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## Publishing House of the ELCA (1517 Media)

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### Statement of purpose

1517 Media is the ministry of publishing of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The constitutional description of this unit appears in section 17.40 of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*.

### Report of work for 2016–2019: Name change signals both foundation and future

The past triennium included the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's posting of the 95 Theses in 1517, a common marker for the launch of the Reformation. Just before the 2016 Churchwide Assembly, the Publishing House of the ELCA changed its "doing business as" name from Augsburg Fortress to 1517 Media. The focus and commitments of 1517 Media and its predecessors across 200 of the past 500 years remain constant. 1517 Media is committed to helping Christian communities and individuals encounter a loving, gracious God and grow in faith, understanding and response. 1517 Media creates resources for Christian worship and faith formation, for study and professional enrichment, and for individual edification and spiritual growth. 1517 Media is grounded in the grace-oriented theology of the Lutheran tradition and dedicated to the proclamation of the gospel. At the same time, 1517 Media embraces the media of the day to meet people where they are, both as individuals and in their communities of faith and life.

The imprints of 1517 Media exhibit the range of its publishing activity. Congregational resources are developed in partnership with hundreds of creative contributors across the church under the Augsburg Fortress and Sparkhouse imprints, supporting worship and music, faith formation and other congregational ministries with a principal and essential focus on the ELCA. Books and ebooks developed with hundreds of talented authors and thought leaders represent an expanding area of the organization's ministry. For rostered ministers, students and other adult learners, Fortress Press publishes titles that support ministry and scholarship. Its program includes an intentional outreach to a broad audience with titles that seek to nourish souls, ignite minds and promote the common good. Beaming Books develops vibrant, high-quality books for children (and their caregivers) that help kids thrive emotionally, socially and spiritually.

## New resources for 2016–2019: How can 1517 Media support your ministry?

Since 2016, 1517 Media’s main website for communicating with the ELCA—[augsbουργfortress.org](http://augsbουργfortress.org)—has greeted visitors with the question “How can we support your ministry?” During these years, 1517 Media has been inspired by the vision of the ELCA’s *Future Directions 2025*, especially as it articulates the following key dimensions of this church’s future.

### 1) How 1517 Media seeks to support the ministry ... of a thriving church

“Spreading the gospel and deepening faith for all people” are the signs of a thriving church supported by recent 1517 Media publishing initiatives, especially those aimed at the formation, education and continued development of rostered ministers and lay leaders.

In 2018, 1517 Media launched Word & World Books in partnership with Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minnesota, and the editorial board of the *Word & World* periodical. Initial titles in this series include Rollie Martinson’s *Elders Rising: The Promise and Peril of Aging* and Wesley Granberg-Michaelson’s *Future Faith: Ten Challenges Reshaping Christianity in the 21st Century*.

One essential ministry focus is supporting and accompanying various pastoral care ministries. New in 2019, an updated edition of the classic guide *Good Grief* is now accompanied by *The Good Grief Journal* and *The Good Grief Devotional*. Launched in 2016, Augsburg Fortress’ “Living With Hope” series comprises nine books, including *Carrying Them With Us: Living Through Pregnancy or Infant Loss* and *Dignity and Grace: Wisdom for Caregivers and Those Living With Dementia*.

Additional extensions to the Evangelical Lutheran Worship resource family include six new titles in the “Worship Matters” series, supporting both worshipers and worship leaders with resources for funeral and marriage planning, as well as compact guides for those who preach, prepare intercessory prayers and provide ministries of hospitality. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Enlarged Print Edition* provides words to frequently used liturgies as well as all the psalms, service music and hymns. *Music Sourcebook for Life Passages: Healing, Funeral, and Marriage* is just one of nearly 200 new releases of worship music in the past three years.

Based on the Gospel of Matthew, *Wondrous Love* for Lent 2020 is the latest in a series of colorful, pocket-sized Lenten devotionals that give worship communities a spiritual-discipline resource for every household. Two subscription devotionals, *Christ in Our Home* and *The Word in Season*, continue to be daily companions for thousands of readers.

New in 2019, *Hear My Voice: A Prison Prayer Book* is a beautifully illustrated print resource intended primarily for those in correctional facilities, as well as for chaplains and others with relationships to those who are incarcerated. ELCA churchwide worship staff and Augsburg Fortress developed the resource collaboratively in response to the call from the ELCA social statement *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries*.

### 2) How 1517 Media seeks to support the ministry ... of an equipping church

“Equipping people for their baptismal vocations in the world and in the church” is a goal that relates to congregational resources aimed at nurturing faith formation.

*Luther’s Small Catechism With African Descent Reflections* (2019) includes thoughtful viewpoints on Luther’s work by more than a dozen distinguished African-descent scholars.

Starting in 2018, 1517 Media expanded its partnership with Daniel Erlander, whose books about Lutheran identity and practice have been beloved for decades and are now available exclusively through Augsburg Fortress. New resources extending these works include two series supporting sacramental preparation and understanding, *A Place for You* (on Holy Communion) and *Come to the Water* (on Holy Baptism).

A robust array of resources for children’s ministry includes *Spark Sunday School*, *Holy Moly*, *Connect* and *Whirl*. In 2018, Sparkhouse launched *Spark All Kids* and *Whirl All Kids*, new models of these popular curricula for churches with multiage or single-room classrooms, as well as *Frolic Preschool Sunday School*, for children from birth to age 3.

An engaging new series for youth ministry released in the last triennium, *T.B.D. (Think. Believe. Do.)*, helps youth discover what they believe and why. The first four-week topical studies are focused on prayer, sin, mission and salvation. Confirmation ministries continue to rely on the *CoLABorate: Lutheran Confirmation* and *re:form* curricula.

Premiered in 2018, the Sparkhouse Digital platform gives unlimited access to more than 15,000 Sparkhouse leader resources, reproducibles and exclusive content for children and youth.

### 3) How 1517 Media seeks to support the ministry ... of an inviting, welcoming, visible church

Programmatic resources for congregations include *Dialogues On*, an adult series addressing difficult topics that face society today, including race, sexuality and the refugee crisis.

The organization's book publishing programs have been reoriented over the past three years to stress what it means to be "an outwardly focused church" that seeks to reach leaders and readers both within and beyond the church community.

Beaming Books, formerly Sparkhouse Family, is reaching directly to parents and others who want their children to thrive emotionally, socially and spiritually, with a mix of high-quality, richly illustrated religious and values-based children's books. Recent titles include Dawn Rundman's *Little Steps, Big Faith: How the Science of Early Childhood Development Can Help You Grow Your Child's Faith*, Jennifer Grant and Benjamin Schipper's *Maybe I Can Love My Neighbor Too*, Caryn Dalhstrand Rivadeneira and Sonya Abby Soekarno's *Gritty and Graceful: 15 Inspiring Women of the Bible*, Rebecca Ninke's *There's No Wrong Way to Pray* and Robin Currie and David Kutz Williams' *The Very Best Story Ever Told: The Gospel With American Sign Language*.

Fortress Press has broadened its attention to critical topics in society as well as the questions and needs of people today. Many of these books not only support the continuing education of church leaders but also serve well as a basis for group study and individual reading. Recent titles include Michael Girlinghouse's *Embracing God's Future Without Forgetting the Past: A Conversation About Loss, Grief, and Nostalgia in Congregational Life*, Lenny Duncan's *Dear Church: A Love Letter From a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S.*, Rozella Haydée White's *Love Big: The Power of Revolutionary Relationships to Heal the World*, Emmy Kegler's *One Coin Found: How God's Love Stretches to the Margins* and Todd Green's *Presumed Guilty: Why We Shouldn't Ask Muslims to Condemn Terrorism*.

### Plans for 2019–2022

1517 Media's strategic thinking focuses on continuing to serve customers in congregations of the ELCA and its full communion partners, in higher education settings and in individual lives by looking for opportunities to partner with individuals to communicate the liberating grace of God in an ever-changing world. 1517 Media is always here to serve individuals and support their ministries.

1517 Media appreciates its many creative partners who contribute to published resources: authors, writers, editors, composers, visual experts and others. In addition, 1517 Media thanks individuals for their support and their use of the resources provided by the ministry of publishing of the ELCA.

Mr. T. Mark Brokering, *board chair*

Mr. Tim Blevins, *president and chief executive officer*