



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

**Tell Me Without Telling Me Lutheran Challenge**  
**ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton Weekly Video Message**  
**July 9, 2021**

As we move forward as the ELCA into this future to which God calls us, we decided that our purpose was to activate each of us so that more people know the way of Jesus and find community, justice and love. We also set a very bold goal: that we would engage 1 million new, young and diverse people before the end of this decade. Now, clearly that's work that we all have to do together, and it is audacious to say that we are going to engage a million new people. We'll be working with you all to help you and all of us to reach this goal. But to what are we inviting these people? To what do we want to call them? How are we going to engage them? How can we explain what it means to be a Lutheran Christian and how we understand the way of Jesus in a way that makes sense in today's world?

There's a sort of game going on around Twitter and other places on the internet where you say, "This is who I am," without saying, "This is who I am." So, for example, I'm from Cleveland, and if I wanted to tell you I was from Cleveland and a Cleveland sports fan, I wouldn't say, "I'm a Cleveland sports fan." I would say something like, "For me, there's always next year." Or if I wanted to tell you I live in Chicago, I wouldn't say, "I live in Chicago," I would say, "You never put ketchup on a hot dog."

Well, how would we explain this or say that we're Lutheran without saying that we're Lutheran? And here's the added challenge — no mention of cuisine or ethnic identities. How would we do that?

Here's a crack at it: I believe that I am loved completely and deeply by a just and merciful God who wills the best for God's creation and, through that reconciliation, has set me free to serve the neighbor. Give it a try.

Be well, dear church.