



Living our Faith



2020 ANNUAL REPORT
In Mission for Others

On the cover, left to right:

Jett Isleifson and Playmobil "Marty" take a break during the Luther Village Bikeathon From Afar.

Barb Christensen, Treasurer at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, with an offering fishnet at a drive-through service at New Denmark Lutheran Parish in New Denmark, New Brunswick.

Tending the garden at Shelbourne Community Kitchen, Victoria, BC.

Celebrating a pandemic Easter at home with Rev. Elina Salonen and Rev. Ed Bastian (and Cinder), St. Peter's, Ottawa.

A heartfelt message from Mt. Olive in South Surrey/White Rock, BC.

National Bishop Susan Johnson wearing a mask made by the Women's Skills Training Center of Huria Kristen, Indonesia, in support of The Lutheran World Federation.



Rainbows over Concordia, Churchbridge, SK, reminded us that God has not forgotten us even when we cannot worship together. We remain hopeful.

CONTENTS

- | | | | |
|-----------|---------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|
| 2 | From our National Bishop | 18 | Empowered Disciples |
| 4 | Mission Statement | 22 | A Year Like No Other |
| 5 | Our Vision Priorities | 24 | Your Offering |
| 6 | Courageous Innovation | 25 | A Focus on the Strategic Plan |
| 10 | Reconciled Relationships | 26 | #myELCIC |
| 14 | One Body Working Together | 28 | National Office |



National Bishop Susan C. Johnson

MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL BISHOP

Dear members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada,

Wow, 2020... what a year this has been.

I want to start by saying first and foremost — THANK YOU! To our members and our rostered leaders, you have been an inspiration to me.

Thank you for the many ways you have continued to support your congregations and communities, and for how you continue your ministries in safe and appropriate ways.

As online worship has opened up a new world of possibilities, I have enjoyed the opportunity to worship with so many of you.

We have had to be creative and flexible in so many ways this past year. And we are in this together.

It feels like we are so much more connected between all expressions of the church than ever before. There are so many stories of people worshipping with one another, praying for and with one another, and I appreciate the work so many of us have been able to do together. We are all doing our very best.

I hope you will enjoy this year's Annual Report – a look back on some of the ways we have come together and the many partnerships that help enable this work to be carried out.

As much as 2020 has been a challenging year, we are people of hope. Christ is with us and together we will manage the challenges and faithfully live into the next chapter.

Yours in Christ,

ELCIC National Bishop Susan C. Johnson



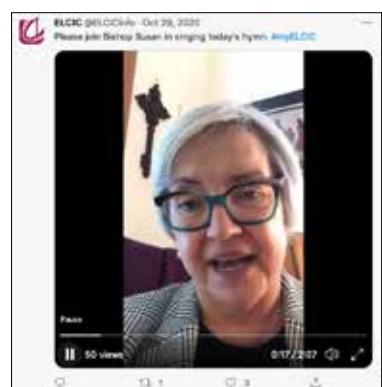
Canadian Council of Churches church leaders retreat at the Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine in Markham, ON.



Signing the global Common Word initiative with Archbishop Linda Nicholls of the Anglican Church of Canada, witnessed by Muslim scholar Dr. Ingrid Mattson, and Dr. Engin Sezen, adjunct professor at Martin Luther University College.



Meeting with Nabil Sultan, Muslim Association of Canada; Paul Gehrs, assistant to the bishop, justice and ecumenical and interfaith relations; and Wael Haddara, Muslim Association of Canada.



Sharing a daily hymn and prayer through much of the first lockdown.



A joint Easter message with Anglican Church of Canada Archbishop Linda Nicholls.



Sunday morning worship with St. Peter's Church, Kitchener, ON, the second and fourth Sunday of the month at 10:00 am EST, via CTV.



ELCIC MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of this church, as an expression of the universal Church and as an instrument of the Holy Spirit, is to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to people in Canada and around the world through the proclamation of the Word, the administration of the sacraments and through service in Christ's name.



OUR VISION PRIORITIES

In September 2017, the ELCIC's National Church Council began the work of developing a new *Strategic Plan* for the National Church. This five-year plan helps us to focus our work at the National Office.

COURAGEOUS INNOVATION

We are called to not be afraid.
(Luke 12:32)



- Addressing systemic change
- Innovative interaction with the community
- Encourage experimentation
- Accompaniment
- Acknowledge our anxiety
- Flexibility in sharing and deploying financial resources
- Ongoing evaluation of mission priorities
- Ongoing evaluation of barriers to innovation

RECONCILED RELATIONSHIPS

We are given the ministry to reconciliation.
(2 Corinthians 5:18)



- Vision of an inclusive church
- Indigenous justice and reconciliation
- Ecumenical and interfaith partnerships
- Challengers of racism and privilege
- Work with diverse allies
- Healthy relationship with the earth
- Striving for peace
- Work to end poverty in Canada

ONE BODY WORKING TOGETHER

We are one body in Christ.
(Romans 12:5)



- Shared vision across all expressions of the church
- Mutual credibility, trust and transparency
- Sharing of necessary resources
- National and international partnerships
- Connectedness to local ministries
- Support CLWR's mission
- Mutual support between synods and National Church
- Focused priorities
- Good communication

EMPOWERED DISCIPLES

We are to equip the saints for the work of ministry.
(Ephesians 4:12)



- Faithful gospel witnesses
- Baptismal vocation
- Leadership development for a changing world
- Engaged and empowered youth and young adults
- Worship that nurtures disciples



COURAGEOUS
INNOVATION

A 21st century church: Banding together in COVID times

From shared ministry endeavours to Zoom meetings to telephone sermons, the ELCIC has pushed forward courageously through the pandemic.

The year of 2020 will long be remembered for how we navigated through the COVID-19 global pandemic. But through many forms of courageous innovation, ELCIC members and congregations were able to come together—albeit mainly online—to share moments, resources and community interactions, breaking down barriers, both new and old.

For many church-goers across Canada, the introduction of new technology loomed large. Accessibility was an issue for some, while comfortability continued to be a problem for others. But courageously, ELCIC members pressed on.



I have seen people become more flexible than they ever imagined they could possibly be. Further, I have seen communities become more flexible than they thought they were capable of.

- Kristina Kuhnert

"We have had one outdoor service—Thanksgiving Sunday—since March," says Rev. Marlys Moen of New Westminster, BC's Mount Zion Lutheran. "It all happened so fast; by mid-March we were recording worship services, and that was something we had never done before. I'd like to think that we had strong relationships here before COVID, and they have only strengthened through this time online. We've even done virtual baptisms. We would record the baptism and then include it in the Sunday morning worship video service for that week."

Although helpful for most, online services didn't work for every member of Mount Zion. Those without access to YouTube had a difficult time "tuning in." But according to Moen, some members took it upon themselves to ensure others had a means of weekly worship.

"Some of our older members don't have computers or wifi," Rev. Moen says. "One of the women in our congregation would actually phone one couple and another lady every Sunday morning. She would read the sermon to them over the phone because they couldn't access the recorded services that the others did. They said

they looked forward to their nine o'clock Sunday morning phone calls every week."

Deacon Sherry Coman of Trinity Evangelical in New Hamburg, ON, agrees that the various online streaming platforms have given churches within the area a newfound sense of community, even if tuning in from afar.

"One of the best decisions made by the church was the Bishop's decision to allow congregations to determine their own context and their direction," Deacon Coman reflects. "While challenging for some, it did allow us to reach across community lines and geographical areas. And this really isn't necessarily a new thing; many people drive 20 minutes or more to go to the church that they attend pre-pandemic. The church is really learning how to lean into the 21st century."

Sticking with the Eastern Synod, Kristina Kuhnert—who some may know as "ELCIC Young Adults" on social media—says that the ELCIC is currently in one of the best places it has ever been, all thanks to its members' abilities to adapt amid a challenging and often frustrating year.

"I have seen people become more flexible than they ever imagined they could possibly be," Kuhnert says. "Further, I have seen communities become more flexible than they thought they were capable of. This is true of congregations, meetings and synod assemblies. We have seen the benchmark of what we thought was possible in

COURAGEOUS INNOVATION



Flexibility and innovation began to take hold.

Adapting to serve during a pandemic

The face of ministry in the third decade of the twenty-first century is changing. What are the implications for university chaplains in the future?

"We know that campus ministry is in a state of evolution," says Rev. Christie Morrow-Wolfe, assistant to the bishop for public policy and service, stewardship, and youth and young adults in the Eastern Synod. "There is no consensus about what it is evolving into."

She notes that chaplaincy will always be fluid ministry. "It is a fluid context. The community is never the same one year to the next. The seniors graduate and move on, the first-year students arrive trying to figure this new role out."

She sees value in having campus ministry tied to a local congregation. This helps foster a sense of ministry and missional thinking in the mind of the congregation. It also gives the student a sense of place and space.

Students come to university without really leaving home because they still have social media and can keep all the home connections alive. This year there is a very real chance that many students will not leave home to attend classes because most courses and content are being offered online. Campus chaplains are pioneering new ways to respond to the challenges that poses.

Campus chaplains have a long history of adapting their presence on the campuses in ways that keep this ministry on the cutting edge of mission.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and in its aftermath, we will still need to be there for students. 

terms of being adaptive, and it has now moved football fields."

Contrary to popular belief, churches and congregations have shown they are able to shake long-standing traditions and routines. As Kuhnert says, this very well may be for the better.

"Although situated in Ontario, my family can spend one Sunday worshipping from coast to coast to coast," she says. "We have been able to hop across the country and check in on many different church services. Geography, which was so inhibiting before the pandemic, is so much less so of a factor right now in the ELCIC."

In Manitoba, the shared ministry of Abundant Life in East St. Paul and Prince of Peace in Winnipeg has taken a sizeable step forward over the past year. Rev. Jeremy Langner says that despite the expected logistical challenges that those in shared ministry partnerships undergo, 2020 has been positive in developing community between the two congregations.

"I think the pandemic has really helped us come together as a shared ministry," Rev. Langner says. "Geography now isn't a barrier because we have had to go virtual on so many things. This has meant that the congregations have gotten to know one another a little better and collaborate more. We have been doing virtual worship services together, alternating between Abundant Life and Prince of Peace. Over this time, the two congregations have really been able to know each other's worship styles and appreciate the musical talents and gifts that each congregation brings."

Helping oversee a relatively new shared ministry in the 14-congregation Nith Valley Ministry Area is Rev. Bonnie Schelter-Brown. She says the idea of collaborating actually came as a result of both some research and the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We actually used the shared ministry model from Manitoba when we began developing this vision together," Rev. Schelter-Brown says. "It began with three churches doing shared ministry

together, but has since moved to a more collaborative ministry model with many congregations involved. So we met on how to do worship during pandemic times. Each church was attempting to worship or stream worship differently, so we just

cumulatively decided to do it together. We're pastors, not technology majors. Nine of our 14 churches within the ministry area now participate in our weekly online worship; it has really been a blessing. ¶

COURAGEOUS INNOVATION

Cutting costs while counting kilometres

When a half-dozen churches in southeastern Manitoba saw their numbers start to drop off, they did the only thing they could to guarantee—or at least to prolong—their continued existence. They started sharing resources, including Rev. Richard Engel.

What started as a three-year experiment in 2017 now sees Engel putting more kilometres on his 2018 Ford Escape than some long-haul truckers, driving between Whitemouth, Lac du Bonnet, Ostenfeld, Pinawa, River Hills and Lydiatt, Man.

He leads services in two communities every Sunday on a rotating basis. For example, he's conducting worship in Pinawa at 9:15 a.m. and then in Lac du Bonnet less than two hours later.

"It was a very ambitious experiment to share a minister among six different churches," he says. "The geographical layout of the six communities is ideal for a shared ministry arrangement. Some people in Saskatchewan have to travel up to an hour. I'm travelling a maximum of 40 minutes in the car at one time."

"There weren't as many people in rural areas. If more people are moving to the city and the kids are going to school there, there's a natural decline of country churches. There's a decline in the finances as well. We thought, 'How could we do ministry together?' At some point, the congregations wouldn't be able to support a full-time pastor."

In the four communities out of Engel's loop every Sunday, somebody from the congregation will lead the service and read a sermon that a pastor has prepared. The only thing they don't do is communion.

"It's working well," he says. "We've come up against some challenges. We're trying to live out a new vision of sharing in the ministry."

It's entirely possible, and perhaps even probable, that the sharing will increase in the future as other churches look to follow.

"Right now it's insular with ELCIC congregations sharing in the ministry. There are some other denominations that might also be struggling that could come into the fold and we could share inter-denominationally," Engel said.

"We are hoping people will begin to see this as a way of connecting with others outside of our own communities and learning what it means to serve in the wider church."

Today, Engel's total parish is about 120 people, ranging from 10 in Ostenfeld to 30 in Whitemouth, where he lives. ¶



Rev. Richard Engel



RECONCILED RELATIONSHIPS

Working for justice: ELCIC task forces continue work amid pandemic

Task forces on Ableism, Racism and Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia begin groundwork on a more inclusive and affirmative ELCIC.

This past year has been significant in the life of the church. We have had to shift and pivot as a church and learn new ways to worship and support one another in the midst of a global pandemic. We've practiced social distancing and doing our best to help avoid social isolation. We've "zoomed" more than we ever thought possible.

Even in the midst of the global COVID-19 crisis, we have continued to work together for justice, addressing privilege and systemic racism, seeking to eliminate racism, white supremacy, ableism, sexism, misogyny, homophobia, biph-

bia and transphobia. And yes, we acknowledge as a church there is much work to do in these areas.

It was just two years ago at the 2019 ELCIC National Convention, delegates voted to form three separate national task forces, which were developed to investigate and address issues within the ELCIC pertaining to: Ableism and barriers for people with disabilities; Racism, white supremacy, and issues of racial injustice; Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

These task forces were assembled prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and despite the various challenges presented by way of travel restrictions and online meetings, those mandated with roles on the task forces fully embraced the ever-changing landscape that 2020 presented.

"While the technology is far from perfect and not without its glitches, it has allowed us to meet more regularly, cost-effectively and with a minimal environmental impact," says Rev. Steve Hoffard, a member of the ELCIC Task Force Addressing Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia. "It has allowed us to easily interview and learn from the experiences of LGBTQ2SIA+ folk from across Canada."

It is our hope that our work will allow the ELCIC to continue to grow in compassion and understanding for all of God's children who are pushed to the margins and do not experience full-inclusion in our church.

- Rev. Steve Hoffard



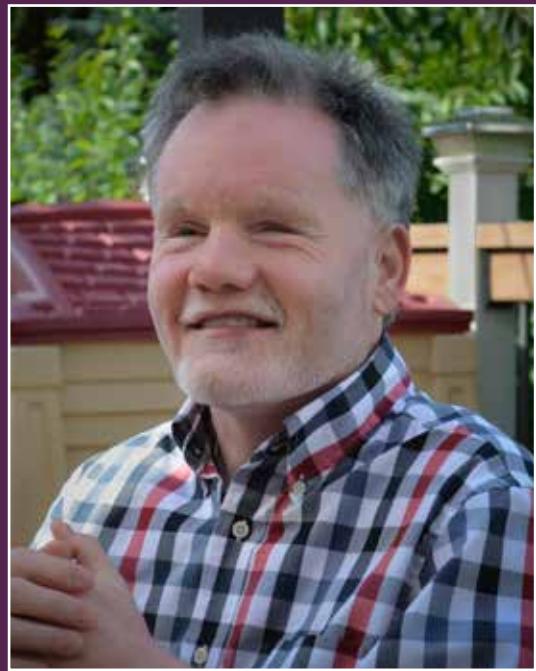
Members of the Task Force on Addressing Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia.

Although admitting that some forms of true communication are lost while holding online meetings, Rev. Hoffard says that the emotional aspects of the important work of the task force continues to shine through.

"Our conversations have been full of feeling and emotion," Rev. Hoffard adds. "We still laugh, we still cry, we still have been able to build important relationship with one another... But it is our hope that our work will allow the ELCIC to continue to grow in compassion and understanding for all of God's children who are pushed to the margins and do not experience full-inclusion in our church."

Rev. Aneeta Saroop serves as chair for the ELCIC Task Force Addressing Racism, White Supremacy and Issues of Racial Injustice. She agrees that while face-to-face gatherings would have been more ideal, meeting online has allowed for conversations to continue in a time of covid.

"This task force is a diverse group of BIPOC Lutherans that come from very different backgrounds who are able to meet as faithful Lutherans and hold holy space for one another," Rev. Saroop



During a meeting of the Task Force on Ableism, members received news from Rev. Mark Urguhart's family that he had unexpectedly passed away. This loss is great for his loved ones, friends and colleagues. We ask for prayers for all those grieving this sudden death.

says. "White Lutherans are privileged to see their own race reflected in most wider church gatherings. BIPOC Lutherans most often do not get this experience. Often when BIPOC Lutherans attend wider church meetings or gatherings, they are the only BIPOC person in the room; as warm as we Lu-

therans are to one another, this can still feel isolating. When we are able to caucus as BIPOC in person, the experience is affirming and life-giving."

Although coming together to raise awareness and create resources in helping guide the ELCIC towards a more inclusive church, Rev. Saroop

RECONCILED RELATIONSHIPS

Grand River connections: journey to reconciliation

About a million people live on the watershed of the Grand River, in southern Ontario, which receives the output of water treatment plants, and suffers from littering, pollution and the pressures of agriculture along its banks. Lake Erie is encumbered with large quantities of toxic algae, fueled by phosphorus in field runoff from the Grand and other sources. The health of every creature in the watershed depends on the health of these waters. All of us, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, have responsibilities towards one another and all of creation. When one of us is not healthy, we all suffer.

The Dish with One Spoon is a treaty, originating long ago with the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee, that commits the inhabitants of present day Southern Ontario (the "Dish") to share and protect the territory and its resources (the "Spoon"), and work together to maintain the health of lands, waters and animals. It will take our wholehearted collaboration to achieve this. Two initiatives involving the Eastern Synod and the Music for the Spirit & Indigenous Visual Arts (MftSIVA) after-school program are conceived as ways of fostering this collaboration.

The first is *Grand Expressions: Indigenous Youth Perspectives*, an integral part of a project called the Grand-Erie Study, which focuses on improving water monitoring and management in the area where the lower Grand River and Lake Erie meet. The goal of *Grand Expressions* is to bring youth stories and art to local water managers, scientists and Canadian communities. Co-ordinator Richelle Miller and youth affiliated with MftSIVA put together a travelling exhibition to share their relationships with water through art and storytelling. A self-guided tour of this very powerful exhibition is available online at granderiestudy.ca.

The second initiative is *Paddle Project*, which in the summer of COVID-19 became a series of online live workshops commissioned by Great Art for Great Lakes (GAGL) and arranged and hosted by Richelle Miller and artist Thomas Anderson. The workshops were made available to MftSIVA participants and others at Six Nations of the Grand River, interested residents of the nearby Oneida Nation of the Thames and Walpole Island First Nation communities, and friends.

Eastern Synod congregations and individuals have been inspired to learn more from our Indigenous neighbours about how we are all connected to the land we share. Through our friendships with people of Six Nations of the Grand River Territory we are deepening our care and respect for water which gives us all life. (*September, 2020*) 



Participants at a Music for the Spirit hand drum workshop.

knows that the work of her task force will unfortunately not fully-eradicate racism within the ELCIC.

"This work will hopefully open a small window of awareness that the whole church will incorporate into our collective lens of faith in Jesus," she says. "We will all need to work together to understand Anti-Racism as part of the mission and ministry of discipleship in Christ."

Despite the best of intentions, the ELCIC still has much work to do in many areas. Even as it seeks to eliminate racism, white supremacy, ableism, sexism, misogyny, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, such behaviours can quietly embed themselves into the lives of members. In hopes of eliminating its oppressive roles, the ELCIC will have its three task forces present reports and recommendations at the 2022 National Convention.

"As a task force, we are imperfect and incomplete, and yet we are whole in our faith and community," says Diaconal Minister Sarah Rudd, a member of The ELCIC Task Force Addressing Ableism. "We are a small representation of the very, very wide disability/different abilities community which we see spanning all ages, abilities, injuries, illnesses, unique formation and personhoods as a part of the larger body of Christ."

With hopes of examining and addressing ableism, physical barriers, and discrimination towards people with disabilities, this task force has been able to continue with its work toward various possibilities pertaining to full-involvement, albeit during the pandemic.

"We have stuck with it," Diaconal Minister Rudd says. "Without a unifying thread or experience we have worked hard to understand our mandate. We appreciate the patience of the church and one another in staying in conversation and community as we consider what is next... Acknowledging

This work will hopefully open a small window of awareness that the whole church will incorporate into our collective lens of faith in Jesus.

- Rev. Aneeta Saroop

early on in our process as a task force that we would not have a unified message or easy fix to the church in addressing ableism freed our conversation to look at what was possible and shared."

Diaconal Minister Rudd says that virtual task force meetings actually provided some freedom and ease amidst various other aspects and demands that are often forgotten when considering caregiving during a pandemic.

"In some ways, COVID has empowered technologies that the disability/different abilities community has actually long been hungering for," she says. "Isolation is a very present reality for some in our community... Deliberate sharing time and on-camera time to support individual needs and requests have been helpful tools for our task force."

In continuing their collective focuses on ways to combat the various forms of oppression, the three task forces will remain driven in their pursuit of a more inclusive and affirmative ELCIC. But in order to get to that point, there will be significant action required from outside of the task forces to begin the process of healing and enacting the needed change.

"I would like the church to know that the task forces are just doing preliminary work to help the church begin its job," Rev. Hoffard says. "It's time to roll up your sleeves, as you are the ones that will have to do the real work." ☺

We appreciate the patience of the church and one another in staying in conversation and community as we consider what is next... .

- Sarah Rudd



ONE BODY WORKING TOGETHER

Opportunity through challenge

Discovering the positivity of online worship, conferences, meetings and workshops.

Quite often, “working together” is the means of carrying out a physical task. But as we all so quickly came to know, 2020 had 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 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 says. “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. Bishop Mohr recalls countless emails and telephone



conversations with members from other synods and even in other countries asking for links to the various sermons. As chair of the Conference of Bishops, Rev. Mohr continues to see the many benefits that the *Summer Sermon Series* has had across the church.

"This served as a way for us to be guest speakers in congregations," he says. "We are obviously unable to travel around and be with the churches in person, but this has given 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."

Also held online this past year was *Stronger Together*. Typically, an in-person gathering of Lutheran and Anglican youth leaders, the 2020 gathering took place via Zoom, free of charge for



anyone interested in the two-day event. Meeting online was certainly no replacement for an in-person assembly, but Deacon Gretchen Peterson, assistant to the national bishop for youth and leadership, says the two-day event provided attendees with a comforting feeling of connectedness and fellowship, despite their geographical distance.

"Because there was no cost for travel, accommodations or registration fees, we were able to invite anybody who showed any interest in youth ministry to come to the event," she says. "We've learned that it can be easy to put together some

ONE BODY WORKING TOGETHER

The Feisty Saints of Bergland

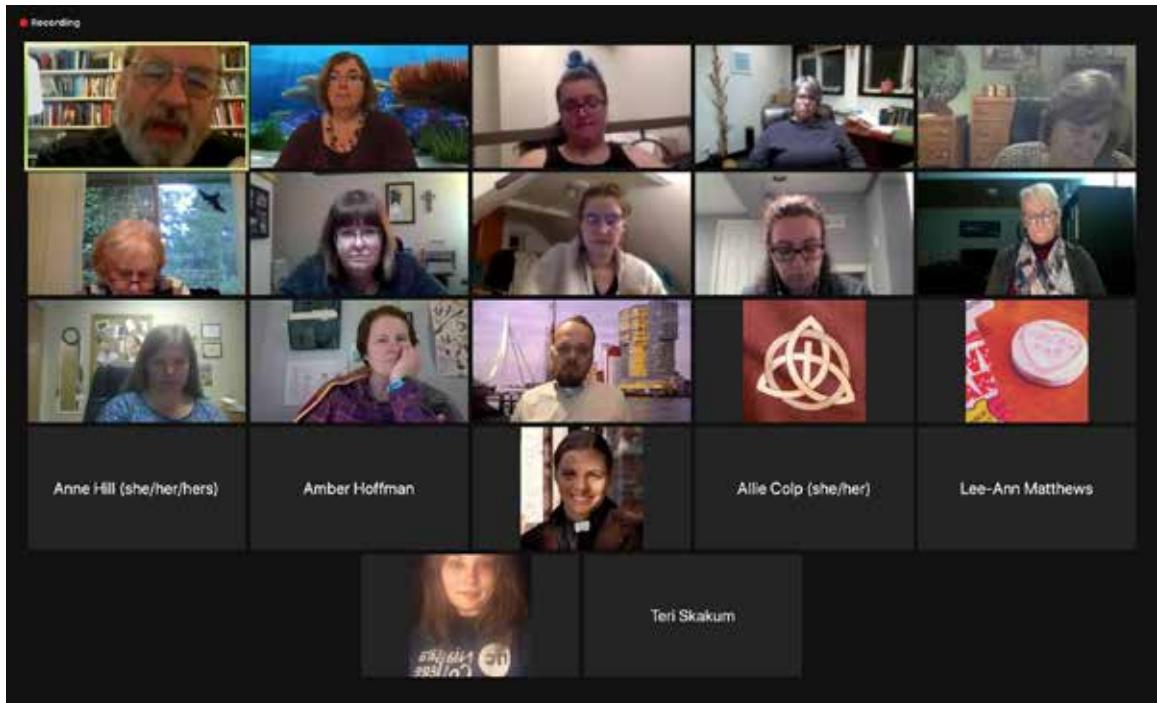
Trinity, Bergland, Ont. is a unique congregation nestled in a small community on the shores of Lake of the Woods. After several years with rostered pastoral care, it became apparent in 1992 that we would no longer be able to support such a ministry. We struggled with our identity but were pleased when 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 Kreger and Carolyn Kreger with quilts and We Care bags for CLWR.



Participants of Stronger Together 2021 take in the online “gathering”.

online training which allows us to invite a broader group to be a part of it. I don’t think we’re going to throw that learning away.”

Deacon Peterson notes that *Stronger Together 2021* will likely also be conducted online, with the hope of returning for an in-person gathering in a “hybrid” form as government and health officials allow in future years.

Much like that of the annual youth leaders gathering, the ELCIC also saw its treasurers’ meet-

ings to a monthly cycle would be a way to provide consistent communications to congregations across the ELCIC,” Eastern Synod Treasurer Keith Myra says. “They were timely and researched communications because we had the benefit of all the synod treasurers and national treasurers at our disposal. Everyone has been very enthusiastic about this and has found it quite beneficial. Certainly, the feedback that I have received from congregations on our resources has also been very positive.”

Initially launched back in April of 2020, the first set of communications provided options on alternate giving methods, these were followed up with information to congregations on the various government financial assistance programs. Most recently, the monthly treasurers’ meetings have expanded to cover topics above and beyond the COVID-specific focuses, including updates on the ELCIC Group Services benefits plan, insurance

We have worked together on some projects now that have had a meaningful impact on the church.

- Keith Myra

ings shift to an online platform. Not only did they go from being held in-person to virtual, the meetings actually also occurred more frequently in 2020 as additional content continued to pour in for discernment and discussion.

“We figured that shifting our treasurers’ meet-

premium adjustments, and employee and lay person agreements. Through this, Myra has seen heightened levels of cohesiveness within the group.

"Because we are meeting so frequently, we have gotten to know each other a lot better," he says. "We are more comfortable reaching out to each other on a one-on-one basis. Those types of

things were much less likely to happen previously, because we just didn't have the relationships established as well as they are now. We have worked together on some projects now that have had a meaningful impact on the church; that has been fulfilling and encouraging us to continue to work together." □

ONE BODY WORKING TOGETHER



Fifth International Global Companion Consultation—Latin America, the Caribbean, and North America: Rev. Mark Cerniglia, SC Synod; Rev. Ginny Aebischer, SC Synod; Rev. Mark Johnson, SE Minnesota Synod; Bishop Larry Kochendorfer, ABT Synod; Rev. James Hendrickson, ABT Synod; Kathy Chatelaine, SE Minnesota Synod; Bishop Atahualpa Hernández, The Lutheran Church of Colombia.

Building global bridges

The Fifth International Global Companion Consultation 2019 took place from Nov. 6–10, 2019, in Guatemala. Strengthening global partnerships between Synod Companions was a real blessing and helped us think together as part of the faith community about issues of gender justice and migration—issues that are important to all of us.

This consultation had representation from synods across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and Canada, as well as churches in countries from Central and South America and the Caribbean. It was a heart, mind and spirit stirring week as we shared stories, listened to one another and began to see the weaving of a beautiful community tapestry formed in faith.

In addition to being blessed by companionship with the Lutheran Church in Colombia (IELCO), we in our synod are also profoundly blessed by our connection—through IELCO—to the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA and the South Carolina Synod, ELCA. Leaders from these four areas have gotten to know one another better through this ministry and learned to walk and work together. We have been building trust in our relationships with one another as we seek to faithfully live out our calling to proclaim the good news of Jesus far and wide.

It is a joy and a true gift to work side by side with these leaders of Christ's Church! □



EMPOWERED
DISCIPLES

“Come on, join the Club!”

ELCIC enjoys successful second year of Living our Faith initiative with a Bible Book Club.

In September 2019, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) began a four-year initiative on *Living our Faith—Pray, Read, Worship, Love*.

In its first year, ELCIC members were invited to begin with an intentional focus on prayer—to learn about prayer, grow in our experience of prayer and deepen our regular prayer practice.

A year later, in September of 2020, as the focus shifted to *Read*, ELCIC members were invited to read and learn scripture together.

Materials were prepared and distributed for the creation of Bible Book Clubs, which were originally envisioned as a way of physically

bringing people together to deepen their understandings of a variety of books of the Bible with friends, family or even complete strangers. That all changed with the ongoing global pandemic.

With most Canadian provinces under lockdown or operating under restrictions, the possibility of gathering in-person for monthly Bible Book Club meetings quickly fell to the wayside. But with technology helping to pick up the pieces, the year of a focus on reading the Bible was able to carry on, with a few adaptations.

According to Rev. Dr. Ali Tote of Saskatoon’s Resurrection Lutheran, the idea of laying out a framework for monthly readings, reflections and





Rev. Dr. Ali Tote

questions was a “fantastic” way of accomplishing the goal set out by the ELCIC.

“I thought it was a great initiative,” Rev. Dr. Tote says. “When books are assigned by the book club, you will see much progress within the group of working towards the objective or goal every month. If you were to just allow the participants to speak on books of the Bible they are familiar with or confident in, there likely would not have been as much learning occurring in that process. Having an objective and then picking the books that will fit into that objective is certainly more productive.”

Rev. Dr. Tote was one of 12 individuals who helped prepare a set of questions/reflections for use across the church as part of the Bible Book Club. His assignment was that of Daniel for March 2021.

“The book of Daniel holds extreme relevance to our current context,” Rev. Dr. Tote says. “How in times of struggle, hardship, or in these pandemic times, it can really be difficult to be faithful. I put together some questions and thoughts that the participants could use in reference to our current context. I’ve heard from a number of people who have said they have participated and really enjoyed the overall idea. And I did too; I felt that it was really a great concept from the ELCIC.”

Six-and-a-half hours west, members from the congregation of the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Lethbridge also participated in the *Living our Faith* initiative. Led by Hugh McKay—who serves on the church council with a focus on youth and faith development—members gathered monthly online for Zoom-styled Bible Book Club discussions.

“Having never led a Bible study before I didn’t

Parish nursing

Parish nurses are growing in number in several denominations across the country, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

Parish nurses are a hybrid of sorts, combining health, healing and wholeness with spirituality. Every parish nurse is a registered nurse who has taken a parish nursing training program.

The geographic location of a congregation can play a huge role in what a parish nurse does on a particular day, according to Christine Ramseyer, a parish nurse at Mount Zion, Waterloo, ON. For example, at inner-city churches, parish nurses often deal with the homeless and people battling addictions.

She visits parishioners’ houses, their hospital rooms or their long-term care or retirement homes, helping them with their needs for health care and advocating on their behalf. “I help people who are grieving and support them with that. As people’s health fails, a big part of my time is to support them through the process and seek out resources to help them,” she said.

Ramseyer sees her role as tying in spirituality with health issues. “I try to see ways they can stay connected to their church or faith community. Sometimes I’ll arrange car rides to keep them connected. I’m always looking at ways that the church can be senior-friendly so they can still participate,” she said. □



Christine Ramseyer visits with Rita Schaus, one of her parish nursing clients in Mount Zion, Waterloo, ON.



Bible Book Club at the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Lethbridge, AB.

"I have now had the chance to learn about books of the Bible that I haven't read before."

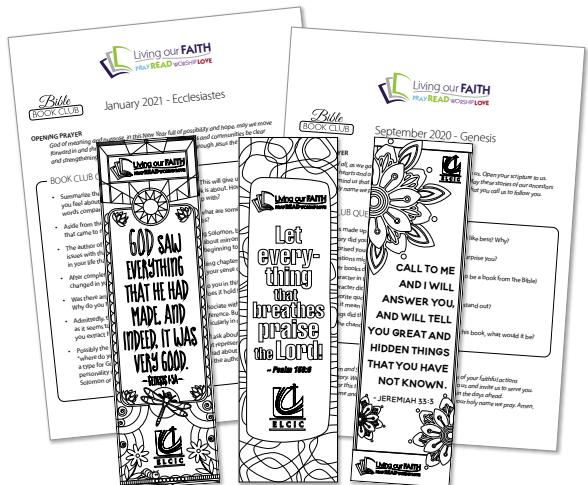
- Hugh McKay

quite know what to expect, but everybody has really seemed to enjoy it," McKay says. "These things are as much a social kind of gathering as they are anything else. I'm not a very technologically savvy person, but I seemed to manage just fine. Our church has really tried to make the most use of online resources as we can. Having said that though, I do think it's possible we may have had more people interested in this who just didn't happen to have computers at their disposal."

Despite the drawbacks of using an online platform to host the monthly "gatherings," McKay has been able to deepen his understanding in both the world of online technology and many new books of the Bible through the *Living our Faith* initiative.

"I really appreciate the ELCIC for putting this out there," he says. "It was fun, and I have now had the chance to learn about books of the Bible

that I haven't read before. It wasn't just reading them, but reading them in a focused and intentional way. Everyone within our book club here has actually mentioned that, even people who are seasoned veterans at these kinds of things. It was nice to have the chance to read and think a little bit more contemplatively about the scripture."



A set of questions and reflections are available for each month, as well as a printable colouring bookmark with a verse from that month's book of the Bible.

Remaking campus ministry on the fly

“I am afraid to leave my home,” one international student admitted to Rev. Margaret Propp, chaplain at the University of Calgary. “What can I do?”

So began another day for Propp, whose ministry is aimed at outreach to students, including a number of international students living in Calgary. Her goal for the past number of years has been to reach out to people who had not had much contact with the church before, or who have been hurt by the church for their racial or sexual identities.

But with COVID-19 she was thrust into the front lines of helping those who needed her most. Many international stu-

dents could not leave Canada for fear of not being able to finish their studies. But their families back home were terrified of their children falling ill or dying in a faraway land.

“So, I had to let them know what it was safe to do,” Propp explained. “Most of these people used to come out once a week for our Simple Suppers, but now that was off the table—literally!” she explained. “So we began doing them online, turning them into a Zoom cooking class. For some, it was their only social interaction all week.”

Similarly, at the University of Alberta (U of A), Rev. Richard Reimer is finding ways to be of service to his community of students. Activities had previously

centred around Martin Luther House, a Lutheran student residence.

“Now our residence is not full because of online course offerings, and weekly meals are forbidden under the U of A’s gathering guidelines. So in many respects, the students and I are reinventing the ministry on the fly. But that’s okay, because the community of students has such strong leadership. We just have to figure out how they can share their gifts in this new, online context or in a socially-distanced setting.”

Similar efforts at outreach also take place at the four other campus ministries in the ABT Synod: NAIT/MacEwan (Edmonton)—Dana Rayment; U of A, Augustana Campus (Camrose, AB)—Rev. Craig Wentland and Sara Smith; Lethbridge Community College and University of Lethbridge—Rev. Canon Erin Phillips; Ecumenical Campus Ministry (Medicine Hat, AB)—Rev. Kristy Reimers-Loader. ¶



The smiles show how popular the University of Calgary’s campus ministry Simple Suppers (over Zoom) became with each of the participants.

A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

The year 2020 brought immeasurable challenges, learning experiences and blessings across all expressions of the ELCIC family. We celebrate our members' innovation and creativity as we worked together to fight COVID-19 and stay safe while also staying connected.



Church doors and outdoor signs across the country reflected a part of the early response to dealing with COVID-19.



Socially-distanced services and creative alternatives to in-person worship and activities became commonplace from coast to coast to coast.

YOUR OFFERING

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) functions through three major expressions: **NATIONALLY** as the ELCIC, **REGIONALLY** as synods, and **LOCALLY** as congregations. Each expression of the church has unique ministries as well as ministries which are shared with the other expressions.



In 2020, ELCIC members gave over
\$63 million
to support the call to be
In Mission for Others.

CONGREGATIONS

\$59,410,906 was used by congregations to fund local ministries. Your weekly offering supports the work of your congregation and its ministry.



SYNODS

\$3,460,599 was shared to support the ministry done through ELCIC synods. This includes supporting congregations and leaders within your synod.

NATIONAL CHURCH

\$812,343 was sent through the synods to the National Church to support the wider mission of the ELCIC.

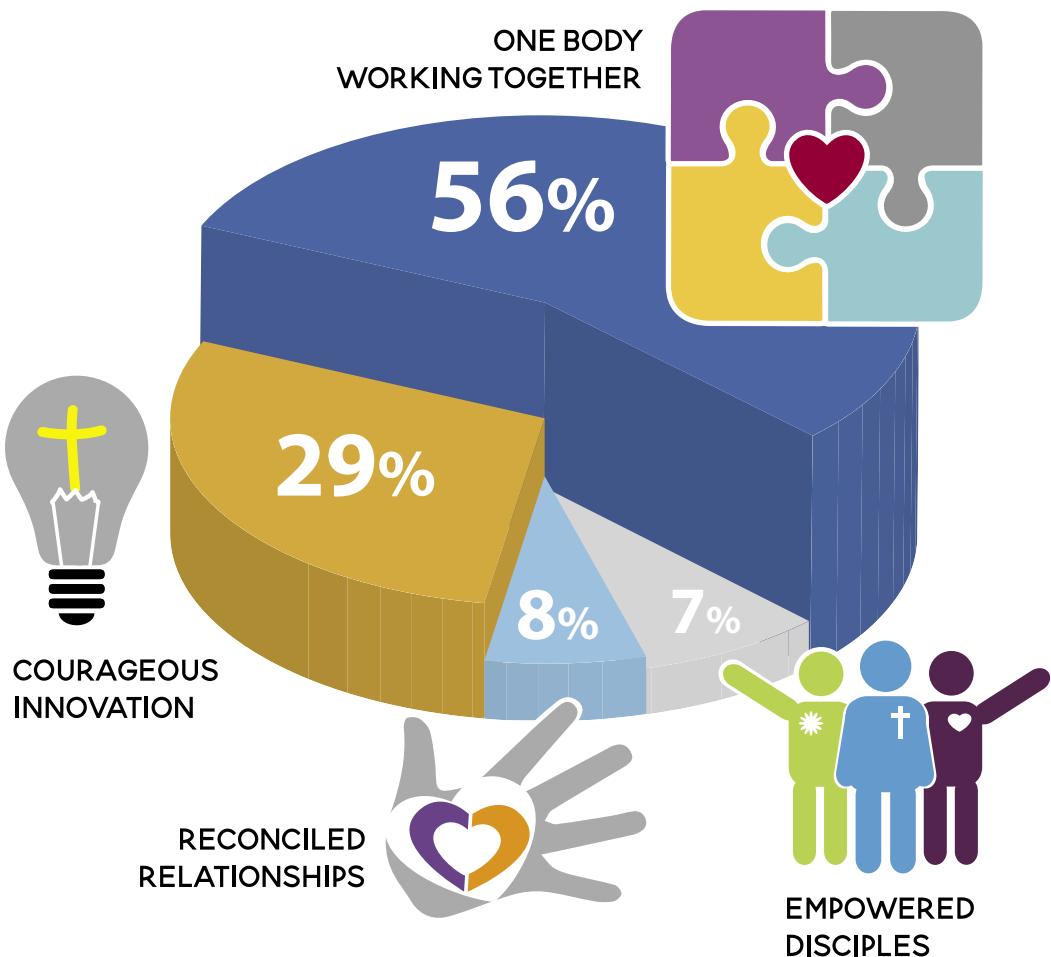


When you give to the ELCIC, you help support ALL the expressions of the church!

A FOCUS ON THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The 2020 ELCIC National Church budget supports ministries carried out through the four areas of focus set out in the National Office Strategic Plan.

\$3,038,948) TOTAL BUDGET



#MYELCIC



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

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ELCIC Young Adults
@ElcicYoung Adult

Trying to get this number to 100 by September 25th! If you have not, please GO SUBSCRIBE so you see the new videos that get posted!



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.

Even in a global pandemic, we remain *In Mission for Others!*



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.



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



Camp Kuriakos @CampKuriakos Thanks to Emma Berg for joining the team today. We're sanding boards to replace the trim in the KC (get excited for a new look in there)! And let us know if you've got some time for staining them this winter.

NATIONAL OFFICE

There are six full time, seven part time and one casual staff working for the National Office for a staffing compliment of 10.5 equivalent full-time positions.

Your National Office staff:

- (1) Rev. Susan C. Johnson, *National Bishop*
 - (2) Carter Brooks, *Communications Specialist*
 - (3) Norman Coull, *Proofreader, Canada Lutheran*
 - (4) Catherine Crivici, *Graphic Designer*.
 - (5) Trina Gallop Blank, *Assistant to the Bishop for Communications and Resource Generation*
 - (6) Rev. Paul Gehrs, *Assistant to the Bishop, Justice and Leadership*
 - (7) Kyle Giesbrecht, *Director, Finance and Administration*
 - (8) Rev. Lyle McKenzie, *Assistant to the Bishop, Worship*
 - (9) Desreee Mendoza, *Meetings and Communications Co-ordinator*
 - (10) Rick Natividad, *Information Technology Co-ordinator*
 - (11) Deacon Gretchen Peterson, *Assistant to the Bishop, Youth*
 - (12) Lucy Randa, *Accountant*
 - (13) Rev. Ali Tote, *Assistant to the Bishop, Faith, Order and Doctrine*
 - (14) Rev. Kenn Ward, *Editor, Canada Lutheran*
- Missing: Danica Cuaderno, Office Assistant and Canada Lutheran Circulation*





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**We thank all those who assisted with this annual report. Your contributions underline the many ways we are working together
*In Mission for Others.***

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