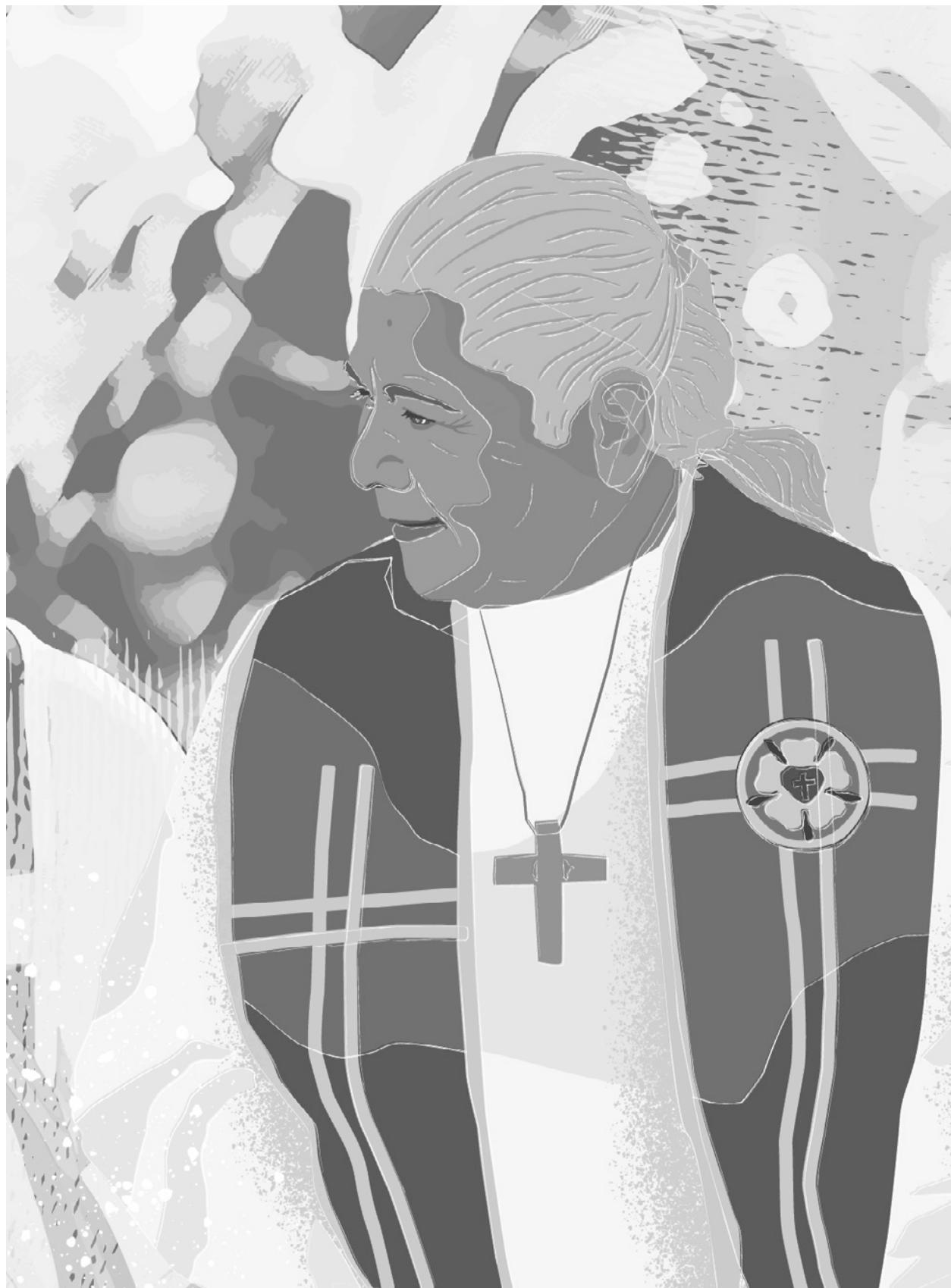


## STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION 2020-21



*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.”

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