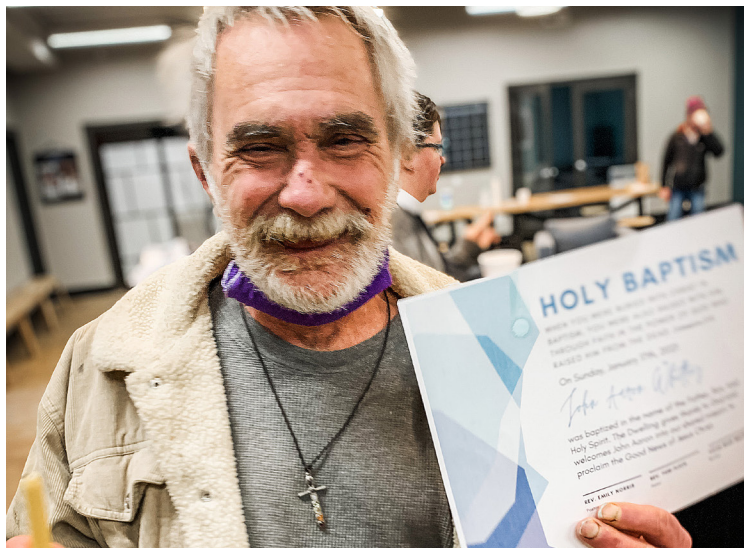


# STORIES OF FAITH

IN ACTION

2021 • 2022



*Your  
Mission Support  
at Work*



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



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## A MESSAGE FROM ELCA PRESIDING BISHOP

*Elizabeth  
Eaton*

Dear sibling in Christ,

At the beginning of the sixth chapter of the Gospel according to John, Jesus is presented with a dilemma. After healing numerous people, he's amassed a large following, and they're hungry. He asks his disciple Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?"

Philip tells Jesus they don't have enough cash to feed the crowd. The need is too great, he says.

Here the Gospel writer makes clear that Jesus is testing his disciples. When another, Andrew, points to a boy with five barley loaves and two fish, provisions that Andrew doubts will satisfy the hungry crowd, Jesus simply replies, "Make the people sit down."

I imagine Jesus chuckles, even shaking his head. What he does next defies all reason. Jesus takes the boy's food, thanks God for it and uses it to feed the 5,000 gathered — with leftovers to boot!

As we consider the last year and our current reality navigating the COVID-19 pandemic, we in the church might be tempted to view our situation as Philip or Andrew might. We could wring our hands and say we're low on funds, or look at our resources and complain they're not enough.

Yet, looking at the stories that came out of 2020, I see evidence of God's miracles. You'll see too when you flip through the pages of this year's "Stories of Faith in Action" ....

Meet Lutherans in Arizona (page 8), Malawi (page 22) and Alaska (page 16) who adapted worship and outreach in response to COVID-19 restrictions to continue spreading the gospel. Learn how young adults across this church found community amid isolating circumstances thanks to Abide, virtual small groups led by ELCA Young Adult Ministry (page 12). Hear about Lutheran leaders in Minneapolis who served their community and spoke out for racial justice after George Floyd's death (page 14).

Our records show that in 2020, ELCA congregations continued to give generously, including sharing Mission Support with their synod and the churchwide organization, to sustain vital ministries (page 4). We showed up as church together to provide hope and healing to hungry souls. Thank you!

The disciples in John's Gospel approach ministry challenges with a scarcity mindset. Jesus shows us a different way: trusting in God's awesome abundance.

May this be so for us — now and always.

Faithfully,

*Elizabeth A. Eaton*

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton

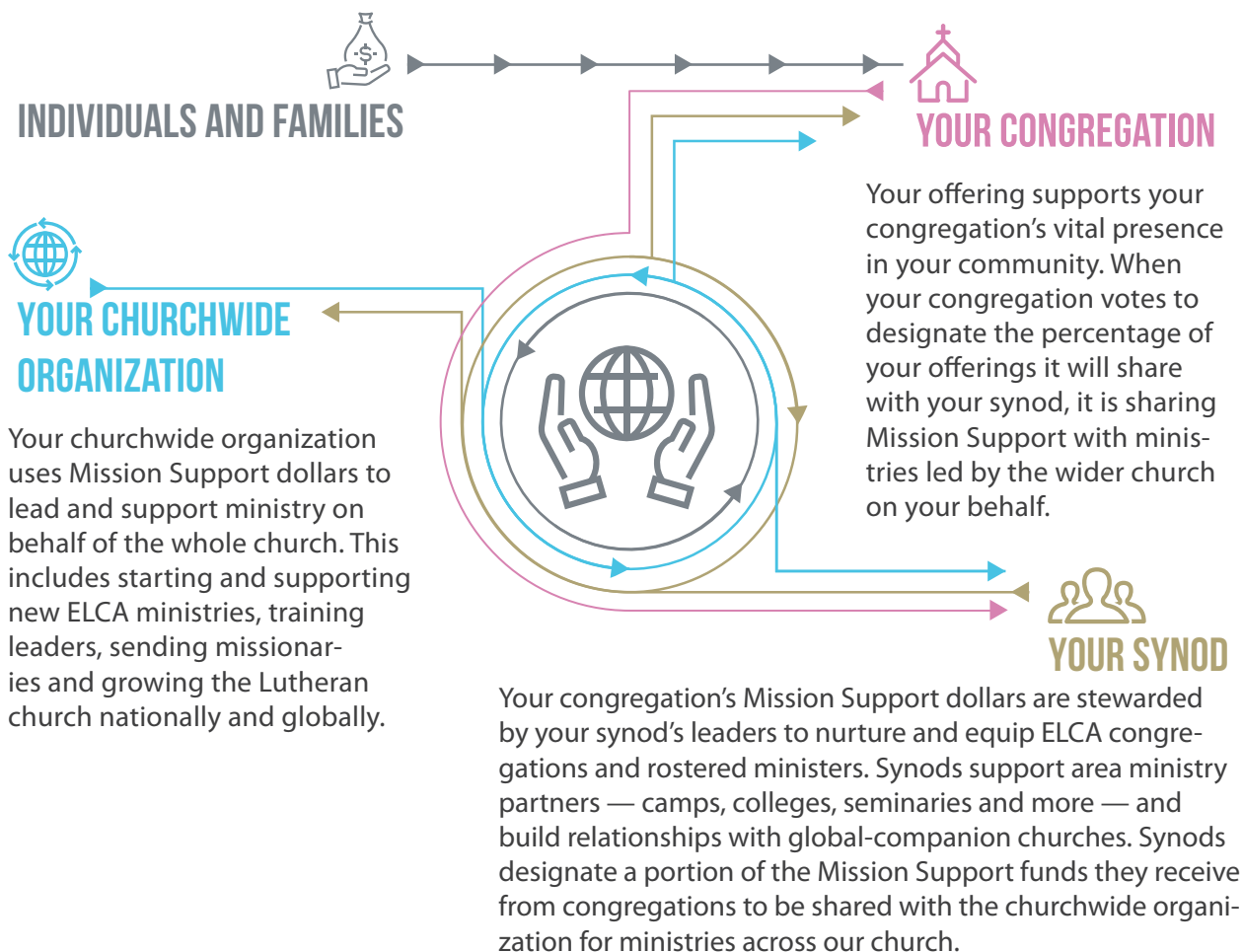
# HOW YOUR OFFERING BECOMES MISSION SUPPORT

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 turn our faith into action is by making a financial gift — an offering — to our congregation.

Each year, ELCA congregations pledge to send 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 more than 8,900 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



# 2020 FINANCIAL PICTURE

In 2020, 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!

## 94.7% — CONGREGATIONS

\$1.6 billion was stewarded by over 8,900 ELCA congregations.  
\$90.2 million was shared by congregations as Mission Support.

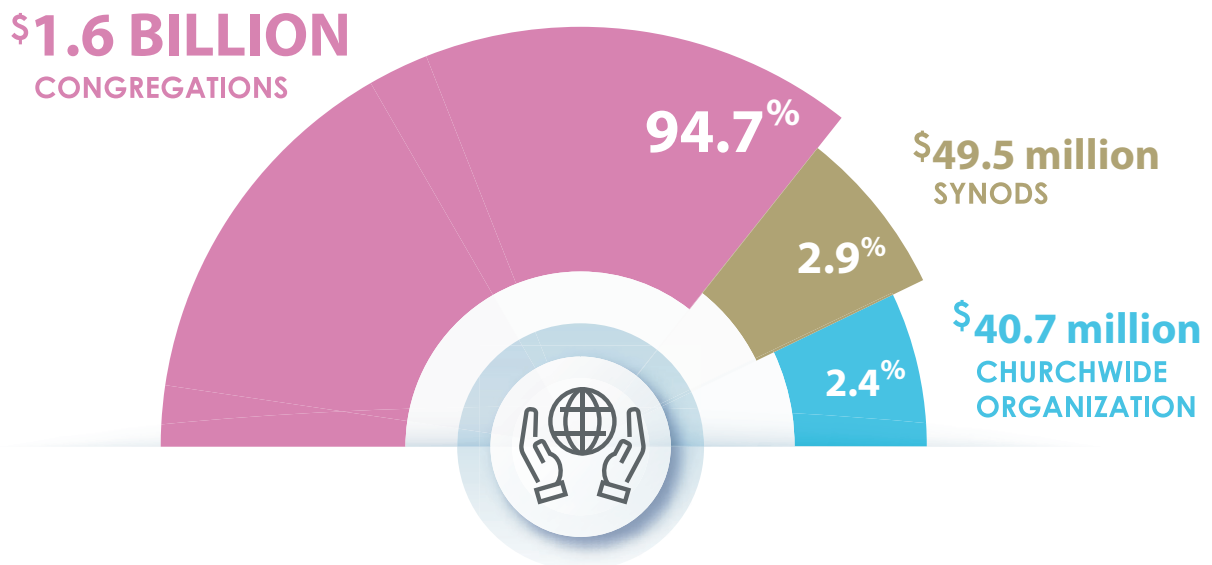
## 2.9% — SYNODS

\$49.5 million in Mission Support was stewarded by the ELCA's 65 synods.

## 2.4% — CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION

\$40.7 million in 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!



“Showers provide a sense of dignity and are therapeutic. I don’t know a better way to remind people of their baptism.”



# Where all May Dwell

Christian community

Emily Norris had been serving at Augsburg Lutheran Church's winter-overflow homeless shelter in Winston-Salem, N.C., for a few years when she heard the rumblings. Many of the guests opened up to her, told her stories. One need kept arising.

"I heard very loudly that there was a deep hunger for a faith community that looked like them," Norris said. They craved space where they could worship God and not feel judged for their housing status, their past or their appearance. Heeding their calls led Norris to Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, to become a pastor.

By 2020, Norris was ordained and serving as the mission developer for the Dwelling, an ELCA faith community designed for, but not exclusive to, people in Winston-Salem who are or have been homeless. *Funding comes from partnerships with Augsburg, the North Carolina Synod, the Moravian Church in America and the ELCA churchwide organization, which draws on Mission Support for the Dwelling's grant.*

Starting a church during a pandemic wasn't ideal. Safety restrictions made worship impossible, and the population Norris had hoped to reach became especially vulnerable. So she did what many ELCA leaders and congregations were forced to do: she pivoted.

After assessing community needs, Norris determined that free mobile showers would be the Dwelling's anchor ministry. Visitors could take showers and receive clean underwear, socks and T-shirts donated by nearby members of the Dwelling's synod.

"It was really a profound way to start," Norris said. "Showers provide a sense of dignity and are therapeutic. I don't know a better way to remind people of their baptism."

Eventually the showers became permanent, with participants volunteering to help the program. By Christmas Eve, area restrictions for gatherings had been relaxed, and Norris held the Dwelling's first service. In January 2021, it began offering regular Sunday worship.

With a living room for its sanctuary, couches and chairs for its pews, and free-flowing food, the Dwelling takes seriously its mission of hospitality. "It has a feather touch, where you can come in and get comfy," said member Cheryl Morrison. "It's OK to talk to the person next to you, get up to get a cup of coffee, doughnut or muffin."

"This is a church for God's people — the homeless — and they are the foundation of what makes this church work, which in my eyes is extremely special."

"This is a church for God's people — the homeless — and they are the foundation of what makes this church work, which in my eyes is extremely special," added Ryan Sprinkle, a council member. "You have people right off the street with their backpacks."



The online presence has enabled this church on the edge of town to reach an audience that extends from Phoenix to the Philippines.





# “New Ways to Be Faithful”

Christian community

When a congregation’s location can best be described as “on the road out of town, near the mall,” that might be a reason people aren’t filling the pews. In fact, in early 2020, Living Christ Lutheran Church, Flagstaff, Ariz., was facing a 65% decline in membership since 2013. *Grants from the Grand Canyon Synod, funded by Mission Support, helped sustain Living Christ’s ministry.*

So when the pandemic struck, the congregation faced an uncertain future.

After in-person worship was halted, Living Christ reignited its ministry by expanding its online footprint to include digital worship, with new sermon videos posted weekly and associated worship materials provided via PDF.

“We were initially just getting anywhere from 30 to 40 viewings for the sermons,” said Dean Garner, council member and IT/website manager for Living Christ. “When I put a little more work towards it when the pandemic started, we got up to 70 to 100. Then we put just a few dollars into it [on Facebook], and now we’re averaging 500 for the viewing of the sermons.”

The online presence has enabled this church on the edge of town to reach an audience that extends from Phoenix to the Philippines.

“The internet has basically been as much of a change for the church as, say, Gutenberg and the printing press was for Luther,” said Living Christ’s pastor, Kurt Fangmeier. “We’re always trying to find new ways to be faithful, both to the calling in our baptism but also in the midst of the world as it is.”

Though Living Christ may be new to internet outreach, the congregation has long been known for involvement in its community, particularly Flagstaff’s LGBTQIA+ population. In 2011, the congregation began sponsoring Pride in the Pines, an annual celebration in Flagstaff that is hosted by the Northern Arizona Pride Association (NAPA) and typically draws over 4,000 attendees.

“The internet has basically been as much of a change for the church as, say, Gutenberg and the printing press was for Luther.”

“There are not too many churches ... that walk the walk and talk the talk,” said Debra Taylor, president of NAPA, of the congregation’s LGBTQIA+ outreach. “Living Christ does.”

Now, in year two of the pandemic, Living Christ has transitioned to a hybrid in-person/online model and plans to relocate to downtown Flagstaff, which offers ample outreach opportunities.

“The building has served us well for over 35 years and will serve us well again by providing us the means to take our mission elsewhere in our community,” Garner said. “Jesus did not share the good news from one place, nor shall we. ... We are excited about this new journey.”

 To learn more about Living Christ’s ministry, view the video at [ELCA.org/SOFIA](https://ELCA.org/SOFIA).



Over 15 years, Jesús Escamilla has seen God provide for his congregation through faithful partners across the church and within his community.

# Bolstered by Relationships

Jesús Escamilla knows the power of relationships. Over 15 years, he's seen God provide for his congregation through faithful partners across the church and within his community.

"What God wants, if you believe and trust in how he wants to do it, it will get done," said the pastor of San Gabriel Lutheran Church in Alvarado, Texas.

Escamilla came to San Gabriel in 2006, when future congregants were holding Bible studies weekly in worshippers' homes. To worship, they drove more than 30 miles north to San Miguel Lutheran Church in Fort Worth. He joined the Bible studies, then became the faith community's official worship leader a year later, ministering in homes for both Bible study and worship. In time, the growing faith community needed a building in Alvarado.

"What God wants, if you believe and trust in how he wants to do it, it will get done."

A deal with a local supporter allowed the congregation to begin renting a plot of land, where it worshiped outdoors and eventually built makeshift indoor worship space. "Everyone was dusty, but they didn't care because they had a place to worship — their own place," Escamilla said.

Over time, partnerships with local congregations allowed San Gabriel to build a permanent church. Gifts from Calvary Lutheran

Church in Richland Hills allowed San Gabriel to put in flooring, and pews were donated by St. John Lutheran Church, a closing congregation in nearby Grand Prairie. Later, St. John's council gifted funds that helped San Gabriel take ownership of its land.

Since then, the church has grown, adding a fellowship hall that serves as a community hub for the area's largely Mexican immigrant population. But like so many congregations, San Gabriel struggled to maintain a sense of community during the worst days of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States.

The church closed and pivoted to virtual worship on Zoom and Facebook, with Escamilla, lay leaders and a small contingent of choir members recording services in person at the church.

But with virtual worship, collecting offerings became a challenge. Some congregants sent money through the digital-payment network Zelle or even left their offerings in the church mailbox, but many couldn't contribute monetarily. So the church began hosting weekly food sales to raise needed funds and provide members with a way to give back.

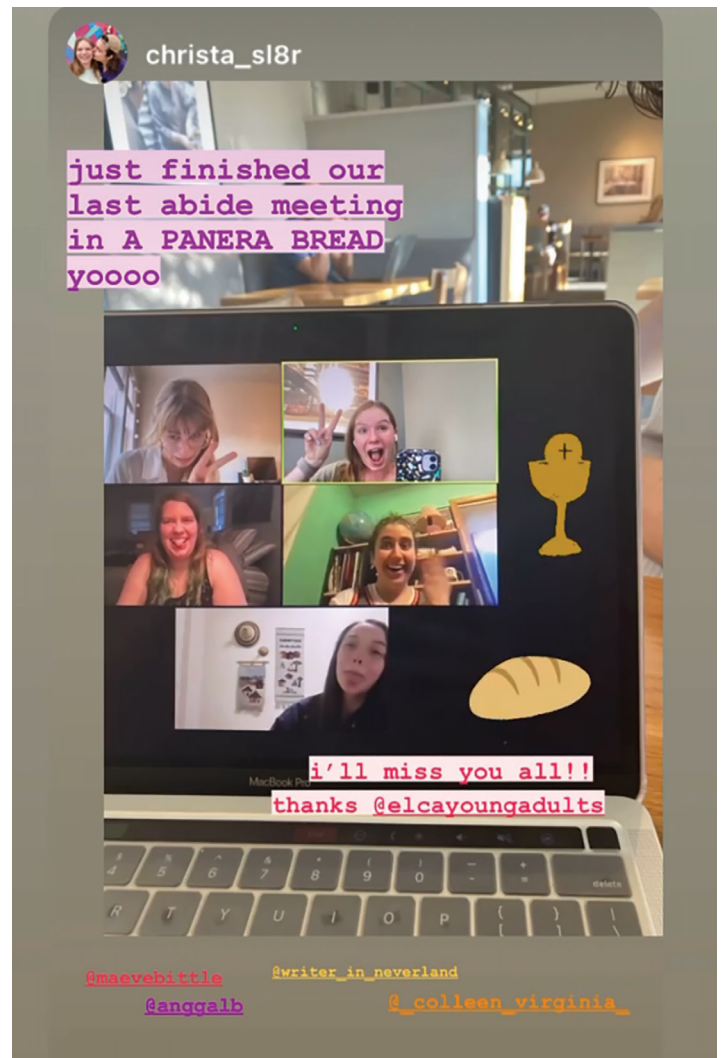
*Escamilla believes that San Gabriel has been built up by the generosity of others — church members, nearby ELCA congregations and, through Mission Support funds, the ELCA Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod.*

"It's been a conjunction of [congregations] working together to help a community that was struggling," he said. "We have this wonderful community that is working together to work with what the Lord wants us to do."

@heidig143's abide group making time to abide in rest last week!! Thanks for sharing!!



In the first Abide season, more than 400 participants met in over 50 virtual small groups for nine weeks.



# Space to Abide

Where are all the young adults in the ELCA?

Daniel Kirshbaum, program director for ELCA Young Adult Ministry, hears this question often. “They’re here,” he said. “We just need to figure out a way to meet them where they’re at.”

Meeting young adults where they’re at is a goal of Abide, a small-group ministry for ELCA members between 18 and 35. The program started in early 2020, shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic began. Hoping to connect isolated young people from across the country, Kirshbaum, former Young Adult Ministry program director Savanna Sullivan, and ELCA young adult leaders decided to facilitate a series of weekly, virtual small groups.

In the first Abide season, more than 400 participants met in over 50 virtual small groups for nine weeks. In the following two seasons, over 500 more participants joined. There have been groups of teachers, nurses, Young Adults in Global Mission alums, LGBTQIA+ people, and people of color. Weekly video and discussion topics so far have included “Abide in Hope,” “Abide in Grief” and “Abide in Failure.” *Mission Support makes this program possible by funding Kirshbaum’s leadership position.*

Claire Embril, social media coordinator for Abide, served as a group leader for the spring and fall seasons in 2020. “No matter what the topic was, I always left my group better than I

came into it,” she said, adding that even though her group members had different political views, they were ready to listen to and support each other through challenging experiences.

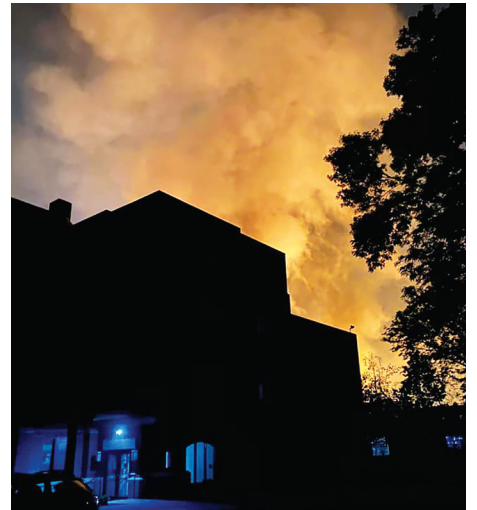
One challenge in particular? “As a Black woman, watching the intense, violent racism [over the summer of 2020] was extremely difficult,” Embril said. “Having an Abide group to process that with was really important.”

“As a Black woman, watching the intense, violent racism [over the summer of 2020] was extremely difficult. Having an Abide group to process that with was really important.”

This past summer, Abide partnered with Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp to organize a backpacking trip. Embril dreams of organizing a national Abide gathering. For now, she’s glad that Abide is giving young adults the space to just be together. “Abide shows that young people really want to participate in the church,” she said. “When space is made, they come.”



Holy Trinity served as a first aid station and a food distribution center in the days after George Floyd's murder.



# Living Our Theology, & Demanding Justice

The first time Angela !Khabeb attended an ELCA church service, she and a friend, prepared for an “evangelical” experience, brought their tambourines and Bibles. “We didn’t use either, and before we knew it, we were done with church!” !Khabeb recalled.

Curious to learn more, she visited [ELCA.org](https://www.elca.org) and found social statements explaining the church’s commitment to diversity, gender equality and racial equity. *ELCA social statements, developed through the ELCA churchwide office and funded by Mission Support, are a frequent starting point for potential members in learning how Lutheran theology applies to pressing issues.*

After years of searching for a place in Pentecostal congregations that limited her leadership because of her gender, !Khabeb hoped the ELCA was where she belonged.

She continued her faith journey as an ELCA missionary serving the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia and a seminary student at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. After calls in Ohio and Wisconsin, she became pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Minneapolis in 2018.

Holy Trinity’s building is located less than three blocks from the Minneapolis Police Department’s Third Precinct, where Officer Derek Chauvin worked. After Chauvin murdered George Floyd on May 25, 2020, protests broke out in the precinct. Holy Trinity served as a first aid station and a

food distribution center during the uprising. !Khabeb preached in the streets and later appeared on ABC’s *Good Morning America* to discuss faith and racial justice.

The simultaneous reckoning with racial inequity and the COVID-19 pandemic forced Holy Trinity to grow in its vocation, she said. “We’ve made strides in our congregation, moving from the toxic theology of scarcity to the breadth and joy of abundance.” The response also amplified her voice.

“A lot of times we look to [pastors and deacons] to do the things that all of us are called to do as baptized members of the body of Christ.”

!Khabeb thinks the ELCA needs strong leadership if it wants to practice the same theology it espouses in social statements. “A lot of times we look to [pastors and deacons] to do the things that all of us are called to do as baptized members of the body of Christ,” she said. “If we see violence and division in our society, we find it also in our pews. Lay leaders are key to reminding the church of what we said we would do. God is like a mirror. Just keep holding it up and asking ourselves, ‘Are we there yet?’”



"The pandemic was a stark illustration of the fact that the church is not a building."



# “Many Ways to Be Connected”

Leadership

As churches returned to in-person worship in 2021, many expressed thanks for the online support that the ELCA Worship team at the churchwide organization provided during the pandemic lockdowns.

When pandemic restrictions halted in-person worship in March 2020, the Worship team provided resources for worship at home, technological advice for online services, guidance for reopening church buildings safely, and tips on resuming congregational song in line with federal guidelines, said John Weit, a deacon and ELCA executive for worship.

*These resources, Weit said, are funded through Mission Support. “We’re very thankful for the Mission Support that we receive, and we’re happy to be able to give back to the congregations by providing online resources during the pandemic.”*

Of those resources, the “Worship in the Home” webpage was especially popular, Weit said, because it included Scripture, hymn links, prayers and reflections for each Sunday.

Many congregations already had the technology and know-how to stream services live or use social media platforms such as Facebook Live, but those who didn’t relied heavily on the resources provided by Worship. Gwenn Trout, pastor of Zion (Enola) and Zion (Etters) Lutheran churches in Pennsylvania, used those resources to record services from her home via Zoom and post the videos on Facebook Live.

With the help of a tech-savvy congregant, Trout figured out how to make it all work. Now both Zions are hybrid churches, combining online and in-person services. “We’ve learned the importance of hybrid church and of reaching out ... online,” Trout said.

Sandra Rudd, pastor of Sitka (Alaska) Lutheran Church also found the online resources to be a blessing. In addition to using them for online worship each Sunday, her congregation printed out the “Worship in the Home” readings and reflections and hand-delivered them to members who lacked internet access.

In addition to using them for online worship each Sunday, her congregation printed out the “Worship in the Home” readings and reflections and hand-delivered them to members who lacked internet access.

“The pandemic was a stark illustration of the fact that the church is not a building,” she said. “A lot of people say that, but we didn’t fully know it until we didn’t have a building to use. We learned that there are many ways to be connected as the church.”



Little did they know that they would become the ELCA's longest-serving active mission personnel, with 38 years of service.



# “A Life of Accompaniment”

In 1982, a month after their wedding, Mark and Linda Jacobson moved to Kenya. Three years later they accepted a call with the Lutheran Church in America, a predecessor church of the ELCA, to serve as community health workers with the Arusha Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT). Little did they know that they would become the ELCA's longest-serving active mission personnel, with 38 years of service.

“Mark and Linda Jacobson are the embodiment of a faithful servant of Christ,” said Rafael Malpica Padilla, ELCA executive director for Service and Justice. “Their whole life has been a life of accompaniment.” *Mission Support, which funds ELCA mission personnel, makes the Jacobsons' work possible.*

In the beginning, Mark, a doctor, supported Maasai community health workers in six small primary-care clinics. He quickly concluded that “prevention could only prevent a certain amount of disease; people still needed a place to go when they were acutely ill.” So, with the ELCT, he developed one of the clinics into Selian Lutheran Hospital, which now provides care in orthopedics, fistula, hospice and other areas.

Then he and his team opened the Arusha Lutheran Medical Centre, creating training programs for medical officers and nurses and opening a rehabilitation center for children recovering from surgery. Mark said he's proud of the work he and his colleagues have done together and loves seeing his colleagues' skillful leadership of the medical center since he stepped down from his leadership role there.

After working briefly in one of the clinics and then in hospital labs, Linda focused on coordinating volunteers, offering hospitality and arranging housing for visiting medical students and interns. But her most substantial accomplishment may be the support group Widow's Might, launched to counter Tanzania's practice of disinheriting widows. When a Tanzanian woman's husband dies, their property goes not to her but to her in-laws. Not every widow's in-laws claim the inheritance, but Evelyn (last name withheld) and her children stood to lose their house. “I'm not going to fight my family,” Linda remembers her saying. “I'm just going to work. God will help me.” Together, Evelyn and Linda launched Widow's Might, whose members support their families by weaving, sewing, embroidering and beading.

“I'm not going to fight my family, I'm just going to work. God will help me.”

Remembering her life in Tanzania, Linda is most struck by her neighbors' faith. “If things get really bad [here], we pray,” she said. “My neighbors start by asking us what God wants to do. ... [I] am learning from this tremendous faith.”

▶ To learn more about the Jacobsons, visit [ELCA.org/SOFIA](https://www.elca.org/SOFIA) for a link to the video documentary *Kuambatana (Accompaniment): The Ministry of Mark and Linda Jacobson*.



"The church becomes a family only with the recognition of women as equal partners in God's vineyard."



# Equal in God's Kingdom

Cholita Narzary made history in November 2020 as the second woman ordained into ministry by the Bodo Evangelical Lutheran Church (BELC) in Assam, India. She joined the roster 22 years after the denomination ordained its first woman, the late Kunanjaw Basumatary, who served as BELC bishop in the past.

"Since the first woman's ordination there were many silent years," said Ichahak Muchahary, BELC bishop. "The church becomes a family only with the recognition of women as equal partners in God's vineyard."

Muchahary credits the ELCA-organized 2019 South East Asia Conference on Gender Justice in Hyderabad, India, for pushing him and other leaders to advocate for and implement gender justice shifts within the church. *The ELCA has accompanied the BELC for two years, funding some of its ministries through Mission Support.* Since entering a formal companion relationship with the BELC in 2018, the ELCA has accompanied the church with mutual encouragement and leadership training events and funded community development, disaster response and academic scholarships (including for International Women Leaders).

Said Narzary of her ordination, "I knew the call of God from my childhood, but due to my parents and others, I could not go for further biblical studies. It took me long years, and it was really challenging for a girl like me to [acknowledge] my true [vocation]."

Prior to 2020, Narzary served as an evangelist and Sunday school teacher within the BELC and received training at the Karnataka Theological College in Mangalore (India).

She currently works as women's coordinator for the BELC, manages its Silk Research and Development Centre and leads a local parish.

"I strongly believe that men and women are equal in God's kingdom, both bearing the image of God. Now, after experiencing the work that women are also capable [of], the church will open the door for other women too."

Muchahary said Narzary's ordination has paved the way for the BELC to ordain more women. Currently six are pursuing theological studies in different seminaries in India, and in 2021 the BELC General Council adopted a resolution to implement 41% gender representation in all its governing bodies, in compliance with the Lutheran World Federation's gender justice policy.

With those amendments, Narzary hopes that many qualified and ordained women will take leadership positions in the BELC. "Women have always been in the forefront of Jesus' ministry," she said. "I strongly believe that men and women are equal in God's kingdom, both bearing the image of God. Now, after experiencing the work that women are also capable [of], the church will open the door for other women too."



“Despite this COVID-19, as a problem, Malawi has not stopped evangelizing. [We simply used] a different approach.”



# Evangelism Is Alive in Malawi

*Service and Justice*

In spite of COVID-19, ministry continues.

Those are words from Evance Mphalasa, a pastor and acting general secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi (ELCM), words that have energized him and a team of evangelists as they spread the gospel despite the setbacks of the pandemic.

Strict government measures issued in early 2020 closed some of the churches in Malawi and restricted gatherings to 100 people, said Feston Phiri, pastor, ELCM director for training and secretary for mission and evangelism. Churches that remained open had to provide congregants with masks, sanitizer and water buckets, unbudgeted expenses that proved financially devastating.

Additionally, the printing of Sunday school and evangelism materials — particularly those in the Tumbuka language — stopped completely because most offices were closed, Phiri said. Malawian evangelists were not deterred.

2020 was “a very hard time indeed in regard with evangelism in Malawi, but I think the whole world [was challenged],” he said. “Despite this COVID-19, as a problem, Malawi has not stopped evangelizing. [We simply used] a different approach.”

Pastors hosted two, three, even four services each Sunday to accommodate the small-gathering restrictions. To further share the gospel, Phiri said, evangelists organized a van equipped with loudspeakers so they could preach and sing to people in their homes.

“We used this van and this singing group, which is a praise team, evangelizing, going

around to different areas, reaching out to different people with this kind of way,” he said. “This exercise was done during [the evenings] ... when people are in their houses, so it was very easy to reach them.”

Many first-world countries turned to social media to continue faith conversations and stay connected to parishioners, but Malawians lacked that luxury.

“Bishop never slept; he was always helping to get us the latest information about COVID-19, always sending messages through the forums for pastors.”

ELCM Bishop Joseph Bvumbwe created a virtual forum for Malawi pastors, providing daily updates so the pastors could stay at the forefront of helping their parishes.

“Bishop never slept; he was always helping to get us the latest information about COVID-19, always sending messages through the forums for pastors,” said Mphalasa. “Then, the pastors disseminated the information.”

*This outreach — part of which was funded through ELCA Mission Support — has encouraged and increased the growth of the church, even during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

“Without your help, we wouldn’t be talking about expanding the church,” Phiri said. “The church is growing so fast and so rapidly. This is very important.”

## A MESSAGE FROM THE MISSION SUPPORT TEAM



Dear partner in ministry,

The last year has been one of change, adaptation and creativity. Together we learned new ways of being church as we continued to reach out to our communities and serve the spiritual and physical needs of our neighbors locally and globally. We found ways to lift each other up and support one another across all three expressions of the ELCA: congregations, synods and the churchwide organization. The way we do things may have changed in 2020, but the reason we do them — to serve and love God and our neighbor — stayed constant.

Being church during a pandemic has produced some of the most inspiring stories of our ministry together. We shared new ways of being community. We shared new ways of caring for one another. Our congregations and synods generously continued to share Mission Support — the portion of your offering that your congregation shares with your synod and your synod shares with the churchwide organization. This Mission Support breathed new life into our ministry together, helped ministries adapt to a changing world and even planted seeds for new ministries.

We are so grateful for the generosity of this church. We are grateful for the creativity that has sprung out of the challenges we faced in the last year. We are grateful for each of you, for being part of the body of Christ and part of the ELCA.

*Being church during a pandemic has produced some of the most inspiring stories of our ministry together.*

We hope this publication will remind you what is possible when we open ourselves up to change and walk alongside one another as church together. We invite you to share these stories of impact so others can see how God is at work in and through the ELCA.

Gratefully,

Victoria Flood  
Director  
Mission Support, ELCA

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 for you — 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 6-23.

## **Discussion**

Consider 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 this story teach you about ministry across the ELCA? 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 2021 • 2022

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