



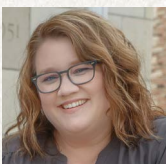
Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America

*Greetings*, pastors, deacons and congregational lay leaders! I am Amanda White, director for Congregational Generosity. I am excited to share with you the first issue of our "Leadership Circle" newsletter for congregations – a selection of important stories to increase your congregation's imagination for how we can be church together, using our resources to propel God's good work across the globe.

The Leadership Circle is a group of faithful supporters of ELCA ministries, including generous congregations such as yours. My hope is that you will find these stories inspiring and worth sharing with your church. In this edition you will learn about Generation Zero-Hunger and the ELCA World Hunger matching challenge available to participants in the ELCA Youth Gathering. In addition you will get an update for the ongoing work of Lutheran Disaster Response to support those displaced by the Russia-Ukraine War. And you can learn more about how the ELCA is engaging the next generation of leaders in the church.

[The full newsletter](#) features additional stories of the church at work. The Leadership Circle website, [ELCA.org/leadershipcircle](https://elca.org/leadershipcircle), offers updates, information and stories from the ministries you support: ELCA Fund for Leaders, ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response, Global Mission and ELCA Where Needed Most.

**Thank you for all the ways you faithfully cultivate generosity among your people. May God continue to form your lives as you engage in the joyful work of loving and serving our neighbors.**



*Amanda White*

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# CIRCLE *Leadership*



*International Leaders gathering, March 2024.*

## ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

Engaging the next generation of leaders is central to our mission, especially through the ministries of our young-adult communities. Through programs such as Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM), campus ministries and the International Leaders Program, young



*Young adults worship together as part of the Gather community in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.  
Photo: Jessica Holleque.*

adults in our church are called together and sent out in the way of Christ. This fall an anticipated 26 new YAGM volunteers will serve abroad in Cambodia, the United Kingdom, Central Europe, Mexico, Senegal and Argentina/Uruguay. The International Leaders Program supports about 200 scholars worldwide; of these, approximately 30 study at ELCA colleges, universities or seminaries in the United States, 20 participate in the International Women Leaders program and about 20 work as international camp counselors at ELCA summer camps in the United States.

Our young-adult communities also include Abide and Gather, small-group ministries that meet young adults where they already are. Abide small groups gather members from around the world to meet online around topics such as climate change, being a public church, Dungeons & Dragons, and more. This digital ministry, which started as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, has touched the lives of thousands of ELCA young adults. The Gather network connects young adults in cities or geographic regions for in-person fellowship, worship, community and discussion. Currently there are 16 Gather small groups meeting to ask challenging questions of themselves, their faith and the world.



Nadia, a participant in the agriculture livelihood program, on her property in Derhachi, Kharkiv. Photo: Corus International.

With your support we raised more than \$13 million for initial and ongoing efforts in and around Ukraine since the Russian invasion began more than two years ago.



## REMAINING IN UKRAINE

With your support we raised more than \$13 million for initial and ongoing efforts in and around Ukraine since the Russian invasion began more than two years ago. Amid one of the worst refugee crises in recent history, Lutheran Disaster Response's partners in the region gathered food, clothing and other supplies and opened their doors wide to the traumatized people who began to arrive.

The impact of the war continues to be felt around the world. In 2023 alone Europe experienced fuel shortages, existing food shortages were exacerbated, and Russia suspended a wartime deal that allows shipment of wheat from Ukraine to other countries, which worsened the global food crisis. As the situation evolves in 2024, Lutheran Disaster Response and its partners continue to adapt to accompany the people affected, thanks to your generosity.

One such project is addressing the urgent needs of our neighbors in newly liberated areas of Ukraine through an agricultural livelihood recovery program. The program aims to restore or establish small farms, which provide critical agricultural livelihoods, strengthen local communities and improve food security and household income for war-torn, vulnerable populations. This includes giving them such resources as chicks, chicken coops, feeders, vegetable seeds, gardening tools, canning kits and pickling containers. Local agriculture advisers provide training in small-scale, climate-sensitive farming practices and in winterization preparedness, which involves drying, packaging and storing crops. Additional grants are available to those who have lost assets to the war and need a financial boost to expand their farming. Over 7,000 individuals and families benefited directly from this grant work in 2023, and that number continues to grow in 2024.

## GENERATION ZERO-HUNGER

In July youth from ELCA congregations across the country will come together in New Orleans for the ELCA Youth Gathering. This year's gathering attendees will join a long lineage of young Lutherans coming together — the first gathering was held in 1902!

This year also marks the 50th anniversary of ELCA World Hunger. During the gathering, youth will be invited to join ELCA World Hunger and commit to being part of Generation Zero-Hunger, taking action to usher in a world without hunger and futures filled with hope. With a matching challenge of \$250,000 from generous individual donors including Leadership Circle members, youth will strive to raise \$250,000 of their own to net half a million dollars or more for this life-changing ministry.

Continuing this commitment, youth will receive a take-home kit empowering them to share what they have learned with their congregations. We encourage you, as leaders of this church, to get involved! Check to see if youth from your congregation or another ELCA congregation nearby are attending the Youth Gathering, and invite them to share what they have learned with your congregation, small group or other setting. Your invitation can be a great opportunity for them to share their faith, learnings and leadership experience in the ministries of our church.

