

REDISCOVER MACEDONIA

A spirit of gratitude and generosity



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

During the first century, the Apostle Paul was called in Acts 16: “*during the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man from Macedonia pleading with him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’*” As soon as Paul had the vision, the group set out to “*cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them*” (Acts 16:9-10). Paul and his co-workers went to the congregations in the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, and all the rural congregations in Macedonia. The community, through the Holy Spirit, issued the invitation, and Paul understood it as God’s call.

Paul writes to the faith community in Corinth about this call for mission, “*We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia. During a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity*” (2 Corinthians 8:2).

Today we hear a lot about motivating individuals and congregations to grow in Christ, participate in ministry and give to God’s work. Many are unaware of the Macedonian zeal for giving that existed generations ago. How did the people of Macedonia become motivated to give to their sisters and brothers in Jerusalem? “*They gave themselves first to the Lord*” (2 Cor. 8:5). Then they also gave themselves “*by the will of God, to us*” (2 Cor. 8:5). These were **acts of commitment and spiritual maturity**. When people give themselves to the Lord, the Lord makes things happen.

The congregations in Macedonia reached out beyond their walls, and their own financial means. “*...they voluntarily gave according to their means, even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints*” (2 Cor. 8:3-4). This shows that the Macedonians gave as **a community** beyond their capacity as an act of love. This calling from God led them to reach out to their Christian brothers and sisters well beyond their walls and community.

The Macedonians also practiced sacrificial giving. Their example is applicable today. They asked “To whom can we send money?” Christians today say, “We want to help; how can we participate?” When we hear about people living in poverty of body or mind, or when we see people being victimized by intentional abuse or unpredictable catastrophe, our hearts are moved. God opened the hearts of the Macedonians to give “*...not merely as we expected*” (2 Cor. 8:5). This was an **act of compassion**.

Paul wrote the Macedonians gave “*even beyond their means*” (2 Cor. 8:3), and their “*overflowing joy and extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity*” (2 Cor. 8:2). It took strong faith for the Macedonians to engage in this **act of generosity**. It was not easy. Paul also wrote that this occurred “*during a severe ordeal of affliction*” (2 Cor. 8:2)

In our economic times, it is this same faith in Jesus Christ that enables us to act with spiritual maturity as communities with compassion and generosity. The focus of this project is to strengthen our relationship with Jesus Christ in this same spirit of gratitude and generosity.