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Living Our Theology, & Demanding Justice

The first time Angela !Khabeb attended an ELCA church service, she and a friend, prepared for an “evangelical” experience, brought their tambourines and Bibles. “We didn’t use either, and before we knew it, we were done with church!” !Khabeb recalled.

Curious to learn more, she visited ELCA.org and found social statements explaining the church’s commitment to diversity, gender equality and racial equity. *ELCA social statements, developed through the ELCA churchwide office and funded by Mission Support, are a frequent starting point for potential members in learning how Lutheran theology applies to pressing issues.*

After years of searching for a place in Pentecostal congregations that limited her leadership because of her gender, !Khabeb hoped the ELCA was where she belonged.

She continued her faith journey as an ELCA missionary serving the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia and a seminary student at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. After calls in Ohio and Wisconsin, she became pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Minneapolis in 2018.

Holy Trinity’s building is located less than three blocks from the Minneapolis Police Department’s Third Precinct, where Officer Derek Chauvin worked. After Chauvin murdered George Floyd on May 25, 2020, protests broke out in the precinct. Holy Trinity served as a first aid station and a

food distribution center during the uprising. !Khabeb preached in the streets and later appeared on ABC’s *Good Morning America* to discuss faith and racial justice.

The simultaneous reckoning with racial inequity and the COVID-19 pandemic forced Holy Trinity to grow in its vocation, she said. “We’ve made strides in our congregation, moving from the toxic theology of scarcity to the breadth and joy of abundance.” The response also amplified her voice.

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!Khabeb thinks the ELCA needs strong leadership if it wants to practice the same theology it espouses in social statements. “A lot of times we look to [pastors and deacons] to do the things that all of us are called to do as baptized members of the body of Christ,” she said. “If we see violence and division in our society, we find it also in our pews. Lay leaders are key to reminding the church of what we said we would do. God is like a mirror. Just keep holding it up and asking ourselves, ‘Are we there yet?’”

