

FOR FAITHFUL SUPPORTERS OF ELCA MINISTRIES

CIRCLE

Leadership

Fall 2020

NEWSLETTER

ELCA.org



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

“So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).

Dear friends in Christ,

Over the past several months, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused countless disruptions in our lives. Now, uncertainty continues to get in the way of establishing new routines. As some buildings reopen, others must close again. Yet, as Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton reminds us, “The church has never been closed.” Throughout this time of upheaval, our worship and work have continued – because you have not grown weary of doing good.

As members of the Leadership Circle, you are among our most generous and invested partners. This newsletter contains updates from the directors of the programs you support. They describe how your gifts have been at work throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. You will read about future church leaders entering seminary with Fund for Leaders scholarships; recipients of International Women Leaders scholarships continuing their studies online; missionaries finding new ways to connect with their communities; ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response partners meeting the needs of more community members than ever before; and ministries providing vital services to their neighbors with help from the COVID-19 Response Fund. As you will see, your generosity is allowing our church’s mission to continue in many innovative ways.

We are people of hope – even and especially in times of great challenge. Through your generosity, you are sharing that hope with others. Thank you for your steadfast support.



In peace,

Kathy Summers
Executive Director, Mission Advancement
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

On the cover: ELCA missionary Steve Swanson provides care for a patient at a Lutheran hospital in Arusha, Tanzania, before COVID-19. Find out more about how you are supporting Dr. Swanson and the work of other missionaries on page 3.

CONTENTS

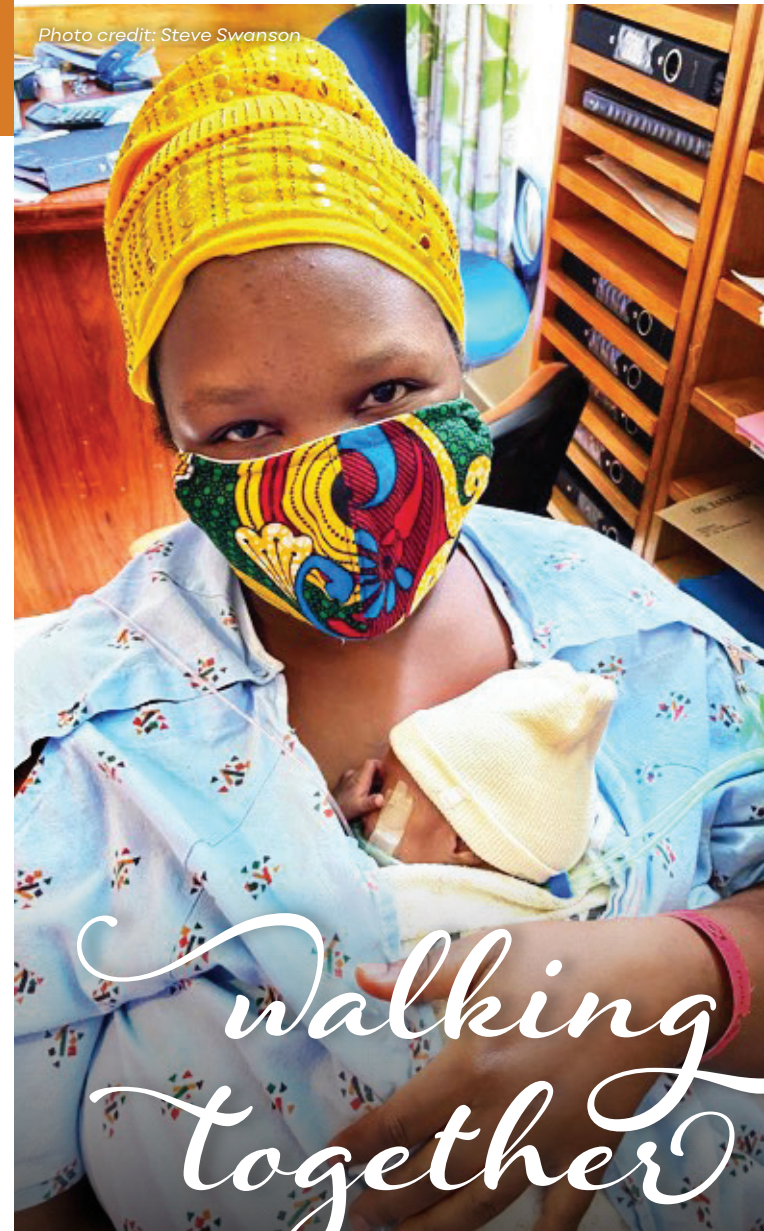
GLOBAL MISSION	3
ELCA FUND FOR LEADERS	4
ELCA WORLD HUNGER	5
LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE	6
ELCA WHERE NEEDED MOST	6
COVID-19 RESPONSE FUND	7

HOW TO GIVE

ONLINE:
ELCA.org/donate

PHONE:
800-638-3522

MAIL:
Make checks payable to “ELCA” and mail to:
ELCA, P.O. Box 1809,
Merrifield, VA 22116-8009



Communities around the world have been impacted by COVID-19. Yet, as the pandemic persists, we continue to find new ways to remain connected as a global community of Lutherans. Through your support, you have continued to walk alongside our companions around the world. Thank you for your generosity. It is my honor to walk this journey with you.

Rahel Mwitula Williams
Director, Global Mission Funding

MISSIONARIES AND GLOBAL CHURCH

In March 2020, the ELCA asked all mission personnel to either return to the United States or shelter in place. Most missionaries chose to shelter in place with their communities. For example, Dr. Steve Swanson and Jodi Swanson continued their work in Lutheran hospitals in Arusha, Tanzania, for several months before returning to the United States in July. They worked to provide medical staff with the personal protective equipment they need, sourcing locally made masks and hand sanitizer from a nearby craft beer maker.

Missionaries who returned to the United States have also found ways to continue their missions. From Columbus, Ohio, Mark and Cynthia Holder Rich are teaching students in Arusha online. While Christie Manisto and Steven Saari spent several months in Minneapolis, Minn., they remained connected with partners in Cairo, Egypt, through weekly online worship. They have recently been able to return to Cairo.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN LEADERS

The International Women Leaders program (IWL) offered five new awards for incoming scholars to study at ELCA colleges and universities. This incoming class includes two college/university partners and four companion churches that are new to the IWL program. This summer, we have had to navigate the constantly changing implications of the pandemic for international students. Most U.S. embassies and consulates around the world remain closed for visa interviews, so some of our incoming students will defer their program starts. We are fortunate that two incoming IWL students received their visas in time to begin classes in person this fall. We hope the rest will begin their studies in the spring semester. In the meantime, we welcome them to the IWL community.

The 2020 Global Leadership Academy has been postponed until late 2021. The event will still be held in Palestine in partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. And it will still provide women leaders from companions around the world a chance to gather, learn and build relationships. All of this will be possible because of your gracious gifts.

UPCOMING TRIPS

Donor immersion trips give faithful friends of Global Mission a chance to see their gifts at work. The trips that were planned for 2020 had to be postponed, but we have recently rescheduled them for 2021. One group will travel to Indonesia in September, and another will travel to the Holy Land in October.

“Despite not being able to meet in person, it is so clear we people of faith have been sent in these days to literally be God’s hands wherever we are, and we feel so incredibly grateful.”

–CHRISTIE MANISTO, missionary in Cairo, Egypt

2019 ELCA Fund for Leaders Scholarship Awards Banquet



Leadership

The adjectives many have used to describe 2020, such as "uncertain," "trying" and "challenging," have grown tiresome to me. A global pandemic, the renewed movement for racial justice and equality, and a turbulent economy have affected us all this year. All the more reason why I give thanks to God for the faithful candidates for ministry now answering the call to become pastors and deacons in our church. I likewise give thanks to God for you. Your leadership-level gifts to the ELCA Fund for Leaders help make their theological education and formation possible.

The Rev. Mark Olsen
Director, ELCA Fund for Leaders

Visit www.elca.org/fundforleaders to watch the 2020 Fund For Leaders banquet online.

GROWING GIFTS, GROWING ENDOWMENT FUNDS

Midway through 2020, the Fund for Leaders had received just over \$1.8 million in new gifts, which puts us 54% of the way toward our fundraising goals for the year! Our endowment fund values were negatively impacted by markets and fell during the first quarter. However, our endowment funds fared much better during the second quarter; by June 30, 2020, they had reached a combined value of over \$63.7 million. A strong finish for the year will allow the Fund for Leaders to provide continued significant scholarship support in 2021.

ONLINE EVENTS

Planning is underway for an early 2021 online event featuring a panel of Fund for Leaders alums who will talk about and reflect on ministry throughout 2020. The working title is "For Just Such a Time As This,' A Leadership Summit." We hope this conversation will offer insights into how these alums have been leading across our church during this remarkable year. They will also share how the support of the Fund for Leaders helped enable them to lead at a time such as this. Look for more information later this year or early next year.

TWO NEW ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIPS CELEBRATE THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN

Two new endowed scholarship funds were created by generous donors this year to celebrate advances in the ministry of women in the Lutheran church. The Rev. Elizabeth A. Platz Seminary Scholarship Fund honors the 50th anniversary of Lutheran women being ordained in the United States, and the Rev. Earlean Miller Seminary Scholarship Fund celebrates the 40th anniversary of Lutheran women of color being ordained in the United States. Please consider making a gift to the scholarship fund in honor of Pastor Platz, in memory of Pastor Miller, or for anyone else you wish to honor at elca.org/fundforleaders.

NEW ACADEMIC YEAR, NEW SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

The fall semester of the 2020-2021 academic year began with the ELCA's seven seminaries offering their students either a hybrid of in-person and online instruction or courses conducted entirely online. The goal of each seminary was to provide the highest quality education for its students in the safest and least disruptive way possible.

For 2020, the Fund for Leaders has awarded 50 new churchwide scholarships (38 full-tuition, nine Mission Developer and three Federal Chaplaincy Ministry scholarships). For the 2020-2021 academic year, the Fund for Leaders will be assisting 297 total students with just over \$2.8 million in scholarship support.



"For me, the Fund for Leaders scholarship means gratitude. Receiving this opportunity didn't just happen. It's woven with hundreds of people that guided me, affirmed, challenged, encouraged and befriended me."

—ALEXANDER THESHIP-ROSALES, candidate for Word and Service ministry and 2020 recipient of an ELCA Fund for Leaders full-tuition scholarship



Daily Bread Grant recipient St. Matthew Trinity in Hoboken, N.J.

The COVID-19 pandemic is crashing over the world in waves. Beyond the threat of the virus itself, the pandemic is causing a rise in hunger unlike anything we have seen in decades. With your leadership-level gifts, you have put ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response in a unique position to respond. Your generosity has helped foster relationships with partners in 60 countries around the world who understand the unique ways their communities have been affected. And now, your gifts are meeting their needs — providing life for today and hope for tomorrow.

The Rev. Daniel Rift
Director, ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response Funding

ELCA WORLD HUNGER

During this time of social distancing, we are finding new ways to unite as a church and confront the rising tide of hunger. On Sept. 24, we hosted the first-ever online benefit for ELCA World Hunger. Speakers included guidebook author and travel TV host Rick Steves, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and ELCA Northwest Washington Synod Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee. Over 1,500 participants registered, making this the ELCA's largest online gathering yet.

Attendees learned about how ELCA World Hunger is responding to the current hunger crisis, as well as the ongoing root causes of hunger and poverty addressed in Steves' recent special *Hunger and Hope: Lessons From Ethiopia and Guatemala*. They also heard personal messages from ELCA World Hunger partners who are putting your gifts to work in their communities. A group of generous donors agreed

"We're grateful to the ELCA Daily Bread Grant for helping us. ... We served 44 families in the first 15 minutes of the 'drive-through' food pantry. ... It is taking the support of the whole congregation (and many of our neighbors, too) to make our pantry possible. Together, we are being church for the sake of the world as we meet people's needs for food."

— MEREDITH LOVELL KESELEY, senior pastor of Abiding Presence Lutheran Church in Burke, Va.



Hope

to match all gifts given in honor of the benefit up to \$250,000. Within days of the event, we met that match.

This event was part of a larger fundraising challenge for ELCA World Hunger. In recent months, a group of generous donors have contributed to a pool of challenge funds. Through this effort and others, we hope to raise an additional \$9 million by the end of the year. We believe we can combat hunger in the time of COVID-19 — but only together.

Meanwhile, your gifts are already making a difference around the world and in the United States. The 137 congregations that received \$500 Daily Bread Matching Grants in March — made possible by your gifts — are now serving their communities and garnering more support for their efforts. Together, they have raised over \$313,000, surpassing their collective fundraising goal.



Handwashing stations in Sierra Leone



ELCA WHERE NEEDED MOST

Your generous support for the ELCA Where Needed Most has truly been a blessing in a time of COVID-19, natural disasters and social unrest. Your gifts have put us in a position to respond as a church family to what is happening in the world. One clear example is our work with social ministry organizations, such as Lutheran Services in America, that impact the lives of 1 in 50 Americans. Together we have engaged in churchwide study and deliberation to create social statements and resources that address social, political, environmental and other timely public issues. We equip members and leaders of the ELCA to advocate legislation that promotes justice and peace. Your gifts also allow us to find new ways of reaching people and communities impacted by injustice. This is a shining example of being church together.

These are just a few ways your gifts are making an impact in our church. Your faithful financial support is essential to continuing these and many other programs that are changing the lives of people in need. You are empowering us to be there for our neighbors near and far in the ways they need us most. Thank you.

DeWayne Cook

DeWayne Cook
Director of Major Gifts



LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

Your gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response have allowed this ministry to honor our commitments to our neighbors affected by disaster. Since January 2020, Lutheran Disaster Response International has distributed over \$1.3 million to companions in 32 countries in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. With your support, our partners are meeting the immediate needs of their communities.

In Chile, the Iglesia Evangelica Luterana en Chile is distributing food and supplies to vulnerable families. It is also providing counseling to those experiencing depression, anxiety or trauma. In the Central African Republic, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic is distributing food and installing handwashing stations in public places. In Lebanon, the Contact and Resource Center is providing cash assistance to those living with disabilities who have lost their parents and are on their own. And your gifts are supporting the ACT Global Appeal, which is continuing humanitarian assistance, supporting vulnerable populations and bolstering community preparedness and resiliency around the world.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, other disasters – such as earthquakes, hurricanes and violent conflict – have continued to strike. This year, they pose even greater danger to vulnerable groups, with resources spread more thinly than ever before. Your generosity is reaching those groups in their time of greatest crisis.

In recent months, you have walked alongside communities in India and Bangladesh, where Cyclone Amphan left millions without power; in South Asia, where monsoons have driven 27,000 from their homes and into relief camps; and in Beirut, where an explosion has caused death, injury and damage as far away as six miles from its epicenter. You have also responded to tornadoes, hurricanes and wildfires that have affected communities across the United States. Your generosity has provided immediate necessities for survivors, as well as support for the long process of repairing and rebuilding their homes.

Your gifts are helping to assure your neighbors impacted by disaster that, even in the chaos of a global pandemic, they have not been forgotten. Thank you for your continuing dedication to this work.



Masks from St. John Prairie Hill in Brenham, Texas

Food drive at Holy Cross Lutheran in Houston

Launched in response to the unprecedented need caused by the pandemic, the ELCA's COVID-19 Response Fund supports the ministries of this church that are most in need and best positioned to make an impact. Generous members of the ELCA have contributed over \$1.5 million to this fund so far. Through these gifts, our church has committed to addressing this crisis and joined hands with people who are struggling throughout our community in Christ.

We have distributed four rounds of grants, reaching 61 synods across the ELCA. These grants support congregations and local ministries serving communities that are disproportionately at risk from the pandemic. The ELCA is committed to walking alongside ministries that are critical to carrying out the mission of this church, including the staff of ELCA congregations, camps and outdoor ministries, and these grants have made that possible. These grants are providing resources for ministries that provide people in poverty with health care, sanitation and hygiene supplies, clean water, food and shelter – resources critical to slowing the spread of the virus.

When one member of the body of Christ suffers, all suffer together. The needs are great. So are the opportunities. Thank you for sharing your gifts with our church and the world.

Rachel Wind

Rachel K. Wind
Executive for Development

Your gifts at work:
Grace in Action Church, Detroit, Mich.

One of the most pressing challenges facing Detroit residents during the COVID-19 crisis is access to internet service and digital technology. The Southeast Michigan Synod reports that, as schools have turned to virtual education, a high number of children and youth throughout the city lack access to home internet service and are therefore unable to participate in their classes.

A grant from the COVID-19 Response Fund has allowed Grace in Action Church to set up Wi-Fi hot spots in neighborhood parks, parking lots and schools. These hot spots are part of the church's Equitable Internet Initiative Southwest, a collaboration with the city of Detroit to increase internet access for its families.

"As people of faith, it is important for us to be clear that all people, as children of God, should have access to information and opportunity, and we need to fight against a narrative that would say it's acceptable for some people not to have that access based on where they live, how much money they have or the color of their skin," says the Rev. John Cummings, pastor of Grace in Action.

Grace in Action has set up five hot spots and is working on a sixth. To the donors who helped make this possible, Pastor Cummings says, "Especially now, the money you have donated is making a crucial difference not only in creating that access for families in southwest Detroit but [in] allowing children to continue their schooling, ensuring that they are not left behind in their education and opportunity to have a bright and successful future."



Children gather at Grace in Action (photographed before COVID-19)

CIRCLE Leadership

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
8765 West Higgins Road
Chicago, IL 60631-4101
ELCA.org

FALL 2020



ELCA Mission Funding directors

From left to right: The Rev. Mark W. Olsen, Signe Fredrickson, the Rev. Marissa Krey, Karen Mathison, DeWayne Cook (director of major gifts), Gabe Brannan, the Rev. Robin Brown, the Rev. Daniel Rift and Rahel Mwitula Williams. Not pictured: The Rev. Ron Glusenkamp, Sharon Magnuson.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Would you like to know more about the ways in which your Leadership Circle gifts are making a difference?

Give us a call at (800) 638-3522.