



Dear friend in Christ,

As human beings, we are easily preoccupied with the present in ways that minimize our attentiveness to the future. As stewards and people of faith, we face the same challenge. How do we make space amid our daily responsibilities as leaders, managers and caretakers to invest in a world that we will never see?

God's dream for creation is a work-in-progress that will not reach completion during our lifetimes. Being a co-creator with God of that emerging reality involves not just how we make the world a better place today but the people, systems and ideas we pass on to keep that work going in the future. Can we maximize our current impact in a way that detracts from the longer-term trajectory of Jesus' movement to fulfill the Kingdom of God? Would that be good stewardship?

This issue of *stewardNet* looks at the bigger picture of stewarding our world, not just today but for years to come.

We are a church energized by our lively engagement in our faith and life. Thank you for doing God's work with a faithful, generous heart!

Faithfully,
Steve Oelschlager
Stewardship Program Coordinator
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

I'm interested in hearing your thoughts. [Let me know what you are thinking.](#)



ERIK ERIKSON AND GENERATIVITY

Shifting our focus to the future

In the 1950s, developmental psychologist Erik Erikson proposed an eight-stage framework of human growth and maturation. As part of that theory, he coined the term "generativity" for phase seven, to define an "interest in establishing and guiding the next generation." Generativity is about zooming out to the bigger picture beyond oneself and investing in it to outlast one's own life. Parenting is part of this stage, but generativity goes beyond that to include coaching, mentoring, and creating and nurturing systems, ideas and new generations that will carry life into the future beyond oneself. Erikson saw impulses for generativity coming from the love people received in childhood and seeking outward expression.

As we think about our stewardship of the present and the future, what might it mean for churches to be generative? Our older generations understand the importance of meaning, purpose and belief systems. Generativity motivates the passing of that wisdom to future generations, not to control them but as a foundation to bless them. It is about finding the sweet spot between continuity and change and about letting go so that the new might emerge in healthy and sustainable ways. It is about our learning to trust new generations and depend on each other.

To further explore this topic, see Cory Seibel's [The Generative Church](#), a collection of essays about investing in emerging generations. Also, check out the document "[Foundation and Fundamentals](#)" from the ELCA's Generosity Project, about teaching stewardship and discipleship cross-generationally.

[READ MORE](#)



GROWING YOUNG

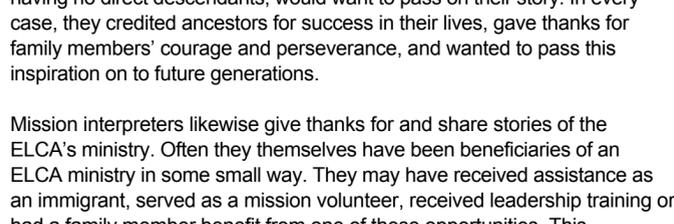
Fostering a culture of intergenerational discipleship

What would a generative church look like, and what kinds of things would it be doing? Beginning in 2004, the Fuller Youth Institute began to research these questions by studying exemplar congregations. Fuller invested 10,000 hours, conducting 1,300 interviews across the United States in 15 different denominations (Protestant, Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox). The results of this research can be found in the book *Growing Young* (2016).

Six themes emerged from the research into "growing young" congregations, commonalities that were about culture more than sustainability strategy. For example, growing young churches know that young people value warm and authentic intergenerational friendships while also relating to peers. These congregations purposely invite young people into leadership positions that matter and "look for creative ways to tangibly support, resource, and involve them in all facets" of the church's life. In effect, growing young congregations live out Erik Erikson's idea of generativity (see previous story) as they steward the church's future.

Visit the [Growing Young website](#) to learn more about the Fuller Youth Institute's research and about tools for your own congregation to grow young. The "growing young" movement is building momentum in the ELCA. Check with your synod for local events and resources, or contact [Rachel Alley](#)

[REACH OUT](#)



PASSING ON STORIES

I have known three individuals from different generations, different families and different locations who nevertheless shared two things in common: none had heirs, and each spent an extensive amount of time and research writing their family history. One might naturally ask why these individuals, having no direct descendants, would want to pass on their story. In every case, they credited ancestors for success in their lives, gave thanks for family members' courage and perseverance, and wanted to pass this inspiration on to future generations.

Mission interpreters likewise give thanks for and share stories of the ELCA's ministry. Often they themselves have been beneficiaries of an ELCA ministry in some small way. They may have received assistance as an immigrant, served as a mission volunteer, received leadership training or had a family member benefit from one of these opportunities. This assistance has provided hope, perhaps changing lives or attitudes, so the beneficiaries want to share these and similar stories with congregation members.

Normally synod coordinators for Mission Interpretation Ministry receive face-to-face training at a ministry site in the United States. This year the training will be virtual and begin in August. We invite more people from each synod to participate. If you're interested in becoming a better mission interpreter in your congregation, contact your synod mission interpreter coordinator. If you don't know who that person is, contact ELCA Mission Interpretation Ministry Coordinator [Karen Kaufman](#) at 330-929-9020.

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

- This August or October, participate in generosity365 Academies. These virtual events focus on essential topics to help churches and their leaders create a culture of faithful generosity. The Aug. 1 event, "generosity365 EXTRA," is a shorter event between the longer April and October sessions. Participants will consider the conversation from the April event and consider current issues impacting the church and how they shape best practices related to generosity and giving. Click [here](#) for more information.
- Join Stewardship Kaleidoscope this fall for three consecutive Tuesdays — Sept. 22, Sept. 29 and Oct. 6 — at 11:30 a.m. Eastern/8:30 a.m. Pacific for theological, practical and actionable perspectives. Each presentation will be followed by a live Q&A session allowing additional time to share and learn. Register and [learn more here](#).
- Use the Generosity Project to form and celebrate generous households during the pandemic. Because of COVID-19, the way we're approaching ministry is unlike anything we've experienced before. We have had to "pivot," adapt and adopt new digital tools and resources for ministry. How do we use this moment in history and ministry to consider new, unending possibilities? [Learn more here](#).
- Our world continues to change and adapt. What are the implications of this for faith formation? See John Roberto's "[A Guide to Transforming Faith Formation for a New World](#)" from Vibrant Faith.
- Interested in six ways that recurrent giving can help your congregation? [Watch this recent webinar](#) from Vanco to learn more.
- A thriving church is one so convinced of the resurrection that members feel free to give their lives in service to others. In this [2020 message for synod assemblies](#), Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton shares how the ELCA continues to thrive in country churches, cityscapes and places with no walls.

Sayings, quotes, thoughts

"The future depends on what we do in the present."
— Mahatma Gandhi

Biblical foundations

"For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

— Romans 15:4

UPCOMING EVENTS (CALENDAR)

Mission Interpretation Ministry Conference

Aug. 15th
Online
[Connect here](#)

stewardTalk

Aug. 20, 3 p.m. Central Time
Contact [Neil Bullock](#) for connection information.

Creation Care Ambassador Training

Sept. 18
Online
[Connect here](#)

Stewardship Kaleidoscope

Sept. 22
Online
<https://stewardshipkaleidoscope.org>

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Email stewardnet@elca.org.

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