



Living  
our  
Faith

CONGREGATIONAL  
ANNUAL REPORT



# ADAPTING, EVOLVING, FLEXIBLE, CREATIVE

## Lessons from the pandemic: Year 2

What a year this has been! As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, congregations and communities of the ELCIC continue to seek out safe and appropriate ways to serve and continue the important ministries that God calls us to. In fact the whole church has been adapting, evolving, being flexible, getting creative and partnering with one

another in many, many different ways. 2021 may have been challenging but we are people of hope. Together we will manage the challenges and faithfully live into the next chapter, responding to the needs of those around us and upholding life-giving relationships.

### Summer Sermon Series

Quite often, “working together” is the means of carrying out a physical task. But as we all so quickly came to know, the COVID-19 pandemic has put its limitations on in-person gatherings, socialization and how we were able to carry out our work. Through the many challenges, bishops, pastors, leaders, volunteers and members across the church



Rev. Prema Samuel prepared a sermon for July 18, 2021 which was used across the ELCIC as part of the 2021 Summer Sermon Series.

demonstrated a newfound strength and resiliency amid the ongoing global pandemic.

In looking for new ways help support ordained leaders and congregations as they shifted gears to offering online Sunday services, the ELCIC synod bishops and assistants to the bishops

put together 14 pre-recorded sermons for use across the church through the months of June to September. This *Summer Sermon Series* resource provided relief for well-deserved summer holidays, time for leaders to focus on some of the many other needs for their congregation and an opportunity to

hear from different leaders from across the church.

“At a certain point we started hearing of concerns as the pandemic wore on,” British Columbia Synod Bishop Greg Mohr said. “The exhaustion and stress of our rostered and lay leaders continued to build. We wanted to figure out what we could do to help provide a sermon resource so that pastors could accommodate that to the worship they were preparing for their congregations.”

The response was overwhelming. Mohr recalls countless emails and telephone conversations with members from other synods and even in other countries asking for links to the various sermons.

“This served as a way for us to be guest speakers in congregations,” he says. “We were obviously unable to travel around and be with the churches in person, but this gave us an opportunity to show face in many congregations once a month. Another side goal this accomplished was the broadening of connections and relationships across the ELCIC.

People just really enjoyed hearing from us, especially out of jurisdiction. Hearing our voices and the different ways we preached helped bring online church alive.”

### The Feisty Saints of Bergland

Trinity, Bergland, Ont. is a unique congregation nestled in a small community on the shores of Lake of the Woods. After several years with rostered pastoral care, it became apparent in 1992 that we would no longer be able to support such a ministry. We struggled with our identity but were pleased when Bishop Lee Luetkehoelter sent a letter to us, addressed to the “Feisty Saints of Bergland.” We were now a lay-led congregation with no expenses other than general maintenance. We provided full-time programs and our worship life was filled with the Spirit.

Our outreach program became our focus and remains so today. We support Luther Village, provide food and workers for the local food bank, church services for the residents at Long Term Care in Rainy River, supplemental food items for children’s lunches at the local school, food hampers for families in need and contribute to skating ice time at the local arena. Beyond our local communities, we contribute to The Urban in Winnipeg, LAMP, the Salvation Army, Family Crisis Centre, Amythest House, and our local missionary in Bangladesh. Our passion abroad is Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR). We have made many, many quilts and a multitude of We Care bags. We have been blessed beyond belief with opportunities to give and share.



Sherri and Carolyn Kreger with quilts and We Care bags for CLWR.

## When COVID-19 drives us out — we drive-in!

As the world unexpectedly embraced the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the congregations of New Denmark Parish (St. Peter's and Bethany,) in Northwestern New Brunswick encapsulated the spirit of their ancestors and adapted to the challenging circumstances before them.

Social distancing measures closed the door on in-person worship and poor bandwidth allocation made virtual worship extremely challenging and often times unfeasible. In light of this, an adaptive and alternative approach was taken: drive-in style worship services held at the local recreation centre parking lot. As vehicles arrive on Sunday morning, a volunteer directs them to a parking spot and ensures that they maintain a two-meter radius from all other vehicles. People remain parked in this location and enjoy the full duration of the service from the comfort of their vehicle. Following the service, the same volunteer directs traffic out of the parking lot, toward the driveway, where one of our treasurers waits to collect the weekly offering using a fishnet that ensures social distancing.

God continues to bless the New Denmark Parish as it strives to remain active and faithful amidst the many challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has produced. Rather than focus on what the pandemic has prohibited, we strive to focus on the new opportunities that it creates! COVID-19 attempted to drive us out of our buildings, but has instead driven us into a wonderful opportunity for people of all ages and skillsets to work collectively in the service of Christ and the church. Thanks be to God.



Barb Christensen, Treasurer at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, with the offering fishnet.

## #MYELCIC

Highlights via social media from members and leaders across the ELCIC. Do you follow the #myELCIC hashtag?



**Eastern Synod-ELCIC @ESynodELCIC** A snapshot of our life together in worship on the #SecondSundayofAdvent. Martin Luther, Toronto ON.



**Tom Brook @TomBrookTB\_CO** Gimli LC adds food pantry to the free library. Take as you need and give as you are able



**Saskatchewan Synod @BishopSidH** About 430 of us had the opportunity to meet on the call with the prime minister yesterday. Appreciated that faith leaders are part of the conversation. And to hear faith leaders both express the concerns of faith communities and affirm that we pray every week for our leaders.



**Larry Kochendorfer @abtbishoplarry** Wear it, Share it. The Synod of Alberta & the Territories, ELCIC, has donated to the LWF Rapid Response Fund, which supports member churches responding to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

# WORSHIP FOR A CONGREGATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING

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## OPENING THE MEETING

### PRAYER

Gracious and loving God, we give you thanks for gathering us together into your church — whether we be in person, online or some combination of the two — to discern the work you call us to do. While this last year has been hard in many different ways, we know that you are with us at all times and in all places. Help us to know and trust your deep love and care. We ask that you help guide us today as we do your work. May we seek to be generous, compassionate, loving people of God. Keep us mindful of the many other needs in the world – conflicts, refugees, poverty, and all other concerns that we name before you now. All this we pray in your name. *Amen.*

**READING** 1 Timothy 6:17-19

**HYMN** *Great God, Your Love Has Called Us*  
EvLW #358

### LITANY

**Leader:** Your love has called us here. We acknowledge our anxiety. May we have

the courage to pursue experimentation and innovation, and in all things practice a ministry of accompaniment.

**All:** *Be with us, God.*

**Leader:** Your love calls us to nurture Reconciled Relationships. To challenge racism and privilege, strive for peace and a healthy relationship with the Earth, and work towards a vision of an inclusive church.

**All:** *Be with us, God.*

**Leader:** Your love calls us to work together with one another, to share our resources and be in good communication.

**All:** *Be with us, God.*

**Leader:** Your love calls us to be faithful gospel witnesses. Let us seek ways to engage and empowered youth and youth adults, and look for opportunities to provide leadership and development for a changing world.

**All:** *Be with us, God.*  
*Amen.*

## CLOSING THE MEETING

### LITANY

**Leader:** Faithful God, we thank you for seeing us safely through another year.

**All:** *We trust in your faithfulness to be with us this coming year.*

**Leader:** Hopeful God, you continue to show us the vision of a future of justice, peace and mercy.

**All:** *Empower us with your hope, and lead us into your ways of righteousness.*

**Leader:** Loving God, we give you thanks for your presence with us this day.

**All:** *Fill us with your love, so that we may embody your love in all we do this year.*

**Leader:** In your holy name we pray,  
**All:** *Amen.*

**HYMN** *Lord of All Hopefulness*  
EvLW #765

**Leader:** Go in peace. Faithful, hopeful, and loving.  
**All:** *Thanks be to God.*