



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

Dear congregational leaders,

We are so thankful for generous congregations such as yours that partner with the larger church to make our collective work possible. In these stories, you will see the impact of congregations across our whole church. Through your own ministries and your generous support of our shared ministries, you are creating meaningful change in your neighborhood and around the world.

A common theme in these stories and others like them is how we are formed by this shared work. Ministries that begin as outreach, to better the lives of others, generate meaningful relationships that profoundly change us as well. Our congregations are engaged in ministries that transform our church in remarkable ways. We hope this abbreviated version of the Leadership Circle newsletter will give you a quick glimpse of the impact your congregation's support has made. You can find the full version, containing longer versions of these stories and much more, at [ELCA.org/LeadershipCircle](https://www.elca.org/LeadershipCircle).

Many congregational leaders have told me how valuable they find these stories about the ways our church alters the world. Our long-term work with Lutheran Disaster Response is one of those ways. If you haven't seen this year's edition of "Thrive," I encourage you to [click here](#) to see highlights of our disaster relief work from one, three and five years ago.

For all the ways you make a difference in this world, through your own ministries and your generosity to churchwide ministries, we give thanks. We are all better because of it!



Rev. John Eggen
Senior Director
for Annual Giving



THE POWER OF SHOWING UP

"People in the church had been telling me for years that I should go to seminary, but it didn't feel quite right," recalls the Rev. Samantha DiBiaso. The words sounded different coming from the community she served in South Africa during her year as a Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) volunteer: "I developed this deep sense that showing up – being in relationship and loving people – was my next, most faithful step on the journey."



And that is exactly what DiBiaso did: "I showed up by God's invitation to seminary, to keep learning, growing and listening." Today she is pastor of Living Faith Lutheran Church in Rockville, Md. DiBiaso's story is special because she was affirmed by two very different communities and cultures, but there are many stories highlighting what YAGM does for young people who step out in faith, as well as for the church itself. YAGM is forming leaders and mapping the future of the church, thanks to congregations like yours that support ELCA ministries through Where Needed Most.

After almost 25 years of YAGM, there are countless stories like DiBiaso's. Volunteers leave the program shaped by their experience as people of faith, citizens of the world and future leaders of the church. Many also discover a more particular future taking shape: a calling to serve the ELCA as a rostered minister. DiBiaso remarked that, as she showed up, "God kept showing up too – through my wrestling with classes, through clinical pastoral education, through hands-on ministry during internship. And now that I am a called and ordained minister to Word and Sacrament in the ELCA, God continues to keep showing up."



SACRED SETTLEMENT

“You don’t just wake up in four walls and think you’re not homeless anymore,” remarked Valerie Roy. She is the inaugural member of a tiny-home village created on the property of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Roseville, Minn., one of more than a half dozen such sites in Minnesota alone.

“These folks coming out of homelessness have years of deep-seated trauma,” said Tammy Walhof, director of Lutheran Advocacy–Minnesota. “They need people who will listen, who just accept them as a child of God.” Along with ELCA Witness in Society, supported by your gifts to World Hunger, Walhof helped ensure passage of the “sacred communities” law, which allows religious properties to host communities of micro-unit dwellings.

Settled., an organization that helps faith communities develop tiny-home villages it calls “sacred settlements,” provided a tiny home for Roy at Prince of Peace, which she moved into in December 2022. A designated volunteer family reside in the settlement too, to build a sense of community.

“We write a lot of checks, and sometimes we roll up our sleeves and go out and help with a project,” said the Rev. Peter Christ, pastor of Prince of Peace. “But this is different, where we’re inviting people into a campus and building a community together. We recognize the ways in which the presence of this community we’re building will fundamentally shape, color and add richness and vibrancy to a church that was in a place of fearfulness about our future. As people of faith, that has been a tremendously eye-opening experience.”

Pastor Christ believes that building a sacred community has been life-changing for Prince of Peace in ways it could never have envisioned: “We imagined how transformative it could be for someone who has experienced chronic homelessness to be welcomed into a home and community that support them. ... But what we had less imagination for is how much it would transform us and our community.”

—Adapted from an April 2024 story in [Living Lutheran](#).

GENERATION ZERO-HUNGER

Thanks to donations — including those from generous congregations such as yours — and a substantial matching gift, we have raised almost **half a million dollars** to become Generation Zero-Hunger!

Want to bring the Generation Zero-Hunger experience to your congregation? [Click here!](#)

