

ELCA New Congregations

Building community, becoming church



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



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You can support ELCA New Congregations today by making a gift online at www.ELCA.org/newcongregations/donate.





Photo by Fernando Caglianese

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” MATTHEW 18:20

Today, many Americans are facing life’s challenges without hearing words of God’s love and forgiveness. There is a place for everyone here – but they need to be invited to hear the good news of God in Jesus Christ. As followers of Christ, we are called by God to share the good news. **How can we spark faith in an increasingly secular world?**

It starts with community.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a church that is a catalyst, convener and bridge builder. Our goal is to become an evangelizing, multicultural, multi-generational church growing in faith, and witnessing to God’s mission, with more people worshiping in new and renewed congregations and living out their faith in the world.

Through ELCA New Congregations, we are employing innovative models for starting new congregations – reaching out to areas experiencing rapid population growth and engaging diverse

socio-economic groups, ethnic and multicultural communities and emerging young populations throughout the United States and the Caribbean.

Through these new ministries, we are worshiping in pews and in city parks, breaking bread in homes and in shelters and equipping our neighbors with bread and resources for life. With our hands, we are doing God’s work of restoring and reconciling communities in Jesus Christ’s name. Currently, there are 340 ELCA new-start ministries under development. **What do these new congregations look like?**



Photo by John O'Hara



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Kaw Prairie Community Church

A JOINT MINISTRY BETWEEN THE ELCA AND
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH U.S.A. | LENEXA, KAN.

Kaw Prairie held its first service in a local elementary school in 2004. Today it's a thriving faith community with 650 members at worship every weekend. Gifts to the ELCA were there to support Kaw Prairie when it was a new congregation with only a handful of members. The Rev. Dan McKnight, pastor of Kaw Prairie Community Church, is extremely grateful for the support. He says, "We exist because of the grace of the ELCA." Pastor Dan says that our church – the ELCA – is made up of individuals, each unique in their own way, called by God to be one in ministry and mission.

One of the ways we do ministry together is through financial generosity. Undesignated gifts make the work of the ELCA possible, here in the United States and throughout the world, and especially at Kaw Prairie.

The Welcome Church

A MISSION CONGREGATION | PHILADELPHIA

The Welcome Church is the largest ELCA congregation in Philadelphia. Every week, hundreds of people gather for worship in a park, bearing witness to passers-by. Among the many who gather for word and sacrament, some have eaten that day and many have not. But all come hungry – not just for food but for the gospel. Why a public park? Because it's the streets where The Welcome Church lives out its ministry. There's no church building. The Rev. Pastor Violet Little travels by public transportation to meet people where they are: subway stops, parks and neighborhoods. Pastor Violet says, "Having church out on the streets has been a public witness to many. Since starting this ministry, I have felt truly gifted." This isn't a congregation that serves the homeless, but a congregation whose members are without homes. The Welcome Church offers hope through God's grace – that members are a new creation through God's living word by the power of the Holy Spirit. Your undesignated gifts have made the ministry of The Welcome Church a reality.



Iglesia Luterana Santa Maria de Guadalupe

AN ELCA CONGREGATION
IRVING, TEXAS

Three years ago, Moses could be seen roaming the streets of Irving, Texas. Caught up in crime and violence, he often felt angry and alone – until he walked through the doors of an ELCA congregation. Today you can find Moses volunteering with youth or playing drums in the worship band. His life has changed because of the faith community

he found at Iglesia Luterana Santa Maria de Guadalupe, a new ELCA congregation that exists because of ELCA financial gifts. Like many ELCA congregations, Santa Maria started with a few members – sharing the grace-filled gospel. Today, thousands of people pass through the church's doors each week. "We are working together to bring Jesus to the whole community. I do believe that is what it means to be Lutheran," says the Rev. Pedro Portillo, pastor of Santa Maria.



Cathedral in the Night

A JOINT MINISTRY | NORTHAMPTON, MASS.

In what they call the “radical tradition of Jesus,” Cathedral in the Night, an ELCA worshiping community, welcomes all who show up to a “community and a common meal.”

Every Sunday at 5 p.m., “rain, sun, snow or shine,” the congregation hosts a worship service, communion and a warm meal to anyone interested in stopping by.

“One of the things that’s really important to us about this ministry is that it’s not outreach to anyone; it’s creating community with everyone, that we are church together,” says the Rev. Stephanie Smith, pastor of Our Savior’s Lutheran Church in South Hadley, Mass.

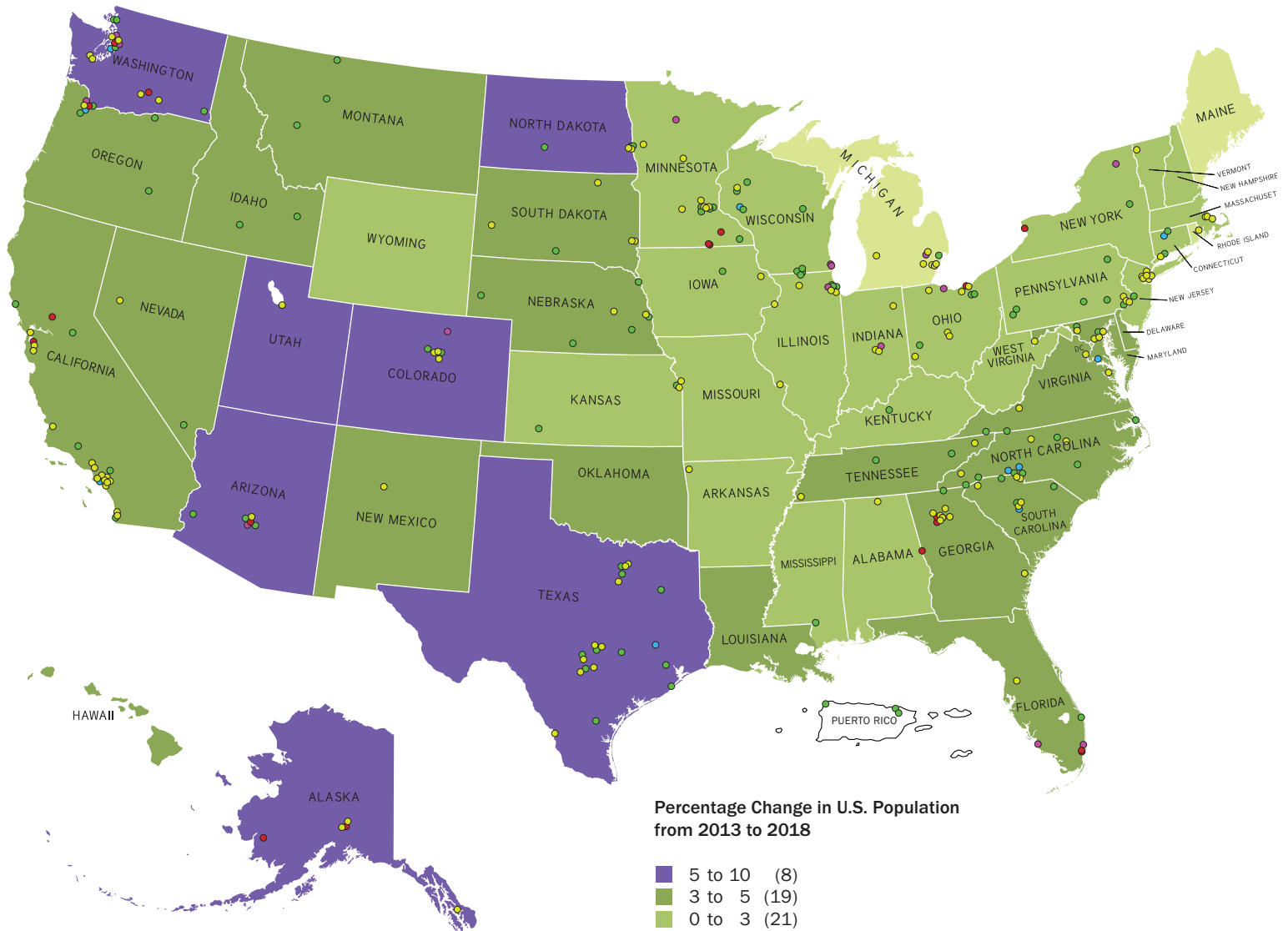
In the spirit of a congregation that “welcomes everyone,” Stephanie is joining with pastors from two other denominations to shepherd the ministries: Chris Carlisle, director of Campus Ministry for the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts, and the Rev. Eric Fistler, pastor of West Suffield Congregational Church, a United Church of Christ congregation.

“It does honor to the way Jesus did his ministry,” Chris says. “The early Christian communities were wandering communities in the open air where Jesus really seemed to do most of his reaching and teaching.” Cathedral in the Night is supported by an ELCA churchwide ministries grant.



ELCA map of congregational development

Since the beginning of the ELCA in 1988, 471 new ministries have organized as congregations and have grown across the country. This map highlights our 340 new-start ministries to be developed into new congregations.



Percentage Change in U.S. Population from 2013 to 2018

- 5 to 10 (8)
- 3 to 5 (19)
- 0 to 3 (21)
- -1 to 0 (3)

□ Projected data
not available

Congregation Status

- Congregations Under Development (147)
- Synodically Authorized Worshiping Communities (113)
- Alternate Worshiping Site (16)
- Approved Site (17)
- Alternate Worshiping Community (20)

Today more than 50 percent of ELCA New Congregations are emerging from diverse socio-economic groups, ethnic and multicultural communities and growing young populations. These mission initiatives will help us increase the capacity of our church body to serve and spread God's word everywhere.



Photo by John O'Hara

The ELCA's comprehensive approach to supporting new-start ministries secures funding from local, regional and national partners. Your financial gift to ELCA New Congregations supports new-start ministries each serving the specific needs of their community.

Being a part of the ELCA means that, together, we serve our neighbor – on the street, in our country and around the world. We are freed to serve, not out of burden or obligation, but out of gratitude and joy.

Give by mail

Use the enclosed response cards to make a gift through your synod and/or through the churchwide organization. Please send your gift to ELCA New Congregations, P.O. Box 71764, Chicago, IL 60694-1764.

Your gifts to the synod for new congregations help start ministries within your synod.

Your gifts to ELCA New Congregations help start ministries where they are needed most throughout the United States and the Caribbean.

Give online

Visit www.ELCA.org/newcongregations/donate

For more information

Contact the New Congregations Director at 800-638-3522, ext. 2664 or newcongregations@elca.org.



Cover and this photo by Fernando Gaglianese



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