



YOUR MISSION SUPPORT GIFTS AT WORK

AUGUST 2023 Mission Support Memo STORYTELLING ENGAGEMENT

Interconnected “We” Thrive

A story from our [Alaska Synod](#)

As you read this story, what connects with you?
What does Lutheran look like in your setting??

Much of this text is excerpted from [Brenda Blackhawk](#)’s story “**Harmonies and memories**: Seward Peninsula Lutherans connect past and present,” *Living Lutheran*, July 6, 2023. To read more, visit www.livinglutheran.org/223/07/harmonies-and-memories/.

The Seward Peninsula in our [Alaska Synod](#) is a place of interconnectedness, collective being and deep spirituality. Brenda Blackhawk writes, “It’s no surprise that the people of the Seward Peninsula draw on the traditional values of community, relying on one another and the world to provide for them. What might come as a surprise to some is that many of the Inupiat people on the peninsula are Lutheran.” The congregations of Nome, Brevig Mission, Teller, Shishmaref and Wales are vital stabilizing forces for the peninsula and each village.

Blackhawk reminds us that “Indigenous communities around the globe share a common understanding that we are interconnected. We need each other to survive. And the ‘we’ is expansive — it includes all creation, those who came before us and those yet to come. That understanding requires us to care for one another, acting with an abundance of love. This is an understanding that Jesus, who was Indigenous, commanded us to live by. ... Due to the remoteness and weather conditions, the villages can be accessed only by plane, snowmobile or dogsled. Since most household necessities must be shipped in, the cost of living is high. As Bryan Weyauvanna, who grew up in Shishmaref and Nome, said, ‘Life up here is tough.’ The people survive this ‘tough’ life by practicing a traditional subsistence lifestyle: hunting, fishing, gathering, creating and bartering. Shannon Klescewski, who grew up in Teller, told me that her son was going to hunt walrus and would give the first animal to the community elders.”



The congregations are in an independent partnership, organized into the Seward Peninsula Lutheran Ministry (SPLM) cluster, which consists of the five majority-Inupiaq congregations on the peninsula plus Alaska Native Lutheran Church in Anchorage. These congregations receive Strategic Ministry grants funded through Mission Support, but what they receive matters less than what they offer to our greater church. Quoted in Blackhawk’s story, Lisa Smith Fiegel, the synod’s director for evangelical mission, said the

ministries “have made a real difference in our synod, helping us understand the gospel, testimony, hospitality. We’re a better synod for the contributions made by our siblings from the Seward Peninsula.”

Blackhawk was invited to the SPLM's 2023 Spring Conference, and her story shares insights into the experience. She beautifully wraps up with these words: "Much like the lives spent in these communities, the Seward Peninsula Spring Conference is a beautiful combination of Inupiaq and English, the traditional and the religious, the harmonies and the memories. And all Lutheran."

ENGAGE WITH US

This month Karen Kretschmann, coordinator for storytelling engagement, is partnering with Deacon Colleen Bernu and the Northeastern Minnesota Synod to present **"WALKING TOGETHER: ENCOUNTERS WITH CHRIST,"** a day to engage with others and to know Jesus through stories of our ELCA ministries.



Encounters with Christ are often not what we expect. In Christ, God goes straight to the heart of the matter, inviting us to address questions we may not have realized we had and revealing to us solutions that we might not have found on our own. These encounters impel us to tell others about the work God is doing in and through us and our congregations.

JOIN US!

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, 2901 S. Highway 169, Grand Rapids, Minn.
Saturday, Oct. 14, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Check-in and social time begin at 7:45 a.m.
Open all day: Quilt auction, marketplace, VLM bake sale and Zion's Bistro
Register at www.nemnsynod.org/walking-together-2023/.



GRATEFUL

We send both gratitude and kind encouragement as we move into the second half of our year. Mission Support that we receive for the churchwide organization is essential to our collective ministry and figures prominently in the stories we tell in this memo. Typically about 48% of the total budget for Mission Support (\$38 million for FY2023) is received in the first half of the year. So far this year, revenue is falling below budget. We remind you that there are still opportunities to help us finish the year in a strong position. These ideas may be helpful:

- Provide ongoing acknowledgement and gratitude for the financial support already received (there's still time to share "thank you" certificates this year; find templates at www.elca.org/resources/stories-of-faith-in-action#RelevantResources).
- Share stories of the difference that both synod and churchwide organization ministries make through Mission Support.
- Invite people to connect with ministries in a variety of ways including prayer and participation as well as financial generosity.

We are grateful,

Victoria Flood, Senior Director for Congregation and Synod Support

Nick Kiger, Director for Mission Support

Karen Kretschmann, Coordinator for Storytelling Engagement

