Report to the 2018 Synod Assembly
Commission for Church in Society

According to the governing documents of this synod, the Commission for Church in Society “attends to the intersections between the church’s mission and the world’s needs.” In order to achieve these purposes, this work focused on the following areas of ministry:

**Hunger:**

Seeking to involve the people and congregations of this synod to find ways to alleviate hunger both locally and globally, this Commission has:

- Shared various hunger resources with congregations through this synod’s weekly Enews;
- Promoted Synod Hunger Grants ranging from $100 - $1000 for efforts to expand the capacity to feed hungry people on the territory of this synod (over $24,000 has been awarded through 26 grants);
- Sponsored Andrea Love and Carol Fredrich to attend the ELCA Hunger Leaders Event in Washington DC;
- Hosted “An Evening to End Hunger” with Pastor David Beckmann from Bread for the World during the week of the World Food Prize;

**Advocacy:**

The Commission sees the task of encouraging greater advocacy in our synod as an emerging key need. In our efforts toward this goal the commission has:

- Posted several articles on the synod’s weekly E-News regarding various issues, especially related to immigration and hunger;
- Assisted Lutheran Services in Iowa in making preparations for Lutheran Day on the Hill, February 8, with keynote speaker the Rev. Amy Reumann, Director of Advocacy in the ELCA. Helped sponsor a bus for participants stopping in Iowa City;
- Applied for and received a Domestic Hunger Grant to assist with transportation expenses for Lutheran Day on the Hill;
- Renewed our commitment to be a partner with Bread for the World.

**First 1000 Days:**

In response to the resolution adopted at the last assembly, posted resources on the synod website for congregational and individual use. [http://seiasynod.org/first-1000-days/](http://seiasynod.org/first-1000-days/)

**Care for Creation:**

Continued membership in Iowa Interfaith Power and Light.
Comission for Evangelical Mission

*God said to me, ‘Mortal, can these bones live?’ I answered, ‘O Lord God, you know.’ Then God said to me, ‘Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.’ ~ Ezekiel 37.3-4*

This seems to be the question in many congregations across the church today. Can these bones live? We know the ending to the story, of course. The bones do live, and God breathes breath into the flesh and the whole of Israel is restored. And it all started with a prophet’s voice: Hear the word of the Lord.

Evangelism is at the heart of this passage from Ezekiel – the sharing of God’s good promises to a valley full of dry, dead bones. Evangelism, leadership, and congregational vitality are at the heart of the work in the Office of the Bishop throughout Southeastern Iowa in 2017:

Through the LEAD partnership, six congregations began an 18-month program which, centered on Living Every Day as Disciples, sought to hear God’s voice in congregation and community. There will be opportunities in 2018-2019 for more congregations to participate in retreats and learning for the sake of greater vitality and life in the community of faith.

A new congregation, FreeIndeed, was started in the Anamosa State Penitentiary with Pastor Jerry Collell in July. People who are separated from family, friends, and the general population now have the opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus Christ, and congregations all around the state of Iowa have the opportunity to be present in the prison and worship with our brothers in Christ.

Through Collaborate, a pilot project geared at helping congregations become more collaborative for the sake of a stronger Lutheran witness, rostered ministers gathered to be in community and to be reminded of God’s goodness. This pilot will expand in 2018-2019 to additional communities and will also incorporate lay leadership in the meetings.

In addition to the expansion of the Collaborate program, there will continue to focus on evangelism through the formation of a leadership network and school. Thanks to a grant from the ELCA *Always Being Made New* campaign, leaders throughout the synod will have the opportunity to gather, strengthen relationships, and be equipped to share this good news of Jesus Christ for the sake of greater witness, greater vitality, and stronger leadership in congregations.

2018-2019 will also be a year marked with listening and deepening relationships. re:Vitalize was a new event that had to be canceled due to lack of interest and registrations. Initially hoped to be an event that brought excitement and vitality to leaders and congregations, it is the hope of the Office of the Bishop to support leaders and congregations in the way you need. To better understand how our shared ministry can work to enhance all of our shared witness, we are ready to listen.

Can these bones live? By the grace of God, and the word of the Lord.

Reverent Erika Uthe

Director for Evangelical Mission

Assistant to the Bishop
This commission is committed to this synod’s engagement in God’s mission throughout the world. As we move into the future, the commission will be supporting the ongoing work of established Working Groups, and developing areas of new focus. These Working Groups are:

- Companion Synod Relationship
  Pare Diocese, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.
- Peace Not Walls
- Missionaries and Young Adults in Global Mission
- International Women Leaders and New Evangelism Projects

_In support of Global Church emphases of “Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA”_

**Companion Relationship with the Pare Diocese**

The Southeastern Iowa Synod has been in a companion relationship with the Pare Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) since 1988. This companion relationship exists for the purpose of strengthening one another for life and mission within the body of Christ.

The Pare Diocese convened a General Assembly in December 2016. Bishop Mjema will serve as bishop through 2021. Pastor Ibrahim Azayo Ndekia was elected as Assistant Bishop. The diocese structure now includes three districts, namely the Eastern, Western and Lowland.

The newly-formed Mwanga Diocese is served by Bishop Chediel E. Sondoro and Assistant Bishop, Pastor Timothy J. Msangi. Though the Southeastern Iowa Synod is not in a formal companion relationship with the Mwanga Diocese, Bishop Burk and Bishop Sondoro have been communicating and agree to uphold the current parish-to-parish relationships in which several congregations are engaged.

We remain a companion synod to the Pare Diocese. All companion relationships fall under the umbrella of the church-to-church relationship between the ELCA and the ELCT and we will work closely with our partners in Global Mission to determine how best we can serve the interests of the church-to-church partnership.

**Peace Not Walls**

The Peace Not Walls working group continues to focus its efforts on education opportunities for congregations. One of the highlights of this past year was hosting an event in February 2018 entitled: Nurturing Hope in Bethlehem and the West Bank: A Day with The Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb and Bright Stars of Bethlehem.

**Missionary Sponsorship/Young Adults in Global Mission**

The commission continues to develop communication strategies to educate congregations about the ELCA Missionary Sponsorship program, including Young Adults in Global Mission.
Commission for Rostered Leadership Support - 2018

The Commission for Rostered Leadership Support “is dedicated to fostering connections among the rostered leaders of this synod, while addressing issues related to continuing education and enrichment, compensation for ministry, vocational affirmation.” (Synod Constitution) Since the 2017 Synod Assembly, this commission has sought to fulfill this charge in the following ways:

First Call Theological Education

A standing committee chaired by Pastor Dan Kuckuck, and including Pastor Bill Bernau, Pastor Bill Runaas, and Pastor Connie Spitzack:

- Works with rostered ministers for the first three years in their first call;
- Hosted a spring gathering on the topic of Evangelism in Iowa City;
- Hosted a fall gathering following the fall Theological Conference in Des Moines;
- Utilizes the Walking Together – New Beginnings process for the first 18 months;
- Hosted a Winter Gathering at the Center for Ministry for peer consultation.

Pastor Erika Uthe is the staff liaison for this committee.

Fall Theological Conference

- A Tri-Synodical Fall Theological Conference with the three Iowa Synods was held September 24-26, 2017, at the Sheraton in West Des Moines. Anna Madsen and Bishop Guy Erwin centered their presentations around the theme “The Reformation: What’s at Stake? Then and Now”. Bishop Elizabeth Eaton was present for a presentation and to preach and preside at the Monday evening communion service at Faith Lutheran Church, Clive. Pastor Minna Bothwell and Pastor Paul Ostrem served on the planning committee from this synod.

- Plans are being made for the September 23-25, 2018, Fall Conference to be held at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Davenport. Bill Withers from Wartburg College; the Rev. Michael Hurst from Elim Christian Fellowship in Des Moines; and the Rev. Louise Johnson from Wartburg Seminary will be the speakers around the theme of Leadership and Innovation.

Boundaries Workshop

There will be boundaries workshops for Rostered Ministers and congregational program staff in the fall of 2018. One of these will be held cooperatively with the Northern Illinois Synod.

Compensation Guidelines

The synod council will be presenting minimum compensation guidelines for 2019 at the synod assembly.
Commission for Vocation and Faith Formation

This commission is dedicated to enhancing the ministries of congregations, leaders, and individual members of every age throughout the Southeastern Iowa Synod. Wholeness, renewal, and faith development are dominant themes that shape the work of this commission, paying special attention to youth and young adults.

The Children & Youth Ministry Network

Adults who work with children and youth regularly attend a biannual event for the purpose of networking and continuing education. In November 2017, the network invited The Rev. Dr. Nathan Frambach, Professor of Pastoral Theology at Wartburg Theological Seminary, to speak about the context of the church in which we live. In March 2018, we hosted Kristin Rodenberg, LISW to speak about Trauma Informed Care. The 2018/2019 dates are November 1, 2018 and March 7, 2019.

Ministry with Youth

Confirmation/Middle School Ministry

ConFEST is a synod-wide event to enhance and support congregation confirmation ministries by exploring churchwide connections, engaging servant learning, and creating community. Two events took place on January 14 and February 11, 2018. Over 200 youth and adults in the combined events, which centered around baptismal identity.

Synod High School Gathering

Rooted: A Partner Synod Journey took place June 11-17, 2017. The purpose of this event was to strengthen one another for life and mission within the body of Christ between the Southeastern Iowa and Grand Canyon Synods. Through worship, learning, and service, high school youth and adults gained insight into the culture and people of our respective synods while on the territory of the Grand Canyon Synod. Over 250 youth and adults from the two synods traveled from Las Vegas to Tucson, immersed in service and learning around immigration, human trafficking and homelessness.

The ELCA Youth Gathering will be held June 27-July 1, 2018 in Houston, TX under the theme “This Changes Everything.” The Southeastern Iowa Synod has 675 youth and adults registered for the event. Ellen Rothweiler (Grace Lutheran Church, Des Moines) serves as the Synod Gathering Coordinator, and Danny Stone (Faith Lutheran Church, Marion) serves as the Synod Day Director for the Gathering.
Our conference has fifteen congregations within the conference with one congregation under a self-study officially as of this report submission. Pastor Heidi Williams will be retiring from her call at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Slater, Iowa as of the end of May, 2018. We wish her well and God’s speed in pursuing her calling further.

As of September, 2017, Pastor Eric Klimpel at Palestine Lutheran Church, Huxley, Iowa took over some duties as an interim dean for Conference 1 for the primary purposes of conducting a conference annual meeting and disseminating information at the bequest of the Bishop and synod staff to conference churches.

At the Conference 1 Annual Meeting – held on November 12, 2017 – pastors and delegates presented nominations for synod positions in preparation for the 2018 Synod Assembly. We learned more about the JOPPA ministry to the homeless in Des Moines through a guest speaker – the founders Joe and Jackie Stevens. We promoted the “Faith Not Walls” event – Nurturing Hope in the West Bank, and followed our gathering with a meal and fellowship.

I am thankful for the opportunity to help support the synod staff and congregations in this limited way. I appreciate the help of Pastor Heidi Williams and the synod staff for their guidance and confidence in this role.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Eric Klimpel
Interim Dean of Conference 1
Pastor of Palestine Lutheran Church, Huxley
Conference 2 Synod Assembly Report

The ten congregations that make up our conference in central Iowa are all striving to be Vital Congregations. We work to make sure that what we do points to the Good News of Jesus. We are willing to try some new things. In various ways, we connect to the whole church. We seek to make an impact in our communities. Here are some of the ways we are doing this.

Last summer Elim Lutheran in Marshalltown offered a Saturday night summer community worship event called “Cowboy Worship”. It was an outdoor worship experience and the congregation was encouraged to dress in western wear and everyone was invited to a beef burger and beans supper following worship. This summer Pastor Karen Cluts will celebrate her 25th Anniversary of Ordination and will retire.

St John Lutheran in Grinnell started a Wednesday afterschool program with Grinnell United Methodist Church. They welcomed Vicar Kari Lee as an intern this year. St John is in the process of starting an endowment.

First Lutheran in Newton, served by interim Pastor Mark Holmes, has submitted their Ministry Site Profile and are awaiting names from the Synod to continue their call process.

St Paul in State Center partnered with Lutheran Church of Hope in West Des Moines and live streamed Hope’s Wednesday night PowerLife worship service. Christian Education is now small group time on Wednesday evenings – and the conversations are lively in all groups. St Paul is a LEAD congregation and in the process of discerning God’s dreams for their future. St Paul is also trying different ways to ‘live stream’ Sunday morning worship.

St. Andrew’s in Sully welcomed 17 new members, completed a stained glass restoration project, and hosted summer VBS for 50 students.

Holy Trinity in Newton celebrated 60 years of ministry and offered a Christmas break VBS.

Both St. Andrew’s and Holy Trinity commemorated the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation with monolog Martin Luther presentations.

Our congregations address hunger locally and globally through food pantries, soup kitchens, backpack programs, and the ELCA World Hunger ministries. We seek to do God’s Work with Our Hands in our communities.
The Cedar River Conference is centrally located within the SEIA Synod serving Benton, Iowa and Linn counties in the communities of Cedar Rapids, Conroy, Ely, Lisbon, Marion, Vinton, and Walford. Our Conference gathers three times a year (January, May, September) to connect and grow together. Both rostered and lay leaders from our congregations share updates on life in our churches and communities. We also hear from Synod and other ministry partners to imagine together how we can better partner to impact the world with the love of Jesus.

The Cedar River Theological Education Forum offers regular continuing education and enrichment opportunities close to home. The Forum gathers September to May to hear speakers on a variety of topics. Topics in 2017-18 have been: A Conversation with Cedar Rapids Police Chief about Partnership for our Community, Debunking Myths About Martin Luther, A Conversation with Bishop Burk, Safe Equitable Thriving Communities, Outdoor Ministry and Faith Formation, A New Approach to Ministry with Women, Prioritizing Ministry Decisions (in partnership with the Synod’s Incite Program), Why People Give and The Theodicy Questions.

Highlights from this year included a joint worship and Oktoberfest meal to recognize the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. Worship leadership was shared by conference pastors and an all-conference choir and specially commissioned hymn added to the festivities. At our January meeting, we voted to give funds from the Tokheim Trust to Family Promise of Linn County and Helping Hands of Linn County. The Tokheim Trust is a fund established years ago by a member of First Lutheran, CR to support the efforts of ministry to those in poverty and entrusted to the conference clergy to determine where funds are distributed. Other business centered around next steps for the conference as we look ahead to possible Synod restructuring.

We are thankful to Al Runau, Conference Treasurer and Geoff Weber, Conference Secretary for their continued service. We said goodbye and Godspeed to Rev. Pat Fish from Holy Redeemer, CR now serving in Aurora, IL. We celebrated ordination of Brian Middleswarth, Rodney Bluml and Lynn Banderob.

Respectfully submitted, Trish Decker, Conference Dean
Conference 4

Conference 4 held one meeting to nominate candidates for Synod positions.

Rev. William Runaas
Conference Dean
2017 Conference 5 Report

At the 2017 Conference 5 meeting, Rev. Clark Olson-Smith was re-elected as Conference Dean. The conference also decided to close its bank account and disburse all its funds to Lutheran Chaplaincy Outreach to support Rev. Cindy Breed at the University of Iowa Hospitals.

Regular gatherings of Conference 5 clergy include a weekly text study group in Clinton and a monthly Jackson County clergy gathering. A handful of congregations in the eastern part of the conference plan to travel to Houston together for the ELCA Youth Gathering this summer.

The following Conference 5 congregations and clergy were in transition in this last year, May 2017 to May 2018.


- Immanuel in Camanche and Chancy in Clinton said goodbye to interim pastor, Rev. Britt Vickstrom, and called Rev. Phil Harkey, who came from New Jersey Synod.

- Immanuel in Clinton celebrated with Rev. Paul Holmer as he retired and welcomed Rev. Britt Vickstrom as interim pastor.

- Interim pastor, Rev. Duane Miller, completed his ministry at Zion in Clinton, and Zion called Rev. Mark Luepke, who came from Northern Illinois Synod.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Clark Olson-Smith
Conference 6

The River Bend conference is comprised chiefly of congregations in Scott County, in and around the Quad Cities.

In partnership with congregations on both sides of the Mississippi and the student ministry of Augustana College, a junior and senior high youth ministry, Ignite, provides shared events and encouragement for adult youth leaders.

The rostered leaders of the River Bend conference meet monthly for a lunch gathering. The purpose of this gathering is to encourage one another in life and ministry. Similarly, conference preachers meet weekly for a text study at Zion Lutheran Church in Davenport.

Congregations of the conference joined together for “God’s Work. Our Hands.” In partnership with the RiverBend Food Bank backpacks were filled with food for students throughout the greater region. Congregations also joined for a special 500th Anniversary Reformation Celebration held at St. Paul, Davenport.

The River Bend conference experienced several changes of call in 2017. Amy Diller was called to All Saints, Davenport and St. James, Bettendorf. Rich Pokora retired from Redeemer, Bettendorf, where John Grebner is serving as interim. St. Matthew, Davenport, Grace, Davenport and Zion, Princeton are currently without pastors with the leaving of Kristine Dohrmann, John Grebner and Julie Monnard, respectively. Kelsey Fitting-Snyder and Joshua Kestner are now serving term calls at St. Paul, Davenport.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor John Grebner - Conference Dean
Conference 7 – No Report

Conference 8 – No Report

Conference 9 – No Report
Conference 10

Conference 10 comprises the western half of the greater Des Moines Metro area and meets quarterly in conjunction with Conference 11 (east side of metro area). We alternate meeting sites between conferences, offering congregations and other church ministries the opportunity host and provide a program. These meeting provide a forum for sharing information and fostering collaborative efforts. Each meeting begins with a brief time of worship and prayer. Following each meeting participants gather for a fellowship lunch at a local restaurant.

April 2016 the conference met at St. Mark Lutheran Church in West Des Moines, participants shared ideas for marking the 500th anniversary of the reformation with discussion about a conference-wide “God’s Work. Our Hands.” effort in the fall. August of 2016 the conference meeting took place at the Luther Park Campus, a joint ministry to the aged by the ELCA and LCMS. The annual conference meeting took place at Faith Lutheran Church in Clive November 2016, with lay leaders presenting on spirit-filled ministries in their context. The annual meeting also lifted up the interns and seminary students in our conferences. In January of 2017 we met at Lutheran Hospital with a program presented by Unity Point Pastoral Care staff, highlighting resources available through Unity Point and opportunities for congregations to be involved in ministry opportunities through the hospital system.

In the context of this year’s reformation anniversary there are a number of efforts being made through our conference toward unity—bringing together conference congregations, Christian denominations, and religious groups. This year our congregations are making an effort to bring together diverse communities in learning, service, and worship. We give thanks for the opportunity to be in ministry together!

Pr. Sarah Trone Garriott, Conference Dean
Conference 11 Report

Conference 11 Rostered Leaders met three times this year with those of Conference 10. Each gathering consists of a time for worship followed by sharing of information and conversation. Gatherings were hosted by Pastor Lisa Parker at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Ankeny, and by Pastor Fayonne Tooman at Christ Lutheran Church, Des Moines. Pastor Jerry Collell of FreeIndeed Congregation at Anamosa was our guest at Christ Lutheran and shared his prison ministry experience and how congregations can be involved in supporting this prison ministry.

Our Fall Conference Gathering was held at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Des Moines. Congregation leaders shared about new ways God was at work in their congregation this past year.

We worshiped at St. John’s in Des Moines with our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters in a joint prayer service in the fall. Lutheran and Roman Catholic Clergy and Leaders were involved in the worship service.

A luncheon was held in May to say farewell to Pastor Sharon Worthington prior to her retirement.

We value our shared times with Conference 10 as we minister in the Des Moines metro and surrounding areas. We thank God for the work of the churches in sharing the Good News in this time and place.
Ten Things You Might Not Know about 1517 Media
Spring 2018

1. Since last fall, congregations have experienced the Small Catechism in a new way using *By Heart: Conversations with Martin Luther’s Small Catechism*. The book and video-based curriculum are designed to create deep conversations in small groups about Lutheran foundations. This is a great resource for both new members and seasoned Lutherans. [augsburgfortress.org/byheart](http://augsburgfortress.org/byheart)

2. *In Sure and Certain Hope: A Funeral Sourcebook* has become an indispensable resource for those planning, presiding, and preaching at funerals. This fall, Augsburg Fortress will release a companion funeral handbook, designed to assist congregations in teaching about and planning funerals with families and in small groups. [augsburgfortress.org/funeral-sourcebook](http://augsburgfortress.org/funeral-sourcebook)

3. Augsburg Fortress will be releasing a multi-faceted holy communion learning resource for kids and families later this year. Get ready to see a long-time favorite become something new. Receive updates at [augsburgfortress.org/lutheran-learning](http://augsburgfortress.org/lutheran-learning).


5. Fortress Press is now producing a greater quantity and variety of books for general readers that intersect religion with topics in art, literature, and culture. Grounded in fresh, substantive, timely, and inspiring theological reflection, these titles are perfect for reading groups, Bible studies, and personal growth. Browse the topics, including youth ministry, social justice, Bible study, and more, at [fortresspress.com/popular](http://fortresspress.com/popular).

6. This spring, Frolic will expand to offer a new Sunday school curriculum for preschool! The new play-based preschool builds faith formation among three to five year olds, and focuses on sharing stories and themes from the Bible. [wearesparkhouse.org](http://wearesparkhouse.org)

7. *Whirl: All Kids* and *Spark: All Kids* are new models of Spark and Whirl for churches with multi-age or single room classrooms. Created for kindergarten through grade five, these programs offer mentoring and leadership opportunities so all kids can learn together! Available this spring at [wearesparkhouse.org](http://wearesparkhouse.org).

8. Sparkhouse Family Book Fairs will continue this year and can now be hosted anytime, anywhere. Receive a selection of free books and extend to your congregation or school a discount with free shipping on select books. You can even use it as a fundraiser for your ministry. Learn more at [SparkhouseFamilyBookFairs.com](http://SparkhouseFamilyBookFairs.com).

9. Sparkhouse Family has grown since its launch in 2014 and has a refined mission: to publish high-quality children’s books that help kids thrive emotionally, socially, and spiritually. In recognition of these changes, Sparkhouse Family has a new identity: Beaming Books.

10. From the empty tomb to Jesus’ appearance to the disciples, the story of Jesus’ triumph over death is told with vibrant art in a new pop-up book, *Jesus Is Risen!* This book will bring the Easter story to life in a whole new way for children and the adults who love them. Take a peek at [beamingbooks.com](http://beamingbooks.com).

Want to learn more? Follow us on social media. Sign up for our free eNewsletters at augsburgfortress.org | wearesparkhouse.org | fortresspress.com | beamingbooks.com
Established in the fall of 2017, Augustana’s new **Presidential Center for Faith and Learning** sponsors initiatives related to the college’s Five Faith Commitments: interfaith engagement, social justice, spiritual exploration, vocational discernment, and reasoned examination of faith.

The new center is directed by Dr. Jason Mahn, Augustana associate professor of religion and author of *Radical Lutherans, Lutheran Radicals* (Cascade Books, 2017). You also may recognize him from his work within NECU and his editorship of the journal *Intersections: Faith, Learning, and the Vocation of Lutheran Higher Education*.

In collaboration with Augustana faculty, Campus Ministries, CORE (Careers, Opportunities, Research, Exploration) and community leaders, the center organizes speakers and other events related to Augustana’s faith commitments. It also houses the college’s pre-seminary program for students who discern a future in the ministry. Currently, six seniors in pre-seminary studies plan to graduate with the Class of 2018.

This year the Presidential Center for Faith and Learning and Augustana’s Campus Ministries also have been hosting celebratory events and opportunities for discussion and learning in honor of the 500th Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. Events planned as part of Homecoming and winter Symposium Day drew alumni and members of the campus community to reflect on Augustana’s roots and the modern-day relevance of Lutheran higher education.

I believe that what especially matters today is the generation of Augustana students and young alumni who are making an impact because of how they learn, what they learn and what they do in the world. I agree with Dr. Mahn that the world desperately needs our graduates, who are able to respond both capably and compassionately to the great needs of the world.

I am constantly heartened to see how our students, faculty and alumni live out Augustana’s mission and connection to the values of the Lutheran church. The period of time that has passed since my last report has been a notable one within the history and mission of Augustana College. It has been a year infused with celebration, actions toward a greater common good, more students interested in a ministry vocation than in recent years, and the introduction of our Presidential Center for Faith and Learning.

I anticipate sharing news of the center’s good works throughout the coming years.

Steven C. Bahls, President
Dear Friend in Christ,

I’m thankful for the opportunity to write to our neighboring synods and to reflect on the past year at Carthage College. It is a chance to step out of the fast lane of activities on campus and slow down to examine the work we have been doing at the Center for Faith and Spirituality. It was a good year that included celebrating our Lutheran heritage and our growing diversity.

**Lutheran Heritage**

Last fall, we put on several events to conclude our celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Highlights included:

- A trip to Carthage, Illinois, with the Wind Orchestra, new Carthage president John Swallow, and his wife, Cameron. I was invited to preach at Trinity Lutheran Church as part of its Reformation celebration.
- A concert/hymn sing titled, “From Chants to Hymns: Singing our Faith.” It was a wonderful event featuring the voices of the Carthage Choir and organist Christopher Berry.
- The world premiere of “From Heaven Above to Earth You Come,” a piece commissioned specifically for the annual Christmas Festival based on Luther’s hymn of the same name.

**Growing Diversity**

This spring has a strong focus on religious diversity. Highlights include:

- A visit by Bishop Emeritus Munib Younan from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Land and Jordan, who spoke to us about religion’s role in creating peace in Israel and Palestine.
- Presentations and workshops led by Kenosha Interfaith Scholar in Residence William Cavanaugh, Ph.D., who spoke about “The Myth of Religion and Violence.”
- An amazing Faith Dialogue Dinner we hosted as part of our Better Together Week, celebrating our religious diversity.

Finally, great things continue to happen around campus. Carthage continues to grow and change to meet the demands of an evolving world, while keeping a liberal arts education at the core.

- Carthage was named a top producer of U.S. Fulbright Students for the third year in a row. This year’s Fulbrighters are in South Korea, Thailand, the Czech Republic, and Taiwan.
- A new residence hall informally nicknamed “the Tower” will open in fall, promising improved community spaces.
- The Nursing Learning Laboratories opened as our first nursing majors entered the clinical phase.
- A Master of Science program in business design and innovation started last fall.
- Carthage was awarded a $1.2 million Noyce grant for scholarships and mentoring to help recruit more STEM teachers. Participants commit to teach two to four years in a high-need school.

Thank you for your continued support of Carthage. Please continue to keep us in your prayers as we strive to prepare students to use their gifts and skills for the greater good of all.

Peace,

Pastor Kara Baylor
2017 Highlights & Statistics

Ewalu programs are effective at strengthening connections between youth and their home churches. All programs seek to foster lasting faith formation with solid ELCA Lutheran theology. God’s work was done with your hands again this year through your partnership with Camp Ewalu. Thank you for being part of this:

2017 Program Highlights

Summer Bible Study (Lutheran Outdoor Ministries, ELCA): “Water of Life”
“One-Year-To-Live” Men’s Retreats (2) with Lutheran Men in Mission (Feb., Nov.)
Northeastern Iowa Synod Youth Ministry Network Retreat (April)
Dirty Feet Retreats (2): Weekend faith-builders for Junior High youth (March, Oct.)
Volunteer Work Weekends (2) for building/maintenance projects (May, Oct.)
“Family Camp” cross-generational retreat ministry (July)
Ewalu Fall Festival & Quilt Auction, 30th Annual (September)

Christian Education at Ewalu: the Numbers

Summer Bible Camp

49 Youth Ministry Staff, 28 x 4-week high school “Leadership Training” participants
990 Summer Campers
69 Family Camp participants
804 Day Camp (VBS) children, 21 churches/communities and ~100 volunteers

Recent Ewalu staff beginning M. Div. programs at Lutheran Seminaries: 5 this year!

Hours of intentional Christian Education at Ewalu in 2017 (conservative est.): 70,560

Retreat and Event Numbers

679 participants at Ewalu Sponsored Events & Programs (non-summer)
1026 guests at 39 Custom Retreats at the Ewalu Main Site
847 guests at 30 Events at the Ewalu Stone Center
1120 guests for 21 School Retreats and Events
155 participants at 7 Volunteer Events
990 summer campers received general scholarships totaling $241,000
77 children & youth received “Greater Need” Campership gifts totaling $18,204
Dear Friends,
Warm greetings on behalf of our faculty, staff, students, and alumni! Here are some highlights of recent additions or enhancements to the campus:

**Grand View Receives $1.5 Million Gift**
Grand View has received $1.5 million to create The James E. Rasmussen and Duane M. Skow Chair in Pastoral Excellence at Grand View University. Thanks to a generous gift from Kurt and Lynette Rasmussen and Sandra Rasmussen (Grand View alums), the endowment aims to preserve and strengthen Grand View’s commitment to providing excellent pastoral leadership for current and future generations of students and to become a model or a “center of excellence” for the larger Lutheran Church. The Reverend Russell Lackey, Grand View’s campus pastor, will serve as the first holder of the Rasmussen-Skow Chair.

**$210,000 Grant Supports Launch of Emergency Grant Program**
Grand View University has received a $210,000 Dash Emergency Grant from Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation & Affiliates to operate and maintain a student emergency aid program. Emergency grants have been integrated into the college’s overall student success strategy with the goal of improving retention and completion rates.

**Grand View Choir to Tour & Perform Home Concert**
The Grand View University Choir traveled a ten-day 2018 Spring Tour through Iowa, Missouri, Indiana, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York. Grand View Choir tours extensively throughout the United States as well as regularly in Europe. Wherever they sing, they have been praised for their excellence in musicality, blend, programming, and attention to detail.

**Grand View Biochemistry Program Receives National Accreditation**
The Chemistry Department at Grand View University is excited to announce that the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) has formally granted the Biochemistry program a full seven-year accreditation. This is the first and only program in the state of Iowa to be accredited. The program was recognized for its support for diversity and internship, as well as research opportunities. Students graduating from the program can now have their degree certified (by taking a national exam), making them competitive with other graduates from across the nation.

**Athletic Highlight**
The Grand View wrestling program won an unprecedented seventh-straight team national title. With the win, the Vikings are the first team in NAIA history to win seven consecutive national titles. Grand View finished with a total of 10 all-Americans.

**NEXUS**
Last year Grand View received a generous grant from the Lilly Endowment to launch a Youth Theology Institute for the purpose of cultivating youth who will be theological leaders of the church. The Institute immerses high school students in Christian community, learning under Grand View’s theology faculty, being exposed to the vocation of ministry, and putting into practice their calling. More information is available at: [www.thenexusinstitute.org](http://www.thenexusinstitute.org).

**eSports**
Grand View has added eSports, an online sport, consisting of organized video game competitions. Specifically, Grand View students compete in League of Legends, one of the largest and most popular eSport games. eSports competitions have seen a large surge in popularity in recent years. Grand View University recognizes the value and legitimacy of eSports and is excited to have added to its already rich athletic program.

**Campus Ministry at Grand View**
Campus ministry continues to grow and serve our students in many ways. Chapel is held once a week with different guest speakers often featured and there are multiple Bible study groups, prayer groups, and evening worship offerings. The Viking House on campus is open during the day for students to hang out, eat, study, or relax.

God’s Peace and Joy,
Kent Henning, President
Greetings to you from your partners in ministry at Gustavus Adolphus College! The College community has been looking forward, dreaming big and thinking strategically. In alignment with our mission and core values, we are guided by a bold vision: Gustavus equips students to lead purposeful lives and to act on the great challenges of our time through an innovative liberal arts education of recognized excellence.

As our mission partner, you can contribute to the way we live into this vision. The network of institutions and relationships which holds our Lutheran congregations, synods, camps, colleges, seminaries, and social agencies together plays a vital role in nourishing and advancing our collective and important contribution to the world. We all make a greater impact because of this diverse network to which we belong.

Many years ago Gustavus established the Gustavus Adolphus College Association of Congregations as way of living our Lutheran identity and to create a tangible structure through which we might serve the wider Lutheran church. The Gustavus Association of Congregations network of congregations continues to thrive, energized by the John D. and Ruth Hogenson-Rutford Endowment for Church Relations at Gustavus.

As you gather for congregation annual meetings and synod assemblies, we hope you are inspired by the reminder of the many others who walk along side you in mission. We are blessed to be able to share numerous resources with your congregation. Thank you to the many of you who have made good use of our church and college ministry partnership.

MARK YOUR 2018 CALENDARS AND JOIN US FOR THESE SPECIAL EVENTS:

- **STEP UP — MARCH 8, 2018**, a leadership development resource for high school youth. Students will be introduced to college level concepts of leadership that will help them develop a stronger personal plan for continuing to grow as a leader. For more information: www.gustavus.edu/churchrelations/stepup
- **Annual Gustavus Faith Conference and Association of Congregations Business Meeting Luncheon — APRIL 21, 2018**
  
  The theme for the 2018 conference is “Doubt & Difference: Finding Faith through Authentic Engagement.” Dr. Jacqueline A. Busie, Professor of Religion and Director of the Forum on Faith and Life at Concordia College is the featured speaker. The Annual Business Meeting of Gustavus Adolphus College Association of Congregations will take place during the luncheon meeting. For more information: www.gustavus.edu/faithconference
- **MAYDAY! Peace Conference — MAY 2, 2018** “Mighty Be Our Powers: Gender, Justice, and Peacebuilding” with featured speaker Nobel Peace Prize winner Leymah Gbowee.
- **The Gustavus Academy for Faith, Science, and Ethics — JULY 14-30, 2018**, an exciting resource for high school youth interested in exploring creative alliances between faith and science. The theme for the 2018 Academy is “Land and Identity: How our Food and Microbiomes Change Who We Are.” For more information and to nominate a high school student: www.gustavus.edu/chaplain/academy
- **Annual Nobel Conference® — OCTOBER 2-3, 2018** “Living Soil: A Universe Underfoot”
- **Christmas in Christ Chapel — NOVEMBER 30 – DECEMBER 2, 2018**

For more information about these events and the many resources we offer congregations, please contact the Office of Church Relations or visit us on-line at: www.gustavus.edu/churchrelations. Thank you for your partnership and prayers!

Rev. Grady St. Dennis
College Chaplain/Director of Church Relations
Dear Friends in Christ,

Your partnership in Lutheran Outdoor Ministries changes lives! We thank you, and we thank God together for working in and through the lives of campers, staff, volunteers, pastors, congregations and other friends of the ministry! The past year has been filled often with joy, as we watch people discover afresh God’s love for them and respond in love and worship. The sounds of campers and the smiles on their faces are also delights as those children of God celebrate the gifts of friendship and life in Jesus Christ.

Beth Benschoter, one of your Summer Program Directors, penned a heartfelt reflection of God at work at camp through the eyes of a summer staff leader, and we want to share an excerpt of her words here:

In the smallest of moments, I saw God’s faithfulness shine in the boldest of ways. I did weird things like dress as a strawberry, sing Disney karaoke, pull water balloon pranks, serve breakfast in bed, and eat toast as a talent. I laughed with my pal, a little girl who clung to me as her parents preached and we drew pictures of each other and wrote notes for our friends. My heart was broken for a group of high schoolers giving Jesus all they had because this world is broken and they have to learn that the hard way. I cried saying goodbye to the kindest, funniest, and most adorable little 9-year old boy I’ve ever met who already knows what it feels like to not be accepted, and loves to feel the acceptance of those at camp. I prayed hard as tears fell down over a paper of names of people who need to know God’s reckless love more than ever. I would “meet it up” every night with a God-fearing, crazy positive and extremely goofy friend who kept me going every day. I heard the stories of God’s faithful hand in SO many lives this summer, and I realized that in moments that seem mundane, goofy, insignificant or irrelevant—God shows up. Divine revelation is not limited to any agenda or one specific night of worship. Revelation happens as you teach a teenage girl how to swim while simultaneously explaining the Trinity and learn about her family. It happens while reminding college aged counselors how capable they are even when words hurt and campers are hard to understand. It happens during tug-of-war, early morning canoe trips, or family communion. It happens all around us in every moment because our world is full of signs of God’s grace and faithfulness.

We join you in proclaiming the grace, salvation and faithfulness of our loving God! Thank you for your partnership through prayer, participation, support and encouragement! Come and join us whenever you can at one of these two beautiful camps!

For the many who are blessed,

Rodney Quanbeck  Dan Antoine  Kristin Rienhardt  Jim Sunde  Sara Heutinck
Executive Director  Director of Programs  Day Camp Director  Ingham Director  Registrar

P.S. Our campers look forward to music and worship in the new chapel at Ingham Lake! Come and see the chapel and enjoy ice cream and fellowship at our summer kickoff on June 3!

1.800.OKOBOJI  www.okoboji.org
New students walk into University Lutheran Center at Iowa State University almost every Sunday for 11 a.m. worship. To break the ice, I like to ask general questions: What’s your major? What year are you? Where are you from? It’s that last question that can be interesting. Not all students who come to us are from Iowa; some come from places like Washington State, California, and New Jersey!

Students at Iowa State University come from many different places they call home. Having conversations with them about their home causes me to stop and rethink what that word “home” means. In the context that I’m asking newcomers where it is that they consider home I’m thinking of a city and state. But “home” means so much more. More and more these days we live as transients, moving from one town to another, usually following the path our careers take us. The average person will change careers 5-7 times during their working life according to career change statistics.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that the average American will move 11.4 times in their lives. This means we can assume 11 homes are lived in over the course of an American’s lives. That’s a lot of homes—especially considering most realtors suggest only living in three homes throughout your life. Compare this to Europeans only moving four times in their entire lifetimes.

These census reports help inform the path and purpose of Lutheran Campus Ministry. We provide a stable home for ISU students by providing a place for them to meet, study, worship, and grow in faith. We model a “home” that is more than merely a “place.” The home that students find at University Lutheran Center is a community—a family—that is loving and supportive. We prepare students to create loving spaces in all the towns in which they will live as they journey onward from Iowa State University.

These students will know what a stable and caring home is like because of their experience with Lutheran Campus Ministry. They will continue from here to be a part of other church homes that also share the good news of Jesus’ love.

Here are a few examples of how University Lutheran Center is a “home away from home” for students:

- Worship Wednesdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 11 a.m.
- Sunday free noon meals made by students
- Mid-week dinners on the town
- Volunteer opportunities with the homeless and the poor
- Haiti trips to work with Wings of Hope
- Student-led book studies addressing current affairs, racism, poverty

Lutheran Campus Ministry is thankful for all the support from the Iowa synods, the ELCA, and individual donors. These gifts are what help us make stable this home called University Lutheran Center.

Peace and power to you all!

Pastor Jen Andreas
LUTHERAN CHAPLAINCY OUTREACH – REPORT TO THE SYNODS - 2018

Lutheran Chaplaincy Outreach (LCO) is the organization that supports an ELCA chaplain at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City. Formed in 2005, this organization receives funds from ELCA congregations, individuals and organizations to support this chaplaincy. No financial support is provided by the hospital or any Synod.

The mission of LCO is “to compassionately share the Good News of God’s healing love and grace through providing an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Chaplain at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics.” This chaplain position, presently at 75% time, focuses on visiting patients (and families and friends) who indicate at registration at the hospital that they are “Lutheran.” Referrals come from congregational pastors and the patients and families themselves, through nurses, social workers, and physicians.

If it were not because of Lutheran Chaplaincy Outreach, there would be no ELCA chaplain here at University Hospitals. Lutheran Pastors would not be able to call or e-mail a Lutheran chaplain to visit their parishioners on their behalf. Congregations would have to pay mileage to their pastors to come hundreds of miles, and pastors would need to take an entire day to come visit their member. Patients in this big, confusing place would not have an advocate to help them weed through the maze of doctors and medical terms and illness, and family members would not have a Lutheran pastor to sit with them during an unexpected, emergency surgery.

Thank you to those congregations, individuals, and organizations that have graciously provided financial support to Lutheran Chaplaincy Outreach in the 13 years of its existence.

Consider being a part of Lutheran Chaplaincy Outreach by making a contribution to LCO. Congregations: consider giving ½ of 1% of your congregational budget; put a regular, line item in your budget; have a special offering or fundraising event to raise money for LCO; give from your endowment fund.

The Lutheran Chaplaincy Outreach newsletter will soon be sent electronically. If you would like to receive this newsletter, send your e-mail to the e-mail address below.

Thank you for our partnership, as together we share the grace and love of Jesus Christ to those who are sick and hurting.

Respectfully submitted,

Chaplain Cindy Breed

(mailing address): Lutheran Chaplain Outreach
123 E. Market Street
Iowa City, Iowa 52245

(to reach the LCO chaplain) office phone 319-356-3817
e-mail: cindy-breed@uiowa.edu
page: 319-356-1616, ask for Chaplain Cindy to be paged
emergency pastoral care: 319-356-1616, ask for on-call interfaith chaplain
“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”
— Galatians 6:2

Thanks to the generous support of our friends at the Southeastern Iowa Synod, thousands of our Iowa neighbors are on the path to hope and healing. In 2017, the Southeastern Iowa Synod gave $175,000 and 49 churches gave a total of $122,445 in support of LSI’s mission: to respond to the love of Jesus Christ through compassionate service. Thanks for creating brighter futures for the families we serve!

YOUR IMPACT IN 2017

In 2017, LSI provided:
- **15,238** home visits to young parents
- **13,239** therapy sessions to adults, children, and families
- **174,562** hours of service to people with disabilities
- **12,627** hours of behavioral health services sessions to children in residential treatment

Last year, the Global Greens Farmers from LSI’s Refugee Community Services earned **$107,893** from farmers market and Community Supported Agriculture sales.

New in 2017: Host Homes!
LSI pioneered a new program that changes the way adults with disabilities live and interact with their communities. Our Host Homes program pairs an adult with disabilities with a mentor family who welcomes that individual into their home.
Joint report to synods from LSTC & Wartburg Theological Seminary

Dear Partners in Ministry in the Southeastern Iowa Synod,

We know that you seek out and value excellent leaders for your ministries. Wartburg Theological Seminary (WTS) and the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC), the two seminaries that the Southeastern Iowa Synod supports, is dedicated to forming such leaders. This report reflects the spirit of collaboration between our schools and highlights the benefits of the distinctive ways we form leaders.

Of all ELCA students enrolled in our church’s seven seminaries, 29% of them attend LSTC or WTS. In fall 2017, Wartburg saw a 77% increase in enrollment in the first year class over the previous year, with many of those students enrolled in the distributive learning program. The two schools have over 150 students who hail from our 18 supporting synods in Regions 4 and 5.

The distinctiveness of our locations and programs mean that those following their call to leadership in the church can find the best fit for their circumstances and passions.

LSTC is located in a bustling, racially and ethnically diverse neighborhood on the south side of Chicago. As the ELCA seminary with the highest percentage of residential students, students are able to take advantage of all of the resources and learning opportunities the Chicago area has to offer. LSTC’s new strategic plan for 2018-2020 focuses the school on being a community that forms leaders to form communities. In a time of deep polarization in our society, we believe that Christian leaders will play a crucial role in bringing people together. This emphasis is part of LSTC’s innovative public church curriculum.

Wartburg Seminary has been forming leaders for over 160 years. Our deep roots allow us to be nimble and explore new ways of preparing people to lead. Although the central location is a castle in Dubuque, Iowa, the technology within these stone walls is far from ancient. In classrooms equipped with newly updated video technology, students from Florida, Colorado, Iowa, Texas, and around the country learn together in real-time. This allows students in our Master of Divinity – Collaborative Learning (CL) program to serve in a congregation or other ministry all four years while learning via video technology. With this program and the help of our partners, we are able to address nearly every education expense a student faces in considering seminary – housing, insurance, tuition, and fees.

Whether face-to-face or online, outstanding faculty and staff at our seminaries form leaders in critical ways.

Gordon Straw, Cornelsen Chair for Spiritual Formation and Coordinator of Candidacy at LSTC, draws on his Native American roots to communicate to his students that spiritual formation is about how we live our lives every day, and that how we live honors God, those around us, and
ourselves. We are formed through life experience, he says, as much as through traditional spiritual practices.

Lindsey Queener, WTS Director for Admissions joined the team in early 2018. She said, “When I joined the Lutheran church, our congregation used to pray this prayer: ‘Bring to this church those who will be nourished here, and those who will nourish us.’ That prayer is my prayer as I begin my work on the WTS Admissions team; that this next generation of leaders will be formed in all kinds of new ways, and we too will be formed in all kinds of new ways by them.”

Finally, we’d like to introduce you to just one alum from each of our seminaries.

JustChurch is the name of an ELCA Saturday evening worship service supported by Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Iowa City, Iowa. "We offer gritty preaching, engaging those uncomfortable, authentic and exhilarating places where the world intersects the kingdom of heaven, those same places where God calls us to be. Just church," Rev. Sarah Goettsch, WTS ’01 explains. "We commend it to those who find themselves disenfranchised from organized church, who feel harmed or skeptical towards denominational religion, who are seeking to worship, but not necessarily join."

While a youth director, Kara Baylor was called on to preach when the pastor was ill. That sermon must have gone well, because after that Sunday she had plenty of people urge her to consider seminary. The idea wasn’t new to her, of course, but it made her seriously consider it. “The call of the community to leadership is very important to me,” said Baylor, who graduated from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago in 2000. She is now campus pastor at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wis., where she “loves the opportunity to be on the faith journey with students, faculty and staff. The college environment is a place where we are supposed to ask big questions and do it within community. It is a great place to help constructive conversation take place.”

We invite you and members of your congregation to visit our seminaries to participate in worship, attend a continuing education event, discern a call to ministry or visit with some of the future leaders that you and your synod support through your gifts to Wartburg and the LSTC. To learn more about your seminaries and the innovative and distinctive ways that we are forming leaders, please visit www.lstc.edu and www.wartburgseminary.edu.

Your partnership is essential for LSTC and Wartburg to continue our shared mission of providing effective theological education and developing leaders for the many ministries of your congregation, synod, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Yours in Christ,

James Nieman
President
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Louise N. Johnson
President
Wartburg Theological Seminary
Greetings from the campus of Luther College! I am pleased to submit this 2018 Synod Assembly report as a way to connect with you, the college’s extended community. At Luther, students discern their vocations and prepare for their careers in a college community committed to the life of faith and learning. We count on your partnership in this important work.

On October 31, 2017, the Luther College community experienced a highlight in our yearlong commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s nailing of the Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. The all-day symposium, “The Reformation of Everything” brought together scholars, faculty, students, staff and the Decorah community to engage in the distinctive education that Martin Luther championed and that we at Luther College embrace. The event was devoted to the investigation of the Reformation, its historical impact, and its continuing influence in religion, education, academic disciplines, social and political thought, art and music. The evening of October 31st featured the premiere of the “Reformation Cantata.” This new music was a collaboration among alumni and current students, working together and inspired by Martin Luther, to question ideas, discern meanings, and ultimately to express their conclusions beautifully and powerfully in music.

All Luther College pastors on campus are available to all within the Luther community for conversation, reflection, vocational discernment and counseling. At the core of College Ministries is the Luther College Student Congregation. The student congregation elects a council each year who work in partnership with the college pastors to provide a rich range of ministries and opportunities for students to explore their faith, build community and discern their particular gifts and calling for leadership and service.

One tangible way your church can support Luther College is to encourage your high school students to visit campus. Should they choose to enroll, we hope you will consider supporting them with an EPIC grant (Education Partners in Covenant). Luther will match up to $1,000 per year in support of each student from your congregation. More information can be found at luther.edu/financialaid/current/scholarships.

I am convinced that a community of faith and learning provides the best possible environment for young people to discern their callings. Thank you for your prayers, your support, and for encouraging high school students to look closely at all that an ELCA college like Luther offers.

Sincerely,

Paula J. Carlson, Ph.D.
President
2018 Greetings to the Southeastern Iowa Synod
from

**Lutheran Lakeside:**
**An ELCA Outdoor and Retreat Ministry**
**Spirit Lake, Iowa**

**Transition...Change...Gratitude**

A primary gift of this place called Lutheran Lakeside is the stunning beauty and mystery of God’s creation. Even in the midst of the often busy Iowa Great Lakes region!

*Sigurd F. Olson (1899-1982) was an educator, conservationist, and writer who believed that wilderness preservation is a “spiritual necessity, an antidote to the high pressure of modern life.” His first book, The Singing Wilderness, became a best-seller. Olson wrote: “Our lives seem governed by speed, tension, and hurry. We move so fast and are caught so completely in a web of confusion there is seldom time to think...The change of seasons is often unobserved, the coming of winter, spring, summer, and autumn...”*

Lutheran Lakeside is a place for your spiritual renewal and discovery in all seasons. Lutheran Lakeside is a welcoming place for all to experience Christian community.

In 2018 the Lakeside staff, transition team, and Board of Directors are diligently working together to do the necessary work of “interim,” following the retirement of Carolyn and Jerry Fritsch. This includes: *re-establish congregational and constituent linkage, and enlist commitment to new directions and new leadership.*

We will continue to build enriching relationships with congregations, leaders, and the people of the three ELCA synods in Iowa. Lutheran Lakeside is your partner in ministry. It is my privilege to serve as Interim Executive Director during these initial months of leadership transition. Lutheran Lakeside is grateful to St. Mark Lutheran Church in Sioux City for this creative arrangement, which surely demonstrates and affirms the value of ministry partnership.

Your stories, experiences, prayers, and ideas are welcomed as we begin this new chapter of Lutheran Lakeside's ministry! Our gratitude to you for your partnership in ministry!

*Rev. David Halaas, Interim Executive Director  
david@lutheranlakeside.com   712-336-2109*

Three ways to connect with Lutheran Lakeside:

1. Come and see! We invite you to **come and see** Lutheran Lakeside. Come and tour the facilities; come and see the surprises of nature; come and visit with the Lakeside staff about ministry, service and retreat possibilities.
2. Invite us! **Invite us** to come and see and learn about your ministry.
3. We would welcome donations of new, hardcover copies of the Lutheray Study Bible and Spark Story Bible (from Augsburg Fortress).
4. Go to **www.lutheranlakeside.com** to see the current issue of Shore Lines, meet the staff, read the 2017 Annual Report, and discover the donation wish list.
We are church together.
This call from ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton is at the core of Portico’s identity: We serve those who serve the church, so they can serve others. Ecclesiastes 4:12 reads, “a three-fold cord is not easily broken.”
Imagine, then, the resilience that comes from a community more than 50,000 strong that includes:
- Active and retired rostered ministers, lay employees, and family members
- Congregations, synodical and churchwide ministries, and social ministry organizations
- The dedicated and talented staff at Portico Benefit Services

Together, we pool our resources and carefully steward our gifts, leveraging our collective strength to provide the care our members need. Together, we walk the path toward financial, emotional, and physical well-being, so all might experience God’s abundant life. Together, we are church.

In 2017, our community’s size and scope allowed Portico to:

**Deliver personalized support that helps our members live well.**
- Skillful Portico Care Coordinators by Quantum Health helped more than 70% of members with ELCA-Primary health coverage navigate the complex world of health care.
- More than 400 members enrolled in Livongo’s innovative diabetes management program to make living with diabetes easier and more cost-effective.
- 35% of our sponsored members used Portico’s Retirement Planning Tool to get a comprehensive picture of how much they’re saving, and how it might last in retirement.
- 3,500+ members gained a better understanding of their financial picture after talking with our new in-house team of credentialed Portico Financial Planners.

**Exceed our goals for practicing good financial stewardship.**
- Over and above a record-breaking year for the markets, the expertise of our investment management team demonstrated our commitment to a long-term, diversified approach to investing.
- For the second year in a row, administrative efficiencies and innovative plan adjustments allowed us to hold our baseline increase for ELCA-Primary health benefits to 5% — below the national trend of 6.5%.
- Benefiting from the run of growth in the markets and strategic fund management, we announced a 4.0% increase in the ELCA Participating Annuity payments for 2018, the sixth consecutive annual increase.

**Speak with one voice on behalf of those who serve the church.**
- As part of the Church Alliance, Portico joined with 37 other denominations to advocate for legislation to protect 403(b)(9) plans designed to help churchworkers save for retirement.
- On behalf of ELCA investors, our shareholder advocacy team championed a history-making climate-change resolution at a major energy-producing company.

The church is a shining example of what happens when we come together to care for one another. Lives are changed, hearts are touched, hurts are healed, hope is shared. We are grateful to lead the ELCA in the good work of wellness, and thankful for your partnership that makes this possible.

We are church together — and together, in Jesus’ name, we are creating abundant life for those who serve.

In Christ,

The Rev. Jeffrey D. Thiemann
President and CEO
If you have reached your limit on how many times you have read that the Riverside ministry is such a great ministry….

If you can’t bear to hear how wonderful the past year has been….

If you are tired of having me tell you about how faithful God is…. Then skip the rest of this report! ;)

2017 was another spectacular year of loving people and sharing the Good News with young and old! Our youth campers increased, our family campers increased and made the summer the largest since 1978. We are to be ROOTED in God and grow where He has planted us. Our Women’s Retreat had record attendance of 104 women. Our Marriage Retreat was attended by 53 couples who had a wonderful time reconnecting and improving their marriages. Our message was made clear to all.

Our Living Water, Living Word Appeal set out 5 years ago to raise $2,500,000 for the purpose of replacing a swimming pool and refurbishing the chapel. As of December 31, 2017, we have reached that goal! The pool has been in use for two summers and the final improvements to the chapel will be completed in 2018. What an amazing feat you, as supporters, have attained. We thank you for all you have done for the improvement of the ministry!

We move into this year with big plans and several opportunities to celebrate the 75TH anniversary of the Riverside Lutheran Bible Camp ministry. It is an honor and privilege to have served in this wonderful ministry.

Finally, this will be my last annual report. Jan and I have loved our calling here and will miss it as we enter into retirement in October. Our outstanding Board of Directors have already been laying the groundwork for the hiring of an outstanding Executive Director who will allow God to move the ministry forward with renewed fervor and love for God and what He has in store for the future. Please continue to support Riverside as well as you have over the past 21 years and more!

Romans 9: 28 (NIV) – …and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.
The Southeastern Iowa synodical womens organization is under the Women of the ELCA. Our board consists of 4 executive board members & 7 board members, elected for 2 years at our yearly convention. Current board members: Sue Mangels (pres) Keokuk, Kris Elgin (vice pres) Oskaloosa, Lynda Miller (secretary) Eldridge, Linda Kortemeyer (treasurer) Davenport, Virginia Eggers, Clinton, Carol Gruhn, Clinton, Judy Hardesty, Iowa City, Maureen Johnson, Madrid, Ardy Proehl, Ogden, Karen Miller, Davenport, Ramona Vonsprecken, Maquoketa. We meet 6-7 x a year, host 2 retreats & a convention every year. Circles or womens church unit send us funds as well as clusters. We keep 50% for the board needs & send the other 50% to womens churchwide organization. Excess monies are voted upon for Lutheran and other worthy causes. 2017 we were able to divide $2,400.00 among 8 different organizations to help them in their work. We set up truck transportation for Lutheran World relief out of Ankeny 2x a year & have access to truck out of Cedar Rapids arranged by Missouri Synod ladies. We try to have a board member go to each cluster meeting to share information from churchwide & our board involvement in the work of the Lord. The bonding and spiritual ties with the women is awesome.

Every 3 years churchwide womens organization has a Business convention followed by gathering. 2017 site was Minneapolis-we sent 4 delegates plus the President to the business meeting (3 days) with about 300 delegates & churchwide staff passing resolutions, voting on new churchwide board & executive board, and so much more. The fun & awesome speakers were the next 3 days with over 3100 women from all over the Us & the world. All anew was the theme. It was a powerful gathering and our synod had at least 56 women attend the gathering. We offered a bus & about 30 women used this service.

Over the years our synod ladies have supported Binta Mama-a tanzania group training mothers & dau & family members in improving the health & needs of children & parenting, even food preparation. We are the only synod supporting this group & hope to continue to offer this assistance.

One goal in 2017-2018 is to raise money for LSI (Lutheran Services of Iowa). As health insurance changes-many funds are no longer available to them. We encourage each women & churches to give generously to this organization. Any funds for LSI can be mailed to them or earmarked for LSI to our treasurer to collect & present to LSI.

Gods word and call to help those in need leads us to bond together as more hands & money collectively can be awesome.

Each women in the Lutheran church is part of the Women of the ELCA-reach out & see what we are doing. Be involved in Gods work. Pray & Bless all of us.

President Sue Mangels
Enrollment
Fall 2017 enrollment was 1,527 students from 30 U.S. states and 55 countries. This number included international students and U.S. students of color, who constitute 21 percent, a record number being Hispanic.

Transforming Tomorrow Campaign
Transforming Tomorrow raised a total of $89.5 million, exceeding the $75 million goal. The five-year comprehensive campaign resulted in investments across campus, including more than 60 new donor-funded scholarships. More information can be found at www.wartburg.edu/transform.

Focus on the Future
Wartburg engaged more than 150 alumni, faculty, staff, students, and friends of the College in an examination of strategic opportunities in today’s challenging environment for higher education. There were seven task forces – three focused on academic innovation, two on dimensions of student success, and two on expanding our reach.

Reformation Celebration
Wartburg commemorated the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in numerous ways. The following represent some of the highlights:

- Wartburg hosted “Spirited Expression: A Celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation” on Oct. 31, featuring music leadership by Dr. Karen Black, college organist, and the Wartburg Choir and Dr. Lee Nelson, conductor, with remarks by the Rev. Dr. Kathryn Kleinhans, Mike and Marge McCoy Family Distinguished Chair in Lutheran Heritage and Mission.
- A documentary “The Wartburg Choir in Germany: Celebrating 500 Years of the Reformation” followed the choir on its May Term tour through several German towns with strong ties to the College and the Reformation.
- The Rev. Louise N. Johnson, president of Wartburg Theological Seminary, received an Honorary Doctor of Divinity degree during the College’s fall Opening Convocation.

Spiritual Life and Campus Ministry
- In October, Wartburg completed the initial phase of a review of Spiritual Life and Campus Ministry, thanks to the generous support of the Siebert Foundation and other donors. On Oct. 31, more than 280 students, faculty, and staff gathered for Table Talks to discuss Wartburg’s commitment to faith and learning and the future of Spiritual Life and Campus Ministry. Participants learned about recommendations from the program review and provided feedback:
  - Wartburg could do a better job articulating its identity as a College of the Church. Recommendation: Draft a theological identity statement for the College and ensure that it is used with all new community members to introduce them to the College.
  - The campus religious environment has become more decentralized and tribal. Recommendation: Experiment with different staffing models that distribute ministry leaders throughout campus.
  - Students cite classes as one of their most important opportunities for spiritual discussion and growth. Recommendation: Seek better integration of SLCM’s work in the academic curriculum.

Recognition
- The Rev. Dr. Ramona Bouzard, dean of the Chapel and Moehlmann Chaplaincy Chair, announced her retirement as of June 2018, after 24 years of service to the College.
- The Rev. Dr. Kathryn Kleinhans retired from her position as McCoy Chair to serve as dean of Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University.
- Dr. Diane Levy Jacobson, Luther Seminary professor emerita of the Old Testament, was the 2017 Graven Award recipient. The annual award for Christian vocation continues to highlight the powerful and positive effect of a strong sense of Christian vocation as it interfaces with service to community, the church, and the world.
- Dr. August Waltmann ’64 received the Wartburg Medal in recognition of his sustained service to the College.
• President Darrel Colson serves on the executive committee of the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities (NECU). He participated in the multi-year process that produced *Rooted and Open: The Common Calling of the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities*, which the Wartburg Board of Regents affirmed at its February 2018 meeting.

**Academic Programs**

• Wartburg received reaffirmation of its accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association.

• The Board of Regents approved a Master of Arts in Music Therapy, which will be the College’s first graduate program. This was approved by the Higher Learning Commission and will commence in Fall 2018.

• A $500,000 grant from The Kern Family Foundation allowed Wartburg College to enter into partnership with Wartburg Theological Seminary to streamline preparation for pastoral ministry for some students. See details on Wartburg College and Wartburg Seminary websites.

• Wartburg is offering a digital ministry class that helps ordained and lay leaders use technology to enhance all aspects of their ministry. The course is offered on campus, with an online option for those not in or near Waverly.

We are blessed to work with optimistic and enthusiastic students committed to leadership and service. Thank you for supporting these young people who bring such rich gifts to our community.

**Darrel D. Colson, President**
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500th anniversary of the Reformation

The ELCA’s Reformation anniversary commemoration, Freed and Renewed in Christ: 500 Years of God’s Grace in Action, gave a confident and joyful witness to the life and freedom in Jesus Christ that is for all. A heartfelt appreciation to the many congregational and synodical coordinators, committees and leaders who collaborated to build and sustain anniversary momentum.

In 2017, the ELCA joined global Lutheran companions in hosting topical events around the country that engaged people of all ages and backgrounds – both within and outside of this church. Many of these focused on acknowledging what Martin Luther did to spark the Reformation, revisiting the roots of our Lutheran beliefs and articulating what those roots mean for us today and in our engagement with others.

The commemoration year that began on Oct. 31, 2016, as Pope Francis and The Lutheran World Federation leaders co-hosted worship and common social engagement in Sweden, culminated a year later with a national commemoration event in Washington, D.C. hosted by the ELCA’s Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton. More than 6,000 viewers participated in that event in person or online as we honored the first centennial anniversary in the ecumenical era. Ministries of reconciliation featured ecumenical and inter-religious partners and stories of congregational vitality and leadership highlighted how we are called forward together in Christ.

Results from the anniversary communications engagement survey (February and November 2017) revealed an increase in respondents’ knowledge and participation with double-digit increases in several areas. More importantly, 91 percent of respondents stated they participated in one or more anniversary activities.

Lastly, many engaged with the anniversary online through social media platforms and ELCA500.org. Thanks to those who utilized, recommended and shared the online resources resulting in more than a 50 percent increase in social media followers and nearly a 10 percent increase in website traffic in 2017. Many of these resources continue to be available through 2018 at ELCA500.org.

Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA

We are now in the final year of the ELCA’s first comprehensive five-year campaign, Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA. As of Jan. 31, we have raised more than $144 million – 73 percent of our goal – in cash and multi-year commitments for churchwide ministries and are so grateful for the continued support and partnership of ELCA synods and congregations.

Since the campaign’s launch in 2014, we have accomplished amazing things with the help of ELCA members, congregations and synods.

• More than 300 Domestic Hunger Grants support sustainable solutions that get at the root causes of hunger and poverty across the U.S. In addition, nearly 60 countries around the world have ELCA World Hunger supported programs.

• The ELCA Fund for Leaders provided 251 students with more than $2.1 million in seminary scholarships during the 2017-2018 academic year.

• With more than $1 million in support from the campaign, Renewing Congregations grants are being implemented across the ELCA, including 16 Synodical Renewing Congregations Strategies, six Area Ministry Strategies and four Fast Growth Congregations Initiatives.
• Funding from the campaign has expanded the work of ELCA congregational new starts by funding 18 additional ministries in a variety of contexts and with creative strategies.

• The International Women Leaders initiative has reached 115 international Lutheran women with access to academic scholarships, training and networking opportunities.

• Eleven global ministry evangelism projects were initiated by companion churches in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America.

• Twenty-one new or enhanced youth and young adult ministries have received a grant to grow existing programs or start new ones.

• Young Adults in Global Mission launched four new country programs – Rwanda, Cambodia, Australia and Senegal – with 93 young adults sent into service during the 2017-2018 year. This represents a nearly 48 percent growth since the campaign’s launch four years ago.

The 2018 campaign theme, Leadership, includes a focus on ELCA Fund for Leaders and Youth and Young Adults. Congregations and synods received a kickoff packet in early January with materials to get started. In June, congregations and synods will receive information on a new initiative, launching in September, to help us celebrate the leaders in our congregations while supporting the next generation of leaders through these ministries.

For additional resources, including the campaign case statement, videos and more, visit the campaign resources website at ELCA.org/Campaign-for-the-ELCA/Resources. For more information as you plan your involvement in the campaign, please contact us at 800-638-3522 or email us at campaignforELCA@elca.org.

**Advocacy**

**Living out our baptismal identity**

ELCA Advocacy works for change in public policy based on the experience of Lutheran ministries, programs and projects in communities throughout the world, and on concerns that the ELCA has identified and spoken about through its social teaching documents. ELCA Advocacy invites Lutherans to live out our baptismal identity through participation in opportunities to learn and act with and on behalf of our neighbors with the ELCA Advocacy network.

We are excited to have welcomed over 5,000 new advocates to the national Advocacy network in 2017 alone. Join these Lutherans and thousands more as we advocate together for a just world where all are fed. Visit ELCA.org/advocacy to learn more.

**We are called “For Such a Time as This” to #PrayFastAct!**

In May 2017, ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and the Most Rev. Michael Curry, presiding bishop of The Episcopal Church, issued a joint invitation to a season of prayer, fasting and advocacy out of concern for proposed deep cuts to programs that are vital to hungry people struggling with poverty. ELCA Advocacy supports this call with #ForSuchATime, an advocacy opportunity on the 21st of each month that joins spiritual disciplines with action to address hunger, poverty and environmental degradation. Find more at ELCA.org/prayfastact.
Farm bill advocacy
In 2018, ELCA Advocacy is working to pass the farm bill that funds agriculture and food programs and helps to support American farmers in their vocation to steward the land. With the renewal of the farm bill every five years, we are offered an opportunity to reduce hunger and poverty in the U.S. and around the world and encourage sustainable stewardship. Advocacy staff have held listening sessions in North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Texas and California to inform policy work and hosted 150 hunger leaders in January for advocacy together. Follow @ELCAadvocacy on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for information on how to take action.

Building new advocacy leaders
In 2017, ELCA Advocacy launched the ELCA Hunger Advocacy Fellowship program, a year-long transformative experience that combines leadership development and faith formation with impactful advocacy for economic, racial and gender justice. The inaugural class of ELCA Hunger Advocacy Fellows currently serve in ELCA Advocacy network offices in Texas, Minnesota, Virginia and Washington, D.C.

AMMPARO
Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO) accompanies Central American unaccompanied migrant children forced to flee their communities due to horrific violence, lack of opportunities or environmental problems. Although faith communities work in different ways on issues of immigration, we are still the only church with a comprehensive strategy that has a regional focus of addressing the root causes of migration in Central America and of accompanying immigrant children and families in the U.S.

A significant percentage of funds for AMMPARO are used by ELCA partners in Central America to address the issues that drive people to flee and to offer safe alternatives to migrant youth and families who have been deported. Our companions have experienced great success in providing these individuals with the opportunities for new lives that remove the need to migrate.

In two years, 76 congregations have become welcoming and sanctuary congregations in 26 synods, committing to accompanying migrants in their communities. Today, 18 synods have an organizational structure with either AMMPARO, Welcoming or Sanctuary task forces. And five ELCA synods are now sanctuary synods.

These congregations and synods have overcome the fear that many of our communities experience daily, have moved beyond their walls and have a new sense of vitality through their work.
How do synods and congregations and ELCA members accompany migrant children and families? Here is where the AMMPARO letters P-A-R-O come in – Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities.

**Protection** – This means accompanying children and families in their communities. One example is Ascension Lutheran Church in Milwaukee; it rehabbed an old youth room that had a bathroom and turned it into a sanctuary suite. And Lutherans in Los Angeles, Chicago, Omaha and Denver are observers in immigration court through our Guardian Angel programs. They provide support and accompany children and families during one of the most difficult moments in their lives.

**Advocacy** – Last year, the AMMPARO network and leadership of the ELCA sent 2,582 messages, 390 letters, 2,192 electronic messages and made many phone calls calling for protecting vulnerable children and families as well as sound and compassionate ways to address the root causes of migration.

**Representation** – Today, children and families seeking refuge in the U.S. have to represent themselves in court. The ELCA now has a small network of AMMPARO pro bono lawyers that accompany them. We also have lawyers who are representing sanctuary congregations.

**Opportunities** – In addition to the accompaniment by Lutheran Social Services organizations, congregations are helping immigrants in their communities make new lives. In some cases, this includes finding short- and long-term foster families for them. It also includes helping parents get their kids enrolled in school and helping them find health services and employment.

In 2018, AMMPARO is aiming for 150 ELCA congregations that are welcoming or sanctuary and engagement in 33 synods. You can be part of this movement by connecting to them through [ELCA.org/ammparo](http://ELCA.org/ammparo).
Getting the Word Out

We give thanks to God for all of the individuals, congregations, synods, and churchwide ministries and institutions for their deep and abiding commitment to God’s transforming word in Christ, in proclamation and in Scripture!

The Book of Faith Initiative is a continuing priority of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, dedicated to encouraging all ministries and people of the church to continually renew and enrich our broad and deep engagement with Scripture for our own sakes and for the sake of the world.

The Book of Faith Initiative has operated using a decentralized, grassroots approach centered on our common vision in which all are invited to open Scripture and join the conversation. We invite leaders to continue and boldly further this effort in their places of involvement.

From the beginning, the goal of the initiative has been two-fold:

1. to meet the continuing challenge of widespread biblical illiteracy and
2. to renew the teaching of our rich theological heritage of scriptural understanding, interpretation and engagement.

To help realize the above goals and address the challenges listed below, we want to further encourage engagement of Scripture, especially using the “multiple lenses” approach. We seek your help and support as partners in this effort, in addressing the challenges that are currently serving to shape our calling. Some of the larger challenges are:

- The growing number of people in society claiming to be “spiritual but not religious”
- The need to address and learn from the great variety of cultures that make up this church and world
- The role of the Bible in mission outreach
- The importance of family and home as centers of faith development
- The need for creative use of social media
- Continued biblical illiteracy

Despite the challenges, Christ is present as we engage Scripture and this promise calls us forward together. Please join us in getting the word out and in encouraging all to open Scripture and join the conversation!

Learn more: bookoffaith.org         @bookoffaith         #bookoffaith
Four lenses for engaging Scripture.
Open Scripture. Join the conversation.

The initiative has emphasized that biblical engagement is greatly enriched by the use of multiple lenses in conversation with Scripture and other people. This suggested method is centered on four ways of reading the Bible and asking questions: devotional, historical, literary and theological reading.

**DEVOTIONAL**

We begin. We read, ask questions, reflect on the meaning of the Bible from wherever we are – in place, time or state of mind. No matter where we are, our Book of Faith meets us there.

**LITERARY**

We pay close attention to how the passage is written. We notice what kind of literature it is. We notice all the details, themes, characters, storyline, poetry and logic. We compare and contrast these with our understanding and experience of life. In this process we discover meaning.

**HISTORICAL**

We seek to understand the world of the Bible. We explore the world of the writers and the original readers, the rulers, slaves, women, men and children. All the people in our Book of Faith. How do we understand their social and cultural contexts? How were their lives different from or the same as ours today?

**THEOLOGICAL**

As we open Scripture and join the conversation, we ask our deepest questions and listen for God’s voice. We hear God’s demands as well as God’s words of comfort and promise. We see Christ alive yesterday and today. We feel the movement of the Spirit and are moved to respond. God is present in the word.
**Congregational Vitality**

In each synod, directors for evangelical mission (DEMs) engage lay and rostered leaders in the formation and development of congregational vitality. The congregational vitality working description:

> “Communities of Jesus that nurture life-changing relationships with God, one another and the world.”

DEMs are the “vitality organizers” who help make connections as the ELCA in congregations, synods and the churchwide expression to be catalysts for new mission starts, vital congregations, stewardship ministries, and Mission Support. They build upon ELCA commitments to ethnic-specific communities, communities of color and the young-adult population, as well as people and communities experiencing poverty, so that we might be a thriving, equipping and inviting church that embraces diversity and strives for justice and peace throughout the earth.

Domestic Mission has a new Congregational Vitality Team led by the Rev. Ruben Duran. This team will partner with synods, bishops, directors for evangelical mission, pastors and congregations across the church to foster and nurture congregational vitality. Vitality is described by the Conference of Bishops as “communities of Jesus that nurture life-changing relationships with God, one another and the world.” Seeing ministry through the prism of vitality is an exciting and promising direction for this new team and a central goal of the ELCA. Certainly, vital communities of Jesus exist in many places in our church and indeed go back to the life-changing communities of the early church. We envision that this work will support vital communities that are in place and foster and promote new vital communities.

Vitality ministry will be deeply rooted in relationships, collaboration, creative and repeating innovation, and a passion for learning and sharing that learning throughout the church. Local leaders will be encouraged and expected to discover their God-given vitality in diverse contexts, especially among emerging generations, ethnic and multicultural communities, and among leaders in ministry among people experiencing poverty. Creating the Congregational Vitality Team is a proactive response to the ELCA priorities expressed in the Future Directions 2025 initiative.

**An example of vitality ministry is found in new starts:**

We share Christ’s love by extending our welcome through new congregations and by supporting them as growing centers for evangelical mission. We are worshiping in pews, city parks, cafes and libraries; we are breaking bread in homes and in shelters, and we are equipping our neighbors with both spiritual and physical sustenance. With our hands, we are doing God's work of restoring and reconciling communities in God’s name.

There are 431 ELCA new ministries under development in the United States and the Caribbean through the work of synod mission tables made up of local leaders, directors for evangelical mission and bishops. But there is more work to be done and communities to reach. To reflect the diversity in our country, we are engaged in God’s mission with the goal of becoming an evangelizing, multicultural, multigenerational church.
Deaf ministry in Allegheny Synod: Following the signs

“Sorry, I'm deaf,” said the sign on the back of Kory's shirt, as he tended to his duties in the garden center at the Home Depot in Tacoma, Wash. The sign indicated that customers should face Kory directly to ask for help. But the sign soon became a call to ministry for the Rev. John Telyea, Kory's coworker and a student at Seattle University at the time. Telyea initially befriended Kory partly as a practical matter. He wanted to learn about the garden center of the store to help customers.

Telyea planned to learn Kory's language so that he wouldn't have to keep writing notes to communicate with him. He learned the American Sign Language (ASL) signs for different types of flowers and plants. Soon he was conversing with Kory and his deaf friends who passed through the store. He enjoyed the beauty and depth of the language. As he got to know Kory, Telyea began to understand some of the problems deaf people encounter: “So often the hearing community conveys the message to the deaf community that 'there is not a place for you,' or 'you don't use my language,’” he said.

Building faith and understanding

His time with Kory helped shape Telyea's ministry interests, particularly in his present call in west-central Pennsylvania. Pastor at Geeseytown/Newry Evangelical Lutheran Parish in Hollidaysburg, Telyea has been leading the Allegheny Synod Deaf Ministry group since fall 2016. The group gathers members of the deaf community from Blair and surrounding counties for fellowship, Bible study and conversation.

Fewer than 10 deaf congregations exist across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), according to the Rev. Timothy Knauss, assistant to the bishop of the Allegheny Synod and director for evangelical mission of the ELCA. Today, the synod is seeking to develop a deaf congregation in the Altoona area of Pennsylvania. Telyea is leading the way, with support from Knauss and other leaders involved in deaf ministries from around the country.

Plans include starting a monthly evening worship service (on March 25, 2018) at Geeseytown Lutheran and working from there to engage in faith building. Telyea hopes this ministry will help the hearing community become more comfortable interacting with the deaf community. “It's OK to say 'hi' to someone who may seem different or speak another language,” he added.

Telyea also participates in a weekly lunch gathering for members of the deaf community and hearing people who are studying to be interpreters for the deaf at a local college. Conversation covers life issues affecting both the deaf and hearing communities.
**Same gospel, different language**

Knauss is an enthusiastic resource for Telyea. He is excited to follow his own desire to develop a deaf ministry as he brushes up on his ASL skills and follows God's call to “gather in this community.”

Knauss hopes that through this ministry, “congregations will continue to grow in their communication of faith regardless of the language of our senses.” He added: “Through Pastor John’s compassionate leadership, we feel that the deaf community will see the welcoming body of Christ throughout the Allegheny Synod.” Trusting in God, Telyea and Knauss are simply following the signs.

**Multicultural ministry in Florida**

**Bahamas Synod: Empowering leaders**

Diana Fajardo has a gift for building up people. Her passion is to serve the Latino immigrant community in Fort Lauderdale and the greater Broward County area of South Florida. Working in partnership with the ELCA and the Florida Bahamas Synod, she is the mission developer for Comunidad Luterana Todos los Santos, a Reconciling in Christ (RIC), Spanish-speaking community of faith growing as a mission of Abiding Savior Lutheran Church in Fort Lauderdale.

Todos los Santos officially began in 2015 and is housed in the Abiding Savior building. It has a unique origin, having grown organically among the people served by and/or serving others through a local community center called El Centro Hispano de Todos los Santos. El Centro assists and empowers low-income, underserved immigrant families from Latin America. For the past three years, El Centro, too, has operated at Abiding Savior.

Fajardo is the link connecting Abiding Savior, Todos los Santos and El Centro as they work together to grow faith, build relationships and serve the needs of the larger community. Fajardo cofounded El Centro 14 years ago, and until recently she served as its executive director. In her role as mission developer for Todos los Santos, Fajardo continues to oversee El Centro, working with a coordinator and board of directors.

**Neighbors helping neighbors**

Members of the Todos los Santos congregation actively connect in ministry with El Centro’s multiethnic community. They are key partners—neighbors help neighbors—raising up leaders in the immigrant community, training church and community volunteers and mentoring those who have been served so that they may serve and empower others in the community.

El Centro engages, nurtures and encourages Latino immigrant families through a variety of activities and educational programs for families, children, youth and young adults.
Another very important goal is to equip adults to become self-sufficient, helping them to adapt to their new culture so that in turn they can support their families and the larger community. “Parents and guardians must have the necessary skills to support their children’s education and help them to achieve school success and to be models of behavior,” Fajardo said.

Adults can take career- and life-skills classes and even earn certifications in food handling and beauty, thanks to partnerships with local organizations. Participants feel God at work through El Centro. “We receive the word of God that nurtures our lives and prepares us to serve God’s creation,” said certification student Carmen Martinez.

Raising up leaders also involves building relationships with local agencies, including the police department, United Way and several government agencies. “The mutigenerational community gets the benefit of healthier families, individuals and professionals, all contributing to build an inclusive and equal environment for the new generations,” Fajardo said.

Fajardo is a TEEM (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries) program participant through the Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest (LSPS), Austin, Texas, a program of Wartburg Theological Seminary (Dubuque, Iowa). As she looks ahead toward ordination and the future of the ministries she shepherds, she is filled with hope. She knows Todos los Santos and El Centro will continue to impact the community, growing faith and changing lives. “I believe that God’s grace heals and prepares us to share the good news with all the people. The more I witness our society being restored, the more I rejoice, with the hope of a better world for the new generations.”
ELCA congregational vitality key statistics:

- **431 new ministries** are under development.
- **59 new starts** were approved in 2017.
- **238 total new starts** approved over the last four years.
- **515 new ministries** have been organized as congregations since the birth of the ELCA in 1988.
- **56%** of all new starts are among ethnic-multicultural communities.
- **18%** of 2016 new starts are with ecumenical partners.
- **21%** of 2016 new starts are young adult-millennial leaders and communities.
- **151 ministries**, including strategic renewal, ethnic-specific, ministry with and among people living in poverty, and specialized ministries (prison ministries, people with disabilities) were supported with Congregational Vitality Partnership Support totaling $2.4 million in FY 2017.
- **29 projects** are being supported with more than $1 million in the ELCA Campaign Renewing Congregations Initiative approved during the past three years, including:
  - **19 synodical renewing congregations strategies**
  - **6 area ministry strategies**
  - **4 fast-growth congregations**
  - **72 practitioners trained as facilitators** for Congregational Development Trainings in the last 12 months.
- **670+ leaders** participated in Congregational Development Trainings in the last 12 months.

What YOU can do ...

**SHARE AN IDEA:** If you have an idea for a new congregation, contact your synod office. Ask for the director for evangelical mission or your bishop.

**PRAY:** Be a prayer partner for the new starts, mission developers and vitality work.

**GIVE:** Share your resources to propel ELCA Congregational Vitality today by making a gift online at ELCA.org/newcongregations/donate or ELCA.org/campaign.
Congregational Vitality: Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)

In 2017, Global Mission introduced the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to directors for evangelical mission to strengthen their abilities to accurately understand and adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities. In 2018, this proven tool will be used for two synod assembly Glocal events. The IDI is an essential tool for congregational vitality as we seek to become a more inviting and welcoming church that reflects, embraces and identifies the gifts of the diversity of the communities where our congregations are or could be located.

Ecumenical & Inter-Religious Relations

Draft of inter-religious policy statement


Individuals or groups are welcome to participate. The document can be downloaded from the website; input can be shared through the online survey link. Detailed information describing the background and process is also available online. The Inter-Religious Task Force, appointed by Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton in 2016, will receive the input and revise the document for consideration by the Church Council and the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. All questions can be directed to Kathryn Lohre.

500th anniversary of the Reformation: year in review

The 500th anniversary of the Reformation and its call to mutual understanding, dialogue and reconciliation, shaped our church’s ecumenical and inter-religious relations in 2017.

Lutheran-Catholic relations

Recalling the joint ecumenical commemoration in Lund, Sweden, jointly led by The Lutheran World Federation leadership and Pope Francis, the ELCA Conference of Bishops’ Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Liaison Committee and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs co-hosted a similar service on March 2, 2017, and signed a joint statement. [ELCA.org/service-of-common-prayer](ELCA.org/service-of-common-prayer)

This was bookended by another service of common prayer on Nov. 5, 2017, held at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at the University of Notre Dame. Presiding Bishop Eaton preached and co-chaired with Bishop Denis Madden, auxiliary bishop emeritus, Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore, and co-chair of the U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue. Other judicatory leaders and pastors also participated. [news.nd.edu/news/ecumenical-prayer-service-affirms-christian-unity-in-challenging-times/](news.nd.edu/news/ecumenical-prayer-service-affirms-christian-unity-in-challenging-times/)

In between, many events, initiatives and services occurred in synods and congregations across the church. Please invite synods to share records of these events with the Office of the Presiding Bishop.

The current round of U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue on Faithful Teaching is at the point of working intensively on the report. Internationally, The Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity have committed to finding pastorally significant ways to take

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God’s work. Our hands.
up questions of church, Eucharist and ministry, as were addressed in the “Declaration on the Way” affirmed by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly.

The Lutheran World Federation

In May 2017, the 12th Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) took place in Windhoek, Namibia, under the theme “Liberated by God’s Grace.” A service commemorating the 500th anniversary was held in Sam Nujoma Stadium, providing a focal point for the assembly. Namibia, a beautiful country with a rich Lutheran history, provided a remarkable context for this forward-looking assembly and symbolized the ways in which the global Lutheran movement is growing most strongly in the global south, especially in Africa and Asia. Archbishop Musa Panti Filibus of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria was elected by the assembly to serve as LWF president and Bishop Eaton was elected by the new council to serve as the LWF vice president for the North American Region.

Reformation Day 500

On Oct. 31, 2017, Bishop Eaton co-hosted with ELCA Vice President Bill Horne, Chair of the Conference of Bishops Bill Gafkjen, and Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod Bishop Richard Graham a daylong program of public witness. “Looking Back and Called Forward: A Commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation” was hosted by Lutheran Church of the Reformation on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. The first segment of the program focused on ministries of reconciliation: 500 years of division and 50+ years of dialogue, lifting up Lutheran-Catholic, Lutheran-Jewish, and Lutheran-Muslim relations, and racial justice and reconciliation. The second segment of the program explored leadership and congregational vitality. The day concluded with worship building on the liturgy used in Namibia by the LWF and a celebratory reception. The complete program, as well as videos and other information can be found at ELCA500.org/resources/october-31-commemoration/.

Lutheran-Jewish relations

The ELCA Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Jewish Relations developed a Litany of Confession for the occasion of the 500th anniversary, based on the “1994 Declaration to the Jewish Community.” This public act of confession and commitment took place in the presence of our Jewish partners in the context of Reformation Day 500. The litany can be found on pages 6-7 of the program booklet linked below; it can be adapted for use across the church. ELCA500.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Final-Program-Booklet_web.pdf

The ELCA participated in the national Jewish-Christian dialogue on pastoral issues co-convened by the National Council of Churches and the National Council of Synagogues and hosted by the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 1, 2017. The theme was “Religious Reformation – Past, Present, Future.”

Lutheran-Muslim relations

As part of our commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the ELCA had a significant presence at the annual Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) Convention. Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton addressed the assembly. By design, the interfaith unity banquet on July 2, 2017, spotlighted Lutheran-Muslim relations and was attended by nearly 70 ELCA Lutherans. Bishop Richard Jaech (Southwestern Washington Synod); Bishop Claire Burkat (Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod) and her colleague from the Council of Religious Leaders of Greater Philadelphia, Imam Anwar; and Bishop Wayne Miller (Metropolitan Chicago Synod) shared about Lutheran-Muslim
relations between congregations and mosques, city-based inter-religious councils, seminaries, non-profit organizations and individuals. Bishop Eaton was honored with ISNA's interfaith unity award.

The ELCA participated in the national Christian-Muslim dialogue co-convened by the National Council of Churches and the Islamic Circle of North America, which focused on re-invigorating the dialogue and common public witness.

**Full communion**

The ELCA tends to relations and reception with our six full communion partners through the ongoing work of coordinating committees, which meet at least annually.

Notably, this year, for the first time the biennial assembly of the African Descent Lutheran Association (ADLA) was held jointly with the Union of Black Episcopalians in Cherry Hill, N.J., and Philadelphia. ADLA President Lamont Anthony Wells was the visionary behind this ecumenical convening. This gathering also honored 30 years of ADLA presence within the ELCA and its predecessor bodies. The theme was, “Like a Mighty Stream, Let Justice Roll: Absalom, Jehu, and Beyond,” honoring the forbears in the faith, especially those pioneers of African descent within each tradition, current leadership and the call to ongoing formation and support of future leaders.

**National Council of Churches’ Act Now: Unite to End Racism initiative**

Building on its history during the civil rights movement, the National Council of Churches (NCC) will launch a truth and racial justice initiative, Act Now! Unite to End Racism, in Washington, D.C., April 3-5, 2018. A rally will take place on the National Mall on April 4 honoring the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination. Bishop Eaton will be one of the main speakers; ELCA participation is currently building across the church, including synod bishops, pastors, deacons and lay people. rally2endracism.org/

**Historic Black Church relations**

For the third year, the ELCA participated as a sponsoring partner in the Conference of National Black Churches National Consultation, held Dec. 12-14, 2017, in Memphis on the theme, “Overcoming the Burden of Bias.” Our presence at this gathering has been helpful for tending to both the internal and external/ecumenical dimensions of our work to address racial injustice and white supremacy. It has also been important as a space for building and nurturing relations with our bilateral dialogue (AME) and discourse (AMEZ) partners.

**Global church relations: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land**

In January 2018, Bishop Eaton led a delegation to participate in the consecration of Bishop Ibrahim Azar as the new bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. Elected one year ago, Bishop Azar succeeded Bishop Munib Younan, who also completed this year his service as president of The Lutheran World Federation. The ELCA delegation participated in events honoring Bishop Younan, the consecration of Bishop Azar, and made church to church visits with the six congregations and the baptismal site at Bethany Beyond the Jordan. Included were five synod bishops, including Bishop Don Kreiss of the Southeast Michigan Synod (companion synod) as well as the Rev. Khader El-Yateem, the president of the Association for Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage, and staff.
**ELCA Credit Union**

The ELCA Federal Credit Union has had a tremendous response since its grand opening in 2016. We are delighted to be serving ELCA members, congregations and synods nationwide and the Caribbean.

A few highlights:

- We offer consumer loans, credit cards, deposit accounts and more.
- Those who have refinanced or consolidated existing debt have saved an average of over $1,500 in finance charges.
- We also offer ministry deposit accounts, and coming soon in 2018, we will offer small loans for our congregations/ministries.
- We provide full account access via desktop and mobile app.

Find out more about your credit union at elcafcu.org or by phone at 877-715-1111. We look forward to serving you!

**ELCA Foundation**

**The ELCA Foundation: Your life. Your faith. Your gift to the future.**

We are pleased to announce that effective Jan. 1, 2018, the Endowment Fund of the ELCA, a separately incorporated ministry, began doing business as The ELCA Foundation. This follows action by the ELCA Church Council last November to assign additional responsibilities to the Endowment Fund corporation for all work historically associated with the ELCA Foundation.

- The new structure anticipates an expanded role for the endowment fund board of Trusteeet in overseeing the work of The ELCA Foundation. To accomplish this goal, four sub-committees of the board of trustees, in addition to the executive committee, have been created: audit, finance, investment and resource development.
- We have moved several positions, previously in the Office of the Secretary and the Office of the Treasurer, to the foundation: compliance, investment administration and chief financial officer.
- This year will be a time of transition as we review processes and procedures around the management of the gift pools. To ensure uninterrupted services as systems are transitioned, we are entering into a service-level agreement with the Office of the Treasurer for financial and trust administration.
- The work of the regional gift planners will not change much in terms of the day to day interaction with your synod and its ministries. The ELCA Foundation will continue to work in coordination and cooperation with the ELCA churchwide organization, particularly though its Mission Advancement unit.

The ELCA Foundation supports 21 regional gift planners throughout the U.S. These gift planners provide a number of services:

- They help congregations, synods and other Lutheran ministries identify their financial needs and wants and develop a Ministry Funding Plan.
- They help members of the congregations align their passions with the ministry funding needs through planned giving.
• Gift planners help donors make decisions about whom they want to help.
• Gift planners make sure everything is in place to fulfill the donor’s wishes.

In 2017, the 17 ELCA Foundation regional gift planners completed $34.7 million in planned gifts and $800,000 in current gifts. Congregations will receive $11.2 million and synods $3.4 million when those planned gifts are realized. In addition to the new written gifts, the foundation stewarded $11.3 million in gifts written in previous years, meaning a call was made to the previous donor to confirm that the gift was still in place and fair market value was updated. The foundation opened 56 Fund A accounts with $7.8 million of deposits and added $20.1 in net deposits to existing accounts, while writing $5.1 million in planned endowment deposits.

• Our gift-planning partner in Nebraska completed $3.5 million in planned gifts and $115,000 in current gifts but left our network in August. The position is currently open. Our South Dakota partner hired a new gift planner in 2017.
• Our Texas partner, Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest, which consists of four gift planners, completed $9.6 million in planned gifts and $288,000 in current gifts.
• Our total network of 23 regional gift planners completed $47.8 million in planned gifts and $1.2 million in current gifts in 2017.

**ELCA Fund for Leaders**

In 2017, Fund for Leaders marked 20 years of ministry, and there was much to celebrate! As of Dec. 31, the Fund for Leaders endowment had reached $57.3 million, allowing Fund for Leaders to provide more than $2.1 million in scholarship assistance to 251 seminary students during the 2017-2018 academic year. Synodical scholarships represent almost $500,000 of the $2.1 million distribution, disbursed in 152 awards by 41 synods.

Among the funds awarded in 2017 were 20 new full-tuition scholarships (of the 40 total) which were awarded thanks to a generous three-year, $3 million gift from Dean and Rosemarie Buntrock. Other scholarships were awarded for new mission developer/redeveloper candidates, and scholarships for seminarians pursuing chaplaincy ministry in military, prison or Veterans Affairs hospital settings.

For fiscal year 2017, Fund for Leaders raised more than $4 million. Of this amount, more than $1.5 million came from partner synods giving directly to Fund for Leaders, and the remainder came from donor gifts through *The Campaign for the ELCA*.

In 2017, Fund for Leaders staff worked with students, seminaries, synods and our new ELCA GrantMaker software to initiate a fully online application process for all full-tuition scholarships, allowing all eligible students entering ELCA seminaries to apply directly to Fund for Leaders to be considered for a scholarship. The 2018 award process is currently underway.
As of Jan. 31, 2018, ELCA Fund for Leaders can celebrate reaching its campaign revenue goal of $15 million in gifts and commitments to this ministry! For 2018, Fund for Leaders will be concentrating on three primary goals: 1) continued development work with new and existing donors to expand the reach and impact of ELCA Fund for Leaders; 2) the implementation of our new direct application and award process; and 3) planning with the ELCA campaign team for events and strategies connected to the campaign’s 2018 focus on leadership, including the Fund for Leaders. Focusing on these strategies will allow the Fund for Leaders to continue to grow in its ability to support as many future ELCA ministers as possible, toward our mission goal of fully funding tuition for all rostered-ministry candidates at ELCA seminaries.

**ELCA World Hunger**

**Generosity:** Even in the wake of disastrous hurricanes and unprecedented generosity to Lutheran Disaster Response this year, donors continued to give generously to ELCA World Hunger – more than $21.3 million in 2017! Giving from donors (directly, through congregations, and through synods) to ELCA World Hunger continues to grow every year and is now significantly higher than it was previous to The Campaign for the ELCA. This increasing generosity allowed ELCA World Hunger to distribute more funds to programming in 2017 than in any previous year.

**Hunger leaders:** A network of synod and congregational hunger leaders represents the local hands and hearts of ELCA World Hunger. In January, ELCA World Hunger convened the 2018 ELCA World Hunger Leadership Gathering in Washington, D.C., under the theme “Until All Are Fed” –150 representatives from more than 50 synods and 30 states came together for a focused training on farm
bill-related advocacy as part of ELCA World Hunger's comprehensive approach. As the government shutdown lifted, our Lutheran leaders met in over 120 Capitol Hill visits, supported by over 300 online actions from the network across the nation. Thank you, ELCA synods, for your commitment to turning out your hunger leaders for this important work we do together – until all are fed!

**Domestic Hunger Grants:** ELCA World Hunger Domestic Hunger Grants are in transition. We give thanks for the leadership and work of Josselyn Bennett, the now-retired former director of Poverty and Justice Ministries, and wish Joe Young the best in his new responsibilities as her successor. Within that transition, the newly formed Domestic Hunger Strategy Team, led by Mikka McCracken, will take leadership for the ELCA Domestic Hunger Grant process and affiliated training. We will share important updates through synod offices and our network of hunger leaders. We expect the new cycle to take effect in 2019.

**ELCA Youth Gathering:** Why are many of the people who produce much of the world’s food hungry themselves? We are excited to explore this question with you through ELCA World Hunger’s Global Farm Challenge. Learn more and download congregational toolkits at [ELCA.org/globalfarmchallenge](http://ELCA.org/globalfarmchallenge). In this final year of *The Campaign for the ELCA*, if we all work together, alongside our companions around the world, to ensure that all are fed ... well, that changes everything!

**ELCA Youth Gathering**

Every three years, youth from across the ELCA and the world gather for a week of faith formation. On June 27-July 1, the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering will bring together in Houston more than 31,000 youth and their adult leaders from every synod in our church. Through worship, interactive learning, Bible study, service learning and fellowship, youth will grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ, experience new perspectives, learn about the ELCA, deepen passions and explore vocation.

The theme for the 2018 Gathering is “This Changes Everything,” focusing on the gift of grace God bestows on each of us. This gift, undeserved and freely given, changes lives and perspectives as people realize they are enough because of what Christ has done and are called into the world to serve their neighbor and share the good news. The primary Scripture will be Ephesians 2:8 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."

Immediately preceding the Gathering are the tAble and the Multicultural Youth Leadership Event (MYLE). The tAble blesses and empowers young people who live with a wide range of physical, cognitive and emotional disabilities so that they might grow as faithful, wise and courageous witnesses. MYLE gathers young people of color and those whose primary language is other than English to explore culture, form leaders, claim identity, deepen faith and make friends.

You can learn more about the Gathering, MYLE and the tAble at [ELCA.org/gathering](http://ELCA.org/gathering) or find us on social media.
Entrance Rite Discernment Group

The Entrance Rite Discernment Group has been tasked to bring a recommendation to the Church Council for action by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly regarding the entrance rite for the Roster of Ministers of Word and Service. The Church Council also requested that the group provide recommendations on appropriate diaconal symbols and whether constitutional language on representational principles should be altered.

To find FAQs and resources related to this work go to: ELCA.org/Resources/Word-and-Service-Roster.
Ethnic Specific Multicultural Ministries & Racial Justice Team

March 14-15, 2018: The 2016 Churchwide Assembly called for the convening of a Task Force for Strategic Diversity. The task force is intentionally composed of people of color. The participants are diverse in race, ethnicity, gender and regional representation. The task force will include mapping anti-racism, racial inclusivity and multicultural relationship building, resources and initiatives happening across the ELCA. Reports on its progress and recommendations will be prepared for the 2019 Churchwide Assembly, with interim updates and reports given to the Church Council.

March 16-17, 2018: The Ethnic Specific, Multicultural Ministries and Racial Justice Team convened a follow-up to the 2016 Multicultural Leadership Summit called “The Power of Connection.” Each caucus group present at the 2016 summit reviewed action steps in monitoring progress and offered recommendations in areas in need of resourcing or reprioritizing. Representatives received updates on churchwide assembly actions and the strategic direction of the churchwide organization.

The spring 2018 Conference of Bishops implemented a continuing resolution on diversity goals. The 2016 Churchwide Assembly asked this church to report on synodical efforts in becoming a more diverse denomination. The continuing resolution states, in part: “This church commits itself to ethnic and racial diversity. Each expression of this church shall annually assess its ethnic and racial diversity when compared to the demographic data of its community or territory.” During the session, the bishops were asked to identify priorities in their synod and the ways in which increased diversity can be addressed. An assessment of their efforts and a progress report will be shared during the October 2018 meeting. This work is facilitated by Domestic Mission and Research & Evaluation.

The International African Lutheran Conference will convene in Moshi, Tanzania, Aug. 9-13, 2018. The conference theme is “UBUNTU, I Am Because We Are: Reconnecting, Re-rooting and Growing.” The gathering will engage participants in a worship service, educational workshops, community connections with emphases on women and young adult leadership. The event is co-sponsored by Domestic Mission, Global Mission and The Lutheran World Federation.

The ELCA ethnic associations foster a collective voice and the involvement of people of color in the ELCA with special attention to the equitable participation in the life of our church. Each association is working on several initiatives to increase the visibility and involvement of the associations, particularly among people of color, in the synod and churchwide expressions, and various agencies. Wider engagement of the representative communities requires each association to increase the number of participating members and calls for deeper support for the growth and work of the associations.
Global Church Sponsorship

Global Church Sponsorship consists of four priority ministries:

- Young Adults in Global Mission
- Missionaries
- Global Ministries
- International Women Leaders

2017 was the global church annual theme year for *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*. Many wonderful resources were created for congregations to use to lift up the work of global mission in their congregations. Those resources are still available for use, and we encourage congregations to continue lifting up the global church as we celebrate being church for the sake of the world.

Pentecost Sunday

Pentecost Sunday is the opportunity to reflect on the global community of which we are a part – a community of people living out our faith, serving our neighbors and sharing God's love with the world. This Pentecost Sunday we will lift up life-changing ministries with our global companions working to grow the global Lutheran church. *The Pentecost Sunday packet arrived at your congregation in mid-April.*

Global Church Sunday – pick a Sunday in October!

Global Church Sunday is about celebrating our church’s connections and common mission within Christ’s global church. It is a day to rejoice in our relationships with companions around the world, to learn more about how the ELCA is connected globally and to support our church’s missionaries who work in partnership with our companions in Christ. *The Global Church Sunday packet will arrive at your congregation in July.*

Other resources (available at [ELCA.org/resources](http://ELCA.org/resources), click on “ELCA Global Church Sponsorship”)

- Global Church Minutes: prayers to be incorporated in weekly worship
- Global Church Passport: educational activities for youth and young
- Church Story Series: 12 stories from our global companions
- International Women Leaders: Stories, video and booklets to help lift up the International Women Leaders program and International Women’s Day
Global Mission

Glocals and Mission Formation

As the education and interpretation team within Global Mission, Mission Formation creates events, trainings and resources that equip members in the re-forming of global mission. This has meant fruitful partnerships with not only congregations and communities around youth programming, advocacy, cross-cultural competency training and congregational development but also with synods through their yearly assemblies. In 2017, as a key part of over 20 Mission Formation events, we were privileged to be a part of the programming of six synod assemblies – stretching from North Dakota to Texas.

When Glocal partners with a synod, we offer a wide range of plenaries, workshops, music and worship leadership that are rooted in accompaniment as a way of better seeing, being and doing mission abroad and in our own neighborhoods. Over the course of the last five years, Glocal has participated in assemblies in 25 of our 65 synods, connecting congregational leaders from around the country to issues and values of mission in new and deepening ways.

In the coming five years, we look forward to partnering with 25 more synods as we continue to engage and deepen our understanding and practice of mission, to collectively receive the gifts of the global church, as well as to share resources that leaders can take home to their ministry and impact their home communities.

Evangelism

Mexico:

ELCA Lutherans are excited to know that our church is in relationship with the Mexican Lutheran Church (ILM), a church body of 11 congregations and a member of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). This is extremely important not only because of its geographic proximity but also because of the 54.1 million Latinos in the United States (see attached graphic from 2015), 64.1 percent are Mexican or of Mexican origin. In companionship with the ELCA, the ILM is investing in leadership development and theological formation and has a deep commitment to gender justice as a way of transforming a society that is “machista” and violent toward women.

Nigeria:

The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN) is a strong and growing church with about 2.7 million members, many of whom are under 20 years old. With support from The Campaign for the ELCA, the LCCN is hoping to harness the energy of the large youth population in the church and communities, evangelizing through music, intentional conversation and educational opportunities. These evangelism efforts will strengthen the goal of the church to be a bulwark against youth radicalization, will teach the freely given liberating grace of God and empower Nigerian youth to live out their faith amid many challenges.
Siberia:
With support from The Campaign for the ELCA, we are equipping women and men in Russia and other former Soviet states for leadership and service in the church. In 2017, a Clinical Pastoral Education initiative was created to provide lay and clergy members with skills and formation in pastoral care. Participants said: “I learned how to listen. ... I realize that empathy is at the center of pastoral care.” and “After this seminar I feel healthier spiritually and physically. ... Many thanks for accompanying me on the way, for caring for the healing of my soul.”

Zambia:
With support from The Campaign for the ELCA, Global Mission is helping the young, vibrant Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zambia (ELCZ) to grow. Of their 40 worshiping communities, only four have sturdy, weatherproof buildings. In 2018, the ELCA is investing in brick-and-mortar structures that will house worship spaces for the congregations of the ELCZ. Join us in this holy work of building permanent church buildings across the ELCZ.

Health care
Global Mission is exploring new ways to integrate a holistic perspective into its health care work, supporting projects that incorporate many aspects of life – food security, peace, livelihoods – into preventive and curative health care programs.

In South Sudan, for example, the Evangelical Lutheran Church Africa Mission in South Sudan (ELCAMSS) opened a clinic at the Reconciliation Lutheran Church Community Center and Clinic in February 2018. The center and clinic create a holistic space that includes community worship,
educational opportunities and healing for people of many ethnic and religious backgrounds. Clinic services recently began with antenatal visits for pregnant women and well-child visits. In addition, spaces for training in computer, sewing and the English language are set up with instructors and ready to start working with students in the coming weeks.

Overview and resources

The ELCA has relationships with Lutheran companions in more than 120 countries through companion synod relationships, your offerings and prayers. Thanks to the generosity of ELCA members, the ELCA funds missionaries and projects in more than 90 countries. Receiving the gifts of the global church opens ELCA congregations to strengthening their proclamation and service.

Individual congregations can enhance their connection with the witness of the ELCA’s companions around the world with the 2018 Global Mission map brochure (available as a digital download or paper copy from the ELCA Resource Catalog).

This brochure provides some highlights of the ELCA’s global engagement and partnerships in 2018. This educational resource showcases a variety of ways in which we and our global companions walk alongside one another in Christ. This resource unfolds into a world map, which is wonderful for displaying in your congregation’s foyer, narthex and literature racks.
Sustainable development
Global Mission continues to expand support to projects that focus on peace, justice and human rights, as this sector represents some of the most potentially transformative work the ELCA supports. Half of the new projects beginning in 2018 are rooted in such work, including a number of projects that focus on gender justice and a new project working with ex-bonded laborers (Haliya) in Nepal.

While the government of Nepal officially ended the Haliya slavery system in 2008, members of the freed Haliya community are often homeless and subjected to a range of human rights abuses. In this new project, LWF-Nepal will work with members of the freed Haliya community to increase the livelihood opportunities of families, promote children's access to quality education, and enhance advocacy and leadership skills within the community. Activities include nutrition education, high-value crop production and market distribution, water access, education and vocational training, mobilization of freed Haliya human rights defenders and advocacy for the rights of freed Haliya at all levels of government toward creation and implementation of more just policies.

“God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday
This year, we will observe “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday on Sept. 9. Across this church, over 36 percent of all ELCA congregations participate annually in this special day of service. Thank you to all who participate, and we look forward to having even more congregations join in this year. There are many resources currently available at ELCA.org/dayofservice and more will be added in the coming month. They include videos, social media memes, customizable door hangers and postcards, T-shirts and graphic resources. Watch for an updated planning toolkit, bulletin insert, worship resource and customizable posters. Promotion will include emails to congregations and leaders, notices in Living Lutheran, Seeds for the Parish and Seeds Monthly, and numerous social media posts. Congregations are invited to share photos and stories through social platforms and LivingLutheran@ELCA.org. This is work you do in your communities every day, and we look forward to working together again this year on our dedicated day of service on Sept. 9.

Leadership
Leadership for Mission Team:
The Leadership for Mission Team, in collaboration with all its educational networks, is committed to formation, education, and the continuing development and care for all lay leaders and rostered ministers.

Candidacy Team:
The team is collaborating with the Conference of Bishops on the document that will replace “Vision and Expectations.” In March, the team reviewed the sections of the “Candidacy Manual” that committees have identified as needing more clarity to help synod candidacy committees accompany candidates in their candidacy journey. Below is a chart with the information submitted by synods and entered in ECIS that shows the total number of candidates preparing for rostered ministry.
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Lay School for Mission:
An asset map that identifies all the lay school programs across the country is almost complete and will be available soon on our ELCA website. Also included on the site will be contact information for each of the programs and their course offerings. This information will provide resources for synods and congregations as they begin their lay schools.

The Latino Academy:
The eight Spanish courses developed to equip Latino(a) leaders for service in their congregations is now available on the Select website. A new website being developed will offer an easy link to these resources.

Theological education:
We continue to work with the Theological Education Advisory Committee to develop strategies to increase the number of people discerning a call to rostered ministry. An important area being addressed by our theological education network is building alliances that will continue to focus on the best formation programs for equipping leaders for service in the church and in the world.

International Leaders Program
Global Mission’s International Leaders Program provides academic scholarships to individuals endorsed by our global companions. The scholarship program is one of several ways in which the ELCA through the Global Mission unit accompanies our companions. The focus of the scholarship program is to increase the leadership capacity of global companions in areas of need that they identify. Scholarship awards are granted for a variety of fields of study, including theology,
business, education, medicine and science. Global Mission currently provides financial support to approximately 130 students who are engaged in programs of study in the U.S. and in or near contexts closer to their countries of origin.

In order to achieve greater gender balance, a new scholarship initiative was implemented in 2015 through *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*. The International Women Leaders (IWL) initiative provides four-year scholarship awards for bachelor's degree study at ELCA colleges and universities. This critical initiative for women is thriving, thanks in large part to the generous support of donors to *The Campaign for the ELCA* and the faithful partnership of our excellent ELCA colleges and universities. Educational partners now include: Augsburg University, Concordia College, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Luther College, Newberry College, St. Olaf College and Wartburg College. California Lutheran University and Wittenberg University have joined this list of partners and will receive their first IWL scholar in the fall. We also depend on the program's partnership with the ELCA global companion churches who have raised up these scholars and who will welcome them back after graduation. We're grateful to now partner with 10 companions in the work of the IWL initiative, spanning Cameroon, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Rwanda, Suriname, Thailand and Zimbabwe.

The International Leaders Program staff invites synods to engage these international scholars during their time of study in the United States. We would be pleased to share the list of U.S.-based students with staff who are serving as churchwide representatives to synod assemblies this year.

In addition to scholarships, the IWL initiative has provided leadership development seminars in Wittenberg, Germany. Nearly 100 women representing 38 of our global companions have participated in six week-long gatherings to learn about women of the Reformation era, to talk about women's empowerment, to network and share resources. The next generation of leadership seminars will take place in diverse contexts allowing for historical and contextual learning and cultural development. The first of the new-leader seminars is scheduled to take place in India later in 2018.

Under the leadership of the International Leaders Program staff, Global Mission is currently engaged in a process of renewing its commitment to gender justice. Drawing on 30 years of experience and looking toward the future, all of Global Mission's sections are contributing to a comprehensive Gender Justice Strategy that will strategically shape our work in the coming years.

**Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) and leadership**

With generous support from *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*, the Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) program sends 20-somethings into the world to be globally formed and globally informed by the visions, hopes and struggles of our companions around the world. Through its discernment and orientation, the YAGM program intentionally pushes hard against the volunteers' understandings of God, sense of self, sense of vocation and sense of place in the world. That process is difficult and sometimes even painful, but it also opens a liminal space in which deep connections with God and with other people are created. These young adults then can return to the United States and push hard on the church and on the society in which this church is situated. Having been radically re-formed by the global context, our volunteers return with a renewed vision and commitment to the new reformation that we believe the Holy Spirit is trying to work within us.
Since 1999, more than 700 young adults have been shaped by this powerful program. They are now infiltrating the ELCA and the broader U.S. culture as pastors and deacons, as physicians and social workers, as activists and change-makers, and as people rooted in a vision that places restored relationships at the center of life and work.

**Glocal Musician Educators: A space that opens the ELCA to new leaders**

The Glocal Musician Educators program is an example of creating new spaces for musicians/artists/educators to gather and learn so their stories and expertise can serve the wider church. This program receives the gifts of story, song and witness of our global and local companions and then translates them into competencies for proclamation and service in the U.S. context. The program started with 15 musician-educators and has grown to 170 members as of January 2017. This community is intergenerational, diverse in terms of ethnicities, orientations and socio-economic backgrounds.

This community is generating a new profile of leader in the ELCA. These leaders:

- represent today’s demographics and context of this country;
- are new to ELCA circles;
- represent perspectives, approaches and skills for community organizing, worship, theology, justice and advocacy of people of color and languages other than English;
- bring competencies in and a commitment to worship that is transcultural, contextual, counter-cultural and cross-cultural. (Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture); and
- are trained in the accompaniment as a narrative, lens and methodology.

**Lutheran Disaster Response**

**Domestic**

In 2017, Lutheran Disaster Response U.S. responded to about 11 disasters in 11 states, including flooding in Minnesota and legal support for unaccompanied minors from Central America in New York. The most notable responses were to the hurricanes of 2017.

The 2017 hurricane season had 17 named storms that caused widespread destruction across the Atlantic region. Five of these hurricanes hit the U.S. mainland and/or territories, causing large-scale damage across Texas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Our response:

**Hurricane Harvey**

**Texas**

Lutheran Disaster Response, in partnership with Portico and LEAD of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod, hosted a respite retreat for rostered leaders and their families who were affected by Hurricane Harvey in the Houston area. Lutheran Disaster Response is also a part of a consortium of four other Texas-based voluntary agencies that will be providing disaster case management to families and individuals recovering from the hurricane in 10 counties. This service will help survivors access resources, financial and other, to rebuild their homes and their lives.
Hurricane Irma/Maria

Lutheran Disaster Response is working with the Florida-Bahamas Synod, the Caribbean Synod, affiliates and other International companions and partners to provide relief to the most vulnerable individuals and communities in the U.S. and around the world.

Florida

Lutheran Disaster Response provided early support to Lutheran Services Florida (LSF) to provide $100 gift cards to LSF staff and grants up to $5,000 for staff most severely affected to help with high deductibles and other expenses not covered by other funds. Also, through LSF, crisis counseling was provided to thousands in 20 Florida counties. In addition, LSF attorneys, through partnership with the Florida-Bahamas Synod, is helping congregations navigate insurance claims for hurricane damage.

Georgia

Lutheran Disaster Response, through a partnership with Lutheran Services of Georgia, is planning to launch a multiyear volunteer rebuild and repair program accompanied by construction management and other services.

Puerto Rico

Lutheran Disaster Response worked with the synod to establish Lutheran Disaster Response–Puerto Rico (LDR–PR), now a ministry of Lutheran Social Services of Puerto Rico. Partnering with LDR-PR and the Caribbean Synod, Lutheran Disaster Response distributed critical relief supplies, such as food, water, formula and diapers, during the days and weeks immediate following the storm. Also, 125 mattresses were given to families and individuals. Through our continued partnership, we are providing case management to 190 families and individuals to identify other unmet needs.

Lutheran Disaster Response continues to work with LDR-PR to build its capacity to respond to this disaster. Through our partnership, we are planning to launch a multiyear volunteer rebuild and repair program.

U.S. Virgin Islands

Lutheran Disaster Response, through Lutheran Services of the Virgin Islands, is providing a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-funded crisis counseling program on the islands. In addition, we will launch a major, multiyear repair and rebuild program on St. Croix and will assist residents in building and implementing their recovery plans.

Because of your generosity, about $15 million was raised to respond to the 2017 hurricanes. Because of this, Lutheran Disaster Response is able to provide significant, multiyear funding and other forms of support for years to come, including ongoing support to help survivors create their recovery plan and secure much needed resources, continued emotional and spiritual care for survivors and leaders in the response, and continued capacity building for our partners and affiliates.

Lutheran Disaster Response received an extraordinary $22.9 million from donors in fiscal year 2017, including more than $14.7 million to support the ELCA’s hurricane response efforts.
International

In 2017, Global Mission responded to 23 disasters in 15 countries. The majority of these disasters were sudden-onset, natural disasters (primarily flooding and mudslides) wherein we provided immediate relief (e.g. food and non-food item distribution) through our companion churches, implementing partners and the ACT Alliance.

In Cuba and Haiti, we responded to the 2017 Atlantic hurricanes through companion churches and ecumenical partners, and in December, Global Mission staff visited Cuba to discuss ongoing disaster recovery and preparedness efforts with the Cuban Council of Churches.

In Nepal, our response to the earthquakes that affected nearly 8 million people continued in 2017. Last June, Global Mission staff visited companions and partners in Nepal where recovery projects have assisted over 40,000 people through shelter/home reconstruction, reconstruction of schools and a health center, new potable water sources, livelihood opportunities and community-rights training for Dalit communities.

In Mexico, after an 8.1-magnitude earthquake struck off the Pacific coast in September, we responded through our local partner, Amextra, to provide immediate relief to families in Chiapas, which included food, water and personal hygiene kits. Additional support is being directed toward longer-term response efforts; with this support, we are accompanying local communities through activities such as re-opening businesses, building temporary and permanent housing for women-headed households, the elderly and other vulnerable communities, and post-traumatic stress management workshops for children and adults.

Missionaries

ELCA missionaries, through their witness and service in more than 40 countries, are a mark of this church’s vitality – an embodiment of the relationship we have in Christ with our sisters and brothers around the globe. The ELCA sent 113 new missionaries and Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) volunteers into service this past year. These new missionaries include people like the Rev. Dr. Cynthia Holder Rich and the Rev. Dr. Mark Rich, who are educating a new generation of East African pastors and evangelists as professors at Tumaini University Makumira in Tanzania. They include the Rev. Viking Dietrich and Marissa Dietrich, who are strengthening relationships between the ELCA and our companions in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa in their role as ELCA regional representatives. They include English as a second language teachers serving in Lutheran schools in Slovakia and Poland, who are equipping young people to become faithful leaders in their post-Communist countries. And they include vibrant, passionate ELCA young adults serving in 13 countries, who have opened themselves to be shaped and transformed by our global companions through the YAGM program.

To learn more about ELCA missionaries and YAGM volunteers, or to support their ministries, visit ELCA.org/globalchurch. Follow their journeys on social media @ELCAGlobalChurch.
Mission Investment Fund

The Mission Investment Fund (MIF) is the lending ministry of the ELCA. MIF makes low-interest loans to ELCA congregations and ELCA-related ministries for building and renovation projects. With MIF loans, congregations and ministries can purchase property, construct new buildings, and expand or renovate existing facilities.

MIF loans expand the capacity for ministry. MIF loans help create expanded worship spaces, updated space for education and youth ministry, new kitchens for community meals and soup kitchens, affordable housing units for the community and much more.

At year-end 2017, MIF had 888 loans outstanding, totaling $539.1 million.

To fund these loans, MIF offers a portfolio of investments for congregations, their members, synods and ELCA-related ministries to purchase. At year-end 2017, MIF investments totaled $506 million.

MIF is a financially strong and stable organization, with a record of steady, controlled growth. With total assets of $715.7 million and net assets of $203.9 million at year-end 2017, MIF maintains a capital ratio of 28.5 percent—positioning MIF in the top tier of well-capitalized church extension funds. For more information, visit mif.elca.org.

The Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities

The Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities (NECU) is the vehicle for churchwide ministries in higher education. The NECU is an unincorporated, missional, collaborative association whose members are the churchwide organization and the 26 colleges and universities related to the ELCA. As of June 2017, the network’s membership expanded to include Luther College in Regina, Saskatchewan, which is the only college formally related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. The NECU is managed and supported financially by the colleges and universities and by the churchwide organization through the Domestic Mission unit. It is overseen by a board, whose directors are the presidents of member institutions, plus an executive director, whose service fulfills the duties of program director for colleges and universities in the Domestic Mission unit. The churchwide organization and the schools agreed to form the network in 2015. During 2016 and 2017, Lutheran identity in higher education was the NECU’s focus, culminating in the reception of the statement “Rooted and Open: The Common Calling of the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities.” The network will focus in 2018 and 2019 on enhancing ties between higher education and other churchwide ministries.
Office of the Treasurer

ELCA total operating revenue and support for 2017: $68,947,647
ELCA total expense and allocations for 2017: $66,190,185
ELCA World Hunger total income for 2017: $21,355,536

Campaign-to-date

Congregations: $2,552,502
Leadership: $15,390,965
Global Church: $19,029,986
Hunger and Poverty: $100,849,769
"Where Needed Most": $6,183,596
Total revenue and commitments: $144,006,818

Key information technology accomplishments during 2017

• Launched ELCA Digital Directory replacing ELCA Yearbook
  Directory.elca.org
• ELCA granting process improvements and ELCA Grant Maker system implementation
  ELCA.org/grants
• Centralized and simplified churchwide electronic newsletter subscriptions
  community.elca.org/elca-email-subscriptions
• Information security program and technology enhancements to protect sensitive data and systems

Refugees and migrants

In 2017, Global Mission continued to accompany refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in both emergency relief efforts and through ongoing development work. Support was directed through partners and companions to respond to the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe and the Middle East, as well as with Rohingya IDPs and refugees in Myanmar and Bangladesh. We also responded to the conflict and famine within South Sudan and supported South Sudanese refugees in refugee camps in Kenya. In addition, we worked with repatriated refugees who have returned to Somalia in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) promotion. Projects continue to provide refugees with resources and assistance throughout all phases of their journey.

For instance, the work of St. Andrew’s Refugee Services (StARS) in Egypt provides the most vulnerable refugees in Cairo with protection services, adult education programming, early childhood development and education programs, connections with higher education and work opportunities, psychosocial support and links to care providers, and legal aid. In 2017, StARS provided 350 nutritious meals per day for children in their programs to enable concentration and success at school.
**Systems Academy**

The ELCA Systems Academy began its third academic year last fall. The academy is a four-year commitment to the study of family systems theory and theology combined with clinical work. The appeal of natural systems thinking about human behavior and leadership functioning has taken on more relevance in addressing the larger and deeper processes that resist quick fixes. Among ministers, the natural systems theory of Murray Bowen, M.D., and his student, Rabbi Edwin Friedman, has gradually become a more effective resource and way of thinking about emotional processes in families and congregations. In the therapy field, a major shift in the study of human behavior has occurred and is still in the early stages where the focus is on the relationship system as an emotional unit instead of the focus being just on the individual. Each individual is understood as being part of a larger field of interaction in natural family systems thinking.

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton found this natural systems orientation especially helpful when she was a synod bishop responding to her responsibilities to rostered ministers and congregations. She saw a more comprehensive frame of reference for leaders stemming from natural family systems research and application. After her election as presiding bishop, she encouraged a family systems orientation in the synods and in the churchwide organization. As a result, an academy process was designed that would present natural systems concepts along with family of origin work, case studies and noteworthy presenters.

Since the fall of 2015, eight to 10 synod bishops have been invited prior to the start of a new academy year to select a staff or synodical representative to be part of a four-year commitment to the academy's goals. The ELCA Systems Academy meets four times a year for three days. Depending upon their years of academy study, synodical appointees are in a variety of stages in the development of their synod work utilizing the lens of systems theory. The academy participants now include a total of 24 bishops’ appointees and seven churchwide staff.

The ELCA Natural Systems Academy is a pathway initiative. Bowen's theory and Rabbi Friedman's application of this thinking has become a path to effective capacities of leadership beyond therapy and technique. Toward this effort, the academy curriculum aims include:

1. The ability to observe how things work in a relationship system
2. An understanding of how anxiety affects relationships
3. The impact of “mature” behavior on institutions and ministry
4. The challenge to think differently
5. An understanding of the challenge and the importance of how we treat one another
6. The practice of taking time to think
7. The way theory makes theology concrete

Deacon Mary Ann Schwabe serves as the natural systems coordinator in the churchwide organization and as one of the coordinators of the ELCA Systems Academy.
Theological Discernment

Human rights social message
The Church Council adopted an ELCA social message on human rights during its November 2017 meeting. Drawn from experts in the field of human rights and Lutheran ethics, the message will be used to guide ELCA investment and social policy.

Acknowledging that human rights do not fully encompass God's intention for abundant life, the message states that, “The recognition of fundamental human rights, however, serves as a safety net of critical, baseline commitments.”

The message can be found at ELCA.org/socialmessages and will be released in Spanish in 2018.

Women and justice social statement draft
The ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ has released a draft social statement for public comment. People are encouraged to study the document individually or in groups and to respond via a response form or by attending a synodical hearing. Questions and comments can be directed to womenandjustice@ELCA.org.

You can find more information at ELCA.org/womenandjustice, including:
- Digital copies of the draft
- Online response form
- Instructions for ordering paper copies
- Schedule of hearings
- Tips for discussion groups and hearings