

# Lifelines

For supporters of  
**ELCA WORLD HUNGER AND LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE**  
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Spring 2018



**ELCA World Hunger**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.



## The Rev. Daniel Rift

Director,  
ELCA World Hunger  
and Disaster Appeal



## Mikka McCracken

Director,  
ELCA World Hunger  
Planning and Engagement

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**ELCA World Hunger**  
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God's work. Our hands.

Dear friend of ELCA World Hunger,

When was the last time something entered your life that changed everything? A new call, or perhaps a partner, a child, a home or even a difficulty? Most of us can likely recall a few major moments we can look back on and see a clear “before and after” in our lives.

This June, more than 30,000 young people who are part of this church will meet in Houston for the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering. They’ll center on the theme “This changes everything,” based on Ephesians 2:8: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.”

As part of the Gathering, we’re inviting youth and their congregations to participate in ELCA World Hunger’s Global Farm Challenge. The challenge is both an invitation to fundraise for the work of ELCA World Hunger and an opportunity to learn more about what it’s like to be one of the millions of smallholder farmers around the world – some of whom you’ll read about in this issue – for whom access to training, tools or livestock can change everything.

Of all the things that can change our lives, surely God’s grace is the best and deepest. It’s in this spirit that we as ELCA World Hunger are privileged to partner with you, the youth of our church, our supporters and communities in 60 countries to accompany people living with hunger and poverty. Together, we recognize that our world is fraught with division and inequity. Together, we believe in God’s promise for a better future. And together, we roll up our sleeves and excitedly get to work toward that beautiful “after” we know is coming.

With deep gratitude for your partnership,

Mikka McCracken  
Director, ELCA World Hunger  
Planning and Engagement

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A woman wearing a vibrant, patterned sari with shades of pink, blue, and red is standing in a lush green rice field. She is holding a bundle of freshly harvested rice stalks and a curved sickle. The field is situated next to a large body of water, possibly a lake or a wide river, under an overcast sky. The woman is looking towards the camera with a slight smile.

**“It’s a love for soil. And it’s a love for nature. We understand things because we are working with God’s nature. And because of that, I feel that in many ways farm people have a very deep faith, whether they admit it or show it or not, they do because of the way they work with God’s nature.”**

*James Sandt on what all farmers around the world share*



## Chili peppers boost income for farmers in Indonesia

**O**n a half-acre of land on Nias, Indonesia, that belonged to his father, Yaatulo and his wife, Mariata, grow bananas to support themselves and their two children.

While they work hard, the income from the bananas wasn't enough to support the family, Yaatulo says. Bananas are only harvested once a year, bringing the family an income equivalent to about \$40 (U.S.) a month.

"Sometimes we don't eat rice, maybe not for two days, just banana or cassava," Yaatulo said. "It makes me want to work harder so I can feed [my family]."

One day while working, he heard about a development program of the Center for Disaster Risk Management & Community Development Studies supported by gifts to ELCA World Hunger. He decided to join, and soon he had the support to borrow enough money for chili seeds. Over two months, Yaatulo and Mariata cleared their land and dug trenches to plant more than 1,000 chili bushes.

Chilis can be harvested multiple times a year and grow relatively quickly, giving farmers more opportunities to sell them at markets. One kilogram can sell for 30,000 IDR (\$3), so over three months, the crop has the potential to add up to 2 million IDR (\$200) in revenue. Now, Yaatulo and Mariata have diversified their income sources.

"I will pay [the loan] back in three months so that someone else can use the money," Yaatulo says.

Through ELCA World Hunger, this church accompanies our neighbors like Yaatulo around the world as they work to end hunger and poverty. Thanks to your gifts to ELCA World Hunger, farmers like Yaatulo have improved access to the tools, training, livestock, seeds and more that will help their families increase farm production and have more to eat and sell on the market.

Yaatulo and Mariata have become an inspiration for others in their community, examples of what can be accomplished with hard work and resourcefulness. Yaatulo has also offered his experience to others who ask for help starting their own farms.

Through it all, Yaatulo has his eyes set on one thing: education for his two children.

"We are listening and learning," Yaatulo said. "I feel very happy, and my No. 1 priority is schooling for my children."

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## Income



*Income-generating activities help families pay for essentials like food, medical costs and school fees, while microloans enable starting or upgrading small businesses. These and other long-term solutions to ending hunger and poverty are at the center of the programs supported by ELCA World Hunger.*

# A year in the life of a smallholder farmer

Many farmers in the developing world are subsistence farmers – growing just enough food to feed their families. This is valuable but risky work. If a crop fails, subsistence farmers might not have the savings or income to buy food for themselves. Access to land, a variety of seeds, tools, clean water and training helps farmers produce enough crops to both feed themselves and sell some at market. They can also learn how to make sure that the prices they get at market are fair. While the year varies for farmers depending on their crops and other circumstances, this is what a typical cycle might look like.

## 1. Preparing the land

Many farmers need to till the soil, turning it over to bury organic matter and make it easier to plant. If the soil is too dry, it will need to be irrigated so that seeds and stems can be planted. Access to water and to modern tools and livestock – like cattle to pull plows – can make this easier and more efficient.



## 2. Planting

Access to healthy seedlings or stems and improved varieties of seeds can ensure a high yield of crops at the end of the growing season.

## 3. Growing

Farmers with access to enough water and healthy soil can help their plants grow abundantly. Pests, drought and disease at this stage can be significant risks.



## 4. Harvesting

In much of the developing world, harvesting is done by hand or with small tools like a sickle or scythe. For some crops, animals can help by pulling carts as they're filled with the harvest. Depending on the crop, it may need to be processed before selling. Rice grains, for example, must be separated from the stalks, dried, hulled and milled.



## 5. The road to the market

Growing enough crops is only part of the work. For farmers in many countries, market shutdowns, blocked roads, and unreliable and often costly transportation can make getting to market challenging. This makes ensuring peace, stability and maintenance of infrastructure key in supporting smallholder farmers, so they can get to market.

## 6. Market

With access to the right tools, seeds and clean water, as well as organizing and training that can ensure a fair price for their crops, families can sell some of what they grow at the market. This brings in money for food, school, and other necessities throughout the year – with enough left over to buy new seedlings and seeds for next year.



Paul Jeffrey/ACT

## Education



*When children can attend school, they can secure better opportunities for their future. Programs like literacy training and vocational education also help teens and adults get jobs and increase their earning potential.*

“I thank you so much because by supporting orphans you are supporting future leaders and breadwinners.”

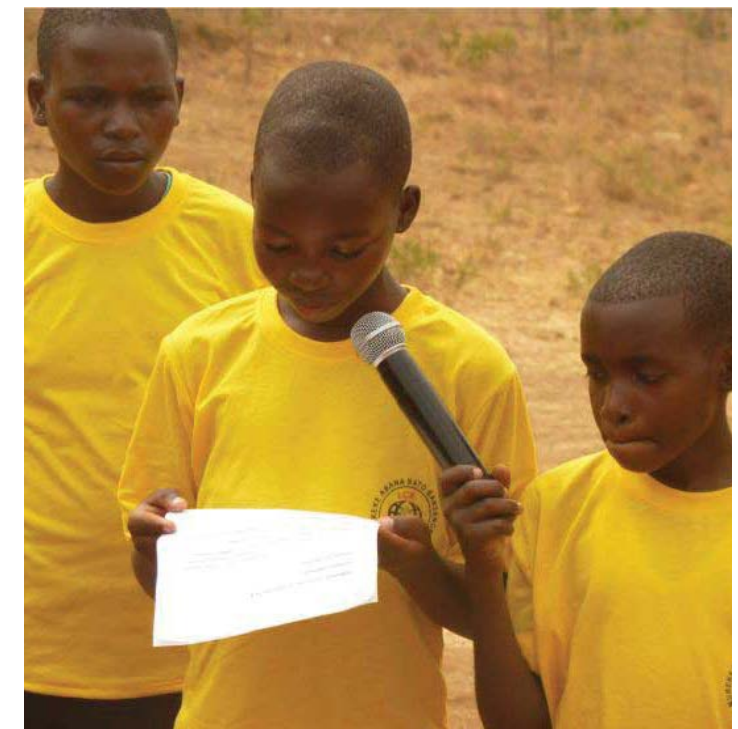
- Angelique

## ‘Indeed, God is great’

Frank’s story, like so many stories of vulnerable children in Rwanda, begins in tragedy. Frank’s father died when Frank was only 2 years old, and Frank’s mother, Angelique, struggled to provide for him. As he got older, supporting the family and caring for Angelique, who is HIV positive, fell on the young boy’s shoulders. Angelique knew Frank was intelligent and hard-working, but she also knew that keeping food on the table was already a challenge. Finding the extra money for his school fees was out of the question. Fears for his health and future – especially if she succumbed to her own illness and left him an orphan – kept her awake at night in tears.

Frank and Angelique are active members of the Lutheran Church in Rwanda (LCR), a young church on an exciting mission, with 6,000 members in 20 parishes, including Kibungo, where Frank and Angelique live. LCR was founded in 2004, after the genocide that left thousands of children orphans. Today, nearly 1 million children are considered “vulnerable,” living in poverty and often without parents or other caregivers. With knowledge of this deep need and faith in God’s care for all people, LCR began an ambitious “Integrated Child Support and Welfare” project focused on accompanying children like Frank and their families. This project is supported by your gifts to ELCA World Hunger.

Frank’s good grades qualified him for a scholarship through the project. With this crucial support, Frank was able to start his secondary education, and in 2017, he began his second year. Angelique’s tears of fear were turned to tears of hope and joy when she heard the news.



“I hadn’t thought that my son [could] continue with his education,” she says. “Indeed, God is great.”

The educational support project provided 136 children with money for school fees and supplies in the first half of 2017, and Angelique knows what a difference that makes. “I thank you so much because by supporting orphans you are supporting future leaders and breadwinners,” she says.

Church leaders in Rwanda know that helping children attend school is a long-range solution to a present problem. Recognizing the need to help families in poverty find the means to meet their other needs, the project also includes training and support in agriculture for parents and caregivers to address the deep poverty that keeps many children from going to school. Through the project, more than 100 families received goats, pigs and chickens, as well as training in animal husbandry, to increase their capacity to provide food and income. Through vegetable gardening and livestock raising, families in communities across Rwanda will be able to meet their needs today and tomorrow. By providing a stable income, families will have the resources they need to provide for food, health care and education, reducing the vulnerability of all members.

Frank’s journey begins with the tragic loss of his father. But because of his hard work and the support of the Lutheran Church in Rwanda through ELCA World Hunger, it doesn’t end there. Today, he and his neighbors can tell a different story – a story of education and agriculture, of livelihoods and resilience that will point the way to a hopeful future.



St. Peter's Plainfield

## Community garden becomes a community mission

James Sandt knows a thing or two about growth. The third-generation produce farmer from Pen Argyl, Pa., has spent his life working in the farming industry. He started as a boy by pitching in on his family's farm, moved into the management of large corporate farms as an adult, and eventually made the dream of working for himself a reality by purchasing his own farm.

So, it's no surprise that God's Garden of Grace, a community garden Sandt began in collaboration with his congregation, St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Plainfield Township, Pa., has grown by leaps and bounds since its inception – impacting both his community and others in inspiring ways.

Sandt's motivation to begin this garden came after attending a four-day educational event hosted by ELCA World Hunger in 2011, where he quickly became an advocate for the work of the ministry. "Before I left at the end of the fourth day, I had made up my mind that we were going to start this garden here at St. Peter's and move forward," he said.

And move forward he did. In collaboration with his congregation and its social ministry committee, Sandt began God's Garden of Grace. Their goal was to help supply fresh food to their local food banks.

What started as a small venture by Sandt and St. Peter's quickly became a community effort, involving and inspiring other organizations and residents. A contractor supplied them with a 3,000-gallon water tank for irrigation, and the fire department fills it as often as three times a week.

"We involve the community. Not just our church, but our community."

- James

Other farmers lend their coolers during the summer so the crops stay refrigerated until they're ready to be delivered. The local Rotary Club started funding the garden and provides some volunteer labor as well.

Today, the garden – which has grown tomatoes, peppers, green beans, cucumbers, eggplant, onions, cabbage, radishes, watermelon, lettuce and squash – has almost doubled in size since its first harvest. In 2017, it yielded 15,000 pounds of produce – an increase from 2016.

The garden has expanded so far beyond its borders that Sandt now uses his own farm to grow crops for food bank distribution. Last year, his 120 fruit trees yielded an additional 5,000 pounds of produce, which was harvested by food stand owners and food bank volunteers.

The success hasn't gone unnoticed. Over the years, Sandt has received requests from other congregations and communities that, inspired by God's Garden of Grace, wanted help starting a garden. Sandt and his partners have helped start six community gardens. The most recent request came from a Seventh-Day Adventist congregation about 30 miles from Plainfield Township.

A venture that was once subsidized solely by St. Peter's and its members is now entirely subsidized and supported by the community. "We have become self-sufficient in that we don't require our own social ministry to support us anymore," Sandt said. "Our community pretty much supports us."

Today, Sandt, his congregation and the volunteers and community partners are all hard at work planning the garden's 2018 season. And if someone asked Sandt what the secret is behind the success of God's Garden of Grace, he would emphasize one thing: the garden's dedicated volunteers. "This garden and this mission only exists because of the great volunteers that help it and make it happen," Sandt said. "And for that I thank them."



Jewel Williamson-Burns

## Leaders



*Together, we are church. ELCA World Hunger is pleased to walk alongside ELCA congregations and individuals who are creatively and courageously working toward a just world where all are fed.*



## Lutheran Disaster Response



*Lutheran Disaster Response brings hope, healing and renewal to people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the United States and around the world. Our approach is comprehensive and extensive.*

## On long road to recovery, hurricane survivors are not alone

In the second half of 2017, a rapid succession of disasters - wildfires, floods and hurricanes - interrupted the lives of millions of our neighbors. Thanks to your generous gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), our church has been able to accompany survivors of these disasters as they rebuild their lives.

LDR works through a robust network of companion churches, partners, social ministry organizations and synods. Together, they respond comprehensively, from providing immediate assistance like food and shelter to working on long-term support like rebuilding homes and providing counseling. Often this work continues for 10 or more years after a disaster.

The disasters in 2017 included a series of hurricanes that affected many in the United States and the Caribbean.

### HURRICANE HARVEY

In August, Hurricane Harvey tore through the southern U.S. causing severe flooding and major damage. LDR is working with Upbring (formerly Lutheran Social Services of the South) and two of the Texas ELCA synods on recovery efforts. LDR is part of a group doing case management for survivors of disasters and expects to be working long-term in the Dickinson and Rockport areas in Texas.

“People are overwhelmed with the process,” said Beverly Davis of Houston, “But they are also overwhelmed with love of the church, the neighbor and the stranger.”

A respite retreat was also held for ELCA rostered ministers who have been faithfully supporting members of their congregations affected by Hurricane Harvey for months.

### HURRICANES MARIA AND IRMA

Hurricane Irma, the second strongest hurricane of the 2017 season, made its first landfall on the island of Antigua and then tore through several more Caribbean islands before reaching the U.S. mainland.

In Haiti and Cuba, LDR replaced lost tools for farmers affected by the hurricane so they can get back to work, helped woman-headed households with cash assistance, and helped families get daily life back to normal with dishes, cookware and blankets.



In Florida, LDR supported crisis counseling for thousands of people in 20 counties and continues to work closely with the Florida-Bahamas Synod to assist affected congregations. And in Georgia, LDR is collaborating with Lutheran Services of Georgia to provide professional services such as disaster case management, construction management and volunteer management to support rebuilding over the next several years.

On Irma’s heels, Hurricane Maria struck the Caribbean with destruction and loss of life. Damage to the electrical grid left many residents in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands without electricity for weeks or months, leading to myriad complications, including business closures and loss of jobs.

LDR has provided emergency relief supplies, including mattresses, to survivors, and supported pastors so that they can focus on caring for their congregations and communities. In Puerto Rico, the Caribbean Synod hosted a lunch in Toa Baja, one of the most affected communities, serving nearly 500 people a hot meal. In addition, LDR helped hire a director for disaster response and a case manager to coordinate between responding groups. The Lutheran Camp in Puerto Rico is expected to be renovated to accommodate volunteers for years to come.

In the U.S. Virgin Islands, LDR is supporting Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands as it provides crisis counseling and prepares for a multi-year volunteer rebuild program in St. Croix. “Virgin Islanders are strong and caring people,” said Christopher Finch, director, LDR, Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands. “We have been hit hard, and so many are suffering. Despite this, people are joining together and supporting each other and forging a recovery out of the devastation.”



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*New!*

**ELCA World Hunger  
Vacation Bible School Study**

## GOD'S GOOD CREATION

V a c a t i o n B i b l e S c h o o l

“God’s Good Creation” is a vacation Bible school study that helps children learn about hunger, hope and the work to which God calls us in the world. The five-day program highlights the work of ELCA World Hunger and includes a schedule, educational activities, skits, and snack and craft ideas.

**Order online for free at [ELCA.org/Hunger/Resources](http://ELCA.org/Hunger/Resources) under the “Hunger Ed” tab.**

