

# Service and Justice Updates

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



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

**Winter/Spring  
2022**

# Constantly Being Rooted

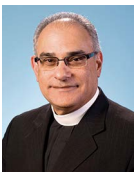
*“I pray that . . . Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love” (Ephesians 3:16-17).*

One of the items on my “bucket list” is a visit to Redwood National Park in Northern California. The park is home to the world’s tallest trees, the sequoia. These trees can live for over 3,000 years, and some specimens have grown to 370 feet high. The sequoia is a magnificent tree, tall, robust and full of life. Its root system goes deep, providing the physical support and seeking the nourishment needed to sustain these giants. The system is part of an underground network that connects the trees of the forest in an intricate web. Scientists tell us that these trees care for one another. Their branches serve as a home to entire ecosystems. Their rootedness and interconnectedness are a source of life.

To a certain extent, we, the community of followers of Jesus, are like a redwood forest. In the letter to the Ephesians the Pauline community encourages the believers to grow in their rootedness in Christ, to mature in him, growing “to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (4:13). The dwelling of Christ in each of us provides for this growth. This is not a once-in-a-lifetime event but a continuous process. The writer exhorts the community, indicating that, through the power of the Spirit, “Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, *as you are being rooted and grounded in love*” (3:17, italics mine). God’s work through Christ in the power of the Spirit is an ongoing process in our lives. We are constantly becoming the new person that is born through the waters of baptism.

I invite you to read the stories in this update. Through them you can see the movement of the Spirit rooting and grounding us in love. Our theological identity is marked by the movement of becoming. Our Lord dwells within us, offering the gifts of forgiveness, salvation and grace through Christ. His presence frees us from sin and liberates us for love. Grounded in God’s love, we “become Christ to one another,” as Luther wrote, forming an intricate and interconnected ecosystem to support and nourish one another. Like the sequoia we grow tall and strong. Together we grow into the full stature of Christ.

Pax,



The Rev. Dr. Rafael Malpica Padilla  
Executive Director, Service and Justice

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# Administration

## AMMPARO

AMMPARO 3.0: A Response to the Global Migration Challenge will take steps toward full implementation in 2022. AMMPARO 3.0 represents the national integration of two programs: the AMMPARO strategy and the Global Migration strategy that outlined migration work with respect to Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. AMMPARO 3.0 responds to the context of global migration as it has evolved since 2016 and offers the ELCA the opportunity to build upon AMMPARO's strong presence and work in countries of origin, transit, destination, contention and return.

AMMPARO 3.0 expands (1) the implementation of the Sanctuary Memorial adopted at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly and (2) the continentalization of AMMPARO that began in 2020. The ELCA has responded to the increased scope and complexity of migrant flows in Latin America and the Caribbean region. As successive political and economic crises have impacted Nicaragua, Venezuela and Haiti, displacing millions, AMMPARO has supported the emerging migrant ministries of ELCA companions and ecumenical partners in Costa Rica, Colombia, Peru, Chile and Argentina.



Haitian migrants in southern Mexico line up before the government asylum office.

In late 2021, AMMPARO companions in Mexico were on the frontlines of the response to the increasing number of Haitians arriving at Mexico's southern border with Guatemala. The migrants and refugees waiting there endure excruciating asylum-processing times. During the wait, Haitian migrants cannot leave the area. They are unsheltered, underemployed and lack access to health care or education for their children. Their daily struggle for survival is eased by the humanitarian aid provided by civil society organizations including the local affiliates of our AMMPARO companions. AMMPARO's efforts in Mexico are part of a holistic response to the needs of the diaspora of Haitian migrants throughout the Americas, which will continue to be a priority for 2022.

The fall of Afghanistan's government and the evacuation of thousands of Afghans to various U.S. military bases called safe havens have created anguish among the evacuees and posed new challenges in resettlement. Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton reminded us of the critical need for ELCA-wide engagement and long-term support, issuing a call across the ELCA to join in this "long welcome." An information session was held on Feb. 8 for ELCA congregations and synods with questions about Afghan congregational sponsorship. There are various ways that all ELCA congregations, synods and members can continue to follow our Lord's call to welcome the stranger, through accompaniment, advocacy and support.

## Companion Synod Relationships

The companion synod program continues to be an expression of accompaniment among synods and companion churches. The program has led to shared prayers (especially during these pandemic times), conference calls, newsletters, work on specific initiatives, participation in online webinars and more. The commitment to relationships and global work among the church's companions has filled the program with energy. Following are a few examples of the vitality of this program:

### Europe

The bookkeepers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia (ELCIR) had smiles on their faces when two brand-new computers were purchased for their work. This effort fits into the long-term vision of

the church to renovate the equipment of the national church. Furthermore, these tools will benefit the entire community, particularly women in their ministry roles.

*Companion Relationship: Northeastern Minnesota Synod ELCIR Task Force / Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia (ELCIR)*

## Africa

ELCA networks in the Africa region continue to meet quarterly for prayer, updates and sharing of strategic priorities, encouraging each other to keep relationships vibrant during the pandemic. Many synods have planned joint virtual-worship services. "It [was] so powerful when we were all online!" writes Heidi Cryer of the Northwest Intermountain Synod, which recorded a joint worship service with the Ulanga Kilombero Diocese in Tanzania for use by congregations at any time during the summer or fall. Each companion recorded components of the service, which were assembled into one and posted on YouTube. The service, including several musical numbers from UKD choirs, was recorded in both English and Swahili.



A companion synod in a virtual meeting with Bishop and Vice President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Central African Republic.

*Companion Relationship: Northwest Intermountain Synod / Ulanga Kilombero Diocese (UKD) in Tanzania*

## Asia

Over several years, the Northern Illinois Synod chapter of Women of the ELCA has fostered a relationship with the women of the Arcot Lutheran Church in India. Recently the chapter sent two Global Gifts to support the companion church's gender justice and women's fellowship work. Likewise, during the United Nations' 16 Days of Activism, Northern Illinois women prayed virtually with students from Gurukul Theological Seminary and several leaders of companion churches in India. The chapter rejoices in the chance to build up its connectivity and spirit.

*Companion Relationship: Northern Illinois Synod / Arcot Lutheran Church in India*

## Latin America and the Caribbean

The earthquakes in 1985 and 2017 severely impacted the foundation of the pastoral house of Santisima Trinidad, a congregation of the Lutheran Church in Mexico (Iglesia Luterana Mexicana, or ILM). The structural damages posed a threat to any inhabitant. Conversations among companions led them to take action in support of this main priority of the ILM, and today renovation of the pastoral house is almost complete. Soon it will be habitable again for the pastor of this congregation.

*Companion Relationship: Grand Canyon Synod / Iglesia Luterana Mexicana (ILM)*

The Latin America and the Caribbean region has received a request from the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, specifically the Sul-Rio-Grandense Synod, to begin a companion synod relationship. If you would like to know more about this unique request, contact Paulina Dasse at [Paulina.Dasse@elca.org](mailto:Paulina.Dasse@elca.org).

## Middle East North Africa

Opportunity Palestine (OP), which grew out of the two companion synods to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, has continued to support the ELCJHL schools financially and through spreading the word about all the good work that they do. Currently, the OP board has five members from two companion synods. In November 2021, OP held a webinar about the role and impact of cultural activities in the curriculum of the ELCJHL schools. Current students and advisors explained how these activities further develop their pride in their cultural identity, which prepares them to be Palestine's next generation of peace builders.

*Companion Relationship: Southeast Michigan Synod and New England Synod / Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land*

## Protocol for Sending Gifts to Companions

Our protocol for sending Global Gifts states, "In companionship between ELCA synods/congregations/members, the Service and Justice Home Area and our International Companion Churches, the ELCA can include monetary 'Global Gifts' in the quarterly remittance of grants to our companions." In 2021 many monetary gifts were sent to our companion churches in support of their ministries. Support for Curran Lutheran Hospital and the Phebe Hospital and School of Nursing in Liberia came from the Upper Susquehanna Synod, and scholarships for students studying at Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and the Andhra Christian Theological College in India came from the Northeastern Minnesota Synod. Support for the new Leadership Academy program of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Argentina and Uruguay came from the Nebraska Synod.

## "Becoming" Conference

Service and Justice is excited to host a conference this summer: "Becoming." From Aug. 21 through 28, all Service and Justice staff will gather in Chicago with mission personnel and ELCA networks. The vision is to foster meaningful connections and reflect on new ways we are being called to do God's work.

During the conference, there will be concurrent network gatherings. Service and Justice teams will extend invitations to multiple networks. For instance, the World Hunger Leaders Gathering brings together leaders from across the ELCA who are rallying their synods and congregations to work toward ending hunger in their communities. This gathering provides them the opportunity to learn new skills, build networks that enhance their work back home, and learn firsthand about their work's impact around the world. The Service and Justice team looks forward to this celebration of connection and service!

SAVE THE DATES

*Becoming*  
ELCA SERVICE AND JUSTICE CONFERENCE

AUGUST 21-28 | 2022

HYATT REGENCY  
O'HARE  
CHICAGO

*"Connecting communities through Service and Justice  
for transformation into the way of Jesus"*

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

Gather with ELCA Service and Justice staff, international mission personnel, network representatives and beyond.

# Accompanying Peoples, Communities and Networks

## GLOBAL SERVICE

The Global Service team is in the season of recruiting and hiring for its various missionary positions. At the time of this update, five new missionaries have begun their service since last summer, filling such positions as ESL teacher in Japan, graduate studies director in Cairo, Egypt, and Young Adults in Global Mission country coordinators in Jerusalem/West Bank, Argentina/Uruguay and Senegal. The Global Service team continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic as it secures deployment for various new missionaries hired in 2021. It looks forward to upcoming orientations for new missionaries in 2022 and the “Becoming” conference in August, which will provide an unprecedented opportunity for all missionaries to gather in Chicago.

## DOMESTIC MINISTRIES

### African Descent Ministries

In October 2021, African Descent Ministries (ADM) transitioned into new leadership. This year nine African-descent leaders completed their grief coach training. Fifty-three African-descent candidates for ministry have been confirmed as viable. Currently there are 40 African-descent/African-national missions listed across the ELCA. On Jan. 18, ADM launched the Sankofa Wellness Series, a six-session virtual therapeutic space for leaders in the African-descent community. Feb. 1 marked the launch of “Talks at the Desk,” a multimedia storytelling project for Black History Month. ADM is preparing for the “Becoming” conference in August, hosted by the Service and Justice home area. One African-descent congregation, Bethlehem Lutheran Church in New Orleans, is working on a grassroots affordable-housing capital campaign to complete four units and remodel its sanctuary over the next five years. The African Descent Strategy Team plans to reconvene in March.



Bethlehem Lutheran Church in New Orleans, La.



South Sudanese leaders meet in Omaha, Neb., for COVID-19 training.

### African National Ministries

Exploring, understanding and addressing COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy within African-national communities in the United States remains the primary focus for African National Ministries (ANM) in 2022. A high percentage of African nationals live in densely populated communities and work as essential workers in service industries where they face greater risk of exposure to the virus. ELCA World Hunger awarded ANM a grant of \$30,750, which helped train ANM pastors and lay leaders to provide support, information and spiritual leadership in all six caucuses. The ANM team is increasing awareness, knowledge and trust among synods, their

partners and the communities involved. The team also hosts educational activities and forums to share research findings more broadly. Communities are being motivated to fight for better practices and reduce existing health disparities.

### Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations

The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force, which serves at the appointment of the presiding bishop and has been working for over a year, continues to meet regularly to ensure the execution of the repudiation. The Repudiation Task Force has charged additional sub-task forces with work focused on catechism, settler narrative, churchwide assembly and the creation of “Declaration of the ELCA to American Indian and Alaska Native People,” which was adopted by the Church Council and presented to all expressions of the ELCA on Oct. 11, 2021, Indigenous Peoples’ Day. One of the commitments listed in the declaration is for leaders at all expressions of the church to practice the ritual of land acknowledgement at meetings, gatherings, events and worship. Also, after the revelation of unmarked and mass graves of First Nations children at residential schools in Canada, the American Indian and Alaska Native Lutheran Association challenged churches of the ELCA to display orange flags in memorial to Indigenous children buried in unmarked and mass graves at Indian boarding schools in the United States and residential schools in Canada. Many congregations, synod offices and churchwide staff have displayed orange flags and begun the practice of land acknowledgement. Soon after U.S. Representative Sharice Davids and Senator Elizabeth Warren introduced to Congress the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States Act on Sept. 30, 2021, the ELCA invited support of the act through an ELCA Action Alert. Responders sent just under 2,000 letters to senators and representatives.

### Arab and Middle Eastern Ministries

The Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage (ALAMEH) will hold its biannual assembly in August. The keynote speaker will be Bishop Ibrahim Azar of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL). Last October, a three-day training workshop for Arab and Middle Eastern pastors focused on Lutheran church polity and worship. This is essential, since most Arab and Middle Eastern pastors of the church come from non-Lutheran backgrounds. A June training will focus on outreach, evangelism and stewardship. The Arab and Middle Eastern Ministries team began a new worshipping community in Sacramento, led by Charbel Zgheib. Lastly the team is exploring the start of an online, Arabic Christian radio station to reach out to new members, support the Arab community and provide positive and uplifting interaction with the Arab Christian community in North America.



### Asian and Pacific Islander Ministries

After a few months of delay, a new resource titled *The Book of Life* will be published in April. The resource focuses on understanding the Bible from an Asian Lutheran perspective and aims to guide Asian pastors, congregations and ministries in reading the Bible, which lies at the core of most Asian Christian beliefs. Written by Paul Rajashekar, the book will appear first in English, after which the U.S. domestic desk and Asia Pacific desk will assemble a team to translate it into Chinese (both traditional and simplified), Korean, Japanese, Myanmar, Laotian, Hmong, Lahu, Thai, Cambodian and Indonesian.



COVID-19 has delayed the 15th Assembly of Asians and Pacific Islanders, ELCA (AAPI) and the 11th Asian Lutheran International Conference (ALIC). Despite the uncertainties surrounding the pandemic, the AAPI executive committee is committed to holding its assembly in conjunction with the ALIC in fall 2022. The ALIC planning team intends to reassess its plans for the conference this spring.



### ▶ Latino Ministries

Hector Carrasquillo, program director for Latino Ministries, is working with Ruben Duran, who is involved in new ministry developments from the Christian Community and Leadership home area, to create a database of Latino ministries. The project is supported by and housed at Trinity Theological Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. This database will contain the latest information about Latino ministries in the ELCA, which can be shared with the whole church. The 2022 Vacation Bible School materials being produced through World Hunger are being translated and adapted into Spanish for use in ELCA Latino congregations.

### ▶ Peace Not Walls

Many ELCA individuals and congregations travel to Palestine and Israel on pilgrimages. The accompaniment-based model of travel invites pilgrims to augment their visits to holy sites by engaging the people of the Holy Land, including those involved in Lutheran ministries in Palestine, and learning about their lived reality. As COVID-related travel restrictions are lifted and international travel resumes, Peace Not Walls encourages you to email [peacenotwalls@elca.org](mailto:peacenotwalls@elca.org) for resources on itinerary development, preparation for travel, social awareness and post-travel advocacy.



In December 2021, ELCA Peace Not Walls partnered with ELCA Young Adult Ministry to create the second annual “Advent Pilgrimage in Palestine” series, which lifted up the voices of young adults from the ELCA and the ELCA’s companion church in Palestine, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL). The theme for this four-week virtual pilgrimage was “The WAY to Bethlehem: Prepare, Journey, Arrive, Witness.” What is “the way to Bethlehem,” as an Advent practice and as Christian engagement in Palestine? What does it mean for us as Christians, and for the church, to be called to resist the injustice of “the way things are” in favor of the disruptive, transformative way of the Lord? This annual resource includes short video reflections, a parallel Bible study with discussion questions, and a host of resources for leaders to use in their ministry contexts.

Be one of the thousands of people who act on their faith using Action Alerts from the ELCA Advocacy Network. Sign up at [ELCA.org/advocacy/signup](https://elca.org/advocacy/signup). To receive Action Alerts related to Peace Not Walls, select “Middle East Network” on the signup form.

## GLOBAL MINISTRIES

### ▶ Africa

The ELCA Africa Gender Justice team had an exciting 16 days of activities under the United Nations theme “Orange the World: End Violence Against Women Now!” The 2021 event was hosted by youth and young adult groups of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church



The Rev. E. Moyo addresses a news crew of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Cooperation.

in Namibia (ELCIN). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, turnout was expected to be low. Surprisingly, in Zimbabwe 120 people participated in person, including the ELCZ’s presiding bishop, gender justice chairperson and youth pastor; the ELCA’s regional representative for gender justice and programs; and elderly members of the church and community.

In Namibia, 400 people participated in the event, including government officials, church leaders and the Namibian police department. Youth and young adults attended in large numbers, all dressed in orange and speaking out against gender-based violence. Several young men addressing the group declared that they were tired of seeing their

sisters and mothers sexually abused by older people in the community, and that they would no longer remain silent. These voices came from youth of the ELCZ and ELCIN and from the Lutheran youth groups of 15 other countries in the region, participating in the event through video skits, the ELCZ’s Facebook page and live Zoom presentations.

During the event, messages on gender-based violence were transmitted on Zimbabwe national television and radio. In Namibia, where the event was broadcast live on TV and radio, another initiative was launched at the event’s conclusion: 365 Days of Action – Zero Tolerance on Violence Against Women and Girls. Africa is experiencing a kairos moment for speaking out against all forms of gender-based violence.



ELCZ Presiding Bishop K. Sibanda (center, sports shirt) and the Rev. E. Moyo (center, black mask) join “Orange the World” attendees as they demonstrate the “Africa Unite” gesture.



## ▶ Asia and the Pacific

Charles Peterson has arrived in Indonesia to serve as missionary and associate with the Lutheran Study Center, located in Pematangsiantar, West Sumatra. In this role he will bring a renewed focus on Lutheran theology and practice that will benefit the country’s 6 million Lutherans in 13 Lutheran church bodies. The study center has been established by the National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation (KNLWF).

Charles Peterson (second from left) with (left to right) Bishop Abdul Hutaaruk of the Christian Protestant Church in Indonesia (GKPI); the Rev. Humala Lumbantobing, secretary of the National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation; and the Rev. Dedi Pardosi, coordinator of the Lutheran Study Center.

## ▶ Europe

In the coming year, the Europe desk will continue to prioritize its accompaniment of regional partners as they respond to the needs of the most vulnerable populations in Europe.

Within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary (ELCH), Szabolcs Végh is an active leader in the Lutheran community and guides the Backyard Garden and Little Workshops project, one purpose of which is to



A participant in the Backyard Garden and Little Workshops project tries her hand at loom weaving during an introductory training session.



Participants in the training sessions and their families get an introduction to pottery.



A participant in the basket-weaving workshop with his first project nearly complete.

address limited economic opportunity and skill training. In rural settings, women and Roma individuals are disproportionately impacted by lack of economic opportunity. This project focuses specifically on communities in five neighboring villages near Lake Balaton in western Hungary.

The first step in establishing the Backyard Garden and Little Workshops was to equip a location, so a multipurpose house in the village of Kötcsé was renovated to serve as both a community space and an arts and crafts center. Once the space was established, the ELCH invited families from the surrounding villages to a trial day at which they could learn about and try each of the crafts (basket weaving, loom weaving and pottery) and select a training course in the one they preferred. The eight-week training courses are led by professional craftspeople. Once a participant completes a training course, they can utilize the space and materials to create art to sell.

In addition to providing practical skills training, work space and materials, the project weaves together creative expression, cultural celebration and community connection. To that end, the building utilized for crafts is also used for community activities. From guitar practice for the youth club to pottery days for children to all family events, the message to the larger community is clear: this is a place to gather. Through this collaboration with the local villages, the ELCH is empowering individuals and strengthening the fabric of the community.

### Latin America and the Caribbean

The ELCA accompanies the Mexican Lutheran Church alongside five other organizations in Mexico: the Lutheran Augsburg Seminary, the Theological Community of Mexico, the Mexican Association for Rural and Urban Transformation, the Migration Policy Working Group and the Lutheran Center in Mexico City. During December, these six companions hosted the Service and Justice unit's Latin America and the Caribbean team. These groups gathered in person for the first time in two years to reflect on the work of our companions



in the region during the pandemic and to discern and plan how to strategically accompany companions in 2022 and '23. The work of these companions in Mexico is emblematic of the wider work of companions in the region: rooted in faith and community, they work for the positive transformation of their communities through International Development and Lutheran Disaster Response. This transformation manifests in a variety of ways, from evangelical outreach to leadership development to sustainable agriculture and water use to sheltering and advocacy for migrants to health care to child protection and education to gender justice. The praxis and theology of accompaniment were reaffirmed by companions as well during the visit. The Theological Community of Mexico presented the Rev. Rafael Malpica Padilla, executive director of Service and Justice, with an honorary doctorate for his contributions toward Latin American theology and missiology in advocating for new methodologies of engagement with companions in the Global South.

## ► Middle East and North Africa

The Middle East/North Africa (MENA) area desk has been working with regional partners on some exciting new ELCA-supported programs. In Lebanon, the MENA desk has helped the Contact and Resource Center (CRC), a Christian organization serving disabled adults, to break ground on a new farm and guesthouse that will employ adults with disabilities and bring in revenue to support the CRC's ongoing work. In Jerusalem, the MENA desk is supporting the Lutheran World Federation affordable housing project, which will soon begin construction in Beit Hanina. The ELCA also continues to accompany our partner church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, as it ministers to members and neighbors at a time when the perseverance of the Palestinian Christian community is being tested by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing occupation, and increases in violence and harassment. In Cairo, St. Andrew's United Church of Cairo and St. Andrew's Refugee Services continue a growing ministry of service to refugees.

Two new missionary couples have been welcomed to the region: the Rev. Cory Driver and Sarah Driver are assigned to Cairo, where Cory serves as director of graduate programs for the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, and the Rev. Jordan Miller-Stubbendick and the Rev. Adam Miller-Stubbendick will serve in Jerusalem as country coordinators for the Jerusalem/West Bank YAGM (Young Adults in Global Mission) program, which is scheduled to resume this year.



Bishop Ibrahim Azar celebrates his fourth anniversary as bishop of the ELCJHL in January.



Local schoolchildren learn about bird migration at the ELCJHL's Environmental Education Center.

# Building Resilient Communities

The past year has been a time of discovery and opportunity for Building Resilient Communities (BRC). The team, which oversees both the domestic and the international portfolios of ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response, focused on finding efficiencies in grantmaking and discovering unique ways to accompany Lutheran ministries, synods and congregations in the United States and companion churches and ecumenical partners abroad. The team also expanded relationships with social ministry organizations and supported their work through granting opportunities. The ongoing pandemic has prevented many in-person gatherings, yet the team has found ways to connect and stay engaged with its networks virtually. Within Service and Justice, BRC found new touch points for serving ethnic-specific communities and joining teams to advocate on homelessness, climate change, poverty and migrant rights.

BRC's goal is to build upon the past year of discovery and turn 2022 into a year of engagement. BRC looks forward to learning more about assets within the team and finding areas for meaningful integration within Service and Justice and the churchwide organization as we continue to fulfill the promise of the Future Church initiative.

## BRC New Colleagues

**Roselle Tenorio** | Roselle (they/them) joined BRC on Aug. 1 as domestic grants manager. Roselle brings experience in direct service, gender justice and queer studies to their intersectional work in participatory grant-making. Their work in the Service and Justice home area is informed by their passion for ensuring equity, building community and pursuing liberation.

**Naomi Sonne** | Naomi (she/her) joined BRC on Oct. 18 as social ministry organization engagement manager. She lives in Philadelphia and has a background in social services, environmental sustainability, global development, housing equity and gender justice. Naomi is excited to join the ELCA and continue her work in service and justice with the church.

**Kanchan Sharma** | Kanchan (she/her) joined BRC on Oct. 20 as international grants manager. She brings to BRC her passion and her eight years of experience as finance coordinator for the Service and Justice home area and Global Mission unit. Kanchan is excited to continue her work with Service and Justice in a new role, working more closely with our companions and partners.

## LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

Many headlines we saw in 2021 told stories of hardship experienced by people around the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing migration and worsening natural disasters. However, Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) also witnessed stories of resilience as families and communities came together, prayed together and helped each other in times of crisis.

In 2022, LDR-International aspires to continue supporting our international partners in disaster response and preparedness and accompanying people on the move in every point of their journey. We will continue to highlight stories of hope and strength and invest in initiatives that promote resilience, especially in response to protracted disasters. LDR-US will continue to develop its strategic priorities to engage, educate and equip the national network, curating resources and cultivating relationships with ELCA ethnic-specific and other ministries with an eye toward grounding LDR's work in the principles of community organizing and racial equity. Concurrently, LDR-US continues its Midwestern capacity-building project, developing training resources and providing assistance for marginalized communities.

## LDR-International

The South Sudanese Civil War lasted from 2013 to 2020. Despite a cease-fire agreement and a national call for dialogue, violence and distrust still divide different ethnic communities. Lutheran Disaster Response is supporting the peace and reconciliation projects of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan–Upper Nile Internal Province (ECSS-UNIP).

Throughout South Sudan, violence breeds more violence, and ECSS-UNIP is striving to break that cycle. The church brings together tribal communities, ethnic groups, political parties and ecumenical partners and encourages peace-building dialogue between the groups. As part of the peace and reconciliation project, local peace committees distribute peace and reconciliation messages through social media, brochures and radio broadcasts. The messages are translated into four languages to accommodate the different ethnicities in the area. Additionally, ECSS-UNIP hosts trainings for leaders on peace-building, conflict resolution and trauma healing.



Participants in a peace and reconciliation workshop pray together.

## LDR-US

As part of Lutheran Disaster Response's Midwestern capacity-building project, Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (LSS-MN) has partnered with CAPI (formerly the Centre for Asians and Pacific Islanders) and Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES) to support refugee and migrant families in Minnesota that have been impacted financially by the COVID-19 pandemic. The partnership has strengthened organizational capacity and resources to better support vulnerable communities during current and future disasters.

One client, JH, is a Liberian immigrant who lived with her sister. Her sister was the primary breadwinner, and after the sister's death from COVID-19, JH struggled with not only the emotional trauma but paying her bills. CAPI assisted her in applying for the RentHelpMN program, which covered six months' worth of past-due utility bills and provided much-needed relief.

"It was a miracle for us as a family when [our case manager] introduced us to your program," another client remarks. "It was a huge relief to us. It helped in paying off our accumulated bills. . . . We consider its impact as a gift of inestimable value. Thank you so much. We pray God's continuing blessings upon you, family and the endeavors."

## Social Ministry Organization Engagement

There are 285 social ministry organizations (SMOs) affiliated with the ELCA. Affiliation has historically been the formal expression of vibrant partnerships between SMOs, their congregations and synods, the ELCA, and Lutheran Services in America (LSA). SMO Engagement seeks to deepen and extend those partnerships and streamline and revitalize the affiliation process. Many SMOs have long been vehicles of service and justice as they implement Lutheran Disaster Response and ELCA World Hunger programs via domestic grants. The work



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



**CAPI**



**COMUNIDADES LATINAS  
UNIDAS EN SERVICIO**

Powerful partnerships, such as the one between Lutheran Disaster Response, CAPI and Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio, strengthen the capacity of local organizations to help more people.

of SMOs also includes health and human care, substance abuse treatment, counseling, employment assistance, adoption and foster care, developmental disability services, pregnancy counseling, senior adult care, child abuse prevention, and housing for people experiencing homelessness.

This year the ELCA is opening Nellie J. Svee Grants, an endowment fund for SMOs in North Dakota, named for the founder and benefactor who lived most of her life on that land. The ELCA is also opening the Lutheran Services for Children and Elderly Endowment Grants, designed to fund ELCA-affiliated programs that benefit youth, older adults and their families. As discussed during the SMO CEO Summit (held by LSA in January), the labor shortage has particularly impacted SMOs providing direct care. The strain on these SMOs' finances, workforce and physical, social and emotional well-being presents an opportunity for the ELCA to accompany these partners in this acutely challenging time. SMOs are encouraged to create grant proposals that offer innovative and effective solutions to the persistent needs exacerbated by these compounding challenges. We continue to nurture these relationships and accompany SMOs as they pivot to serve their communities.

## ELCA WORLD HUNGER

Through its network, educational resources and grants for ministry, ELCA World Hunger accompanies people in understanding and addressing the challenges that contribute to hunger and poverty. In the second half of 2021, ELCA World Hunger continued its accompaniment of partners in 60 countries and took exciting steps toward expanding accessibility of virtual and print resources. ELCA World Hunger is building the capacity of leaders to address the link between climate justice and hunger, partnering with Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in the launch of its Center for Climate Justice and Faith, and creating effective spaces for Lutherans from the United States and around the world to learn from one another and advocate together for justice and economic sustainability for our most vulnerable neighbors. In 2022, ELCA World Hunger looks forward to gathering with network leaders, expanding engagement and leadership opportunities for young people and people with lived experience of hunger or poverty, and focusing efforts on the intersection of hunger and housing.

### WH-International: Lutheran Development Services, Zimbabwe

With a vision of transformed, robust and resilient communities, Lutheran Development Services in Zimbabwe promotes peace, justice and sustainable livelihoods through activities such as improved agricultural production, climate-smart agricultural practices and microenterprise development. The Chikombedzi Learning and Demonstration Centre (CLDC) has implemented training in conservation farming, which has produced a drastic increase in yields. Conservation farming is based on environmentally friendly techniques and practices that help farmers increase crop yields and improve soil condition over the long term, which reduces the need to regularly clear new fields.

“*Pfumvudza* [conservation farming] is new to me,” recalls Emma Mangwede, one of the CLDC’s 64 members. “I had never heard about it. I joined this group because I was keen to learn how to survive as an old lady looking after seven grandchildren. I practiced this new farming method in my field where I produced sorghum, and the yield is impressive.”



Alice Mapikure practices conservation farming with a sorghum seed variety she received after attending lessons at the CLDC.

Alice Mapikure, a widow with eight children, also practices conservation farming with the “Marcia” variety of sorghum seed that she received after attending lessons at the CLDC. “I collected nine scotch-cart loads of sorghum heads from the same plot where I had only one load in the previous season,” she says. “I will be able to feed my children and sell some of the produce to raise income for school fees and other daily needs.”



Residents at Trinity Place Shelter, a secure transitional shelter in Manhattan for homeless LGBTQIA+ youth aged 18-24.

### ► WH-Domestic: Trinity Place Shelter, New York, NY

LGBTQ youth and young adults are more than twice as likely to experience homelessness as their straight, cisgender peers. And when they do experience homelessness, they face additional barriers to service and support because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Trinity Place Shelter, a ministry of Trinity of Manhattan Lutheran Church, is a secure transitional shelter for homeless LGBTQIA+ youth aged 18-24. Trinity Place fills a critical niche in New York City by operating a homelike residence where LGBTQIA+ youth can stay long enough to receive the care and support they need to establish a healthy trajectory following a period of trauma

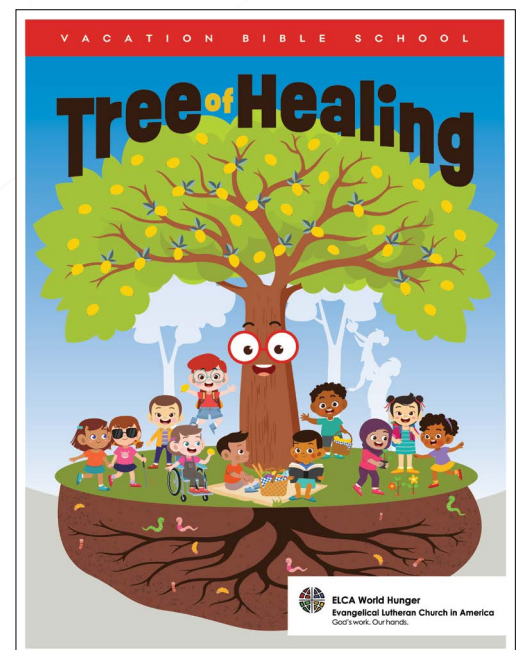
and homelessness. These young people bear the weight of multiple, intersecting oppressions. They are targets of systemic and personalized injustice, which not only keeps food from their table but keeps them from having one. Since opening its doors in 2016, Trinity Place has assisted approximately 700 youth; each year, 75-80% of them move on to a better set of circumstances.

“As an essential worker working during the pandemic, I have felt that my safety and dignity have been undermined in the workplace,” says Ezra, a former resident of Trinity Place. “It was comforting to be provided with food and safe shelter through Trinity, and to be uplifted by the staff helped me to visualize a future where my life not only mattered but was truly of value.”

The inaugural event of ELCA World Hunger’s “Hunger at the Crossroads” webinar series featured Rev. Heidi Neumark of Trinity of Manhattan exploring the intersections of hunger, poverty, sexuality and gender identity.

## Hunger Education

Come learn about health at the “Tree of Healing,” ELCA World Hunger’s Vacation Bible School program for 2022! Through skits, stories and activities, participants will learn what it means to be healthy in body, mind and spirit. This program includes sessions on grief, mental wellness, environmental health and more. The leader’s guide will offer suggestions for in-person and online activities for children of all ages, including new videos for 2022, instructions for hosting a congregation health fair, activities to help introduce children to Braille and American Sign Language, and options for virtual VBS! We hope to see you at the “Tree of Healing” this year.





## Witness in Society

Witness in Society encompasses some of the ELCA's work and ministry in the public sphere, advancing justice and shining a light for peace and dignity. This work and ministry take place wherever Lutherans are found, in communities across the 50 states and in the Caribbean region, with focused activity through the Lutheran Office for World Community at the United Nations in New York City; the ELCA's federal hub in Washington, D.C.; and Lutheran state public policy offices (SPPOs) in California, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, as well as more than 17 directly affiliated locations serving even more states. Through the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program, the ELCA intersects with the social implications of company practices and affects ELCA investment policy in socially responsible ways. The Christian community of the ELCA envisions a world experiencing the difference that God's grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation.



**VIDEOS & DISCUSSION STARTERS**

- Session 1 - WHAT IS FAITH-BASED ADVOCACY?
- Session 2 - HOW DO I APPROACH POLICY MAKERS?
- Session 3 - HOW DO I USE MEDIA FOR IMPACT?
- Session 4 - LET'S TALK: ABOUT THE HOLY LAND
- Session 5 - LET'S TALK: ABOUT IMMIGRATION

Offered by  In collaboration with 

ELCA.org/advocacy ELCA.org/PeaceNotWalls

ELCA colleagues and partners contributed to this series on faith-based advocacy for Lutheran advocates, available at [vimeo.com/showcase/8860262](https://vimeo.com/showcase/8860262).

Policies impact us all, and ELCA Witness in Society staff advance policy priorities shaped by the ELCA's social teaching documents and the experiences of its congregations, ministries and partners – both directly and by equipping members and congregations. As Presiding Bishop Eaton articulated in “What Is Faith-Based Advocacy,” a video with discussion starters available through the 2021 Advocacy Summer School series ([vimeo.com/showcase/8860262](https://vimeo.com/showcase/8860262)), our ministry of advocacy is a public witness to God's love for our neighbor, ourselves and all creation.

## RECENT ACTIVITY

Challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, have given us many opportunities to assert priorities in public policy consideration.

### Domestic

“COVID reminded us all of the inequities in health care, other social services and public institutions that have always existed,” says John Johnson, ELCA program director for domestic policy. “There are social and racial inequities throughout our systems at the federal, state and local level that were made plain by this public health crisis. The American Rescue Plan at the beginning of the year set the stage, and our advocacy around the bipartisan infrastructure plan and Build Back Better was also designed to face impacts of the pandemic justly now and into the future. The benefits of the child tax credit provision, particularly, not only helped people in urgent need spend in a grocery store or afford a home test kit, but also helps us live into a better future with all the health and learning implications that result from lifting almost half of children in the U.S. out of poverty. Although this provision has lapsed, our advocacy remains vigilant.”

Over the course of the pandemic, voices from the faith community and faith-based service providers have been critical in expanding COVID-19 protections for the most vulnerable among us, including those of us experiencing homelessness. Our advocacy uses such tools as sign-on letters with issue-specific allies

“[Increasing Access to COVID-19 Vaccines Among People Experiencing Homelessness](#)”), Action Alerts to the nearly 20,000 people who’ve [opted-in](#) to the ELCA Advocacy Network (“[Tell Congress to Take Action to Avoid Mass-evictions and Housing Insecurity](#)”) and meetings with congressional staff and White House officials. “I have frequently experienced lawmakers as eager to hear more about the work of houses of worship and partnering ministries who have been reliable partners meeting the holistic needs of people facing homelessness over generations,” says Andrew Fuller, ELCA program director for housing and human needs. “Hearing these direct and experienced perspectives brings essential voices needed in policy decisions.”



John Johnson and Presiding Bishop Eaton (center) in a strategy session in advance of Circle of Protection leaders meeting with White House leaders on Sept. 22, 2021.

## State Public Policy Office

The state public policy offices in the ELCA Advocacy Network are very active making policy connections with a faith-based lens locally. Lutheran Advocacy Ministry Arizona (LAMA), for example, made fair and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines a policy priority for 2021. Fact-finding for policy influence connected LAMA with a coalition partner, Valley Interfaith Project (VIP), that was organizing congregational vaccine clinics and had identified, in Maricopa County, the Arizona neighborhood with the lowest vaccination rate. In that zip code is St. John’s Lutheran Church. “Because I knew Pastor Peter [Perry] and had a LAMA liaison at St. John’s, I reached out to them,” says Solveig Muus, director of LAMA. “Together they mobilized the congregation to participate in door-to-door canvassing. Ultimately, with the help of our ELCA congregation and others, VIP distributed more than 2,500 vaccines in the neighborhood.”



Isa Peterson, ELCA Hunger Advocacy Fellow placed at Texas Impact, at COP26

## Environment

Facilitating the presence of diverse, policy-impacting, faith-based voices was a strength of the Lutheran delegation at the United Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in November 2021. Our delegation included young adults, American Indians and varied ELCA synod members speaking to climate and health issues from the grassroots level. Those in attendance were keenly aware of COVID-19 restrictions and concerns, but delegates from the Global South could speak directly of the inequity of global vaccine distribution. Ruth Ivory-Moore, ELCA program director for environment and corporate social responsibility, reports, “Through advocacy on the national and international fronts, the ELCA and other members of civil society were able to get some policy changes internationally for the first time, such as acknowledgment of climate impacts that cannot be addressed by mitigation and adaption measures (that is, loss and damages) on the negotiation agenda. The ELCA advocates and works to ensure that no one is left behind, focusing on just transition.”

## International

A general principle – such as the ELCA’s recognition, in the 2003 social statement *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor*, that the United States must work toward addressing public health challenges as a wealthy country globally – translates into particular advocacy activity. For example, the international policy team advocated with coalition partners for a waiver of the World Trade Organization’s Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement to allow more companies to manufacture COVID-19 vaccines and to increase access to therapeutics and diagnostic tools. “Vaccination rates of many low- and middle-

income countries remain quite low,” says Patricia Kisare, ELCA program director for international policy, “partly because there aren’t enough vaccines to go around currently. We will continue to urge the U.S. government to use its resources, experience and diplomatic prowess in the fight against the disease globally.”

## Migration

The economic shocks of COVID-19, combined with lack of vaccines to mitigate its devastating impact, continue to exacerbate human insecurity around the globe. Amid such compounding factors as violent conflict, climate change, poverty and food insecurity, more and more people are driven to seek safety and security. Yet pandemic-era policies such as Title 42, which remains in use at the U.S.-Mexico border, are forcibly turning back highly vulnerable people. “Heeding the call to boldly love and serve our immigrant and refugee neighbors, ELCA congregations, programs and partners have risen to meet challenging moments in a year of enormous change with great warmth and impact,” notes Giovana Oaxaca, ELCA program director for migration policy. “In spring 2021, over 500 Lutheran bishops and pastors joined a letter urging U.S. policy makers to advance all-inclusive immigration legislation. ELCA Advocacy has made advocating for permanent protections for our undocumented siblings and other essential immigration reforms a priority.”

## Lutheran Office for World Community

Through the Lutheran Office for World Community (LOWC), the ELCA joined others in the global faith community in a November 2021 [statement](#) calling on the World Trade Organization to vastly increase global access to COVID-19 vaccines and treatment through a waiver of the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement. LOWC’s presence in the United Nations community allows the ELCA to participate in world-stage activity with a faith foundation. In advance of the 76th General Assembly, incoming president [Abdulla Shahid reflected](#), “I spoke about vaccinating the world because it is very clear that no one is safe until everyone is safe.” Advocacy with LOWC colleagues advances that shared realization.

## Corporate Social Responsibility

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) tools used by the ELCA to screen investments, shareholder advocacy and community investing take into account new issues generated by the pandemic. Consistent with the church’s [CSR process](#), the ELCA recently updated its issue paper “[International Access to Health Care](#).” A resolution guideline now specifically targets vaccine access: “We support reports on whether and how receipt of public financial support for development and manufacture of a vaccine or COVID-19 therapeutic will be taken into account when making decisions that affect access, such as pricing.” CSR tools motivate corporations to ensure that they treat people fairly and with dignity and foster sustainable communities.

## NEW STAFF

### Hunger Advocacy Fellowships

The ELCA’s Hunger Advocacy Fellowship program enhances our work and ministry today and seeds continuing innovation and creativity through young advocacy leadership. Four fellowships are active in the 2021-’22 cycle: Hannah Peterson has been placed with Lutherans Engaging in Advocacy Ministry New Jersey; Isa Peterson with Texas Impact; Sandra Roper with the ELCA office in Washington, D.C.; and Rachel Wyffels with Lutheran Advocacy–Minnesota.

# Addendum

In the Future Church design, the International Leadership Development Program (ILDLP) and Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) program reside in the Christian Community and Leadership (CCL) home area. However, Service and Justice continues to work closely with these programs as it engages with our global and domestic partners to develop leadership across the ecology of the ELCA.

## Young Adults in Global Mission

In 2020, when all active Young Adults in Global Mission volunteers had to be evacuated at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, their story unfolded away from the public eye. But it was one of the few good—even beautiful—stories to play out over those frightening first weeks.

As YAGM staff raced to book flights for returning volunteers that spring, the team grew concerned about the prospect of these volunteers returning to their families after having traveled through so many international airports. To mitigate the risk of exposing vulnerable family members to the virus, YAGM staff issued a call to the YAGM alum community: “Anyone with a spare couch or guest room to spare willing to put up a YAGM evacuee for 10-14 days?” Given the health risk at that time, this act of hospitality would amount to a monumental gesture. Dozens responded.

Without any further coordination by YAGM staff, recently returned YAGM volunteers were picked up at airports, driven to apartments and studios, and taken in by various individuals until the volunteers could safely return to their families. Many of these volunteers and their alum hosts had never met; their only shared bond was the YAGM program, with more than a decade between their service in some cases. Everything else fell into place.

This experience reinforced the idea that YAGM represents more than just a year of service in another country. Young Adults in Global Mission embodies the bond between all people no matter where they live or when they were born. Their common vulnerability reveals their shared humanity and forges a bond that cannot be broken by time, location or adversity. Once you experience that connection, you know it can happen again. Everything else falls into place.

Now, as the YAGM team wraps up its hiring of both 2022-'23 volunteers and country coordinators, it looks forward to fostering a new generation of these connections. This will be the first deployment of an active service group in three years, and the YAGM team could not be more excited.

If you have any questions about YAGM, contact Dan Beirne at [Dan.Beirne@elca.org](mailto:Dan.Beirne@elca.org).

## International Leadership Development Program

The International Leadership Development Program (ILDLP) continues to accompany global companion churches and institutions to equip leaders for mission and ministry in a global context. Through the annual awarding of almost 200 scholarships, administration of the international camp counselor program, and other leadership development efforts, International Leaders is engaging in exchanges with the current and future leaders of the Lutheran communion worldwide.



From left to right: Naomi Mbise, Dora Houma, Marina Fomgbami

An ongoing goal for the program is to develop comprehensive leadership experiences that emphasize gender equity at all levels of the church. The scholars and leaders in the program are pioneering innovative approaches to gender justice. One exciting example of this innovation is the launch of the African Girls Scholarship and Mentorship Program, designed and implemented by three current and former ELCA scholarship recipients: Dora Houma of Cameroon, Marina Fomgbami of Cameroon, and Naomi Mbise of Tanzania. Participants in the ELCA's International Women Leaders scholarship program, these young women are "paying it forward" by opening doors to education and leadership for girls in their home contexts.

The mission of the African Girls Scholarship and Mentorship Program is to give girls in Cameroon and Tanzania the opportunity to earn a high school diploma while participating in a mentorship program with accomplished women from all walks of life. The program is being executed in partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, with additional support from Women of the ELCA and other supporters. Participants in the program will receive comprehensive support and mentorship in areas such as leadership, self-love and life skills.

"By empowering women through education," writes Houma, "we can help them develop the skills and knowledge they need to stand up for themselves, as well as the self-confidence necessary for them to participate fully in the development process of their communities and countries."

Young women scholars such as Houma, Mbise and Fomgbami are designing and implementing projects such as this around the world, contributing to the growing gender justice movement throughout the Lutheran communion.

If you have any questions about ILDP, contact Kaleb Sutherland at [Kaleb.Sutherland@elca.org](mailto:Kaleb.Sutherland@elca.org) and Ann Hightower at [Ann.Hightower@elca.org](mailto:Ann.Hightower@elca.org).



*"A girl should be two things: who and what she wants."*

# Service and Justice Home Area Directory

## Service and Justice Administration

**Rafael Malpica Padilla**  
Executive Director  
[Rafael.Malpica@elca.org](mailto:Rafael.Malpica@elca.org)

**Barbara Lund**  
Senior Director for S&J Operations and Innovation  
[Barbara.Lund@elca.org](mailto:Barbara.Lund@elca.org)

**Sylvia Perez**  
Assistant to Executive Director  
[Sylvia.Perez@elca.org](mailto:Sylvia.Perez@elca.org)

**Paulina Dasse**  
Program Director for Relationships  
[Paulina.Dasse@elca.org](mailto:Paulina.Dasse@elca.org)

**Kevin Jacobson**  
Program Director for Relationships  
[Kevin.Jacobson@elca.org](mailto:Kevin.Jacobson@elca.org)

**Mary Campbell**  
Program Director for AMMPARO  
[Mary.Campbell@elca.org](mailto:Mary.Campbell@elca.org)

**Alison Richard**  
Coordinator, Becoming Conference  
[Alison.Richard@elca.org](mailto:Alison.Richard@elca.org)

## Service and Justice Home Area Partners

**Pam Clark**  
People Business Partner  
[Pam.Clark@elca.org](mailto:Pam.Clark@elca.org)

**Caitlin Sellnow**  
Communications Manager (Operations)  
[Caitlin.Sellnow@elca.org](mailto:Caitlin.Sellnow@elca.org)

## Accompanying Peoples, Communities and Networks

**Tammy Jackson**  
Senior Director  
[Tammy.Jackson@elca.org](mailto:Tammy.Jackson@elca.org)

**Rocio Cardenas-Wright**  
Administrative Assistant II  
[Rocio.Cardenas-Wright@elca.org](mailto:Rocio.Cardenas-Wright@elca.org)

## Global Service

**Samantha Ea**  
Global Service Manager  
[Samantha.Ea@elca.org](mailto:Samantha.Ea@elca.org)

## Global Service Partners in People Solutions

**Venis Hamb**  
Global Services Manager  
[Venis.Hamb@elca.org](mailto:Venis.Hamb@elca.org)

## Africa Table Team

**Benyam Kassahun**  
Director, Continental Africa Desk  
[Benyam.Kassahun@elca.org](mailto:Benyam.Kassahun@elca.org)

**Amy Vogt**  
Manager for the Africa and Latin America and Caribbean Desks  
[Amy.Vogt@elca.org](mailto:Amy.Vogt@elca.org)

**Philip Knutson**  
Regional Representative, Southern Africa  
[Philip.Knutson@elca.org](mailto:Philip.Knutson@elca.org)

**Daudi (David) Msseemmaa**  
Regional Representative, East Africa  
[Daudi.Msseemmaa@elca.org](mailto:Daudi.Msseemmaa@elca.org)

**Anne Langdji**  
Regional Representative, West and Central Africa  
[Anne.Langdji@elca.org](mailto:Anne.Langdji@elca.org)

**Willie Langdji**  
Regional Representative, West and Central Africa  
[Willie.Langdji@elca.org](mailto:Willie.Langdji@elca.org)

**Themba Mkhabela**  
Regional Representative, Madagascar and West Africa  
[Themba.Mkhabela@elca.org](mailto:Themba.Mkhabela@elca.org)

**Elitha Moyo**  
Regional Representative, Gender Justice  
[Elitha.Moyo@elca.org](mailto:Elitha.Moyo@elca.org)

## **Asia and the Pacific**

### **Franklin Ishida**

Area Desk Director for Asia and the Pacific

[Franklin.Ishida@elca.org](mailto:Franklin.Ishida@elca.org)

### **Mary Rothenbach**

Manager for Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Middle East/North Africa

[Mary.Rothenbach@elca.org](mailto:Mary.Rothenbach@elca.org)

### **Chandran Paul-Martin**

Regional Representative, South/Southeast Asia

[Chandran.Martin@elca.org](mailto:Chandran.Martin@elca.org)

### **Phil Baker**

Regional Representative, Theological Education and Church Relations

[Phil.Baker@elca.org](mailto:Phil.Baker@elca.org)

### **Timothy Melvyn**

Special Representative, India Projects

[Tmelvyn@gmail.com](mailto:Tmelvyn@gmail.com)

## **Latin America and the Caribbean**

### **Jaime Dubon**

Area Desk Director for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

[Jaime.Dubon@elca.org](mailto:Jaime.Dubon@elca.org)

### **Hellen Rios-Carrillo**

Regional Representative, Caribbean and Coordinator for Gender Justice

[Hellen.Rios-Carrillo@elca.org](mailto:Hellen.Rios-Carrillo@elca.org)

### **Michael Busbey**

Regional Representative, Central America and Mexico

[Michael.Busbey@elca.org](mailto:Michael.Busbey@elca.org)

### **Stephen Deal**

Regional Representative, AMMPARO

[Stephen.Deal@elca.org](mailto:Stephen.Deal@elca.org)

### **Gustavo Driau**

Regional Representative, South America

[Gustavo.Driau@elca.org](mailto:Gustavo.Driau@elca.org)

## **Middle East and North Africa**

### **Gabi Aelabouni**

Area Desk Director, Middle East and North Africa

[Gabi.Aelabouni@elca.org](mailto:Gabi.Aelabouni@elca.org)

### **Karin Brown**

Program Director, Peace Not Walls/MENA Relationships

[Karin.Brown@elca.org](mailto:Karin.Brown@elca.org)

## **Europe**

### **Rachel Eskesen**

Area Desk Director for Europe

[Rachel.Eskesen@elca.org](mailto:Rachel.Eskesen@elca.org)

## **Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations**

### **Vance Blackfox**

Director

[Vance.Blackfox@elca.org](mailto:Vance.Blackfox@elca.org)

## **Ethnic Specific Ministries**

### **Joseph Bocko**

Program Director, African Nationals Ministries

[Joseph.Bocko@elca.org](mailto:Joseph.Bocko@elca.org)

### **Hector Carrasquillo**

Program Director, Latino Ministries

[Hector.Carrasquillo@elca.org](mailto:Hector.Carrasquillo@elca.org)

### **Khader Khalilia**

Program Director, Arab Middle Eastern Ministries

[Khader.Khalilia@elca.org](mailto:Khader.Khalilia@elca.org)

### **Pongsak Limthongviratn**

Program Director, Asia Pacific Ministries

[Pongsak.Limthongviratn@elca.org](mailto:Pongsak.Limthongviratn@elca.org)

### **Nicolette Peñaranda**

Program Director, African Descent Ministries

[Nicolette.Penaranda@elca.org](mailto:Nicolette.Penaranda@elca.org)

### **Eva Ching-Nakashima**

Ethnic Specific Ministries Coordinator

[Eva.Ching-Nakashima@elca.org](mailto:Eva.Ching-Nakashima@elca.org)

## **Building Resilient Communities**

### **Marie Anne Sliwinski**

Interim Senior Director, BRC

Program Director, Lutheran Disaster Response-International

[Marieanne.Sliwinski@elca.org](mailto:Marieanne.Sliwinski@elca.org)

### **Juliana Glassco**

Director, World Hunger Domestic

[Juliana.Glassco@elca.org](mailto:Juliana.Glassco@elca.org)

**Christine Moolo**  
Manager, World Hunger (International and Domestic)  
[Christine.Moolo@elca.org](mailto:Christine.Moolo@elca.org)

**Ryan Cumming**  
Program Director, Hunger Education  
[Ryan.Cumming@elca.org](mailto:Ryan.Cumming@elca.org)

**Brooke DeJong**  
Program Assistant, Hunger Education  
[Brooke.Dejong@elca.org](mailto:Brooke.Dejong@elca.org)

**Angela Galbraith**  
Grants and Reporting Coordinator  
[Angela.Galbraith@elca.org](mailto:Angela.Galbraith@elca.org)

**Roselle Tenorio**  
Domestic Grants Manager  
[Roselle.Tenorio@elca.org](mailto:Roselle.Tenorio@elca.org)

**John Pyron**  
Program Director, Lutheran Disaster Response-US  
[John.Pyron@elca.org](mailto:John.Pyron@elca.org)

**Kanchan Sharma**  
International Grants Manager  
[Kanchan.Sharma@elca.org](mailto:Kanchan.Sharma@elca.org)

**Naomi Sonne**  
Social Ministry Organization Engagement Manager  
[Naomi.Sonne@elca.org](mailto:Naomi.Sonne@elca.org)

**Louisa Ishida**  
Program Communicator, Lutheran Disaster  
Response (Operations)  
[Louisa.Ishida@elca.org](mailto:Louisa.Ishida@elca.org)

**Witness in Society**  
**Advocacy**  
[washingtonoffice@elca.org](mailto:washingtonoffice@elca.org)

**Amy Reumann**  
Senior Director, Witnessing in Society

**Andrew Fuller**  
Program Director, Housing and Human Needs

**Ruth Ivory-Moore**  
Program Director, Environment, Energy and  
Sustainability

**John Johnson**  
Program Director, Domestic Policy

**Patricia Kisare**  
Program Director, International Policy

**Karen Krueger**  
Program Director, Advocacy Engagement

**Jackie Maddox**  
Manager, Administration and Grants

**Giovana Oaxaca**  
Program Director, Migration Policy

### **State Public Policy Offices**

**Regina Banks**  
Director, Lutheran Office of Public Policy–California  
[lutheranpublicpolicyca.org](http://lutheranpublicpolicyca.org)

**Cindy Crane**  
Director, Lutheran Office Public Policy–Wisconsin  
[loppw.org](http://loppw.org)

**Tracey DePasquale**  
Director, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry–Pennsylvania  
[lutheranadvocacypa.org](http://lutheranadvocacypa.org)

**Tammy Walhof**  
Director, Lutheran Advocacy–Minnesota  
[lutheranadvocacymn.org](http://lutheranadvocacymn.org)

### **Hunger Advocacy Fellows**

**Rachel Wyffels**  
Minnesota

**Sandra Roper**  
Washington. D.C.

**Hannah Peterson**  
Lutherans Engaging in Advocacy New Jersey

**Isa Peterson**  
Texas Impact



