



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel;
it is the power of God for salvation
to everyone who has faith

– Romans 1:16

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On Oct. 31, 1517, 500 years ago, Martin Luther posted his “Ninety-five Theses” in Wittenberg. This resulted in a debate about Christian teaching and practice that led to significant reforms that shaped the course of Western Christianity. As we gather to meet in synod assemblies during the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, it is a good time to reflect on what it means to be Lutheran.

Neither culture nor behavior define what is distinctive about the Lutheran movement. It's our understanding of the gospel. We proclaim Jesus Christ crucified and raised from the dead for the life of the world. It is this gospel word that creates faith and sets us free to serve the neighbor.

We are freed and renewed in Christ.

The church's proper work is to proclaim the gospel word. “We are to fear and love God, so, that we do not despise preaching or God's word, but instead keep that word holy and gladly hear it and learn it” (Small Catechism).

I have invited and encouraged all of you to engage in reading Luther's Small Catechism together. This is to be done in a way that is most promising for your community of faith and most fitting for the relationships in your community. Resources are available at [ELCA500.org/withnewvoices](https://elca500.org/withnewvoices).

As a church deeply rooted in Scripture and in Christ, this church continues to be shaped by the changing face of our communities, by new migration patterns and national and global trends affecting religion and society. We are a community of faith that is always forming and being renewed, and as a church we engaged in a process, Called Forward Together in Christ, to help us tell the story of the church we are becoming. Through that process, we developed ELCA Strategic Directions 2025. This strategic framework identifies goals and priority areas for the ELCA as a whole church.

What is the church we are becoming?

- A thriving church spreading the gospel and deepening faith for all people.
- A church equipping people for their baptismal vocations in the world and this church.
- An inviting and welcoming church that reflects and embraces the diversity in our communities and the gifts and opportunities that diversity brings.
- A visible church deeply committed to working ecumenically and with other people of faith for justice, peace and reconciliation in our communities and around the world.
- A well-governed, connected and sustainable church.

As we observe the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, I pray that ELCA Strategic Directions 2025 will guide and foster ELCA church unity in the years ahead. To learn more about these strategic directions, visit ELCA.org/future.

One of the ways we are achieving our goals together as a church is through *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*. Throughout 2017, the campaign will emphasize ministries supporting Global Church. The ELCA is known as a faithful partner in the work to build up Christ's church throughout the world and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, risen for the life of the world.

If you don't have the date on your calendar already, be sure to note that Sept. 10 is our suggested date for the 2017 dedicated day of service. If your congregation cannot participate on this date, please consider another day. "God's work. Our hands." Sunday is an opportunity for us to explore one of our most basic convictions as Lutherans: that all of life in Jesus Christ – every act of service, in every daily calling, in every corner of life – flows freely from a living, daring confidence in God's grace.

As we gather in our synod assemblies, let us remember that together in Jesus Christ we are freed by grace to live faithfully, witness boldly and serve joyfully. I pray that God blesses your time together.

I give thanks to God for each of you, for our more than 9,300 congregations, for our 65 synods and our churchwide ministries. As a church freed and renewed in Christ, may we bear witness to a world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ makes for all people and creation.

With gratitude,



Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



A la verdad, no me avergüenzo del evangelio, pues es poder de Dios para la salvación de todos los que creen

– Romans 1:16

Queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo:

El 31 de octubre de 1517, hace 500 años, Martín Lutero hizo públicas sus “95 Tesis” en Wittenberg. De ahí siguió un debate sobre las enseñanzas y la práctica cristiana que condujo a importantes reformas que moldearon el curso del cristianismo occidental. Ahora que nos vamos a reunir en asambleas sinodales durante el 500 aniversario de la Reforma, es un buen momento para reflexionar sobre el significado de ser luteranos.

Ni la cultura ni el comportamiento definen aquello que distingue al movimiento luterano. Lo que lo define es nuestro entendimiento del evangelio. Proclamamos al Cristo crucificado y elevado de entre los muertos para la vida del mundo. Es esta palabra del evangelio lo que crea la fe y nos libera para servir a nuestro prójimo.

Somos liberados y renovados en Cristo.

La verdadera obra de la iglesia es proclamar la palabra del evangelio. “Debemos temer y amar a Dios, de tal manera que no despreciemos la predicación ni la palabra de Dios, sino que honremos la santidad de dicha palabra y la escuchemos y aprendamos con alegría” (Catecismo Menor). Les he invitado y animado a todos ustedes a unirse en la lectura del Catecismo Menor de Lutero. Debemos hacerlo de la manera que sea más promisorio para su comunidad de fe y más apropiada para las relaciones en su comunidad. Los recursos están a su disposición en ELCA500.org/withnewvoices.

Como iglesia con raíces muy profundas en las Escrituras y en Cristo, esta iglesia continúa siendo moldeada por el rostro cambiante de nuestras comunidades, por nuevos patrones de migración y por las tendencias nacionales y globales que afectan a la religión y la sociedad. Somos una comunidad de fe que siempre está siendo formada y renovada y, como iglesia, emprendemos un proceso, Called Forward Together in Christ (Llamados a Avanzar Unidos en Cristo), para poder contar la historia de esa iglesia en la que nos estamos convirtiendo. Por medio de ese proceso, desarrollamos las Directrices Estratégicas de la ELCA para el 2025. Este marco estratégico identifica metas y áreas prioritarias para la ELCA como una iglesia completa.

¿Cuál es la iglesia en la que nos estamos convirtiendo?

- Una iglesia que prospera difundiendo el evangelio y profundizando en la fe para todas las personas.
- Una iglesia que está equipando a las personas para sus vocaciones bautismales en el mundo y en esta iglesia.
- Una iglesia acogedora y de bienvenida que refleja y recibe con agrado la diversidad en nuestras comunidades, así como los dones y oportunidades que aporta esa diversidad.

- Una iglesia visible, profundamente comprometida con la obra ecuménica y con las demás personas de fe en pos de la justicia, la paz y la reconciliación en nuestras comunidades y en todo el mundo.
- Una iglesia bien gobernada, conectada y sostenible.

En este momento de celebración por el 500 aniversario de la Reforma, oro para que las Directrices Estratégicas de la ELCA para el 2025 guíen y promuevan la unidad eclesial de la ELCA en los años venideros. Para conocer mejor estas directrices estratégicas, les invito a que visiten ELCA.org/future.

Uno de los medios por los que estamos alcanzando nuestras metas unidos como iglesia es *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA (Siempre siendo renovados: la campaña para la ELCA)*. A lo largo del 2017, la campaña enfatizará los ministerios que apoyen la Iglesia Global. La ELCA es reconocida como asociado fiel en la obra de levantar la iglesia de Cristo en todo el mundo y de proclamar la buena nueva de Jesucristo, resucitado para la vida del mundo.

Si todavía no han marcado la fecha en su calendario, asegúrense de apuntar que el 10 de septiembre es nuestra fecha sugerida para el día dedicado al servicio en el 2017. Si su congregación no puede participar en esta fecha, por favor consideren otro día. El domingo de “La obra de Dios. Nuestras manos” es una oportunidad para que exploremos una de nuestras convicciones más básicas como luteranos: que toda la vida en Jesucristo –cada acto de servicio, en cada llamado cotidiano, en cada esquina de la vida– fluye libremente de una confianza viva y valiente en la gracia de Dios.

Al reunirnos en nuestras asambleas sinodales, recordemos que unidos en Jesucristo somos liberados por la gracia para vivir en la fe, dar testimonio valiente y servir con alegría. Oro para que Dios bendiga el tiempo que estén reunidos.

Doy gracias a Dios por cada uno de ustedes, por nuestras más de 9,300 congregaciones, por nuestros 65 sínodos y los ministerios de nuestra organización nacional. Como iglesia liberada y renovada en Cristo, pido que seamos testigos de un mundo que experimenta la transformación por obra de la gracia y amor de Dios en Cristo para todas las personas y para la creación.

Con gratitud,



Elizabeth A. Eaton
Obispa presidente
Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en América

Bishop R. Guy Erwin



Called Forward Together in Christ: Strategic Directions for the ELCA

Introduction

Since the beginning of last year, our ELCA been engaged at the Churchwide, synodical, and conference levels in a systematic review of our church's life: strengths, challenges, anxieties and hopes. In last year's conference meetings, I have led you through some reflection on how your churches are doing and what they are hoping for in the years ahead. VP Randall Foster and I have collected that and shared it with the Synod Council and the national church.

Some of you participated in the process directly through the online survey the ELCA made available, and about which your congregations were informed through letters, e-mail, at these meetings, and at the Synod Assembly last year. Then the ELCA went through all the information and came up with a draft report. This was then shared with the ELCA Conference of Bishops, and we discussed it and made recommendations last October. Then the ELCA Church Council took a turn at it at its December meeting in Chicago. And now we have a report: *Called Forward Together in Christ: Strategic Directions for the ELCA*.

Copies of the report are available here in your packets and in Guidebook. It is also available on the ELCA website. You're welcome to take it with you and read it at your leisure. But I want to use this report to let you know what I think it means for us in this synod. I will do this by going through the five main goals the strategic directions document puts forward.

The church we are becoming

1. A thriving church spreading the gospel and deepening faith for all people

What does it mean to thrive? I'm glad our church has connected "thriving" to how we live out our purpose and not just to our numbers or size or wealth. We want to spread the gospel and deepen people's faith, no matter what. We want to tell the story of God's love and mercy to all who need to hear it, whatever the cost. We want to feed hungry hearts with food that never gives out; to quench our world's thirst for the water that gives life. This is what Christ's church has always been about—communicating God's love and healing, and strengthening the faithful for service to their neighbor. And I believe this is what our synod is called to do here in Los Angeles and beyond.

But doing this, in our society and in the kind of church we are, has not gotten easier. Once upon a time, it was taken for granted that religious affiliation and being part of a religious community was simply part of what it meant to be a good person, a good citizen, and a good neighbor. But no longer. Our aspirations for ourselves and our children today are happiness, prosperity, health and fulfillment. Few people feel driven by fear of judgment or even by social pressure to belong to churches. More and more seem to think that the kind of sacrifice of time and money active church membership requires more commitment than they are willing to make, though they may enjoy the fellowship and respect the tradition. As individuals and as families we are pulled in so many directions today; so many things bid for our attention; life seems to require us to juggle so much. And the church often comes short in the balance.

Our congregations are caught in this dilemma: though they are wonderful communities, even our strongest congregations have to work harder to keep people's loyalty. Neighborhoods change fast: some have turned over twice or three times in the 60 years or so most of our congregations have existed. So we live farther from the churches we grew up with or for which we have long associations. Our members find themselves fewer and fewer as others leave. This is not failure; this is simply change. We have done our best to present something to our communities that they no longer want as badly, or for which they have found substitutes.

So what does "thriving" mean for our congregations today? I think we need to reassess that, and the strategic directions document gives us some suggestions in the goals that follow.

2. A church equipping people for their baptismal vocations in the world and this church

What does it mean for us to be Lutheran people in service to the world? We preach a liberating gospel, a message that is brutally honest about our human weaknesses, and critical of the lazy assumptions that organize our world of consumption and pleasure—but our gospel is also a word of hope that anchors us to a loving, merciful God. This is something that we need, especially in a world in which meaning is hard to find. May we not let go of either of these realities: our (and our world's) need for God, and God's infinite patience and love shown in Jesus Christ.

We preach a message that warns us that spiritual growth doesn't mean getting comfortable with our assumptions, but questioning ourselves and pushing ourselves to greater faithfulness. Not because God will reward us—the reward came first—but because it is the right thing to do. I think our greatest challenge as a church is that we have told people that if they are just decent

and don't do anything too bad, everything will be OK. Everything WILL be OK—but not because we have been lazy about helping others, and have overlooked injustice in our midst. It will be OK because God promises it will be. God offers grace for free—but God doesn't promise that a life lived in faith will be effortless!

I believe a church is not Lutheran unless it proclaims freedom from the law, but at the same time rejoices in works of mercy, done not for our sake or God's sake, but just because they help someone else.

I believe a church is not Lutheran unless it teaches that our baptism is not just a birthright but a call to live together in peace and trust, and to work for change in the world around us. We are different because God has marked us for difference, and calls us to service.

I believe a church is not Lutheran unless it calls people to God's actual presence in their midst: in preaching a hard but welcome truth about our weakness and God's love for us anyway; in feeding God's people with Christ's body and blood in worship that is elevating and empowering; in maintaining a holy ministry of the ordained to nourish and sustain the whole servant priesthood of the baptized to which we all belong.

I believe a church is not Lutheran if it is not suffering from the consequences of the love it is compelled to show the world. To care truly for those who suffer injustice will always, inevitably, anger those with power and privilege, and bring criticism from others who do not understand our motives.

This is why we need leaders who know what we stand for and are not afraid to say it; leaders—both lay and ordained—who reach out and speak out and make us visible. In today's world, visibility and viability are closely connected. I don't want any Lutheran congregation to die a well-kept secret, cherished by the few who tended its tiny flame. I would rather we take risks and let ourselves be known.

I think this means a teaching church: teaching discipleship; teaching scripture; teaching our Lutheran theological distinctives. This year we are doing this intensely: the Reformation Roadtrip; synod worship gatherings; continuing education opportunities; the upcoming catechism initiative—all of these are for our strength and for the community's needs. I want us to be a church that understands what it does and why it does it. And as your bishop and your sibling in Christ, I pledge myself to this effort for the rest of my life.

I think this It means, as hard as it is, to try to get young people together and keep them together in activities they can enjoy, and which work against the forces in society that try to turn them into consumers first and people second. It means getting ourselves and our youth out of their comfort zone and into an engagement with a world that may seem scary, but which needs us. We are blessed to have strong youth leaders and wonderful ELCA opportunities like the Western States Youth Gathering this year and the ELCA National Youth Gathering in 2018.

Every way we can work together inter-generationally is a good thing: “God’s work, Our Hands” Sunday projects; feeding programs and food pantries; clean-up days; mission trips. Service has its own meaningfulness; working together is satisfying and takes us out of our bubbles and connects us to people in need.

3. An inviting and welcoming church that reflects and embraces the diversity in our communities and the gifts and opportunities that diversity brings

How do we embrace our diversity? I think this is something we do well in general, but not always in every congregation. The bright line between growing and declining congregations may well be right here: how well do we invite people in who are not like us? How well do we help people different from us feel comfortable in our midst and part of our congregations? What holds us back from that? If this is difficult, why? What do you fear to lose? Is it just too much work?

We live in one of the most diverse parts of the United States; our synod reflects diversity to a greater degree than almost any other ELCA synod—and yet our congregations are largely mono-ethnic. How can we be more intentionally multicultural? How can we keep working to resist racism? How can we build bridges between communities? I am greatly blessed to be able to worship often with our ethnic-specific congregations; I see what holiness is in their worship and I appreciate the gifts of the Spirit they bring. I wish all our congregations could share that experience, for it is truly enriching and a sign of God’s reign!

4. A visible church deeply committed to working ecumenically and with other people of faith for justice, peace and reconciliation in our communities and around the world.

How are we doing this? How can we do it better? Again, I believe we do this well in general, but how well is it understood and supported in our congregations? Are we really interested in making a difference in the communities around us? Or have they become foreign territory for us? How can we bridge that gap? Whenever I visit a congregation that is thinking about its future viability and wondering if it can afford to sustain its ministry, I always ask “Who would miss you if you were gone?” If the answer is “nobody beyond those already in the congregation,” I suggest a new, outward orientation—or considering how else the congregation’s resources could be used generously to help others.

Many of our congregations have poverty and hunger outreach. Others are good at raising awareness and funds for emergencies and disasters. Some of our congregations strongly support LSS and LIRS, ELCA World Hunger or LWR. We are a generous and caring church. But we need to connect not just our wallets, but our hands and bodies to the care we support financially. It is my dream to have synod-supported social service outlets in various places in the synod, partnering with LSS or other skilled agencies to provide direct care to people who live precarious lives or have no homes.

I also believe our congregations should be places where we advocate and act for social justice. The gospel does not invite us to congratulate the prosperous and secure for their virtue—it points

out to us how far we have to go to bring true justice to others, and critiques us for our complacency in the face of others' need. Economic status, race, gender, sexual orientation, language, education—all these things divide us. Jesus unites us in his one body—it is up to our congregations to show that by the quality of the welcome they offer.

Synod taskforces and interest groups help create connection in a larger way: justice, care of the earth, support of those in recovery, prison reform, reduction of gun violence, global development and mission—all these things bring together people across the congregations at the synod and national levels. I am proud of the active and even activist church we have become, and I pray for and support our synod-wide justice and care initiatives.

5. A well-governed, connected and sustainable church

What does this mean? We should be clear in our priorities and governance. We should strengthen relationships, be transparent and have accountability to each other. We have never lacked for congregations and pastors who are willing to hold the synod and the wider church accountable for what they don't like—I think it's time for congregations to hold each other accountable, too—to the goals and standards we embrace as a synod and as a church. It's time we got rid of antiquated prejudices against each other as though ministry is a zero-sum game in which someone always loses. When we work together generously and charitably, everybody wins. The scarcity mentality that comes with the reality of our gradual membership loss cannot stop us from being brave and bold in our desire to carry out our church's mission.

For in fact, we are rich in assets and resources. It's just that too much of them goes to maintaining structures that have lost focus or energy for mission. I think we need to think about new ways of being church: congregations without property perhaps, or without a single, full-time pastor all their own; merged and multi-point congregations; maybe even community gathering points where service and teaching happens first and worship second. Strong, well-organized churches have a lot of life ahead of them; we need to be sustaining them, AND trying new things at the same time—new things that small, tired congregations have trouble doing on their own.

We're doing that already in this synod: we have a number of ministries—some in the southern part of Los Angeles—that will likely never be middle-class, self-sustaining congregations, because the people they serve are poor—and there is an endless supply of the poor. We are better at this together as a synod, or as area ministry groups, than just as free-standing congregations, and I hope congregations and the synod can keep on working together for good.

I am committed to structural reform; financial responsibility; long-term sustainability of synod ministries; keeping our commitments to the wider church; using the resources and memory of legacy congregations for the long-term future; and promoting generosity among congregations and individuals.

Conclusion

Though there is much to be anxious about in our world, in our nation, even in our church, I believe there is even more to rejoice in. We are richly endowed with property and assets through

the faithfulness of the generations before us. We are heirs of a powerful theological and intellectual tradition—500 years old!—that helps us steer a steady course, cherishing scripture while not falling into literalism; taking what we can learn from secular knowledge without forgetting that we are children of God, and that the whole of science and nature reveal God's wonders, even if we can't understand how.

And most—and best—of all, we have the Easter hope that we celebrate in this season. If Jesus rose, we too shall rise—and if that is true, nothing else matters. Nothing can silence God's word shown to us in Christ and active in our world—through the Gospel proclaimed, the water of baptism splashed around, and the eating and drinking of Our Lord's body and blood forming us into Christ's own people, parts of his very body, and strengthening us for the work that lies ahead.

I am proud to be a proclaimer of the gospel truth of God's love and grace shown in Christ. I rejoice in your call to me to be a leader and teacher in Christ's church for the sake of the world. I give thanks to God for you, your prayers, your strength and your generosity of spirit, as together we take up Jesus' yoke and proclaim him to the peoples! Amen.

The Southwest California Synod
Report of the Synod Council by the Vice President
Synod Assembly, June 2-3, 2017

In 2015, the Synod Assembly took time to image and consider the many ways in which we engage in *“Sacred Intersections”*. We viewed the possibilities, the potential, and the purposeful realities that allow us to be a blessing to one another, to do God’s Work with our hands. In many ways, we were led to fully appreciate how our interrelationships with each other are not only a commandment – “Love God, love neighbor” but are intrinsically and innately a blessing of the greatest order, for the greatest purpose.

In 2016, we drew together in assembly, intentionally acknowledging those intersections in life that propels us to action as we *“Welcome the Stranger”*, into our communities, our neighborhoods, our congregations and yes, our homes. We are all strangers to someone or somebody, hoping to be welcomed in places that may be unfamiliar or for which we are unaccustomed. This year, we shall contemplate furthering our interactions and intercession with and for others by advancing last year’s theme from “welcoming” to offering and extending our ability to “serve”. We are *“Freed in Christ to Serve”* wherever our faith shall lead. We will be discussing our values in the context of this freedom to serve, to respond to the world’s needs, to react to the circumstances and situations of our recent times, and to intercede in the plight of others. In so doing, you will be provided an opportunity to consider the impact and implications of designating the synod – and correspondingly – our congregations as “sanctuary shelters”.

Bishop Elizabeth Eaton reminds us that our work on behalf of others is indicative of *“responding for the sake of the world.”* We elicit your prayers as you discuss these intentional levels of engagement.

Your Synod Council continues to forge ahead on matters of mutual interests and importance. Faithfully, its membership has thoughtfully met, deliberating on matters of programming, finance, services and outreach ministry. They have pursued and familiarized themselves with volumes of information and reporting, resolutely concluding their reviews with insightful recommendations and resolutions for which I, as the vice president, am most appreciative.

We thank those on our council whose terms have concluded, several having completed up to six years of diligence and resourcefulness. Many thanks to Rev. Jennifer Amos-Burgos, Robert Chillison, Rev. Rustin Comer, Paul Muller, and Jan Smith for their prayerful insight and prominent presence.

Their departures obviously warrant the process for replacement and thus the need for synod assembly nominations and elections. You will be offered the opportunity to seek among our active ELCA membership, representatives who shall serve with the needed resolve and commitment of time and talent in the performance of their

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constituted roles. We ask God's blessings on all who have allowed themselves to be considered and who ultimately shall extend their Christian service as members of the synod council, beginning with the fall season.

With much anticipation, we have watched the council's goal for establishing a more widespread and purposeful role for the **Lutheran Center for Education and Mission** flourish, following its receipt as a *Legacy Gift*. Over the last year and a half, increasingly, the center has offered educational programs and sessions for all Southwest California congregants. At times, it has become rather customary to witness several groups on campus enjoying the setting, enhancing their appreciation for service and ministry while appreciating what the Lutheran Center has to offer. Gathering together during a communal lunch, these groups share the elements of their respective exchange with excitement and confidence that God is doing a new thing! Even the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary has plans for an immersion program for its students on campus, extending an invitation to Pacifica Synod to involve those in their respective conferences who have aspirations for formal ministry instruction. Perhaps the most visible of the Lutheran Center's planned education came in the form of Bishop Erwin's Reformation Roadtrip, a didactic series of instruction covering the life and times of Martin Luther while acknowledging the *500th Year of the Reformation*. The overarching inquiry for each of the sessions as they began thus far has been: Is your passport stamped? And, with a hearty smile, many raise their documents with an affirming "yes!" Two remaining sessions are scheduled between now and October. The Southwest California Synod is truly blessed to have as its Bishop, arguably the most informed professor on the subject of the Reformation in the ELCA. Great job, Bishop!

These and other opportunities for advanced education are becoming the norm at the Lutheran Center with prospects of even more extensive sessions in the future. The Lutheran Center and other outreach ministries no doubt require thoughtful attention and financing. The synod council has approved the creation of a dedicated philanthropic approach to help ensure that these services are never compromised or marginalized. Dedicated resources will be sought that, once received, will augment the existing synod ministries in complement to ***the ELCA's Campaign "Always Being Made New"*** with emphases on congregational vitality, church leadership, and hunger & poverty. These dedicated resources will help to aid in ways in which the existing synod budget is and has been limited. Certainly, there is much more to come on this issue, although its importance cannot be overstated as we seek various ways of enhancing and furthering our effectiveness in ministry "for the sake of the world."

Your council has also addressed itself rather soundly to the complexities of synod-life over the last year, discussing, debating and deriving decisions that marshaled in the following approved actions:

The Southwest California Synod
Report of the Synod Council by the Vice President
Synod Assembly, June 2-3, 2017

Synod Council Meeting – June 21, 2016

-) Approved constitution updates for Holy Cross - Ojai, St. Luke's – Woodland Hills, Gloria Dei – Long Beach, St. John's – Gardena, Emmanuel – North Hollywood.
-) Approved new ministries at Lord of Life CLU Campus Ministry, Abundant Life – Channel Islands (Episcopal/Lutheran Ministry).
-) Established a steering committee to negotiate with organizational partners that can help advance the precepts of the Lutheran Center for Education and Mission.
-) Approved Synod Convocators to California Lutheran University.
-) Approved updates to the Rostered Leaders Fair Compensation & Benefits Workbook
-) Approved changes to Rostered Leaders Register
-) Reviewed quarterly financial results

Synod Council Meeting – September 10, 2016

-) Held the biennial synod council retreat
-) Approved Fall Conference Assembly schedule and agenda topics
-) Approved resolutions addressing property transfers, unrestricted endowment income, required synod officer fiduciary responsibilities, and rostered changes
-) Approved endowment stock sale in keeping with 2014 Audit recommendations
-) Approved new *synodically authorized worshiping communities* and identified *congregations under development*
-) Received status reports on grants extended through the Warner Trust and the Mission & Ministry 2015 Grant cycle
-) Reviewed quarterly financial results

Synod Council Meeting – December 3, 2016

-) Activated the Nominating Committee for 2017
-) Activated the Reference and Counsel Committee for 2017
-) Activated the Synod Assembly Planning Committee for 2017
-) Reviewed and approved the Evangelism and Outreach Ministry Team recommendations for funding new starts and development congregations. Fifteen ministries were approved, totaling \$104,000
-) Approved the Spring Conference Assembly dates
-) Assessed mid-year financial results

Synod Council Meeting – February 18, 2017

-) Conducted Synod Governance Review of structure, form and function
-) Approved Synod Philanthropy Initiative
-) Received 2016 Audit Plan
-) Approved Rostered changes
-) Outlined plans for 2018 Budget preparation and presentation

Synod Council Meeting – April 29, 2017

-) Approved the 2018 Synod Program Budget with creative narrative for presentation to the Synod Assembly in June
-) Created a taskforce to assess and make recommendations to the current Synod Constitution (Governance Report, Part-2)
-) Declined the request from Grace of Calvary to disaffiliate retaining its property based on constitution provision *C6.05
-) Approved presenting the LAC Assessor's property reports as market valuation estimates for properties under synod jurisdiction
-) Approved allocating \$9,000 to conduct formal property market valuations for 3 of 9 synod properties, including the Lutheran Center

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) Approved En Bloc, including constitutions as present during the last quarter and all rostered changes through March, 2017

For each synod council meeting, you must equally know that there was also a corresponding executive committee meeting the week before and a budget and finance meeting held also two weeks prior. These important working sessions help to ensure that the aforementioned decisions by the council emanate from sound and informed judgment.

It is always gratifying as plans begin to come to fruition, as initiatives are launched with fervor and eagerness, and as progress is measured by significance and influence to witness God's unchanging hand in the process. With great effort, the Synod has strived to be responsive and resourceful to congregational and conference needs while guiding its actions with prudent stewardship in mind. The council has been responsive to audit recommendations, presented proposals, market trends and bequests criteria, all while addressing the daily affairs of ongoing and active ministry from Central Coast to Greater Long Beach.

On a personal note, I have also been honored to serve as your lay representative at the Churchwide level, serving equally on the Boards of *Augsburg Fortress Press* (now 1517Media), *California Lutheran University*, the ELCA's *Theological Education Advisory Committee* and the ELCA's *Called Forward Together in Christ Initiative* – Future Directions Table. I have been extremely blessed in doing so on your behalf!

Pastor Reg Schultz-Akerson
Assistant to the Bishop for Rostered Leadership



“Freed in Christ to Serve” is my heart-felt prayer and hoped-for outcome as I carry out my ministry in this synod. I seek to approach each conversation, meeting, and encounter as an opportunity through which the Spirit is at work to liberate and empower the Church to be about God’s gracious purposes in the world. Though the days are often long and always call upon me to offer my best self, I am thankful for the daily gift of seeing God’s work being done through our collective hands.

CANDIDACY

Providing oversight for the candidacy process of our synod is a key responsibility for me. It is my privilege to serve alongside the following individuals in our synod: *Bishop R. Guy Erwin, Pastor Pam Challis, Pastor Reggie Hansome, Deacon Shannon Savage-Howie, Susan Tolle, and Manny Valdez.* Our synodical candidacy committee works in collaboration with Pacifica Synod’s committee. Together we are called the Cooperative Candidacy Committee of the Pacifica and Southwest California Synods. The mission of this committee is to raise up, prepare, certify and place public leaders in the ELCA

Over the past year, the following **five** individuals were approved for **Entrance** into the candidacy process: *Paul Benz, Rev. Wally Burman (ordained in another Christian tradition), Elizabeth Denton, Rev. David Lin (ordained in another Christian tradition), and Rev. Violeta Sanders (ordained in another Christian tradition).* **Five** candidates were **Endorsed** to continue in the process: *Roderick Hines, Maria Montalvo, Maria Pavia, Tracy Williams, and John Yu.* Each of these five candidates are in the TEEM (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries) Program and are serving one of our congregations as TEEM Pastors. **Three** individuals completed their education, as well as all necessary candidacy steps, and were **Approved** to be

ordained: *Henry Martinez, Rev. Hongsun Kim (ordained in another Christian tradition), and Karleen Jung.*

CONGREGATIONS AND ROSTERED LEADERS IN TRANSITION

Guiding, coaching and assisting congregations who are in search for a pastor or a deacon, as well as rostered ministers who are open to call, is a primary focus in my portfolio. Below is a brief summary of what has transpired over the past year.

Ordinations: As a synod, we were blessed to celebrate **three** ordinations since the last assembly as follows: *Steven Otte, 10/29/2016; Hongsun Kim, 04/08/2017, and Dawn Wilder, 04/30/2017.*

Congregational Calls Extended: It has been a joy to watch the Holy Spirit on the move through the call process and to assist these **eight** congregations in calling the following rostered ministers to serve them: *Rev Scott Peterson, as pastor of Lutheran Church in the Foothills, La Cañada (05/22/2016); Rev Martin Hancer as Senior Pastor of Emmanuel, North Hollywood (06/26/2016); Rev Steven Otte as pastor of Grace, Covina (08/07/2016); Rev Christopher Hogstad as pastor of St. Stephen's of the Valley, Palmdale (09/18/2016); Rev Ioan Ittu as pastor of St. Stephen's, Granada Hills (10/02/2016); Rev Jennifer Chrien as pastor of Shepherd of the Valley, Simi Valley (11/20/2016); Rev Dawn Wilder as Pastor Re-developer at Emmanuel, Bakersfield; Rev Hongsun Kim as Pastor Developer of the Japanese Community, Torrance (02/18/2017); Deacon Lynn Bullock as Deacon for Senior Ministry at New Hope, Agoura Hills (02/18/2017).*

Other Calls for interim pastors and specialized ministry have been issued through the Synod Council and a listing of these can be found in the report of roster changes

Currently in Transition: At the writing of this report, there are 23 congregations in one phase or another of transition. Here is a review of their various situations:

- One (1) congregation is about to ***extend a call***.
- Four (4) are currently ***interviewing***.
- Seven (7) are preparing ***to interview***.
- Eleven (11) congregations are in an intentional ***discernment process***. With synod staff guiding them, these congregations are exploring various possibilities in respect to the shape and direction of their next chapter of ministry. In some cases, the outcome may not include the calling or appointing of a pastor.

Region 2 Mobility Conferences: There is a commitment among the five synods of Region 2 to regard each rostered minister who is open to call in one synod as open to call in all the synods. I am thankful for the collaborative efforts each synod staff makes to share the names of prospective pastors and deacons. We also problem solve together in identifying candidates for complex or unique calls. A hallmark of our working together is the two Mobility Conferences that we offer each year. The Rocky Mountain Synod hosted one in Denver on June 20 & 21. Our synod was the host for the second conference held at the Lutheran Center on December 6 & 7. At each event, 15-20 rostered ministers from across the nation are interviewed by panels of Region 2 bishops and staff. The fruit of this endeavor is that we become acquainted with

several promising leaders, and their names are frequently passed on to various Call Committees in the synod.

Attention rostered ministers currently open to call: I highly recommend your participation in the upcoming Region 2 Mobility Conference, which is being held in Sacramento on June 13 & 14, 2017. If interested, I welcome you to contact me for details about what takes place, and you can find more information at:

<http://events.constantcontact.com/register/event?llr=zoeaptcab&oeidk=a07edytyuqh678c0cc1>

CONGREGATIONAL CONFLICT

Most often I am the first responder to conflicts which arise in congregations where the lay leaders or the pastor request synodical assistance. I am thankful to report that in this pastor year I have only been called upon in **three** situations. Each one of these situations has underscored two key principles: 1) the earlier the conflict is addressed the better; and 2) when the parties in conflict willingly agree to work together toward a resolution, the more likely a positive outcome.

My experience in this area also leads me to echo the adage that the best medicine is preventive. So I have two encouragements and invitations in this regard:

- Strongly consider participating in the **Lombard Mennonite Peace Center's "Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church,"** held at **St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Woodlawn Hills, November 13-17, 2017.** It is a process with a faith and healing component that seeks to lead those who are in conflict toward reconciliation. The training is exceptional. The skills and the knowledge from this training will be helpful for dealing with conflict in your personal life and when it arises in your congregation. You can find detailed information and steps for registration at: <http://www.lmpeacecenter.org>. Or ask me at the assembly for a brochure.
- **On September 27, 2017, St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Woodland Hills will also host *Leadership and Anxiety in the Church, a one-day workshop.*** Most often it is anxiety and fear which is at the root of conflict in a congregation. This seminar looks at the challenge presented by the rising levels of anxiety being experienced in churches today, as well as the role that self-differentiated leadership can play in calming such anxiety. I suggest bringing your entire council to this top notch training. For detailed information and registration go to: <http://www.lmpeacecenter.org>. Or ask me at the assembly for a brochure.

FIRST CALL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

It is an expectation of the ELCA that all newly called rostered ministers will attend two gatherings a year during their first three years of ministry. These gatherings are provided jointly by the five synods of Region 2, and they focus on mutual support and continued faith and leadership formation. The two events this past year took place on November 7-9, 2016 in Denver

under the theme “Public Church: Vote with Your Faith” and then on February 14-16 in Phoenix focused on “Creativity in Ministry and Leadership.” Ten rostered ministers from our synod are participating and 57 from across Region 2. What a pleasure it is for me to accompany them and learn so much from them. Along with Pr. Jon Gathje and Pr. Scott Fielder, I serve on the coordinating team for FCTE in Region 2.

Rev Marjorie Funk-Pihl, Assistant to the Bishop for Congregational Mission/Director of Evangelical Mission ELCA.

“Always Being Made New” has been a slogan of the ELCA for a few years now. It has solid Scriptural backing and deep Lutheran roots. As we celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation we recognize, yet again, the need for the church to be in a state of continuous renewal. God is always working for the sake of the world. The mission of the church is to keep up with the ever-moving Holy Spirit. As God would have it, many of our pastors and congregations are doing just that. My call in this synod is to be in the middle of this movement and to help people join in.

As DEM, I facilitate two processes which aid this movement: 1) *The Mission Exploration Team*



(MET) and 2) *Living the Resurrection* (LtR). MET is the first step of the call process and includes four sessions of discerning the pull of God on the mission of the congregation. Together we explore the passions and struggles of both the congregation and the neighborhood, and listen for where God is working to build connections. *Living the Resurrection* is a deeper look at these same concerns. MET spends four sessions over about eight weeks, while LtR meets in nine workshops over 18 months. This past year eight congregations have gone through the MET process and eight are in the middle of *Living the Resurrection*. A new Learning Community for Living the Resurrection will be formed this summer. If your church is ready to be made new again, look for the booklet in your assembly packet and watch for the video during our time together. Let's get moving!

Pastor Steve Beckham and the Living the Resurrection team from Gloria Dei in Long Beach participate in a workshop.

Another way I get to participate in the work God is doing through our synod is in working with our **New Start** ministries (hoping to become recognized congregations) and our congregations in “official” **Redevelopment** (receiving grants from the ELCA and the synod through EMOT). Aside from annual reviews (of both the ministry and the pastor) we also meet quarterly for gatherings.



This photo is from our Epiphany Party. Standing from left to right are pastors John Yu, Cesar Gogorza, Marcos Panahon, Jonathan Hemphill, George Villa, Dawn Wilding, Jennifer Burgos, and Golf Chutimapongrat. Seated are Maria Paiva, Hongsun Kim, Maria Elena Montalvo and myself. Not shown are pastors Ryan Chaddick, Joseph Castañeda-Carrera, Pr Stephanie Jaeger Pr Newman Chiu, Pr Esteban Salazar. The diversity of our new starts and redevelopments aligns well with the diversity of metro LA. God is clearly up to something! We have 16 pastor developers and redevelopers representing ministries with people from almost as many different cultures and languages!

If you are interested in knowing more about any of these ministries go to the Evangelical Outreach Mission Team table in the vendor room, and you can pick up a booklet with a profile of each of our new starts, or download it at [socalssynod.org/resources/SOFIA/stories of faith in action/synod stories](http://socalssynod.org/resources/SOFIA/stories%20of%20faith%20in%20action/synod%20stories).

Stewardship: In 2015 and 2016 your stewardship team developed a resource called *The Generous Life*. It contained stories of generosity in our synod told through six 2 - 4 minute videos. The supporting booklet contains Bible study and sermon preparation materials as well as other ideas on how to develop a narrative budget and pledge forms, etc. If your congregation hasn't utilized any of these tools, it's not too late! Download them at socalssynod.org/resources/generouslife. The videos are on our synod YouTube channel. If you want a DVD version go to the EOMT table in the vendor room at assembly. The ELCA also has new resources that you can access on the ELCA website at elca.org/resources/stewardship - samples on our EOMT table.

Vanco (the team behind Simply Giving) has branched out and now provides support for congregations who want to try other forms of electronic giving in their congregations. If you are interested go to the EOMT table in the vendor room for more information.

Holy Closure: Some form of death always precedes resurrection. We closed one congregation and one new start this year. Of course, God works through this process, and sometimes the new life is very exciting! Holy Cross Lutheran Church and Preschool in Ojai has become Holy Cross Lutheran Preschool and Chapel. The congregation closed and resurrected as a worshiping community that supports the ongoing work of the preschool! Mission St Francis was a new start in Chatsworth. We closed the ministry but retain the property with the expectation that God will show us what is meant to grow there.



Grace Lutheran Church in Santa Barbara closed last year and is resurrecting as Grace Village, a home for low-income seniors. The photo left is the groundbreaking for the new village. Pictured are two members of Grace who were active in this process: Pat Wheatley and Rep. Lois Capps.

Thank you for your continued support of God continuing renewal of the Church. I appreciate the honor of working with you in God's work. If you would like to join us and work with one of the teams of the EMOT, stop by our table in the vendor room and sign up! We'd love to work with you!!!

Yours in the Mission of God with the congregations of the Southwest California Synod.

Rev. Marj Funk-Pihl

Director of Administration and Finance, Andreas Hirsch

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function.
Romans 12:4

As the body has many members so does our church, and so does the Office of the Bishop. As Director of Administration and Finance, the “body part” my position represents is the back office for the congregations and leaders in our synod.

Our back office is staffed with efficient and faithful servants to this church. Although we often work under time restrictions and limited resources, we are able to manage the many demands put in front of us.

Properties:

- We remodeled the parsonage at Iglesia Luterana San Pablo in North Hollywood for the arrival of Pastor Cesar from Argentina. Major repairs and improvements were necessary to make the parsonage habitable. Necessary improvements included new flooring, plumbing, dry wall, and a replacement water heater.
- Mission San Francis Chatsworth had disbanded, and the property is not currently in use by any Lutheran group or organization. One of the tenants a Church of Christ congregations signed a two-year lease for the property. This will give synod council time to develop a plan for a Lutheran presents at this location.
- The members of St. John’s in Cerritos voted to sell the property, which is currently being appraised. The existing tenant, Paul Church, is interested in purchasing the property. We also have two realtors interested in representing us. My first effort will be to sell the property without realtors as we have done in the past. If we can’t find a satisfactory offer, we will engage a realtor.
- We are also in the process moving the title of the property of Faith Long Beach into the synod’s name. The property is vacant, and it appears that after Pastor Ujiies’ death the congregation disbanded. The Greater Long Beach Conference is looking into possible uses for the property
- The Christ the King, Van Nuys property was to be sold beginning on June 2017. The buyer experiences problems with the City of Van Nuys and is now expecting to close in December. We obtained legal counsel insuring the synod’s interest are best served.

The Lutheran Center:

The Lutheran Center hosted several meetings each month ranging from workshops to theological training events, accommodating at times up to 100 participants per day and hundreds of guests during the year on the property. Our support staff and property staff worked very diligent making these events a success for our synod.

A few of the larger events were:

- 500th Reformation Road Trip
- HR Workshop
- Treasurers' Workshop
- Constitutional Workshop
- Boundaries Workshop
- Living the Resurrections Workshops
- Sanctuary Movement Workshop
- Ecumenical Worship Service
- World Water Day Worship Service

Our Staff:

I would like to thank our support staff for their never-ceasing efforts. Samantha Henderson has been juggling all correspondence, from writing letters to keeping our social media current. She also serves as web master and has started updating the new website with content from our mission teams. Sherri Miller has been doing the bookkeeping for many of our organizations and processing our pass-through gifts and mission support. Robin Lujan is always eagerly supporting the executive staff as secretary to their needs. We added two new staff members helping with the increasing workload in supporting our ailing congregations. Sheri Dillon will take on a leadership role within the synod office supporting the Bishop and the two Assistants to the Bishop. Nicole Miller works hand in hand with Robin Lujan assisting with the many daily tasks the Office of the Bishop requires. Our faithful support staff are the members keeping this body of Christ working, and are building the foundation the synod sits on.

Synod Finances:

The synod finances are at times challenging. We are transitioning from the traditional purpose of the synod of managing the ELCA rostered leaders and congregational rosters to being the back office of the wider synod. More and more congregations are relying on our support with sometimes small issues to be resolved within one phone call to more complex issues requiring hours of staff time. Reinventing our relevance in each congregation's life is an investment that will pay off in future years. This means that for the time being we should consider alternative ways of funding the Office of the Bishop. The traditional source of Mission Support will probably not increase in the next few years and we face the same issues our congregations face - how to make ministry happen and explore other ways of funding.

At last: I'm grateful serving here at the office and can help so many people with their issues of running our churches. We all live in two worlds: the liturgical world of love and gospel and the legalistic world of being a corporation.

Faithfully yours,
Andreas Hirsch

Maria Paiva
Latino Ministry Coordinator
Assembly Report 2017

“But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God’s grace.”
-Acts 20:24 (NRSV)

Let me begin this report by giving thanks to God for the great opportunity we have as a Synod to proclaim the good news of God’s grace specifically to the Latino population of our Synod. Two of our Latino pastors passed away since we met last year. Pastor Carlos Paiva died November 22, 2016 and Pastor Nimrod Flores died on February 17, 2017. We give thanks to God for their faithful ministry in our Synod. We welcome to our Synod Pastor Cesar Gogorza, who is serving as interim pastor at Angelica Lutheran Church and is also developing the North Hollywood Latino mission. We also have three Latino TEEM students serving as follows: Joseph Castaneda’s sites are Hollywood Lutheran and ADORE in the Hollywood/North Hollywood area; Maria Elena Montalvo’s site are Reformation, Pasadena and Grace, Bell; and Maria Paiva is at St. John, Gardena and the Latino Ministries Coordinator at Southwest California Synod. We also give thanks to God for the ministry of Pastor Patricia Muran who retired in February, 2016 after serving Santa Cruz, Santa Maria for over 14 years. Pastor Esteban Salazar, from the Anglican Church, is serving as interim pastor at Santa Cruz now.

We have 15 ministries that welcome the stranger by providing worship in Spanish: Grace, Bell; Faith, Canoga Park; Pueblo de Dios, Compton; Saint John, Gardena; First, Inglewood; Trinity, Long Beach; Angelica, Los Angeles; St. Mark’s, Los Angeles; North Hollywood Mission; Our Redeemer, Oxnard; Reformation, Pasadena; Adore, San Fernando Valley/Hollywood; Santa Cruz, Santa Maria; Fe y Esperanza, South Gate; Christ, West Covina. Most of our ministries are committed to welcoming the strangers by providing worship opportunities, faith formation programs, hot meals, food bags, immigration assistance, after school programs, youth programs, support groups, parish nurses, music and art classes, camping, and other ministries.

Our Escuela de Lideres para la Mision (ELM in Spanish) began classes in January 2016 and completed the first year of classes in November 2016. Plans are being made to resume classes this Fall. We also sponsored a Latino Theological Symposium, March 31 and April 1 to commemorate the 500 years of the Reformation. Presenters were Bishop Guy Erwin, Dr. Julia Fogg, Dr. Cesar Gogorza and Dr. Tomas Gutierrez.

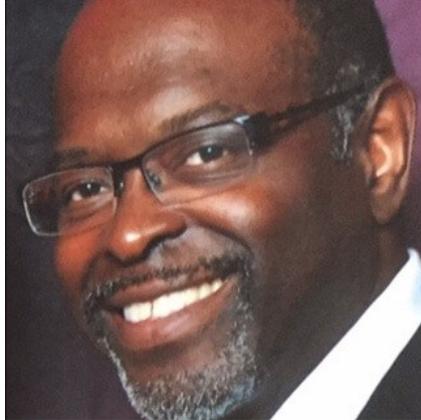


We have also started a Latina Women's Network which meets once a month at our different congregations. Plans are on their way to start a Latino Men's Network this coming year as well as a Latino Young Adult network.

To serve God's people in 2017-2018 we will continue to focus in lay leadership training, recruiting Latino candidates for rostered ministries, strengthening our existing ministries, emerging generations (Latino Young Adults Network) and multiracial youth and children in our congregations, explore the possibility of starting one new ministry and men's ministry.

Thank you for your partnership in making Christ known in the territory of our Synod. Please continue to pray and support our outreach to the Latino population in our Synod.

Coordinator for African Descent Ministry



It continues to be my pleasure to serve as Coordinator for African Descent Strategy. Thank you for your support and prayers for the African Descent Ministry in the Southwest California Synod.

The ELCA African Descent Strategic Plan, “Many Voices, Tell the Story, Create the Vision: Build Our Future,” guides our work. The strategic plan calls us to live out God's call in and through visionary pastoral leadership, worship, witness, discipleship, stewardship, family ministries, social justice, and unity and diversity. These areas of ministry work together in an integrated, holistic approach to responding to God’s call for us to build up the body of Jesus Christ, the church, in the world and in every community. We stand together to glorify God as partners in the Gospel, doing God’s work in the world together.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- + Participant in Sacred Struggles, Workshop on Prejudice, a follow-up to Gathering/Conversation on Multi-Cultural and Ethnic-Specific Ministry
- + Participant in ELCA Multi-Cultural Ministries & Ethnic Specific Summit Meeting, SWCA Synod
- + Participation in Conflict Transformation Skills Training, SWCA Synod
- + Sponsor/Participant: Gathering of African Descent Congregations: “An Artistic Voyage Celebrating the African Diaspora, SWCA Synod
- + Participant in “Black Lives Matter Rally,” SWCA Synod
- + Sponsor/Participant of Juneteenth Celebration Service, SWCA Synod
- + Participation in the Lutheran/Episcopal Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Service
- + Support/Advocacy for African Descent Clergy of Southwest CA Synod
- + Facilitator, Mission Exploration Team Process for African Descent Congregation
- + Support/Advocacy of African Descent Candidates in T.E.E.M
- + Support /Advocacy of African Descent Rostered Leaders in Transition
- + Support/Advocacy of African Descent Leaders in Synodical Candidacy for Rostered Leadership

May God continue to guide and bless us in our shared ministry.

Serving Christ

The Reverend Reginald Hansome, Coordinator of African Descent Strategy

The Rev. Hitoshi Adachi
Asian Ministry Coordinator for Southwest California and Pacifica Synods



Since early 2013, I have been assigned as Asian Ministry Coordinator for both the Southwest California and Pacifica Synods. In this 2017 Assembly notebook, I would like to start with the same statements I wrote in the 2016 notebook so that each participant is a little more familiar with Asian Ministry in Southern California.

The Asian Lutheran Ministries (please see the updated list below) are serving Asian immigrants. The people served are both English and native language speakers and are also first (some are not American citizens yet) or second (or more) generation Americans. Asia has over 3 billion people and 40 percent of the world's population lives in Asia. In the last few decades we've seen tremendous growth in the economies of China and South Eastern Asian countries. We are witnessing increased Asian immigration in Southern California. If we consider the 5 major religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, all of them started in Asia. So, all Asian-born people were raised in a pluralistic religious environment.

Some 2016 (until April 2017) Highlights:

- 1) On July 7th, 2016, under the guidance of Bishop Guy Erwin, Bishop's office had the second racism discussion panel with Asian Leaders in the Synod. A total of 8 Asian leaders attended the panel. Since it was held a few weeks before Churchwide Assembly, we shared some racism-related memorial resolutions that would be voted on during the assembly.
- 2) "Thai Hollywood" ministry started, in 2015, by Rev. Pongtep (Golf) Chutimapongrat and hosted by Hollywood Lutheran Church is growing.
- 3) Ministries of Glory Lutheran Church led by Rev. Newman and Mrs. Grace Chiu and hosted by First Lutheran Church and School in Torrance is also doing well for reaching out to younger Chinese

people at nearby Universities. Especially, Thursday evening fellowship ministry called “Zion” at University of Southern California campus (FYI, 4,000 USC students are Chinese) is extremely doing well. Glory marks its 10-year anniversary next year; therefore it is expected to be an organized congregation in 2018.

- 4) From January 31st through February 7th in 2017, there was the Asian Lutheran International Conference in Medan, Indonesia. Bishop Erwin and myself attended the conference. For me, since many exciting events are happening in Pacifica Indonesian congregations where people came from Huria Kristen Batak Protestant, which is the largest Lutheran Church body in Asia and the number of HKBP members in Indonesia is over 4 million; it was very meaningful to meet with the executive leaders of HKBP.
- 5) Rev. Hongsun Kim was ordained on April 8th, 2017 at Christ The King (CTK) Lutheran Church in Torrance. He was born in Korea but raised in Japan and has lived in the United States for almost 20 years. He is starting a new ministry called “Fruits of the Spirit Lutheran Community” in CTK where the largest Japanese speaking preschool in Southern California (called “Suika”) is located.

Moving Forward to Serve God’s People in 2017 and early 2018:

- 1) Continue and enhance current ministries already placed by the Holy Spirit. Especially, those recently started in the last two years, e.g. Thai Hollywood and Japanese Lutheran.
- 2) On July 13th, there will be an Asian Church Planting meeting for the Southern California region at the Lutheran Center in Glendale. Rev. Dr. Pongsak Limthongviratn, Program Director for Asian and Pacific Ministries of ELCA, is coming. I am hoping that Bishop Erwin and both Directors of Evangelical Mission may attend the meeting.
- 3) In April 2018, there will be the Association of Asian Pacific Islanders ministries of ELCA at Lao Evangelical Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Thank you very much for your continued understanding regarding and support for the Asian Ministries.

In Christ’s Service,
Hitoshi Adachi

Pacifica Synod Asian/Pacific Islanders Ministry

MINISTRY	PASTOR/LAY LEADER	CITY	LANGUAGE
Glory	Betty Chen	Chula Vista	Mandarin
Filipino	Jogy Deogracias	San Diego	Tagalong/English
Taiwanese	Shiau-ting (Paul) Liu & Albert Lin	San Diego	Taiwanese/Mandarin
ELCA Batak	Esra Pangaribuan	Norco	Batak/Indonesian
Grace Taiwanese	Thomas Chen (Interim)	Anaheim	Mandarin/Taiwanese
Church of Dream Builders	Hyunho Hong	Anaheim	Korean/English
Thai Shepherd of the Hills	Pongtep (Golf) Chutimapongrat	Whittier	Thai
Immanuel Indonesian Fellowship	Robert Waworuntu	Los Alamitos	Indonesian
Japanese Ministry (as a part of Resurrection)	Hitoshi Adachi	Huntington Beach	Japanese/English

Southwest California Synod Asian/Pacific Islanders Ministry

MINISTRY	PASTOR/LEADER	CITY	LANGUAGE
Lutheran Oriental	Paul Nakamura	Torrance	English/Japanese
LC of the Cross	Charlie Wang	Arcadia	Mandarin/English
Christ	Philip Demers	Monterey Park	Mandarin/English
Faith	David Lin	Monterey Park	Mandarin
Bethlehem	Frank Wang /John Yu	Temple City	English/Mandarin
Glory LC	Newman and Grace Chiu	Torrance	Mandarin
St. Matthew	Marcos Panahon	Glendale	Tagalog/English
Thai Hollywood	Pongtep (Golf) Chutimapongrat	Los Angeles	Thai
Eagle Rock	Violeta Sanders	Los Angeles	English/Tagalog
Fruits of the Spirit Lutheran Community	Hongsun Kim	Torrance	Japanese/English/Korean

Youth Ministries and Synod Youth Team



2016 - 2017 has been a very eventful year for the Southwest California Synod Youth Team. We are a team whose mission is to help youth find their place in the ELCA and the Synod, and to use their God-given gifts as God directs. Our team members are elected or appointed to serve the youth and congregations within the Southwest California Synod through servant events, consulting teams, youth gatherings for High School, Middle School, and Elementary-aged youth, as well as being present and serving at Synod Assembly. Our theme verse for our team is 1 Timothy 4:12, which says, "Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young."

Our "year" typically begins at the annual Fall Retreat for High School Youth, at which time elections to the team occur.

We have a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Multicultural Rep, Definitely-Abled Rep, Hospitality Rep, Media Manager, as well as Conference Reps and Adult Leaders.

- Our High School Leadership Event in October 2016 took place at Camp Luther Glen. Our theme was "Shine", with our speaker being Michael Bridges of the band "Lost & Found".
- In November, Cheyenne Boykin (our President) and Shawntelle Augustine (our Multicultural Rep), both from St. Mark's, Los Angeles, traveled to the ELCA Youth Leadership Summit in North Carolina, where they discussed many of the issues facing youth in the ELCA. They met people from all over the country and were deeply moved by the things that they did!
- Last November, some of us were able to help with the Middle School Youth Gathering in Anaheim. There were about 300 youth present, and this was done in conjunction with the Pacifica Synod.

- We began the new year with a planning retreat at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Los Angeles. We helped to lead an Epiphany Event for the congregation, and planned several events for the year. A film crew joined us one evening to interview us for the making of a film to be used at the upcoming ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston 2018.
- We helped with the Elementary Youth Gathering at Luther Glen in March.
- We also planned a one-day Elementary Youth Gathering for children from both the Pacifica Synod and the Southwest California Synod. Our theme was "Be Our Guest", teaching children about being welcoming and offering hospitality!
- Synod Assembly is always a highlight for our team, because it gives us opportunities to mingle with youth and young adult voting members from congregations as well as the many pastors and congregational leaders from our Synod. We host a reception, have a youth booth with information and giveaways, and we serve the assembly as pages, worship leaders and more! Rosalie Tarsala from our team was elected last June as the Youth Rep to Synod Council.

FUTURE EVENTS

- The Western States Youth Gathering will happen in late June/early July. Gathering Synod Coordinators from Pacifica and Southwest California Synods will be leading workshops about the upcoming Houston Youth Gathering.
- November 10 - 12, 2017, we will host the Annual High School Youth Retreat. Pastors, youth leaders and youth are invited to join us. Our theme is "Remix," based on Revelations 21:5, and our speaker will be Pastor Matt Keadle.
- Middle School Youth Gathering will be November 17-19, and will include a trip to Universal Studios.
- Janet Renick will be serving as the Gathering Synod Coordinator for the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston, 2018. Workshops will be presented throughout the year as we prepare!

The Synod Youth Team consists of youth and adult leaders from our Synod who see youth as being the PRESENT of the Church today. Those serving 2017 are:

President – Cheyenne Boykin (St Mark's, Los Angeles)
 President-Elect – D.J. Ware (Christ, West Covina)
 Vice President & Hospitality – Kaytlynn Haywood (Prince of Peace, Covina)
 Secretary & L.A. Metro Conference Rep – Shawntelle Augustine (St. Mark's, L.A)
 Definitely-Abled Rep – vacant
 Multicultural Rep – Jaylen Ware (Christ, West Covina)
 Synod Council Rep – Rosalie Tarsala (Christ the Shepherd, Altadena)
 Media Manager – Emma Griffis (Mt Cross, Camarillo)
 Other Conference Reps:
 Twin Valleys – vacant
 Channel Islands –vacant

Central Coast Conference – Anneke Moersdorf (Mt. Carmel, SLO)
San Gabriel – Brittney Rodriguez (Christ, West Covina)
Tehachapi – Alayda Young (At Large – St. Mark’s, L.A.)
Foothill – Sarah Hoffmann (At Large – Christ, West Covina)

Adult Leaders:

Janet Renick – Adult Chair (Christ, West Covina)
Bryan Honda (Shepherd of the Valley, Simi
Ingrid Frokjer (Mt. Carmel, San Luis Obispo)
Pastor Matt Keadle (St. Mark’s, Los Angeles)
Meredith Gardner (Mt Cross, Camarillo)
Aaron Tidwell (Christ, Long Beach)

There are still several openings on the team that we hope to fill as soon as possible. Talk to us!

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Renick, Adult Chair, Southwest California Synod Youth Team

SWCA Synod Events 2016

DATE	EVENT	WHERE
1/17/2016	MLK Service	Trinity, Hawthorne
1/24/2016	Reformation 500	California Lutheran University
2/04-2/08-2016	Youth Ministry Extravaganza	Anaheim
2/22/2016	Bishop's Colloquy	Cathedral Center, Echo Park
3/22/2016	World Water Day	Lutheran Center
3/26/2016	Easter Vigil Service	St. Mark's, Los Angeles
4/20-4/21-2016	Boundaries Workshop	Lutheran Center
4/21/2016	LCLA SoCal Lutherans	Long Beach
6/02-6/04-2016	Synod Assembly	Crowne Plaza, L.A.
6/15/2016	Legislative & Advocacy Training	Lutheran Center
7/09/2016	FPSGV Consortium Homeless Retreat	Lutheran Center
7/09/2016	Book Study with the Bishops	Lutheran Center
7/17/2016	Dialogue on Ethnic-specific & Multi-cultural Ministry	Lutheran Center/ First, Inglewood
8/04-8/05-2016	Joint Candidacy Committee	Lutheran Center
9/17-9/18-2016	Living the Resurrection Workshop	Lutheran Center
9/18/2016	Lutherans Concerned Annual Meeting	Lutheran Center
10/12-10/13-2016	Coach Training	Lutheran Center
10/14-10/16-2016	Men's Advance	Lutheran Center
10/14-10/16-2016	WELCA SWO Convention Grand Vista Hotel	Simi Valley
10/29/2016	Living the Resurrection Workshop	Lutheran Center
10/30/2016	Interpretation Workshop	Lutheran Center
11/02/2016	Portico Luncheon	Lutheran Center
11/05/2016	Living the Resurrection Workshop	Lutheran Center
11/05/2016	HR Workshop	Lutheran Center
11/05/2016	Church Women United	Lutheran Center
11/19/2016	Reformation Road Trip	First, Carson
11/29/2016	Candidacy Committee	Lutheran Center
12/01/2016	Living the Resurrection Workshop	Lutheran Center
12/06-12/07-2016	Mobility Conference	Lutheran Center
12/08/2016	Advent Pastors Retreat	Lutheran Center
12/16/2016	FLS/Synod Joint Christmas Party	Lutheran Center
9	Spring Conference Assemblies	
9	Fall Conference Assemblies	



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

2017 SYNOD ASSEMBLIES

Churchwide report in detail

CALLED FORWARD

**Together
in Christ**



Table of Contents

Editor's Note: Contained within this document is detailed report for ELCA ministries and programs, from which the Synod Assembly talking points were drawn.

This document is organized in alphabetical order for ease of use, with the exception of *Called Forward Together in Christ Strategic Directions 2025*. It is listed first as it serves as the basis for our future direction together as a church.

Called Forward Together in Christ

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AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities)

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Office of the Treasurer

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Rostered Ministers Gathering

South Sudan outreach

Women and Justice

Called Forward Together in Christ

Propelled by a commitment to Lutheran traditions and to being a community of faith that is always forming and being renewed, the ELCA's presiding bishop, Church Council and Conference of Bishops initiated Called Forward Together in Christ Strategic Directions 2025 for this church. The process sought to engage all ELCA members and partners in conversation about future directions so that this church can journey faithfully and effectively together in the years ahead. Many of you participated – THANK YOU!

CALLLED FORWARD
**Together
in Christ**

Five goals came out of the of Called Forward Together in Christ process. These are the priorities that were shaped by the voices across this church:

1. A thriving church spreading the gospel and deepening faith for all people Priority areas for action.
2. A church equipping people for their baptismal vocations in the world and this church.
3. An inviting and welcoming church that reflects and embraces the diversity of our communities and the gifts and opportunities that diversity brings.
4. A visible church deeply committed to working ecumenically and with other people of faith for justice, peace and reconciliation in communities and around the world.
5. A well-governed, connected and sustainable church.

The Conference of Bishops, Church Council and Churchwide Organization have all affirmed two main focus areas for the next few years:

- Congregational Vitality
- Leadership

You can learn more about all of this at [ELCA.org/future](https://elca.org/future).

We invite you to continue to engage with Called Forward Together in Christ as we live into God's call for the future of this church.



500th anniversary of the Reformation

2017 is well underway, which means we're quickly approaching the Reformation anniversary date of Oct. 31. Here are a few things to keep in mind as your congregation and community plan for the year.



Reformation anniversary resources

There are three ways to stay up-to-date on Reformation anniversary activities. These are: **ELCA500.org**, ELCA500 Facebook page and ELCA500 Twitter. Please take a moment to check them out, “Like” or “Follow” and use the resources to engage your congregation or participate in an event.

Now on the **ELCA500.org** site are two new resources to help congregations (and synods) plan and promote Reformation anniversary activities. Located under “Resources,” the how-to-guide for Reformation anniversary planning and promotion provides tips and tools for planning and promoting your activities. The Reformation Ideas list provides four categories of activities to consider or use as a brainstorming launch pad for events from now through October.

This January, travel expert Rick Steves provided a copy of his new Reformation documentary to every ELCA congregation.

Reformation storytelling projects

Several storytelling projects are underway to help tell our collective Lutheran experience. Each is unique in its purpose, but all provide opportunities to share and learn from each other. You can read, watch or listen to the stories at **livinglutheran.org/Reformation** and find submission information at **ELCA500.org/more**. Consider submitting your story today.

Advocacy

The ELCA advocates for fair and just public policies that overcome poverty, promote peace and dignity, and defend God's creation.

During the past year, this church encouraged faithful and nonpartisan voter participation by providing faith-based resources around voting.

Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA

We are now in the fourth 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 collectively raised more than **\$113.4 million** 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.



Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA (cont'd)

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 250 students with more than \$2 million in seminary scholarships during the 2016-2017 academic year.

With \$759,000 in support from the campaign, Renewing Congregations grants are being implemented across the ELCA, including 13 Synodical Renewing Congregations Strategies, four Area Ministry Strategies and four Fast Growth Congregations initiatives.

Funding from the campaign for the ELCA has expanded the work of ELCA congregational new starts by funding ten additional new ministries in a variety of contexts and with creative strategies.

The International Women Leaders initiative has reached 100 international Lutheran women with access to academic scholarships, training and networking opportunities.

Thirteen new 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 84 young adults sent into service during the 2016/2017 year. This represents a 45% growth in the first 3 years.

The 2017 campaign theme, Global Church, includes a focus on Missionaries and Young Adults in Global Mission, International Women Leaders and Global Ministries. Through a variety of learning and giving opportunities around three days – International Women's Day, Pentecost Sunday and Global Church Sunday – we are lifting up this important work. Congregations and synods received a kickoff packet in early January with materials and ideas to get involved in the 2017 theme. A Pentecost Sunday packet will arrive in mid-April.

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.

AMMPARO

The AMMPARO Strategy was overwhelmingly adopted by the Churchwide Assembly last August. This strategy is unique among U.S. churches and provides a holistic, whole church response to Accompany Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO). This initiative encompasses accompaniment, awareness-building and advocacy at



AMMPARO (cont'd)

every moment of the migrant journey, from working with companions to providing protection and opportunities to potential migrants in their countries of origin, to migrants along their journey from Central America through Mexico, and to arriving migrants as they transition to a new phase of life in the U.S. It also includes accompaniment of companions who work with those migrants who have been deported to their countries of origin. As a whole church response, all ELCA expressions, strategic allies and ecumenical partners are included.

AMMPARO is a movement of people that is supported and facilitated by communication, funding and systems to organize the work.

The ELCA is accompanying international companions in Central America and Mexico who address the root causes of this migration -- principally violence, poverty and climate change.

In the spirit of AMMPARO's guiding principles, synods and congregations are invited to accompany migrant children and families through synod AMMPARO or immigration task forces, as Welcoming Congregations, through the creation of Guardian Angel programs and through prayer. All ELCA members are encouraged to continue awareness-building and advocacy for the protection of these vulnerable children and families.

Bishop Eaton's Leadership Initiative

Created in November 2016, the Leadership Initiative encourages all of us to seek out and inspire gifted people in our congregations, communities and networks to consider a call to the ministry of the gospel, supported by growing levels of scholarships for seminary tuition.

At the same time, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton announced a generous \$3 million gift to the ELCA Fund for Leaders, which provides seminary scholarships for 60 additional students over the next three years.



If you know someone who shows a gift for ministry, help mentor and foster them. Together - pastors, deacons, lay people – we can bring the word of God to the world.

For more information, visit [ELCA.org/leaders](https://www.elca.org/leaders) to find resources to guide discussions and offer inspiration for conversations and individual reflection on becoming a leader within the ELCA.



Book of Faith

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 ELCA, 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, grass-roots 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 at bookoffaith.org. Find us on Facebook @bookoffaith and Twitter #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.



Book of Faith (cont'd)

DEVOTIONAL

AT CHURCH IN THE COMMUNITY AT THE OFFICE AT HOME WITH FAMILY

Where are you today? Our Devotional book of faith

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

EPIC JOURNEYS LETTERS OF ENCOURAGEMENT TALES OF TRAGEDY BOOKS OF POETRY

The library that's always open Our Literary book of faith

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

THE TEMPLE THE ROMANS THE EGYPTIANS KING DAVID

Meet yesterday's story today Our Historical book of faith

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

HOW DO I FIND HOPE? WHO IS GOD? WHY IS THERE SUFFERING? WHAT IS LOVE?

What are the God questions? Our Theological book of faith

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

The church is working with more than 35 synods on intentional strategies for improving congregational vitality. In addition, the unit has partnered with synods to start 124 new congregations and communities of Jesus over the past two years. The Directors for Evangelical Mission continue to engage synodical leaders, structures and strategies and coordinate and staff the education of all evangelical mission, mission support, and stewardship ministries in each synod.

Point out the Director for Evangelical Mission – a colleague who works with the synod to enhance collaboration and work together to grow the church.

Ecumenical & inter-religious relations

Lutheran-Catholic relations/500th anniversary of the Reformation

The 500th anniversary of the Reformation was launched by a joint ecumenical commemoration in Sweden on October 31, 2016, that was led by the president and general secretary of Lutheran World Federation and The Pope. It included a service of Common Prayer at the Cathedral in Lund and a public stadium event lifting up areas of common service and public witness. (See lutheranworld.org/lund2016)

The service of Common Prayer was adapted for a service that took place on March 2 at the Lutheran Center between the ELCA Conference of Bishops and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Ecumenical & Interreligious Affairs Committee.



The co-chairs and members of the *Declaration on the Way* Task Force have been active in providing leadership for many synodical events to discover, explore and deepen understanding about Lutheran-Catholic relations and to consider the ecumenical dimensions of the 500th anniversary – with focus on the “*Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, From Conflict to Communion,*” and “*Declaration on the Way*”. We welcome these invitations as opportunities for partnership.

We are grateful to 1517 Media for creating an online study guide for “*Declaration on the Way*”. This is a resource for deepening our reception of the agreements, and strengthening local Lutheran-Catholic relations. Available from the 1517 Media website and ELCA.org/ecumenical.

Other resources:

- Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton’s webcast, “Ecumenical Witness and the Reformation:” ELCA.org/webcast
- Joint Ecumenical Commemoration of the Reformation in Sweden: lutheranworld.org/lund2016
- Press conference: <https://vimeo.com/189685569>



Ecumenical & inter-religious relations (cont'd)

Lutheran-Orthodox relations

On Nov.15, the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago ceremoniously returned a rare 9th century Greek manuscript of the complete New Testament to the Greek Orthodox Church. His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (GOA), Bishop Demetrios of the Chicago Diocese, and members of the staff of the GOA were also present. Conversations have led to the possibility of renewed dialogue between the ELCA and the GOA, possibly on the topic of care of creation.



Lutheran-Muslim relations

Our Lutheran-Muslim relations have taken two forms in recent months: rapid response to anti-Muslim bigotry and continued engagement in long-term relationship-building, education, dialogue, and cooperation for the common good.



We are working in partnership with the Islamic Society of North America on church-mosque pilot projects in three synods: Southeastern Pennsylvania, Southwestern Washington, and Southeast Michigan. Thanks to Bishop Donald Kreiss, Bishop Rick Jaech, and Bishop Clarie Burkat for leading. The hope is that by taking these steps and expanding out to include other existing and new initiatives across this church, we will build out stronger local relations across the country.

We are also partnering with the Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign to respond to increased incidents of anti-Muslim bigotry over the past year and to concerns about anti-Muslim policies, including the recent and anticipated executive orders. We have participated in statements, press conference, events and strategic planning sessions. Bishop William Gafkjen, representing the ELCA as chair of the Conference of Bishops, gave a statement at the Nov. 18 press conference in Washington, D.C.: youtu.be/ijoNgnI8Er8. Learn more at shouldertoshouldercampaign.org.

Inter-Religious Task Force

Chaired by Bishop Patricia Lull, the Inter-Religious Task Force is developing an inter-religious policy statement that will complement the 1991 *ecumenism* vision statement. A first draft is expected to be completed by the end of summer 2017, at which time a consultative process for input and feedback will unfold across this church. Under proper governance, a proposed statement is intended for presentation at 2019 Churchwide Assembly.



Please consider how you might take up Presiding Bishop Eaton's invitation for conversation about our inter-religious calling and commitments in your synods. Apart from their own value, these events can be used to provide input into the work of the task force. EIR staff and Lutheran Ecumenical & Inter-Religious Representatives Network reps are available to offer leadership and support: Kathryn.Lohre@elca.org. Information about



Ecumenical & inter-religious relations (cont'd)

“Engaging Others, Knowing Ourselves: A Lutheran Calling in a Multi-Religious World,” including downloadable workshop templates is available: ELCA.org/Faith/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Inter-Religious-Relations/Case-Studies. The book is also now available for Kindle on Amazon.

Historic Black Church relations

As we work on racial justice and reconciliation within the ELCA, we are also working in partnership with Historic Black Churches in coalitions and bi-laterally.



For a second year, the ELCA was a co-sponsor of the cross-racial dialogue convened by the Conference of National Black Churches (CNBC) in Charleston, S.C. Dec. 13-15, 2016. The CNBC is the annual conference of the Historic Black Churches in the United States. This continues to be an area of growing partnership between Racial Justice Ministries, the African and European Descent Lutheran Associations, and Ecumenical & Inter-Religious Relations.



A significant dimension of the Bishops' Academy was the presence of Bishop John White, president of the African Methodist Episcopal Council of Bishops. We are exploring possibilities for re-engaging our churches' dialogue, which took place in the 1990s. It will be important to consider fresh models that combine theological dialogue and common action for the sake of the gospel. The initiatives in your synods will continue to be critical for shaping this future together.

Formula of Agreement 20th anniversary

On March 26 at 3 p.m., the United Church of Christ Center in Cleveland hosted a worship service in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Formula of Agreement, the full communion agreement between the ELCA and three Reformed bodies the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ. Heads of communion, local judicatory leaders, ecumenical officers, and local clergy and lay leaders participated. This service was held in conjunction with a heads of communion meeting to explore the next chapter of our life together as full communion partners.

Churches Uniting in Christ - UPCOMING

On the evening of June 4 in Dallas, heads of communion, local judicatory leaders, ecumenical officers, and local clergy and lay leaders will participate in a national worship service of recognition of ministries among the Churches Uniting in Christ. A public forum on race relations will be held on June 3, along with a pulpit exchange between local clergy and national Church Uniting in Christ leadership on the morning of June 4.



ELCA Federal Credit Union

- Our credit union is approaching its one-year anniversary in June and is off to a great start
- Currently serves members in 43 states and in the Caribbean
- Offers a variety of consumer loan, credit card and deposit accounts
- To date, those who have refinanced or consolidated debt have saved an average of more than \$1,400 in finance charges

To learn more, visit elcafcu.org

ELCA Foundation – partnerships and gift planners

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

The ELCA Foundation works in partnerships to strengthen the financial capacities of our broader ELCA-related ministries through:

- lifelong stewardship including annual, major and deferred giving;
- financial education, resources and a variety of planned giving tools;
- investment management services for congregations, synods and related ministries.

The ELCA Foundation supports 20 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 2016, our regional gift planners secured \$56 million in planned gifts (this is up from \$39 million in 2015). Of these gifts, \$10.5 million will directly benefit ELCA congregations and \$2.8 million will benefit ELCA synods. Anyone who wants to help ministry in any way after they pass, should meet with a regional gift planner.

ELCA Fund for Leaders

2016-2017 statistics

As of July 1, a new staff team is growing the ELCA Fund for Leaders. The endowment has reached \$48.7 million, allowing Fund for Leaders to provide more than \$2 million in scholarship assistance to 250 seminary students, approximately 25 percent of all seminary-enrolled candidates for rostered ministry in the ELCA in 2016-2017. Synodical scholarships represent nearly \$540,000 of the \$2 million distribution, disbursed in 147 different awards by 38 participating synods.



ELCA Fund for Leaders (cont'd)

Supporting diverse ministries

Among the funds awarded in 2016 are scholarships specifically geared toward students of color and/or first language other than English, scholarships for new mission developer candidates, and scholarships for seminarians pursuing chaplaincy ministry in military, prison, or VA hospital settings.

- One of these students is Elle Dowd, an M.Div. student at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, who says, “It is for freedom that Christ set us free. We use that freedom, not for our own benefit, but to help free others. None of us are free until all of us are free.” From current students and alumni, who serve as pastors, chaplains and rostered leaders in all areas of the church, we hear again and again that the freedom from crushing student debt has allowed them to serve in ministry more freely and proclaim the gospel.

Fundraising and strategy

For the fiscal year 2016, Fund for Leaders reached a fundraising total of \$2.66 million as of Dec. 31, 2016. A \$3 million gift commitment in 2016 catalyzed the introduction of an expanded scholarships program, which will provide an additional 60 full-tuition scholarships over the next three years (in collaboration with Presiding Bishop Eaton’s Leadership Initiative). Fund for Leaders staff are working with students, seminaries, synods and our new grant-making software to restructure the application and the selection process to best support future ministers as they go and serve where the church needs and the Holy Spirit leads.

For 2017, Fund for Leaders will be concentrating on three primary goals: 1) continued development work with new and existing donors, toward the goal of raising \$4 million in the next two years (and \$15 million overall during *The Campaign for the ELCA*); 2) the implementation of new interim award process and planning for the transition to a direct application and award process for subsequent years; and 3) planning related to recognizing and highlighting the 20th anniversary of the Fund for Leaders with its multiple constituencies, beginning in fall 2017.

ELCA World Hunger

2016 was the Campaign focus year for ELCA World Hunger, and we are grateful to report that over \$21.9 million was given in support of our church’s ministry for projects in 60 countries including the U.S. - working for a world in which all are fed. Thank you!

From participation “ELCA World Hunger’s 40 Days of Giving” during Lent to special efforts in over 45 synod assemblies and gifts of goats, pigs and latrines during the Advent and Christmas season, thank you for being part of the growth in giving – especially the growth in giving from congregations and synods.

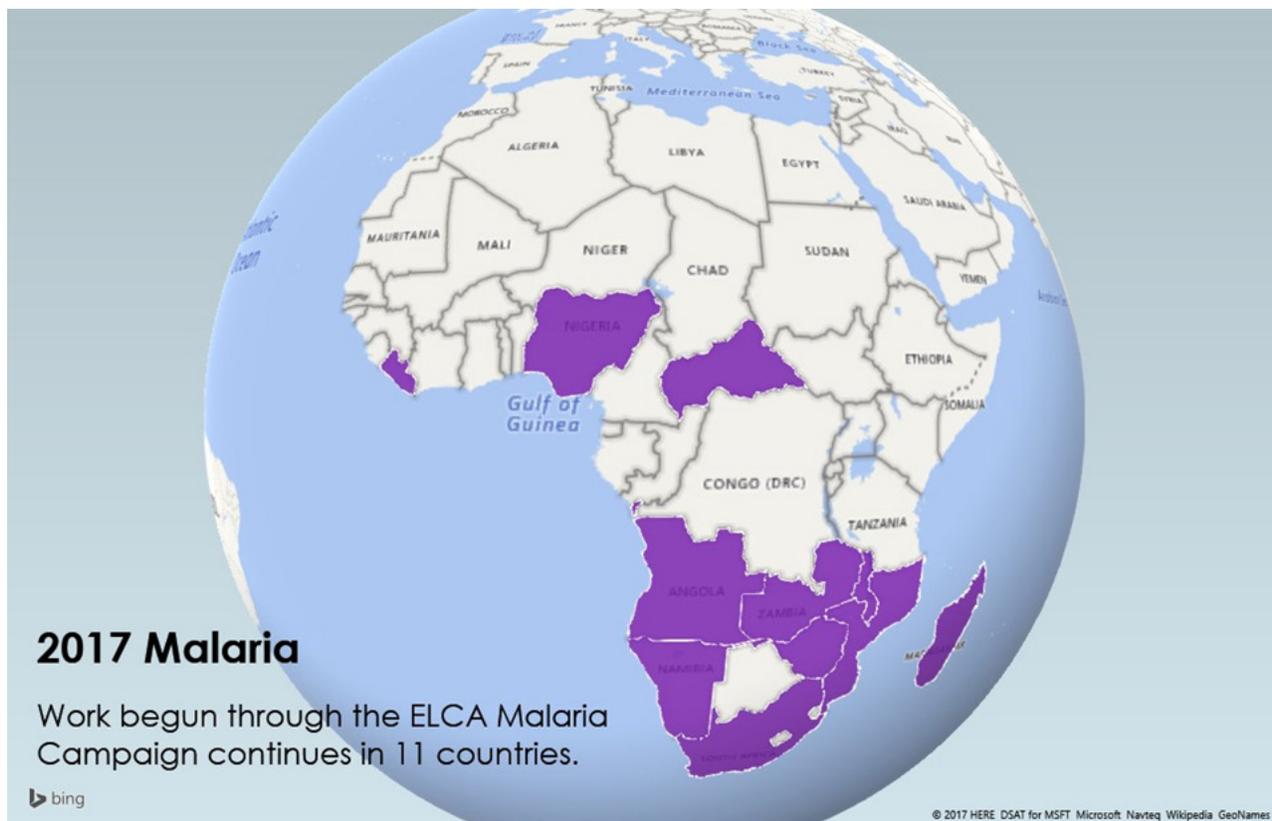
This church currently funds almost 350 domestic hunger and poverty programs across the church.



ELCA World Hunger (cont'd)



ELCA World Hunger (cont'd)



Entrance rite discernment

The Entrance Rite Discernment Group continues the work of moving toward a recommendation for a final entrance rite for the new roster of Word and Service.

Word and Service resources on the ELCA website include:

- a new FAQ describing the work of the Entrance Rite Discernment Group; and
- a Bible study “Mission, Ministry, and Leadership” to encourage discussions across the church.

Worship resources on the website include:

- a liturgy of welcoming and;
- an adapted consecration rite to be used until the next churchwide assembly.



Global church

Evangelism and outreach: Some of the youngest and fastest growing Lutheran churches are found in Asia in the countries of Indonesia, India, Nepal, Cambodia and Myanmar. It is long-time ELCA companion churches that are driving much of this growth, with strong support from ELCA Global Mission that builds on long-term relationships.

- The ELCA has joined with the Lutheran Church in Singapore to accompany the birth of the Lutheran Church in Cambodia. Because of the ELCA's work with and through others, evangelism in Cambodia is vibrant and is centered around young adults whose enthusiasm for proclaiming and living the gospel is catching.
- In Malaysia, with generous support from *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*, we are helping the Lutheran church in this country reach the Orang Asli indigenous peoples who are now becoming faithful and gifted leaders in their own cultural context.
- In China, we are accompanying the Lisu ethnic minority in Yunnan Province with a particular focus on developing evangelists, Bible teachers and music leaders.
- In The Gambia in West Africa, ELCA Global Mission is coming alongside Lutherans in neighboring Senegal to help a new Lutheran church grow in a 90 percent Muslim context.

ELCA missionaries: “ELCA missionaries are ambassadors,” Malpica Padilla (ELCA Global Mission Executive Director, the Rev. Dr. Rafael Malpica Padilla) said. “Paul writes to one of the communities, ‘Receive one another.’ We send missionaries today because ‘sentness’ is a sign of being the church, of being part of the body of Christ.” 225 ELCA pastors, doctors, nurses, teachers, theological educators, communicators and community organizers are serving as missionaries in 44 countries on every continent of the world. For brief personal stories about the ways ELCA missionaries accompany companion churches around the globe, see the February Living Lutheran: livinglutheran.org/2017/02/called-gathered-sent/.

Sustainable development: Global Mission supports projects and programs across a variety of sectors including water, agriculture, livelihoods, food security, and peace and reconciliation. In 2015, approximately \$5 million was provided to 78 projects with a water-work component (e.g. wells, boreholes, spring boxes, water for irrigation, sanitation and hygiene, etc.). Food security and its link to health and nutrition underscore many projects.

- For example, in Burure, Zimbabwe Global Mission supports not only a health clinic, but education, HIV and AIDS education, life-skills training, agriculture and food preservation and livelihoods. Together these foster a broad impact in the lives of people in the Burure.
- In Cambodia, people who had been landless have been able to acquire new land and grow new crops, leading to improved nutrition, increased incomes and the ability to send their children to school.
- Also in Zimbabwe, a peace and reconciliation program has helped participants heal from the trauma of conflict and is enabling the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the promotion of development.

Health care: ELCA engagement strengthens the life-saving and healing ministries of hospitals and clinics in countries such as Liberia, Madagascar and Zimbabwe. With support through the *The Campaign for the ELCA*, ground was broken in 2016 in Juba, South Sudan, for a new clinic focused on maternal-child health. A large and growing area of our work across the globe is



Global church (cont'd)

disease prevention and health promotion through community-based, primary health projects. For example, in Chile, *Educacion Popular en Salud - EPES (Popular Education in Health)* receives World Hunger support for this grass-roots work and is accompanied by an ELCA long-term missionary. Moreover, the ELCA seeks to make the HIV and AIDS and malaria pandemics history by addressing underlying injustices with a focus on poverty.

The Global Mission unit receives the gifts of companions and channels them for the re-formation of global mission engagement narratives and practices in our own U.S. context. This work is done through approximately two dozen “glocal” events offered to synods and congregations each year. The events are a venue for trainings and experiential learning that increase participants’ understanding and build new capacities in the use of accompaniment as a narrative, lens and method for global and local mission engagement.

Women represent 70 percent of the world’s population living in poverty. Yes, in church and society, women often lack access to opportunities to realize their full potential because they lack access to educational opportunities. The ELCA’s International Women Leaders initiative is our church’s strong effort to create opportunities that support women leaders in church and society. With support from *The Campaign for the ELCA*, from winter 2014 to fall 2016, the International Women Leaders benefitted 91 women with study and leadership opportunities. Awards were granted to participants of five leadership seminars in Wittenberg, Germany, and to students studying at ELCA colleges, universities, seminaries and academic institutions closer to their homes.

Global church sponsorship

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

In 2017, *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA* is lifting up the Global Church as its theme. We invite every member and every congregation to join us in celebrating the ways in which our church lives into God’s mission of building bridges and living as one body of Christ in the world! We began 2017 with a celebration of International Women’s Day on March 8 and there are two additional celebrations coming up:

Key 2017 dates for Global Church Sponsorship

June 4 – 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 sponsorship (cont'd)

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)

- Global Church Minutes: prayers to be incorporated in weekly worship in 2017
- Global Church Passport: educational activities for youth and young
- Global Church Story Series: 12 stories from our global companions

“God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday

“God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday is an opportunity to celebrate who we are as the ELCA – one church, freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor. Since 2013, thousands of ELCA congregations have participated in this opportunity and dedicated one day to serve communities in ways that share the love of God with all people.

The date for 2017 is Sunday, Sept. 10. Mark your congregation’s calendar today! If your congregation cannot participate on Sept. 10, please consider another time that works best.

This year we observe the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The ELCA’s anniversary theme, “Freed and Renewed in Christ,” reminds us of the gospel’s promise that we are freed in Christ to love and serve our neighbors. This is work that you do every day – serving your community in ways that share the love of God with all of God’s people. Visit ELCA.org/dayofservice for more information.

Human rights social message

The ELCA Church Council has initiated the development of a social message on human rights. This message will meet the long-recognized need for the ELCA to robustly address human rights in light of global complexities. For more information, go to ELCA.org/socialmessages.

Leadership development

The churchwide organization partners with synods, seminaries, outdoor and campus ministries, and others to identify and prepare new Ministers of Word & Sacrament (pastors) and Ministers of Word & Service (deacons). During the past year, a new Candidacy Manual for Synod Candidacy Committees and a revised Candidacy Process was developed and is now being implemented. In addition, the unit helps to encourage and support lay leadership efforts in many synods.



Lutheran Disaster Response

Lutheran Disaster Response brings God's hope, healing and renewal to people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the United States and around the world. When the dust settles and the headlines change, we stay to provide ongoing assistance to those in need.

Key areas of work

Lutheran Disaster Response strives to help the church continue to be church in the midst of disaster – following Christ's call to bring hope and healing to our neighbor in need. Some key areas of work include:

- providing emotional and spiritual care for people who have been affected by disasters and for leaders who respond to disasters;
- coordinating volunteers through local affiliates;
- assisting refugees in a holistic way that meets the varied needs of each community;
- promoting disaster preparedness and disaster-risk reduction;
- addressing unmet needs that could exist months, even years after a disaster and would help assist a family in their recovery. Unmet needs can include things such as furniture and appliances;
- supporting disaster case managers who work one-on-one with individuals or families as they navigate their recovery efforts, such as applying for FEMA assistance or filing insurance claims.

International work

- Provided support for 47 disaster relief and recovery projects in 31 countries in FY2016.
 - These were initiated in response to a wide variety of disasters including the drought in Africa.
- Importantly, support for refugees and migrants has become even more critical in the current sociopolitical context; efforts are focused on AMMPARO as well as responding to the refugee crisis in the Middle East and Europe.
- Last fall, Hurricane Matthew hit in the Caribbean, and LDR's collective response spanned across international and domestic work.
 - Internationally, we responded by supporting emergency relief in Haiti and Cuba (the first time LDR responded to a disaster in Cuba).
- Support for recovery efforts after the earthquake in Nepal is ongoing, with completion of this phase of work planned for dedication in summer 2017.
- We have also worked with companion churches to build capacity for disaster preparedness through workshops in Malaysia (July) and Madagascar (October).

Domestic work

- Provided support for 12 disaster relief and recovery projects in 10 states in FY2016.
- AMMPARO was affirmed at the Churchwide Assembly, and we continue to support programming such as Pro-Bono Lawyers and the Guardian Angel's program to support unaccompanied minors from Central America.



Lutheran Disaster Response (cont'd)

- Continuing to coordinate with the four states affected by Hurricane Matthew.
 - Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia
 - We are coordinating with social ministry organizations and synods to work toward long-term recovery efforts.
- The West Virginia flooding
 - Coordinating with our affiliate for long-term recovery efforts. Several congregations, pastors and individuals supported the recovery efforts.
- South Dakota reservation flooding
 - We continue to work with Native American communities to accompany them through the recovery process from disasters that received little to no media attention.
- Louisiana flooding
 - Coordinating with affiliate Upbring, which is implementing a major disaster case management program for survivors. The disaster team is operating out of First Lutheran Church in Lafayette, La.
 - This flood started during the 2016 Churchwide Assembly in New Orleans and was declared one of the worst U.S. disasters since Hurricane Sandy.

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, build expansions and make renovations.
- 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 2016, MIF had 860 loans outstanding, totaling \$524 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 2016, MIF investments totaled \$474 million.

The MIF is a financially strong and stable organization, with a record of steady, controlled growth. With total assets of \$678 million and net assets of \$198 million at year-end 2016, MIF maintains a capital ratio of 29 percent—positioning MIF in the top tier of well-capitalized church extension funds.



New congregations

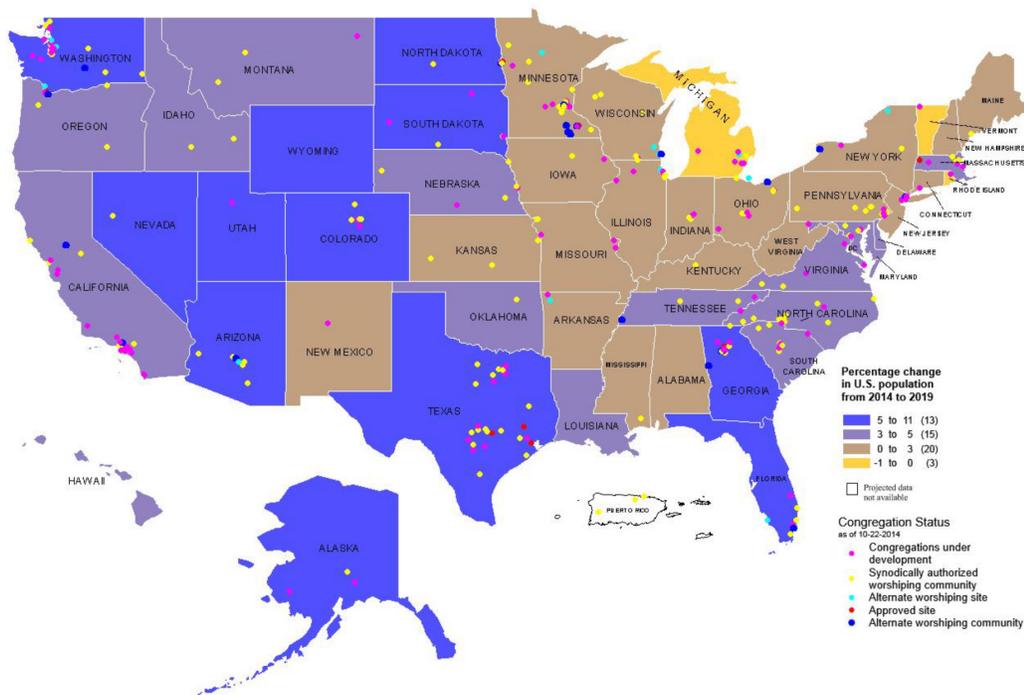
We share Christ's love by extending our welcome through new congregations and by supporting them as growing centers for evangelical mission.

As we seek to grow God's church and extend our welcome to all God's people, we are worshipping 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 372 ELCA new ministries currently under development in the United States and the Caribbean through the work of 65 synod mission tables made up of local leaders, directors for evangelical mission and bishops.

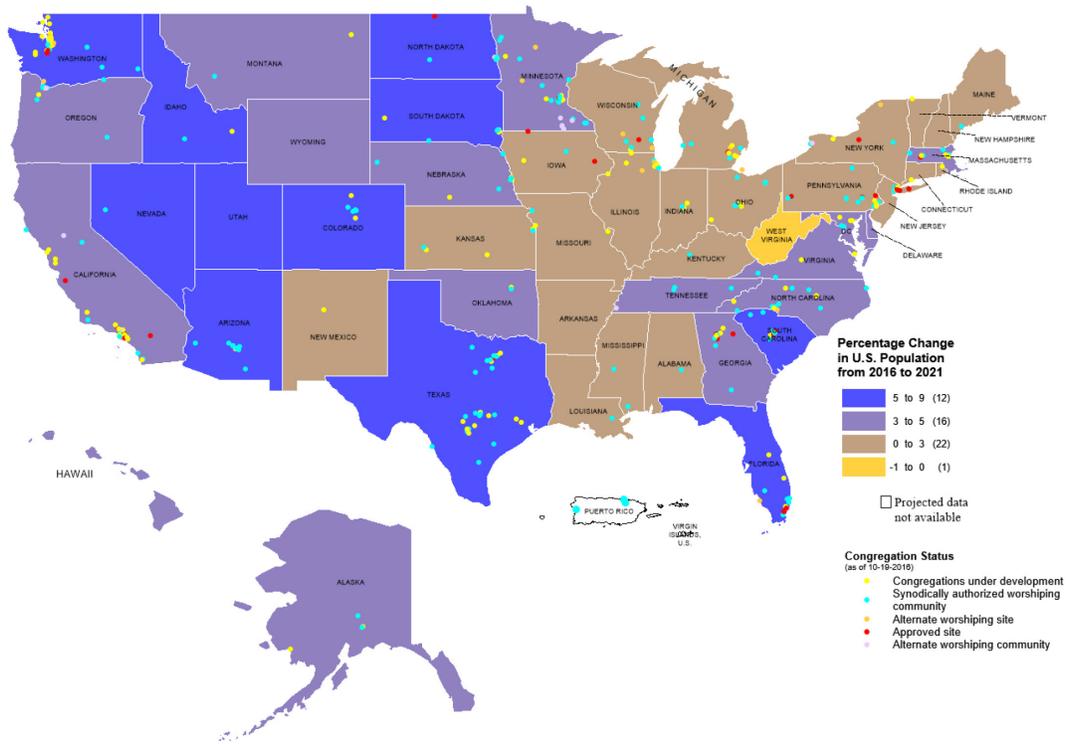
But there is more work to be done and communities to reach. In order to reflect the diversity in our country, we are actively engaged in God's mission with the goal of becoming an evangelizing, multicultural and multigenerational church.

Map of ELCA congregational development

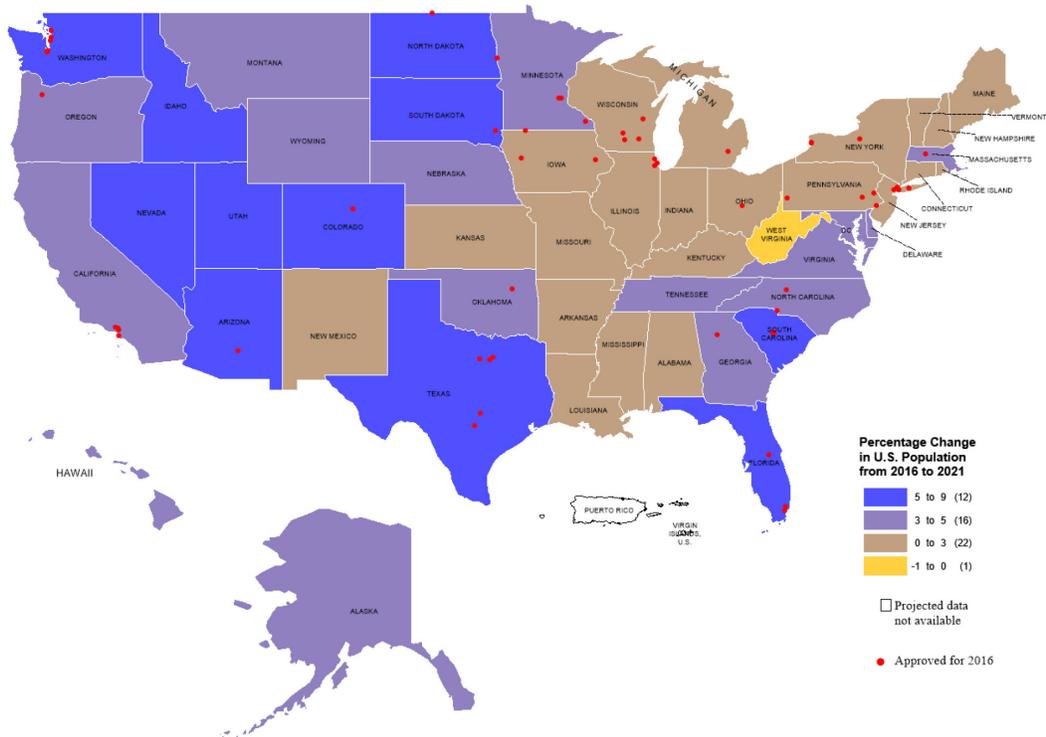


New congregations (cont'd)

Map of ELCA congregational development



Map of ELCA congregational development - Approved for 2016



New congregations (cont'd)

ELCA new congregations key statistics:

- **384** new ministries are currently under development
- **62** new starts were approved in 2016
- **12** new starts were approved in 2017 as of March 2, 2017
- **136** total new starts total approved in last 26 months
- **514** new ministries have been organized as congregations since the birth of the ELCA in 1988
- **56 percent** of all new starts are among ethnic-multicultural communities
- **18 percent** of 2016 new starts are with ecumenical partners
- **21 percent** of 2016 new starts are young adult-millennial leaders and communities

What YOU can do ...

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

PRAY: Be a prayer partner for the new start and its mission developer.

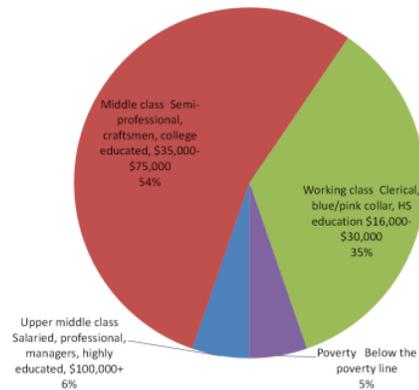
GIVE: Share your resources to propel a new congregation in its development. You can support ELCA new congregations today by making a gift online at: ELCA.org/newcongregations/donate

Office of the Secretary

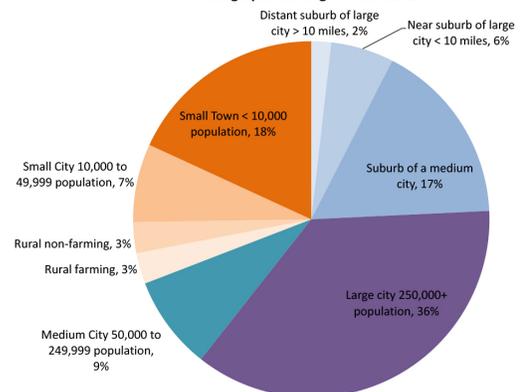
Congregations should amend their constitutions to incorporate the changes made to the Model Constitution for Congregations that were adopted by the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. Amendments made in conformity to the model require action at one congregational meeting and require a majority vote for adoption.

Deacons are still counted as laypeople when looking at the representational principles of this church. This status is being addressed by the Entrance Rite Discernment Working Group and any change would come before the 2019 Churchwide Assembly.

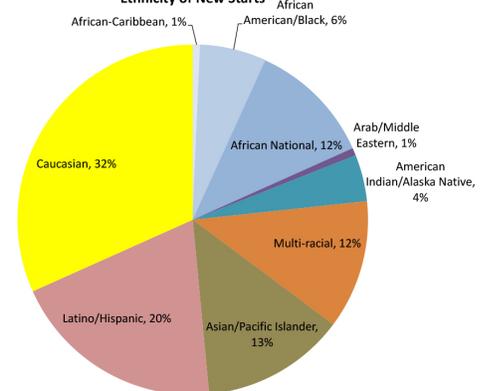
New Starts by Economic Group Type



Geographic Setting of New Starts



Ethnicity of New Starts



Office of the Treasurer

- ELCA total operating revenue and support for 2016: **\$69,001,013**
- ELCA total expense and allocations for 2016: **\$67,370,338**
- ELCA World Hunger total income: **\$21,922,250**

Campaign-to-date

- Congregations: \$2,276,568
- Leadership: \$12,259,243
- Global Church: \$14,049,115
- Hunger and Poverty: \$79,789,649
- “Where needed most”: \$4,989,452

Total revenue and commitments:
\$113,364,026, 57.3 percent of goal – on target

Refugees and migrants

ELCA Global Mission is responding to several critical refugee or migration crises in the global context. Through relationships with global companions and partners, we provide humanitarian assistance, extend a welcome to the stranger and encourage those in power to work for peace with justice. Here are some examples:

- Support has been provided to companions and partners in Hungary, Serbia, northern Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Jordan to assist people in transit and those living in refugee camps and host communities.
- With ELCA support, Asylum Protection Center in Serbia provides critical information, humanitarian supplies and psychosocial support to refugees from countries such as Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.
- Also in Serbia, Lutheran Disaster Response provided \$100,000 in 2016 to build a temporary shelter and supply acute humanitarian needs of refugees during the winter months. The shelter is insulated and heated and can be used by approximately 200 single mothers with children, and/or families on a daily basis.
- In Sub-Saharan Africa, an ELCA missionary is accompanying Sudanese refugees in Gambella, while additional support is provided for refugee camps in Kakuma and Daabab.

Global migration story: Safety net for refugee children in Cairo, Egypt

Yohannes was 16 when he arrived in Cairo, Egypt, alone. He made his way to Egypt from Eritrea, in East Africa. He crossed the Sudan and with food hard to come by he found himself going without food for two days. Upon arriving in Cairo, Yohannes came to St. Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS) seeking help. StARS, a program supported by gifts to ELCA World Hunger, offers unaccompanied refugee children food, education and psychosocial support. First order of business for Yohannes: a warm, home-cooked meal.



Refugees and migrants (cont'd)

Through your gifts to ELCA World Hunger, StARS feeds 350 refugee children two meals a day, four days a week. And, with the help of the program, Yohannes has learned about nutrition, budgeting, services available to him in Cairo, and how to get around this city of 7.7 million.

The program also offers him a safe space for playing sports and building friendships. "If StARS did not exist, I would go without food for the entire day," Yohannes said. "Nobody can study with an empty stomach."

"And here I get the chance to learn and to be with my friends."

Today Yohannes is attending school. He has a brighter future thanks to your support of ELCA World Hunger.

Rostered Ministers Gathering

The ELCA will host its first Rostered Ministers Gathering in Atlanta (Aug. 7-10, 2017). This is an opportunity for Word and Service and Word and Sacrament ministers to gather for continuing education, fellowship, fun, service and worship.

Keynote speakers include: Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, the Rev. Dr. James Forbes and Rachel Held Evans.



Our theme, "On the Way – Together," uses the Emmaus road story (Luke 24:13-35) to guide our time together. It's an opportunity to gather rostered ministers from around this church to remind one another that we are far better together than we are apart. We are on our way together as a church with our ecumenical partnerships, with our continued conversations around racism and reconciliation, and toward continued reformation.

We will gather in Atlanta in the name of Jesus, the crucified and risen Christ. We will center ourselves each day around Word and Sacrament in worship. We will have opportunities to be in fellowship and to dwell in God's Word. We will hear from keynote speakers. Then we will be sent forth into this world to love and serve the world in Christ's name.

There will be two event pre-gatherings: federal chaplains and young rostered ministers (20s and 30s).

For more information, please visit ELCA.org/RMG. Email questions to 2017MinistersGathering@elca.org or you can call 773-280-2552 or toll free at 800-635-3522. Registration closes on July 23.



South Sudan outreach

In South Sudan, we find the youngest nation and the newest Lutheran Church – in the midst of extremely difficult circumstances.

The ELCA is committed to its ongoing work in South Sudan to help cultivate peace and a sustainable future for millions affected by civil war and famine. There are 3 focus areas for our work:

- We are working together with others to deliver immediate famine relief: Right now, more than seven million people need humanitarian assistance in South Sudan. The ELCA is poised to respond to this need. Through our long-standing relationships in the region, we are prepared to accompany communities through food distribution, water and sanitation, and psychosocial support. Your gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response are critical to implementing this work. Together, we can provide life-saving aid to our brothers and sisters in South Sudan when they need it most.
- Sustainable food security: In efforts to build resilience of communities, we are working through the Lutheran World Federation to enhance food security and improve livelihoods of poor and vulnerable households. With support from ELCA World Hunger, community members are increasing food production through development of new agricultural practices and skills, and women and youth are increasing their economic capacity by initiating businesses through savings clubs and small loans.
- Sustained ministry: In November of 2016, we broke ground on a Lutheran center and clinic in Juba, in an area that lacks basic health and education services. The center will be a place for the community to find hope by providing classes, including computer training, and a health clinic – which will be the country's first and only place for fistula surgery for women and girls. For many South Sudanese adults, this will be their first educational experience.

There is a congregational toolkit online with resources to lift up this work in your communities. Go to ELCA.org/SouthSudanNow.

Women and Justice

Join the conversation!

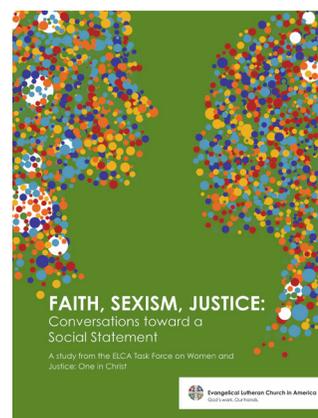
The ELCA Women and Justice Task Force is developing a social statement and wants to hear from you!

Participate with the *Faith, Sexism, Justice: Conversations toward a Social Statement* study with a group or on your own.

Divided into seven modules, topics include:

- Justice
- Gender-based violence
- Sexism
- Words and images for God
- Economics
- Scripture usage

Feedback on the study is accepted through Aug. 31, 2017. For more information, go to ELCA.org/womenandjustice.



2017 EVANGELICAL OUTREACH MISSION TEAM REPORT

The Evangelical Outreach Mission Team (EOMT) is a Synod outreach team consisting of members from each of the nine conferences, representatives from the Synod council including the Vice-President, Randall Foster and Synod council representatives; as well as members from the following ministry areas, New Starts, Renewal/Transformational Ministry, Stewardship, Latino Ministry, Asian Ministry, African Descent, Mission Partner/Founders and Mission Interpreters.

The Team is tasked with implementing the ELCA's evangelism strategy and implementing the Synod's mission goals of intentional outreach to our area's diverse populations, to ethnic-specific populations, developing new congregations and providing resources for existing congregations who are interested in transformational/renewing ministries.

The EOMT has three tables/committees: New Start Ministry, Redevelopment Ministry and Stewardship. We continue our work in implementing the Generous Life project providing an opportunity to work with congregations on what it means to be generous and the stewardship implications for each congregation's church members. This presents an exciting opportunity to have firsthand involvement in the creation of a way of doing stewardship ministry which is tailored to our area.

One of our key functions is recommending allocations of money for new starts and transformational ministries out of the First Los Angeles Fund which was created when First Lutheran of Los Angeles was sold several years ago.

Over the past year the Team has continued in its oversight of the development of several new start and redevelopment ministries in our Synod. Over \$70,000 was allocated from the First Los Angeles fund this past year. We strongly believe that our mission is best served when we work together to support the ministries of our existing congregations to provide not only financial support but guidance where appropriate.

LIVING THE RESURRECTION

A specific emphasis for the EOMT has been in the strengthening of Renewal Ministry within our existing congregations. We received a grant for an exciting new-self-created- program entitled Living the Resurrection. Several congregations are currently involved in helping to create a new vision of renewal in our Synod.

We also continue our work in the following areas:

- **WORKING TO STRENGTHEN OUR TABLES.** The EOMT has three different tables; New Starts, Renewal and Stewardship. We will be discussing ways to broaden the representation at each table to include both pastoral and lay involvement.
- **STRENGTHENING ETHNIC STRATEGIES.** There are three major ethnic strategy components, African-American, Asian and Latino. Given the diversity of the population of the Southwest Synod it is essential that we work together with our local congregations and congregation coalitions to enhance our mission in reaching local communities.
- **REVIEWING EOMT'S STRUCTURE.** One of the issues raised was the unwieldiness of our current structure. Part of our oncoming discussion will focus on potential changes to EOMT's structure.
- **AREA MINISTRY STRATEGY.** We hope to bring recommendations to the Council concerning the development of various ministry strategies which would involve more than a single church. Given the number of small congregations within our Synod we believe that encouraging churches, in close proximity, to walk together will enhance each church's ability to evangelize and reach out into the local community.

We are thankful for the opportunity to serve with our brothers and sisters in the Southwest California Synod as we spread the Good News of the Gospel.

We will have a booth available at this year's Synod Assembly and will have written information available. We are happy to answer any questions you may have about EOMT and the various projects ongoing in southern California.

Respectfully submitted,

Philip C. Allen
Chairperson

Synod Mission Team for Justice

Sharon Heck, Chair



Our Justice Team has been very active this past year. Team members meet once a month to hear reports from our committees and task forces. We meet on the second Tuesday at the Synod Office, 10:30 AM to 1:30 PM and anyone is welcome to join us. Below you will find reports from four of our groups. We also have some activity on Prison Ministry and Racial Diversity. Under Prison Ministry we support the Recovery Bibles for Prisoners project at Hope Lutheran, Hollywood. Racial Diversity will be planning educational events for congregations.

I would like to thank all of the faithful members of our Team. A special thank you is extended to our Executive Committee: Jane Affonso, Alexia Salvatierra, and John Halbert who serves as our secretary. This committee helps me plan our meetings, and they are very active in many of our projects.

The Chair of the **Immigration Committee** is Pastor Alexia Salvatierra and here is her report. Accomplishments:

1) Guardian Angels Project:

- Over 40 regular volunteers visiting immigration court three days a week to accompany and support unaccompanied children and youth fleeing violence in Central America, connecting them with legal resources as the front line responders.
- Quarterly trainings with updates on broader threats and advocacy opportunities
- Participation in ELCA steering committee for AMPARRO project (and technical assistance provided as needed to new Guardian Angel programs in other synods.)

2) Second Annual Refugee and Migrant Sunday

- Current educational materials developed (including mission moment, sermon helps etc.) and outreach to congregations carried out for second Sunday of Lent

3) Initial Training for Sanctuary Network (representatives of over 20 congregations attended) and facilitation of process for potential sanctuary family at Fe y Esperanza.

4) Preparation of workshops for regional ELCA Youth gathering and for Synod Learning event

The Chair of the **Middle East** group is Bishop Emeritus Dean Nelson and here is his report.

The Middle East Peace Task Force follows the ELCA's Peace Not Walls strategy for engaging our Synod in the work of peacemaking in Israel and Palestine. Awareness, Accompaniment and Advocacy are the three emphases of the strategy. We help make the congregations of our Synod aware of the situation on the ground in the Holy Land, we accompany our brothers and sisters in the ELCJHL with our prayers, visits and financial support, and we advocate with our legislators for a two state solution for ending the occupation and the hostilities. Interested persons are welcome to join the Task Force.

The Co-Chairs of the **Green Faith** group are Jane Affonso and Pastor Peg Schultz-Akerson, and here is their report.

- Team attended ELCA-sponsored Retreat at Luther Glen which drew together the 3 CA Synods on Green Faith efforts: CA Cares for Creation: Collaboration, Cooperation, Communion. Included gathering apples; collecting eggs which we brought to San Bernardino Lutheran City Center Mission
- Theoasis – Professional Leader’s Retreat “How to Be Green in Congregations” gifted participants with Green Faith Resources on USB – Oct. 2016 – led by Prs. Peg Schultz-Akerson and Glen Egertson,
- Created Lutheran’s Restoring Creation CA Facebook Page AND Group.
- Represented at California Adaptation Forum (Marsha Harris) – Sept2016
- Provided consultation to many for Monarch butterfly habitat (milkweed).
- Provided consultation on succulent gardening at 2016 Assembly - Gave out poppy seeds (CA State Flower) approx.100 packets
- First Lutheran, Torrance co-sponsored viewing the film – "Bag It" – Nov. 2016
- Trinity Wall Street - Water Justice Conference – Live-streaming at Ascension, Thousand Oaks
- Encouraged use of Fair Trade Coffee/Tea by SoCalSynod. Raised funds to support it.
- Celebrated the farm at Luther Glen – And the commitment to plant TREES! ☺
- Facilitated Synod observance of UN WORLD WATER DAY 2017 on March 22nd at Lutheran Center, Glendale. Dr. Lisa Dahill offered a beautiful sermon which can be found on Synod website. Bishop Erwin presided.
- READ many more details on our flyer, at Green Faith booth, and on our video!

The **Joint Episcopal-Lutheran Gun Violence Prevention Task Force** is Co-Chaired by Virginia Classick, Patricia Terry (Episcopalian) and Rev. Dan Gibson (Lutheran). Our mission is to educate, equip and engage congregations in the work of gun violence prevention. Over this past year we have increased our use of e-news and developed a Facebook page to promote events and express our concerns. We led workshops and provided resource tables at synod-wide assemblies, pastor’s retreats, women’s conventions, and other conference events. At this year’s first nationwide “Concert Across America” event, Bishop Erwin gave the invocation. For Gun Violence Sabbaths and other national commemorations, we offered litanies and songs for Sunday services. Our network is growing, and this coming year we plan to expand our work in all areas of education, outreach, and advocacy.

As you can see, our Justice Team has been very busy this year. It is a wonderful group of people who try to follow the biblical teaching of Micah 6:8. "... and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." NRSV

Come join us!

Southwest California Lay Leadership Mission Team 2017 Synod Assembly Report

The LLMT in conjunction with the Synod Staff have worked this past year to present the Reformation Road trip to Celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. At the writing of this report, there are two Reformation Road trips opportunities left to hear Bishop Erwin's lectures on Martin Luther.

The attendance with each event increased. Here is where we went this year:

- The Lutheran Center, Glendale, September 17, 2016:
 - Lecture One & Two: Luther as A reformer of the Church.
 - In-Depth Text: To The Nobility of the German Nation, 1520
- First Lutheran Church, Torrance, November 19, 2016:
 - Lectures Three & Four: Luther as a Reformer of Christian Life.
 - In-Depth Text: The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther, 1529
- Hill Avenue Grace – Pasadena, January 21, 2017:
 - Lectures Five and Six: Luther as a Reformer of the Sacraments.
 - In-Depth Text: The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1520
- Emmanuel Lutheran – North Hollywood. March 25, 2017:
 - Lectures Seven & Eight: Luther as a Reformer of Pastoral Practice
 - In-Depth Text: A Simple Way to Pray, 1535
- Ascension Lutheran – Thousand Oaks, May 13, 2017:
 - Lectures Nine & Ten: Luther as a Reformer of Marriage and Civil Society
 - In-Depth Text: Temporal Authority: To What Extent I Should Be Obeyed, 1523
- Mt Carmel – San Luis Obispo, July 15, 2017
 - Lectures Eleven & Twelve: Luther as a Reformer of Biblical Interpretation
 - In-Depth Text: On Translating, 1530

We continue stamping the passports distributed at the first trip with a Luther and now an official 500th Anniversary stamp. A small token gift: a reminder of Luther's Christmas Hymn "From Heaven Above" coin, a Sola coin, a Luther Rose pin, and a Martin Luther pin.

Thanks again to the:

- Bishop Erwin for his willingness to share his knowledge on Martin Luther. It is a joy to hear him speak.
- Sherri Miller, Samantha Henderson, Robin Lujan, and Nicole Miller Synod Staff for their registration coordination and preparation.
- LLMT members: Nancy Neyer, Valerie Shaw, Kristal Shipp, Karen and Penny Moyer for set and registration. Penny Moyer for video taping the sessions.
- Each church for their support committees.

Books are sold at each location: Luther Small Catechism \$1.00, and the October 31, 1517 by Martin Marty.

Pictures of the Reformation Road Trip 2016 – 2017.

First Lutheran, Torrance



Hill Avenue Grace,
Pasadena

Emmanuel, North Hollywood



SWCS Recovery and Spirituality Team Report

This year's Synod Assembly theme is: *Freed in Christ to Serve*. In Galatians 5:1, St. Paul says: *Stand firm then, and do not let yourself be burdened again by a yoke of slavery*. This declaration of freedom is both a statement of independence and encouragement to defend that freedom. It is based on the liberating, redemptive act of Jesus Christ that sets us free from the various dark forces that would enslave us.

We define addiction as, not only the unhealthy attachment to various substances, but any object that enslaves us and restrains our freedom. This ranges from cultural ideologies to church traditions to various personal fixations. We are exposed to it in all areas of life, and to some degree, it is something we all encounter personally. As people of faith, it can erode our trust-relationship with God and damage and destroy our relationships with others.

Without a doubt, this is a difficult and complicated issue that is further clouded by stigma and fallacy. What we might tend to label as a "moral shortcoming" could in reality be a misunderstood disease. Once the condition turns chronic, it can lead to a debilitating physical and mental deterioration that can result in death. Sadly, many who have sought the church for refuge and care were instead met with judgment and condemnation.

The Recovery and Spirituality Team recognizes that the use of our grace-oriented theology can offer release and life-giving transformation for those who are caught in the deadly grip of addiction. We are new, and some of our initial goals include: distinguishing between myths and foundations concerning the plight of addiction; providing education, resources and support; offering useful spiritual practices; equipping those who desire to work with others who suffer; and engaging in public awareness and advocacy.

Our members include: Deacon Shannon Savage-Howie, CSD (Co-Chair), John Halbert, Vicar Julie Kelly, Rev. Mark Rasbach and Mary Tabata, PhD.

As we embark on this much-needed venture, we ask for your prayers and invite you to consider your part in this special calling that brings new freedom and hope to others.

Grace & Peace,

Rev. Dan Gibson, RADT-II, Co-Chair
SWCA Synod Recovery and Spirituality Team

Mission Team for Rostered Leadership



The Mission Team for Rostered Leadership is responsible for supporting the Bishop and the synod staff in matters involving rostered leaders at all stages of their careers through candidacy, call process, interim ministry and including retirement. The team helps organize and plan synod events such as the Bishop's Colloquy and assists in review and oversight of clergy and deacons who are in calls authorized through the Synod Council.

Members of the team include: Pastor Ruth Sievert (Chair), Pastor James Bessey, Deacon Lynn Bullock, Deacon Kevin Eisenbraun, Pastor Megan Hunt Fryling, Pastor Ralph Midtlyng, Pastor Reg Schultz-Akerson (Synod staff liaison), and Mr. Jon Uhler

The team has met three times since the last synod assembly, holding meetings in June and December of 2016 and April of 2017. During the time since last year's synod assembly the team accomplished the following:

- Helped edit and oversee a plan for congregations in transition
- Formed groups to support trained interim ministers, young clergy and deacons, and retirees and their spouses, including widowed spouses of retirees.
- Helped edit and oversee and new synod directory of congregations and rostered leaders in digital format

Events that the team organized or helped organize included:

- The Bishop's Colloquy and Chrism Mass held March 13.
- A Boundaries workshop held March 14. It is hoped that such workshops will be held in the spring and fall of each year in different places throughout the synod.
- The first gathering of trained Interim Ministers in order that they might support each other, learn from one another and interact. A gathering of Interim Pastors to encourage and support one another, encourage them in pursuing intentional interim training, and for more experienced interims to provide mentoring and some training. The group decided to meet twice a year, once at CLU and once at The Lutheran Center, and Pastor Ron White has agreed to convene the group.
- The planned retirees and spouses luncheon at (this) Synod Assembly.

- Ongoing workshops and programs on mediation and conflict resolution with the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center.

Things that we are researching include finding a way to provide continuing education funds for our rostered leaders, and ways to provide more support for rostered leaders in specialized calls or challenging ministry settings.

Youth Ministries and Synod Youth Team – 2017

2016-2017 has been a very eventful year for the Southwest California Synod Youth Team. We are a team whose mission is to help youth to find their place in the ELCA and the Synod, and to use their God-given gifts as God directs. Our team members are elected or appointed to serve the youth and congregations within the Southwest California Synod. Through servant events, consulting teams, youth gatherings for High School, Middle School, and Elementary-aged youth, as well as being present and serving at Synod Assembly. Our theme verse for our team is I Timothy 4:12, which says, “Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young.”

Our “year” typically begins at the annual Fall Retreat for High School Youth, at which time elections to the team occur.

We have a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Multicultural Rep, Definitely-Abled Rep, Hospitality Rep, Media Manager, as well as Conference Reps and Adult Leaders.

- Our High School Leadership Event in October 2016 took place at Camp Luther Glen. Our theme was “Shine”, with our speaker being Michael Bridges of the band “Lost & Found”.
- In November, Cheyenne Boykin (our President) and Shawntelle Augustine (our Multicultural Rep), both from St. Mark’s, Los Angeles, traveled to the ELCA Youth Leadership Summit in North Carolina, where they discussed many of the issues facing youth in the ELCA. They met people from all over the country and were deeply moved by the things that they did!
- Last November, some of us were able to help with the Middle School Youth Gathering in Anaheim. There were about 300 youth present, and this was done in conjunction with the Pacifica Synod.
- We began the new year with a planning retreat at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in Los Angeles. We helped to lead an Epiphany Event for the congregation, and planned several events for the year. A film crew joined us one evening to interview us for the making of a film to be used at the upcoming ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston 2018.
- We helped with the Elementary Youth Gathering at Luther Glen in March.
- We also planned a one-day Elementary Youth Gathering for children from both the Pacifica Synod and the Southwest California Synod. Our theme was “Be Our Guest”, teaching children about being welcoming and offering hospitality!
- Synod Assembly is always a highlight for our team, because it gives us opportunities to mingle with youth and young adult voting members from congregations as well as the many pastors & congregational leaders from our Synod. We host a reception, have a youth booth with information and giveaways, and we serve the assembly as pages, worship leaders and more! Rosalie Tarsala from our team was elected last June as the Youth Rep to Synod Council.

FUTURE EVENTS

- The Western States Youth Gathering will happen in late June/early July. Gathering Synod Coordinators from Pacifica and Southwest California Synods will be leading workshops about the upcoming Houston Youth Gathering.
- November 10-12, 2017, we will host the Annual High School Youth Retreat. Pastors, youth leaders and youth are invited to join us. Our theme is “Remix”, based on Revelations 21:5, and our speaker will be Pastor Matt Keadle.
- Middle School Youth Gathering will be November 17-19, and will include a trip to Universal Studios.
- Janet Renick will be serving as the Gathering Synod Coordinator for the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston, 2018. Workshops will be presented throughout the year as we prepare!

The Synod Youth Team consists of youth and adult leaders from our Synod who see youth as being the PRESENT of the Church today. Those serving 2017 are:

President – Cheyenne Boykin (St Mark’s, Los Angeles)
President-Elect – D.J. Ware (Christ, West Covina)
Vice President & Hospitality – Kaytlynn Haywood (Prince of Peace, Covina)
Secretary & L.A. Metro Conference Rep – Shawntelle Augustine (St. Mark’s, L.A.)
Definitely-Abled Rep – vacant
Multicultural Rep – Jaylen Ware (Christ, West Covina)
Synod Council Rep – Rosalie Tarsala (Christ the Shepherd, Altadena)
Media Manager – Emma Griffis (Mt Cross, Camarillo)
Other Conference Reps:
Twin Valleys – vacant
Channel Islands –vacant
Central Coast Conference – Anneke Moersdorf (Mt. Carmel, SLO)
San Gabriel – Brittney Rodriguez (Christ, West Covina)
Tehachapi – Alayda Young (At Large – St. Mark’s, L.A.)
Foothill – Sarah Hoffmann (At Large – Christ, West Covina)

Adult Leaders:

Janet Renick – Adult Chair (Christ, West Covina)
Bryan Honda (Shepherd of the Valley, Simi)
Ingrid Frokjer (Mt. Carmel, San Luis Obispo)
Pastor Matt Keadle (St. Mark’s, Los Angeles)
Meredith Gardner (Mt Cross, Camarillo)
Aaron Tidwell (Christ, Long Beach)

There are still several openings on the team that we hope to fill as soon as possible. Talk to us!

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Renick, Adult Chair, Southwest California Synod Youth Team

May 5, 2017

CENTRAL COAST CONFERENCE

Church Together:

The Central Coast Conference encompasses San Luis Obispo County and northern Santa Barbara County placing us at the northern end of our synods geographic boundaries. The conference includes eight congregations:

- **Bethel Lutheran**, Templeton –Pastor Amy Beverage
- **Hope Lutheran**, Atascadero – Pastor’s Ryan & Liz Radtke
- **Calvary Lutheran**, Morro Bay – Pastor Jim Berg
- **Mt. Carmel Lutheran**, San Luis Obispo – Pastors Valarie & Dan Carlson
- **Iglesia Luterana Santa Cruz**, Santa Maria – Father Estaban Salazar
- **Gloria Dei Lutheran**, Santa Maria – Pastor Greg Kintzi, Conference Dean
- **Peace Lutheran**, Lompoc – Pastor Jeffrey Nelson
- **Bethania Lutheran**, Solvang – Pastor Chris Brown

Specialized ministries include **elder ministry** (Solvang Lutheran Home, Solvang), **young child ministry** (Bethania Preschool & Afterschool, Solvang), **prison ministry** (U.S. Federal Penitentiary, Lompoc and San Luis Obispo Men’s Colony, SLO), and **campus ministry** (Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo).

Conference Highlights from 2016:

- Father Estaban Salazar and his wife Angie began serving at Iglesia Luterana Santa Cruz under a temporary call until Father Estaban is approved for transfer to the roster of the ELCA. The two of them have jumped right into our conference life by inviting all churches to a few of their big festivals at Santa Cruz and hosting our recent Spring Conference Assembly. It’s exciting to see so many new families participating in the life of this mission congregation.
- On February 24th – 26th of this year, Bethania Lutheran in Solvang hosted the 32nd Farstrup-Mortensen Lecture Series. The theme of the lecture series this year was “The Reformation and its Consequences.” The speakers included Bishop, Dr. Guy Erwin and Professor Kirsi Stjerna from P.L.T.S. If you are looking for an excellent continuing education experience, please consider joining us in the future.
- This coming June a number of people from our conference will participate in a tour to Luthers Saxony to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. The Bishop and a number of our local pastors will be participating in this tour as well.

- At our Fall Conference Assembly this year, Pastor Amy Beverage gave a presentation on “Ugly Food” which centered around practices every congregation can engage in which support conservation of our environment.
- On Saturday, March 4th, a memorial service was held in Atascadero for retire Pastor Russ Mueller who was an active participant in our monthly conference gatherings and will be deeply missed.
- Outreach efforts to impact local neighborhoods continue to be implemented throughout our conference. “Serve Santa Maria” is now in its seventh year with nearly 400 people gathering from over 20 congregations to do various beautification projects. “Love Lompoc” is also going strong and starting to build new partnerships.

Forward to Serve God’s People in 2017:

- We look forward in the coming year to finding new ways for commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, including some special music programs around the central coast.

Respectfully Submitted by the Rev. Greg Kintzi,
Conference Dean

Channel Islands Conference
Synod Assembly 2017

Congregations in our conference:

- Ascension Lutheran Church, Thousand Oaks - Pastors Tim Delkeskamp, Steven Herder
- Christ Lutheran Church, Goleta - Pastor Elizabeth Nees
- Holy Cross, Ojai
- Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Thousand Oaks - Pastors Erik Goehner, Tom Ford
- King of Glory Lutheran Church, Newbury Park - Pastor Steven Simpson
- Mount Cross Lutheran Church, Camarillo - Pastor John Soyster
- New Hope Lutheran Church, Agoura - Pastor Craig Beeker, Deacon Lynn Bulock
- Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Oxnard - Pastor Nancy Switzler
- Our Saviour's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Oxnard - Pastor Lynn Enloe
- Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church, Simi Valley - Pastor Jennifer Chrien
- St. Paul's Episcopal and Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Santa Paula - Rev. Dr. Cynthia Jew
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Santa Barbara - Pastor Truls Person
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Ventura - Pastors David Hall, Erin Martinson

Highlights from the past year:

- The pastors in the conference have continued to meet monthly. We have discussed subjects including: Lutheran Social Services, the Rainbow Umbrella Network, and preaching resources.
- There were a number of pastoral transitions over the past year. Rev. Tim Delkeskamp now serves as senior pastor at Ascension Lutheran Church in Thousand Oaks, and Rev. Jennifer Chrien was called as the pastor to Shepherd of Valley Lutheran Church in Simi Valley. Rev. Elizabeth Nees has been an interim pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Goleta, and Rev. Lynn Enloe continues as the interim pastor for Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Oxnard. Deacon Lynn Bulock was called to New Hope Lutheran Church in Agoura.
- The conference continues to participate in interfaith conversations. This appears to be an area of growing interest for many in our congregations. A large number of Lutherans attended the "Family of Abraham" picnic, hosted by the Islamic Center of Conejo Valley. Many Lutheran clergy also attended a meeting of faith leaders at the Islamic Center of Conejo Valley after the Trump administration travel ban was put into place.
- The 2016 Fall Conference Assembly was hosted by California Lutheran University on September 6th. The 2017 Spring Conference Assembly was hosted by Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church on May 2nd. We are truly grateful to both of these hosts and for the opportunity to meet together.

Looking to the future:

The congregations in the conference hope to create a joint worship service this year in celebration of the 500th anniversary of the reformation. We are looking for additional opportunities to do ministry together as well.



Foothill Conference

Southwest California Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
1920 W. Glenoaks Blvd.
Glendale, California 91201
818-842-3138

The Rev. Pr. Keith G. Banwart, Jr. – Dean

2016 proved to be a time of great change in the Foothill Conference of our beloved Synod. Here is a brief rundown of some of the leadership and other changes:

- Agape, El Monte seems to have possibly ended his ministry
- First, Glendale ended its life as a “congregation” in the traditional sense some months after the retirement of Pr. Ken Simon. A time of transition was guided by Pr. Ioan Ittu. First Lutheran School remains open under the auspices of the Synod.
- Lutheran Church in the Foothills, La Canada celebrated the Installation of Pr. Scott Peterson as its new pastor.
- Mt. Olive, La Crescenta began a new call process after Pr. Gary Heltsley announced that he would be leaving later this summer.
- Solheim, Los Angeles went through a review of its ministry leading to a number of changes including receiving pastoral leadership from Pr. Kathy Richter after the retirement some time ago of Pr. Charlie Carlson.
- Hill Ave. Grace, Pasadena began a time of transition with Pr. Gene Leiter serving as Interim Pastor.
- Trinity, San Gabriel also entered into a time of transition after the retirement of Pr. Ed McGee with pastoral leadership first provided by Pr. Deborah Andersen and then Pr. Kenny Bowen.

And those are only some of the major changes!

Once again this year, Audrey Bahr continued to serve the Conference as Chair and Pr. Deborah Andersen continued her service as Secretary/Treasurer, attempting to encourage congregations to remember their commitment of minimal dues payments to further the work of the Conference.

As Dean, I continue to be thankful for all of the Rostered Leaders who serve the congregations of the Conference and ask the Holy Spirit to be with each one of them. Moreover, I know that I, and all of our Rostered Leaders, give God thanks for the lay leaders within each one of our congregations who faithfully continue to do God’s Work with (Their) Hands - even in the midst of rapidly changing times when resources feel strained and needs feel greater - as together we seek to Make Christ Known in the Foothills and beyond.

INJ,

The Rev. Keith G. Banwart, Jr. – Dean

Greater Long Beach Conference

I officially began my position as Dean of the Long Beach Conference in June of 2016. It is a privilege to serve this very active and collegial Conference. Our Collegium is held the second Thursday of every month. At the beginning of the year, the pastors are given a schedule and choose a convenient date to host. For each Collegium, we first have a service of word and sacrament followed by lunch and a meeting. Our Conference pastors and deacons are very faithful in their attendance and participation. During the time that we convene, we each share regarding events, activities, services, and concerns in the congregation we serve.

For many years, five to seven Conference churches have participated in sharing Confirmation, meeting every Wednesday evening from September through May at Christ Lutheran, Long Beach. The pastors and deacons rotate presenting the lesson and topic for each week. We gather at 5:30 for dinner, have games for half an hour, followed by the presentation and discussion, often held in small groups. We end the evening with a brief closing of review and prayers. The Confirmation classes also share in service projects such as wrapping Christmas gifts for LSS. The youth love doing this each year and within two hours wrap 600 or more presents.

For our February Collegium, we visited LSS in Long Beach and were very impressed by the wonderful service they render to the people of Long Beach. Many of us support LSS by donating supplies including food, clothing, school supplies, and even furniture.

It is a tradition in our Conference to hold an Easter Vigil. This year Our Saviour's, Long Beach hosted and it was wonderful! We roasted hot dogs and made s'mores from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m., then processed into the sanctuary for an inspiring and joyful service celebrating the resurrection of our Savior. We were especially blessed to have Bishop Rev. Dr. Guy Erwin preside.

A few of our churches are currently in transition. We were very sad to lose Pastor Nimrod Flores from Grace, Bell. He was ill for some time before he died. We are thankful that he served as long as he was able. St. John's in Cerritos closed and is currently for sale. The congregation has dispersed at this time. Stacy Williams of TEEM ministry was installed at Holy Redeemer, Bellflower. The future of Faith Lutheran, Long Beach is still under consideration.

We have had two Conference Assemblies. One in October was hosted by Christ Lutheran, Downey. Our Spring Assembly was hosted by Christ Lutheran, Long Beach. The Bishop gave an excellent presentation on ELCA Strategic Directions. He discussed the five goals for "Called Together in Christ." The ELCA is in transition and we are anticipating, preparing, and planning for new beginnings and new meanings for gathering and worship. It is both challenging and inspiring.

With excitement we anticipate and prepare for Gay Pride week-end in Long Beach. We are so blessed to be in a Synod and Conference that is supportive of all human rights including

LGBTQ. Our Conference is also very active in interfaith participation as we respect all faith traditions.

Some of our churches are very involved in food distribution programs for the poor and homeless. Fe Y Esperanza in South Gate with Pastor Marta Moscoso has a wonderful program that serves many individuals and families in their area. Holy Redeemer, Bellflower has a long tradition of providing meals and food from their Food Bank. Christ Lutheran Downey will begin a Food Distribution program beginning in August. This will be coordinated with the Moravian Church of Downey which is closing June 4. Moravian members want to help continue this weekly program and Christ Lutheran has offered its facility and support in continuing to serve the Community.

The “Spirit of the Lord is upon us,” and we whole heartedly embrace our Lord’s compelling words, “Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto me.”

Faithfully submitted in Christ,

Nancy Hamm, Dean

LA Metro Conference

The LA Metro Conference spans across some of the most diverse communities in the Southwest California Synod, from the ocean pier of Santa Monica to the border of Compton, encompassing Pico Union and goes as far south as Inglewood. This Conference also hosts a variety of parachurch organizations like the New City Parish, SoCal Lutherans, and Ground Zero to name a few. Along with those, we have a few Congregational-Based Campus Ministries at the University of Southern California, El Camino College and Los Angeles Southwest College.

The primary focus of the LA Metro Conference this year has been around unity, diversity and inclusivity. With such a large territory it makes collective work a challenge at times. However, we welcome this challenge because we believe we are better together. LA Metro voted as a conference to remain as one and not dissolve into two smaller. Splitting up would not help us in our goal to be a diverse church. Furthermore, the wealth in which we are is intrinsically tied to our diversity. We are diverse in many ways—culturally, socioeconomically, in our ethnicity, spirituality and sexuality, worship styles, leadership and community. This diversity leads us to what we have decided to actively pursue this year; what it means to be a Sanctuary Church and to promote Anti-racism in the church.

Our goal is to provide and/or partner for safety and community to those on the margins of life. We see it as our collective responsibility to help families stay together, connect with those who have the means, find help and secure resources to make an impact in people's lives. We have no more clear evidence than the Bruin Shelter at Mt. Olive in Santa Monica or the Guardian Angels program at Angelica.

It has been a new experience to be a dean and one I'm proud to be part of. I do not take this role for granted, but prayerfully hope that our conference will continue to be missional in their work of ministry to others. Here reflected in these pictures below is the work of churches in our community. I can show you, better than I can tell you...

Respectfully Submitted,

Pastor Jonathan Hemphill, Dean
LA Metro Conference
Ascension/Another Level Church



Ascension Lutheran Church



Lutheran Church of the Master



Messiah Lutheran Church



Holy Trinity Lutheran Church



St. Andrew's Lutheran Church



Bruins Shelter at Mt. Olive Lutheran



St. Paul's Lutheran Church



San Gabriel Valley Conference

See GuideBook for report

South Bay Conference



CHURCH Together:

- Christ the King Lutheran Church, Torrance – Pastor Dale Krumland, along with Rev. Hongsun Kim, ordained April 8, 2017, to a joint Japanese/Korean ministry with Christ the King
- First Lutheran Church, Carson – Pastor Dan Gibson, *Interim*
- First Lutheran Church, Torrance – Pastor William Hurst, *Intern* Crystal Larsen
- Glory Lutheran Church, Torrance (Cong. Under Development) – Pastor Newman Qiu, *Pastor/Developer*
- Good Shepherd Lutheran, San Pedro – Pastor Chris Lindstrom
- Olivet Lutheran Church, Hawthorne – Pastor John Miller, *Interim*
- Iglesia Luterana Pueblo de Dios (Cong. Under Development) – Pastor Samuel Nieva, *Pastor/Developer*
- Lutheran Oriental Church, Torrance – Pastor Paul Nakamura
- Resurrection Lutheran Church, Redondo Beach – Pastor Ken Johnson
- St. John Lutheran Church, Gardena – *Maria Paiva, TEEM candidate*
- St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Rancho Palos Verdes, Pastor Jon Gathje
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Hawthorne – Pastor Lawrence Becker, *Conference Dean*
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Manhattan Beach – Pastor Luther Martel

We Gather together:

The South Bay conference pastors and leaders meet every other month, from September through May, for Collegium gatherings hosted by one of the pastors of the conference at their church. These important meetings help us stay connected with one another, as well as with the synod. There are currently two *Congregations Under Development (CUDs)* in our conference.

Conference Highlights:

- First Lutheran in Torrance hosted one of Bishop Erwin's Reformation Roadtrip sessions in November, 2016
- Several churches in our conference, especially First, Torrance, and Trinity, Manhattan Beach, continue to support the Monday Night Meals and feeding program at St. John's, Gardena
- First Lutheran, Torrance, continues to host the Chinese outreach ministry, Glory Lutheran Church
- Christ the King, Torrance, is moving forward in the development of a Korean/Japanese ministry, with the Ordination of Rev. Hongsun Kim this past April
- Several churches in our conference supported Pueblo de Dios in their wonderful Posada event in December 2016, and plan to continue their support
- Several conference pastors meet on Tuesdays for a text study at First, Torrance

Rev. Lawrence Becker
South Bay Conference Dean

Tehachapi Conference

Conference Dean: VACANT

Twin Valleys Conference ASSEMBLY Report 2016

CHURCH Together:

- American, Burbank- Pastor Reginald Hansome, Interim
- Faith, Canoga Park- Pastor Cesar Arroyo
- Church of Hope, Canyon Country- Pastor George McLeary
- Mission St. Francis, Chatsworth- Ramiel G. Shamwel and Pastor Sam Platts
- Bethel, Encino- Pastor Rustin Comer
- Bethlehem, Granada Hills- Pastor Megan Hunt Fryling
- St. Stephen's, Granada Hills- Pastor Ruth Sievert, Interim
- Emmanuel, North Hollywood- Pastor Patricia Lowe
- Iglesia Luterana San Pablo- Pastor Cesar Arroyo, Supply
- St. Matthews, North Hollywood- Pastor-Redeveloper Stephanie Jaeger
- LIFEhouse/First- Pastor Dana Hanson
- Prince of Peace, Northridge- Pastor Charles Bunnell
- Bloom, Santa Clarita- Pastor-Developer Ryan Chaddick
- All Saints, Sun Valley- Pastor Ralph Midtlyng
- Church of the Foothills, Sylmar-pulpit supply
- Central, Van Nuys- Pastor Larry Eckholm, Interim
- St. Andrew's, Van Nuys- Pastor Charles Bunnell
- Shepherd of the Valley, West Hills- Pastor Bryan Woken
- St. Luke, Woodland Hills- Pastor Janet Hansted



[A few of our conference pastors gathered in November.]

FAITH EMBODIED in Our Work:

In 2015, the pastors of the Twin Valleys Conference met monthly as a collegium. Each month we visited a different church and time was spent sharing ministry ideas and talking about ways that our congregations can work together and support each other. Our fall Conference Assembly was held in September at St. Luke Lutheran Church in Woodland Hills with an emphasis on effective stewardship. Our Spring Conference Assembly was held at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church & School in West Hills; we explored the ELCA's new visioning process "Called to Forward Together in Christ." Lay leaders serving our collegium include: Vice President: Jim Obrt, Emmanuel Lutheran—North Hollywood (to Spring 2018); Secretary/Treasurer: Mike Metzger, Faith Lutheran—Canoga Park (to Spring 2018); Representative to Synod Council: Jan Smith, Church of Hope—Canyon Country (to Spring 2017); Representative to Evangelical Outreach Mission Team: Leslie Petit, St. Stephen—Granada Hills.

CONFERENCE Highlights:

- *In March 2015, Ryan Chaddick was ordained and installed as Pastor-Developer of the new-start Bloom in Santa Clarita.*
- *The new start "Mission St. Francis" opened on the former site of Good Shepherd Lutheran in Chatsworth.*
- *In November 2015, the pastors met to share different ideas and practices for the season of Advent.*
- *On November 22, 2015, Rev. Janet Hansted was installed as pastor of St. Luke Lutheran Church in Woodland Hills.*
- *Bethlehem Lutheran, Granada Hills, began sponsoring an ELCA missionary in Cambodia.*
- *Representatives of many Twin Valleys congregations attended the Lutheran Social Services Lutherans Looking Forward Breakfast this spring.*
- *Spanish language ministries in the Twin Valleys conference (Iglesia Luterana San Pablo, North Hollywood, and Faith, Canoga Park) continue to thrive under the leadership of Pastor Cesar Arroyo.*

- *In March 2016, pastors of the conference elected Pastor Stephanie Jaeger and Pastor Megan Hunt Fryling as co-deans*
- *On April 24, 2016, Rev. Ralph Midthyng celebrated 25 years as pastor of All Saints, Sun Valley.*
- *Church of Hope, Canyon Country, recognized 25 years of ministry this spring 2016.*
- *“Adore,” a new Synodically Authorized Worship Community Exploration reaching out to LGBTQ persons and allies in the Latino communities in the San Fernando Valley, began in March 2016 under the leadership of new TEEM candidate Joseph Castenada Carerra.*
- *In March 2016, St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church in North Hollywood in partnership with LSS launched a new ministry: a half-day drop-in program for homeless persons on Wednesdays and encourages other conference churches to participate..*
- *St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church in Van Nuys continues to host the Mother’s Day prison visitation program “Get On the Bus” which unites children with incarcerated mothers.*

CULTIVATE Together:

Twin Valleys congregations, pastors and lay leaders collaborate in several ministries and partnerships with community organizations. Some examples include:

- *Nearly all congregations in the conference support and celebrate the work of Lutheran Social Services, now in Canoga Park.*
- *Women of Twin Valley congregations are active in the local WELCA chapter. At a recent gathering at St. Andrew’s Van Nuys, the group explored global issues in conversation with guest presenters from a Tongan congregation that worships at St. Andrew’s.*
- *Bethel Lutheran, Encino, Bethlehem Lutheran, Granada Hills, and St. Matthew’s Lutheran in North Hollywood continued a 14-year tradition of traveling for 3 days to Tijuana to build houses and improve living conditions through Lutheran Border Concerns Ministry.*
- *Bloom in Chatsworth and Bethel in Encino collaborate regularly through pulpit exchanges and shared fundraising for initiatives such as Charity Water.*
- *Bethlehem, Granada Hills, Bethel, Encino, and Faith, Canoga Park, offer a shared confirmation ministry.*
- *Church of Hope collaborates with various interfaith partners and congregations in the Santa Clarita/Canyon Country area in support of its food pantry and thrift store ministries.*
- *All Saints in Sun Valley partners with a local non-denominational congregation to offer a thriving Summer Day Camp on its campus.*

FORWARD to Serve God’s People in 2016:

The congregations of the Twin Valleys conference join together in witnessing to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the grace of God through common commitments including:

- *Feeding people and developing hands-on ministries;*
- *Offering mutual support through prayer, gatherings, and friendship;*
- *Finding more avenues for partnership in mission;*
- *Inspiring one another to creative forms of Christian ministry; and*
- *Encouraging one another to reach out to our individual and shared communities and contexts.*

-We hope to spend more time finding ways that we can help each other in our ministries

-We hope to increase participation in the clergy meetings and in the conference assemblies

ABUNDANT Opportunity

God's abundance is manifest in the Twin Valleys conference in:

- The extraordinary generosity of our members as they support Lutheran Social Services, Get on the Bus, homeless outreach and other initiatives that care and protect the most vulnerable in our midst.
- The boundless energy of our clergy and laity to live the Resurrection in our congregations and communities.
- The capacity in our congregations for creativity and to try new ways of witnessing to God's love and grace.
- Twin Valleys conference is home to two new starts (Bloom, Mission St. Francis), a new SAWC exploration (Adore) and a congregation in transformational ministry (St. Matthew's). We invite you to become mission partners of these new things the Spirit is calling forth—by offering your prayers, presence and presents.
- We continue to look for more ways that our congregations can work together.
- The Twin Valleys Conference pastors are always looking for ways to be more engaged in our communities and in the world. We will continue to share ideas with each other.

California Lutheran

UNIVERSITY

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. Jeremiah 29:7

God does not need our good works, Martin Luther says, but our neighbor does. (Wingren, Luther on Vocation, 10)

To be a neighbor and contribute to the community and world into which you are called. This resonates with the mission of Cal Lutheran, your Lutheran university in the west. Our dedicated and accomplished faculty work with small classes of undergraduate and graduate students who are open-minded-about ideas, about people, and about faith--and are seeking to grow as individuals while they pursue their passions and discover their purpose. Neighbor love has prompted us to live out our mission in these ways:

Adina Nack (Sociology) presented "**Women's Health: A Matter of Justice**" to the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice as they work to create a social teaching and policy document. Nack's two-part seminar used the lens of medical sociology to highlight and explain major health issues faced by girls and women in the U.S.

Molly George (Criminal Justice) and her students, Emily LeGrand and Amanda Juan, have been conducting research focusing on law enforcement and community interaction. Their work, "**Project Safe Passage**" is investigating the effectiveness of community policing and educational interventions with at-risk children in Thousand Oaks. Their preliminary analysis of crime statistics has revealed that community policing and after school programs are correlated with a decrease in crime as well as increased in trust in local law enforcement.

Kapp Johnson (School of Management) and the Office of Congregational Relations is offering **Executive Skills for Pastors: Level One and Two** in July. Through lectures, group work, and one-on-one learning from faculty from the School of Management, leaders will gain valuable and needed skills for the complex environment of congregational management.

Colleen Windham-Hughes (Religion) will be the keynote speaker for the **Youth Ministry Training Event** being held in August at Cal Lutheran, a professional development program training children, youth, and family leaders for their work in the church and the world. Her leadership in the Theology and Christian Leadership program prepares students and professionals for this intentional ministry with congregations.

The accomplished faculty of Pacific Lutheran Theology Seminary are **On The Road** giving presentations, leading discussions, teaching and preaching, and guiding discernment as they serve as teaching theologians for the church. Follow them at www.plts.edu/admission/on-the-road.

California Lutheran

UNIVERSITY

The **Western States Youth Gathering** and **Multicultural Youth Leadership** events will be gathering youth and their adult leaders in June from across the western United States to Dream Big! Through worship, immersion experiences, small groups, and workshops, these young adults will be empowered to engage their community and connect more deeply to their faith.

The **Center for Nonprofit Leadership** is providing a comprehensive approach to sustaining nonprofit-specific organizational and leadership development in Ventura County. Through programming that is accessible, relevant, timely, and adaptive to the current needs of leaders and organizations, the Center provides hands-on management tools that help nonprofit leaders strengthen skills and make valuable contacts for future collaboration.

The **Autism and Communication Center** is offering educational, communication, and community inclusion resources—through workshops, conferences, research and resource information development—to P-20 students with autism and the teachers, providers, caregivers, administrators, and families who support them so that they can choose and use alternative forms of communication and realize their educational and civic potential and become meaningfully included in school and community settings.

The U.S. Department of Education named Cal Lutheran a **Hispanic-Serving Institution**, a milestone in the university's commitment to living out its mission to educate leaders for a global society within the changing context of student demographics. Cal Lutheran's goals as an HSI include evolving from being a Hispanic-enrolling institution to a Hispanic-serving institution by transforming institutional culture and daily practices to embrace inclusive excellence as a guiding concept for strategic planning. Changing the fundamental way the university carries out its curriculum and services from the ground up will help boost services, retention and graduation among Latino/a students.

These are just a few examples of the ways in which your Lutheran university lives out its mission to educate global leaders to live a life of purpose and service to others and make a difference within the community in which we live. Thank for holding us in prayer and encouraging students to investigate the learning environment at Cal Lutheran. Learn more at www.callutheran.edu.

SYNODICAL ASSEMBLIES REPORT - 2017

Southwest California Synod; Pacifica Synod



California Lutheran Homes
and Community Services

Since its founding in 1948, California Lutheran Homes *and Community Services (CLH)*, continues to preserve, strengthen and expand not-for-profit missions in the areas of serving the elderly and other disadvantaged persons, primarily through:

- Providing Charitable Care funds to retirement communities for direct assistance to residents who experience financial hardship,
 - Purchasing furnishings and equipment to improve the residents' quality of life,
 - Renovating and replacing existing capital assets at retirement communities,
 - Funding employee scholarships,
 - Providing resources for chaplaincy and the Center for Spirituality in Aging,
 - Investing seed capital for developing affordable housing projects, and
 - Serving as a sponsor of several subsidized housing projects.
-

In 1999, CLH and two other non-profit retirement community organizations transitioned the daily operations of their owned retirement communities and managed affordable housing communities to the non-profit Front Porch in exchange for relief of their debt obligations. Since then, CLH has been able to focus its strength, resources and energy in serving its constituents.

This is a year of leadership transition for CLH as The Rev. Gary Wheeler will step down as CEO after almost 3 decades at the helm. His retirement had been anticipated, and the Board has selected William Jennings to succeed him starting in July. Mr. Jennings has previously served as CLH's CFO for the past 20 years.

Because of the financial strength of Front Porch, many of the resources of California Lutheran Homes that used to be required to sustain community operations are now available to pursue affordable housing expansion in cooperation with congregations [*see Affordable Housing Section below*] as well as qualitative programming in behalf of the CLH communities operated through Front Porch, including:

CHAPLAINCY Chaplaincy is available at all retirement communities formerly owned by California Lutheran Homes, and to other communities that have partnered with Front Porch.

CENTER FOR SPIRITUALITY AND AGING For decades, The CLH's Center for Spirituality and Aging has brought immeasurable value to the lives of those we serve, and has had significant impact upon the entire long-term-care delivery system in California and beyond. The Center has been responsible for research, education and advocacy in the areas of spirituality in long-term care/retirement living and community-based services, and its resources are available to congregations, synods/district and others. In fact, Front Porch will be incorporating some of the Center's mission vis-à-vis the retirement homes into its resident services. Previously, the Center hosted the International Conference on Aging and Spirituality. The Center's previous director, The Rev. Nancy Gordon, has retired effective March 31, 2017. Going forward, CLH feels it is a good time to revisit the many successes of the Center and look for opportunities for the future.

THE CLH AUXILIARY For decades, the CLH Auxiliary has been a leader in improving resident life at CLH communities through volunteerism. Now, the Auxiliary reaches out to affordable housing communities, as well, including those sponsored by CLH and those managed through Front Porch. The Auxiliary continues to be a major provider of volunteers.



FirstServe *Community Services of the South Bay, Inc.*

"Inspiring People, Transforming Lives"

1725 Flower Avenue • Torrance, California 90503 • Tax ID # 32-0187458

310-320-3818 • www.first-serve.org • firstserve.office@aol.com

Dr. William L. Hurst, Jr., Executive Director • firstserve.hurst@aol.com

Report to the 2017 Southwest California Synod Assembly

In the past year FirstServe has continued our mission of inspiring people and transforming lives. In cooperation with First Lutheran Church and School, Torrance, and other community partners, we have responded to a range of human community needs to inspire people and change lives.

One of these programs is the **Hope Circle support group**. The monthly meetings include therapeutic presentations, reflection, and time for group sharing. New participants are welcome at all sessions. We appreciate a 2009 Synod Mission and Ministry Endowment to help begin this program.

Another FirstServe program is **basic dental care**, offered in partnership with an area dental practice. A skilled Dentist and staff, serving as volunteers, offer free basic dental services one Friday a month. FirstServe is the first point of contact for those inquiring about this program.

FirstKids, a creative arts program offered on the campus of First Lutheran, offers dance, theatre and other creative arts training for elementary and middle school age children. Through these classes, children develop self-esteem and confidence, and get in touch with their creative energies.

First Friends is a growing group of adults with special needs. They gather monthly to visit with friends, share in craft projects, play games, go on field trips, share dinner, and participate in worship. Harbor Regional Center, which operates a housing program within walking distance of our site, has helped us identify needs and offerings for this important and growing program.

New and expanding efforts being undertaken or explored include: an ongoing nutrition and social service partnership with St. John's Lutheran in Gardena; support for families of children with special needs; a partnership offering monthly free classical music concerts in Torrance; and expansion of staff with the addition of a development and advancement professional to join our team.

Ministry with elders is an expanding emphasis for FirstServe. We cooperate with local services for the elderly, helping to guide individuals and families to agencies and sources of important information. Monthly "Prime Timers" luncheons offer nutritious lunches, community speakers and good companionship. Our newest initiative is the **Community Wellness Center**, offering health care advocacy and advisement to South Bay area seniors, and training for caring companions to accompany seniors to medical appointments and emergency care.

Grants and donations from foundations, endowments and individuals assist FirstServe in providing these important programs without charge to participants. We would be happy to share our experience if you are interested in developing similar programs in your community, or would like to join us in our work. For more information contact us at www.first-serve.org.

Sincerely,

Dr. William L. Hurst, Jr.
Executive Director

I-LERT ASSEMBLY REPORT 2017



I-LERT is a collaborative ministry of the Southwest California and Pacific Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Pacific Southwest District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. I-LERT demonstrates Christ's compassion for people by promoting hope, healing, and wholeness for disaster survivors.



I-LERT is connected to Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) through Lutheran Social Services of the Southern California (LSS-SC) headquartered in Santa Ana. We also work with World Relief and Human Care through the Pacific Southwest District office. I-LERT focuses on ministry in the Southern California area, from Hawaii to western Arizona.



I-LERT's Goals:

- Raise awareness in Lutheran congregations about the importance of disaster preparedness and response.
- Enlist and engage congregations to provide spiritual support to those recovery from a disaster.
- Identify the needs and capabilities of the diverse populations within the region to respond to disaster.
- To provide training for congregations through the Prepare to C.A.R.E. program

HIGHLIGHTS

We are updating the PREPARE TO C.A.R.E. program:

Check out the web-site <http://www.i-lert.org/>

The Team continues to meet, with our Judicatory Leaders - Bishops Taylor and Erwin, and President Stoterau, providing leadership with the Team.

We are working with Ron Drews of LSS-SC, to become part of the ELCA's 501.c3.

The LDR Program Director is Pastor Michael Stadie, <http://www.ldr.org/>

LOOKING AHEAD 2016

NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH - I-LERT will be working to help congregations be aware and involved in September, 2017.

See <https://www.ready.gov/september>

GREAT CALIFORNIA SHAKEOUT - On Thursday, October 19th at 10:19 a.m., millions of people throughout the state will participate in the 2017 Great California ShakeOut earthquake drill!

Will you, your family and your Church be involved?

See <http://www.shakeout.org/california/>



Rev. Milo Ken Anderson, I-LERT Co-Chair



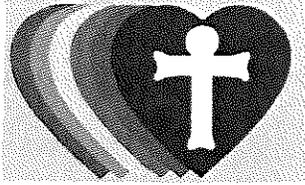
Lutheran Office of Public Policy - California
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Freed in Christ to Serve – The Lutheran Office of Public Policy - California (www.loppca.org), established in 1984 under the Synod's theme of ***Set Free to Serve***, is moving into its 33rd year of education and advocacy, listening and sharing stories connecting faith and life, ethics and public policy, congregations and the Capitol, bringing ELCA social statements and other expressions of institutional policy to bear on issues affecting hunger, poverty, discrimination, equal opportunity, and the well-being of God's creation. LOPP's mission in the public sphere, joining with other expressions of the ELCA (the three synods that cover California; the ELCA Washington Office), and its ecumenical, interfaith, and secular partners, is pursued in the State Legislature and Administration, in a context that includes federal and local government actions. There are many new legislators in 2017, but with changes in term limits, legislators may serve 12 years in one house, enabling development of more experienced leadership in policy subjects. Relationships are important! Please inform your elected officials – and LOPP – about how your congregation and members are assets to your community, and share your experiences in helping to relieve suffering, meet human needs, care for creation, stand for welcome, empower and engage residents – food relief, violence prevention, early childhood care, access to safe, affordable water, immigration and refugee assistance, community organizing, etc. With changes in the federal administration and policies, the importance of California in creating public policies and practices that effectively reduce poverty and hunger and protect the earth has intensified. We are set free to transcend partisanship and division to help reduce harm and promote harmony, seeking and speaking the truth in love – love for God and neighbors, and gratitude for God's gifts of grace and abundance.

The 17 ballot propositions on the 2016 ballot had mixed results from LOPP's perspective: we applaud criminal justice reform and the plastic bag ban, and death penalty repeal will have to wait for another day. In 2016, LOPP advocacy to address poverty focused on successful repeal of the punitive Maximum Family Grant CalWORKS/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families rule that contributed to California's high child poverty rate (approaching one in four kids). 2017 priorities include protecting the gains made by Covered California and MediCal through the Affordable Care Act, reauthorizing and updating California's landmark climate change law, protecting migrants and refugees (including through the ELCA's AMMPARO program and Welcoming Congregations), and funding for affordable housing and permanent supportive housing. Back is the DISCLOSE Act: a "good government/healthy democracy" bill to clearly identify and inform voters about the top three original-source funders of ballot measures (2/3 vote required; died by one vote 2016).

LOPP priorities are pursued through direct advocacy, by supporting congregations and members engaged in advocacy, and by providing hospitality to groups visiting the Capitol at facilities at St. John's Lutheran Church in Sacramento, which donates office space for LOPP. In 2017, the projected LOPP budget is \$128,230, including \$111,694.66 provided by the ELCA Domestic Mission Unit, through an ELCA World Hunger grant to address systemic causes of domestic hunger and poverty. Other income includes support from the Southwest California (\$4,169), Pacifica, and Sierra Pacific Synods, and congregational and individual gifts. A Policy Council provides oversight for LOPP. Members representing the Southwest California Synod include Sharon Heck (Chair), Jane Affonso (Vice Chair, Synod Council rep), Rev. Dan Hooper, and Sheri Groenveld, Lillian Simons represents Women of the ELCA.

– Respectfully submitted, *Mark E. Carlson*, Director



ANNUAL REPORT OF SOCALLUTHERANS.COM
(Lutherans Concerned/Los Angeles)
The Los Angeles Chapter of ReconcilingWorks

Grace, mercy and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

The past year has been a somewhat more difficult year for SoCalLutherans.com. Nonetheless, over the past twelve months, your Board, Clergy, and Lay Volunteers have continued to be involved in a variety of projects and activities.

For the fourth year in a row, LC/LA partnered with St. Paul's, Santa Monica to sponsor an LGBT Pastoral Internship. Vicar Chelsea Achterberg served $\frac{3}{4}$ time at St. Paul's and $\frac{1}{4}$ time for LC/LA assisting with both Long Beach and Los Angeles Pride festivals under the leadership of Pastor Caleb Crainer who worked more than doubly hard this year for a variety of reasons including Pastor Keith Banwart's serious injury. Vicar Achterberg was replaced in Fall 2016 by our new shared intern, Vicar Kristian Kohler.

From afar, the Board monitored the progress of our former interns. Pr. Brenda Bos continues to serve a part-time pastorate in San Juan Capistrano. Pr. Becca Seeley is now serving in campus ministry in New York City. Seminarian Joel Bergeland continues to await call while living in the Twin Cities. And Seminarian Chelsea Achterberg has returned to our Southern Seminary for further graduate studies along with her wife, Mandy.

May and June were once again very busy this year with LC/LA's major presence at Long Beach Pride and at Los Angeles Pride in West Hollywood. Bishop Emeritus Dean Nelson rode in the Long Beach Parade while Bishop Buy Erwin and Mrs. Shirley Egertson did so at Los Angeles – a parade that fell a mere matter of hours after the horrific massacre at Orlando's Pulse LGBT Nightclub. While our numbers remained relatively stable (although we DESPERATELY need more marchers in the future), overall attendance at the parade was down due, in part, to the fear of terrorism. In 2017, our congregations all need to be far more proactive in encouraging congregants to attend and march. The booths inside the festivals were well received; however, the number of volunteers was disappointing, especially at Long Beach Pride.

Looking forward to the remainder of 2017, our new Vicar Kristian Kohler will lead our efforts at both the Long Beach and Los Angeles Pride festivals before completing his internship this summer. Kristian's duties also involve assisting with various outreach efforts and working to increase our public visibility both inside and outside of the church.

Many thanks to all of the members of the Board, all of our members, supporters, and friends, as well as to Aubrey and the national staff of ReconcilingWorks. And also many thanks to Pr. Jaeger and the people of St. Matthew's for hosting our Annual Meeting 2016 along with the assistance of Seminarian Joseph Castañeda-Carrera and the people of Adore, Los Angeles.

May we all go forward into summer 2017 exuding the grace of the One who came to embrace us all.

INJ,

The Rev. Pr. K. G. Banwart, Jr.



LUTHERAN MARITIME MINISTRY

This ministry could not exist without the support of our Synod, congregations and their members. In the process, we are not only an awesome Christian witness and support for international seafarers, but also for our local communities and congregations. We thank you, AND invite your personal prayers and involvement. This is truly an awesome expression of our faith in Jesus Christ and our love for people around the world of various backgrounds and beliefs!

2016 was an exciting year of growth for this ministry as Chaplain Samson Chauhan began working full time with the Seafarers' Center (120 Pico Av, Port of Long Beach)! He is working 5 days a week and more. Over the years, this ministry has developed relationships withIN the ports' community that has great respect! Ships officers are contacting "Sam" while still out to sea, approaching the breakwaters, to request his welcome and helping hands. We have great trust from the ports' authorities allowing access within the various terminals.

In visiting these huge ships (mostly carrying thousands of container), Chaplain Samson meets with officers and seafarers at their dining tables, prays with them, shares the Word through providing scriptures, helping with spiritual needs and transportation around local communities.

Also, Chaplain Samson preaches and provides mission moments for our churches. This year, he presided at a wedding for one of our families! Give us a call and let us know when we can worship at your church!

In 2016, our Board of Directors welcomed Rev. Parimal Roy, pastor of a congregation with mostly people from India. Pastor Roy brings wisdom and faithful spiritual presence for us! In addition, we welcomed Catherine Erickson from Trinity Lutheran Church in Hawthorne. We appreciate the support of many local churches and invite your participation. Do you have any recommendations for future board leaders?

Chim Mandalia continues to work with the Board of Directors of the Seafarers Center. During recent difficulties with the center's fiscal director, Chim proved to be a huge asset for the whole service! We continue to support its annual fundraiser on the Queen Mary! Let us know if would like to join us on the Queen Mary this year!

PRAISE GOD FOR THE FAITHFUL SUPPORT OF OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND CHURCH FAMILY!

THANKS AGAIN for your support!
Look for our table at the Synod Assembly!
God bless your ministry sharing Jesus Christ in the world! AMEN!

RON NELSON
TERRY WALL, CHIM and FAY MANDALIA, Rev. Parimal Roy, Catherine Erickson
PASTOR SAMSON CHAUHAN
(562/209-1577 SHEKHARD01@GMAIL.COM)

Lutheran Social Services of Southern California - Ministry Update

Spring 2017

Lutheran Social Services of Southern California continued its' core ministries, annually serving 45,000 people across Southern California. With help from hundreds of volunteers, our emergency services offer food, clothing and essentials for daily living. Our case-management, counseling, mental-health, education and housing staff equip people on the road to self-empowerment - with the goal of no longer being dependent on our services.

It is a pleasure to share with you our new mission, vision and values, recently completed by our 20-member Board of Directors:

Mission: Ignited by faith, we live out God's love by embracing, equipping and empowering vulnerable people in Southern California.

Vision: Sharing the love of Christ, we are a community to care and be cared for where the...

- vulnerable are safer and stronger;
- dependent are self-sustaining;
- isolated dwell in community;
- weary will be given hope

Values: Compassion | Advocacy | Collaboration | Respect | Innovation | Stewardship

There are new programs and initiatives, several in different contexts within which our mission now exist. Our Community Care Areas:

- **Canoga Park** is deploying its staff and programs out into churches throughout the San Fernando Valley. This allows us to reach more clients, support the ministries of congregations and follow good stewardship. Everybody wins.
- **Ventura County** is sponsoring monthly gatherings of sharing the story prospective donors. Called Voices of Hope, these sessions emphasize our current programs, with a year-end event planned to solicit significant funding.
- **Long Beach** is the anchor of a five-year project throughout the South Bay that will assisting the homeless and others to sign-up for benefits. Many eligible recipients have not been registered for these payments.
- **Pasadena** is well on the way to integrating its participants in community volunteer and work settings. The Aveni site continues to provide training and experience but now focused on community placement. We are partnering with the Southwest California Synod to manage The Lutheran Center's food pantry, with Aveni participants volunteering and working at that location.
- **Orange County** is growing with service expansion anticipated at St Peter, Santa Ana and First Lutheran, Fullerton to growing the Lutheran Counseling Center's clinical work and case-management service work at St Olaf in Garden Grove.
- **Bakersfield** has a formally installed group of committed people that will be trained to lead grief and loss groups based in 2-3 congregations. A curriculum has been written for people facing terminal illnesses. The support groups are designed for both the person with the illness and their care givers. Our Lutheran Counseling Center will respond to people's need for more clinical support.
- **Riverside** continues to support people in the community with low-income and supportive housing.
- **San Diego** We now hold a 20-year contract to operate the Clairemont Friendship Center in Clairemont Mesa. The Center was started many years ago by First Lutheran Clairemont and thank you to Pastor Doolittle who was instrumental in our securing the contract. Recent meetings at the Center with city officials reflected that the Friendship Center is a blank slate with not much happening for the past couple of years. To give the opportunity to gather input, we are planning 'Town-Hall' meetings to garner church and community ideas as to the services most needed and desired for the adult community. Our Senior Companion program will move to this location.
- **San Bernardino** Our children and family clinical programs continue to fill the gap in the poorest county in America. We are investing in Electronic Health Records that will shrink our geography by securely sharing records from Big Bear to Barstow to Apple Valley.

Central City Lutheran Mission is planning a capital campaign that will underwrite serious rehabilitation efforts, bringing the campus into compliance with the ADA governmental standards, and offer a renewed focus on transitioning as many people as possible into a more permanent housing arrangement. It remains committed as a worship community with programs that support community needs.

Lutheran Social Services of Southern California is moving its Central Office from Santa Ana to Fullerton where we will occupy part of the education building of First Lutheran Church. Our partnership goal with First Lutheran is to bring other nonprofit groups into that location, as a way of focusing more service to more clients in the community. Being in Orange County, this effort will coordinate with St. Olaf's, Garden Grove and St. Peter's, Santa Ana.

Lutheran Social Services of Southern California is grateful to the Synod and all the congregations for your prayers and your many levels of support. At this time when many services for the poor and disenfranchised are being reduced, your faithful commitment to our agency allows us to continue reaching to those in greatest need. God bless you.

Respectfully Submitted, Ron Drews, President/CEO



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



The Mission Investment Fund (MIF), the lending ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, makes low-interest loans to ELCA congregations and ELCA-related ministries for building and renovation projects.

At year-end 2016, MIF had 860 loans outstanding, totaling \$524 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 2016, MIF investments by congregations, their members, synods and ELCA-related ministries totaled \$474 million.

The Mission Investment Fund is a financially strong and stable organization, with a record of steady, controlled growth. With total assets of \$678 million and net assets of \$198 million at year-end 2016, MIF maintains a capital ratio of 29 percent—positioning MIF in the top tier of well-capitalized church extension funds.

MIF Loans and Investments in the Pacifica Synod (as of December 31, 2016)

- 21 Mission Investment Fund loans, with a balance of \$12,846,238
- \$9,533,410 in Mission Investment Fund investments by 111 individuals, 53 congregations, 5 ministries and the synod

MIF representative

Joel S. Wudel, Regional Manager, Tel: (773) 682-1765; email: joel.wudel@elca.org

Mission Investment Fund | 8765 West Higgins Road | Chicago, Illinois 60631
Tel: 877-886-3522 | Web: mif.elca.org

April 2017

Greetings in the name of our Lord!

My Friends House, Inc. (MFH) continues to thrive as an organization that works to end hunger and promote healthy living. We are known primarily as a food pantry, but we are much more than that. Our Hunger Prevention programs include the food pantry and the Urban Garden while the Wellness programs include Creative Chefs, Cook N Connect and the Parish Nurse.

The Lorna & Frank Harrison Community Distribution Center (food pantry) serves on average 145 households each week representing over 350 persons. Weekly, we receive approximately 2500-3000 pounds of food through the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank programs in which we participate and the Food to Donate (Harvest) program, the majority of which is distributed the same week. In 2016, we received from the food bank 121,182 pounds of food valued at \$136,240.65 for which we paid \$4,300. On average volunteers donated 227 hours per month preparing and distributing food to the community.

The MFH Urban Garden is an organic garden and had its first harvest in 2016. During the spring and summer we planted tomatoes, eggplant, beans, peppers, radishes, carrots and squash. Unfortunately, the beans, carrots and squash did not do well. However, we had an abundance of the other produce which we distributed through the food pantry. We are in a learning mode and receive wonderful advice from a local organic nursery in the urban core of Los Angeles. We envision the MFH Urban Garden as a site for educating the community on the economic and health benefits of fresh food.

MFH provides information that contributes to the community's understanding of the warning signs and symptoms of lifestyle diseases and opportunities to learn ways to improve and maintain a healthy lifestyle through the Parish Nurse program. This program is a partnership with Dignity Health California Hospital Medical Center in which a nurse provides health screenings about every six weeks to those who come to the Lorna and Frank Harrison Community Distribution Center.

Creative Chefs and Cook N Connect are programs that use local chefs to promote healthy eating and cooking with the goal of improving the community's health. Chefs introduce participants to recipes that use a variety of fruits, vegetables, legumes, lean meats, and healthy alternatives to processed and fast foods. Participants assist in the preparation of the recipes and then get to enjoy the final product. Cook N Connect targets seniors in a 3-hour session on Saturdays where they prepare a full meal while Creative Chefs is open to all ages and meets on Thursday evenings making one or two items. Cook N Connect was a pilot program in 2016 funded by an ELCA Foundation grant. Both programs are easily replicated in any community.



As I am retiring at the end of April 2017, My Friends House will have a new Executive Director beginning May 1. Mr. Temesghen Starr currently serves on the Board of Directors and will step down to assume his new duties. His primary responsibility will be to raise the funds needed to position MFH to fill key staff positions to enable the organization to grow to its full potential.

Mr. Starr was a member of the development team at the Montana State University Alumni Foundation, serving as the Director of Development for Athletics. Along with being liaison to athletics he also served as the regional lead for the university's development to Southern California, Nevada, and the state of Montana. Prior to his move to Montana he coached basketball at Marshalltown Community College where he also worked in the ASSIST office and taught English Courses. Starr is a principal with Sands Mutual Group, a fund raising consulting firm specializing in nonprofit organizations and educational institutions. He also serves on the board of California Lutheran Homes.

My goal during my time with My Friends House, Inc. was to help lay a solid foundation on which to build. I believe we have accomplished that goal and are now ready for the next phase. The board and staff of My Friends House, Inc. are excited about the future of the organization. Mr. Starr has the gifts and skills to take us to the next level.

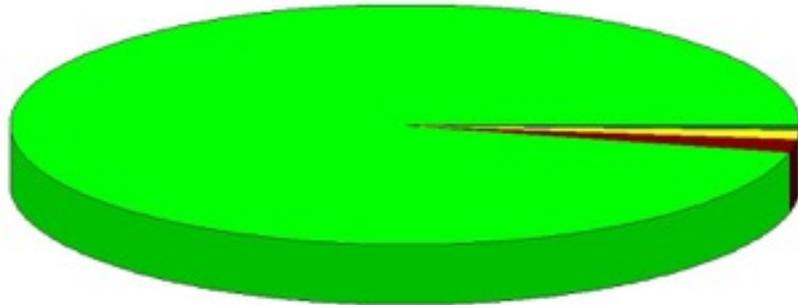
MFH has always held a special place in my heart from its earliest days as Neighborhood House. It is vital to the community it serves. I have been richly blessed during my tenure at My Friends House, Inc. both as a board member and as Executive Director. I know it will continue to flourish under new leadership and become an even greater blessing to the community it serves.

God's Work, Our Hands.

Deacon Tempie D. Beaman
Executive Director

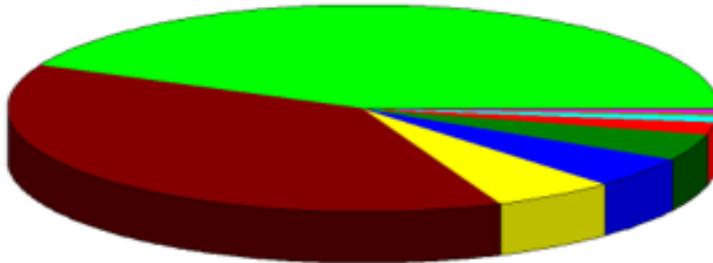


Income Summary
January through December 2016



41100 · Direct Public Support	96.32%
46400 · Other Types of Income/Revenue	1.94
47200 · Program Income	1.26
42200 · Gifts In Kind	0.30
45000 · Investments	0.19
Total	\$33,762.21

Expense Summary
January through December 2016



65000 · Operations	43.17%
60300 · Awards and Grants	38.28
62800 · Facilities and Equipment	5.60
60200 · Donated Facilities	4.94
62100 · Contract Services	4.29
68300 · Travel and Meetings	1.92
65100 · Other Types of Expenses	1.11
60900 · Business Expenses	0.55
65115 · Interest Expense	0.08
65105 · Late Fee	0.07
Total	\$43,566.99



Thank you Pacifica Synod for being a ministry partner!

Your prayers, direct synod gifts of \$39,230 last year, and encouraging our students like Dianne Finnecey, Pam Reynolds, and Julie Patten who give us strength and courage in our mission of equipping faithful leaders. In addition, there are 96 alums of PLTS that live and work on the territory of your synod, many of them in congregational ministries.



Students: Paul Benz, Ben Hogue, Rachel Swenson

PLTS is moving toward sustainability.

With the support of California Lutheran University, we are:

- offering more scholarship assistance to students every year.
- moving our campus into Downtown Berkeley this summer to increase accessibility for students and reduce the financial strains of deferred maintenance costs. Proceeds from the sale of the Marin Avenue property will be invested in an endowment for PLTS.
- working on a new curriculum which is creative and collaborative, with the goal of implementation in 2018.

Students have diverse learning experiences.

In January, seven PLTS students had the opportunity to visit the Holy Land along with a group of PLTS alums, friends, and donors. Their pilgrimage took them from Nazareth to Galilee into Jerusalem and ending in Bethlehem. In addition to walking in the footsteps of Jesus, the group was invited into the life of Pastor Gabi Aelabouni, Director of the ELCA Fund for Leaders, who grew up in Eilaboun, a small village outside Nazareth, and who served as one of the pilgrimage leaders.



Students on the Sea of Galilee

Giving makes a difference.

Many individuals and congregations on the territory of your synod are already making regular gifts toward the work of PLTS. Your support of our Annual Fund helps fuel our academic programs and operations. We are also grateful for the 246 supporters who have promised to remember us in their estate plans. Such gifts often go toward establishing endowed funds for scholarships, programs and faculty chairs. If you want to discuss being part of our legacy society, contact Rev. Brian Stein-Webber at bsteinwebber@plts.edu or 510-559-2711.

Congregation Spotlight: Bethlehem Lutheran,

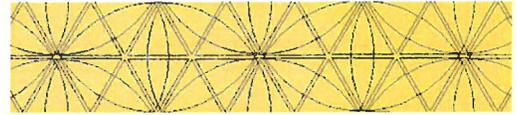
Encinitas, California has been supporting PLTS since 1988 by sending students like PLTS alum Rev. Casey Kloehn, providing scholarships, and making annual gifts to the Seminary Fund which supports student programs, faculty, and operations.

Bethlehem's increased gift last year was eligible for PLTS' congregation matching program. 66 congregations in the ELCA made a new or increased gift to the PLTS Seminary Fund. With the help of a match incentive, every eligible congregation gift, up to \$1,000 was matched, thanks to a pool of gifts totaling \$25,498 from a group of faithful friends of the seminary.

FAST FACTS for 2016-2017

- PLTS has 84 students in its Master of Divinity, Master of Theological Studies, and TEEM Programs.
- PLTS has 9 faculty members including Dr. Luis Menéndez-Antuña who started in 2016, teaching New Testament.
- Cost of attendance for one year averages \$36,575 including full-time tuition of \$16,000.
- The average ELCA seminary student's debt is \$46,386.

To learn more about PLTS, or to make a gift, visit www.Plts.edu.



Spring 2017

Dear Partners in Ministry,

As the ELCA commemorates the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we are reminded that *the church should always be reforming* — adapting to a changing landscape even as it stands firm in its mission. In 2016, Portico's ministry epitomized this combination of innovation rooted in mission, as we expanded our service and stewardship in new ways while continuing to provide cost-effective, high-quality health and retirement benefits for more than 46,000 active and retired ELCA rostered ministers, lay employees, and their families in partnership with the almost 6,600 ELCA churches and employers we serve.

We championed a wellness reformation in the ELCA, inviting a recommitment to healthier lifestyles and a healthier church. For the first time, we formally extended our annual wellness challenge to congregations. Also a first: We surveyed those already living a healthy lifestyle, and more than 1,800 members and spouses shared inspiring testimonies of the life-changing power of prioritizing one's physical and emotional health.

We offered a new approach to providing health care. In response to the growing prevalence of chronic disease and rising claim costs, we introduced Portico Care Coordinators by Quantum Health to help members navigate today's complex health care system and get the best possible care at the right price. The anticipated savings from this industry-leading approach was one of several cost-containment measures that helped us hold 2017 health contribution rates to the lowest increase in four years.

We answered the church's call for socially-informed investing. We strive to live out the church's mission and make an impact in God's kingdom as we manage the assets in the ELCA Retirement Plan. Memorials at Churchwide Assembly in August affirmed the three powerful ways we impact corporate behavior through shareholder advocacy, screening, and positive investing. The Assembly also called for even broader work on the environment and human rights; in the coming months, we look forward to partnering with the ELCA to develop screens that will guide future investment opportunities.

We developed new support for financial decision-making. For two decades, Portico has been a leading voice in the ELCA connecting the importance of physical, emotional, and financial health to ministry. In response to members' desire for an easier way to manage their retirement savings, we developed new benefits that will help our members better assess their readiness for retirement, and will provide personal assistance to help them reach their financial goals.

These efforts — and many more — come thanks to a dedicated, creative staff constantly seeking to improve our internal operating processes, maximize efficiency, and be good stewards of the resources entrusted to our care. Their efforts helped ensure that for the third straight year, Portico's capital and operating expenses were under budget, and we maintained ELCA Health Plan and Retirement Plan expense ratios lower than our benchmarks. As the church adapts to today's changing landscape, Portico is well positioned to continue to provide the best possible care for our members, so they can serve the world with confidence, resilience, and faithfulness.

In Christ,

The Rev. Jeffrey D. Thiemann
President and CEO

Southwest California Women of the ELCA ASSEMBLY Report 2017

The SWCA WELCA is a Women's Organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Southwest California Synod. The synodical women's organizations (SWOs) establish a partnership with units in their geographic areas and with the churchwide women's organization. SWOs exist to support women in congregations with a board elected at an annual or biennial convention by delegates from units. Each SWO establishes clusters or conferences of units within its geographic area.

FAITH EMBODIED in Our Work:

The Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is quite a mouthful and includes Lutheran women who gather in over 7,000 locations in the U.S. and the Caribbean. They gather for service, study, advocacy, fellowship and more! The Women of the ELCA embraces all kinds of ministries that support our mission of mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. There is a place for you in Women of the ELCA.

There are three expressions of Women of the ELCA, each with its own constitution:

- * Congregational, inter-congregational and special units (about 7,000)
- * Synodical Women's Organization (in 64 of the ELCA's 65 synods)
- * Churchwide Women's Organization

MISSION to serve: Mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

Our Purpose As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.

Highlights:

2016 19th Convention Southwest California SWO Convention, October 14 – 16 at the Grand Vista Hotel, Simi Valley, CA. Bible Study Leader: Rev. Erin Martinson CHTP Pastor of Trinity Church Ventura a certified healing touch practitioner and spiritual development coach. Chaplain and Worship Leader: Rev. Nancy Switzler, Pastor of Our Redeemer, Oxnard. The theme: "Blessed to Be a Blessing". Based on Genesis 12:2: I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. This truly was a weekend of blessing.

Election of Officers, Board and Triennial occurred: Officers elected: Karen Moyer, President, Rosemary Lawson, Vice President, Dianne Tillman, Secretary, and Karil Drake, Treasurer. Board Members: Sharon Heck, Terri Kelly, Dona Kintzi, Keia Morris, Krystal Shipp, Mary Ridneour-French, and Pastor Donella Silverira.





Triennial Voting Members: Mary Shipp, Women of Color, Diana Craig and Keia Morris (missing from the picture, Member at Large with Anna Sarvers, Churchwide Representative).

Winter Gathering January 28, 2017, Bethania Lutheran Church, Solvang, CA was very successful with 84 in attendance. The Caregiver panel lead by Rev. Russ Gordon, Family Therapist (right to left) included, Nola Huss MSN, RN FNP, Suzanne Hollrah, former Director of Resident Services at Atterdag Village of Solvang, Atterdag Village of Solvang DBA Solvang Lutheran Home, Inc and Rev. Chris Brown, Pastor of Bethania Lutheran Church. Theme: Romans 12: 10. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love: give preference to one another. NASB. The offering: was split equally: Atterdag Village of Solvang (crafts for the people at the facility and Churchwide Women of the ELCA.

STORIES of Faith:

Our What's News, newsletter for the year of 2016 / 2017 contained many faith stories:

El Centrito Oxnard, A project affiliated with the Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer article written by SWO President, Claudia Cuevas. The Synodical Women Organization supported El Centritio by directing half of our 2016 SWO Convention offering. El Centritio works to prepare youth and families of Ventura County to meet the future and become productive member of the community by providing bilingual, bicultural education programs in partnership with parents, schools and neighborhoods.

Greater Long Beach Cluster Spring Gathering article written by Linda Medina was held June 11, 2016 at St John's Cerritos. The theme: "Blessed to be a Blessing". Kristal Shipp, Lutheran Social Services lead the devotions. Maria Paiva Southwest California Synod was the Key Note speaker giving an inspiring and motivating presentation on how we can all be a blessing to others.

Peace with Justice articles written by Sharon Heck keep the women informed on various ELCA activities such as: Gun Violence Prevention and the Fall-Winter 2016 ELCA World Hunger packet with an Activity Guide booklet for many ideas and the ELCA Good Gifts Catalog. Quoting from a brochure...did you know..."Nearly 800 million people – one in nine people in the world today – are hungry. As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) we are called to respond.

Autumn Renewal – “Dream Anew” October 20 – 22, 2017

Mark your calendar for Autumn Renewal scheduled October 20 – 22, 2017 at California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks, CA. Those attending the Autumn Renewal will be

staying at the Best Western Posada Royale Hotel & Suites, Simi Valley, CA but travel to CLU Ullman Commons for Friday and Lunding Events Center for Saturday and Sunday for the daily activities.

The theme "Dream Anew" builds on the Triennial and Western States Youth gathering themes as a way to inspire the conversation with High School students who attended the summer gathering as well as leverage the resources and conversations of the Triennial "All Anew."

Faith is choosing and believing God's dream for your life. Nothing starts happening in your life until you start dreaming. God gave you the ability to dream, to create, to imagine. Dreaming is an act of faith. Everything you see on this planet started as a dream. So, how do you get God's dream for your life? How do you Dream Anew?

Bible Scripture verse: Ephesians 3: 20 - "Now glory be to God, by his mighty power at work within us is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of — infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes." NTL

Two Bible Study Leaders selected are: Rahel Williams, Manager, Donor Relations, Young Adult Global Missions, Global Church Sponsorship, ELCA and Valora K Starr director for discipleship for Women of the ELCA. Keia Morris, Deacon will serve as Chaplain. Music will be led by Angelica Lutheran Church Praise Band.

Event goals: Listen, Discover, Accept, Act

Watch for the What's News for more information.

Karen L Moyer, President of the Southwest California Synodical Women's Organization
Women of the ELCA.