



Report of the Presiding Bishop

Our church and our world have experienced incredible changes during the past two-and-a-half years. It was a short seven months after the closing of the 2019 assembly that our lives were upended by the COVID-19 pandemic, and now, it feels as if we are living in another world. When we talk about the past few years, many of us speak in terms of “before the pandemic” or “since the pandemic began.” But there is no pre-pandemic or post-pandemic language when we speak about the church. We are still the church—that has remained constant. We are church, and we are church together.

The 2022 Churchwide Assembly meets under the theme, “Embody the Word.” There is double meaning in both words. “Embody” means both the incarnation of Jesus Christ who became human and then “embody” also signifies the life of the church as we emerge from the pandemic. “Word” means both: Jesus Christ and scripture. Luke 24:45 states, “Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures.” We embody the Word, both Jesus and the scripture, by speaking it and proclaiming it. In the ELCA, we have been speaking and proclaiming the gospel for 35 years, as well as decades before 1987 in our predecessor bodies.

Over the past few years, we have journeyed into new ways of being church together, both virtually and in person. People who had never set foot in our churches heard the gospel—many for the first time. I am grateful to God for the incredible creativity and resilience shown by congregations and for the dedication of pastors and deacons who embody the Word as they continue their work of sharing the gospel and caring for their communities.

Through the COVID-19 Appeal, ELCA members embodied the Word through immense generosity to bolster important ministries supported by our congregations. These funds helped congregations replenish food pantries and feeding ministries, deliver medication and daily necessities to at-risk populations, set up hand-sanitizing stations at churches and clinics, and establish pastoral care through telecommunications. Internationally, in partnership with our companion synods, ELCA members helped provide medical supplies and personal protection equipment for health clinics and community centers, financial assistance for those whose livelihoods were affected, and psychosocial support and pastoral care.

The pandemic also brought into sharp focus how communities of color are disproportionately impacted as a result of decades of economic, political, and environmental factors. In the days following the murder of George Floyd, our country awakened to a racial reckoning. Many of our congregations embarked on racial justice work in their communities. They embodied the Word as they engaged in racial justice trainings, deepened commitments to service in their neighborhoods, and established ministries to address racism.

The assembly offers an opportunity to look back and reflect. Building upon that reflection this church looks forward to new ways of sharing the gospel. Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther took hold of the new technology of the printing press and modernized communication by translating the Bible into German, the language of the people. Now, 500 years later, we need to find new ways to speak in the cultural vernacular. This doesn’t mean we water down or minimize the gospel. Rather we continue to share the good news, to make it rooted in tradition and radically relevant. We believe that the gospel changes lives. It is a word of grace *and* liberation.

Moving into the future, we all must work together to embody the Word to share this powerful witness of the gospel in the world, inviting more new, young, and diverse people to experience God’s grace in action. As church, we are striving to embody community, to embody justice, to embody love.

There will be important decisions made at this assembly. One of the most important is the election of a new vice president. Carlos Peña has been serving as interim vice president following the death of Bill Horne last August. Bill faithfully served as ELCA vice president for 5 years. He embodied the Lutheran understanding of vocation as a husband, father, and city manager of Clearwater, Fla.

So now, as church together, we consider the work before us during this assembly. Let us open our minds to Jesus and the Scriptures. Through the grace of God, let us Embody the Word.

God’s peace,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, *presiding bishop*

Office of the Presiding Bishop

The presiding bishop, with the support of the Office of the Presiding Bishop, provides leadership for the life and witness of this church; oversees, supervises, and coordinates the work of the churchwide organization; provides leadership and pastoral care for the bishops of the synods; provides ecumenical leadership and representation for this church; provides for serving the theological work of this church; provides for this church's justice for women and racial justice program; and coordinates churchwide strategic planning; works with the Office of the Secretary in preparing the agenda for Church Council meetings, the Conference of Bishops, and Churchwide Assemblies, and supporting the vice president in the execution of this officer's responsibilities. In addition, the Office of the Presiding Bishop oversees the process for developing and executing strategic goals. The following staff reports illuminate the work of this office.

Executive for Administration

15.12.A20. Responsibilities of the Executive for Administration

The executive for administration shall be accountable to the presiding bishop and shall serve as chief administrator of the churchwide organization. The executive for administration shall be elected by the Church Council upon nomination of the presiding bishop and shall serve coterminous with the term of the presiding bishop. At the direction of the presiding bishop, the executive for administration shall:

- a. supervise the day-to-day functioning of the churchwide organization and coordinate the work of churchwide units;*
- b. facilitate the interdependent functioning of churchwide units in the fulfillment of the responsibilities assigned to them;*
- c. coordinate the strategic planning and day-to-day staff activities within the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the functioning of the administrative team;*
- d. develop the budget for the churchwide organization and report to the Church Council and the Churchwide Assembly through the Budget and Finance Committee of the Church Council with regard to the preparation of the budget;*
- e. provide staff services and documentation to the Planning and Evaluation Committee and the Board Development Committee of the Church Council;*
- f. oversee churchwide strategic communications, including branding, messaging, and content development; and*
- g. provide for building management and coordinate central services for the churchwide organization.*

This work is shaped by the vision, purpose, goal, and priorities set forth in the Future Church plan:

Vision: A world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation.
Purpose: Activate each of us so more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice, and love.
Goal: Share the story of Jesus and the ELCA by engaging with 1 million new people as we grow the church together.

Priorities:

- A welcoming church: Engaging new, young, and diverse people.
- A thriving church: Rooted in tradition and radically relevant.
- A connected, sustainable church: Raising the bar together.

Jesus commands believers to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). The call to engage 1 million new, young, and diverse people is deeply aligned to this command and worthy of the challenging work it demands. In a landscape of decline, this call and command is a challenge that requires learning new ways of being the church. Fundamentally, the work before us is experimentation. It requires new skill sets, ways of working together, budgets, and evaluation criteria. It requires not only organizational change but cultural change. It requires deep faith in the living God who can part seas, move mountains, and raise the dead. In my first year as executive for administration, I learned about the churchwide organization, and I am beginning to understand how to align this church's resources to accomplish the ELCA's goal of reaching 1 million new, young, and diverse people. To this end, many important changes to the culture, budget, and operations of the churchwide organization are underway. Some are noted here:

- Shift the work and budget of the churchwide organization to deploy 30% of the organization's resources toward the innovation, experimentation, and learning required to engage new, young, and diverse people.

- Grow the Innovation home area to expand this church’s capacity for innovation across the ecology of the ELCA.
- Create a culture in the churchwide organization to support the work of innovation and experimentation by strengthening the organization’s collective ability to trust, collaborate, move with agility and speed, align decision-making, act on measurable data, etc.
- Continuously improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the core operations of the churchwide organization to adjust to the changing realities.
- Develop operational and innovation strategies to accomplish the goal of engaging 1 million new, young, and diverse people.
- Launch some early experiments to build the culture of innovation and test ideas.
- Build funding and process for innovation through the 2022–2025 budgets.

In addition to these responsibilities, the executive for administration oversees communications, works with the Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity; works with Presiding Bishop Eaton to supervise the Innovation, Service and Justice, and Christian Community and Leadership home areas; and convenes the Administrative Team and Strategic Leadership Team. This position co-leads the Collaborative (a leadership development program collectively working on projects proposed to address critical needs in the churchwide organization), convenes the Operations Leadership Team, and supervises the director for strategic communications, the director for strategy, and an executive assistant. This role serves as primary staff liaison to the Church Council’s Planning and Evaluation Committee (soon to end); Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee (soon to begin); and Board Development Committee. This position is also a staff resource to the Budget and Finance Committee and the Executive Committee.

Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations and Theological Discernment

The ecumenical and inter-religious relations of this church are guided by four policy documents:

- “[A Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment](#)” (1991)
- “[A Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community](#)” (1994, updated in 2021)
- “[A Declaration of Inter-Religious Commitment](#)” (2019)
- “[A Declaration of the ELCA to the Muslim Community](#)” (2022)

Ecumenical Relations: 2019–2022

Full Communion Partnerships

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the **Formula of Agreement** among the ELCA, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (PCUSA), the Reformed Church in America (RCA), and the United Church of Christ (UCC). In this period, particular focus has been given to accompanying the RCA during its discernment and decision-making processes regarding the future of the denomination. Following the decision of the RCA’s General Synod to restructure the denomination and adopt guidelines for departing churches, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton offered this [pastoral message](#).

On the 20th anniversary of “**Called to Common Mission**” in 2021, the Lutheran-Episcopal Coordinating Committee launched a strategy for growth with implementation teams in these focus areas: shared ministry agreements and governance, judicatory matters, liturgical considerations, the orderly exchange, the diaconate, and campus ministry.

Lutherans and Moravians have embraced “**Following Our Shepherd Together**” through new mission starts: Common Grace in Madison, Wis., and The Dwelling in Winston-Salem, N.C.

The United Methodist Church (UMC) General Conference in 2024 will bring years of discernment on issues of human sexuality to the point of decision. In May 2022, the Global Methodist Church was formed by congregations leaving the UMC preemptively. The ELCA continues to accompany the UMC in our full communion agreement, “**Confessing Our Faith Together**.”

The ELCA, The Episcopal Church (ECUSA), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), and the Anglican Church of Canada are living into [Churches Beyond Borders](#), a relationship that serves as mutual recognition of full communion agreements. Building on the two full communion relationships between the churches in the United States and the churches in Canada, a [memorandum of mutual recognition](#) establishes mutual accountability, exchangeability, and shared mission among the four churches. Occasional messages, joint statements, and annual devotions have been developed and distributed across the churches. Since publicly launching Churches Beyond Borders during Advent in 2020, the four partners have focused on building relationships and sharing best practices related to the churches’ repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery and the

legacies of slavery, including racism and white supremacy. To this end, a multiday consultation of church leaders took place in 2021.

Dialogues and Bilateral Relations

The ELCA and the **Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)** resumed a [bilateral dialogue](#) in 2021 that initially launched in 2004. A pre-dialogue meeting in fall 2020 explored the churches' shared history and theological differences. The dialogue met twice online in 2021 and in person for the first time in spring 2022. The dialogue is exploring the opportunities and challenges for joint mission and ministry emerging from local case studies.

The latest round of U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue on "teaching authority" has concluded. The publication of the dialogue report is expected in 2022. Planning for the next round is underway with partners from the **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**. The dialogue will cover ministry, with a focus on the role bishops play in our respective churches.

In June 2021, Presiding Bishop Eaton was part of a delegation of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) that was [received by the Vatican](#). The visit, which included conversations with the **Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity** and a private audience with Pope Francis, looked ahead to the 500th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession in 2030.

In fall 2020, the ELCA responded to a letter from His Grace Bishop Daniel Findikyan, primate of the **Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church**, by [expressing solidarity](#) with the people of Armenia and Artsakh amid rising hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In spring 2022, Bishop Eaton [condemned](#) the plans of the Azerbaijan government to defile Armenian Christian sites in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

In fall 2021, Presiding Bishop Eaton presented an ecumenical cross to **His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew** during a reception by the National Council of Churches on the occasion of his [apostolic visit](#) to the United States.

In summer 2020, Presiding Bishop Eaton heeded the call of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of the **Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America** [urging elected leaders](#) to appeal to the Turkish government to maintain the status quo for the Hagia Sophia. Cooperation with the archdiocese has included online programs on [environmental concerns](#) and COVID-19 responses.

Relations with the **African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church** have focused on cooperation in response to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly [resolution](#) to establish June 17 as "Emanuel 9 Day of Repentance." A [resource page](#) was developed by a consultation of various ELCA groups. The inaugural commemoration in 2020 included a national virtual service with participation of senior episcopal leadership of the AME Church and other ecumenical leaders. Conversations about church-to-church relations are ongoing, and new and renewed relations between our bishops in some areas are building on the 1996 congregational resource "[Understanding One Another](#)."

Conciliar and Multilateral Relations

In fall 2019 the **National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC)** commemorated the 400th anniversary of the arrival of West Africans at the site of their enslavement in Virginia. Presiding Bishop Eaton preached at the opening worship, and Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre received the J. Irwin Miller Award for excellence in ecumenical leadership. During this period, Presiding Bishop Eaton convened her counterparts of the predominately white churches of the NCC to learn what each is doing to address white supremacy in church and society and to explore possibilities for cooperation. A working group with representatives from each church was formed to develop a [shared definition of white supremacy](#).

During this period, the NCC Governing Board adopted two significant policy statements in which Lutherans were drafters: "[Interreligious Relations With a Focus on Peace](#)" and "[The Dangers of Christian Nationalism in the United States](#)." Annual Christian unity gatherings held [online](#) have provided many Lutherans with an opportunity to participate. Presiding Bishop Eaton is currently vice chair of the Governing Board.

The updated edition of the NRSV, or **NRSVue**, which is owned by the NCC, is now available for purchase in print and digital formats. This is "the world's most meticulously researched, rigorously reviewed, and faithfully accurate English-language Bible translation" to date. This is not a fully new translation of the Bible but an updated edition of the trusted NRSV translation, used widely across ELCA worship and study settings. You can find more information [here](#).

Christians Churches Together in the USA held its 2019 convocation in Montgomery, Ala., to commemorate the quadricentennial of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Participants visited the [Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration](#) and the [National Memorial for Peace and Justice](#), curated by the [Equal Justice Initiative](#). The steering committee has worked throughout the pandemic on organizational matters.

The ELCA has continued to work in partnership with the **Conference of National Black Churches (CNBC)**. Delegations have participated in the annual CNBC convocations in 2019 in Atlanta, Ga., and in 2021 online. (No convocation was held in 2020.) In 2019, Presiding Bishop Eaton shared “Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent,” and in 2021 she spoke on the panel “Before Confession: The Road to Repentance.”

In February 2021, Presiding Bishop Eaton, National Bishop Susan Johnson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and ecumenical staff met with leaders of the **North American Lutheran Church** to discuss church-to-church matters.

An ELCA delegation will participate in the **World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly** this September in Germany on the theme “Christ’s Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity.” The Central Committee will meet in person in June 2022 to elect a new general secretary, an action postponed for over two years due to the pandemic. The ELCA’s engagement in the [#ThursdaysinBlack Campaign](#) is growing, with Presiding Bishop Eaton serving as an ambassador.

Inter-Religious Relations: 2019–2022

Drawing upon input from a churchwide online survey conducted in 2020, “**Guidelines for Pastoral Ministry in a Multi-Religious World**” was developed by an ad hoc committee appointed by the presiding bishop and published at elca.org/ecumenical in summer 2022. This resource is part of the implementation of the policy statement “[A Declaration of Inter-Religious Commitment](#),” adopted in 2019, which acknowledged that “the church recognizes the need for the ongoing development of appropriate pastoral aids, including guidelines for inter-religious marriages, pastoral counseling, religious education, and joint prayer services.”

In October 2019, Muhlenberg College hosted a conference called “Passing the Word” to commemorate the 25th anniversary of “**A Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community**.” In fall 2021, the ELCA Church Council adopted [revisions](#) to the 1994 declaration to reflect the [ELCA’s concern for rising anti-Semitism](#) and incitement to anti-Jewish violence. The council’s action also called this whole church into a time of study and reflection. Building on the declaration, the ELCA Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Jewish Relations developed a [guide](#) for “[Preaching and Teaching With Love and Respect for the Jewish People](#).” In April 2020, a [letter of solidarity with Jewish partners and the Asian American community](#) was shared in response to the spike in anti-Asian bigotry and violence at the start of the pandemic.

During this period, two bilateral meetings have taken place between the ELCA and the **Union for Reform Judaism**. A joint video project highlighted [interfaith solidarity](#) during the pandemic. The current focus is on possible areas of cooperation with regard to the rise in anti-Semitism.

In spring 2022, the ELCA Church Council adopted “[A Declaration of the ELCA to the Muslim Community](#).” The ELCA has renewed relations with the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) following the appointment of Imam Saffat Catovic in 2021 as director of the ISNA Office for Interfaith and Community Alliances (IOICA).

The ELCA participates in the five [national interreligious dialogues](#) with Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs, co-convened by the National Council of Churches (NCC), on topics such as spirituality, racism, and responding to COVID-19. The ELCA supported a partnership between the Pluralism Project at Harvard University and the **NCC’s Interreligious Relations**, exploring the [Case Initiative](#) as a methodology for transformative dialogue.

The ELCA participates in a network of interreligious officers, convened by the World Council of Churches (WCC). Appointed by the general secretary, Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre has served during this period on the **WCC’s Interreligious Reference Group**. In this capacity, she served as facilitator for the online conference “Common Formation and the Future of Interreligious Dialogue” in 2021 and contributed to the planning for how the 50th anniversary of the WCC’s Interreligious Relations Programme in 2021 will be lifted up at the upcoming Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany.

The ELCA is a founding member of the campaign [Shoulder to Shoulder: Standing with American Muslims, Advancing American Ideals](#). The year 2020 was the [10th anniversary](#) of the campaign, marked by “[A Statement of Renewed Commitment](#)” and advocacy work to advance the [NO BAN Act \(H.R. 2214\)](#). The pandemic forced several key programs online, including the [Welcome to My Table](#) initiative, which connects Muslim and non-Muslim households to share an iftar meal during Ramadan, and the “Faith Over Fear” [training](#) for local leaders to address and prevent anti-Muslim bigotry and violence. Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre will conclude her five-year tenure as co-chair.

The ELCA has participated in **Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies** conferences launching the [New Alliance of Virtue](#). These international conferences have provided a unique opportunity for building bridges between Protestant and Evangelical leaders who share commitments to addressing anti-Muslim bigotry. The

ELCA has also been active in the related effort of the Muslim World League in support of the 2019 “[Charter of Makkah](#),” a consensus document representing the voice of moderate Islam.

Throughout the pandemic, **Religions for Peace USA**, the most broadly representative multireligious organization in the United States, has been convening public prayer services and programs on important issues of common concern, such as racism, suicide, and COVID-19 response.

Lutherans had a strong presence at the 2021 online eighth **Parliament of the World’s Religions**. The parliament will return to its birthplace, Chicago, in August 2023.

For more detailed information about the work of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations, please explore the annual staff reports posted [online](#).

Theological Discernment

There are four overlapping areas of work under the umbrella of the Theological Discernment team:

- Theological Diversity and Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Engagement, directed by the Rev. Carmelo Santos, Ph.D.
- Theological Ethics, directed by the Rev. Roger Willer, Ph.D.
- Racial Justice, directed by Ms. Jennifer DeLeon
- Women’s Empowerment and Gender Justice, directed by Ms. Mary Streufert, Ph.D.

Theological Diversity and Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Engagement

Theological Diversity and Engagement serves the work of the Office of the Presiding Bishop by providing theological grounding and framing for the work of this church, particularly around matters of diversity and in connection with ecumenical and interreligious engagement.

A key project during this period was the preparation and distribution of a **study guide** on [Martin Luther’s The Freedom of a Christian](#) as part of the ongoing 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The guide serves as an invitation to hear, share, and experience the polyphonic Lutheran witness of the Christian faith as it relates to God’s narrative of freedom in Christ.

At the invitation of the ELCA Conference of Bishops, Theological Diversity and Engagement researched and prepared a [paper](#) on confessional, theological, and pastoral foundations to address the question of celebrating the Eucharist via online platforms.

Theological Diversity and Engagement supports several key areas of ecumenical engagement detailed above, including: the ELCA-U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)-ELCA Dialogue, and strengthening partnerships with the historically Black churches.

In terms of this church’s commitments to racial justice, the work is done intersectionally, which means that we are mindful of the ways in which various injustices overlap and intersect. To work on racial justice, it is necessary also to tend to the issues of gender justice, economic justice, ecological justice, etc., without losing the specificity and uniqueness of each issue. To that end, Theological Diversity works to provide theological framing for the work of confronting white supremacy and bolstering diversity and equity throughout this church, internally and with external partners. In this period, this intersectional work has included:

- Cooperative staff leadership to support the development, distribution, and implementation of “[A Declaration of the ELCA to American Indian and Alaska Native People](#).”
- Cooperative staff leadership to support the public witness of [Churches Beyond Borders](#).
- Collaboration with the director for racial justice and the director for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), in consultation with the advisory task force that produced the ELCA’s [Strategy for Authentic Diversity](#).
- Work through the National Council of Churches’ [Faith and Order Commission](#) on combating white supremacy.
- Partnership with the director for theological ethics in providing leadership and theological support for the **Task Force on Government and Civic Engagement** (see below).

Racial Justice

Racial Justice serves the work of the Office of the Presiding Bishop by providing leadership and vision to promote effective strategies toward racial justice within and across this church and with ecumenical partners, using the intersectional approach described above.

As noted, this intersectional approach has included staff leadership and cooperation in support of “A Declaration of the ELCA to American Indian and Alaska Native People,” the public witness of Churches Beyond Borders, and work in support of the implementation of the ELCA’s Strategy for Authentic Diversity.

Additionally, Racial Justice offers support and resources to synods upon request and provides staff consultation to the [European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice](#).

During this period, Racial Justice collaborated to ensure the completion of “[Now Is the Time: A Study Guide for ELCA Declaration to People of African Descent](#)” to help congregations wrestle with the meaning of “[Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent](#),” adopted at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly and its accompanying explanation.

Theological Ethics

Theological Ethics serves the work of the Office of the Presiding Bishop through developing and interpreting social teaching documents for ethical reflection, moral deliberation, and faith and science.

The actions of the 2019 Churchwide Assembly (CWA) initiated a period of discernment around elaboration of the ELCA’s teaching about civics and faith. The most immediate result was the **social message** “[Government and Civic Engagement in the United States: Discipleship in a Democracy](#),” adopted by the Church Council in June 2020 as a teaching resource for the electoral season.

The ELCA Task Force on Government and Civic Engagement invites this church into a fuller discernment to consider all aspects of civics and faith. The proposed statement is anticipated for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly (see www.elca.org/civicsandfaith).

Work has begun this year on a **social message on climate change**, with a public comment period on a draft version anticipated in fall 2022.

Theological Ethics also provided **editorial updates on the existing messages** “Suicide Prevention” (1999) and “Immigration” (1998) for the sake of contemporary references, resource lists, citations, and phraseology. These updates, adopted by the Church Council, do not entail revision to theological or analytical substance (see www.elca.org/socialmessages).

Theological Ethics’ ongoing moral discernment and ethical reflection projects include: the *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* (learn.elca.org/jle/); the annual **Lutheran Ethicists’ Gathering**; resource production and management; translations of teaching documents into Spanish; and attention to faith and science through liaison with the **Lutheran Alliance for Faith, Science, and Technology**, among others.

ELCA Gender Justice and Women’s Empowerment

ELCA Gender Justice and Women’s Empowerment (previously ELCA Justice for Women) serves the work of the Office of the Presiding Bishop through assisting this church’s longstanding commitment to address sexism. [Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action](#), the 13th ELCA social statement, now guides this whole church. Staff engaged multiple networks and people to address sexism and its intersections with other forms of privilege and oppression scripturally, theologically, and structurally. The work focuses on collaboration and partnerships, dialogue, education, policy formation, and resource formation and sharing.

Because *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* is the social teaching and policy on patriarchy, sexism, and gender justice for this whole church, ELCA Gender Justice developed a **study guide**, with collaboration from Theological Ethics. The guide is fully [online](#) in six interactive sessions, with multiple options for engagement.

Staff members are actively engaged in improving the experiences of all women in ministry through one focus of the **Quality of Call Initiative**. Part of the presiding bishop’s leadership initiative, it is funded by a generous donor to empower change and focuses on understanding and addressing inequity and variances in the quality of pastoral calls that are related to gender, race, or LGBTQIA+ identity. During this period, it concentrated on the quality of calls for women who are pastors in the ELCA.

Gender Justice and Women’s Empowerment also fosters theological depth and diversity through, for example, collaboration with other ELCA partners in the ELCA Womanist Theology Initiative and by the development and availability of the free [online database](#) of **Lutheran Women’s Works in Religion** (LWWR). Accessible to anyone at any time, it brings together works of global Lutheran women in religion.

This work also prioritizes addressing gender-based violence through, for instance, the World Council of Churches [Thursdays in Black](#) initiative, support for education and training to synods and rostered ministers, and preliminary efforts to address gender-based violence through collaborative financial strategies. Lastly, Gender Justice and Women’s Empowerment remains committed to the networks and partnerships of Lutheran Women in Theological and Religious Studies (LWTRS) and the Lutheran World Federation [Women’s Empowerment](#) (LWF), particularly in preparation for the 2023 LWF Assembly.

People Solutions

As the ELCA churchwide organization moved into a new organizational design, the Human Resources team responded by reorganizing and rebranding to better support the new structure of the churchwide organization. With a new name and an expanded team, People Solutions serves the churchwide organization through a business partner model. Each home area has a designated people business partner who is the point of contact for all things related to People Solutions. In addition to the comprehensive human resources and payroll functions traditionally provided, the expanded team includes global (HR) services, leadership development, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

The director for leadership development partnered with the executive for administration to launch The Collaborative, a leadership development program engaging a 96% diverse group of leaders in collectively working on projects proposed to address critical needs in the churchwide organization.

The senior director for diversity, equity, and inclusion has facilitated several trainings and webinars related to DEI and partnered with diverse groups in the churchwide organization to develop employee affinity groups and employee resource groups. These include the LGBTQIA+ group, the Young Adults group, and the White People for Racial Justice group, with others in the process of development.

The people business partners are actively engaged in staffing vacancies, updating and revising position descriptions, partnering with home areas on organizational structure adjustments, and serving as advisors to the Hybrid Work team on implementing that model of work for the churchwide organization.

Additionally, People Solutions partnered with Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. to analyze our salary structure and ensure that the churchwide organization is providing fair and equitable compensation. With an intentional commitment to gender pay equity, all churchwide positions and salaries were reviewed and evaluated to ensure fairness and equity comparable to our market. Employees whose salaries were impacted received adjustments over multiple pay dates in 2021 and 2022.

Development

The work of the Development team covers several core areas: mission support, mission funding, regional gift planning, development operations, development marketing and communications, development services, and congregational stewardship and generosity.

Report of work for 2019–2022

Team Reorganization

With the launch of the Future Church design on Feb. 1, 2021, the development work of this church now resides in the Office of the Presiding Bishop. This new team, called Development, consists of three areas of focus: Philanthropy, Development Services, and Development Marketing and Communications.

The Development team will continue to lead the organization in directing efforts for support of the ELCA's work through major gifts, appeals, and collaboration with synods and congregations.

Philanthropy

The philanthropy team is an intentional grouping of teams that work directly and in coordination with individuals, congregations, and synods regarding development of resources for the ministries of the ELCA. Made up of the Mission Support team, Mission Funding, Development Operations, Development Services, Congregational Stewardship and Generosity, and the Regional Gift Planners of the ELCA Foundation, this team works collaboratively to support the ministries that we do as church together.

Mission Support

Rooted in relationships and faith, congregations share with the wider church a portion of undesignated offerings received. This giving is known as Mission Support, and it helps to fund ministries within each synod and through the churchwide organization that no individual or single congregation could support alone.

Synods receive, on average, just over 5% of congregations' undesignated offerings as Mission Support. In 2021, this resulted in approximately \$91 million shared in Mission Support from nearly \$1.7 billion received by congregations in undesignated offerings. In synods, Mission Support typically provides over 90% of the operating budget to nurture, equip, and accompany ELCA congregations and rostered ministers. Synods also support area ministry partners (outdoor ministries, colleges, seminaries, and more) as well as build relationships with companion churches around the world.

A portion of the Mission Support received by synods is shared by synods with the ELCA churchwide organization. In FY21, this totaled \$40.6 million and provided 61% of the churchwide organization operating budget to lead and support ministry on behalf of this whole church. This includes accompanying ELCA

congregations as growing centers for evangelical mission, equipping leaders, and building the capacity of this church for witness and service in the world.

Overall, Mission Support shared by congregations across the ELCA remained strong in 2020 and 2021, despite challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a testament to congregations' relationships with the ministries of the wider church. It also demonstrates people's commitment to continue supporting these ministries that make a difference in the lives of so many.

The senior director and director for Mission Support are responsible for engaging in conversations with key synod leaders to determine synod commitments to Mission Support and developing strategies for addressing future Mission Support sharing. In 2021, the churchwide organization's Mission Support team relaunched its Mission Support strategy team, now with three synod bishops and three directors of evangelical mission participating. In addition, the team reengaged the largely volunteer mission interpretation network within synods, now focusing even more on bringing the impact of the ministries funded through Mission Support to life for people across the ELCA.

Mission Support continues to be a vital and tangible way for the ELCA to demonstrate connectedness and commitment across the three expressions of the ELCA, making a difference as church together for the sake of the world.

Mission Funding

ELCA World Hunger

ELCA World Hunger creatively and courageously works toward a just world where all are fed. As this church's ministry that addresses poverty and hunger, ELCA World Hunger truly accomplishes more working together with many others than it could do alone.

As 2020 unfolded, the spread of COVID-19 threatened to create a national and global hunger crisis. Two years later, ELCA World Hunger is grateful that a wave of extreme hunger has been largely averted. The pandemic magnified the incredible loyalty of ELCA members, who responded with overwhelming generosity to our calls to support the work of ELCA World Hunger.

The onset of the pandemic caused the Development team to try many new approaches, including the use of virtual events to encourage commitment and support for the work this church does together through ELCA World Hunger. In 2020, three virtual events focused on ELCA World Hunger raised more than \$600,000 in support of the program. In 2021, the Development team built upon this success by hosting another online benefit for ELCA World Hunger on World Food Day (Oct. 16, 2021), which raised an additional \$130,000 in support of this ministry. ELCA World Hunger is grateful to Mr. Rick Steves, Mr. Peter Mayer, Ms. Rachel Kurtz, the St. Olaf Choir, the Rev. David Beckmann, the Rev. Rebel Hurd, missionaries Mr. Willie and Ms. Anne Langdji, the Rev. Rafael Malpica Padilla, Bishop Shelly Bryan Wee of the Northwest Washington Synod, and Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton for their participation in these initiatives.

These events were part of a larger fundraising challenge for ELCA World Hunger in 2020. In an otherwise unpredictable year, the giving of ELCA members and congregations to the work of ELCA World Hunger exceeded expectations, with 2020 income exceeding that of any previous year at \$23.6 million.

As a result of this generosity, ELCA World Hunger increased its program expenditures by \$2 million in 2021. The program's growth has allowed this church to respond in vital, lifesaving and life-changing ways in some of the most challenging contexts during a time of extreme uncertainty and hardship.

ELCA World Hunger continues to realize an increase in individual giving over revenue projections and will use this increase to grow support for the program at all giving levels in 2022. A total of \$625,000 in matching gifts will be used to encourage gifts to ELCA World Hunger's Global Farm Challenge. Despite the cancellation of the 2022 ELCA Youth Gathering, ELCA World Hunger is pressing forward with a redesigned challenge to encourage participation from ELCA youth—and the congregations and members who support them—in a youth-focused, whole-church campaign to accompany our neighbors who are facing threats of hunger and poverty around the world.

ELCA World Hunger works through Lutheran churches and their partners in more than 60 countries. Gifts to ELCA World Hunger have made it possible for the program to award ELCA World Hunger grants totaling over \$2.4 million to 146 domestic ministries in 2022. This includes 89 grants awarded in 2020–2021 and 12 Big Dream grants totaling \$1.4 million.

For more on the impact of ELCA World Hunger's grant, education, and networking and engagement activities, see Section III of the *Pre-Assembly Report*. Thank you for all the ways you serve your local and global neighbors, and especially for your support of ELCA World Hunger. With your help, ELCA World Hunger is making progress toward a just world where all are fed.

Lutheran Disaster Response

Like ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) is an essential building block in the ELCA's continuum of care, helping to support and stabilize communities, especially when disaster strikes.

Lutheran Disaster Response has taken care to balance the opportunity for response with the need to have sufficient resources on hand in case of a wide-ranging catastrophic event. For several years, the program has aimed to have \$2-\$3 million of undesignated disaster funds on hand for that purpose. Because of this careful stewardship, the ELCA was quickly able to mobilize support to communities early in the COVID-19 pandemic and sustain that response (connecting Lutheran Disaster Response, ELCA World Hunger, and COVID-19 appeal funds).

In 2020 and 2021, LDR responded to disasters in 53 countries and 46 U.S. states and territories. This was made possible by more than \$21 million representing approximately 79,000 gifts. Several of the largest responses in the last two years included major disasters in the United States—primarily tornadoes, wildfires, and severe storms—as well as international response to the Haiti earthquake in 2021. As of this writing, the Eastern Europe Crisis response continues to be an ongoing and significant area of work for the program. During the first month of fundraising for this effort, the Development team raised more than \$2 million to support this response, with additional fundraising activities planned to support the response as the situation continues to unfold.

ELCA Fund for Leaders

The ELCA Fund for Leaders, which marks its 25th anniversary in 2022, is a merit-based scholarship program aimed at addressing the problem of seminarian debt for ELCA candidates for rostered ministry studying at ELCA seminaries. At the end of 2022, the total asset value of all ELCA Fund for Leaders endowment accounts was \$84.6 million. In the last academic year, 317 seminary students received more than \$3.2 million in support. The Fund for Leaders program currently touches one in three ELCA seminarians. In 2022–2023, staff expect this number to increase exponentially as the program plans to support every TEEM candidate (*see below*)—adding as many as 80–90 students who were previously ineligible for most Fund for Leaders assistance. A portion of this scholarship is being funded through Phase III of the ELCA's "Resourceful Servants" grant from the Lilly Endowment.

In 2021, the Fund for Leaders raised the value of its full-tuition scholarships to \$19,000 per year for all recipients. The result is a total scholarship value of \$57,000 for Master of Divinity students and \$38,000 for Master of Arts students over the course of their seminary studies. Each seminary has committed to make up any difference between actual tuition costs and the Fund for Leaders full-tuition scholarship amount. In cases where actual tuition is less than the Fund for Leaders full-tuition scholarship, the seminary will apply any difference toward other costs, such as books and fees. The program periodically adjusts the value of full-tuition scholarships to try to keep pace with inflation.

In collaboration with Ethnic-Specific and Multicultural Ministries and Candidacy and Theological Formation, the ELCA Fund for Leaders has added a fourth scholarship type to the program, which expands eligibility to Theological Education for Emerging Ministry (TEEM) students. Previously, TEEM students were eligible only for Mission Developer and synod scholarships. This scholarship was formed in response to "How Strategic and Authentic Is Our Diversity: A Call for Confession, Reflection and Healing Action," adopted by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. The new scholarship will be awarded for the first time in fall 2022 to all TEEM students who register and it is hoped that it will, depending on the number of students who complete the registration process, cover close to half of these students' annual tuition costs. TEEM students remain eligible for synod scholarships and can combine those awards.

Global Mission Support (formerly ELCA Global Church Sponsorship)

Global Mission Support has responsibility for long-term missionaries, Young Adults in Global Mission, Global Ministries, and the International Women Leaders initiative.

The International Women Leaders (IWL) program continues to draw the interest and support of ELCA members, especially women leaders throughout the church. The COVID-19 pandemic created several challenges and disruptions to the program, yet even amid these challenges the ELCA continued to support IWL scholarship recipients as they navigated travel restrictions, visa acquisitions, remote learning, and more.

The ELCA's loyal and faithful donors continued to support IWL scholarship recipients during this uncertain time as well, giving nearly \$1.5 million to support the program in 2020–2021. Since the inception of the program, almost 200 established and emerging women leaders from the ELCA's global companions

have accessed educational opportunities designed specifically for them, including four-year scholarships to ELCA colleges and universities.

The Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) program experienced similar interruptions in programming because of the pandemic. In early 2020, all active volunteers were evacuated from their countries of service, and the following two service years (2020–2021 and 2021–2022) were cancelled. Because volunteers were not in service, the Development team reported a drop in funding during this period. (All volunteers carry a fundraising goal of \$5,000 for their service year). The Development team continued to raise funds in support of the program in the absence of active volunteers through alternate fundraising strategies. The YAGM program looks forward to deploying its first cohort of volunteers since the start of the pandemic across four country programs in fall 2022.

Supporting ELCA missionaries through a covenant is one of the most powerful ways ELCA congregations help lift up Christ's global church. Despite the pandemic creating new challenges for the ELCA's missionaries, their work did not stop. By establishing annual covenants, congregations promise to support missionaries through prayer, communication, and financial support. In 2020 and 2021, these covenants, along with direct support from individual donors, generated almost \$3.7 million.

In early 2022, the ELCA established the Mark L. Jacobson Memorial Endowment fund in memory of Mr. Mark Jacobson, who dedicated his life to serving congregations, healthcare facilities, and communities in Tanzania and other countries around the world. The endowment fund will support the work of ELCA missionaries, as well as that of Selian Lutheran Hospital hospice and palliative care program in Arusha, Tanzania, and the Reconciliation Lutheran Community Center & Primary Health Care Clinic in Juba, South Sudan.

ELCA "Where Needed Most"

The end of *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA* presented the Development team with the opportunity to find a renewed focus on efforts to encourage unrestricted gifts to the organization through ELCA "Where Needed Most." Whatever the need may be, unrestricted gifts allow this church to step forth in faith to adapt and respond as necessary from year to year. They are vital to the life of our church as the ELCA lives confidently and generously as a community of faith and in service of others.

As a result of this renewed focus, which included new strategies for giving and engagement from across the team, the organization grew giving to ELCA "Where Needed Most" from \$4.61 million in 2019 to \$8.49 million in 2021, with an average annual growth of 36%. This designation will continue to be a priority area moving forward as the ELCA expands the body of work and ministry support through unrestricted gifts to the organization.

Development Operations (formerly Stewardship Strategy and Operations)

Development Operations is responsible for the scholarship operations of the ELCA Fund for Leaders, project management and event planning for major donor events and leadership table gatherings, and the unit-wide strategy for stewardship and recognition of donors at all levels.

In 2021, the team merged with Prospect Development and now supports relationship management and prospect research, data, and analytics for major, planned, and corporate and foundation relations programs. This year marks the launch of a focused effort to engage with corporate and foundation donors—inviting them into relationship with many of the exciting ministries of the ELCA.

The Development Events team coordinates events—virtual, in-person and hybrid—that engage and strengthen relationships with major donors. The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a significant shift from in-person to virtual events, one that this team undertook with a high degree of agility. In 2020 and 2021, the events team coordinated a total of 20 virtual events. We look forward to the return of in-person events in 2022 as pandemic-related guidance allows.

Working as a single, integrated team, Development Operations is applying best practices from across the unit to create efficient internal processes that support excellent external relationships.

Development Services (formerly Advancement Services)

The Development Services team is responsible for gift processing, the ELCA contact center, and the ELCA Constituent Information System (ECIS).

ECIS manages the ELCA's constituent relationships, providing the churchwide organization with a 360-degree view of constituents. The system is used for all communication with members, donors, rostered ministers, lay leaders, synods, and congregations. Approximately 1 million active constituents and organizations are managed by ECIS. Currently, more than a dozen synods use ECIS to maintain data about rostered ministers, candidates, lay leaders, ELCA congregations and worshipping communities, and friends and supporters.

As part of the Future Church design, the Development Services team shifted its priorities to emphasize its work with analytics and reports to help the Development team and the organization make decisions informed by data analytics and metrics.

Throughout the pandemic, the team continued to operate, answering thousands of calls, processing gifts on time, sending receipts and thank-you letters, helping successfully execute appeals and communications, and completing dozens of reports and analyses.

The Gift Processing team experienced some of its busiest years on record, handling more than 150,000 gifts annually. Much of this growth is due to the substantial growth in year-end giving through ELCA Good Gifts in 2020 and 2021. More than 30% of processed gifts are received online. The Development Services team is partnering with other teams in the churchwide organization to implement a new online marketing and fundraising tool (Engaging Networks). Our “go live” date for this tool is Q2 2022.

The staff in the call center completed more than 14,000 calls in 2021. These calls included resource orders, donations, and general inquiries. The staff also helped in fulfilling more than 3,000 resource orders from the ELCA resource center.

In 2019 and 2020, the team partnered with the Office of the Treasurer and Information Technology to implement Workday, a new financial system for the ELCA. The new system went live in July 2020.

In 2021, Development Services worked with Information Technology and Development Marketing and Communications to implement a new e-store for online resources that offers new features, greater flexibility, and cost savings to the organization and to donors. The e-store went live on Feb. 1, 2022.

Congregational Stewardship and Generosity (formerly Congregational Engagement)

The Congregational Stewardship and Generosity (CSG) team was formed in 2020 to help steward and engage generous congregations across the ELCA. In 2021, a little more than 5,000 congregations gave a total of more than \$15.4 million to ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response, Global Mission, ELCA Fund for Leaders, and Where Needed Most. Of those over 5,000 congregations, 200 gave at least \$10,000 to at least one of those churchwide ministries, contributing \$4.7 million altogether. This means that just over 2% of ELCA congregations were responsible for more than 30% of all 2021 congregational giving to those five ministries. These key congregations are a significant part of the overall mission funding strategy.

The CSG team also supports the work of congregational stewardship, providing congregations and synods with stewardship resources, training and educational opportunities that will help all congregations strengthen their stewardship ministries and grow in their generosity.

One example is the ELCA’s preferred-partner agreement with the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving through which the first Executive Certificate in Religious Fundraising (ECRF) course was offered to a cohort of ELCA leaders in January 2022. The online, seven-week course was offered at an almost 40% savings over the regular cost of registration. The 30 leaders in the cohort included five bishops and five directors for evangelical mission, 10 rostered ministers from congregations, five Lutheran campus ministry leaders, and five Lutheran Outdoor Ministries leaders. In partnership with Lake Institute, CSG plans to provide another such course in January 2023. In 2022 the team will offer Cultivating Generous Congregations to a cohort of 12–16 congregations across multiple synods, as well as quarterly stewardship webinars that will be available to all congregations.

In 2022, the CSG team began working with the African Descent Strategy Team and its Congregational Vitality working group on an African-descent stewardship resource project. A part of the ELCA African Descent Strategy Implementation Plan, the project includes first testing and evaluating existing stewardship resources, then revising and updating them to better support the stewardship ministries of African-descent communities in growing gifts for ministry.

Development Marketing and Communications

The Development Marketing and Communications team supports the ELCA’s brand as well as the development and programmatic communications objectives of the churchwide organization, home areas, sub-brands (e.g., ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response), and the ELCA Foundation. In 2020–2021, the team completed nearly 300 mailed and emailed communications to fundraise for churchwide ministries and share information with ELCA members, congregations, and leaders. As a result of this work, ELCA ministries received:

- \$15.1 million through direct-mail efforts.
- \$12.5 million through ELCA Good Gifts (catalog and online).
- \$9.5 million through online gifts.
- \$2.9 million through Monthly Partners, the ELCA’s monthly-giving program.

The new Combined Programs Appeal program, which provides donors with the opportunity to support more than one churchwide ministry at once, was launched in 2019. The ministries included in the program are ELCA Where Needed Most, ELCA Fund for Leaders, and the current Global Mission fundraising priorities. In its first year, the Combined Programs Appeal resulted in a 36% increase in revenue raised for these ministries over the previous year.

The organization set a record for online giving in a single day through ELCA Good Gifts on Giving Tuesday 2020. In total, the Development Communications team helped to raise almost \$601,000 that day. Additional fundraising efforts on the previous day helped to raise another \$70,000, resulting in a two-day total of approximately \$671,000. Giving Tuesday 2021 raised nearly the same amount, with a two-day total of \$664,000.

Looking forward, Development Marketing and Communications will launch a new email management system and new donation forms in collaboration with the Information Technology and Development Services teams. Scheduled to launch in the first half of 2022, these tools will allow Development Communications to deploy more donor-centric online fundraising strategies, which it expects to drive higher overall revenue through the churchwide organization's online revenue streams.

COVID-19 Response Fund

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, the work of the organization and how it is typically conducted has been disrupted. Amid adapting to new realities brought on by the pandemic, the Development team worked alongside teams from across the organization to prioritize a fund that supports the ministries of this church that are most in need and best positioned to make an impact.

Since the establishment of the COVID-19 Response Fund, Development has helped generate and steward nearly \$2.1 million from generous ELCA members. This support resulted in 190 grants to 63 synods, as well as an additional round of Daily Bread Matching Grants to congregations across the ELCA. Donations now are being distributed through churchwide ministries such as ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response.

ELCA Foundation

The mission of the ELCA Foundation is to support and sustain ELCA ministries by enhancing gifting capacity and stewarding resources. As a ministry, the ELCA Foundation serves individuals, congregations and worshiping communities, synods, the churchwide organization, institutions, agencies, and other related ELCA organizations. A focus of the regional gift planning team is developing planned gifts from ELCA members. This team collaborates closely with the Development team in working with donors. These gifts support all expressions and the serving arms of the church, including churchwide ministries, congregations, and synods, as well as ELCA-related ministries such as camps, seminaries, campus ministries, and Lutheran Services in America organizations.

The ELCA Foundation is a separately incorporated ministry. Find an in-depth look at the ELCA Foundation's work in Section IV of this *Pre-Assembly Report*.

Strategic Communications

Strategic Communications is the churchwide organization's team responsible for leadership in developing and implementing the churchwide communications strategy, supporting all expressions of this church. Through publications, digital media, video, and public relations, Strategic Communications works to inform and engage ELCA and non-ELCA members alike. The team is charged with strengthening the identity and mission of the ELCA through multichannel communication strategies that reach people both nationally and globally.

Throughout the pandemic, Strategic Communications has worked hard to keep members connected and informed, providing content for more than 30 different channels, including ELCA.org, *Living Lutheran*, Seeds Monthly, Stories of Faith in Action, and more. The team shared the stories of the hard work and successes of congregations throughout the ELCA, from those which grew through online worship to those which amplified their food pantry operations to serve an entire community. Congregations continued to grow in their outreach and Mission Support, adapting and updating their methods throughout the pandemic and for the future of this church.

The team continues to provide congregations and synods with resources and toolkits to participate in "God's work. Our hands." Sunday, the ELCA's dedicated day of service held annually in September. In 2020, Strategic Communications developed "Service in the Time of COVID-19," a resource to encourage safe participation during the pandemic, with ideas for at-home, outdoor, and physically distant service. This year's day of service will take place Sunday, Sept. 11.

Since the last Churchwide Assembly, the ELCA's social media following has grown to 142,000 followers on Facebook (a 10% increase), 26,600 followers on Twitter (also a 10% increase), and 18,000 followers on Instagram (a 67% increase). In addition, Twitter has increased post views by 70% and engagements by 110%. Instagram has increased impressions 460% and engagements 410%.

From August 2019 to 2021, the video team produced more than 385 professional videos for use in social media, congregations, synods, and various special events. Because of the pandemic, the video team had to dramatically shift to alternative means of filming and producing content. This included starting a new regular series of Presiding Bishop Eaton's videos at the beginning of the pandemic. Over the last two years, ELCA videos were viewed more than 3.8 million times, more than three times the frequency they were seen in 2019.

From 2020 to 2021, ELCA.org averaged 5.8 million site visits, a 25% increase from 2019, with the top three pages visited continuing to be the home page, the "Find a Congregation" tool, and the resources page. Improvements to ELCA.org continue; staff are updating how users can engage with the website on smartphones and making enhancements to improve accessibility for everyone.

Living Lutheran magazine has a monthly print circulation of 103,000 copies with 75% of the copies going to congregations, 10% to individual subscribers, less than 3% to institutions, and 12% serving as gratis copies. Individual subscriptions continue to stay level, although bulk congregational subscriptions rapidly declined as congregations shifted to online worship during the pandemic. At the same time, *Living Lutheran's* online community continues to thrive, with more than 1.7 million visits to [LivingLutheran.org](https://www.livinglutheran.org) since January 2020. *Living Lutheran's* social media presence has resulted in 1.8 million impressions in 2021, with 139,574 post engagements, a 13% increase from 2020. Instagram has seen considerable audience growth, with a 40% increase in 2021.

In 2020 and 2021, Strategic Communications sent out 101 news releases to prompt TV, radio, print, and digital coverage of the ELCA. In those two years alone, ELCA media coverage had more than 12 billion potential views, just under double the population of the earth.

Concluding Remarks

The last two years have been filled with much uncertainty and hardship for our church and the world but have been filled with an equal measure of faith in the work we are called to do as members of the body in Christ. We are grateful for the tremendous outpouring of generosity by the ELCA and its members during this unprecedented time in our church.

The Rev. Louise N. Johnson, *executive for administration*, together with:

Ms. Kathryn M. Lohre, *executive for ecumenical and inter-religious relations and theological discernment*

Ms. Rhondean L. Johnson, *executive for people, diversity, and inclusion*

Ms. Rachel K. Wind, *interim executive for development*