



## Christian Community and Leadership

*The Christian Community and Leadership home area shall foster and facilitate the work of synods, congregations, the churchwide organization, and others in reaching and welcoming more people into the Christian faith. It energizes and engages the core membership and works with the whole of this church to recruit, develop, and deploy lay and rostered leaders to fulfill the Church's purpose. (16.12.A21. of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA)*

Jesus Christ is the light of the world and the hope for our broken humanity.

The early church organized itself into two missions: caring for the hungry and preaching the gospel (Acts 6). In a parallel to this historic pattern, the ELCA has now placed responsibility for those tasks in two new home areas: Service and Justice (SJ) and Christian Community and Leadership (CCL). Service and Justice attends to the needs of people relative to hunger, advocacy, and disaster response. Christian Community and Leadership stewards the word of God so that the gospel of Jesus Christ might be heard, and people might find faith and join us in the care and redemption of all God has made. The missions of these two home areas are intricately connected. For Christians, service and justice are integral to both God's word and their faith—like breathing in and breathing out.

Christian Community and Leadership helps this church preach the word and administer the sacraments so that more people might become followers of Jesus Christ. ELCA congregations and ministries faced challenges before COVID-19, and the long-term effects of the pandemic are still unclear. Before the pandemic, ELCA membership was declining by about 50,000 people per year. The good news about the last two years is that most of our ministries have learned to adapt and are more open to trying new things.

Communities of faith have gathered online, and these ways of connecting are here to stay even now that the pandemic has abated. This will press the church to expand its understanding of membership, because people will continue to find significance and belonging beyond geography. Campus ministries, camps, service events, justice causes, and the like bear witness to the love of Jesus Christ and communicate the faith in credible ways to an increasingly skeptical society, especially to young adults.

The purpose statement of the ELCA calls on this church to “activate each of us so more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice, and love.” This is needed now more than ever in a society so deeply polarized and traumatized by racial and economic issues on top of COVID-19 and gun violence. Depression, anxiety, loneliness, suicide, and addiction are increasing, and, in this time, which demonstrates how necessary the never-changing message of Jesus and his love is.

The work of CCL is to find and form the leaders this church needs. The people we hope to engage will be younger and more diverse than our current membership and better able to communicate the gospel to a rapidly changing world. We do this not to preserve the institution or be “politically correct” but to proclaim faith in our context. As Jesus taught his disciples to fish for human beings, we need to learn how to gather those whom the Holy Spirit is nudging toward faith.

CCL helps the ELCA live out its mission by recruiting, training, and deploying leaders who establish and grow Christian communities. This is done in obedience to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, who told us to go, baptize, and teach. Followers of Jesus are made through starting new ministries, empowering existing ones, developing leaders, and fostering faith in people of all ages.

### Living out our purpose

#### *Leadership pipeline*

1. **Recruit** leaders for the needs of the church, now and in the future.
2. **Train** Christian leaders to solve problems and adapt to the flexible nature of our world.
3. **Deploy** leaders who are theologically trained and equipped to serve a variety of faith communities, including in various ethnic and linguistic contexts.

#### *Creating and maintaining healthy communities*

4. **Establish** Christian communities designed to invite and respect diversity.
5. **Grow** communities to deepen faith and more effectively share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## 1. Recruit leaders for the needs of the church, now and in the future.

Leadership recruitment encompasses several pipelines managed by CCL. The ELCA has committed to providing a **director for evangelical mission** (DEM) in each synod to serve the synod mission strategy with an emphasis on new ministry starts, congregational vitality, and leadership. This leader implements and builds upon ELCA commitments in partnership with ethnic-specific communities, people with different abilities, the young-adult population, and people and communities experiencing poverty.

Other ministries recruiting leaders target specific demographics. For example, the interim Youth Gathering coordinator has begun the process of recruiting new leaders for future **ELCA Youth Gathering** planning as we prepare to redesign the Gathering for future generations. We are saddened not to gather this year, but we look forward to a reimagined ELCA Youth Gathering when we return to New Orleans in 2024.

The **Horizon Apprenticeship Program** is designed to help young people of color and young people whose primary language is other than English experience leadership in the church and consider it as a vocation. It encourages participants, who are 16–20 years old and enrolled in high school or college, to develop a missional imagination that can help them discern their future and the role Jesus and the church will play in their lives.

## 2. Train Christian leaders to solve problems and adapt to the flexible nature of our world.

One of the pandemic's many lessons is that we must train and equip leaders to serve the church, both as people experience it now and in the future. The seven **ELCA seminaries**, the traditional path for training both rostered ministers and lay leaders, have been successful in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. They maneuvered financial, administrative, and academic situations and demonstrated both resiliency and innovation. As the seminaries begin to envision a return to in-person theological education, the ELCA's academic offerings are robust and varied.

Seminary boards have succeeded in intentionally recruiting new ethnic-specific members and incorporating the ELCA Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity into their agendas. Seminary leaders conducted a series of conversations on formation that will synthesize what the network learned during these trying times and identify and equip a new generation of leaders in theological education.

In higher education, the vehicle for churchwide ministries is the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities (NECU). This unincorporated, missional, collaborative association comprises the churchwide organization and the ELCA's 26 colleges and universities, plus Luther College in Regina, Saskatchewan (the only college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada). NECU is supported financially by the colleges and universities and by the churchwide organization through CCL. NECU's strategic plan for 2022–'25 sets three goals:

- 1) To deepen people's understanding of the rich diversity of Lutheran identity at NECU institutions.
- 2) To enhance Lutheran distinctiveness through increased inter-institutional collaborations.
- 3) To strengthen NECU's relationship with the three primary expressions of the ELCA.

The **Lay Ministry Programs (LaMPs)** working group is developing its annual survey to gather information about the academic offerings of the ELCA's lay schools network. The group is also working with its documents and bylaws and affirms its interest in continuing as an important partner in the formation of synod authorized ministers (SAMs). It is in the beginning stages of identifying and developing a new resource to be shared by the whole network.

The ELCA also supports training of leaders around the globe. Through the efforts of the **International Leaders program**, the ELCA has provided funding for nearly 200 leaders from 66 global companion churches, studying in 45 different countries. One-quarter of scholarship recipients are attending one of the 14 ELCA-affiliated colleges, universities, and seminaries. Many study in their home regions. Two-thirds of the participants identify as women, a significant shift due largely to the ELCA-funded **International Women Leaders** program. Recipients of International Leaders scholarships receive full financial support for their academic programs.

Though training new leaders is critical, another priority is training current leaders for a changing world. During the pandemic, the **ELCA Coaching Ministry** gathered over a thousand leaders with the weekly Being Church/Courageous Leader online events for prayer, equipping, and coaching. **Vital Congregations Online Training for Leaders** gathered 350 pastors and teams in January and February 2022 for renewal, revitalization, exercises, and tools for congregations seeking greater clarity about mission, gifts, testimonies, ideas, allies, and outreach. Topics included Jesus and justice, the Holy Spirit, living as disciples, multiplying leaders who are young and diverse, bringing fresh insights, aligning with purpose, and core values. In spring 2022 directors for evangelical mission invited their synods to the next series, scheduled for Oct. 6 and 20 and Nov. 3 and 17. It is open to 500 leaders or team members from any synod who are working to renew their congregations.

As the ELCA leans into diversity and inclusion, CCL celebrates the **Lutheran Deaf community**. This community has adapted well to online ministry, with stronger support networks, ecumenical clergy gatherings, Bible studies, and worship. In February 2022 the Rev. Lori Fuller became the second deaf woman to be ordained in the ELCA. (The first was the Rev. Beth Lockard, the ELCA's Deaf ministry coordinator.)

Seeking to engage with younger people, the board members of the **Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA)**, the organization for early childhood learning centers affiliated with ELCA congregations, completed diversity training in hope of better understanding the families and communities of the schools it serves. ELEA supports its network of schools with employee benefits, wellness resources, curriculum, and administrative resources. Similarly, the ELCA's **Youth Ministry** continues to equip the Youth Core Leadership Team, a group of high school youth who plan the annual Youth Ministry Summit. Finally, **Total Inclusion!**, in partnership with Lutheran Outdoor Ministries, hosted a series of symposia in 2022 to help outdoor ministry sites become more inclusive and welcoming of all people.

### **3. Deploy Leaders who are equipped to serve a variety of communities, including in various ethnic and linguistic contexts.**

Through the ministries of CCL, the ELCA deploys lay leaders and rostered ministers around the United States and the world. In the past two years one of the most visible ministries launched by the ELCA has been **ABIDE**, an online community of young adults convened by ELCA Young Adult ministry; more than 1,100 individuals gather in small groups for worship, prayer, study, and service ([www.facebook.com/ELCAYoungAdults/](https://www.facebook.com/ELCAYoungAdults/)). During Lent 2022, they created #NoPlasticsForLent, a pledge to reduce plastic usage.

After a pause during the pandemic, **Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM)** relaunched, recruiting newer, more diverse participants. The 2022 applicant pool of about 60 people was the most diverse yet, across all intersections: 12% were Black, Indigenous or people of color, and over 25% represented the LGBTQIA+ community. (See infographic on next page.) Participants in YAGM are deployed throughout the world to serve in a transformative, year-long journey of service.

Rostered ministers continue to be deployed through the **candidacy process** in partnership with seminaries, contextual ministry sites, synod staff, members of candidacy committees, and the candidacy leadership managers in each region. Through these individuals, the church works to lift up, train, and deploy ministers of Word and Sacrament (pastors) and ministers of Word and Service (deacons) who will then go through the first-call consultation to serve throughout the ELCA.

The **new first-call consultation** process approved by the Conference of Bishops in 2020 replaces the former assignment process for first-call candidates in rostered ministry. Responses to a six-month check-in survey suggested that we should continue to live into the new process. A team of bishops and candidacy leadership managers has begun to work on changes to streamline the process, especially for candidates moving to other regions.

Though CCL celebrates the adaptations made during the pandemic, staff remain mindful of the decreasing number of candidates entering the process. The number of applicants declined, from 494 in 2019 to 284 in 2021. The number of candidates approved for ministry also declined, from 266 in 2019 to 245 in 2021. Feedback indicates that potential candidates are discouraged by what pastors and deacons face during this challenging time, as well as by reports that calls are hard to find. This may be the encouragement the ELCA needs to reexamine the full candidacy process. At the end of March, a new task force met for the first time to review the entire process with the present and future needs of the church in mind. This task force includes partners from all points in the candidacy process; after listening to all constituents, it will formulate a robust but flexible new process to develop the candidates needed for ministry in the 21st century and beyond.

# 2022-2023 SERVICE YEAR Young Adults in Global Mission Applicant DATA

## 58 VIABLE APPLICANTS

This is nearly equal to our numbers in the first year of the pandemic, which broke an upward trend in application numbers pre-COVID.



## 5 COUNTRY PROGRAMS



Out of our nine typical programs, five will receive volunteers. This is out of a desire to reenter active service cautiously, and not all at once.

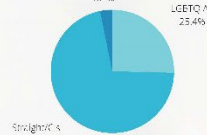
Persons of Color  
12.1%



### Race & Ethnicity\*

6% Latinx, 3% Black, 3% Alaskan Native or American Indian, 88% white. **This represents a 2% increase in black, indigenous persons of color** from past years.

Underserved  
3.7%



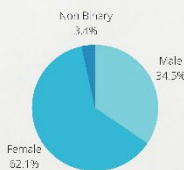
### Sexual Orientation\*

**This is the most sexually diverse applicant pool YAGM has seen.** With the consent of the applicant, this information is used to inform the placements of these candidates in regions where their identities will be safe.

### COVID-19 Precautions:

YAGM's DIP event will be virtual ● Orientation and Deployment will be separated by two weeks ● Vaccines, boosters and masks will be required ● Smaller cohorts

## GENDER EXPRESSION



## Geographic Distribution



Updated:  
2/2/2022

\*While we certainly celebrate these advances in representation in our program, our work is not yet done.



#### 4. Establish Christian communities designed to invite diversity.

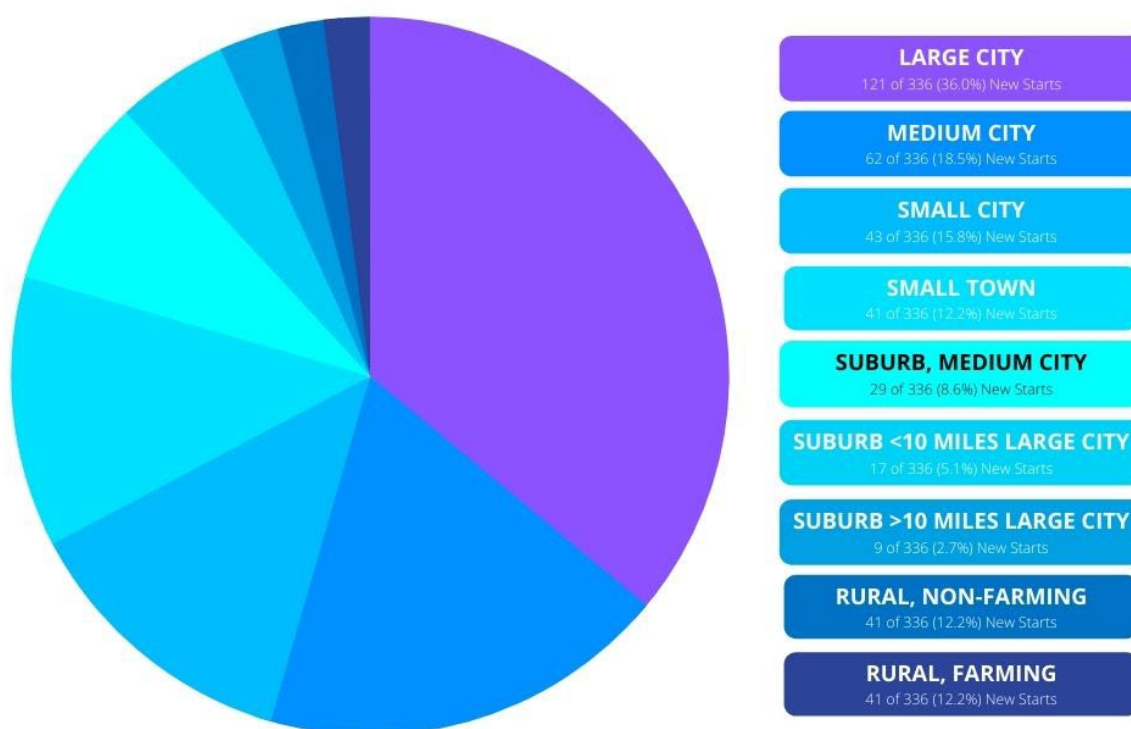
A tangible way CCL establishes Christian communities is through the **ELCA Congregational Vitality team**, which supports all synods in developing vitality initiatives in our 8,900-plus congregations and **new starts**, including new synod-authorized worshipping communities and explorations:

- **528 new ministries** organized as congregations since the birth of the ELCA in 1988.
- **78 new starts** begun during the pandemic.
- **383 new starts** are active now.

CCL also builds and establishes communities through the **ELCA Community Organizing** staff, who direct the Organizing for Mission Network. This network develops and coordinates congregation-based training in community organizing, with workshops, seminars, orientations, and resources within a Lutheran biblical, theological, ecclesial, and contextual framework. This ministry collaborates with the churchwide organization as well as regional, synodical, congregational, institutional, seminary, and interfaith partners.

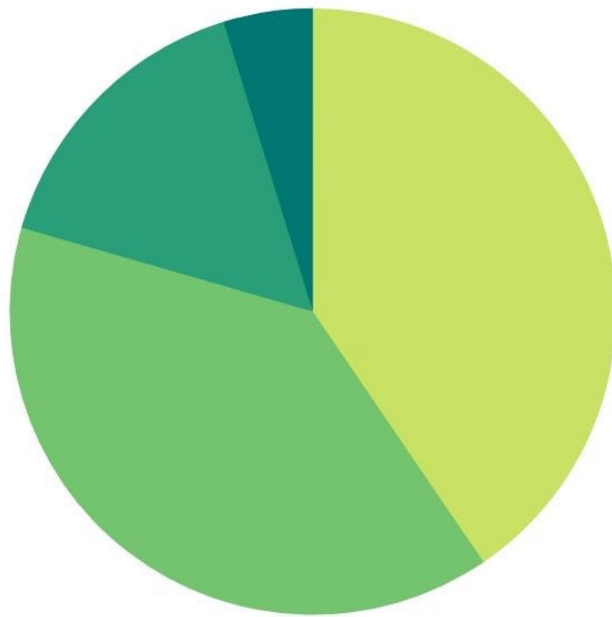
At the college level the **Lutheran Campus Ministry Network (LuMin)** supports campus ministries at non-ELCA colleges and universities, strengthening their connections with each other. In 2021, LuMin increased its support for the Lutheran Student Movement U.S.A. and established the LuMin Scholarships for International Travel, two \$7,000 scholarships for leaders who have served in campus ministry for 10 years or fewer.

To grow more young-adult communities, CCL established a **Young Adult Steering Committee** in late 2021 to share information about and advocate for young adults across the ELCA. Similarly, the **Disability Ministry** team partnered with ELCA World Hunger for its 2022 vacation Bible school curriculum, “Tree of Healing,” to create a lesson that will highlight children with disabilities and nurture this segment of our population.



## NEW STARTS BY GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

DATA CURRENT AS OF 2/15/2022



#### WORKING CLASS

Average Income \$16,000 - \$30,000  
136 of 336 (40.5%) New Starts

#### MIDDLE CLASS

Average Income \$35,000 - \$75,000  
131 of 336 (39.0%) New Starts

#### BELOW POVERTY LINE

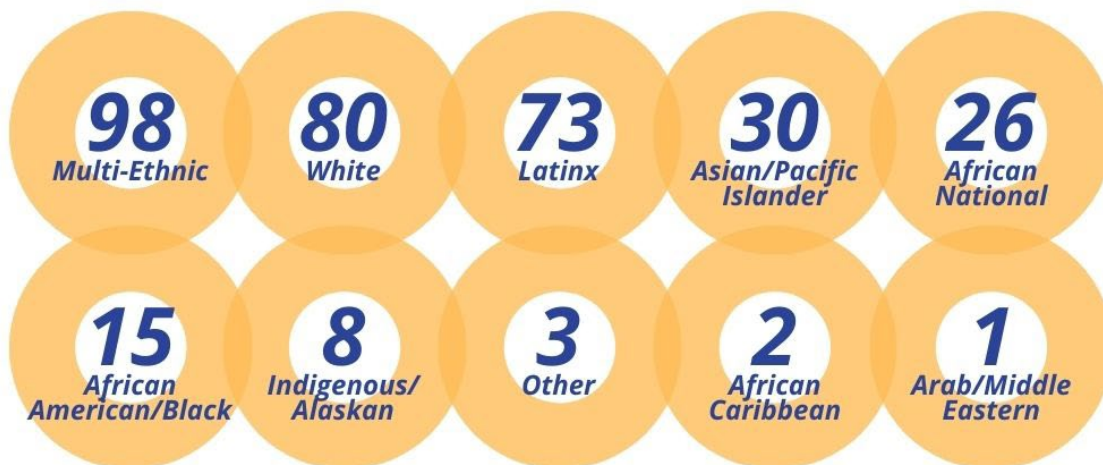
53 of 336 (15.8%) New Starts

#### UPPER MIDDLE CLASS

Average Income \$100,000+  
16 of 336 (4.8%) New Starts

## NEW STARTS BY ECONOMIC GROUP

DATA CURRENT AS OF 2/15/2022



## NEW STARTS BY ETHNICITY

DATA CURRENT AS OF 2/15/2022

The **Latinx Lutheran Leadership (L3) Initiative** is an intentional effort to support ethnic diversity by identifying, equipping, and deploying Latinx leaders in the ELCA. The project is developing a comprehensive and up-to-date database of Latinx ministries and leaders; creating new avenues to provide contextual, competent, and accessible formation resources to lay leaders and rostered ministers; and creating a sustainable administrative framework to ensure the future of Latinx leadership.

## **5. Grow communities to deepen faith and more effectively share the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

ELCA communities grow when members are engaged in the disciplines that faith provides. The **ELCA Worship team** provides growth opportunities by supporting the worship ministry of this church and overseeing the development and review of resources to help worship communities deepen their faith and build community around the means of grace. The Worship team connects with Lutheran and ecumenical partners in a shared mission to support and care for the church's worship and song. These partnerships supported crucial resources and guidance for safe worship during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Worship team also supports the churchwide organization in planning and leading worship, including for the Churchwide Assembly, the Conference of Bishops, the Church Council, and other gatherings.

The latest major ELCA worship resource is the liturgy-and-song supplement *All Creation Sings*. Developed in partnership with 1517 Media, the publishing ministry of the ELCA, *All Creation Sings* provides fresh language for prayer and song in this time of change for the church and the world. The ELCA Worship team also curates, commissions, and distributes worship resources in response to specific needs. Since the last Churchwide Assembly, this has included resources related to the annual commemoration of the Emanuel Nine every June 17.

CCL is growing strategic and at-risk congregations through the leadership of the **Coordinator for Economic Diversity**. There is a newly formed and growing network called **ELCA Vulnerable and Vital Congregations Best Strategically Positioned to Respond**. Such congregations demonstrate at least one of the following:

1. Strong leadership of and service in their communities.
2. Assets, connections, and partnerships with the surrounding community (but, perhaps, limited physical resources).
3. A coordinated response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Growth that reflects the diversity of its community.
5. Holistic work to break cycles of poverty and injustice.

CCL expects to develop resources to promote dialogue throughout the ELCA, to listen to voices at the margins, and to build new relationships and partnerships as “church together.”

**ELCA Mission Builders** continues to support ministry sites, showing up with teams of skilled volunteers for construction projects. The year 2023 will see a sharp increase in building projects as more communities seek help maintaining physical plants.

To grow communities outside congregational life, the **ELCA Chaplaincy** program recruits, endorses, and supports rostered ministers called to serve as chaplains in the federal government as well as in local hospitals, hospices, health care systems, retirement villages, nursing homes, prisons, and other specialized settings. The ELCA chaplaincy program coordinates over 180 federal chaplains who serve in the military or minister to veterans in the Veterans Administration system. Through synods, CCL coordinates approximately 800 chaplains for local employers. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Afghan refugee resettlement, and the Ukrainian crisis, ELCA chaplains are on the front line, serving the nation for the sake of the displaced, dislocated, distressed, and disadvantaged among God's children.

Early in the life of the ELCA, it clearly expressed its intent to take whatever measures might prevent sexual abuse or misconduct within the ELCA. CCL staff work to prevent misconduct among leaders and to make the whole church a safe space. For more information [click here](#).

## **Where do we go next?**

In the next three years CCL will work with the whole church in finding new ways to preach the gospel and nurture people's faith in Jesus Christ; develop ways for a diverse assortment of new leaders to find a path to ministry; and adapt to a rapidly changing environment by listening to others and putting their needs first. This will require ELCA Lutherans to affirm the core principles of faith in Christ and willingness to change just about anything else, just as Martin Luther did so long ago.

The work of strategic and authentic diversity in the ELCA has never been more important, and the ELCA needs to address it directly and honestly as followers of Jesus, who faced the issues of his day as a model for us to follow. CCL will seek to create more multiethnic ministries and communities of faith among poor and working-class people in our country as we try to become the church God calls us to be.

Isaiah said, “Behold, I am doing a new thing, do you not perceive it?” (43:19). In that spirit, CCL will try new and bold things, learning from its failures as well as its successes and always trusting in God. We hope to broaden our

impact through TikTok videos, master classes on Lutheran theology, apps to connect young adults to ministry opportunities, and new media in different languages, cultures, and contexts. If we succeed, we will know the overwhelming joy of seeing a new person come to faith, and we will sing Simeon's song in gratitude for having seen Jesus redeem the lives of new people.

Bold in our faith, we hope to join members of the Churchwide Assembly in bringing other people into the community and love we know in Jesus Christ.

The Rev. Philip C. Hirsch, *executive director for Christian Community and Leadership*





## Lutheran Men in Mission

### Board of directors

The Rev. Jason Adams, *emerging ministries*, Las Vegas, Nev.  
Mr. Lon Buss, *vice president*, Leesburg, Fla.  
Mr. Antoine Cummins, *discipleship*, Alpine, Calif.  
Mr. T. Hal Derrick, *president*, Flat Rock, N.C.  
Mr. Jeffery (Jeff) Kuchenbecker, *treasurer*, Madison, Wis.  
Mr. David (Dave) Newman, *networking and communications*, San Antonio, Texas  
Mr. James (Jim) Schieble, *secretary*, Columbus, Wis.  
Mr. Jimmy Smith, *events*, West Columbia, S.C.  
Mr. Richard (Rich) White, *development*, South Riding, Va.

### Advisors

Ms. Lynette Todd, Women of the ELCA, Baltimore, Md.  
Bishop Erik Gronberg, Conference of Bishops, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod

### Leadership team

The Rev. John Sundquist, *executive director*  
Mr. Kevin Burke, *discipling consultant*  
Mr. Kyle Pedersen, *emerging ministries consultant*  
Mr. Mason Cook, *Project Twelve webmaster*

### Statement of purpose

The vision of Lutheran Men in Mission (LMM) is “for every man to be a bold, daring follower of Jesus Christ.” Its mission: “By God’s grace, to intentionally disciple men by personally modeling the character of Jesus by living and leading a lifestyle intended to help transform them from having an inward focus to a culture of naturally loving and serving our neighbors everywhere.” The governing description of this ministry appears in ELCA continuing resolution 16.12.A21.

### Core values

1. To carry out this ministry in a Spirit-led, Christlike manner.
2. To intentionally make disciples of men.
3. To love and serve our neighbors.
4. To encourage collaborative and collegial relationships.

### Transformational discipleship through 2021

- 4,700-plus active men, women, and congregations.
- 68,000-plus men reached by LMM’s bold impact.
- 25,000-plus volunteer hours per year.

### “Bold Gatherings”

An in-person and virtual Christian event where men come together to learn, network, and be equipped to **boldly** live out their faith. Each event features six speakers on varying topics. These events remain available at [www.boldgathering.com](http://www.boldgathering.com) and on the LMM [YouTube channel](#).

Bold Gatherings Impact:

- From 2017 through 2021, over 600 men have participated in a live event.
- We have intentionally sought men and women of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds as keynote speakers.
- Since 2019, over 1,000 people have viewed online video of Bold Gathering events.

### “One Year to Live” retreats

This 44-hour retreat for men averages 14 participants per weekend. Small groups provide connection with other men, encouragement, new insights, and key learnings. Sacred space allows time for prayer, healing, inner transformation, and personal discovery. In 2015, LMM established Noah’s Fund, a scholarship that helps 20- to 30-year-old young adults attend the retreat.

- 1,830 have attended over the last 15 years.
- 120 participants per year on average.
- 150-plus retreats have been held.

### “Project Twelve” initiative

Project Twelve ([projecttwelve.net](http://projecttwelve.net)) is a website providing new and exciting faith-based resources for young men, regardless of their background, to help them become the men God is calling them to be. Categories include “Growth in You,” “Growth of Others,” and “Growth of Organization.”

- In the first half of 2020, over 2,000 individuals accessed Project Twelve, totaling over 6,113 visits.
- 140 resources have been posted in collaboration with seven denominations and other faith groups to expand the resource library.
- 4,800 subscribers receive weekly resources from Project Twelve.

### Men’s ministry leadership guide and Master Builders Bible

The Master Builders Bible for men is a unique version of the Serendipity Bible, designed for men. Going beyond the traditional group courses, this version contains everything one needs to start a men’s ministry. Includes:

- 200 Bible studies at all levels.
- A how-to guide for building a men’s ministry program, now offered online in English and Spanish.
- “LifeLines: Faith-based Roadmaps for Every Generation,” stand-alone studies first published with the Master Builders men’s courses in 2021. The second set of “LifeLines” studies will be published in 2022.

### COVID-19 response

During the COVID-19 pandemic, LMM was quick to pivot to virtual operations, using Zoom to meet men where they were, across the country. This technology has allowed LMM to host Bible and book studies, virtual Bold Gatherings, and other opportunities for men to gather, lifting each other up in prayer while sharing creative ways to stay connected.

### Major directions for 2016–2019

As Lutheran Men in Mission looks toward the future, we are excited to be sharpening our focus on LMM’s mission, vision, and values as we seek to make disciples of men of all ages, traditions, and ethnicities, living lives that model Christ and becoming the hands and feet of Christ for those in their community, church, and family.

To do this we need to **reach beyond!** Capitalizing on our unique, distinctive mission, we plan to **reach boldly**. Increasing participation in our experiences and expanding the use of our resources, we plan to **reach more**. Intentionally seeking men who are younger, and whose backgrounds are more diverse, to become bold, daring followers of Christ, we plan to **reach wide**. Yet none of this can be done without your support, which is why we are asking you to partner with us to **reach generously**. Together we can continue to create disciples of Jesus Christ who will change the world to the glory of the kingdom.

The Rev. John D. Sundquist, *executive director*