

STORIES OF FAITH

IN ACTION

2020 • 2021



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Your Mission Support gifts at work

IN THIS ISSUE

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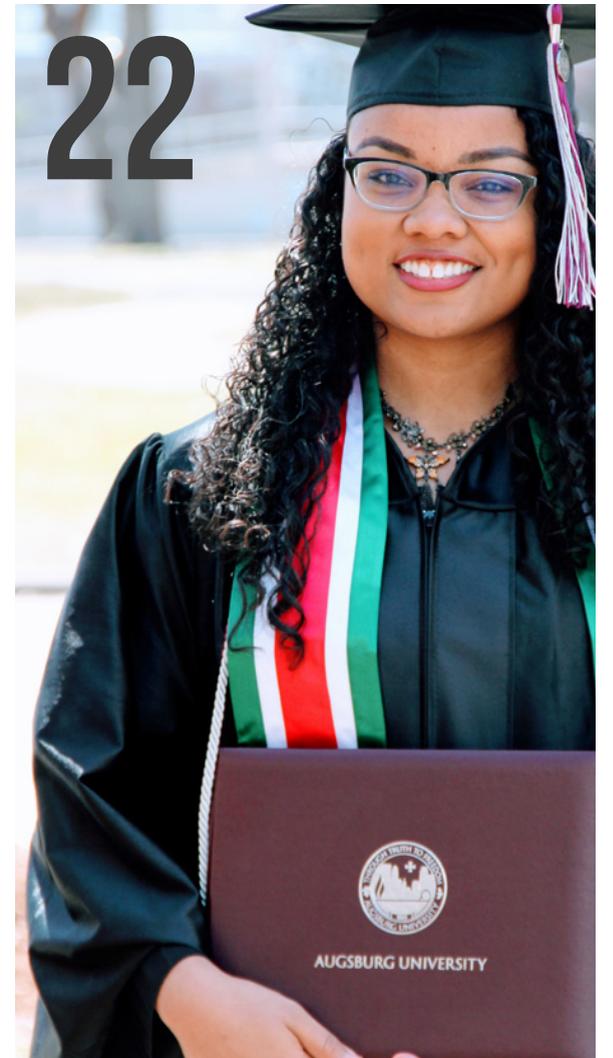


8 Jean Paul Kisuku answered the call to minister, first while living in the Congo and now in Baltimore. His outreach has evolved into the city's Mountain of God Evangelical International Church. ↑

"I continue to do the work of the [church] and the International Women Leaders program [by using] my gifts and talents. And I pass it on by helping [my] neighbors wherever I can." →



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“God has enlightened us as a church to respond to key moments in Salvadoran history, to be part of our country’s history. That is how we’ve grown. Guided by that same vision, these new pastors will keep our church growing.” ↑

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A MESSAGE FROM ELCA PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON

Dear friend,

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed church and society in ways we still don’t fully understand. As we consider our future ministry plans, some of us may be feeling anxious. We might be wondering how the church will survive this new wilderness into which we’ve been thrust.

Our ancestors in faith, the Israelites, faced similar challenges. Exiled in the desert, they struggled with thirst and hunger. They questioned whether Moses had led them to the wilderness to perish. But time and again, God provided.

God purified bitter water and made it sweet. God rained down sweet manna from heaven. God brought them out of exile to the promised land.

For us too, God not only fulfills our needs but provides relief.

I see it in these stories of faith in action that you made possible through your generous gifts of Mission Support:

- I see God providing through **ADORE LA**, a digital ELCA faith community where Ed Ramirez found a church home that offered complete acceptance (page 12).
- I see God providing through the 1,100 leaders formed in service through the **ELCA’s Young Adults in Global Mission program** over its 20 years of ministry (page 20).
- I see God providing in the courageous ministry of **ELCA Chaplain** Anthony Stephens, whose call brought him to the front lines of the pandemic in New York City (page 18).

There are countless other inspiring faith stories. Many bear witness to God’s provision during the pandemic:

- When we couldn’t gather in person, we did it digitally, ministering to long-standing members and engaging new people through online worship, Bible studies and more.
- Though economic disparities have increased, ELCA members are seeing needs and meeting them. One bishop described it as “people holding a cross in one hand and a bag of groceries in the other.”
- Beyond regular giving, people donated to the COVID-19 Response Fund, equipping the churchwide organization and associated ministries to serve those affected by this new disease.

I see God providing in a church that continues to show up for its neighbors. For giving generously of your time, talents and treasures, thank you.

We are living in uncertain times, but this has always been true. What’s certain is that God is near, and God continues to provide sweet relief in the life, death and resurrection of his son, Jesus, the bread of life.

Faithfully,

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton

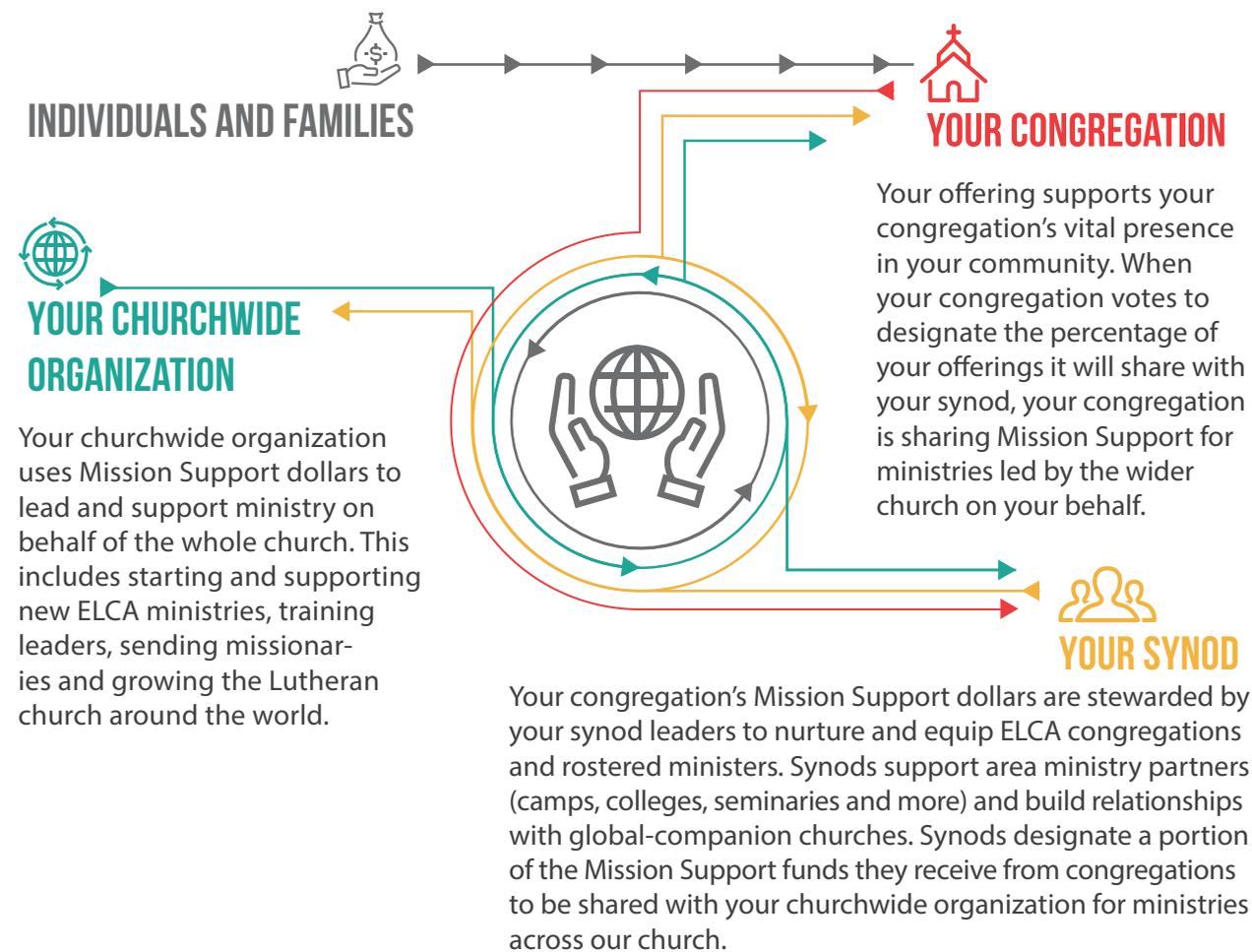
HOW YOUR OFFERING BECOMES MISSION SUPPORT

As Lutherans, we believe that Christ has freed us from sin and death, and even from ourselves, so that we can love and serve our neighbors. One way we put our faith in action is by making a financial gift — an offering — to our congregation.

Each year, ELCA congregations pledge to share a portion of their offerings to fund ELCA ministries in their synods and beyond. We call these funds Mission Support.

Mission Support enables the ELCA's 9,100 congregations and 65 synods to pool resources to love and serve our neighbors in ways that no individual or congregation can do alone. Mission Support is one way we are church together — it's essential to who we are as the ELCA. Through Mission Support, we expand our participation in God's life-changing work in our communities and around the world.

HOW MISSION SUPPORT FUNDS MINISTRY ACROSS OUR CHURCH



2019 FINANCIAL PICTURE

In 2019, ELCA members gave \$1.7 billion in unrestricted offerings* to support God's mission and ministry through the three expressions of the ELCA. Thank you for your generosity!

94.5% — CONGREGATIONS

\$1.6 billion remained with and was stewarded by the ELCA's 9,100 congregations. \$93.5 million was shared by congregations as Mission Support.

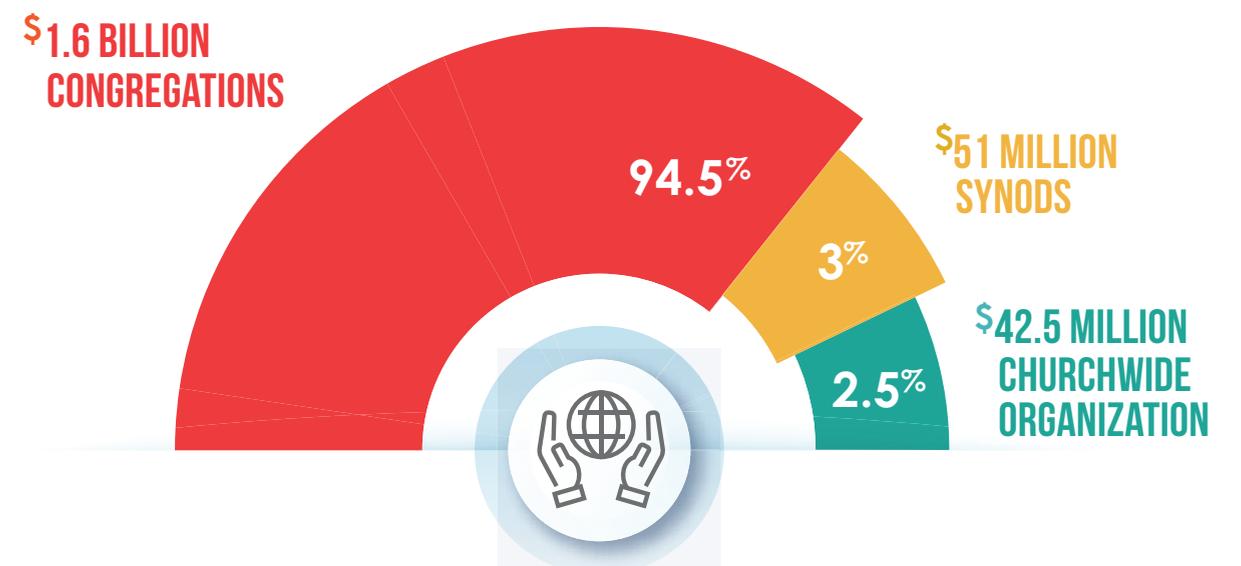
3% — SYNODS

\$51 million was stewarded by the ELCA's 65 synods.

2.5% — CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION

\$42.5 million of Mission Support was stewarded by the ELCA churchwide organization.

*Unrestricted offerings do not include special offerings (e.g., congregational capital improvements or gifts to ministries such as Lutheran Disaster Response or ELCA World Hunger).



READ ON FOR STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION —
MADE POSSIBLE BY MISSION SUPPORT!



Women from Mountain of God Evangelical International Church, Baltimore, dance and sing during worship.

MANY LANGUAGES, ONE GROWING CHURCH

When God spoke to Jean Paul Kisuku, Kisuku knew he had to listen.

While living in the Congo, Kisuku spread the gospel through prayer groups with fellow Congolese and neighbors in nearby Uganda. After immigrating to the United States and settling in Maryland, he stepped away from ministry to focus on secular work to support his family.

God had other plans.

Asked about his return to ministry, Kisuku said, “God is moving you to do his work, and if you say ‘yes’ you will be OK.”

Kisuku and his family were resettled by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) and Christ Lutheran Church, Baltimore. Seeing how the congregation welcomed newcomers, Kisuku reached out to Christ’s associate pastor, Amsalu Geleta, and volunteered to conduct a prayer service there in Swahili, the native language of Congo.

“He gathered five families for the first day in October 2016,” said Geleta, who now serves as executive assistant to the bishop and director for evangelical mission in the Delaware-Maryland Synod. “He’s a wonderful evangelist, and he reached out to many people who speak Swahili, French, Lingala — new arrivals, most of them.”

That prayer service has evolved to become Mountain of God Evangelical International

Church, a new congregation bolstered by grants from the ELCA churchwide organization and the Delaware-Maryland Synod that were funded by Mission Support.

Mountain of God’s membership now boasts over 150 people. Geleta believes the growth has been inspiring for the synod.

“THE PARTICIPATION OF EVERYONE HELPS PLANT AND NURTURE IT TO MAKE IT GROW. AND THE SPIRIT OF EVANGELISM TO THE CHURCH REVIVES US ALL.”

Much of that growth can be attributed to Kisuku’s determination to bring God’s word to as many African-descent people as possible. Many prospective members lacked transportation, so Kisuku began driving them to and from church.

“How can one ministry be born or stand by itself?” Geleta said. “The participation of everyone helps plant and nurture it to make it grow. And the spirit of evangelism to the church revives us all.”

To watch a video of this ministry, visit [ELCA.org/SOFIA](https://www.elca.org/SOFIA).



Diane Krauszer, ELCA pastor, leads a Generosity Project workshop at Epiphany Lutheran Episcopal Church, Valdez, Alaska.

A NEW LENS FOR GENEROSITY

Sharing God’s gifts with one another through stewardship is an integral part of the Lutheran faith. But sometimes stewardship is misunderstood, equated simply with giving money rather than sharing time, spirit and love. **Linda Staats is trying to change that with the Generosity Project, a stewardship resource funded in part by Mission Support.**

Developed through a partnership between Staats, the Rocky Mountain Synod and the churchwide organization, the Generosity Project challenges Lutherans to rethink stewardship through innovative, intergenerational programming.

When Diane Krauszer, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Palmer, Alaska, introduced her congregation to the Generosity Project two years ago, it shifted perspectives.

“One [person] exclaimed, ‘We never talked about any of this when I was a kid, and I wish we had,’” Krauszer said. Believing this resource could benefit neighbors at Epiphany Lutheran Episcopal Church, Valdez, Alaska, she took a cue from the project and shared it with them.

In 2019, Krauszer partnered with Kaitlin Pabo-Eulberg, Epiphany’s pastor, to introduce the blended Lutheran-Episcopal congregation and a neighboring Catholic church to the Generosity Project.

“It [was] a very natural partnership to invite them,” Pabo-Eulberg said of Epiphany’s

Catholic neighbors. “They were really excited to talk about giving from their perspective.”

The event included participants ranging in age from 8 to 89, and Pabo-Eulberg recalled enthusiastic listening and understanding across the generations.

“WE NEVER TALKED ABOUT ANY OF THIS WHEN I WAS A KID, AND I WISH WE HAD.”

Among them were Epiphany members Donna Newcomer, a baby boomer, and Steve Newcomer, of the Greatest Generation. “[Now] every time somebody comes to [our] house, when they leave, I say, ‘Thank you for spending time with us,’” Donna said. “Because that’s the greatest thing you can give somebody — they noticed you and spent time with you.”

Staats said this new lens for generosity is the project’s aim.

“The goal is not to increase giving by a percentage,” she said. “The goal is to change the culture in a congregation [and in homes]. We’re building a culture to bring all generations together ... and equipping the home as a place where generosity is practiced.”



ADORE LA is a digital faith community that is driven and led by people of color and the LGBTQIA+ community, led by pastor-developer Joseph Castañeda-Carrera (left).

“COURAGE TO BE WHO WE ARE”

Ed Ramirez’s journey to find a church was a long one, filled with disappointments. Ramirez, who uses the pronouns they/them, wanted a place where they could feel at ease and fully accepted, but nothing they’d encountered in the Los Angeles area fit.

Ramirez’s search led them to Hollywood Lutheran Church, where Joseph Castañeda-Carrera served as pastor. “I was the member that zipped in and out of service,” Ramirez said. “I didn’t want to engage with the community out of fear of being rejected like in other ‘affirming’ congregations. Joseph was quick enough to catch me one day and ask what I was looking for, and I answered honestly: ‘A place where I can be all of me.’”

The pastor told Ramirez about ADORE LA, a digital faith community that Castañeda-Carrera served as mission developer. **Supported in part by grants from the churchwide organization and the ELCA Southwest California Synod, which are funded by Mission Support, ADORE LA is driven and led by people of color and the LGBTQIA+ community.**

“So often in our church, we don’t have very many queer people of color,” Castañeda-Carrera said. “Community can’t build around them because we’re all spread out all over the place. ... People from all over have joined ADORE LA because it’s creating a community that doesn’t exist in their own neighborhoods.”

As church buildings were shuttered and some congregations struggled to stream worship online during the COVID-19 pandemic, ADORE LA didn’t skip a beat. It was already using digital channels and messaging apps such as GroupMe to engage members. The faith community used the time to innovate and enhance its ministry, Castañeda-Carrera said.

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Ramirez is grateful for their faith home at ADORE LA. “Faith is something that has been taken from a lot of us,” they said. “So ADORE LA focuses on community that then lets us reclaim faith and grow into it together. It also helps to sow our roots like a beautiful LA palm tree because being fully yourself in this world and church aren’t always the easiest things to navigate. The faith we gain as a community provides that: the courage to be who we are, fully created in [God’s] image.”



Lutheran Campus Ministry at West Virginia University, Morgantown, Va., led by Tony Setley, campus pastor, offers students a spiritual home and space to explore vocation.

A SPIRITUAL HOME FOR FUTURE LEADERS

Stuck in traffic at West Virginia University (WVU), when seemingly all of Morgantown's 28,000 students are trying to get to class, you'd be hard-pressed not to notice the fire engine red Lutheran Campus Ministry Chapel with its curved roof, just south of the main crosswalk.

"The building was very interesting; that was probably my first impression," sophomore Lilly Simmons said.

The architectural oddity might draw students for a brief chat with Tony Setley, campus pastor, but however they come, he said, "they are comfortable enough to ask questions, and that can always lead to something bigger."

Graduate student Nathan Blake recalled his first visit. "I was at a really rough place spiritually, and the time for normal Sunday services had already passed, and I was like, 'I need something, but I don't know what.' I remembered that 6 p.m. service time, and I wandered up the hill, snuck in the back [pew] and I just kept coming. It was exactly what I needed."

In and beyond worship, Setley encourages students to set the tone for campus ministry. Simmons said she's loved leading monthly social activities such as ax-throwing or miniature golf. The gatherings make a difference. "I can't overstate the importance of having a place where you can experience spirituality, but also having a group of people you can experience it with," Blake said.

In addition to serving as students' spiritual home, Lutheran Campus Ministry at WVU

THE ARCHITECTURAL ODDITY MIGHT DRAW STUDENTS FOR A BRIEF CHAT WITH TONY SETLEY, CAMPUS PASTOR, BUT HOWEVER THEY COME, HE SAID, "THEY ARE COMFORTABLE ENOUGH TO ASK QUESTIONS, AND THAT CAN ALWAYS LEAD TO SOMETHING BIGGER."

plans this fall to offer a literal rent-free home for some people discerning calls to ministry. The student housing, called [Luther House](#), is located behind the chapel in a building that was formerly the parsonage for St. Paul Lutheran Church of Morgantown. Luther House students will lead chapel and explore seminary through a partnership with Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. **Both the seminary and campus ministry are funded by Mission Support.**

"Hopefully out of that, students will have some of the financial burden taken off, but also to have that ability to discern and engage with their faith in a way that will give them more answers to the questions about what God is calling them to do in this world," Setley said.

To watch a video of this ministry, visit ELCA.org/SOFIA.



Outlaw Ranch's Connecting Cultures at Camp program brought together longtime camp families with new camp families from Pueblo de Dios, an ELCA congregation in Sioux Falls, S.D.

CONNECTING CULTURES AT CAMP

When Matt Rusch, director of Outlaw Ranch, first proposed a family camp connecting cultures, he started from scratch. "We just jumped into this," he said. "[There was] no model. We [thought], 'We know God is in the mix, so somehow it will work out.'"

The idea was to make family camp look like the church in South Dakota, which is both multilingual and racially diverse, he said.

Outlaw Ranch partnered with Pueblo de Dios, a congregation in Sioux Falls, and invited Spanish-speaking families to join with English-speaking families for the camp's weeklong Connecting Cultures program. **Outlaw Ranch is a member of Lutherans Outdoors in South Dakota, which receives funding from the ELCA South Dakota Synod made available because of Mission Support.**

In addition to enjoying faith-based programming, families in Connecting Cultures could hike, ride horses and take trips to nearby Mount Rushmore and travel to Custer High School for fireworks exhibitions. That in itself was a blessing, said Maria Cabello, pastor of Pueblo de Dios.

"[Our] people feel very happy and very joyful with Outlaw Ranch ... and [they] feel very happy with God. Hispanic people don't have a week vacation [often]," she said. "It [was] very exciting to renew our spirit and renew our souls at Outlaw Ranch."

Connecting Cultures also helped some gain confidence. "Especially the kids," Cabello

said. "[Some] speak only Spanish. They feel like a little fish in the ocean. But because others were speaking Spanish, they feel more included at camp."

Instead of being embarrassed to try to use the Spanish they learned in high school years earlier, English-speaking adults utilized bilingual counselors to converse freely with Latino families. And Spanish-speaking adults who had never gone camping learned the ropes from English-speaking veterans who'd been camping for decades.

THE IDEA WAS TO MAKE FAMILY CAMP LOOK LIKE THE CHURCH IN SOUTH DAKOTA, WHICH IS BOTH MULTILINGUAL AND RACIALLY DIVERSE, RUSCH SAID.

"Camp is a wonderful equalizer," Rusch said. "There's not one of the groups who's on unequal footing here, not anyone is not out of their element. ... We all study the same Bible; we worship the same God. We try to address those things instead of the differences at the beginning."



Anthony Stephens, an ELCA pastor and Army chaplain, ministered to some 700 National Guard and Army troops during New York City's severe COVID-19 outbreak.

CHAPLAIN ON THE FRONT LINE

Ministering to some 700 National Guard and Army troops during New York City's severe COVID-19 outbreak might seem daunting. But not to Anthony Stephens, an ELCA pastor and an Army chaplain.

“IN MANY WAYS, THERE’S A FEELING OF DEFENSELESSNESS AGAINST THIS VIRUS,” STEPHENS SAID. “WE WERE ALL EXPOSED BEFORE SOCIAL DISTANCING, AND WE CAN’T ESCAPE THAT.”

Since 2016, Stephens has served as senior chaplain to Joint Task Force Empire Shield, part of the New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs. The task force protects the city's bridges, airports, tunnels and train stations from security threats, and has also responded to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Stephens helped troops deal with their anxiety over serving on the front lines and possibly contracting the virus. He also counseled those with family members or friends who were sick, jobless or challenged by other hardships.

“In many ways, there’s a feeling of defenselessness against this virus,” Stephens said. “We were all exposed before social distancing, and we can’t escape that. There’s a sense that you can wash your hands just so many times; that we’re in God’s hands now.”

With a Master of Divinity from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Stephens maintains a private counseling practice and, as a pastor, chaplain and counselor, has ministered to people in parishes, prisons, hospitals, counseling centers and the military.

Of all his assignments, the closest to his heart is his current role as a New York Army National Guard chaplain, where he holds the rank of major. “Back in seminary, a Navy recruiter showed up and we talked and prayed,” Stephens said. “I knew I’d be called someday to military chaplaincy.” **Mission Support funds contribute to ELCA chaplain ministry.**

His diverse ministry experiences have equipped him to address the troops’ spiritual needs. “Nothing that I’ve done in my life has been wasted. My experiences have been used in sermons, to be less judgmental and to give me perspective.”



Jill Rode (left) said her experience with Young Adults in Global Mission in Thailand helped her discern a call to ministry; she is now a pastor at St. Anthony Park Lutheran Church, St. Paul, Minn.

20 YEARS OF FORMATIVE SERVICE

Jessica Craver's feet felt frozen.

Recently deployed by ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) to the Lutheran Church in Australia, she'd failed to pack adequate footwear to withstand the continent's harsh winter. Her host mother had noticed.

"She set out a basin and washed my feet," Craver said. "What a beautiful sign ... that we are called to serve each other in ways that are uncomfortable."

That was four years ago, but Craver, now a nurse in Seattle, said the moment continues to influence her approach to hospitality when she cares for the city's most vulnerable.

"[DURING] THAT YAGM YEAR ... MY FAITH WAS BROKEN OPEN AND PUT TOGETHER AGAIN."

Such stories are common among the more than 1,100 YAGM alumni. The program, which recently celebrated 20 years, originated from a partnership with the U.K. volunteer organization Time for God. Since then, it has evolved to include collaborations with ELCA companion churches or organizations in Argentina/Uruguay, Australia, Central Europe, Jerusalem/West Bank, Madagascar, Mexico, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal and the United Kingdom.

And it has a history of influencing future ELCA leaders.

"YAGM volunteers are formed by our companion churches and the ELCA during their time in service; they come back to the United States ready to effect positive change within our congregations and U.S. society," said Michael Busbey, acting director for mission personnel and leadership formation.

This rings true for Jill Rode, who taught in Thailand through YAGM more than 15 years ago. After her YAGM year, she returned to teach there for 3 1/2 more years.

"[During] that YAGM year ... my faith was broken open and put together again. All those years formed the foundation for me to think about seminary," said Rode, now a pastor at St. Anthony Park Lutheran Church, St. Paul, Minn.

Although YAGM will pause in sending out young adults during the 2020-21 year due to COVID-19, staff say the future of this program is "very bright." **Funded in part by Mission Support, YAGM continues to affect the church through its rich cohort of alumni who are pursuing callings as rostered leaders, educators, farmers, medical professionals, lawyers, camp directors, filmmakers, politicians, social workers, human rights activists and more.**

"It really acts as confirmation and affirmation of an individual's call to serve God and welcome our neighbors," Rode said. "YAGM takes this really big world and shrinks it down. People who were once strangers become neighbors and friends."



Sarah Abendanon, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Suriname, earned her degree at Augsburg University, Minneapolis, with a scholarship from the International Women Leaders program.

EMPOWERED TO EMPOWER OTHERS

Leaving her home in Suriname for Augsburg University, Minneapolis, Sarah Abendanon felt frightened and excited.

“Before my departure for the U.S., I was a very insecure girl,” she recalled.

Abendanon’s home church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Suriname, had endorsed her to pursue her bachelor’s degree in the United States through the ELCA’s International Women Leaders (IWL) program.

Since graduating in May 2018, Abendanon has found work as a publications officer, started her own small business and volunteered her marketing skills to her church. She credits her Augsburg education as invaluable. “I came back much more confident,” she said.

Abendanon is one of 39 young women who have received IWL scholarships, awarded through partnerships with 11 ELCA colleges and universities. The scholarships continue for the duration of their bachelor’s degree programs.

Thanks to the generosity of ELCA members during and after *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*, all the women’s expenses are covered, “a type of scholarship that’s extremely rare these days,” said Kaleb Sutherland, director, International Leaders program for scholarship administration and student engagement. “The idea is to remove any barriers for students to access this opportunity.”

Mission Support dollars fund IWL program administration and help to support ELCA

companion churches, some of which encourage young women to apply for IWL.

Yuen Ching Lee graduated from Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, in 2019 with the help of an IWL scholarship. She was endorsed by her home church, the Lutheran Church in Malaysia.

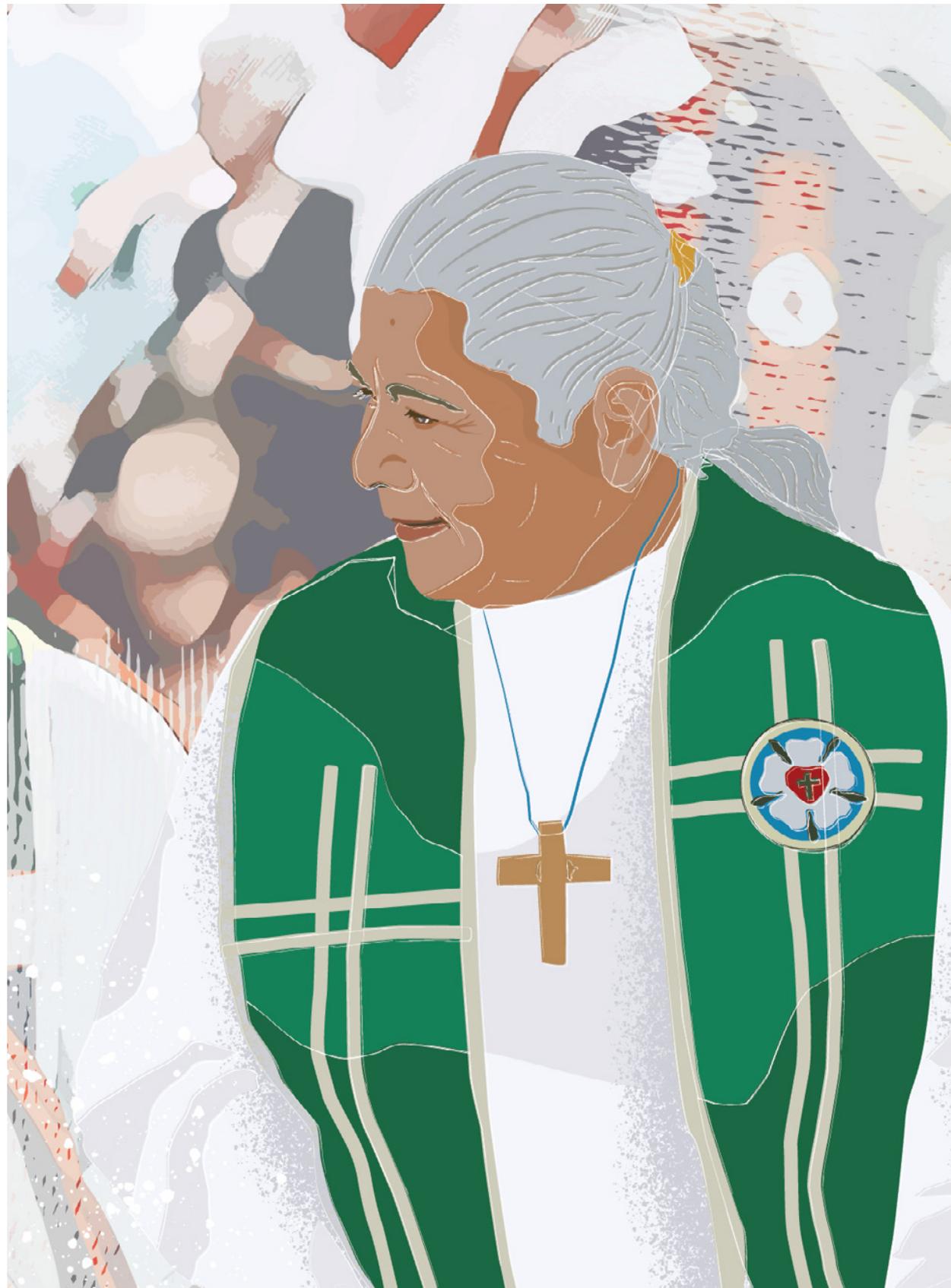
Originally from Selangor, Malaysia, Lee said studying in the United States “broadened my mind and mindset to what things and society could be like, especially when it comes to women empowerment and going against patriarchy.”

Today, Lee is a teacher for a Malaysian nonprofit, Dignity for Children Foundation, that educates underprivileged youth to pursue careers that could lift them out of poverty.

Sutherland noted that the ELCA designed IWL to accompany young women from ELCA companion churches in the hope that they would return to their communities and churches to pursue their vocations with confidence. Recent graduates such as Abendanon and Lee are thriving.

“I continue to do the work of the [church] and the IWL program [by using] my gifts and talents,” Abendanon said. “And I pass it on by helping [my] neighbors wherever I can. No matter where we are and where we are from. We are one.”

To watch a video about this ministry, visit [ELCA.org/SOFIA](https://www.elca.org/SOFIA).



Margarita Moreno is one of 14 pastors ordained into the Salvadoran Lutheran Church in August 2019.

“GOD HAS ENLIGHTENED US”

On Aug. 5, 2019, as the ELCA Churchwide Assembly met to elect leaders and make decisions regarding the future, Salvadoran Lutherans gathered for a similar reason. For them, the day was historic: the Salvadoran Lutheran Church (SLC) ordained 14 pastors, increasing its roster from 35 to 49.

“Never in our [47-year] history has there been such a large group of ordinations,” said Medardo Gómez Soto, SLC bishop. **Bolstered in part by Mission Support funds, the SLC provided training and support for these new leaders as they pursued a path to ordination.**

One of those leaders is Margarita Moreno. Her service in the SLC began in the middle of the Salvadoran Civil War (1980-1992). During that time, Lutheran church workers, including the bishop, were persecuted for ministering to war victims.

“I started as a Sunday school teacher, then worked as a trained health promoter,” she said. “After the war ended, the [church] began offering continuing education and training for its catechists and evangelists. I signed up.”

SLC leaders noticed Moreno’s gifts for ministry and installed her as a deacon pastor of the Espiritu de Paz (Spirit of Peace) congregation in Tepeagua, where she’s served for over a decade. Last August, after completing an alternative, experience-based path to ordination called Presbiterio por Madurez (Presbytery for Maturity), she is now the pastor there.

Moreno, in turn, has gone on to mentor more lay leaders. “I’ve already prepared three youth to serve as Sunday school teachers,” she said. “Now I’m motivating other church members to prepare themselves as catechists and evangelists.”

Gómez Soto believes the SLC is seeing a boost in leaders and members due to its long-standing commitment to social justice and public witness. “God has enlightened us

“NEVER IN OUR [47-YEAR] HISTORY HAS THERE BEEN SUCH A LARGE GROUP OF ORDINATIONS,” SAID MEDARDO GÓMEZ SOTO, SLC BISHOP.

as a church to respond to key moments in Salvadoran history, to be part of our country’s history,” he said. “That is how we’ve grown. Guided by that same vision, these new pastors will keep our church growing.”

A MESSAGE FROM THE MISSION SUPPORT TEAM

Dear partner in ministry,

Stories bring us together. They are the foundation of our faith. They help us stay connected even when we can't physically meet. And the stories of this publication show our connectedness as one church with three expressions — congregations, synods and the churchwide organization. Each story of faith in action was made possible by our sharing of Mission Support.

The ELCA's story as a church is one of action. We act by listening to God's call to serve one another. We act by serving our neighbors around the block and around the globe. We act by giving Mission Support — the portion of your offering your congregation shares with your synod, and your synod shares with the churchwide organization.

Finally, our stories lead us to a place of deep gratitude. We are grateful to individuals, congregations and synods for their generosity. We are grateful that we are part of one body with many members, united by faith. We are grateful for the story God is writing in our hearts as we strive to be church together for the sake of the world.

We hope this publication will inspire you to be part of these stories — and to invite others to do the same.

Gratefully,



Victoria Flood
Director
Mission Support, ELCA



**WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE
STORY GOD IS WRITING IN OUR
HEARTS AS WE STRIVE TO BE
CHURCH TOGETHER FOR THE
SAKE OF THE WORLD.**



Nick Kiger
Associate Director
Mission Support, ELCA

DEVOTIONAL

Interested in using a story from this publication as a devotion for a group gathering? Here's an outline you may use — or feel free to create your own!

Opening

Leader: As in one body we have many members,
Response: So we, who are many, are one body in Christ.

Reading

Select and read a Biblical passage from the following list:

Mark 12:41-44

Luke 10:25-27

Acts 2:43-47

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

2 Corinthians 7:16 - 8:7

Galatians 5:22-26

Next, choose and read one story from this publication. See pages 8-25.

Discussion

Discuss one or more of the following questions:

- In what way(s) does this story exemplify the Biblical passage you read?
- Identify the passion that motivated the people in the story. What passions motivate people in your ministry setting?
- What one thing did you learn about ministry across the ELCA from this story? How might you share this with others in your ministry setting?
- What new ideas for ministry in your setting does this story inspire?

Closing

L: Let us pray.

R: Gracious God, we cannot begin to know all the ways we, as your church, respond to the needs of the world. We thank you for the generosity shared from across our church. Give us strength to respond to your call to live out our faith in service to our neighbors, near and far. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION 2020 • 2021

Congregations are encouraged to reprint the content of Stories of Faith in Action for use in their ministries.

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