



July 28 – August 2  
PHOENIX, ARIZONA



## Report of the Presiding Bishop

Welcome to the 17th Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As you prepare for the assembly in Phoenix, I urge you to read these materials carefully. There is much to be discussed, considered, and voted upon that will guide the work of this church for the next triennium and beyond.

When our assembly gathered in Columbus, Ohio, in 2022, we were emerging from a pandemic—a challenging time in our church and in the world. At that assembly I expressed my gratitude for the resilience and creativity demonstrated by our congregations and worshipping communities who found new ways to share the gospel with neighbors in a very uncertain time. Our congregations and worshipping communities found ways to stay connected with their people and continue to serve their communities.

The theme for the 17th assembly—For the Life of the World—derives in part from the Nicene Creed where we confess that we look for “the life of the world to come.” This year we observe the 1,700th anniversary of the first Council of Nicaea. It was at this council that the Nicene Creed began to be formulated. The Church was still relatively young in the year 325 and there was not yet one universal, comprehensive statement of faith about the nature of the Trinity. In order to unify the Roman Empire, the emperor, Constantine, wanted first to unify the church. It went well until the Latin (Western) Church added the words, “and the Son” to the clause, “We believe in the Holy Spirit...who proceeds from the Father.” This addition is known as the *filioque*, from a Latin word meaning “and from the Son.” It was an important factor in the split between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches in 1054.

After forty years of dialogue, the Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission on Theological Dialogue issued the “Common Statement on the *Filioque*.” This issue was no longer seen to be church dividing. The ELCA Church Council at its Spring 2025 meeting recommended that this assembly prayerfully receive the 2024 Lutheran-Orthodox “Common Statement on the *Filioque*.” Some lessons from this: 1) words matter and 2) seemingly intractable disagreements lasting for nearly a thousand years can be reconciled if we are open to the Holy Spirit and each other. Keep that in mind during this assembly when we consider and debate the agenda items before us.

In Vice President Imran Siddiqui’s report and in section V of the *Bulletin of Reports* you will see a list of actions to come before this Churchwide Assembly. In section VII you will find the report of the Memorials Committee. Everything is important, and I want to highlight a few elements.

**Season of Jubilee**—In response to the social policy resolution, *Renewed Action Regarding Racism Toward Lutherans of African Descent* (CA 16.05.17), and the *Explanation of the Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent*, on June 27, 2019, the ELCA Church Council adopted the following action: “To engage in anti-racism and racial justice work; work toward economic justice—including the study of reparations.”

These actions, in combination with a long-standing call by African Descent leaders, other ELCA synod memorials and resolutions, and the example provided by ecumenical partners already engaging in reparations, led to the launch of The Season of Jubilee initiative to assess perspectives on African Descent community reinvestment within the ELCA and to identify concrete steps for moving the ELCA beyond apology and into tangible actions of repair and reinvestment.

A preliminary report was prepared and presented to the Church Council Executive Committee in June. It combines preliminary research findings, community feedback, and strategic recommendations emerging from the study and a series of community dialogues facilitated by African Descent Ministries (ADM) and the Racial Justice Ministries (RJM) team.

The Season of Jubilee affirms this as a pivotal moment. African Descent communities have spoken—clearly and courageously. The findings call for reinvestment in the following areas:

- Partner with Black churches and nonprofits of color
- Align funding with community-identified priorities
- Simplify access to financial resources and support
- Communicate transparently and consistently with impacted communities
- Set measurable goals and report progress publicly
- Maintain a sustained presence in community spaces

In June, the Executive Committee took action to forward the preliminary report and to request a more comprehensive report be presented to the Church Council in November. This final report will urge the Church Council to allocate funds to be invested strategically in cities across seventeen locations for continued engagement with African Descent communities. Yet, this call is about much more than money—it is about presence, accountability, long-term transformation, and metanoia. To this end, the preliminary report has already recommended establishing a Reparations Task Force—modeled after the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force—with representatives from African Descent Ministries, Racial Justice Ministries, the Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity, the Mission Investment Fund, Research and Evaluation, and other key stakeholders to advance the work.

**Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery**—In the mid- and late 15th century, Pope Nicholas V and Pope Alexander VI issued a series of papal bulls declaring that land not inhabited by Christians was subject to “discovery,” and consequently conquest and colonization by European Christian powers. The Americas were divvied up between the Portuguese and Spanish. Later, the French and English got in on the act. The result was the systematic destruction of Native peoples including language, culture, spirituality, and ties to their ancestral land. You can read the 2016 Churchwide Assembly’s action to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery in Section VI of the *Bulletin of Reports*. Take time to read it. During the assembly there will be a presentation by the Task Force for the Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery as well as an educational powwow on Tuesday evening.

**God’s Love Made Real**—This is the umbrella term for the work we do to support congregations, worshipping communities, and current ministries. Using data from the Barna/Fuller team, the “Church That Is” group will bring focus to strengthening current ministries. Under the same God’s Love Made Real umbrella, the “Church That Is Becoming” group, supported by a generous donor family, has launched four types of experiments aimed toward new ministries with people who would not typically enter one of our congregations and emphasizing lay leadership. Check out [God’s Love Made Real here](#).

**Church Property Resource Hub**—The ELCA Church Property Resource Hub consists of a three-pronged approach with the goals of: 1) sharing resources to equip congregations and synods to make informed and mission-minded property decisions; 2) reaching out to and resourcing congregations at transitional moments; and 3) reconsidering churchwide organization policies around “Holy Closures” in light of program learnings.

**Social teaching**—The assembly will consider editorial revisions to the 2009 social statement, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, and will also consider a new social statement, “Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All.” The texts of both statements are included in Section V of the *Bulletin of Reports*. The new social statement is particularly timely in this church and in the United States. Please read both carefully.

**Transitions**—This assembly will elect a presiding bishop, secretary, Church Council members, and members to other churchwide committees and boards of the separately incorporated ministries. This is a time of transition for this church that requires prayerful discernment. People have been pre-identified for both presiding bishop and secretary. These are not nominations. We will use the ecclesiastical ballot for both offices. This is a call process, not a campaign. We trust that, through the Holy Spirit, God will send us our new shepherd.

To paraphrase John the Evangelist, there are so many things that this church has done and that come to the assembly for consideration that if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the pages that would be written. I will spare you that and conclude with my gratitude to churchwide organization staff—your staff, the Church Council, the Conference of Bishops, all of you, and God. *Soli Deo Gloria*.

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

## Office of the Presiding Bishop

The presiding bishop is elected by the Churchwide Assembly and serves a six-year term. The presiding bishop's office provides leadership and pastoral care for the bishops of synods, and is responsible for ecumenical and inter-religious relationship representation for this church. In addition, the presiding bishop serves as the chief executive officer of the churchwide organization. The executive for administration reports directly to the presiding bishop. Also included in the work of the office is theological discernment, gender and racial justice, worship, strategic communications, development, human resources, and churchwide strategic planning.

### Vision Statement

"A world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation." *God's Love Made Real*

## Report of the executive for administration

### 15.12.A25. 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 Faith, Society, and Innovation Committee and the Board Development Committee of the Church Council; and*
- f. oversee churchwide strategic communications, including branding, messaging, and content development.*

The following is a summary report of the work of the churchwide organization for the 2023–2025 triennium. See reports provided in Section III of the *Bulletin of Reports* for more detailed information regarding the work of the staff and units in the churchwide organization.

### Strategic planning

This year, 2025, is the final year of the Future Directions 2025 initiative. During the triennium, the Church Council lifted up three of the five goals for attention and implementation:

- A Welcoming Church
- A Thriving Church
- A Connected, Sustainable Church

During the past three years, the churchwide organization developed its operational plans and spending authorizations to align with these goals. The organization reviewed and assessed its alignment with the purposes stated in 11.21. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*. The churchwide organization also engaged in research and evaluation to provide updated data/information to shape future decision making. The Research and Evaluation team was reinstated (now housed in the Office of the Secretary), and the churchwide organization received a report and recommendations from Barna Research Group and Fuller Youth Institute. The presiding bishop appointed a Vision Team to explore new, creative models of ministry. The new Innovation unit became more defined in its goals and work internally and externally. The Administrative Team worked with a set of advisors for one year to explore how to bring more diversity "to the table" among organization leadership.

In 2024, the Administrative Team compiled an operational plan for the organization's work in 2025 and to set the stage for 2026 planning and beyond. This was done keeping in mind the 2025 Churchwide Assembly actions that will bring new leadership and other transitions.

## Churchwide organization budget

The Administrative Team worked in 2023 and 2024 with the Budget Prioritization Task Force appointed by the ELCA Church Council. The work of the task force helped to shape 2024–2025 expenditure authorizations. There was extensive review by staff of each ministry supported by Mission Support dollars, and of donor gifts. The churchwide organization is grateful for the generosity of ELCA members and appreciates the partnership of ELCA synods in funding the ministries of this church.

The triennium budget presented at this 2025 Churchwide Assembly reflects declining Mission Support and changes in income resources and expenses of the churchwide organization. See the Report of the Treasurer in Section II and the 2026–2028 Budget Proposal in Section V of the *Bulletin of Reports* for more detailed information on the budget.

## Conclusion

In 2021, the Rev. Wyvetta Bullock retired from the position of executive for administration. In 2024, the presiding bishop asked her to return and serve until the presiding bishop completed her term. Since her return, Pastor Bullock has overseen the update of the churchwide organization Business Continuity Plan, worked with units to compile an Operational Plan, hired a new director for the Strategic Communications team, called for and received a compensation study report and recommendations, implemented a hiring freeze due to income levels and infrastructure capacity, worked with Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility staff on funding and reporting, and, along with the presiding bishop, supervised the executive directors of home areas.

## Report of 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: 2022–2025

### Full communion partnerships

The ELCA has six full communion partners: the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA), the Reformed Church in America (RCA), the United Church of Christ (UCC), The Episcopal Church, USA (TEC), the Moravian Church—Northern and Southern Provinces (MC), and The United Methodist Church (UMC). These partnerships are supported by joint coordinating committees, church-to-church relations, and participation in each other's governance meetings.

In 2022, a new relationship that serves as full communion was established between Lutheran and Anglican/Episcopal full communion partners in the United States and Canada through a [Memorandum of Mutual Recognition](#). The group of four churches—the ELCA, The Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and the Anglican Church of Canada—is known as **Churches Beyond Borders** (CBB). Since its formation, CBB has worked together on repudiating the “Doctrine of Discovery” and the legacies of slavery in North America, or Turtle Island.

This period has been characterized by accompaniment of our full communion partners in light of regular leadership transitions, as well as extraordinary discernment and decision-making processes—especially in the RCA and UMC—in relation to matters of human sexuality and denominational restructuring.

In January 2023, the **Lutheran Episcopal Coordinating Committee (LECC)** adopted its “[Proposal for Exchangeability of the Diaconate](#),” as an interpretation of our full communion agreement, “Called to Common Mission.” The proposal was then recommended by the Conference of Bishops and received by the Church Council in Spring 2023. In Summer 2024, the General Convention of TEC adopted the proposal as part of its consent calendar. In October 2024, LECC completed its work to update the Orderly Exchange document to include the exchangeability of the diaconate. In March 2025, the ELCA Conference of Bishops affirmed this document by consensus. The document was also reviewed by ELCA legal counsel and proposed changes to the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* were sent to ELCA Church Council in April 2025. These changes have been recommended by the Church Council for adoption at this Churchwide Assembly. At the time of this writing, the document has been reviewed by TEC's chancellor and is under review by the TEC Bishops' Ecclesiology Committee. *Once this review is complete, the exchangeability of deacons will be possible.*

## Dialogues and bilateral relations

Round XII of the **U.S. Lutheran–Catholic Dialogue** concluded with the publication of the report *Faithful Teaching* by Fortress Press and a celebratory reception event held at Faith/La Fe Evangelical Lutheran Church in Phoenix, Ariz., where the Rev. Lowell Almen was honored as long-time co-chair. Round XIII was launched in December 2022, led by co-chairs Bishop Patricia Lull (of the ELCA) and Bishop Denis J. Madden (of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops). Three in-person meetings have occurred in this period. This round is dedicated to mutual exploration and learning about the holy order/office of ministry as understood in the Catholic and ELCA Lutheran traditions, with special attention to the distinctive role of the *episkopé* in each tradition.

On October 31, 2024, Presiding Bishop Eaton and Bishop Madden issued a joint letter on the occasion of the **25th anniversary year of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)**. Their letter reflected on the continued significance of the JDDJ for the churches' life together anticipating **this year's 60th anniversary of U.S. Lutheran–Catholic dialogue**.

In June 2024, the Council of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) affirmed the Lutheran-Orthodox Common Statement on the *Filioque*, put forward by the **Lutheran-Orthodox Joint International Commission**. This statement is an example of differentiated consensus, concluding that the *filioque* clause is not church-dividing. In this 1700th anniversary year of the first ecumenical council at Nicaea, work continues on reception of this statement within the ELCA and in dialogue with our Orthodox siblings in the United States. A study guide was published in April 2025 to support these efforts.

During this period there were three in-person meetings of the **ELCA-Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) dialogue**, co-chaired by the Rev. Bill Gafken (ELCA) and the Rev. Dr. Robert Cornwall (Christian Church [Disciples of Christ]). The topics included an exploration of common affirmations in the World Council of Churches' convergence text, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1984); "Ecclesiology: Theology and Polity"; and "Confessing the Faith: Considering Nicaea 1700." The official documents of the dialogue are available here.

## Conciliar and multilateral relations

The ELCA continues to be engaged in the **National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC)**, celebrating its 75th anniversary. A priority among the churches has been work to end racism and address white supremacy. In 2022, the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition, which is owned by the NCC, was launched. During this period, three annual NCC Christian Unity Gatherings have occurred, bringing together convening tables for Faith and Order, Education and Formation, Advocacy, and Inter-Religious Relations. The ELCA has representatives serving at each table. Presiding Bishop Eaton has served as vice-chair and now chair of the board. Ms. Kathryn Lohre chairs the 75th anniversary committee.

We are also engaged through **Christian Churches Together in the USA (CCT)**, the broadest ecumenical table in the U.S., including five church families: Evangelical/Pentecostal, Historic Black, Mainline Protestant, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic. Three annual fora occurred in this period, each exploring a convergence of theological, historical, and contemporary issues. Bishop Suzanne Dillahunt serves on the Steering Committee of CCT.

Engagement with the **Historic Black Churches** continued in this period, including through participation in the National Consultation of the Conference of National Black Churches. Congregations and communities are encouraged to establish or deepen relationships with Historic Black Churches, especially in joint actions for social, economic, and racial justice.

The **World Council of Churches (WCC) 11th Assembly** took place in Karlsruhe, Germany in Fall 2022 on the theme, "Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity." The ELCA's delegation was led by Presiding Bishop Eaton and included Mr. Vance Blackfox, Mr. Khadijah Islam (young adult), Mr. Carlos Peña, and Ms. Kathryn Lohre. The most significant and anticipated actions of the assembly were the adoption of an ecumenical convergence text entitled "Unity Statement," and various resolutions such as "The Living Planet," "Seeking Justice and Peace for All in the Middle East," and "War in Ukraine." You can find information about the Assembly here; the plenary sessions, Bible studies, and business sessions can all be viewed on YouTube. In June 2024, ELCA Vice President Imran Siddiqui and Ms. Lohre were elected to serve as members of the Central Committee, the governing board of the WCC, until the next assembly. The Rev. Carmelo Santos was also elected to serve a term on the WCC's Faith and Order Commission.

The 13th Assembly of The **Lutheran World Federation (LWF)** took place September 2023 in Krakow, Poland, under the theme "One Body, One Spirit, One Hope." Ms. Kristen Opalinski served as visual identity coordinator for the assembly, and her beautiful work was highly praised. The ELCA delegation included Presiding Bishop Eaton and the Rev. Dr. Robin Steinke, who completed their service on the Executive Committee, as well as Bishop Leila Ortíz, the Rev. William Flippin Jr., Mr. Brad Wendel, and Mr. Khadijah Islam, who were elected to serve on the LWF Council for the next period. The Rev. Barbara Lund was elected to serve as chair of the World Service Committee, and she will



serve on the Executive Committee for the next period together with Mr. Islam, who was elected to chair the Constitution and Membership Standing Committee. The Rev. Katherine Gohm of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada was elected to succeed Presiding Bishop Eaton as vice president of the North American Region. Visit the [LWF Assembly website](#) to find resolutions, photos, presentations, study guides, and more. Ms. Lohre served as a respondent to the Assembly keynote speaker, [Monsignor Tomáš Halík](#), a Catholic intellectual from the Czech Republic.

## Inter-Religious Relations: 2022–2025

The ELCA participates in annual meetings of the **National Council of Churches’ inter-religious dialogues** co-convened with Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs.

Building on “[A Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community](#),” the **ELCA Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Jewish Relations** developed a guide for “[Preaching and Teaching with Love and Respect for the Jewish People](#),” published in Fall 2022.

Prof. Esther Menn, chair of the ELCA Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Jewish Relations, served as chair of the **LWF study process** resulting in publication of “[Hope for the Future: A Study Document for Renewing Jewish-Christian Relations](#)” Launched at the LWF Assembly in Krakow, this resource invites reflection on Lutheran-Jewish relations through both historical and contemporary lenses, and renewal in Jewish-Christian relations across the communion.

2024 marked the **30th anniversary** of “[A Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the Jewish Community](#),” which was first adopted in 1994 and revised and reaffirmed in 2021. To commemorate, Presiding Bishop Eaton took part in this year’s Interfaith Service of Remembrance and Commitment in Observance of Kristallnacht on November 11, held at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. The presiding bishop also participated in a [panel discussion](#) featuring Prof. Esther Menn and Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union for Reform Judaism. The panel explored how to deepen and expand the commitments articulated in the Declaration.

The ELCA continues to participate in the annual conventions of the **Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)**. In 2023, Ms. Lohre was invited to provide the keynote address at the interfaith banquet and was honored as ISNA’s 2023 Interfaith Awardee.

2025 marks the 15th anniversary of the **Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign: [Standing with American Muslims, Advancing American Ideals](#)**, of which the ELCA is a founding member. Ms. Lohre completed her long-time tenure as co-chair of the campaign and remains on the Executive Committee. The campaign seeks to equip, connect, and mobilize people to end anti-Muslim hate. In December 2023, the campaign launched a joint declaration and [multifaith commitment](#) to fighting anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish bigotry. In 2024, the campaign published a “[Faith-Rooted Primer for Understanding & Addressing Bigotry in the US Amid the Violence in Israel-Palestine](#)” and premiered a short film titled, “[Planting Seeds for Pluralism in America](#).”

A new **World Council of Churches Reference Group for Inter-Religious Dialogue** was appointed by the General Secretary of the WCC to serve between WCC Assemblies. The group’s mandate is to strengthen the WCC’s inter-religious work globally and through its member churches, and to engage in theological dialogue, common formation, and advocacy with inter-religious partners. Ms. Lohre was invited to serve as co-moderator. In July 2023, the WCC [launched](#) a new resource: “[Building Interreligious Solidarity in Our Wounded World](#).”

To mark the 130th anniversary of the inaugural **Parliament of the World’s Religions**, the largest inter-religious gathering in the world returned to Chicago from August 14–18, 2023, under the theme, “[A Call to Conscience: Defending Freedom & Human Rights](#).” Presiding Bishop Eaton provided a keynote address at the opening plenary. Several ELCA leaders offered workshops.

In February 2025, Presiding Bishop Eaton convened an **ecumenical and inter-religious summit** to respond to the crisis created in the wake of several presidential executive orders, especially those impacting refugees and immigrants. The summit meets weekly to share information, strategize, and to speak with one voice, (“[Interfaith Solidarity Statement on Refugees and Immigrants](#)”).

The ELCA’s **Lutheran Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Representatives Network (LEIRN)**, a network of synod-appointed leaders, meets annually in-person at the **National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU)**. During this period, workshops occurred in Garden Grove, Calif., Milwaukee, and Chicago at the Lutheran Center.

**The Rev. William Rusch**, the first director of the ELCA Office for Ecumenical Affairs died in January 2025. He was instrumental in guiding this church to articulate its ecumenical vision and anticipated the need for undertaking a similar task with regard to our inter-religious relations. Thanks be to God for his legacy.

## Theological Discernment: 2022–2025

There are four overlapping areas of work that are part of Theological Discernment, with cross-over to Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations.

## Theological Diversity and Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Engagement

Theological Diversity and Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Engagement (TDE) 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.

TDE provides theological support for internal intersectional work on combatting white supremacy within the ELCA and with ecumenical partners. An example is the NCC Faith and Order White Supremacy Working Group. An outcome of this work was the publication of a chapter by the Rev. Carmelo Santos entitled, “Lutheran Theological Resources to Confront White Supremacy,” in *Confronting Racism and White Supremacy in the US: Twenty-first Century Theological Perspectives* (Friendship Press, 2024). This work is also supportive of the recommendations in the ELCA Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity.

TDE provided various opportunities for leaders across the ecology of the ELCA to engage in theological reflection with attention to the diversity of contexts and the polyphonic interpretations of Lutheran theology that enrich the ELCA. Two examples are that TDE has provided monetary assistance for theologians from minority communities to participate in theological conferences and that Pastor Santos is participating in an ongoing collaboration with the Innovation unit on theological dimensions of artificial intelligence (AI) and this church. TDE also provides staffing support to the ELCA Theological Roundtable, which brings together diverse theological networks, and supports ecumenical partners in this work. For example, Pastor Santos is serving on the Theology Commission of the Reformed Church in America.

Leadership for creation care and climate justice work is also infused with theological diversity. This is happening internally through initiatives such as the Certificate in Climate Justice and Faith offered by Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, now available in Spanish, and in work to develop a bilingual (English-Spanish) online theological journal from a Lutheran Latinx context. Another example is the ecumenical conference on Faith and Climate Justice in Puerto Rico. Creation care and climate justice work is also happening through external partnerships, including EcoAmerica’s Blessed Tomorrow Faith Leaders Roundtable, where work is underway toward launching a seven-year campaign to address the climate crisis from a faith-rooted perspective.

TDE supported work to develop meaningful opportunities for theologically diverse biblical learning at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly, including three online pre-assembly Bible studies, as well as a theological presentation during the assembly.

## Racial Justice

Racial Justice provides leadership and support through the churchwide organization and in partnership with synods to promote effective strategies toward racial justice within and across this church, and with ecumenical partners, utilizing an intersectional approach.

This has included leadership by Ms. Jennifer DeLeon, director for racial justice, in support of “A Declaration of the ELCA to American Indian and Alaska Native People,” the ongoing implementation of the ELCA’s Strategy Toward Authentic Diversity, and the Task Force for Addressing Disciplinary Concerns of Leaders of Color. This also has included engagement through the Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities (AMMPARO) executive committee and its annual gatherings. Lastly, the Racial Justice team provides staff consultation to White Lutherans for Racial Justice (formerly European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice, EDLARJ). An example of racial justice resourcing to synods is the 2023 training of volunteers to be facilitators for “Now is the Time: A Study Guide for ELCA Declaration to People of African Descent,” done in collaboration with ELCA Young Adults, Women of the ELCA, and what was then EDLARJ.

In August 2023, a manager for racial justice was added to work alongside the director and with the larger team. This position is instrumental in leading efforts to develop educational resources dedicated to condemning white supremacy. An example is the Lenten devotional Dismantle, published in Spring 2025, aimed at addressing white supremacy through theological reflection and action. To ensure the effectiveness and reach of initiatives, the Racial Justice staff collaborate with TDE and engage synod racial justice leaders to align and coordinate this church’s activities in this critical area.

In 2024, Racial Justice focused on strengthening collaboration with synod racial justice leaders. These efforts ensure a more coordinated and impactful approach to dismantling racism within the ELCA. A gathering of these leaders will be convened in Fall 2025.

Ongoing work to foster education and engagement is intended to equip church leaders and communities with the tools needed to address systemic racism. Racial Justice has hosted educational sessions at key ELCA gatherings, including the Conference of Bishops, Church Council, Young Adults in Global Mission, Summer Missionary Orientation, and Directors for Evangelical Mission. This work also includes collaboration with the ELCA Ministries of Diverse Cultures and Communities (MDCC).

Examples from this period include:

- African Descent Ministries: Participated in the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent and continued work on Seasons of Jubilee gatherings.
- Indigenous Ministries and Tribal Relations: Co-led the Day of Mourning learning event for the fourth consecutive year and supported the Theological Education for Indigenous Leaders program.
- White Lutherans for Racial Justice: Led an educational session that included a visit to the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, deepening the understanding of historical and present-day racial injustices. Co-hosted webinars on how to host an anti-racist film screening and a webinar on *A Time for Burning*.
- Collaborated with area desk directors to lift community voices in the Racial Justice blog and in the Presiding Bishop's Public Messaging Working Group.

Through these initiatives, Racial Justice remains committed to equipping this church to confront systemic racism and build a more just and inclusive faith community.

## Theological Ethics

Theological Ethics serves the work of the Office of the Presiding Bishop by developing and interpreting social teaching documents for ethical reflection, moral deliberation, and faith and science. ELCA social teaching and policy governs the institutional life, witness, and teaching of the ELCA while providing frameworks for discernment and guidance to the members of this church. Three major projects are underway shepherded by Theological Ethics staff.

The 2019 Churchwide Assembly (CWA) authorized work led by the ELCA Task Force for Studies on Civic Life and Faith, and a proposed social statement entitled "Faith and Civic Life: For the Well-being of All" is one action item to be considered by the 2025 Churchwide Assembly.

Another task force began work in June 2024, charged with leading reconsideration of two aspects of *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* mandated by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly. The task force has achieved unanimous sign-off on the first reconsideration. This editorial update focuses solely on terminology around marriage and family regarding "same-gender and gender-nonconforming couples in light of current church understanding, church policy, civil law, and public acceptance of same." This action item is before the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. In September, this task force will turn its attention to the second reconsideration, guided by the 2022 directive to reconsider "the church's current concept of the four positions of bound conscience," with a focus on pages 19–21 of the 2009 statement.

A social message on Gun-related Violence and Trauma was adopted at the April 2024 Church Council meeting. The council also authorized the development of a social message on Child Protection and Maltreatment, now underway. A draft for public comment was posted from late March to the end of June 2025 and a proposed message will be considered at the November Church Council meeting.

Theological Ethics supports the ELCA as a community of moral discernment in numerous ways. Examples include The Lutheran Ethicists' Network that meets annually each January and The Journal of Lutheran Ethics that is published six times a year.

## Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment

Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment (GJWE) serves the work of the Office of the Presiding Bishop by assisting this church's longstanding commitment to address sexism. This portfolio, which aligns with the portfolio of The Lutheran World Federation GJWE, serves the global church, empowers theological engagement in the ELCA, and advances collaborative understanding and action on gender justice and its intersections with other forms of justice.

GJWE and Racial Justice collaborate consistently to support learning, formation, and action with the ELCA Church Council, Conference of Bishops, and Directors for Evangelical Mission. GJWE also supports new staff members through orientations and regularly collaborates and offers learning opportunities with churchwide organization colleagues. GJWE is working with ELCA research on a report related to the 55th anniversary of the decision of this church to ordain women.

A significant focus during this period was work in support of Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment as part of the 13th Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation in September 2023. This included engagement through a steering committee to plan and carry out the women's pre-assembly, where participants identified themes, commitments, and actions for the global communion's strategic planning for the next seven years and engaged with participants in the youth and men's pre-assemblies. The women's pre-assembly was effective in influencing the communion's gender justice strategy for the next seven years (see Outcomes | Thirteenth Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation). Priorities include interpretation and implementation of the LWF Gender Justice Policy (2013), which is available in more than 20 languages, theological education and formation that is gender just, access to



theological education for women, and calling member churches to address sexual and gender-based violence within churches. GJWE has been a key partner in the post-assembly global planning process, and in 2025 with regional coordinators.

Together with Trinity Lutheran Seminary, GJWE provides support to the ELCA Womanist Theology Initiative. In October 2022, this initiative had its first in-person meeting with members from synods, seminaries, and the churchwide organization. While this collaboration continues, GJWE is working to expand support for women of color with doctoral degrees as teaching theologians of this church and the ELCA Womanist Theology Initiative.

GJWE continues to support engagement with the social statement, *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action (FSJ)*, adopted in 2019.

- The Spanish version of the study guide was uploaded in 2024.
- Implementing Resolution 17 related to *FSJ* calls for the ELCA Church Council to coordinate public confession for the sins of patriarchy and sexism and for a churchwide day of confession and repentance for the sins of patriarchy and sexism. GJWE staff are supporting an *ad hoc* committee of the Church Council to create a service of lament and repentance for the sins of patriarchy and sexism for the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, and to launch a booklet of prayers and reflections from contributors across this church. These resources are intended for use in worshipping communities in 2025 and 2026.
- Implementing Resolution 8 related to *FSJ* calls on the ELCA churchwide organization, Conference of Bishops, and synods to use inclusive and expansive language for God. To support scriptural, theological, and historical engagement, Ms. Mary J. Streufert, director for GJWE, wrote *Language for God: A Lutheran Perspective* (Fortress Press, 2022). Ms. Streufert is leading workshops on this with various partners across this church.
- Ms. Streufert co-authored with Ms. Mary E. Lowe a new book completed in 2024 entitled, *ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Faith, Sexism, and Justice* (Fortress Press, 2025). They are co-teaching regularly across this church, including with churchwide staff and the Church Council, to support continued education about this church's social teachings.

During this period, GJWE has continued to work with the Quality of Call Initiative to distribute grants across the ELCA to support efforts to address sexism and patriarchy and improve the quality of call experienced by women who are rostered ministers. A Family and Parental Leave Policies Report has inspired nearly a third of synods to improve paid family and parental leave policies since the first results were shared in 2022. A report on the state of policies and practices related to ELCA Sexual Boundary Violations across ELCA was shared with bishops in 2023, and synods are using it to create reforms and renewal, often in collaboration with other synods and the churchwide organization. While this work is formally coming to a close, there are now 32 synods who are part of collaborative grants and about 10 small groups that received pop-up grants, thanks to the Mission Development Fund. The ELCA now has tools for synods to improve family and parental leaves and reports and guides on how to improve prevention and responses to sexual harassment.

## People Solutions

### Accomplishments overview

The People Solutions (PS) team, newly renamed the Human Resources (HR) team, has made significant strides in enhancing organizational effectiveness and employee satisfaction through various strategic initiatives and improvements. Key accomplishments include:

- The implementation of an electronic exit survey that streamlines the process for departing employees to provide valuable feedback. This has facilitated improved data collection, offering actionable insights that drive continuous improvements in employee engagement and retention strategies.
- In a strategic move to further bolster the HR team capabilities, two new business partners and a people solutions assistant were welcomed aboard. Their expertise and support have enabled HR functions to more effectively align with the organization's goals, drive talent initiatives, and provide enhanced support across departments.
- A thorough compensation study was conducted to assess the organization's pay structure against industry benchmarks and ensure internal equity. The findings are being utilized to make informed adjustments to compensation strategies, aligning with market standards and reinforcing the organization's commitment to attracting and retaining top talent.
- The HR team is working on an extensive rebranding and restructuring initiative aimed at improving overall efficiency, modernizing HR practices, and enhancing the employee experience. This includes refining HR

processes, updating communication strategies, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement within the team. These achievements reflect the HR team's ongoing commitment to supporting organizational success through innovative solutions, strategic alignment, and a focus on employee satisfaction.

## Leadership Development

Over the past three years, the Leadership Development portfolio has expanded to encompass Learning and Development. This expansion began with **The Collaborative**, a leadership development program engaging two cohorts of participants totaling over 40 emerging leaders (churchwide organization [CWO] and synod participants). In total, both cohorts worked on 20 projects in partnership with peers, unit leaders, and home area executives; addressed the challenges of bringing this church into the future; engaged in intentional leadership development training in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), design thinking, and more; and had opportunities to lead outside of their day-to-day roles. In September 2023, the Collaborative was recognized with **Christian Community and Leadership's Fire Award**. Some of the project deliverables implemented include: the **Digital Grants Ministry**, the addition of **Indigenous People's Day** to the CWO calendar, **ELCA Good Gifts Social Media Shopping** during the Winter 2022–2023 season, and development of the **ELCA Core Competencies**. The competencies were shared with the full organization through six “**Cultivating Competency Conversations**” in partnership with 10 CWO teams to exhibit the application of the competencies and associated skills. In partnership with the director for organizational innovation and manager for adoption/education, **Learn. Equip. Apply. Deliver. (LEAD)** was created to provide a broader, comprehensive opportunity for ongoing training for all CWO and separately incorporated ministries (SIM) employees. LEAD programming was developed and prioritized following a Learning and Development Needs Assessment and meetings with Administrative Team executives and the executive for information technology and digital solutions, and it was rooted in the survey responses and unit data related to learning needs throughout the organization. Since its launch in September 2024, LEAD has delivered three core sessions with partners: **Building Trust (with The Olori Network)**; **How to Use DISC (with the Rev. Sarah Ciavarr)**; **Understanding, Navigating and Transforming Conflict (with Ms. Kristen Opalinski)**; and two LEAD Supplements: **Facilitation Fundamentals Certification (with the Innovation Home Area and AJ+Smart)**, **Coaching (with Ms. Jill Beverlin and Ms. Rhondean Johnson)**. Nearly 95 percent of participants have stated that this programming has contributed to their professional development. The Learning and Development portfolio has a series of pages on the CWO Connect intranet page where colleagues can view previous recordings, access supportive tools and resources, and receive guidance on skill application through a “**Monthly Mindful Moment**” communication. Employees have expressed excitement with the launch of LEAD and the opportunity to learn these skills, be equipped with useful tools and resources for their work in the ELCA, apply the skills to their daily work, and deliver incredible results through their learning and development.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The 2022 Churchwide Assembly directed the Church Council to contract an external auditor to conduct a comprehensive audit of the ELCA's governing documents and organizational culture for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). The Church Council approved the law firm Fox, Swibel, Levin & Carroll, LLP to perform this audit; the engagement was completed under the supervision of Mr. Neville Reid, a partner in the firm. The audit recommended that the ELCA and its governing documents define DEIA. In addition, a recommendation was made to expand the representational goal that at least 10 percent of the members of boards and committees of this church shall be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English, with a goal that an additional 10 percent be persons from historically underrepresented groups. In November 2024, the Church Council approved amendments to continuing resolutions in chapter 5 of the ELCA Constitution to incorporate language defining DEIA and including a representational goal for members of historically unrepresented groups. The senior director and the executive for human resources have developed an organizational diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy for the CWO.

In observance of the 2025 National Day of Racial Healing, this church, in partnership with Augsburg Fortress Press, hosted a free four-hour online educational event on Tuesday, Jan. 21, 2025. The National Day of Racial Healing—an annual observance that follows Martin Luther King Jr. Day—is hosted by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation as part of its Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation efforts.

The CWO developed an assessment process to record the diversity initiatives of the 65 ELCA synods, as required in chapter 5 of the ELCA constitution. Since 2022, 91 percent of synods have continuously reported on their diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.

## Development

The work of the Development team covers several core areas: annual giving, congregation and synod support, development services, and transformation and institutional giving. The team saw yet another realignment in 2023 and

2024 to further ensure a clear emphasis on providing resources for the work of this church. ELCA members continue to give generously to support the ministries we have been called to do as church together, and we are so grateful for the continued abundance.

## Annual Giving

The Annual Giving team comprises Development Marketing and Communications, Leadership Circle (mid-level), Mission Funding directors (major gifts), congregational generosity, events, and directors of giving for Service and Justice and for Christian Community and Leadership. The Annual Giving team is primarily responsible for fundraising for ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response, and activities of the churchwide organization that fall under the general operating budget, and for engaging donors and congregations in support of these programs.

This team structure, updated in 2023, ensures consistent communication as we engage supporters across all giving levels. The Annual Giving team is responsible for direct-mail programs, including publications such as “LifeLines,” “Boundless,” “Thrive” and “Leadership Circle Newsletter,” along with the Good Gifts program and materials. The team also includes deployed gift officers serving in each ELCA region and a mid-level team, all of whom regularly engage directly with individuals and congregations.

The work of the Annual Giving team is guided by the fundraising priorities established by this church. There were initially seven fundraising priorities, which were consolidated to four in 2024: Where Needed Most (providing support to all ministries in the general fund of the churchwide organization), ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response, and Future Church (an opportunity for primarily institutional funders to support new initiatives that align with the mission/vision of the ELCA). Donors may still support the previous priorities with gifts as the programs continue, but this focused emphasis provides more clarity for donors and more flexibility for the organization.

Following are the highlights for each fundraising priority during the triennium 2022–2025:

- **Where Needed Most:** Giving for the general ministries of the churchwide organization, known as Where Needed Most, were strongest during 2022, with most of this difference attributable to gifts from several “holy closures” of congregations. Other direct giving to Where Needed Most decreased approximately 14 percent from FY22 to FY23 and increased approximately 12 percent from FY23 to FY24. An intentional focus in 2024 was developing core language to describe the work supported by Where Needed Most, which we will begin using in 2025.
- **Lutheran Disaster Response:** Support for the work of this church through Lutheran Disaster Response has remained strong, allowing response to several significant conventional and unconventional disasters during this triennium. The Russia-Ukraine war inspired unprecedented generosity, with over \$12 million given directly to that response since February 2022; as a result of this, Lutheran Disaster Response has become one of the longest-serving organizations in the region. During this period, unrestricted giving to Lutheran Disaster Response has grown by an annualized rate of approximately 4.7 percent, which demonstrates overall trust in the work and provides important support for many victims of disasters that never make the news.
- **ELCA World Hunger:** ELCA World Hunger celebrated 50 years of ministry in 2024, which was emphasized through 2023 and 2024 and will continue to be emphasized in 2025. This included a focused effort at the ELCA Youth Gathering to promote “Generation Zero-Hunger” which encouraged reflection on 50 years of ministry and on developing a new generation of leadership for ELCA World Hunger. The Annual Giving team also hosted the 2022 and 2024 World Food Day events, highlighting long-term impacts of ELCA World Hunger. The highest giving to ELCA World Hunger during this triennium was during 2022, likely bolstered by the strong overall generosity seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Direct giving to ELCA World Hunger declined approximately eight percent in FY23, followed by an increase of 5.6 percent in FY24.

The overall generosity of this church remains strong, as evidenced by the continuing support of these ministries. More and more, individuals want to directly support the work of the churchwide organization.

## Congregation and Synod Support

The Congregation and Synod Support team equips synod and congregation leaders with resources and tools that lay a strong foundation for all types of generosity. A key focus is on ways to support and increase this church’s financial capacity for ministry through regular offerings and Mission Support. Team members have a wide range of skills and resources to share in the areas of effective congregational stewardship, purposeful story engagement, data analysis for strategic planning, and the ways Mission Support connects people across the ELCA responding to God’s call to love and serve our neighbors.

Significant resources shared through the team include coordination with the Lilly Institute on Faith and Giving for its “Executive Certificate in Religious Fundraising” course, to be provided annually to a cohort consisting of only ELCA leaders. Since the program began in January 2022, over 120 ELCA leaders have participated. At the end of

2023, the team facilitated acquisition of a curriculum called “6 Weeks on Money.” This curriculum is currently available for use by congregations even as the team, acting on feedback from users, continues to adapt it. Finally, a newly revised “Where Does Your Offering Go?” video was shared with synods.

The team also currently is engaged with two multi-year projects:

- **Synod Development Pilot Project (2024–2026):** This three-year project will test an innovative new approach to supporting our shared ministries through a collaboration between synods and the churchwide organization. The team plans the project’s quarterly curriculum for 16 synods and facilitates both individual coaching sessions for synod bishops and a quarterly conversation with a cohort of bishops. The curriculum is meant to engage synods and the churchwide organization in:
  - Learning more about the effectiveness of current development work across the ELCA ecosystem—especially within synods.
  - Determining what effect, if any, a three-year, development-related learning curriculum will have on increased development capacity within synods and across the ELCA ecosystem.
  - Strengthening the relationships between synods and the churchwide organization.
- **Church Property Resource Hub:** This three-year project (FY2025–2027) will create a resource for congregations and synods as they consider ways to creatively leverage their properties. Using input and guidance from across the ELCA, the team will create a hub for:
  - Resources on property usage for synods and congregations.
  - Informative, inspirational stories about other faith communities that have innovated in their space usage.
  - Discussion of best practices on the topic.

Over the past triennium, Mission Support revenue given for churchwide organization ministries has fallen short of budget. This means that the Mission Support revenue for many synods has also fallen short of budget. The team and all those associated with churchwide organization ministries are deeply grateful for the continued sharing of Mission Support by congregations and synods. During the past triennium, Mission Support shared by congregations averaged about \$80 million annually. Synod sharing of this Mission Support for churchwide ministries averaged \$37 million—with a high of \$38.7 million in FY22 and a low of \$35.2 million in FY24—all for ministries that no congregation or synod could support on their own.

Decreases in Mission Support revenue continue to put pressure on both synods and the churchwide organization to develop additional sources of revenue to fund ministry and ministry leaders.

## Development Services

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

The Gift Processing team continues to process more than 160,000 gifts annually. Almost 50 percent of gifts are received in the last quarter of the CWO fiscal year (November through January). We partner with an outside vendor (Moore) that helps the Development team process the large volume of gifts this church receives every year, especially at year-end and with gifts related to disaster response.

This church continues to see a gradual shift toward online fundraising. In the last two years, the Development team partnered with the ELCA marketing team and Information Technology to implement a new online communication and fundraising tool, Engaging Networks. This tool makes it easier for the Development team to reach constituents online and also offers donors a simpler online-giving experience with more features and options. Engaging Networks went live in 2024 and the Development team already has used it to send dozens of emails and receive thousands of gifts. The team plans to expand use of this tool in the next few months to replace existing online-giving and communication tools.

The ELCA call center continues to be an essential team in Development Services. Every year, operators answer more than 10,000 calls, respond to over 3,000 constituent emails, and help facilitate more than 2,000 resource center orders.

The Prospect Development team works closely with frontline fundraising staff to manage relationships effectively, ensuring a coordinated and intentional engagement strategy. The team ensures that the donor and prospect engagement and stewardship strategy of the Development team are supported by the highest industry standards for data privacy, ensuring respect for the privacy and communication preferences of donors.

The ECIS database provides the churchwide organization with a 360-degree view of constituents and helps manage constituent relationships. The system is used for communication with members, donors, rostered ministers, lay leaders, synods, and congregations. More than 1 million active constituents and organizations are listed in ECIS.

Currently, several synods leverage this tool to maintain data regarding rostered ministers, candidates, lay leaders, ELCA congregations and worshiping communities, and friends and supporters.

The Development Services team provides the churchwide organization with an average of more than 200 lists every year, used to reach different segments of this church's constituents through email and direct mail. The team also works with different units of the churchwide organization to complete dozens of analyses and reports every year.

### **Transformation and Institutional Giving**

The Transformation and Institutional Giving team works alongside program colleagues to seek foundation grants and nurture institutional relationships in support of churchwide ministry opportunities—both established and transformative. The team also provides guidance and resources to the churchwide Vision and Strategy teams and equips colleagues within the entire ELCA ecology. This is a new team, established to give special focus to funding opportunities that are available to churchwide ministries from private and family foundations, with a particular emphasis on the Future Church fundraising priority.

The team solicited grants from a broad range of foundations in 2022–2024 and received more than 150 grant awards totaling over \$10 million, including transformational gifts for youth ministry, inclusion at camps, congregational innovation, and a church property resource hub. The team helped develop and launch the Transformation Tank, a process at the churchwide organization to invite exciting program ideas and match them with potential income sources including churchwide funding, donors, and foundations.

### **Strategic Communications**

Strategic Communications is the team responsible for leadership in developing and implementing the churchwide communications strategy, supporting all expressions of this church. The team develops strategies for and implements effective internal and external communications, including public relations, video production, marketing, social media, and digital strategies. Strategic Communications is charged with strengthening the identity and mission of the ELCA through multichannel communication strategies that reach people both nationally and globally. The team works hard to keep members connected and informed, providing content for more than 30 different electronic channels, including such outlets as ELCA.org, *Living Lutheran*, YouTube, Facebook, and “Seeds Monthly.”

In November 2022, the ELCA released a refreshed version of the landmark and visual identity guidelines for the churchwide organization and other expressions of this church. The refreshed design features updated fonts and colors. The globe emblem and cross now have smooth edges, and more branding options are offered to accommodate the “ELCA” acronym. The updated branding guidelines offer more flexibility in designing for a wide range of print and digital communications.

The team continues to provide congregations and synods with resources and toolkits to participate in “God’s work. Our hands.”, the ELCA’s dedicated day of service held annually in September. In 2023, “God’s work. Our hands.” celebrated its 10th anniversary with commemorative graphics and a video. In 2024, there was a special emphasis on hunger and feeding ministries for “God’s work. Our hands.” In connection with ELCA World Hunger’s 50th anniversary. This year’s day of service will take place Sunday, Sept. 7.

Since the 2022 Churchwide Assembly, the ELCA’s social media following has grown to 159,000 followers on Facebook (an 11 percent increase) and 22,900 followers on Instagram (a 27 percent increase). Notable increases include a 40 percent increase in engagements and impressions on Instagram and a 45 percent increase in video views on Facebook. Short-form video content also has seen a 614 percent increase in views on Instagram.

Over the past three years, Strategic Communications has facilitated more than 300 email communications to members and leaders, sharing stories, resources, programmatic ministry, and the business of this church.

From August 2022 to December 2024, the video team produced more than 300 professional videos for use in social media, congregations, synods, and various special events. The video team has re-released the Oscar-nominated documentary *A Time for Burning*. The team collaborated with African Descent Ministries to produce three seasons of “Talks at the Desk” and with Indigenous Ministries to produce ongoing webinars for the Truth and Healing Movement. Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton’s messages on Christian nationalism and the 2024 elections and her response to online criticisms of Lutheran social service organizations in 2025 were widely viewed and shared. Over the last two years, ELCA videos were viewed more than 2 million times.

From Fall 2022 to Spring 2025, ELCA.org had 1.4 million new users. The top three pages visited are the homepage, the “Find a Congregation” tool, and the daily Bible reading. Improvements to ELCA.org continue; staff are working to redesign the website and make enhancements to improve accessibility for everyone. The Strategic Communications team looks forward to sharing the new website later in 2025.

In 2023, *Living Lutheran* magazine ended its print run and shifted to a digital-only format. However, the popularity of the magazine compelled the team to relaunch *Living Lutheran* as a quarterly print publication, beginning



with 70,000 copies of the Spring 2025 issue. The magazine continues to provide stories of this church to congregations, members, and rostered ministers. The focus of the subscription marketing plan this year is to reach as many congregations as possible to let them know about the magazine's return and the benefits of being part of the *Living Lutheran* family. At the same time, *Living Lutheran*'s online community continues to thrive, with more than 730,000 visits to LivingLutheran.org since March 2023, when a more accurate analytics system was implemented, an increase of 45 percent. Meanwhile, *Living Lutheran*'s social media presence has resulted in 3.3 million impressions from 2022–2024, a 12 percent increase from the prior period, with 169,021 post engagements, a 28 percent increase from 2021. Instagram, which targets our younger audiences with photo essays and stories that connect to young adults, continues to grow steadily, with a 39 percent increase in followers since 2023.

Beginning in late 2023 and continuing through late 2024, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton participated in a series of nine regional Zoom conversations on the God's Love Made Real initiative, a movement to create a world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation. Strategic Communications, in partnership with Development, facilitated these sessions, responded to questions from participants, and supported communication efforts. Over the course of these conversations, Presiding Bishop Eaton connected with more than 2,300 viewers. Stories shared included a congregation's reconstruction of a food pantry to serve more people; a "Christmas in July" celebration for a single mom and her five children experiencing homelessness; a Queer youth poetry open-mic event, described by one pastor as a tangible experience of God's Love Made Real; renovation of a parsonage to provide long-term housing for survivors of human trafficking; and an ecumenical group's development of a community center that provides people with meals and spiritual connection.

Since the 2022 Churchwide Assembly, Strategic Communications sent out 103 news releases to prompt TV, radio, print, and digital coverage of the ELCA. During that time, ELCA media coverage had more than 10 billion potential views.

The Rev. M. Wyvetta Bullock, *executive for administration*, together with:

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

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

Mr. Aaron Cooper, *senior director for strategic communications*