



Living Our Faith



# Congregational ANNUAL REPORT

# LIVING OUR FAITH

Another year of pandemic saw the church continue to adapt to the evolving world of technology. With online streaming platforms serving congregations for the better part of two years, hybrid-styled worship services, meetings and conventions have quickly become the norm, seeing what will likely be an ongoing shift in participation to both virtual and in-person attendance.

Much like that of last year, 2022 provided similar challenges as the world continued to overcome various hurdles related to the COVID-19 pandemic. With worship and larger-scale events remaining online in 2021 for the majority of congregations across the ELCIC, 2022 saw the return of safe, in-person gatherings.

Bible camps, fundraisers, board meetings and Sunday worship services began to work their way back into the fold.

Technology such as Zoom, YouTube and Box has allowed us to remain a tight-knit community. Bishops have been able to meet more regularly, while Anglican and Lutheran staff have consistently tuned in, working closely on shared areas of work. National and Synod treasurers have met monthly, helping sift through the available government support. We have been able to remain working closely with our partners.

Amid the many questions, we have found ways to continue gathering together as a church *In Mission for Others*.

## The 2022 ELCIC National Convention: online edition

The National Convention of the ELCIC met online, July 15–16, 2022 during three, three-hour sessions under the theme *Let There be Greening*. “This is our first-ever online convention. This



**National Bishop Susan Johnson delivers an apology to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.**

year we will only be doing the necessary business that we are legally required to do,” National Bishop Susan Johnson wrote in her greeting in the *Bulletin of Reports*.

National Church Council reported that it had approved a new ELCIC vision statement: “God’s grace and unconditional love calls us to be a diverse, inclusive community that celebrates all and upholds life-giving relationships.” Further work will be done to communicate this broadly and develop this statement into a new

tagline, replacing the current *In Mission for Others* tagline.

In her address, Bishop Johnson acknowledged the harms that members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community have experienced in the church. “Today I apologize to the members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community for the ways that we have not lived up to our commitments and to the ways we have treated you in the past and even now,” she said.

Bishop Johnson acknowledged the times members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community did not receive welcome, had been denied sacraments, vocation, marriage rights, and when proper gender identity had not been affirmed. She made it clear that the entire church had much work to do in the areas of acceptance and affirmation.

In the near future, the special 2023 convention in Calgary, AB, will see the reports and recommendations of The Task Force on Addressing Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, The Task Force on Addressing Ableism, and The Task Force on Addressing Racism, White Supremacy, and issues of Racial Injustice.

## Fun in the sun at Bible camp in Standard, AB

For 22 children in Standard, AB., the hopes of attending summer Bible camp became a reality. Through some hard work, fundraising, and the “campership” program, the congregation of Nazareth was able to see each of the 22 children that applied for camp live out their hopes, whether they were members of Nazareth or not.

The program saw the congregation and camp hopefuls raise funds—primarily through a bike-a-thon in June—which in turn paid the way for children in Standard who wanted to attend the summer Bible camp. The children who were given camperships were asked to help raise funds through the bike-a-thon.

Rev. Kate Zaiser, who was fortunate enough to be the camp chaplain for one of the weeks the Standard kids went to camp, said it was amazing how “normal” the whole week was.

“Everyone was rapid-tested upon arrival, and then they ran the camp as usual,” Zaiser said. “For one activity, we all stood in a circle holding hands, and I couldn’t help marveling at how surprising and wonderful it felt to be in contact with other people again. And even more importantly, the kids all had a blast, and a return to what childhood is supposed to be like.”



**The campers who participated in Nazareth’s bike-a-thon.**



## Lutheran-Anglican full communion partnership on display through the youth

With a waning youth membership at one Coquitlam, B.C. Anglican congregation came the support of the local Lutheran church, located just down the street. The combination of the two youth groups was both a logical and necessary step. St. Laurence Anglican Church had staff but few teenagers, while Good Shepherd Lutheran had teenagers but no leaders. Just before the pandemic hit, the two congregations decided to merge youth ministry under the name ignYte.

“This really did feel like it emerged very organically and the spirit was in it,” said Jason Wood, minister of youth and families at St. Laurence. “We had a need, and they had a need and because of that similarity and because of our context, it was a natural fit.”

Formalized with the 2001 Waterloo Declaration, the relationship between the ELCIC and the Anglican Church of Canada has resulted in many levels of co-operation and collaboration between the two denominations, much like that of the partnership between Good Shepherd and St. Laurence. Now 20 years into the partnership, congregations and denominational leaders continue to discover new ways to work together, pursuing common goals.

## The Urban continues the work outside its doors

Lutheran Urban Ministry Corp. (the Urban) is a partner ministry of the Manitoban/Northwestern Ontario Synod. And over the past two years, it has shifted its practice from inviting locals to friendly visits/sharing circles over coffee and lunches in the narthex of Lutheran Church of the Cross to a new socially-distanced delivery method.

The Urban’s bagged meal program has resulted in approximately 1,000 bagged meals per month, four times a week distributed outside the door since mid-March 2020. The overwhelming enthusiasm, love and support from the Urban’s meal teams indicate the success of the program far after the pandemic’s end.

The Urban is a ministry standing with Winnipeg’s urban community to support physical, mental and spiritual needs. Its sharing circles, worship services and a planned drop-in for women (with children too) feed the greatest hunger, even more than the food for the body.

Despite the ongoing pandemic, the Urban continues to thrive thanks in large part to its volunteers, donors and leaders, who have made what could have been a disappointing closure into another COVID success story.



**Sharing circle attendees who live at Winnipeg’s Arms of the Cross Housing Inc.**



**Anglican and Lutheran youth carve pumpkins together during an ignYte event at Halloween.**

## Lutheran youth aim to tackle climate change head-on

It is no secret that the climate crisis has become a major worldly concern over the past number of years. With a heightened awareness of climate change—stemming from major hurricanes, extreme heat domes, droughts and major floods—leaders from across the ELCIC have found ways to lessen their carbon footprint, while others have been able to help raise awareness of the ongoing battle.

In expressing their concerns, the ELCIC’s national and synodical bishops called the Canadian government to action on reducing greenhouse emissions, while mitigating the dire impacts of climate change. “As Christians, we are called to care for the whole of creation and to be responsible to our neighbours and communities,” National Bishop Susan Johnson wrote in her letter.

One young Eastern Synod member living out Bishop Johnson’s call to care for creation is circumpolar climate scientist Katarina Kuhnert, who has spent the past year working north of the Arctic Circle focusing on ecosystem changes in the region.

“Climate change is an intersectional and an inter-generational issue, and we need to respond in a diversity of ways across generations,” Kuhnert says. “This affects everyone from youth and children to adults, elders and leaders in the church. The potential for challenges of the current climate crisis impacts so many elements in our lives. When we hold the burdens of challenge and change together they become a little bit lighter.”



**Climate scientist and ELCIC member Katarina Kuhnert.**

# WORSHIP FOR A CONGREGATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING

## OPENING THE MEETING

### LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

You are encouraged to acknowledge Indigenous lands in a way appropriate to your context. These words are provided as an example:

*We acknowledge that the territories, on which we live are the traditional ancestral lands of the Indigenous Peoples, and is the common home to everyone in virtue of God, our Creator's, gracious gift and by the welcome of the Indigenous Peoples of these lands.*

### PRAYER

God of grace and hope, align our hearts, minds, and hands for the work of loving your world. Make your Spirit known in this gathering, to support our conversation and to guide our work in the ways of Jesus. Amen.

**READING**      Revelation 22:1-2

**HYMN**            *Lord, Let My Heart be Good Soil*  
EvLW #512

## CLOSING THE MEETING

### LITANY

**Leader:** God's grace and unconditional love calls us to be a diverse, inclusive community.

**All:** We celebrate all and uphold life giving relationships.

**Leader:** Help us to see the river of life and the tree of life.

**All:** Help us to share the fruit of abundance and the leaves that heal the nations.

### LITANY

**Leader:** We thank you for creation and how it sustains life for all. Help our relationships with land and water to deepen and grow.

**All:** Let there be greening.

**Leader:** We thank you for humanity, in all its diversity, and how all people offer gifts for being true community. Help our relationships with neighbours, near and far, to deepen and grow.

**All:** Let there be greening.

**Leader:** We thank you for the Body of Christ around the world, and how it bears witness to your ways of justice, healing, and peace. Help our relationships with partners to deepen and grow.

**All:** Let there be greening.

**Leader:** We thank you for this faith community, and how we support each other on our spiritual journeys. Help our relationships with each other to deepen and grow.

**All:** Let there be greening. Amen.

**Leader:** We thank you for this faith community, and how we support each other on our spiritual journeys. Help our relationships with each other to deepen and grow.

**All:** Let there be greening.

**HYMN**            *I, the Lord of Sea and Sky*  
EvLW #574

**Leader:** Go in peace to love and serve the LORD!

**All:** Thanks be to God.