

## Ten Things to Know about 1517 Media Spring 2021

1. Fall 2020 saw the release of **All Creation Sings**, a new liturgy and song supplement to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Three new liturgies, a complement of selected new prayers, and 200 hymns and songs supply a rich new collection to enliven your congregation's worship in these rapidly changing times. [augsburgfortress.org/allcreationsings](https://augsburgfortress.org/allcreationsings)
2. This spring we'll release the fourth set of resources based on Daniel Erlander's timeless work, **Manna and Mercy: A Brief History of God's Unfolding Promise to Mend the Entire Universe**. A new leader sourcebook, new kids' interactive edition, and four new board books provide many creative ways to use *Manna and Mercy*. The new resources complement three other series, **A Place for You** (Holy Communion), **Come to the Water** (Holy Baptism), and **Baptized, We Live** (introduction to Lutheranism). [augsburgfortress.org/manna](https://augsburgfortress.org/manna)
3. Also included in the Daniel Erlander family is **Hay Un Lugar Para Ti: A Place for You Bilingual Edition**. This new translation of A Place for You includes text in both English and Spanish, welcoming all to the special meal of Holy Communion. [augsburgfortress.org/hay-un-lugar-para-ti](https://augsburgfortress.org/hay-un-lugar-para-ti)
4. We have expanded our offering of seasonal devotions this year with a new pocket-sized devotion for Advent and Christmas. Quantity discounts make these seasonal devotionals ideal for congregational distribution. The accessible and colorful format makes it easy to incorporate a simple Christian observance into Advent and Christmas as well as Lent. [augsburgfortress.org/seasonal-devotions](https://augsburgfortress.org/seasonal-devotions)
5. Fortress Press released a revised edition of John Doberstein's **Minister's Prayer Book**. This revised edition recognizes the increasingly diverse face of clergy and includes new resources to give the collection a broader appeal. [augsburgfortress.org/ministers-prayer-book](https://augsburgfortress.org/ministers-prayer-book)
6. Broadleaf Books is our newest book publishing imprint. Broadleaf Books explores the expanse of human experience—seeking to deepen faith and understanding and bring wholeness to readers and society. New 2021 releases include **Jesus for Farmers and Fishers**, **The Sandbox Revolution**, and **United States of Grace**. [broadleafbooks.com](https://broadleafbooks.com)
7. Sparkhouse continues to provide access to a wide range of resources for a low annual subscription fee through **Sparkhouse Digital**. New digital activity kits are available to subscribers across all age ranges to help congregations provide resources to families for use in the home. [augsburgfortress.org/sparkhouse-digital](https://augsburgfortress.org/sparkhouse-digital)
8. Recently we have released several guidebooks to support congregations' summer ministry. **Good Stewards Together**, **Journey Together**, and **Creative Arts Camp** provide alternatives to the standard Vacation Bible School in a box. [augsburgfortress.org/sparkhouse-summer](https://augsburgfortress.org/sparkhouse-summer)
9. The Sparkhouse Blog provides ministry ideas and resources for those serving in early childhood, children, youth and adult ministry roles in their congregation. Recent posts include "Lessons from the Pandemic and Virtual Children's Ministry;" "Love, Developmental Science, and Preschoolers;" and "The Benefits of Board Games in Ministry." [blog.wearesparkhouse.org](https://blog.wearesparkhouse.org)
10. Beaming Books continues its mission to publish high-quality children's books that help kids thrive in every part of who they are—emotionally, socially, and spiritually. New releases for 2021 include **Our Father In Heaven: A Lord's Prayer Pop-Up Book**, **The Totally True Book of Strange and Surprising Bible Lists**, and **Simple Prayers for Children**. [beamingbooks.com](https://beamingbooks.com)

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**ADLA PROGRAM YEAR  
@ A GLANCE**

**2020**

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**APRIL**

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**AFRICAN DESCENT LUTHERAN ASSOCIATION**

**CAROLYN FOSTER, PRESIDENT**



# AFRICAN DESCENT LUTHERAN ASSOCIATION (ADLA)

♥ LOS ANGELES – 2020 ♥

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

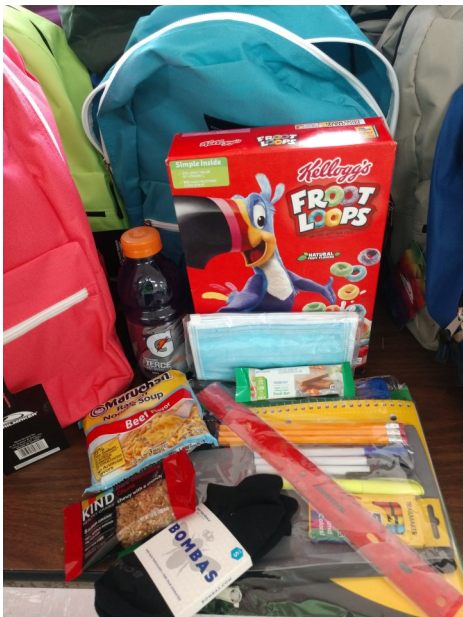
The ADLA Los Angeles Chapter is 1 of 9 such chapters across the country. The Association serves as a collective “voice” for African Americans and those of African descent in the Caribbean who are Lutheran.

The Los Angeles Chapter seeks to improve our communities with direct assistance programs, promote the qualities of higher education through scholarships & support the Southwest California Synod and the ELCA with special agency appeals.

## MISSION IN ACTION

ADLA, like virtually all organizations and agencies across the country and around the world, found program year 2020 to be daunting but we remained resilient in our efforts to offer to those in need our assistance, our unending support and our prayers. Unlike all other years, this past 12-14 months has been exhausting, as the need for help became volcanic, erupting in households throughout our communities, resulting from loss of employment, housing uncertainty and, yes, even food insecurity.

ADLA formed a lasting alliance with My Friends House, Inc., a non-profit food distribution and nutritional guidance agency sponsored by one its member congregations, Ascension Lutheran Church, Los Angeles. My Friends House receives support from many Southwest California Synod congregations, the Churchwide Office and certainly, our Synod’s mutual ministry programs related to mitigating hunger.

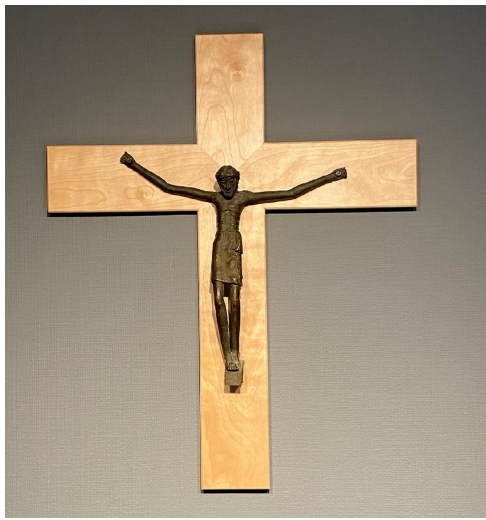


While the assistance lines continue to grow, so has the resolve offered by ADLA's members, giving of themselves – their time, talents and treasures - proportionately more each time a campaign is initiated for the good of others. Jesus reminds us that the struggle of the disenfranchised, the loss, and left out, shall continue and that we are to ready ourselves for this unending challenge. The Coronavirus has no respect for person. It invaded the households of our membership and has negatively impacted the solidarity and security of many families, but, what it has also done is taught ADLA and others a viable lesson, a lesson that defines time and its existence. We have re-learned to rely exclusively on the Grace of God through Jesus Christ in all things. We may well have been bewildered by the need for masks, social distancing and coordinated injections; but our reliance of God in Christ has not waivered. This became quite evident when planning for ADLA's coordinative role with the Synod for its 41st celebration in honor of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was conceived and advanced as an E- Worship Service. This worship service, which was held at the close of the 2nd COVID-19 iteration, was witnessed by over 1,000, having viewed the message of love, unity and hope using the marvel known as YouTube. This worship experience was so well received that viewers have asked that ADLA retain this communication method even if it should return to future face-to-face worship in celebration of Dr. King. A gift of \$1,700 was directed to The Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Service from the offerings received in recognition and support for the thousands of young children held at our southern borders. Many of these kids have resided in detention shelters for months on-end. Here are other notable programs that have received financial support as a result of the annual MLK worship service over the years:



Carolyn Foster, Gwendolyn Jackson  
& Andrea Barnes

- ✦ First Call Theological Education (2015)
- ✦ Synod's Unaccompanied Minors Initiative (2015)
- ✦ Showers of Blessings (2016)
- ✦ Guardian Angels (2016)
- ✦ TruEvolution – Aids Intervention Service (2016)
- ✦ Guardian Angels (2017)
- ✦ Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Service-IRIS (2017)
- ✦ ELCA Disaster Response (2018)
- ✦ ELCA Disaster Response (2019)
- ✦ ELCA Disaster Response (2020)
- ✦ Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Service (2021)



ADLA remains dedicated to providing financial resources for aspiring seminarians through its contributions to the ELCA Robinson-Conway Scholarship Fund and its recently established endowment acknowledging the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Nelson W. Trout, former Bishop of the American Lutheran Church (ALC). This endowment complements the naming of the Southwest California Synod Chapel in his honor. It memorializes the contributions of Dr. Trout and recognizes him as the first African American Bishop of the ALC. A formal ceremony marking the re-opening of Chapel in his name and the endowment's creation will occur in 2022 as part of Black History Month.

Then came the summer months, where ADLA elected to host workshops on the subject of self-help in Christ. Grown Woman, Real Talk is an annual gathering that affords women the opportunity to express their personal concerns, having them addressed through scripture. Questions are raised and shared by the audience and the facilitator guides the group through scripture for the answers. The bible is the place for answers! Additionally, this year, we included suicide prevention as a topic of discussion, warranting its own workshop. This was an all day event with much reflection, contemplation, and prayer.

Sometimes it is necessary to set some time aside for fellowship. By the Fall, ADLA had chartered a bus for a trip to Veijas. Yes, a few hours of financial intrigue and prospecting. While much fun and camaraderie occurred, much of the net proceeds were channeled to Hope Lutheran Church in direct support of its **prison ministry** as the resources were used to purchase "recovery bibles" for the incarcerated. "The Word of God will never return to Him void". Isaiah 55:11

## **SPECIAL THANKS**

A Special thanks are extended to Central Lutheran, Van Nuys, Christ the Shepherd, Altadena, and Holy Redeemer, Bellflower; as all have joined ADLA as member congregations. ADLA thanks its affiliate churches and university as they provide the impetus and the catalyst for effective outreach and service to the community:

- ♥ Another Level Ministries – Los Angeles
- ♥ Ascension Lutheran – Los Angeles
- ♥ California Lutheran University – Thousand Oaks
- ♥ Central Lutheran, Van Nuys
- ♥ Chapel of Peace Lutheran – Inglewood

- ♥ Lutheran Church of the Master – Los Angeles
- ♥ Christ the Shepherd, Altadena
- ♥ Community Lutheran – Los Angeles
- ♥ First Lutheran – Carson
- ♥ Holy Redeemer Lutheran, Bellflower
- ♥ Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran – Inglewood
- ♥ Messiah Lutheran – Los Angeles
- ♥ Olivet Lutheran – Hawthorne
- ♥ St. Mark’s Lutheran – Los Angeles

## **PLANS ON THE HORIZON**

ADLA members continue to play an integral role in helping to shape ADLA on a national level, having served on various Chicago-based committees, led national assembly plenary sessions, conducted parliamentary services, while offering “chapter best practice models”. Last August 2019, the National African Descent Lutheran Association presented the Los Angeles Chapter with its Chapter of the Year Award during the biennial assembly in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 2022, the National Chapters will reconvene to develop regional plans that lift-up God’s people, strengthen the context of inner-city ministries and hold each chapter responsible for serving as God’s conduit in the world.

ADLA’s ministry, dedicated to the service of others is unending, as is the Grace of God!

# California Lutheran

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# UNIVERSITY

## 2021 Annual Report to ELCA Region I and II Synods

California Lutheran University, a member of the Network of Colleges and Universities of the ELCA, equips graduates who are called and empowered to serve the neighbor so that all may flourish.

Amidst the changing landscape of the pandemic, over 4,000 Cal Lutheran students learn virtually or in hybrid classrooms in several different centers in California. We offer 20 undergraduate majors and 29 graduate programs of study. Over 50% of our undergraduate students are from underrepresented populations and one third are the first in their family to attend college. Our students come from over 40 states, 49 countries, and represent a diversity of faiths and cultures. With a network of 30,000 alumni, students from our founding in 1959 until now have discovered their purpose and are transforming their community and the world.



In August of 2020 we welcomed our **8th University President, Dr. Lori Varlotta**. She is the first female president in Cal Lutheran's 61-year history, and she came to the university as an established leader with broad experience in change management and curriculum reform, student success and inclusion, strategic planning and budgeting, and friend-raising and fundraising. Varlotta considers her 35 years working at mission-driven colleges and universities a calling, not a career.



**Pastor Scott Maxwell-Doherty**, who has served as Campus Pastor for 21 years, is retiring from university ministry in May 2021. His service to the university has spanned over two decades. He has seen many changes, accompanied young people, faculty and staff through their journeys, and has preached a lot of sermons. He will be greatly missed by the entire campus community. If you wish to send him a greeting, please do so at [mmmdsjmd@gmail.com](mailto:mmmdsjmd@gmail.com).

More students experienced in-person learning this semester! Our facilities staff worked hard to equip each of our [outdoor classrooms](#) (video) with the technology and safety measures necessary to create a comfortable and engaging learning environment. It doesn't hurt that the Thousand Oaks campus enjoys the beautiful Southern California sun year-round.

[The Office of Campus Ministry](#) has been creative all year with worship online, seeking new ways of connecting through walking worship, social media, online dinner church and highlighting faculty and staff members during our weekly online Chapel hour. All of these have strengthened community in a time when we have been living and learning in multiple locations.

The [Western States Youth Gathering](#) (July 2020) was cancelled due to COVID. WSYG is a large youth gathering for ELCA high school youth from congregations in Regions 1 - 4 held at Cal Lutheran. Our website and social media will share updates as soon as there is a plan to move forward. [www.WSYG.com](http://www.WSYG.com)

[Executive Skills for Church Leaders: Learning from the world of the MBA](#) is offered twice yearly for church leaders and clergy applying concepts from management to the complex arena of ministry today. In January 2021 this event moved online and hosted our first international pastor from Canada, our first interfaith clergy person, and was all interpreted in Spanish! What a gift to have such a dynamic community gathered to learn together. Stay tuned for the ways this event will continue to adapt to support pastors, deacons, and faith leaders in their areas of need. Details here: [www.CalLutheran.edu/ExecSkills](http://www.CalLutheran.edu/ExecSkills)



## THRIVING Leadership Formation

The [Thriving Leadership Formation](#) program brings ELCA leaders together to cultivate skills and networks of trust, support, spiritual practice, and accountability. Fueled with a \$1million grant from Lilly Endowment

Inc., this project helps pastors and church leaders throughout 14 Western States avoid burnout and thrive in their ministries. Our first year is finishing with 12 cohort groups, 80 people, across Regions 1 & 2. If you are interested in joining a small group or leading one find out more here:

[www.ThrivingLeadershipFormation.com](http://www.ThrivingLeadershipFormation.com)

**Fifty and Better (FAB)** — Check out our online courses for those who are 50+. Courses change often (i.e. Architecture and Design in the Reign of 16th-19th Century European Rulers; The Beach Boys in the Studio; The World of Jewish Art and Artists; and more). For details, visit [Cal Lutheran Fifty and Better](#).



*Thank you for praying for and remembering your Lutheran university and telling others about us.*

[www.CalLutheran.edu](http://www.CalLutheran.edu)



## Thank you for being a ministry partner!

Your prayers, direct synod gifts, and encouraging your leaders to go to seminary are all ways you participate with us in the important mission of equipping future pastors, deacons, and non-rostered faith leaders for the work they are called to do in congregations, hospitals, schools, community organizations, and more.

### Center for Climate Justice & Faith:

#### *Linking Ecological Healing to Racial and Economic Justice*

The Center for Climate Justice & Faith (CCJF) empowers leaders to cultivate moral, spiritual, and practical power for the work of climate justice in communities of faith and in collaboration with others. Launched in September 2020, the CCJF is offering/developing the following programs:

#### Current Programs/Achievements:

- Certification as a Green-Justice seminary; PLTS is the eleventh seminary in the USA to complete the process.
- Concentration in Climate Justice and Faith, for Master of Divinity and Master of Arts students.
- Curriculum innovations – Teaching and learning at the nexus of race, class, gender, and Earth.



*Caption: Mural in PLTS' classroom named, La Lucha, meaning "the struggle". Artist: Cristian Munoz*

#### Coming in 2021 – 2022:

- Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith (serving the global Lutheran communion; for non-degree students) in collaboration with Lutheran World Federation, ELCA World Hunger, and Lutherans Restoring Creation.
  - Faith-rooted Community Organizing for Climate Justice course.
- Public programming in collaboration with local, national, and global networks.
- Annual Climate Justice Activist-Scholar in Residence.
- Circle of Affiliated Activist-Scholars and Activist-Artists.

### Master of Arts in Spirituality & Social Change

Coming in Fall 2021!

This new degree program has been approved by the Association of Theological Schools. Students can choose to study between residential and distance learning options.

### Seminary Life during the Pandemic

PLTS moved classes and worship to ZOOM on March 16, 2020. This made it possible for students to continue in their programs and for new students from the United States, Lebanon, and Russia to start their programs in September. It is our prayerful intention to be able to return to campus and offer in-person classes for Fall 2021, though a distance learning option will continue. Graduation in 2020 was postponed to 2021 and an online commencement service is being planned for May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

#### QUICK FACTS ABOUT PLTS

- Total Number of Students: 114
- Master of Divinity (M.Div) Students: 51
- M.Div Students on Internship: 16
- Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) Students: 46
- Tuition (Full-time M.Div): \$22,460
- Total Average Cost of Housing: \$8,640
- Scholarships Awarded: \$644,427 to 100% of need-based qualifying students

*Statistics were compiled in summer 2020.*

To learn more about PLTS, or to make a gift, visit [PLTS.edu](http://PLTS.edu).



***“Grounded in grace. Sustained by faith.”***

**SYNOD ASSEMBLY REPORT – 2021**

**Southwest California Synod**

Founded in 1948, California Lutheran Homes *and Community Services (CLH)*, provides funding and other assistance for those in need of housing and human services through partnerships with churches, community-based organizations, and local agencies. CLH demonstrates God’s grace and love through

- **Seed Capital** for developing affordable housing projects,
- **Sponsorship** of subsidized housing projects,
- **Direct Ownership** of an emancipated youth home for young women,
- **Direct Ownership** of a resource center and housing for former foster youth
- **Charitable Care** funds to support seniors who experience financial hardship,
- **Employee Scholarships** for retirement community staff and,
- **Financial Support** of Lutheran Church bodies.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND LEGACY** Affordable housing remains a primary emphasis for CLH, both in partnership with Front Porch and with community-based nonprofit organizations. Most recently, CLH served as a sponsor for “Johnson Court” an affordable housing project for veterans located in Santa Barbara. CLH has developed expertise in helping Lutheran congregations and Synods/Districts in numerous geographies to utilize land resources for the provision of affordable housing as “Legacy Ministries.” CLH has sponsored three senior affordable housing projects in partnership with three Lutheran congregations.

**FORMER FOSTER YOUTH SERVICES** In 2020, CLH purchased a home in the Kinney Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles. In partnership with The Biddy Mason Charitable Foundation, a ministry of First African Methodist Episcopal (FAME) Church, the site serves as a resource center for former foster youth as well as housing for emancipated young women currently enrolled in local colleges and universities.

Funds from the sale of the former St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Monrovia, dedicated to affordable housing, helped CLH purchase a 4-unit apartment complex in Orange County to provide low-cost housing to young women who have “aged-out” of the foster system. Daily operations and case management are being provided by OC United, a local non-profit.

**RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES** CLH provides direct funding to support seniors who out-live their financial resources, primarily at Walnut Village and Carlsbad By The Sea, two senior living communities that are part of the CLH legacy. CLH also provides scholarship support to Front Porch staff so that they can continue providing exceptional care to residents.

**LUTHERAN CHURCH SUPPORT** CLH is a direct financial supporter of the Southwest California and Pacifica synods, and of *Lutheran Services in America*, the ELCA and LCMS’s network of Social Ministry Organizations.

In 2020 former President and CEO Bill Jennings announced his intention to retire after four years of leading CLH. In March 2021, the board appointed Deacon Nancy J. Ackerman as President and CEO. We are blessed that Mr. Jennings continues as Director of Special Projects during a year of transition.

Through collaborations with non-profit partners and long-time partner Front Porch, and because of the generous contributions of our donors, CLH is taking bold steps to serve those most vulnerable in our local communities.

THANKS be to God!

Robert J. Chillison, *Board Chair*

Deacon Nancy J. Ackerman, *CEO*



## THE ELCA FOUNDATION

It is important to begin this report by thanking our synod bishops, congregations and partners for their incredible leadership during a year of upheaval and challenges. When everything seemed to go wrong, your ability to direct the work of the church was one of the things that was right in 2020. Through it all, this church supported the work of ministering to the world with the love of Jesus Christ.

As of Dec. 31, 2020, the Foundation has crossed a major milestone — \$1 billion in assets managed in gifts and endowments for the ministry of the greater church. This achievement reflects being the church together in ways that equip congregations, organizations and individuals to live out their vocation. This landmark accomplishment was achieved through the work of the ELCA Foundation staff regularly engaging with donors, congregations and organizations along with your trust in the ELCA Foundation to manage gifts and assets for ministry. Throughout the year, despite limited travel and in-person meetings, gift planners engaged with nearly 900 congregations, synods and ELCA-related organizations. They spent time with over 1,500 individuals working on gift plans, logged over 5,500 interactions and continued to maintain partnership relationships with over 150 ELCA-related entities, including 54 synods.

Fund A distributed over \$30 million to ministry in 2020 while also growing the underlying investment to ensure that distribution is there for years to come. Fund A has neither missed nor reduced a distribution amount once it was established – including the volatile year of 2020. We know these distributions are vital to ministry and often used to support service in local communities.

- As of Dec. 31, 2020, the value of participant accounts invested in Fund A was \$904.2 million, compared to \$817.6 million on Dec. 31, 2019. There are 1,155 investing participants in Fund A, including 938 congregations and 54 synods.
- Throughout the year, 53 new endowment accounts were opened, totaling \$7.1 million, and 14 accounts were closed, totaling \$3.0 million. Investments made to new and existing Fund A accounts totaled \$31.1 million; withdrawals totaled \$18.6 million.

In addition, gift levels remained high throughout 2020: Due to the generosity of our members and donors distributions to ministry totaled \$59 million for the year.

- The gift-planning network, including affiliates, posted solid results throughout 2020, with \$118.2 million in total gifts and endowment assets. Of that, \$78.5 million was written in future planned gifts, \$20.3 million in current gifts (including funded trusts, gift annuities and individual endowments) and \$19.4 million in new assets invested in Fund A.
- New gift plans written during the year totaled 249. In addition, gift planners stewarded over \$60.2 million in previously written plans, in some cases increasing the estimated gift to ministry.

The Foundation exists as a separately incorporated ministry, with a network of 23 regional gift planners, working in 21 partnerships, across the United States. Critical to their work and ministry funding outcomes are the Gift Administration and Financial Services (accounting and investment administration) teams. These teams are the bench strength of the deployed gift planners, providing continuous assistance to donors, beneficiaries and Fund A investors — all this despite limited access to the building due to the pandemic.

The Foundation staff continues to work with donors and beneficiaries to create individual gift plans, administer life income and endowment gifts, distribute terminated gifts and facilitate the sale of marketable assets such as land, homes, commodities and other assets.

- Regional gift planners remain available to:
  - Guide individuals in discerning how to be faithful stewards of their estates and invite them to support ministries, congregations and synods through charitable estate gifts.
  - Assist synods, congregations and related entities in investing endowment funds and other assets in the Endowment Fund Pooled Trust — Fund A, which is structured to provide distributions to support ministry today and into the future, utilizing investments that adhere to the ELCA's social purpose guidelines.
  - Advise church leaders in the development of gift acceptance policies for congregations, which often include gifts to synods.

Thank you for your continued work with the ELCA Foundation.

Lisa Marie Higginbotham  
Regional Gift Planner  
[Lisa.higginbotham@elca.org](mailto:Lisa.higginbotham@elca.org)  
805-910-5048

#### ELCA Foundation Regional Partners

ELCA Churchwide Organization	Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service	Lutheran Retreats Camps and Conferences
Southwest California Synod	Pacifica Synod	Lutheran Social Services of Southern California



## Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Greetings siblings in Christ of the Southwest California Synod,

It has been a difficult year for all of us. Despite restrictive policy changes and the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, LIRS has remained committed to our biblical mandate to welcome the stranger.

In the last year:

- 2,782 refugees were welcomed through LIRS affiliates in 23 states.
- 440 unaccompanied migrant children were served through our foster care services and placed in loving homes during and after legal proceedings.
- 9,500 asylum seekers received Safe Release and Post Release services at our Southern border.

Even in these darkest of days, thousands of people from across the country partnered with LIRS to express their support for migrants and refugees through our annual programs and advocacy efforts. The compassion of our neighbors gives us hope, and we are proud to report that in the last year:

- 16,000 holiday cards and 500 gifts were sent to migrant children and families in detention through our annual Hope for the Holidays program.
- More than 600 ELCA clergy and lay leaders signed a letter drafted by the ELCA and LIRS urging Congress to work collaboratively to advance comprehensive immigration legislation.
- LIRS' work was featured on national platforms like *NPR*, the *Washington Post*, *Center for American Progress*, *Religion News Service*, *The Christian Century*, and *Sojourners*.

We are especially grateful for the congregations and communities in the Southwest California Synod who have continued their generous and prayerful support. We could not do this work without you.

Now, that work is expanding. In the coming year, the U.S. expects to welcome 125,000 refugees to our shores. LIRS is actively looking to congregations and faith leaders to partner with us in ways big and small, including donations, volunteer work, and participation in our annual programming. **Emmaus: Congregational Discernment Network** launches this spring for congregations to discern how they can best walk alongside refugees and migrants in their community, and **Stand Up Speak Up**, coming in Pentecost, is a new interfaith prayer vigil focused on advocacy. We encourage you to stay up to date on opportunities for individual and congregational engagement at the **LIRS Action Center**, found at [www.lirsconnect.org/get\\_involved](http://www.lirsconnect.org/get_involved)

With your support, we will continue to live our mission: witnessing to God's love for all people, standing with and advocating for migrants and refugees, and transforming communities through ministries of service and justice. Thank you for accompanying LIRS and our migrant and refugee siblings through 2021 and beyond. God bless you.

In peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristin Witte".

Dr. Kristin Witte  
Director for Outreach



## LSS Southern California Ministry Update

To my Sisters and Brothers in Christ in the Southwest California Synod:

*Greetings from Lutheran Social Services Southern California. This comes to you at the beginning of my 2<sup>nd</sup> year as President & CEO of LSS. If life had played out according to plan, I would have already met most of you and traveled throughout your Synod. Obviously, the COVID-19 Pandemic has greatly impacted that ability over the last 14 months. So, for now I greet with digital hugs and peace.*

*A reality that has not changed, is our service to the marginalized men, women and children throughout Southern California.*

*Below you will find a brief overview of our services and ministry over the last year. We've had to adjust hours of operation, methods of service and deployment of staff. But our clients are still receiving help and hope and moving toward a better and more stable existence.*

*We could not accomplish what we do without your prayers, collaboration, and financial support. Thank you so much for partnering with us as we seek to fulfill Christ's command to love those who turn to us in emergencies.*

*LaSharnda Beckwith*

### Area Overview

- **LONG BEACH/SOUTH BAY** Our staff and volunteers served over 1,000 individuals and families each month. This included distributing 17,232 meals and bags of groceries, in addition to hygiene kits and clothing. Comprehensive emergency assistance was provided to 16,239 families and households addressing a variety of unique struggles. Our County Benefit Entitlement Services Team (CBEST) served 2,427 patrons helping them obtain benefits to which they were entitled. 46 people were housed, six more secured permanent supportive housing, and another 140 women, men and children were supported through Intensive case management. Educational workshops, client advocacy and daily interaction with the surrounding neighborhood strengthened the bond LSS has established over many decades of service (please see pictures on the next page).
- **Avanti/San Gabriel Valley** supports adults experiencing intellectual and developmental disabilities. LSS-Avanti provides participants with the talents they need to navigate daily life, whether at home or in the community. We provide development services for social and communication skills, in addition to community awareness. Case management, housing counseling services, and payee services are offered to re-enforce basic independence, and a positive sense of self-worth.



- **San Fernando Valley LSS** is in the city of North Hollywood. We focus primarily on those without permanent housing, and at-risk individuals and families. We provide emergency assistance programs, education, and long-term resources necessary to empower those in need with a sustainable path to independence. Over the past year we distributed food and fresh groceries to 7,000 clients and 3,000 households obtained clothing through our thrift store. Intensive case management and community resource referrals were offered those seeking stability and a focused direction for their lives. Case management for an additions 65 clients was provided at three apartment buildings close to our location.
- **Ventura County**, located in Thousand Oaks, operates, and manages emergency assistance programs. We provide a food pantry, transportation, and hygiene resources, in addition to rental and utility assistance. Drop-in services are also available. Last year LSS provided food to 2,400 clients and families and extended home services and clothing to 30 individuals. Our rapid rehousing program enabled 30 people to secure a roof over their heads. For many years LSS Ventura County has addressed and responded to the immediate needs of marginalized and underserved communities, while also promoting a sense of self-reliance and community among all persons.

###







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

## Partnering in faith

**The Mission Investment Fund**, a financial services ministry of the ELCA, provides a strong, stable, faith-based way for individuals, congregations and ministries to achieve their financial goals.

MIF provides a range of investments for individuals, congregations and ministries. We put those investments to work to fund building and renovation loans for congregations and ministries.

**The result? Impact investments**, with a transformative impact on our communities: Expanded worship spaces ... new space for education and youth ministry ... much-needed day care centers for working families ... industrial-grade kitchens and fellowship halls for community meals.



**During the year-long pandemic**, MIF provided assistance to investors who needed immediate access to their funds and to borrowers who needed flexibility with their loan payments. We collaborated with our ministry partner, the ELCA Federal Credit Union, to offer expedited loans for congregations, ministries and individuals, as well as Paycheck Protection Program loans for congregations and ministries to keep employees on the payroll and continue operations.

**Our capabilities and capacity have never been stronger.** At year-end 2020, MIF had 883 loans outstanding, totaling \$596.4 million. Investment obligations totaled \$543.1 million. With total assets of \$773.8 million and net assets of \$218.2 million at year-end 2020, MIF maintains a capital ratio of 28.20 percent—positioning MIF in the top tier of well-capitalized church extension funds.

**Our steadfast support** continues for the members, congregations and ministries of the ELCA and the many ways you care for a world in need. We are honored and humbled to walk alongside you as a trusted partner.

**For more information about MIF capabilities, please visit our website, [mif.elca.org](http://mif.elca.org).**



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### **MIF at work in the Southwest California Synod (as of December 31, 2020):**

- 14 Mission Investment Fund loans, with a balance of \$4,217,655
- \$10,261,684 in Mission Investment Fund investment obligations

**MIF representative** Joel S. Wudel, Regional Manager, Tel: 773-682-1765; email: [joel.wudel@elca.org](mailto:joel.wudel@elca.org)



**My Friends House, Inc.**

Hope for Tomorrow: Sharing Caring Loving

March 2021

To The Voting Members of Southwest California Synod Assembly 2021

Greetings in the Name of Our Risen Christ,

The My Friends House, Inc. Board had completed an all day, yearly planning session in late December of 2019 and was looking forward to some dynamic changes for 2020. Wellness, always a top priority was going to be kicked up a notch with the addition of the Youth Healthy Cooking Classes with student participants from public school as well as some local church youth groups; a young master gardener joined our efforts in helping to grow foods that we were proud to offer to our clients; a VIP tour was planned and some adult friendly stretching and fitness classes were planned.

Then March 12, 2020 hit and the world as we all knew it, literally stopped. Our task was to determine what our role could be in the age of a pandemic. We were scared and shifted into high gear to be very visible and supportive, times two or three to the community we served. We also soon learned our community's reach was broadening each week as more and more people were either furloughed or their jobs could no longer sustain them.

The coordinator for food retrieval and distribution, along with a small cadre of folks began to fan out usually at 5:00am, picking up food products from more grocery stores, ministry partners and of course the Los Angeles Regional Foodbank. We were also grateful to be able to share with ministry partners in and around Los Angeles, Inglewood and Culver City.

Grants and contributions were also surprisingly very generous and we used these funds so more fresh foods could be purchased. The Southwest California Synod's Evangelical Outreach Mission Team awarded us money as well, to support our efforts.

My Friends House has been called to serve and these were the most adverse conditions we could have ever imagined. Our entire volunteer base would mask up and show up each week, sometimes several times a week. We had youth and college students, come, as well as several volunteers from American Income Life and they worked hard during that time, as most of our senior aged volunteers were asked to please stay home. From mid-March to mid-August, we were a robust crew!

Admittedly, our thoughts and efforts went into the immediate community needs and state of the situation. Other food distribution sites temporarily closed, but we did not. We, as a volunteer group of twenty-one, lent a hand to the Jackson Limousine Company's Thanksgiving Turkey Distribution, helping to feed at least 6,000 families. We, MFH, also supported the African Descent Lutheran Association's (ADLA) backpacks for students and personal care kits for adults on site one Sunday afternoon, before taking another 200+ care kits to the downtown area of Skid Row as part of the God's Work. Our Hands day.

Please know My Friends House takes seriously our call to advocacy and is grateful to be a ministry partner of the Southwest California Synod.

Respectfully submitted, Temesghen A. Starr, Executive Director

**Temesghen Starr**  
*Executive Director*

**Dr. Casper Reaves, PhD.**  
*Board Chair*

**Paula J. Hart**  
*Vice President*

**Charles Bingham**  
*Treasurer*

**Dale Washington**  
*Secretary*

**Judith Tutt-Starr**  
*Coordinator of Volunteers,  
Food Retrieval & Distribution*

**Carol Foster**  
*Board Member*

**Gwendolyn Jackson**  
*Board Member*

**Marqui Lyons**  
*Board Member*

**Stacy Cole Smith**  
*Board Member*



## MFH 2020 Profit/Loss Summary

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
	\$
General Donations	47,054.90
	\$
Amazon	22.37
	\$
Mighty Cause	5,610.80
	\$
GRANT: ELCA Hunger	7,600.00
	\$
GRANT: SC Synod	17,800.00
	\$
Interest Earned	12.93
	\$
The Gilbert Fund	500.00
	\$
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>78,601.00</b>

<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
	\$
Admin Cost	35.00
	\$
Associations	310.00
	\$
Credit Card	18,325.03
	\$
Equipment Rental	2,840.62
	\$
Food Bank	1,427.48
	\$
Gifts	4,930.00
	\$
Insurance	3,880.60
	\$
Maintenance	2,825.00
	\$
Miscellaneous	5,756.36
	\$
Prof. Svc	543.00
	\$
Staffing	11,249.60
	\$
Supplies	2,271.55
	\$
Utilities	6,131.89
	\$
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>60,526.13</b>

	\$
<b>NET INCOME/(LOSS)</b>	<b>18,074.87</b>

# Supporting Those Who Serve

## Now More Than Ever

Portico Benefit Services is a holistic benefits ministry serving those who serve — from rostered ministers and their families to staff at social ministry organizations. We strive to help our members grow their overall well-being.

We could not have predicted this pandemic. But the virtual benefits we've introduced before and after its arrival, the benefit adjustments we've made since, our successful navigation of volatile financial markets, and the consistency of our customer service have made a powerful difference.

During this pandemic, ELCA benefits are helping to lower stress levels, create safer access to health care, and increase financial flexibility — all to strengthen the resilience of those who serve and, by extension, the resilience of this church.



**The Rev. Jeff Thiemann**  
President & CEO

### Building Resilience in 2020

**26%**

#### More Calls to Our Financial Planners

During last year's market volatility and our introduction of target date funds.

**559**

#### Took a Penalty-Free Distribution

Thanks to quick modification of our retirement plan rules for 2020.

**49**

#### Sought Student Loan Help

Through no-cost counseling via our partner, LSS of Minnesota Financial Counseling.

**3,230**

#### Medical Visits Via Text

Through 98point6, our new virtual 24/7 primary health care service — with \$0 copay.

**98%**

#### Satisfaction With New Mental Health Option

Our self-directed online program, Learn to Live.

**10%**

#### Of Members Streamed a Course

On topics like resilience, mindfulness, and beating burnout via Being, our new wellness video platform.

**90%**

#### Very Satisfied

With our Customer Care service — delivered by Portico employees working remotely.

**22**

#### Target Date Funds Introduced

To help members maintain an age-appropriate asset mix over time — and better weather volatility.

**3.1%**

#### Annuity Payment Increase

Received, in these difficult times, by ELCA annuitants during 2021.

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

## HIGHLIGHTS Seafarers International House

### MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Overwhelming!

Dear friends of Seafarers International House (SIH):

*"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; For I am the Lord your God, the Holy one of Israel, your Savior". Isaiah 43:2-3*

Haven't we all felt overwhelmed this past year? And yet, you have helped us weather the storm caused by the pandemic with your overwhelming support ... this imperfect storm that disrupted the lives of so many of us as well as those often unseen seafarers during the crew change crisis and invisible asylum seekers detained in jail-like facilities, while the immigration process grinded to a halt.

You, our supporters, expressed compassion for seafarers and immigrants during the time of crisis by increasing contributions significantly. When we had to cancel our major fundraiser, the

2020 Setting the Course Banquet, individuals, shipping industry partners and unions, decided to send donations instead of buying tickets so that our 6 port chaplains could continue to visit ships that some likened to "floating prisons" because travel bans made crew changes impossible for most.

Spring was financially disastrous as we had to stop operating the guesthouse, which typically subsidizes our mission with about 75% of total income. Tragically, we had to part with our guesthouse staff, first hoping to rehire them in the summer, then by the end of December. Saving our organization when our services are needed most, we received a "gift" in the form of a respite organization (Comunilife) that leased our space from April to July to attend to community members recovering from COVID-19. With that blessing, we were able fulfill our continuing mission to seafarers and immigrants, while contributing the health insurance of the laid-off staff members throughout the year. And all through the pandemic we have been able to house seafarers in a midtown hotel now temporarily known as "SIH relocated".

The Right of Asylum Online Advocacy Event was a great way to reach new friends – over 100 people attended all across the nation with over 2,000 seeing it on social media in the days after. Many participated in lobbying against new asylum rules and sent contributions to support our work with asylum seekers.

When senior groups, businesses, and congregations could not meet in person to assemble Christmas-at-Sea satchels, they contributed financial-

*A seafarer in the port of New Haven, CT, for a moment does not feel overwhelmed thanks to the encouragement of Port Chaplain Ruth Setaro.*

#### MISSION

*Seafarers International House (SIH) is the Lutheran response to the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and immigrants.*

SIH offers hospitality, social assistance, and advocacy to a multi-national and multi-faith community in maritime ports on the Eastern Seaboard and in New York City.

ly and assembled satchels in their homes and, in the end, showed 2,080 seafarers during the Christmas season that their sacrifices are appreciated.

We have been overwhelmed by the gifts of "imperfect storm weatherers" like you who enabled us to serve almost 20,000 people in the ports and at SIH relocated where we now provide lodging and social work assistance.

We thank the amazing individuals, congregations, synods, foundations, shipping industry partners and unions who helped us through the tempest of 2020 and who prepared a solid ground for 2021, where we will continue our service to seafarers in the ports of Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Jersey and CT, and housing seafarers and asylum seekers who are beginning to remerge after the lock-down.

We are overwhelmed by your support. If you like to learn more about our ministry **watch the 5-minute video on our home page [www.sihnyc.org](http://www.sihnyc.org)** and share it with your congregation or assembly.



*Marsh Luther Drogel*  
Pastor and Executive Director

# 2020 Program Impact

**19,746** immigrants and seafarers directly benefited from SIH services while their lives were disrupted during the pandemic

**2,080** seafarers, regardless of faith, received Christmas-at-Sea satchels filled with warm clothing and holiday greetings prepared by congregations and volunteers to recognize these key workers

**12** asylees stayed for free at the guesthouse and at *SIH relocated* a total of 442 nights; we also hosted 11 local disaster survivors

**18** volunteer visitors brought hope to 8 asylum seekers before detention center visits had to be cancelled

**3** months (April - June) during which a community partner cared for people recovering from COVID-19 at the guesthouse

**14,644** seafarers, the invisible essential workers, who often worked on extended contracts, were visited on 1,407 ships receiving essentials they had requested during the crew change crisis

**1,351** seafarers were transported to the mall or medical facilities before COVID-19 restrictions made shore leave impossible for most mariners

**72** seafarers received at times free lodging at *SIH relocated* when between job assignments because of COVID-related disruptions and quarantine requirements

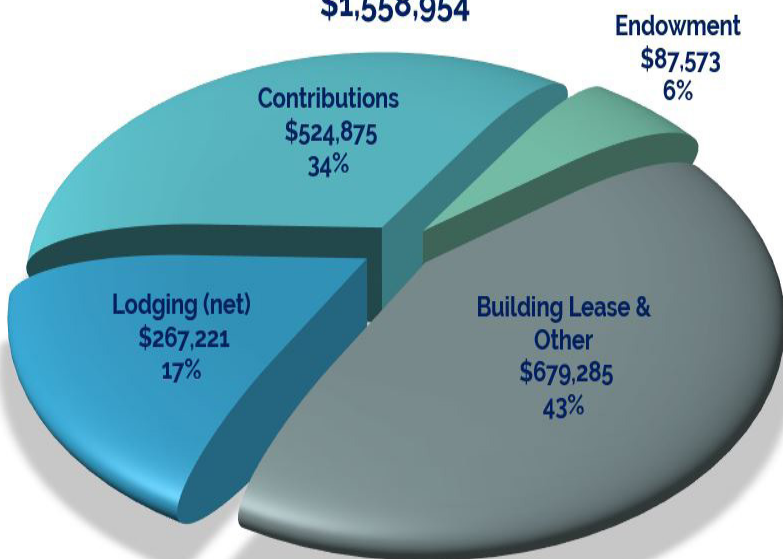
**2** advocacy campaigns, one championing seafarers to be recognized as essential workers, and another online campaign attended by over 100 people drawing attention to a failing immigration system and opposing new rules that would have dismantled asylum to the United States

## 2020 FINANCIAL REPORT

COVID-19 related challenges are reflected in our finances with lodging revenue that accounted for 72% of income last year dropping to just 17% in 2020. Overwhelmingly, it was our supporters' response that enabled us to fulfil our mission with contributions accounting for 34% of income, up from 22% in 2019. Even with the ability to lease the building for three months to a partner organization that took care of COVID-19 patients in recovery, operating expenses exceeded revenues by \$551,048. Program services accounted for 83% percent of expenses with only 17% spent on support services and fundraising. Net Assets increased from \$6,150,830 in 2019 to 6,159,175 in 2020. The figures below reflect unaudited revenue and expenses and are subject to change once audited. To request the audited 2020 financial statements send an email to [henryk@sihnyc.org](mailto:henryk@sihnyc.org). [↗](#)

Operating Revenue 2020 (pre-audit)

**\$1,558,954**



Operating Expenses 2020 (pre-audit)

**\$2,110,002**

