



July 28 – August 2
PHOENIX, ARIZONA



Service and Justice

In these unprecedented and challenging times, we are reminded of our biblical call to pursue justice, serve others, and love our neighbors as ourselves. In the face of uncertainty, we remain steadfast in our mission, knowing that God calls us to act with faith, mercy, and compassion.

Four teams support the Service and Justice unit's mandate to foster and facilitate service and promote efforts to call and act for justice: Building Resilient Communities, Global Mission, Ministries of Diverse Cultures and Communities, and Witness in Society. The unit's administration oversees the work of the Service and Justice unit, shaping vision, setting strategic priorities, and aligning personnel and finance. The administration also coordinates partnerships with The Lutheran World Federation, Lutheran Services in America, Lutheran World Relief, Global Refuge, the Deaconess Community, and ecumenical partners.

Service and Justice is embedded and embodied in the ELCA ecosystem, living out Christ's love through service, advocacy, and a deep dedication to justice and mercy for all. We embrace our calling to be church together, active in love and living our faith in action to serve the most vulnerable among us.

Now more than ever, we reaffirm our commitment to justice, service, and love, trusting in God's promise that light shines through the challenges. This report features ways the Service and Justice unit teams work across this church and around the world in meaningful and impactful ways bearing witness to a vision of church that follows the way of Jesus.

Building Resilient Communities

Adopted by the Churchwide Assembly in 2016, the AMMPARO strategy (Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities) is the ELCA global migration strategy. This holistic, whole-church strategy accompanies migrants in countries of origin and return, transit and return, countries of contention and destination, both internationally through companions and domestically through ELCA partners.

AMMPARO's international engagement has grown from 12 programs in nine countries within the Americas to 22 programs in 21 countries world-wide, encompassing activity in Europe, the Middle East, Asia Pacific, and Africa.

Significant growth in the US network includes a total of 266 welcoming and sanctuary congregations and 35 synod AMMPARO or immigration task forces with activity in 59 synods across all nine ELCA regions.

AMMPARO's priorities include responding to the many inquiries of people within and outside of the ELCA seeking guidance on their activities as a result of executive orders. National advocacy is coordinated with the Interfaith Immigration Coalition and other strategic U.S. and international networks and allies, including Lutheran Services of America, Church World Service, and Global Refuge, through the ELCA program director for migration policy.

Lutheran Disaster Response

A disaster is an event or circumstance that overwhelms the resources and ability of a community to respond and recover on its own. As the humanitarian response ministry of the ELCA, Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) is an important way this church comes together to care for and walk with God's people in need wherever they are, for as long as it takes.

Every disaster is different, so each response is unique and centered on the specific needs of the individual community. The LDR team accompanies local partners across the globe throughout the cycle of a disaster—response, recovery, mitigation, and preparedness—providing financial support, training and technical assistance, advocacy, and networking.

LDR provided more than \$51 million in humanitarian assistance from 2022 through 2024, responding to hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, flooding, volcanic eruptions, drought, war and conflict, water access challenges, and disease outbreaks. In 2024 alone, LDR supported work in 36 U.S. states and territories, primarily through synods, and 54 countries outside the U.S. Learn more about LDR's recent work in [Thrive](#).

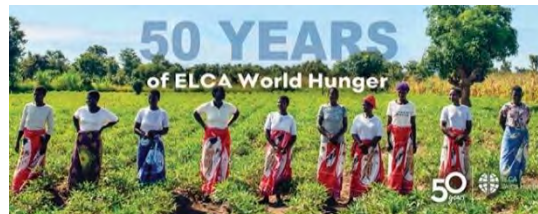
In addition to accompanying partners with grants and technical assistance, LDR continues to nurture its Community of Practice, a network of disaster professionals and volunteers actively engaged in disaster work in synods, social ministry organizations, Indigenous organizations, and community-based groups from across the ELCA. See training opportunities at [2025 Winter-Spring Training and Engagement Calendar](#).

Read about LDR's response to the war in Ukraine [Finding "humanity and kindness" - Living Lutheran](#) and coordinated efforts of [LWF and the ELCA in Gaza](#).

World Hunger

In 2024 ELCA World Hunger marked its 50th anniversary! For 50 years Lutherans have sought to address the root causes of hunger and poverty around the world, supporting nearly 200 projects in more than 60 countries every year, including in the United States.

Sustainable development encompasses the critical, long-term work of ELCA World Hunger in restoring dignity and wholeness to communities that have been historically marginalized by injustice, conflict, and challenges arising from climate change. In the Holy Land, ELCA World Hunger accompanies our partners, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), during this tumultuous time. Despite the current crisis, we strive to create a sustainable future with our Palestinian siblings in Christ. Through *Dal Al Kalima* University in Bethlehem, our ELCJHL partners nurture future leaders who promote their Palestinian identities through art, culture, and design while at the same time providing psychosocial ministry and trauma-informed care for youth and children.



Domestically in 2024, 188 ministries across 55 synods in 40 states and Puerto Rico received nearly \$2.7 million in Domestic Hunger Grants to address the root causes of hunger and poverty. These include 33 Daily Bread grants made in 2024 to ELCA congregation-based ministries that help feed K-12 students over the summer or after school.

The World Hunger Education and Networking team empowers current and future partners to work toward ending systemic injustice to alleviate suffering and end hunger. The team connects and equips the network with resources to deepen and extend the work of World Hunger across the ELCA. At the World Hunger Leadership Gathering in 2024, nearly 150 leaders in hunger ministry, guests, and staff shared best practices, lived experiences, service immersion, worship, and fellowship together.

In 2025, a new platform will be launched to widen the reach of ELCA World Hunger leaders across regions to share tools, resources, and learning opportunities. Resources produced to encourage and facilitate engagement in hunger and justice leadership include annual Advent and Lenten study guides, weekly sermon starters, a new intergenerational Vacation Bible School curriculum, "[At The Table](#)," and an interactive journey originally designed for thousands of youth at the 2024 Youth Gathering.

Global Mission

Global Mission is the guiding foundation that propels and sustains our global church-to-church relationships and mutual endeavors for evangelical witness in the life and ministry of companions, partners, and this church. The Global Mission team also engages and invites synods and congregations to the shared partnership of global work through the Companion Synod Program. This program has been a resource for rekindling, starting, and deepening relationships for many years. In 2025 and 2026, this program will strategically implement a Companion Synod Leadership Network to promote best practices and new initiatives.

The reach of our global mission work is vast, reflected in the countless relationships we nurture, including the ELCA network.

Today, 111 Global Mission personnel are present alongside 33 companion and partner churches, embodying the connection between the ELCA and global partners. Through these commissioned personnel, the Global Mission team supports and collaborates with the mission of companions and partners, deeply engaging in their contexts.

"The ELCA is always present in our lives" is a common statement from companions. Service with others is at the heart of our Lutheran identity, and our commitment is to be present. Future priorities focus on theological and leadership formation with companions and partners to explore innovative approaches, strengthen collaborative networks, and develop strategies to equip leaders in diverse and evolving ministries rooted in Scripture and Lutheran identity. An example of this effort is the online master's degree in theology in Spanish that the Facultades EST in Brazil and the Instituto Pastoral Contextual (IPC) through our companion church in Argentina and Uruguay (IELU). The program will support theological education efforts of companion churches in Latin America, and it will also be available to ELCA Latiné congregations.



Global Mission leads the ELCA initiative "Sumud For Justice in Palestine and Israel." The faithful relationship between the ELCA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and The Holy Land, our partners in Palestine and Israel, are the backbone for [ELCA Sumud](#).

Ministries of Diverse Cultures and Communities

Ministries of Diverse Cultures and Communities (MDCC) calls the ELCA to be accountable to its stated commitments to diversity and the radical inclusivity of the gospel. The MDCC team provide consultation, programming, and resources to support the goal of full partnership and participation of African Descent, African National, Arab and Middle Eastern, Asian and Pacific Islander, Indigenous, and Latino people in the life of this church. A critical resource within the ELCA ecology, MDCC team members find themselves at the nexus of discussions and activity around race, culture, class, gender, colonization, and immigration—often challenging intersectional realities. However, their intersectional lens also places the MDCC team at the center of active and life-giving ministries.

African Descent Ministries is the largest ethnic-specific ministry in the ELCA, consisting of more than 200 congregations nationwide, including 40 new churches, more than 300 rostered leaders, and more than 50 candidates for ministry. New ELCA congregations in Black communities are benefitting from the African Descent New Start Cohort. Five new congregations have finished the second cycle of the New Start experiment. Investing financial, social, and human resources, these new starts achieve their goals and measure the actual cost of a successful new start. In keeping with the 2019 apology entitled “Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent,” work continues on the ELCA’s approach to reinvestment in African Descent communities, including the upcoming RECLAIM: Genetic, Kinetic, Prophetic gathering.

African Nationals Ministries (ANM) works with 91 ELCA congregations. ELCA African National communities are located overwhelmingly in urban settings and are growing. The ANM team is collaborating with the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) program and the seven ELCA seminaries to form visionary leaders for African National contexts. Last year, ANM related to fourteen seminarians and five graduates.

Arab and Middle Eastern Ministries encompasses the ministries of three ELCA congregations (in Dearborn, Mich.; Brooklyn, N.Y.; and Sacramento, Calif.), 10 rostered ministers, and nearly 3,000 individuals of Middle Eastern heritage from across the ELCA. Embedded within the fabric of the ELCA, Lutherans from diverse Arab and Middle Eastern heritage are involved as pastors, lay leaders, churchwide staff, and members of synod and churchwide committees and task forces. The Arab and Middle Eastern Ministries team launched the Interfaith Emotional and Spiritual Care project, providing much needed support to U.S. Arab communities affected by the Israel-Palestine conflict. Salam Radio Ministry has launched in New York, housed at Trinity Lutheran Church on Staten Island.



Pastor Charbel Zgheib's installation service at Salam Arabic Lutheran Church, Brooklyn, NY

Asian and Pacific Islander Ministries brings together 20,000 Lutherans from Asian and Pacific Islander (API) backgrounds. 30% of API Lutherans worship in API-specific communities, and 70% belong to 2,500 different non-API-specific congregations. The API community includes 128 active rostered ministers—47 women and 81 men—as well as nine teaching professors. The community supports 18 seminarians pursuing rostered ministry in the ELCA. The Asian Lay Evangelist Program, which celebrates its strong partnership with Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, graduated its first cohort of ten leaders in 2023, despite the hurdles of a global pandemic. In recent years immigration among Asian groups has been growing quickly. Immigration and gender justice are key priorities for the API community. In partnership with AMMPARO and the Pacifica Synod, the API team brought together Chinese leaders for a southern border immersion to learn about and deepen advocacy for immigrants. The API team continues its work on a trans-Pacific LGBTQIA+ network and the development of new, inclusive Asian theologies.

Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations includes 24 ministries on tribal lands across 11 U.S. states, in both urban and rural areas. These ministries play important roles in their communities, serving as community centers, cultural gathering places, centers for faith life, and essential service providers. Every ministry has a program addressing community food insecurity, and many provide additional services as well. The Indigenous Ministries team has developed programs focused on education, justice, and leadership development. In partnership with Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and the American Indian Alaska Native Lutheran Association they developed the Theological Education for Indian Leaders (TEIL) certificate program to provide a culturally appropriate route to ordination for Indigenous lay leaders who serve as leaders in their communities. The work of the ELCA’s Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force is supported by this team.



Theological Education for Indigenous Leaders (TEIL) Cohort 1 students, San Diego, CA - February 2025

Latino Ministries works with a network of 32,000 people with Latin American roots in 160 ELCA congregations. The network has 120 rostered leaders and includes people with backgrounds in

Mexico, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, Colombia, Peru and other areas of Central America. The Latino Young Adult project began in 2023 with a series of encounters in Texas, Oklahoma, and Puerto Rico, and continued in 2024 with a training held at the Lutheran Center in Chicago. Roberto Lara, an organizer, stated, “It was a groundbreaking experience designed to equip Latiné young adults with the tools, knowledge, and support they need to lead effectively in one of the largest and less diverse Protestant denominations in the United States.”

Witness in Society

The Witness in Society (WiS) team leads the ELCA’s advocacy in the public sphere, advancing justice and shining a light on peace and dignity. The longing for a world of justice and peace is tangible both inside and outside of church life. To shape this church’s priorities from a faith foundation, ELCA Witness in Society listens to church members in communities across the United States and to partners around the world, anchoring public policy priorities in ministry experience. Informed by social teachings of the ELCA, advocacy activity is coordinated from the federal hub in Washington, D.C., alongside the Lutheran Office for World Community at the United Nations in New York City; Lutheran state public policy offices (SPPOs) in California, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, and more than 15 additional affiliated state partners; and the ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program. Connect to [Advocacy: A Publicly Engaged Church](#).

Civic Engagement: The 2024 election year occasioned timely [resources and support](#) for congregations and leaders conducting non-partisan election engagement in a climate of political unrest and polarization. Autumn Byers, a young adult who [served as a polling place greeter](#) at her Arizona congregation, connected election support with faithful public witness, saying “I love that this is something we do with and for our neighbors. It shows that our church isn’t just open to the community but is an active part of it.”

Advocacy that Reflects and Furthers ELCA Priorities: With advocacy a core component of the ELCA World Hunger program, WiS developed a comprehensive [Farm Bill advocacy](#) strategy that included listening sessions on hunger, farming, and rural issues across this church, webinars, advocacy trainings, and lobby events. On Oct. 26, 2024, a delegation of bishops, rostered ministers, and hunger leaders from across Pennsylvania assembled in Washington, D.C., to meet with federal representatives to [advance the upcoming Farm Bill](#).

Executive Action Response: WiS staff are actively collaborating across the ELCA ecosystem and with partners to lead faithful responses to the rapidly developing [impact of executive actions](#) that are jolting a vast array of government agencies and the people who intersect with related vital supports. The team is discerning and advocating in the rapidly evolving, complex political climate and [voicing ELCA priorities](#) through centering the experience of impacted communities and ELCA social teachings with policy makers and resourcing ELCA leaders and partners as they adjust to rippling developments domestically and globally.

Heightened Advocacy Activity: A surge in interest in faith-rooted advocacy is spurring network expansion at the state and federal levels. WiS is responding across the ELCA ecosystem, including advocacy support for bishops, issue training for congregations, and action opportunities for timely and faithful public witness. A new weekly podcast will debut in 2025, “Here I Pod from ELCA Advocacy.” Resourcing the church to build bridges of understanding through depolarization and countering [Christian Nationalism](#) continues as core work.

Engaging Youth and Young Adults: Youth and young adults consistently lift up advocacy for justice as a core expression of faith. At the 2024 Youth Gathering, participants added hundreds of individual pieces to a giant puzzle, illustrating important issues in their lives: annual Young Adult Advocacy Immersion on climate; Young Adult Border Immersion and advocacy action days; and the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women cohort on global gender justice. The Hunger Advocacy Fellowship Program inspires the vocations of young people and enhances their leadership for years to come.

Global Accompaniment: The Lutheran Office for World Community at the United Nations provides Lutherans opportunity to affirm the dignity of each person at U.N. fora, emphasizing human rights, climate justice, gender equity, and peacebuilding. Federal policy work continues to provide platforms for global companions to speak to important issues including international food programs, HIV/AIDs prevention and treatment, healthcare at the Augusta Victoria Hospital, global migration, disaster response, and climate change.

Corporate Social Responsibility: The Corporate Social Responsibility team has been working to align advocacy, churchwide standards, and grounding for Portico’s shareholder advocacy in familiar areas such as environmental and human rights, but also in new areas such as artificial intelligence (AI).

The Rev. Khader El-Yateem, *executive director for the Service and Justice unit*