



Mission Advancement

Statement of purpose

The Mission Advancement unit is responsible for coordinating communication, marketing, public relations, mission funding, major gifts, planned gifts and constituent data management for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The governing description of this unit appears in ELCA continuing resolutions 16.12.C15. and 16.12.D11.

Report of work for 2014-2016

Strategic Communications

Strategic Communications is charged with strengthening the identity and mission of the ELCA through multichannel, strategic communication strategies that reach ELCA members and others both nationally and globally.

The restructuring of two staff teams in 2015 resulted in the creation of Strategic Communications. The team is organized into two work groups that collaborate interdependently. “Communications and marketing” focuses on marketing and social media strategies, direct mail/email appeals, brand integrity and stewardship, and fundraising support communications. This work group also handles all digital media, which includes website development and maintenance, video production and social media support. “Publications” handles all news and feature story development, media relations, messaging strategies (in concert with communications and marketing), graphic design, *Living Lutheran* and *LivingLutheran.org*.

Since the 2013 Churchwide Assembly, Strategic Communications has:

- Launched a comprehensive redesign of ELCA.org, including:
 - o Streamlined content and robust search options.
 - o Fully responsive pages optimized for viewing on mobile and tablet devices.
 - o An interactive map to help users find congregations, people and ELCA ministries.
 - o A resource hub for congregations, leaders and members.
 - o Microsites for the ELCA Youth Gathering, Churchwide Assembly and more.
 - o A new peer-to-peer fundraising platform.

In 2015, 1.2 million users visited ELCA.org, clocking more than 9 million page views.

- Increased the ELCA’s social media presence on Facebook from 36,000 followers in 2013 to 95,000 in 2016. The ELCA’s social media reach includes 18,000 followers on Twitter.
- Produced 218 professional videos for use in social media, congregations, synods and other events. Views of ELCA videos on YouTube totaled 703,932 over the last three years.
- Coordinated approximately 500 mailings and email messages to promote ministries and share information with ELCA members, congregations and leaders from 2013 to 2015.
- Enhanced communications associated with major fundraising programs, including the development of strategic marketing plans for the launch of *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA* and six other ELCA sub-brands.
 - o In collaboration with Mission Funding, the team launched a monthly giving program, Monthly Partners, allowing donors to give monthly, recurring donations online and through the mail. The program has more than 1,000 participants.
- Redesigned the ELCA Good Gifts catalog and ELCA.org/goodgifts, growing the program to more than \$5 million in revenue and 18,000 donors annually. Forty-two percent of first-time donors to ELCA churchwide ministries give through ELCA Good Gifts.
- Provided synods and congregations with resources and toolkits to participate in “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday, a dedicated day of service held annually in September. First launched in 2013, approximately 4,000 congregations now participate. This year’s day of service, Sept. 11, will also mark the 15-year anniversary of 9/11.

The Lutheran, Living Lutheran and livinglutheran.org

The Lutheran was the monthly magazine of the ELCA (its last issue was March 2016). In April 2016, *Living Lutheran* was born. With the same mission as *The Lutheran* — nurturing an understanding of the faith, mission and ministries of this church, and providing informed editorial content about relevant topics — *Living Lutheran* brings an updated, fresh design to the magazine of the ELCA. LivingLutheran.org was also launched as the complementary website to the magazine. Strategic Communications is moving forward with a strategy for a stronger digital presence of ELCA stories by publishing daily online.

More changes from the last few years:

- o Daniel Lehmann, director for publications/editor, retired in 2016 after 10 years at the ELCA.
- o As part of the constitutional change and reorganization, the magazine's advisory committee (part of its structure since its beginning) was eliminated.
- o In December 2015, *The Lutheran* published its final issue of *The Little Lutheran* (and its ecumenical counterpart *The Little Christian*), a magazine for children that made it into many homes and congregations for eight years.

Magazine circulation continues to decrease every year. From 2014 to 2016, there was a 21 percent decrease in the number of magazines printed. Recognizing that print may not be as sustainable as it is now, Strategic Communications is putting a stronger focus on the magazine's online presence through the website, social media and e-newsletters.

Constituent Support

The Constituent Support team is responsible for the ELCA Constituent Information System, the ELCA contact center, ELCA online resource center and gift processing.

ELCA Constituent Information System

The ELCA Constituent Information System (ECIS) is the ELCA's constituent relationship management system. ECIS provides the ELCA with a 360-degree relationship view of its constituents. The system is used for all communication with members, donors, rostered and lay leaders, synods and congregations. Approximately 950,000 active constituents and organizations are being managed in ECIS. In the last three years, additional data sources have been added to ECIS, including advocacy, peer-to-peer fundraising, subscription and communication preferences. Currently 21 synods have access to ECIS to maintain data about rostered leaders, candidates, lay leaders, ELCA congregations and worship centers, and friends and supporters.

ELCA gift processing

The gift processing team processes about 150,000 gifts per year. More than 25 percent of these gifts are received online. The team worked with a gift processing vendor (Merkle) to ensure that almost all gifts are processed and acknowledged within five business days.

Call center

The staff in the call center completed more than 28,000 calls in 2015. These calls included resource orders, donations and other general inquiries. The staff helped in fulfilling more than 6,200 resource orders from the ELCA resource center.

Mission Funding

The Mission Funding team carries churchwide responsibility for mission support conversations and consultations and for developing and executing other specific fundraising strategies, as well as providing for world hunger education and constituency support. The focus is on supporting the major funding appeals that have been requested by this church through assembly action, detailed below.

Mission support

Rooted in relationships and faith, congregations share a portion of their undesignated financial offerings with the wider church. This giving, known as mission support, enables the ELCA to do God's work in ways that no individual, congregation or synod can do alone. In 2014, ELCA congregations received approximately \$1.8 billion in undesignated

offerings from their members. Nearly \$100 million (or 6 percent) was shared with synods and the churchwide organization for mission support. Over the last 10 years, both of these offerings have declined. Undesignated giving to congregations has declined approximately 5 percent while mission support to the wider church has decreased about 24 percent.

Mission Advancement and the Domestic Mission unit have collaborated on a three-year “Comprehensive Mission Support Strategy, 2016-2018” to more deeply engage ELCA members, congregations and synods in growing in stewardship and mission support sharing. Per the strategy, Mission Advancement continues to share the impact of mission support through key resources such as “Stories of Faith in Action” and “Where Does My Offering Go?” In addition, a revised process for conducting synod-churchwide mission support partnership consultations now provides the opportunity for a more in-depth focus on achieving four strategic outcomes:

1. An appreciation of how being church together is both a call and mutually beneficial for congregations, synods and the churchwide organization.
2. A better understanding of the current context(s) impacting the mission and ministry of congregations, synods and the churchwide organization.
3. A clear, future-oriented mission support strategy for each synod and the churchwide organization.
4. Mutual understanding on synod-specific mission support goals.

ELCA World Hunger

ELCA World Hunger creatively and courageously works toward a just world where all are fed. As your church’s ministry to address poverty and hunger, we truly do more together than we could do alone.

Since the advent of ELCA World Hunger in the 1970s, Lutherans and others of good will have given and put to work more than half a billion dollars. During that same period, global chronic hunger has decreased from about 1 in 4 people to 1 in 9 today. Change is possible, and the time to invest is now.

Through *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*, ELCA World Hunger has been doing just that—growing in momentum and ministry. During the campaign’s first two years (2014-15) gifts to ELCA World Hunger totaled more than \$40.1 million. In 2015 alone, gifts totaled \$21.9 million—more than any other single year.

This growth reflects increased giving through congregations and generous legacy bequests. In 2015 alone, more than 72,250 gifts were given to ELCA World Hunger. Large gifts are on the rise—however, the average median gift through direct mail continues to be \$50, so every single gift counts and makes a lasting difference. ELCA World Hunger is a place to give faithfully and to invest wisely.

ELCA World Hunger continues to address hunger as mandated through the program’s assembly-approved guidelines. Led by Christ’s example and freed by Christ’s death and resurrection, we are called into community to encounter and serve with and for our neighbor.

Over the past two years, approximately 71 percent of funds received were put to work internationally, more than 21 percent here in the United States and Puerto Rico, and less than 8 percent for general administration support. For more on the impact of ELCA World Hunger’s ministry, see the reports from Domestic Mission and Global Mission in Section III of the *Pre-Assembly Report*.

Women in sub-Saharan Africa walk, on average, 3.7 miles per day for clean water. At the 2015 ELCA Youth Gathering, youth and congregations were invited to learn more and support water-related ministry through “ELCA World Hunger’s Walk for Water.” With a fundraising goal of \$500,000 and a matching gift from a generous ELCA family, more than \$1.2 million has been mobilized to create stronger communities and healthier families through more than 70 water-related projects in more than 30 countries.

Mission Advancement is responsible for fundraising, educational materials, networking and engagement throughout the ELCA. This includes resourcing and engaging a network of 2,000 leaders who help raise support and awareness in the life of congregations and synods. Visit ELCA.org/hunger to see all of ELCA World Hunger’s educational and promotional resources—many of which are free to you.

2016 is ELCA World Hunger’s focus year within *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*. ELCA World Hunger hopes you will join the movement and host a special event or offering throughout the remainder of the year. Thank you for all the ways you are supporting ELCA World Hunger already and every day. God is calling us into the world—together.

ELCA Malaria Campaign

At the churchwide assemblies in 2009 and 2011, the ELCA launched the ELCA Malaria Campaign with initial support from ELCA World Hunger. The goal was to raise \$15 million by 2015 to support programs of companions and partners in Africa that empower communities to create healthier futures through malaria education, prevention, testing and treatment.

In September 2015 the campaign met its \$15 million fundraising goal—several months ahead of schedule. By the campaign's end (Jan. 31, 2016), total fundraising had reached \$15.45 million. Financial support was received from nearly 30,000 individuals and organizations, 59 percent of ELCA congregations (5,469 total) and each of the 65 synods.

All of the 13 projected malaria programs will be fully funded, and additional funds given will support a 14th program with the Malagasy Lutheran Church in Madagascar. ELCA Malaria Campaign funds will be fully disbursed to these programs by 2018. Additional gifts for malaria programs received after Jan. 31, 2016, will be put to work through ELCA World Hunger, which has a long history of working with companions and partners on community-based health efforts.

Lutheran Disaster Response

In addition to ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response is an essential building block in the ELCA's continuum of care, helping support and stabilize communities, especially when disaster strikes. In the past two years, Lutheran Disaster Response has responded to disasters in 32 countries and 31 states, putting to work more than \$12.9 million, which represents more than 27,000 gifts.

Some of these disasters received significant attention and special gifts (Nepal Earthquake, Syrian Refugee Crisis and spring flooding and storms across the U.S.), but many lesser-known situations continue to rely on the generous gifts from synods, congregations and individuals to the general fund for Lutheran Disaster Response. General gifts allow for immediate, rapid release in times when urgent response is needed, as well as long-term care after the news crews have packed up and families and communities continue to rebuild.

ELCA Fund for Leaders

The ELCA Fund for Leaders is a merit-based scholarship program for the best and brightest ELCA candidates for ordained and rostered lay ministry. It also addresses the problem of seminarian debt. The program has realized excellent growth over the last three years. At the end of 2012 the total asset value of all ELCA Fund for Leaders endowment accounts was \$33.5 million. Since then it has grown to \$45.8 million, representing a 36.7 percent increase in value. In the last academic year, awards supported more than 235 students, including 42 full-tuition, 47 half-tuition, 12 partial-tuition and four new diversity scholarships. This represented sending \$1.1 million in support for students through ELCA seminaries. Adding in 123 synod partner scholarships representing 47 synods and seven Mission Developer scholarships, a total of \$1.6 million was distributed in student scholarships.

ELCA Global Church Sponsorship

ELCA Global Church Sponsorship has evolved over the years from its formerly known brand of Missionary Sponsorship to an expanded program that incorporates Missionary Sponsorship, Young Adults in Global Mission, Global Ministries and the International Leadership Program. The ministries of ELCA Global Church Sponsorship make up \$33 million of the \$198 million goal for *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*. With the projected growth in revenue, growth in global service and programming will occur as well. The ELCA is a sending and receiving church, and Global Church Sponsorship has the unique opportunity to facilitate some of this calling as a church.

An example of the growth in revenue and programming is Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM). In 2014, 64 individuals served throughout the world through the YAGM program. In 2016 the goal is to send 94 young adults into service, an increase of 46 percent over two years. With more than 30 percent of YAGM alumni entering seminary, this program has become one of this church's finest leadership development programs.

Thanks to the campaign, another example of a new possibility is a project in South Sudan, where the ELCA will join its brothers and sisters in establishing a Lutheran church center and clinic. This facility will provide a worship space, community gathering space and a clinic with much needed resources. The two missionaries currently serving in South Sudan are former Sudanese refugees who are now ELCA pastors.

With 2017 being the campaign theme year for ELCA Global Church Sponsorship, there is much excitement for what the future holds for these ministries.

Vision for Mission

This funding program increases the ELCA's capacity to carry out its vital ministries in the United States and throughout the world as this church responds to opportunities for mission where most needed. In 2013 the program was at 98.4 percent to the \$1.4 million goal. In 2014 it was at 104 percent to the \$1.4 million goal, more than making up for the prior year shortfall. In 2015 the program was separated from gifts designated "Where needed most," with its budget based only on appeals and major gift solicitations made on behalf of Vision for Mission. Therefore, the budget was lowered to reflect historical reference data and growth of Vision for Mission and set at \$800,000. That goal was surpassed by \$66,572, which represented 108.3 percent to goal.

Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA

Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA is the moment to look toward the future of this church and boldly respond to the needs of the world with a living, daring confidence in God's grace. This five-year, \$198 million campaign helps this church grow our communities of faith, form new leaders, welcome our neighbors, overcome malaria, confront hunger and poverty, accompany global churches and so much more. Together, we are achieving things on a scale and scope we could never do otherwise.

Find an in-depth look at the campaign's progress and impact thus far in Section III of the *Pre-Assembly Report*.

ELCA Foundation

The ELCA Foundation sustains and grows ministries by stewarding assets for all the related organizations of the ELCA. Using a national network of gift planners, the Foundation supports ELCA members in their call to live as faithful and generous people by providing financial education and resources along with a variety of planned giving tools. Three major gift programs are supported by the ELCA and made available through the Foundation.

The ELCA Foundation also has a long history of working in partnership with congregations, synods and related entities to develop gifts to sustain the work of the ELCA long into the future. Throughout the three-year period, more than \$70 million was distributed to support a variety of ministries.

Gift planners

The Foundation has experienced significant growth in the number of gift planners in the field over the past three years. Starting with 12 at the beginning of 2013, the Foundation ended 2015 with 21 gift planners in the network. A number of new positions, supported by the churchwide organization, have been created and four additional gift planners were added to the network through a joint venture with the Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest, which covers the three synods in Texas.

The work of the gift planners has changed dramatically over the past three years. A structure has been created whereby the field staff reports daily activities, has responsibility to manage relationships and close gifts, and is held accountable for results. Although figures are not available for 2013, documented planned gifts totaled \$18.1 million in 2014 and grew to \$37.2 million in 2015. In addition, gift planners have adopted a holistic approach to their work and often include current gifts in the proposals made to donors. Total current gifts generated in 2014 were \$1.3 million and \$3.8 million in 2015.

Partnerships

Beginning in 1985 in Nebraska, the ELCA Foundation, and its predecessor, has supported gift planning partnerships that allow a variety of related entities to "share" a gift planner. At the beginning of 2013, nine partnerships existed and in 2015 two more were added. At end of 2015 more than 120 organizations participated in partnerships, including synods, social service agencies, senior health care facilities, seminaries, schools and colleges, campus ministries and camps.

Revenue from the partnerships has steadily increased over the period as shown below.

- FY13 = \$174,000
- FY14 = \$217,000
- FY15 = \$318,000

Gift programs

The ELCA churchwide organization sponsors three gift programs for the benefit of its members and related organizations: the Endowment Fund Pooled Trust (Fund A), Charitable Remainder Trusts and Charitable Gift Annuities. An expanded report detailing the results of the Endowment Fund Pooled Trust (Fund A) is included in Section II of the *Pre-Assembly Report*. Most often, the gift planners start their work with congregations, synods and others by suggesting the establishment of a mission endowment fund using Fund A. They frequently recommend the use of charitable gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts when working with individual donors, although in recent years the demand for gift annuities has decreased.

The foundation's future

The ELCA Foundation has already made good progress on its 2016- 2018 business plan around expanding the gift planner and partnership network. As of this writing, two new gift planners have been added in 2016 and six new partnerships have been initiated (two are brand new and four are being built around existing gift planners). The ELCA Foundation is committed to engaging in controlled growth while moving forward on the long-term goal of placing a gift planner everywhere the church needs one. Over the next three years, staff members expect to add two new gift planners and corresponding partnerships per year.

In March 2016, the Foundation hired a director for trust and gift administration to oversee the increasingly complex processes surrounding gift acceptance and administration as well as donor and partner services. Staff is committed to providing stewardship, trust and administrative services at industry standards upon which donors and partners can depend. Trust and gift annuity processing will be enhanced and the overall business structure will be reviewed to ensure that the programs are self-sustaining. Due to the increase in the number of outside participants in Fund A, the ELCA Foundation is in the process of reviewing participant communications, including statements and performance reporting, with an eye toward enhancement.

The ELCA Foundation is determined to continue its tradition of providing an excellent donor experience and the means by which members can create legacies for their loved ones and the ministries they care about.

Major directions for 2016-2019

Initiatives and major projects planned for the upcoming triennium include:

- o Grow the gift planning network at the pace of approximately two new gift planners a year, along with corresponding gift planning partnerships.
- o Review the overall business structure for planned giving programs of the ELCA Foundation to ensure they are efficient and sustainable.
- o Support ELCA leaders throughout the church as they strategize and implement plans to nurture faith, strengthen relationships and grow mission support.
- o Maintain a strategic focus on discovering, cultivating and securing major and transformational gifts in support of ELCA.
- o Develop a cohesive Strategic Communications team focused on multichannel storytelling and extend its reach in sharing the stories of the ELCA community around the world.
- o Increase media presence for Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton and other leaders within the church.
- o Use the ELCA Constituent Information System (ECIS) as the primary database for the management of all ELCA data, including event registration, advocacy, missionaries, email and mailing lists, and groups and networks.
- o Strengthen donor stewardship by ensuring that all donors are thanked and acknowledged in a timely and appropriate manner.
- o Develop a comprehensive model for a sustainable fundraising plan.
- o Meet or exceed the income goals of *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*.

Ms. Christina Jackson-Skelton, *executive director*