcomes, individually. You will end up with 20 cards. Have participants figure out which person matches with which outcome. (You may want to make multiple sets and break into small groups depending on your group’s size. We recommend groups of four to five people.) Give participants five to seven minutes to talk and choose their matches.

After all matches have been made, go through their matches to see how they did by reading the detailed paragraphs for each match. This dinámica was NOT designed to teach you to choose the right answer. It WAS designed to create an opportunity for conscious learning, self-awareness, and reflection on our theme of human migration. As we move toward exploring Scripture together, let’s hold these children and families in our hearts and minds, keeping their humanity present with us as a living reminder of who we are learning about as “the migrant.”

WORD (30 MINUTES):

God’s Story – Scripture

Jesus was a refugee

When exploring this passage, a map can be used to focus on tracing the journey of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, starting from Bethlehem. Each section of the Scripture can be read, while using the map to show movement and talking about what the reasons are for moving. Start by reminding the group that this part of the story is right after the magi visited Jesus in Bethlehem.

Read **Matthew 2:13-23**.

Have the group pay attention to the topic of migration as they listen.

Discuss the passage:

- What were the reasons for migration: threat of death of Jesus by Herod; return to the land of their ancestors, but to a different place – not their hometown
- Notice the citizen status: They move from being a citizen of Bethlehem to a foreigner in Egypt.
- Children who did not migrate were killed.

Our Story - Living Advocacy

The opening activity focused on migration from Central America, however, people from all over the world are migrating due such things as war, famine, climate change, violence and terrorism. We hear a lot in the news about Syrian refugees and others from the Mediterranean who are also migrating en-masse. What do you know about immigration? What have you heard in the news or from family members?

LEARN:

Watch the following video clip. Pay attention to which words pop out at you.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_B9wtsibMwM (4:08 min.)

LISTEN:

- What emotions did you feel as you listened to this piece of spoken word by Lamyaa Hanchaoui?
- How does what you heard and saw in the video agree or disagree with what you hear and see in the media? (TV, social media, radio, etc.)
- It may be necessary to acknowledge that not every youth comes from a household or community that agrees with this. These can be divisive issues. We are focusing on how we are being called by God to engage in the world and show love for every human being (and all things for that matter!).

CONNECT:

Read the case studies taken from two essays written by students at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg who traveled to Central America to study human migration.

Visit to Tomolá

Essay #1:

"Climate change is a major factor that is contributing to the migration crisis. Drought, shortened growing seasons, blight, and other climate-related factors have made subsistence farming no longer a feasible way of life. We visited a village that has banded together to form a co-op of sorts. They have four large grain silos in a community storehouse. Each member of the co-op would buy into the reserve by contributing a bag of corn. At one point the entire reserve was full. Now it is completely empty. We knew that this most certainly did not bode well for Tomolá's future.

The community was holding a workshop when we visited to try to learn about different types of seeds and agricultural practices to make their way of life sustainable again. They are doing everything right, and yet they still struggle because of climate change.

In spite of the fact that they have so little, they showed us radical hospitality. One of the best meals we ate was prepared and served by women in this community. They would not accept payment or reimbursement for their efforts. They showed love to us as their neighbors who were visiting. The concept of community and caring for one another was ingrained in every fiber of their being. The love these people had for one another, and for us, was apparent. They do not want to leave their home, however, they may not have a choice in the future."

Visit to Tomolá

Essay #2:

"After an amazingly generous lunch, we made our way to a meeting that occurred inside the community storehouse. The first to speak to our community was one of the male leaders, who was also president of the grain cooperative that had begun

years back. He told us his story of traveling to the United States to work for three years to send money back home to cover the hospital bills and medicine for his sick father in Honduras. Despite his efforts, his father did not get better and eventually died. He seemed distraught that his dangerous and hard journey had not brought his father back to health. After his father died, he returned home to be with his family ... only to discover an imminent grain crises.

Next, a woman shared the story of her son who traveled to the United States to work and send money back to his mother for a brother who had been sick. They did not have money for medicine, and so her son's sacrifice of the journey north and his hard work were the lifeblood for his brother back in Honduras. Over time, they were able to pay for the medications with the remittance money; the sick son became well, and the son returned to Honduras to be with his family. The stories of migration from Tomolá were similar with extreme poverty, brought on by climate change, as the root cause.

The community had begun a grain storage cooperative process years prior, when there had been enough corn to go around. Each member would contribute a certain amount into the grain stores, which were held in common in silos within the grain house. When times were hard and there was not sufficient corn and sorghum, people would take from the grain stores what was needed. A drought had come upon the community over the prior two years, leading to the depletion of the entire grain supply. As the community described their dire situation, they knocked on the metal silos so that we could hear the emptiness inside resounding into the space around us. Though in crisis, the community was clearly bound together in hope for a different future.

I couldn't help but think about the story of Joseph from Genesis, where famine led to his brothers coming to draw from the king's grain house. The story of Joseph ended with reconciliation and sharing of resources; however, the story of Tomolá is taking a different route. There are no resources to be shared; and the ones who are most responsible for climate change are not in relationship with the ones most affected. The sound of the knocking on the silos was the sound of injustice – the sound of emptiness – but also the sound of expectation and desire for a new “camino” (way) in the days and years to come.”

Discussion:

1. What was the overall theme or themes that you noticed from the two versions of this visit?
2. Who or what is responsible for the plight of the people of Tomolá?
3. What can these people do differently to better their situation?
4. What can we do differently to better their situation?

ENGAGE:

The ELCA is committed to many forms of advocacy. Recently our church began an initiative called AMMPARO.

AMMPARO is a holistic, whole church commitment by the ELCA, as a church in the world, to accompany children today and in the future.

The word “amparo” in Spanish means “refuge,” the protection of a living creature from suffering or damage. The ELCA's strategy to Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO, elca.org/Resources/AMMPARO) was envisioned after witnessing the plight of children who are

forced to flee their communities because of complex and interrelated reasons, including chronic violence, poverty, environmental displacement and lack of opportunities in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. Due to our connection to companion churches in the region, including companion synod relationships, and existing ministries in the U.S., the ELCA is well-positioned to help ensure that these vulnerable children are protected.

In a holistic, whole church response that connects international and domestic outcomes, the ELCA has developed this strategy based on the following commitments:

- uphold and guarantee basic human rights and safety of migrant children and their families;
- address the root causes of migration in countries from Central America's Northern Triangle and Mexico and the treatment of migrants in transit;
- work toward just and humane policies affecting migrants in and outside the U.S.; and
- engage as a church body with all of its companions, affiliates and partners to respond to the migration situation and its causes and to advocate for migrant children and their families.

As brothers and sisters in Christ, the ELCA is called to bear witness to the conditions affecting so many communities and find solutions that will acknowledge the humanity in all of God's children. Join us in making a difference in the lives of vulnerable children and families.



Have youth teach your congregation about AMMPARO.

SENDING (5 MINUTES):

Gather around the Christ Candle and ask someone to share the following prayer.

Sending Prayer

A reading from Exodus: "When a foreigner resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the foreigner. The foreigner who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the foreigner as yourself, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."

Blessed are you, Lord Jesus Christ. You crossed every border between divinity and humanity to make your home with us. Help us welcome you in newcomers, migrants and refugees.

Blessed are you, God of all nations. You bless our land richly with goods of creation and with people made in your image. Help us be good stewards and peacemakers, who live as your children.

Blessed are you, Holy Spirit. You work in the hearts of all to bring about harmony and goodwill. Strengthen us to welcome those from other lands, cultures and religions that we may live in human solidarity and in hope.

God of all people, grant us vision to see your presence in our midst, especially in our immigrant sisters and brothers. Give us courage to open the door to our neighbors and grace to build a society of justice.

Source: Pax Christi

Go and Do Likewise - (Blessing and Sending)

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Joseph was an involuntary immigrant. His family voluntarily migrated due to famine and climate change. Naomi and Ruth also migrated due to famine and climate change. Jesus was a refugee who fled rampant violence and certain death. The ELCA advocates for and embraces immigrants and refugees. May God bless you with a fiery passion to advocate for others:

- **Stand up** – educate yourself and know the issues.
- **Stand with** – speak out and share what you know.
- **Stand for** – do something, so that others might see the love of Christ reflected in you.

St. Paul reminded the community of the Ephesians: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” This changes everything!

Amen.



MIGRATION GAME

This game is a basic matching game. The leader should print out the table below and cut out each of the family situations and outcomes, individually. You will end up with 20 cards. Have participants figure out which person matches with which outcome. (You may want to make multiple sets and break into small groups depending on your group size. We recommend groups of four to five people.) Give participants five to seven minutes to talk and choose their matches.

FAMILY & SITUATION	OUTCOME
<p>Domingo family – Gang violence in their congregation's neighborhood, including a Sunday school student getting shot in the head close to the church.</p>	Migrated to another neighborhood in the city.
<p>Ramirez family – Violence and no job opportunities in their neighborhood in the city.</p>	Moved out of the city into the countryside of Honduras.
<p>11-year-old Gustavo and his 9-year-old brother Alejandro – Abusive stepmother and gang violence, causing them to not be able to go to school. They spend their days looking for recyclables to bolster the family's income.</p>	Walked from Honduras to Guatemala; begged to stay at an orphanage there; deported to Honduras; repeated migration attempts.
<p>44-year-old Paola – No job opportunities and a single mother who left an abusive husband. She needs money to pay for her children's school and sick mother's medication. She worked in the U.S. and was deported. She's on her way back to the U.S. seeking more work.</p>	Paid a lot of money for a work permit that ended up being illegal; dropped off at border fence; broke an ankle crossing; worked in the U.S. for 10 years; returned to Guatemala to be with family.
<p>Tita, a mother, with her 9-year-old-son, Julio – Displaced by increased tourism in their town.</p>	Deported by bus on a 15-hour bus ride with no stops.
<p>16-year-old Lupita – Unable to go to school because of the cost and threats of violence.</p>	Made three attempts with a coyote (human smuggler) enduring hunger and "treated like a dog" by Mexican police.
<p>25-year-old Sandra – Because her address is in a gang neighborhood, no one will hire her.</p>	Worked in Mexico for six months to make money and returned home to be with her baby.
<p>17-year-old Juan – He wants to be reunited with his mother, who is in the U.S.</p>	Was made to watch a gang rape, was robbed, and was threatened to be killed by gangs on the way north. He turned himself in.
<p>27-year-old Guillermo – A drought has left his village without a crop to farm and sell. His father is sick, and his family cannot afford the hospital bills.</p>	Worked and sent home money for his father's hospital bills. His father died while he was away.
<p>22-year-old Miguel – His brother is sick and can't afford the medication. Climate change has left him without a job and food.</p>	Worked and paid for brother's medication and returned home to be with family.

MIGRATION GAME

Discussion:

It's OK if you haven't finished or if you are not sure of an answer. This was not designed to teach you to choose the right answer. It WAS designed to facilitate conscious learning, self-awareness, and now a time of reflection so that we can counter prejudice and stereotypes that our environment and media throw at us.

OK, let's talk about our matches. Most of these statistics are from 2014, the most accurate and recent we have.

1. Let's talk first about two Honduran families, the **Domingo and Ramirez families** who lived in a gang neighborhood with increasing violence. They were active in their Lutheran congregation, until a Sunday school student was shot in the head. Both families moved out of that neighborhood into another neighborhood within their country.

- 174,000: That is the number of people in 2014 who were displaced internally within Honduras, mostly due to gang violence. We often think of the large numbers of people who migrate north to the U.S., but there is very significant migration occurring both within countries and now southward.

2. 11-year-old **Gustavo** and his 9-year-old brother, **Alejandro**, were fleeing an abusive stepmother and gang violence. They walked from Honduras to Guatemala to an orphanage, where they wanted to stay. They were deported back to Honduras and have since made several more attempts north.

- 518 percent: That is the percentage of increase of children under 12 years old migrating from 2013 to 2014. (1100 to 5700 children).

3. 16-year-old **Lupita** was unable to go to school because of the cost and threats of violence. She made three attempts north with a coyote, enduring hunger and said she was "treated like a dog" by Mexican police.

- 306 percent: The largest increase in minors who are migrating is girls (1,800 in 2013 to 5,500 in 2014)

4. **Tita**, a mother, and her 9-year-old son, **Julio**, were displaced by an increase in tourism. This is happening to many Guarafina families in Honduras. They reached the U.S.-Mexico border and then were deported by bus on a 15-hour ride with no stops.

- 70,000: That's the number of people in family units who were deported from the U.S.; the number of people in family units deported from Mexico is much higher.

MIGRATION GAME

5. 44-year-old **Paola**, a single mom who needed money to pay for her kids' education and her sick mother's medicine, paid a lot of money for a work permit that she thought was legal. She was dropped off at the U.S.-Mexico border and broke her ankle jumping the fence. She worked in the U.S. for 10 years, sending back money to pay for her kids' school and her mother's medication. She is now back in Guatemala with her family.

- 235,413 people like Paola were deported from the U.S. in the 2015 fiscal year.

6. 27-year-old **Guillermo** and 22-year-old **Miguel** are from the same village. A drought left them without work and food. Both of them had sick relatives and migrated to work and send money back home. Guillermo's father died while he was away. These men are the majority demographic of who is migrating, which also happens to be the most educated and able to work demographic.

- 17, 16 and 10 percent: These are the percentages of the gross domestic product that are coming into Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala as remittance money. This money feeds the political and economic systems of the country but does not strengthen communities to not need to continue to migrate.

7. 17-year-old **Juan** tried to migrate to be with his mother in the U.S. On the way through Mexico, he was kidnapped and robbed by a gang that made him watch women be gang raped. He escaped and turned himself in to be deported. His trauma stays with him today.

- 70,000 is the number of children who were deported from the U.S. who were traveling solo, many like Juan who were trying to reach their mothers.

8. 25-year-old **Sandra** migrated because she could not get a job to support her baby with her address being in a gang neighborhood. She went to Mexico and worked for six months before returning home to be with her baby.

- 107,814 to 235,000: While the U.S. reported 42 percent less deportations in 2015 than in 2014, the number of people deported from Mexico went from 107,814 to over 235,000. The problems leading to migration are not going away; we are just not seeing as many people reach the U.S. The U.S. is financing the Mexican efforts; however, the violation of human rights has sharply increased in Mexico.

So now I would like you to just take a couple of minutes and talk in your small groups about what you have noticed or learned that you hadn't thought about before. What stood out to you? What surprised you? What were you feeling as you learned about these children and families? You have about five minutes.

APRIL:

GATHERING FOR **ADVOCACY**

**PART 2:
GOING
DEEPER**

Advocacy seeks to ensure that all people, particularly those who live at the margins or are vulnerable in our culture, have their voices heard. Advocacy is not done on behalf of another group but calls us into partnership with those whose voices we wish to amplify. Each of us is called to be an advocate, to lend our voices to a cause that sparks passion in our hearts. Advocacy is a particular kind of leadership that each of us can engage in daily.

Did you know that the ELCA has an advocacy office in Washington, D.C., and public policy offices across the country? Each year, the ELCA sets an advocacy agenda, helping members of the church engage in issues affecting the most vulnerable in our society. Read about the ELCA Advocacy 2017 Priorities here: download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/ELCA_Advocacy_priorities_public.pdf; or watch a video about their work here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5bXIUXVixg>.

“Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow” (Isaiah 1:17).

“Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.” – Howard Thurman, theologian and civil rights activist.

This session will help us look at our advocacy work in our daily lives.



GATHERING CONNECTION:

Advocacy seeks to ensure that all people, particularly those who live at the margins or are vulnerable in our culture have their voices heard. Advocacy is not done on behalf of another group but calls us into partnership with those whose voices we wish to amplify. Each of us is called to be an advocate, to lend our voices to a cause that sparks passion in our hearts. Advocacy is a particular kind of leadership that each of us can engage in daily.

The Gathering helps us come into partnership with the voices we need to amplify. The Mass Gatherings, Service Learning, Interactive Learning and Synod Day will help us shape our calling for partnership when we return home, calling us to action. The Gathering lifts up ways we can do just this!

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Bible
- Christ Candle
- warm-up sheet in large print
- markers

GATHER (15 MINUTES):

Warmup

As the youth enter the space, encourage them to use the large-print version of the word “advocacy” to write down what they think this word means or ways they have done advocacy.

Call the group together when you are ready to begin the session. Ask them to share what they wrote and why.

The Intro

Advocacy seeks to ensure that all people, particularly those who live at the margins or are vulnerable in our culture have their voices heard. Advocacy is not done on behalf of another group but calls us into partnership with those whose voices we wish to amplify. Each of us is called to be an advocate, to lend our voices to a cause that sparks passion in our hearts. Advocacy is a particular kind of leadership that each of us can engage in daily.

Gathering Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to lead the gathering prayer.

In your eyes, God, all life has dignity. All people are worthy of your love and care.

None are left alone, none left behind: those who have no livelihood; the sick, the elderly and those with mental health challenges; the imprisoned and the migrant. All are your children, equally worthy of your blessings, and, in turn, equally worthy of the advocacy of the people of God.

Christ is our voice in the world. Show us, Lord, how to love our neighbor and care for the ones lost to the flock. Jesus spoke so that we might understand. He taught, so that we might learn. He acted, so that we might effect change in our lives and the lives of others. And he gave his life so that we might live in the grace of God. Jesus’ Spirit remains with us moving us to look with different eyes, hear with the ears of one who loves their brother and sisters and act to ensure that life is protected in every way.

As your church, we stand as one, asking for the protection of those who cannot protect themselves. We pray for justice for those who have no voice. In your name, we pray. Amen.

WORD (30 MINUTES):

God's Story – Scripture

Read **Isaiah 1:17**.

Take a few minutes to reflect on the verse.

Next, read this quote: “Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.” – Howard Thurman, theologian and civil rights activist

What is each calling us to do? After a few minutes of discussion ask each participant to create two lists. You can do this individually or as a group.

Hand out paper and pens. Have the youth write the answers to the following questions on their paper. For one list, write responses to the following questions:

- What is God calling us to do in the Isaiah verse?
- What are some ways you can live that out?

For the other list write responses to the following questions

- What makes YOU come alive?
- What are your passions in life?

Now look at these two lists side by side.

- Are there places where they overlap?
- What ways can you use your passions to live out God’s call to care for the oppressed?
- Discuss ways each member of your group can use their passions to live out God’s call to servant leadership.

As you prepare to engage in servant learning in our community and at the Gathering, you are called to SHIFT your mindset. By focusing on Stories, Healing, Intersections, Faith and Togetherness, you are called into leadership in partnership with others. This partnership is called advocacy.

Our Story – Advocacy

Before you serve: Discover Project Row Houses

Rob Lowe is an artist who wanted to use his passion for art to spark change in Houston’s Third Ward. The ThirdWard is a predominantly African American area where many people live in poverty. Lowe wanted to find a way to use art to change the lives of the people in this neighborhood. By working with a coalition of artists and foundations, he purchased a row of houses built in the historic 3rd Ward, creating Project Row Houses.

The project uses art to celebrate African American culture and history as a way of transforming the community. Project Row Houses now owns 40 houses, each used to support the connections between art and the neighborhood. Some provide low-income houses, seven house a program for young, single mothers, and others are home to visiting artists who spend a year in residence creating art and working with the people of the Third Ward. The artists and staff hold weekly tutoring sessions, support first-generation college students, host free public art shows, and provide opportunities for local entrepreneurs to start small businesses. It is a central part of the community it serves.

Project Row Houses exists because a team of artists identified a way to connect their passion for art and their desire to make change. Like all the partners for the Gathering's Service Learning Day, their success is built on the ability of a team to see the needs of a community and respond from their unique point of view.

LEARN:

Visit the Project Row Houses website and learn more about the artists and how they use art to support activism and cultural awareness. projectrowhouses.org.

- What are some things you discovered about this advocacy work and how might it fit in with your passions?
- Did it spark any ideas for you?

LISTEN:

Watch Kid President on leadership: youtube.com/watch?v=KdL4o7wU0CQ.

- Do you see yourself as a leader?
- What does this video remind us about leadership?
- How can we use our leadership skills to do the work of advocacy?

CONNECT:

When people attend the ELCA Youth Gathering, they become a part of one of the largest servant organizations in the country, a movement calling people to use their passions to service alongside others. For those going to Houston, you will learn about partners like Project Row Houses and work with them to serve. But the movement doesn't end after your day of service! We are called to create lollipop moments and continue this movement in our own neighborhoods by using the skill of advocacy.

ENGAGE:

Share the following ways that your group or individuals could engage in advocacy:

- We can be advocates by writing letters supporting the work of partners whose values are like our own.
- Use the ELCA Advocacy toolkit as a jumping point for advocacy work found here: elca.org/en/Resources/Advocacy#Toolkit.
- Help each youth to choose a cause, learn about a partner, and write that organization a letter asking how they can be part of that group's work.
- Encourage youth to share why that organization inspires them. Include a reply address or email so that the organization can respond to your requests.
- Using this format of LEARNING, LISTENING, CONNECTING and ENGAGING, take time to learn about at least one local organization your congregation can partner with in an ongoing mission to be part of the SHIFT movement. Stories, Healing, Intersections, Faith and Togetherness – this has the power to change everything.



Engage the congregation in using the ELCA Advocacy Toolkit.

SENDING (5 MINUTES):

Sending Prayer

Gather around the Christ Candle and ask someone to share the following prayer.

(Portions attributed to Martin Luther King Jr.)

God of compassion, "We need leaders not in love with money but in love with justice. Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter." Let our voices not be silent but used to speak up for those who cannot be heard. Guide our actions and our voices to bring justice for all into this world. In your name, we pray. Amen.

Go and Do Likewise - (Blessing and Sending)

When I say, "Stand up," we all stand up. When I say, "Stand with," put your arm around your neighbor's shoulder. When I say, "Stand for," mark the sign of the cross on the forehead of someone beside you.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Mary was called to be the mother of God – to love, nurture, raise and protect Jesus until he was grown. Elizabeth was called to proclaim God's amazing presence in our world. Joseph was called to protect Mary and Jesus and to publicly present Jesus to the world. The angels were called to proclaim Jesus' birth and to encourage others to seek him out. The shepherds were called to seek Jesus and to proclaim his coming to others. God also has blessed you with a holy vocation:

Stand up – for those with no voice.

Stand for – justice for all people.

Stand with – all of God's creation using your passions and your voice to bring justice to the world.

St. Paul reminded the community of the Ephesians: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." This changes everything!

Amen.

Go in peace. Continue reforming!

Thanks be to God.

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