

FOR FAITHFUL SUPPORTERS OF ELCA MINISTRIES

CIRCLE *Leadership*

Fall 2023

NEWSLETTER

ELCA.org



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

—Isaiah 43:19

Dear siblings in Christ,

For those of us who prefer consistency to change, the last few years have been overwhelming. Sometimes thrilling, sometimes terrifying and sometimes both, the constant societal flux has rattled me. News media bring stories of new technology, scientific breakthroughs, climate emergencies, pandemics, war, social movements, and on and on. What can we cling to in a time of such complex change?

As Lutherans, we are no strangers to change. In fact, we pride ourselves on our capacity for evolving and reforming. We rejoice in a changing world because we understand that, even as the world around us shifts, God's love is constant. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever," reads Hebrews 13:8. Also unchanging is the ELCA's commitment to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ; that mission remains as important today as it was decades ago. So long as we hold fast to our core beliefs, we can reform our institutions and embrace new and innovative ways to share this good news.

By now, you may have heard about God's Love Made Real, a movement in the ELCA seeking to activate each of us to share the good news of Jesus Christ so that more people discover community, justice and love. We intend to build upon our core beliefs as Lutherans, inviting each of us to consider innovative ways we might share this story with the world. This movement builds upon years of action from our church – years of feeding the hungry, raising up leaders, accompanying our neighbors and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, near and far. This work is still crucial to who we are as a church.

You, as a member of the Leadership Circle, have prepared us for such a time as this – you have equipped this church to respond to change while also supporting the core programs we do as church together. I hope that the following pages will show you how your support has enabled this church to innovate and reform while ensuring our continued commitment to be church together. Through such change, you have sustained and strengthened the ministry of the church. Thank you for being a member of the Leadership Circle.

With gratitude,



Rachel Wind

Rachel Wind
Executive for Development
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

P.S. If you'd like to learn more about God's Love Made Real and how you can get involved, visit lovemadereal.elca.org.

On the cover: Crisfield, Md., is repeatedly impacted by coastal flooding. With support from Lutheran Disaster Response, the community is raising over 100 homes to lessen the impacts of future flooding.

CONTENTS:

SERVICE AND JUSTICE	3
ELCA WORLD HUNGER 50TH ANNIVERSARY	5
YOUR GIFTS AT WORK	6
CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND LEADERSHIP	8
LEADERSHIP CIRCLE SPOTLIGHT	11
WHERE NEEDED MOST	11

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



Scan to support the work of our church!



Daniel Rift

Rev. Daniel Rift
Director, Service and Justice Giving

Since childhood I have been fascinated by blueprints, excited to imagine that behind the function and beauty of a structure lay an artfully crafted plan that assured integrity and an inspiring outcome. Only a few people as geeky as I am might be equally fascinated by the structure and organization underpinning the ELCA's work of ministry and mission.

Yet our structure provides the foundation for powerful and effective ministry. How have we been able to reach where few others can? What has enabled some of our partners to turn from receiving support to supporting others? Why do Lutherans provide a pathway to understanding that God is a God of love, first and always? Perhaps our carefully designed blueprint for mission explains this how, what and why.

Over the last few years the churchwide organization has been restructured to create two "home areas": "Service and Justice" and "Christian Community and Leadership." Service and Justice coordinates the powerful work of missionaries, global companions, hunger and disaster. It's the same work you know well, reorganized for greater efficiency and collaboration. In this way God's work in the world is unified into one cohesive and collective effort.

Previously we promised that "more income = more mission," and that promise is being kept this year. As generosity has increased toward the program work of Service and Justice, that work has continued to expand.



Here are a few milestones that you have made possible:

- The largest year ever of planned spending for ELCA World Hunger, including expanded work in the U.S. and growing development work led by women.
- The largest year ever of planned spending for Lutheran Disaster Response since Hurricane Katrina, including expanded response efforts to those who have been displaced and equipping leadership in U.S. synods and congregations for disaster response.
- Appointing and sending 10 new missionaries, which means that the general budget of the ELCA now supports our largest number of missionaries in a decade.
- Adapting the mission of supporting our global companions' work, especially in areas where ministries of service and justice intersect.

Your general support for the ELCA, along with your gifts to ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response, Missionary Sponsorship and Global Mission, make these efforts possible. Thank you.

Read more stories of your impact through Lutheran Disaster Response in the latest issue of "Thrive"!





Women and girls celebrate at the Empowered Girls Launch-A-Leader workshop in South Sudan.

MISSIONARIES

This summer our church welcomed 10 new missionaries into service. They are now on their way to eight countries to walk alongside their new communities as teachers, pastors, pastoral interns, communicators and more:

Justin Mauney — Horizon International intern, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Susan Seidel — Program coordinator, Bega Kwa Bega, Tanzania.

The Rev. Rebekah Davis — Pastor, St. Andrew's United Church of Cairo, Egypt.

Rob Forrest — Chaplain, St. Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS), Egypt.

Karleigh Crepin — Horizon International intern, France.

The Rev. Andrew Ronnevik — Seminary professor, Papua New Guinea (with spouse Meredith and children Beatrice and Hans).

Julia Kontour — Central Europe teacher, Slovakia.

Bridget Gautieri — ELCA Wittenberg Center coordinator, Germany.

Sophie Warnberg — Horizon International intern, Serbia.

"I want to grow as a pastoral care leader," said Mauney. "I hope to walk alongside the people of Malaysia, not just in my congregation but all over the country — to hear their stories and learn how to be present with how God is working in the lives of people around me."

Your gifts to ELCA Global Mission make this work possible. By investing in our global companion churches, you enable each of these missionaries to meet the needs identified by our global partners and to be fully present with our siblings in Christ around the world.

ELCA WORLD HUNGER

Young women in the Republic of South Sudan encounter stifling obstacles. Many are migrants, fleeing war, floods or hunger. They grow up amid the trauma of violence, oppressive patriarchy and limited opportunities in one of the world's poorest countries.

For five days in June, 138 adolescent Sudanese girls put that behind them to attend the Empowered Girls Launch-A-Leader workshop, funded by an ELCA World Hunger grant. Hosted by Reconciliation Evangelical Lutheran Church, on the edge of Juba, South Sudan's capital, the workshop taught the girls, most of whom came from the neighborhood, about sisterhood, celebrating themselves, nonviolent communication, confidence and self-esteem, menstruation and reproductive health, and other life skills such as expressing their needs and advocating for themselves. It culminated in a graduation event where the girls used song, dance, poetry, drama and speeches to demonstrate what they had learned during the week and how they intended to use it in their lives. One girl had recently fled civil war in the neighboring Republic of Sudan and was staying with a relative in Juba. As the workshop began, she would cry, feeling unloved, alone and isolated in a new place. By the end of the week, though, she had tools to cope with her challenges. She rediscovered her smile and wore it proudly, dancing with her new sisters in the workshop.

Your generous gifts to ELCA World Hunger are at work around the world, equipping women and girls with confidence and new skills and expanding their opportunities for a bright future.

ELCA WORLD HUNGER 50TH ANNIVERSARY

"Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action"
—1 John 3:18



Nearly 50 years ago the world was grappling with an astounding increase in hunger. In response, Lutherans in the United States launched the World Hunger Appeals to stand with their neighbors. Since 1974 hundreds of thousands of generous people from across this church have contributed more than \$650 million to support ELCA World Hunger, and countless more have prayed, volunteered and advocated for change. Together we have made great strides against hunger and poverty.

While we reflect on how far we've come, we know how far we have to go. In 2024 we will celebrate ELCA World Hunger's 50th anniversary, yet we find ourselves at another critical moment in history. Amid rising costs, global conflict, the lingering impact of COVID-19, and intensifying effects of climate change, the world once again faces a startling rise in hunger that is undoing decades of progress.

In our 50th year we are making a bold commitment to increase our support of programs around the world. To do this, we need your help. As one of the ELCA's key partners through the Leadership Circle, you are imperative to ELCA World Hunger's continued response and growth in a changing world.

Over the next three years ELCA World Hunger seeks to:

1. Secure \$25 million in commitments and gifts to the ELCA World Hunger endowment.
2. Increase spending for hunger-mitigating programs by 16% for a total of \$75 million being deployed to address hunger around the world.

We understand that these are big goals, but ELCA World Hunger started with a big goal. Over the last 50 years God has provided opportunities for the church to make a tangible and consistent difference, and you have responded with over \$650 million in support. The horizon of possibilities is wide, and we hope the growing support of you and others will push us ever closer to a just world where all are fed.

50
years



Will you join us as we commit to the next 50 years of ministry together?

To learn more about getting involved with the ELCA World Hunger 50th anniversary initiatives, go to ELCA.org/WH50 or reach out to Rev. Daniel Rift at Daniel.Rift@elca.org. We also shared exclusive updates for Leadership Circle members at the recent ELCA World Hunger Special Report event. If you weren't able to join, look for the recording at ELCA.org/LeadershipCircle.

Join us and be part of the story of our next 50 years together — boldly and hopefully pursuing God's promise of a just world where all are fed.

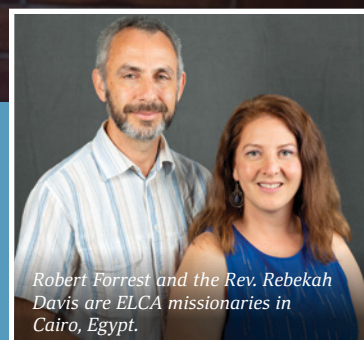


Two people from St. Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS) in Egypt.

EGYPT

Founded in 1979, St. Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS) was one of the first organizations in Egypt dedicated to improving the quality of life of refugees and vulnerable migrants. StARS operates a school serving over 200 refugee children in Cairo, Egypt. It also offers services for adults whose children are enrolled in the school, as well as programming for unaccompanied refugee children. StARS programming includes legal assistance, psychosocial support, education and feeding programs as its clients resettle.

Through your gifts to ELCA World Hunger, you have enabled StARS to provide food, medicine, safety and support for young refugees in Cairo. And, through your gifts to ELCA missionaries, you are funding staff such as Robert Forrest, who works as a chaplain for StARS, and the Rev. Rebekah Davis, who serves as pastor for St. Andrew's United Church of Christ.



Robert Forrest and the Rev. Rebekah Davis are ELCA missionaries in Cairo, Egypt.

"St. Andrew's and StARS are a beacon of hope and dignity for the refugee communities of Cairo," said Davis and Forrest. "Everyone needs community. We feel inspired to both embrace and be embraced by this vibrant community."

UNITED STATES

Naomi Mbise, an International Women Leaders scholar from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, Meru Diocese, graduated this past spring from California Lutheran University with a degree in political science, theology and Christian leadership.

"To be an International Women Leaders scholar, to me, means being 'boundless,'" Naomi said. "It means I am without limits! This program has enabled me to pursue my dreams with no limits. ... It has shaped and keeps shaping me as a leader for a global society."

Naomi Mbise is now serving as an intern with the ELCA and Lutheran Office for World Community in New York, providing leadership in advocacy at the United Nations level.



HAWAII

In early August, a series of wildfires broke out in Hawaii, predominantly on the island of Maui. Exacerbated by strong winds, wildfires on Maui have claimed dozens of lives and have destroyed homes, businesses and lines of communication. The significant loss of life and damage caused by the wildfires in Hawaii have turned our prayers and attention to mourning those lost, supporting the survivors and discerning how Lutheran Disaster Response can assist with recovery.

Members of Kihei (Maui) Lutheran Church have been collecting and distributing relief supplies to help those impacted by the wildfires in Lahaina, Maui. Ron Rucker, interim pastor of Kihei Lutheran, and Dave Nagler, bishop of the Pacifica Synod, toured the area on Aug. 22 following the fires.

"The devastation is more than the loss of lives, homes and businesses," Nagler said. "It is an emotional and spiritual wound in the heart of this community. Yet, you can see God already working in and through the hearts and hands of this community to knit this island back together. We are deeply grateful for the outpouring of *aloha* from people around the country who have reached out and contributed to the recovery. May the rebuild be thoughtful, intentional and focused primarily on the needs of the locals."

Lutheran Disaster Response is currently coordinating with the Pacifica Synod and other partners to assess the needs of people impacted by the wildfires and to provide for immediate needs and recovery amid the widespread destruction. Lutheran Disaster Response is committed to accompanying recovering communities in the years ahead.



A donation site at Lahaina Gateway shopping center with donations for survivors of the Maui wildfires.

"We are deeply grateful for the outpouring of aloha from people around the country who have reached out and contributed to the recovery."

– Dave Nagler



View of a neighborhood destroyed by the wildfires in Maui.

Throughout your life, what leaders have shaped your faith? What communities have joined you on your spiritual journey? For me the list is long, and I give God great thanks that so many people have accompanied me along my way.

As director of giving for the ELCA's Christian Community and Leadership (CCL) home area, I am honored to play a role in fostering the growth, sustainability and impact of CCL ministries, which include International Women Leaders, Fund for Leaders and Young Adults in Global Mission. These ministries continue to show us the best of the church and what investing in leadership and community can truly mean.

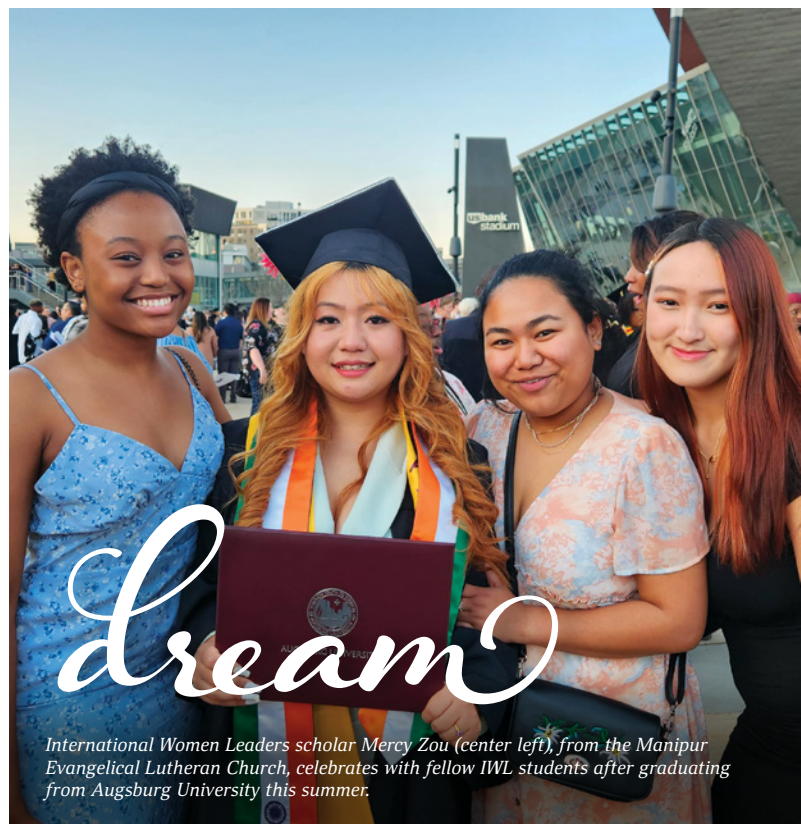
In this capacity I serve as a bridge between CCL and the Development team and, more importantly, a bridge to you, the faithful supporters of these ministries. We all share a passion for building strong Christian communities and empowering visionary leaders. Working to cultivate relationships, communicate the mission and impact of these programs, and invite partners to invest in them, we encounter stories of inspiration and hope. Thank you for your continued prayers and financial commitment to these programs.

I am always moved by the work and witness of the individuals supported through our collective efforts and by the partners who give so generously. Whether we fund someone's seminary education, accompany young women through their college careers or send young adults into the world for service, together we build a brighter church.

Through you, we are equipped to thank God for the leaders and communities that got us where we are today and to support the leaders and communities of tomorrow.

Benjamin Hogue

Rev. Ben Hogue
Director,
Christian Community
and Leadership Giving



International Women Leaders scholar Mercy Zou (center left), from the Manipur Evangelical Lutheran Church, celebrates with fellow IWL students after graduating from Augsburg University this summer.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN LEADERS

Capturing the total impact of any one ELCA program or ministry can be difficult, especially a program as blessed as International Women Leaders (IWL). This fall 19 women have started or are continuing their studies at 11 ELCA colleges and universities, supported by your generosity to the IWL program. One new student, Ngo Sai from Mara Evangelical Church in Myanmar, has long dreamed of this opportunity and began classes at Augsburg University this fall.

In the spring, five scholars graduated and were celebrated for all they had achieved during their four years with the IWL program. These graduates, along with all their IWL sisters, bring gifts and skills that continue to have lasting impacts inside the classroom, on campus and around the world. Not only are these women pouring their intellect and experiences into their studies, they also share their perspectives, enriching their schools and the church with a broader range of ideas. These scholars participate in student government, lead campus ministries, support their academic departments and build friendships that sustain them during their time at school and for a lifetime.

Thank you for your empowerment of these young women. Your support provides them with not only an education but also leadership opportunities and mentorship, ensuring their success in school and building their confidence for life.

YOUNG ADULTS IN GLOBAL MISSION

Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) is back in full swing! Though the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the program in 2020 and 2021, 24 YAGM volunteers from the 2022-2023 cohort returned home this summer from a life-changing year of service, expressing gratitude for the experience, the communities that accompanied them and the ministries they supported.

"Thank you ... for all the ways that you supported me on this journey," said Joanna Holleck, a YAGM volunteer in the Argentina/Uruguay program. "Saying goodbye and returning to the United States was so much easier knowing that there are so many people who support me and were ready to welcome me home."

At the end of August, after a weeklong orientation filled with worship, fellowship and a lot of learning,

28 new YAGM volunteers traveled to spend a year living with and accompanying our global Lutheran partners in six country programs: Mexico, Central Europe, Senegal, Jerusalem and the West Bank, Argentina/Uruguay, and the United Kingdom. However, in October the ELCA made the difficult decision to evacuate YAGM personnel from Jerusalem and the West Bank due to the rapidly changing crisis in Palestine and Israel. This includes the five YAGM volunteers from the Holy Land and the country coordinators.

Your love, prayers and support for the staff and volunteers — past, present and future — is vital to this ministry. Thank you for your continued partnership and your care for our Young Adults in Global Mission.

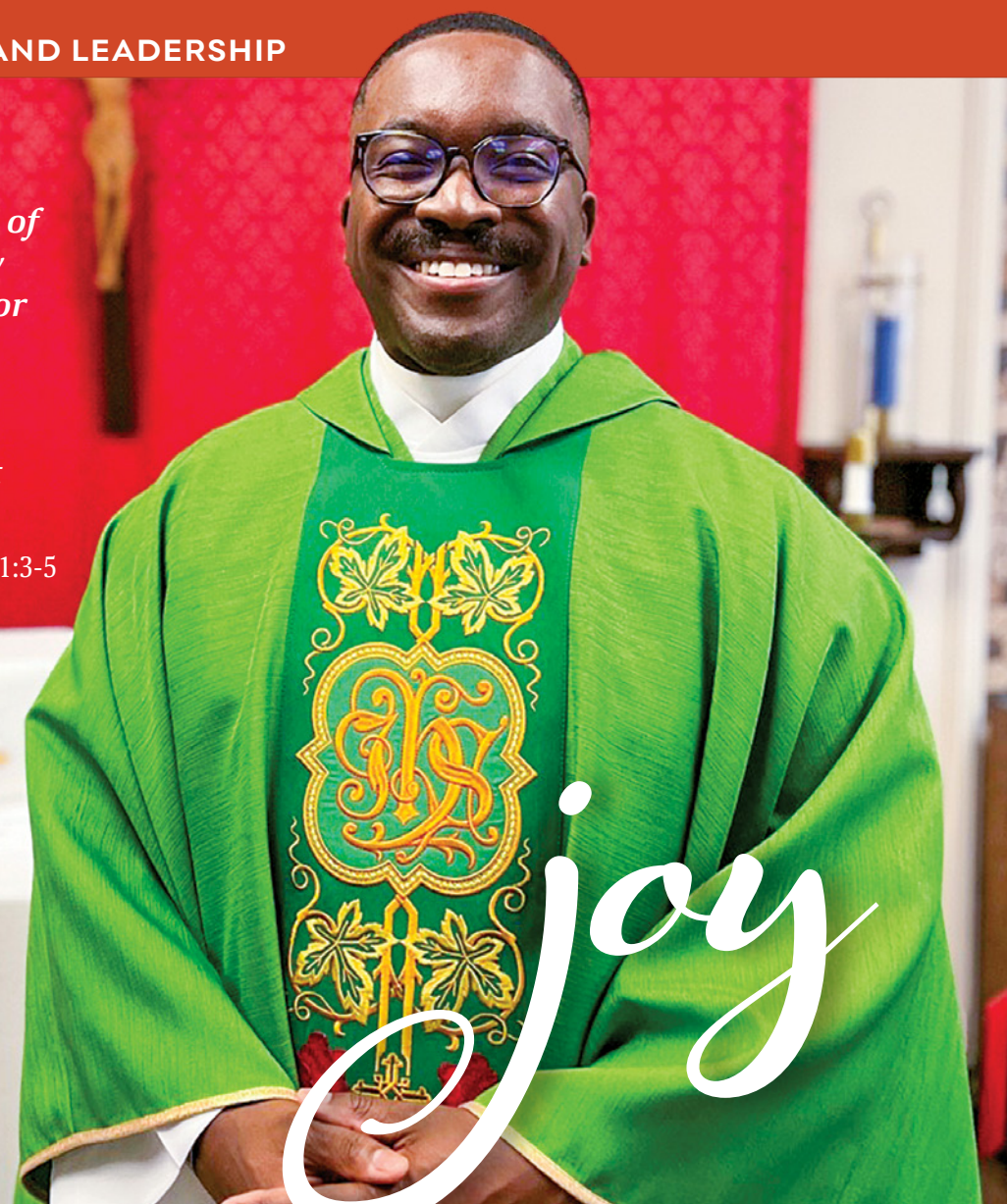
"Thank you ... for all the ways that you supported me on this journey. Saying goodbye and returning to the United States was so much easier knowing that there are so many people who support me and were ready to welcome me home." —Joanna Holleck



Young Adults in Global Mission volunteers in the 2023-2024 cohort gather for a summer orientation in Chicago, Ill.

"I thank my God for every remembrance of you, always in every one of my prayers for all of you, praying with joy for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."

—Philippians 1:3-5



W. Roger Randolph III, 2019 Federal Chaplaincy Scholarship recipient

ELCA FUND FOR LEADERS

As our new ELCA Fund for Leaders scholarship recipients start fall classes and others begin another semester or internship year, Paul's words of thanksgiving and joy ring true for the entire ELCA Fund for Leaders community, supporters and recipients alike. Students express appreciation and joy to generous partners for their ongoing commitment and financial support of these students' seminary educations. Donors express hope and gratitude to seminarians as they live out their vocation and calls. This mutual appreciation for sharing the gospel in individual ways testifies to the work and witness of the ELCA Fund for Leaders program.

This year the churchwide organization awarded 132 full-tuition scholarships, totaling \$2,193,287, and synods and congregations awarded 204 scholarships, totaling \$701,391. In addition, 77 Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) scholarships were awarded, totaling \$292,600. In total, you provided \$3,187,278 to fund the studies of 345 scholars! Thanks be to God – and to

you, our generous donors, for your faithful investment in ELCA Fund for Leaders. Together we can continue to remove financial barriers for those pursuing rostered ministry in the ELCA and allow seminarians to start that ministry without the burden of student debt.

Thank you for your continued partnership with the ELCA Fund for Leaders. This program plays a crucial role in nurturing future leaders and providing a pathway for those called to ministry. By providing financial assistance and full-tuition scholarships, ELCA Fund for Leaders helps ensure that qualified individuals with a variety of backgrounds and experiences can pursue theological education and training. This, in turn, helps form leaders well-prepared and well-equipped to address the spiritual and practical needs of today's faith communities. Using Paul's words to the Philippians as a guide, let us all thank God every time we remember the ELCA Fund for Leaders, praying with joy for the church because of the sharing of the gospel that continues today.

* Some students received both churchwide scholarships and synod or congregation scholarships.

generosity

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE SPOTLIGHT: REV. RICK AND REV. NANCY LUND



Rev. Rick and Rev. Nancy Lund have been passionate and steadfast supporters of ELCA World Hunger, Young Adults in Global Mission and missionaries for years. After long and faithful careers, the Lunds are able to pass on God's abundance to the projects important to them.

In 2019, Rick and Nancy visited Israel and Palestine, where they experienced current ministries of the ELCA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL). They spent a day with 300 students from ELCJHL schools and met a YAGM volunteer and her host family. Seeing the ministries of the ELCA firsthand, they could feel the enthusiasm of those who were impacted.

"[The ELCA] enhances lives and encourages dreams," Rick and Nancy wrote. "It accompanies Lutherans and others around the world in hundreds of ways."

At a recent Global Mission conference, Nancy and Rick got a chance to learn about the many ways ELCA World Hunger and ELCA missionaries support others. They were particularly struck by a story about Fulani dairy herders in Senegal. In the Fulani culture, women typically own the milk produced by cows. Initially the community's cows didn't produce as much milk during the dry season, and many families were struggling. Working together, the herders and the ELCA-supported Senegal Lutheran Development Service created the animal husbandry center Fedanne Jolof, which enables year-round milk production through the crossbreeding of cattle. Women in the community were empowered to sell far more milk, greatly increasing their income and improving their families' quality of life.

Nancy also met a pastor from Madagascar who had worked at a summer Bible camp, thanks to support from the ELCA. The pastor was excited about his life back home, hoping to teach the Old Testament, and was particularly interested in Nancy's 40-plus years as a pastor, a role Malagasy women have not yet assumed. This kind of cultural exchange underpins all the work of Service and Justice in the ELCA, work made possible by donors such as the Lunds.

A key way in which Rick and Nancy support the ELCA is by including ELCA ministries in their wills, with help from the ELCA Foundation. The ELCA Foundation helps church members explore ways to maximize their generosity to the people and ministries they care about most, extending their faith's impact well into the future.

"We know that, even as the church and its specific ministries change to meet the future, our gifts will continue to feed people materially and spiritually," Nancy said. "What a great opportunity we all have to further Christ's work, now and in the future! The ELCA is a reliable partner as we seek to do this."

"Gifts from Leadership Circle members really do support efforts to welcome, thrive and connect as Christians in the world," said Rick.

WHERE NEEDED MOST

Fall has always been my favorite season. There is a change of pace, with children returning to school, the beginning of fall sports, and the start of many church activities such as Sunday school and confirmation classes. Fall also brings temperatures cooling, leaves turning and crops being harvested. Though much of this change will happen again next year, not all of it will. We harvest crops with the hope that we can plant again but with no guarantee.

That's why support for our "Where Needed Most" fund is so important — because it allows for flexibility as we respond in moments of change. We don't always know whether tomorrow will bring challenge or opportunity, but we know God will be present with us.

Your unrestricted gifts to this church have funded the projects you see throughout this issue, allowing us to step out in faith. Because of your gifts to Where Needed Most, we currently support our largest group of active missionaries in a decade, more Young Adults in Global Mission than we've sent out since 2019, investments in our youth and young adults, and greater congregational vitality, exploring our shared calling through the work of God's Love Made Real and the Innovation home area. We don't always know ahead of time when God will call us to something new, but your unrestricted gifts equip your church to respond when the moment comes. Thank you.

Rev. John Eggen
Senior Director,
Annual Giving



CIRCLE *Leadership*

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

Fall 2023



Thank you for your partnership!

ELCA World Hunger will celebrate 50 years of global impact in 2024! Read more on page 5.



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

ELCA.org/LeadershipCircle

Visit the Leadership Circle website to access the latest updates from the ELCA's churchwide ministries.