



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in Canada**
Living Out God's Grace & Unconditional Love



2023 ANNUAL REPORT





ON THE COVER

Redeemer, Saskatoon, tried something new by holding a fall supper serving beef stew and dumplings with a side of cabbage salad and ice-cream treats for dessert. One roaster full of leftover stew was donated to the Friendship Inn. Pictured: preparing stew for the fall supper at Redeemer, Saskatoon. Photo by Ed Miller.

There is much to learn from children eagerly participating and helping during worship. They are being part of the people of God and we need them in our congregations. Pictured: Children participating at St. Paul's, Ellerslie, AB. Photo by Trevor Hutchinson.

Youth from across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada gathered at Wilfrid Laurier University, ON in August 2023 for four days of worship, learning and fellowship together. Photo by Erin Zhang.

Members of Gloria Dei, Winnipeg, participating in Winnipeg's Pride Day Parade. Photo by Wei-En-Lau.

DAVID KLASSEN PHOTOGRAPHY



Participants at CLAY 2023.

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National Bishop

MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL BISHOP



Grace to you and peace
in the name of Jesus!

I hope you will enjoy this Annual Report and looking back over the past year on the work that our church has accomplished together.

We continue to focus our work around four areas: striving to be a healthier church; seeking to cultivate effective partnerships; encouraging relational leadership; and leading with compassionate justice.

It is in these ways we live out our vision: *God's grace and unconditional love calls us to be a diverse, inclusive community that celebrates all and upholds life-giving relationships.*

I'm excited that we are rolling out a new visual identity and tagline for use across our church. I think you'll agree with me that the new identity is fresh and extremely meaningful.

Together, let us commit to *Living Out God's Grace & Unconditional Love.*

+ *Ann C. Johnson*







Mission and Vision

WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

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.

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.

As a National Church, we are called to focus on:



Striving to be a **Healthier Church**

Seeking to cultivate **Effective Partnerships**



Encouraging **Relational Leadership**

Leading with **Compassionate Justice**



Timeline

2023 YEAR-AT-A GLANCE

January

17: National Bishop Susan Johnson and Archbishop Linda Nicholls wrote to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to share their deep concern for the recent desecration of the Protestant cemetery on Mt. Zion, currently under the oversight of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem

February

1: National Bishop Susan Johnson and Archbishop Linda Nicholls wrote to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to express their sorrow and condem-

nation of the Jan. 27 attack on a synagogue in East Jerusalem.

5: ELCIC Congregations were encouraged to lift up Global Mission Sunday, an annual emphasis affirming the importance of Global Mission in the whole ministry of the ELCIC. Global Mission is one way the ELCIC is able to grow and strengthen relationships with its partner churches.

26: ELCIC congregations were encouraged to lift up Diaconal Sunday, celebrating witness expressed

through service (diakonia) and leadership offered.

March

19-25: The ELCIC lifted up the Week of Prayer for Overcoming Racism and Xenophobia. The week focuses on people who continue to suffer from racial discrimination and xenophobia in various parts of the world and includes International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21) and International Day for the Remembrance of Victims of Slavery and the Trans-Atlantic Salve Trade (March 25).



April

3: With the beginning of Holy Week, National Bishop Susan Johnson and Archbishop Linda Nicholls shared an Easter Message of hope, life and new beginnings.

16-23: The ELCIC lifted up Earth Week, which included Earth Day on April 22.

26-27: National Bishop Susan Johnson, along with leaders from several Canadian churches, visited Ottawa to urge government officials and Members of Parliament to further advocate for a just and lasting peace in Palestine and Israel.

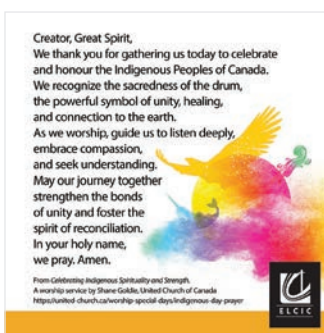


May

For the fourth year in a row, a record number of ELCIC congregations and members signed up to use the resources from the ELCIC Summer Sermon Series which ran from May to September. The series utilizes sermons from the National and Synod Bishops and Assistants to the Bishops to assist congregations in various ways.

June

The ELCIC joined in lifting up National Indigenous History Month—a month for building relationships, deepening engage-



ment with Indigenous history and discerning action for healing and reconciliation.

6: The ELCIC joined with Canadian Lutheran World Relief in an emergency appeal to help with the crisis in East Africa.

June 28-July 2: The ELCIC and ACC joined together in Calgary, AB for the second Assembly of the two church bodies. During this time, the ELCIC also held a special convention, and the ACC held its General Assembly.



2023 YEAR-AT-A-GLANCE

August

10-13: Over 300 youth, leaders and volunteers gathered in Waterloo, ON for CLAY 2023—*Ashes to Embers*. This was the first time the ELCIC and ACC came together for an in-person joint youth gathering since 2018. Typically held biennially, the 2020 event titled *En Route* was hosted online in 2021 due to the COVID pandemic.



September

5: National Bishop Susan Johnson joined with four other national church leaders to visit Camp Morgan at Winnipeg's Brady Road landfill. The leaders called for an immediate search of the Prairie Green landfill, and for justice and an end to the violence against Indigenous

women, children and Two-Spirit people. Camp Morgan is one of two camps within Winnipeg honouring the lives of two missing and murdered Indigenous women, Morgan Harris and Mercedes Myran, who are believed to be homicide victims buried within Winnipeg's major landfill stations.



13-19: The Thirteenth Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) began in Kraków, Poland under the theme *One Body, One Spirit, One Hope*. In attendance were 16 members from the ELCIC participating in varying role as delegates, advisors, communication team members, presenters, as well as a committee chair and key member of the worship planning committee.

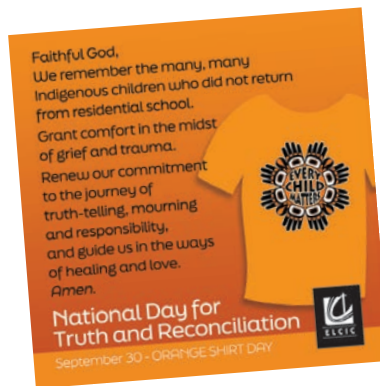


30: Members of the ELCIC were invited to observe September 30 as Orange Shirt Day, which marks the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

October

4: National Bishop Susan Johnson and MNO Synod Bishop Jason Zinko wrote to Premier-designate Wab Kinew following his recent election as Premier of Manitoba, the first First Nations leader of a province in Canada.

8: National Bishop Susan Johnson and Archbishop Linda Nicholls shared a statement on the war on the Holy Land, offering solidarity with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, prayers for safety for all caught in the middle of the conflict, and urging the Prime Minister of Canada and all international leaders to offer whatever they can towards a cessation of hostilities and a lasting, just peace for Israel and Palestine.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
ELCIC
In Mission for Others

Premier-designate Wab Kinew
565 1/2 Osborne Street, Winnipeg, R3L 2H3
Wab.Kinew@govmnb.ca

October 4, 2023

Dear Premier-designate Wab Kinew,

On behalf of the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and especially the members of our Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod, we extend our congratulations to you and your team on your election as Premier of Manitoba. As the first First Nations leader of a province in Canada this is a wonderful and historic moment in the life of our country.

As you noted in your speech last night, we are facing many challenges as a province such as access to healthcare, ensuring affordability for all people, addressing the climate crisis and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. These are all priority areas for our church and our members. We are willing and committed to work with you and your government in these and other common areas of interest.

In the coming days and weeks ahead as you begin to address and respond to these challenges, you will need to do so with a clear vision and with courage and wisdom. As you said last night, "We can accomplish awesome tasks when we stand together as one people...there is no challenge we cannot meet when we stand together as one Manitoba".

Please know that our church and our members are praying for you and for all the Manitoba Legislative Assembly members. May your service to our province be a blessing to many and may the Creator guide us all as we work together for the future of our province and for the people and families that live here.

Mitgwech,

Susan C. Johnson

Rev. Susan C. Johnson
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Jason Zinko
Rev. Jason Zinko
Bishop, Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

2023 YEAR-AT-A-GLANCE

18: National Bishop Susan Johnson and Archbishop Linda Nicholls called upon the Canadian government to advocate for the respect of international law in Gaza and to “speak up with courageous leadership” towards an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

23: The ELCIC joined with Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) in responding to the crisis in Gaza.

Working together with other organizations in the region, CLWR is helping to provide critical, life-saving aid including emergency food, drinking water, shelter, medical care kits, hygiene kits and more to those in dire need.

November

3: The ELCIC invites support for our partners in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy

Land (ELCJHL) through prayers and financial support of an appeal to help cover one month of expenses for the ELCJHL to a total of \$263,000. “The ELCJHL are our siblings in Christ,” said Bishop Susan Johnson. “We have been in a long and important partnership with them and they need our support at this desperate time.”



29: North American Lutheran, Anglican leaders called for peace in the Holy Land and released an Advent prayer resource which features prayers for each day throughout the season of Advent for specific congregations, ministries and outreach initiatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land and the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.

29: ELCIC, ACC, the United Church of Canada and KAIROS leaders wrote to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, "we pray that you and

the Government of Canada will be leaders in addressing the urgent existential threat of climate change as a matter of fundamental moral responsibility to the current and all future generations of life on earth."

December

20: National Bishop Susan Johnson and Archbishop Linda Nicholls shared a joint video greeting wishing Canadian Anglicans and Lutherans a peace-filled Christmas.

November 29, 2023

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, PC, MP
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
Justin.Trudeau@pm.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister,

As representatives of Canadian churches who are members of the World Council of Churches (WCC), we write today to share with you the WCC [Statement on COP28's Responsibility for Climate Justice](#) (attached).

The letter begins by observing that climate scientists are projecting that this year will break all previous records of global warming and will prove to have been the hottest year in the past 125,000 years.

It goes on to affirm our belief in a God of justice that will "let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream" (Amos 5:24), and that as Christians, we are obliged to act for justice. These words are an effective summary of why Canadian churches are deeply concerned about the climate crisis.

The WCC Calls on all governments to act now on phasing out fossil fuels which account for 75% of greenhouse gas emissions. This includes ending fossil fuel subsidies, providing financing for more vulnerable and low-income nations, and acting for a just transition that protects the rights of Indigenous Peoples and vulnerable groups as well as ensuring that no worker, community or country is left behind.

The WCC calls on COP28 to rise above international conflicts in order to act collectively; to make operational the Loss and Damage Fund established at COP27, and to rapidly deliver climate finance that gives climate-vulnerable nations and communities a chance to adapt to the consequences of climate change.

As the statement urges, our churches will be praying and appealing for leaders gathering for COP28 to act resolutely, supporting young people in their efforts to protect their future, and calling on our members to "walk the talk" making the necessary lifestyle changes and taking the actions required for a sustainable future for all.

Statement on COP28's Responsibility for Climate Justice

The World Council of Churches (WCC) executive committee, meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, from 8-14 November, released a statement on COP28's responsibility for climate justice.

CC:

Pierre Pallus
[Pierre Pallus](#)

Yves-Franco
[Yves-Franco](#)

Jagmeet Singh
[Jagmeet Singh](#)

Elizabeth S. Harbeck
[Elizabeth S. Harbeck](#)

We pray that you at threat of climate of generations of life!

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Susan C. Job
National Bishop
The Rev. Dr. Mo
General Secretary
The Most Rev. I
Archbishop & I
Leah Ross-K
Interim Director



2023 Advent Cycle of Prayer
FOR THE CHURCHES IN THE HOLY LAND
AND THE MIDDLE EAST

beyond BORDERS

Sunday Dec. 3 – Advent 1
Presiding Bishop Michael Curry: A Prayer for Truth

"Lead me in your truth and teach me." (Psalm 25:5)
God of truth, in his last days, in Jerusalem, Jesus of Nazareth gave his friends a new commandment: "No one has loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:34). We showed them that the way of love is God's way of life. Hear now our prayers for our brothers and sisters of Israel and Palestine. Help us all to hear the painful truths of our past.

We pray, O God, for all those and find themselves being peace and stability in their to find hope when despair alone and forsaken, and yet pursue avenues of unrest.

Sunday Dec. 24 – Advent 4
Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton: A Prayer for Healing

Gracious God, we feel helpless in the face of war. As we witness the devastation in Israel and Palestine, we feel it here, too. Help us to accompany all who suffer, to be your healing balm in this wounded world.

Almighty God, only you bring healing. When we feel helpless, help us to feel your presence. When we feel despair, restore our confidence in you alone. Teach us again to turn weapons into tools for harvesting your abundance. Remind us that true healing comes only in the presence of your truth, your justice, and your peace.

Heal us, O Lord, so that we might be your healing presence now and always. Amen.

2023 Advent Cycle of Prayer FOR THE CHURCHES IN THE HOLY LAND AND THE MIDDLE EAST





MARTIN LUTHER CHURCH, TORONTO

Bowls and Blessings began in 2020, with volunteers serving soup every day for 24 days during Advent.

Encouraging the church to live and be the church

How the ELCIC Mission Fund is supporting mission and ministry in local contexts.

The ELCIC Mission Fund, previously the Church Extension and Capital Fund, is money from our predecessor church bodies that has traditionally been set aside to build churches and establish new ELCIC congregations across Canada. Now, the Fund is primarily used to support congregations and ministry areas to do mission and ministry in local contexts.

“The Mission Fund is intended to encourage the church to live and be the church, and to do creative, innovative things in our communities,” said Rev. Adam Snook, Chair of the Mission Fund Committee.

“From good food markets, to preschools, to senior summer camps, to devotionals like Lutherans Connect, all get funding from the ELCIC Mission Fund program...it looks different everywhere.”

Martin Luther Church in Toronto, Ontario, has been running its Bowls and Blessings (soup and drumming) programming since December 2020, and the program has been growing ever since.

Volunteers from the congregation serve soup on the street outside their church, to people who are needing food. The soup program started in December of 2020, where volunteers served soup every day for 24 days during Advent. They received funding from the Fund in 2020, to help get the program off

the ground. Though they have not received any additional Mission Fund grants since then, the program is still successfully running to this day, typically occurring twice a week.

“During COVID, because the neighbourhood is quite impoverished, people were ringing our doorbell for the first time, asking for help. Initially, we just gave out gift cards and granola bars, juice, and whatever fruit was available that day,” reflected Iris Schwieger, the congregant who started the soup program.

“And then, I had the idea. I was standing in the kitchen making soup, and my daughter comes in

and she goes, ‘Mom, you’re making soup again, you really love making soup’, and I was like, ‘That’s it, let’s make soup!’”

“From three [initial] volunteers, we got to 15 within that month. When the month was over, everybody was like, no, we can’t stop. There are too many people that are hungry,” she said.

Martin Luther has grouped its drum circle together with the soup, to feed the soul as well as the stomach.

“Drumming really is about health and wellbeing with the community. It’s always an hour before Bowls and Blessings, so first you get your



Drum circle in the Martin Luther, Toronto, foyer.

MARTIN LUTHER CHURCH, TORONTO

emotional and health benefits, and then you feed yourself and go home,” said Schweiger.

In Calgary, Lutheran Care Ministry (LCM), a joint partnership between the Synod of Alberta and the Territories, several local congregations including Hope Lutheran, and the Campus Ministry of the University of Calgary is another organization that has been positively impacted by the Mission Fund. LCM was established in 2022, in response to increasing new arrivals to the area from Hong Kong, including international students.

“Last year from January to March, in only three months, we had 17,000 people from Hong Kong come to Alberta,” said Rev. Peter Chau, who is on the LCM Steering Committee,

and spearheaded the formation of this programming.

“I think they choose Calgary as a first choice in Canada, because it is more affordable in terms of the cost of living and housing,” he reflected.

LCM strives to provide assistance to new arrivals from Hong Kong with integrating into Canadian society. They fulfil this mandate through conducting workshops and sharing sessions in relation to challenges of adjusting to Canada. These sessions cover a range of challenges, such as housing needs, access to healthcare, tax and benefits, stress management and providing an introduction to Canadian cultures and values.

They strive to act as a liaison in assisting new arrivals with making

connections within school and faith communities, as well as other community service agencies in Calgary.

Across the year of 2022–23, they have been able to connect over 350 students and their families through their programming, which was largely made possible by a grant from the Mission Fund. The program received another grant from the Mission Fund for the 2023–24 year.

“The history of Lutheranism in Canada began with newcomers [from Europe] looking for a better or different life. And here, we’re in the same situation with newcomers. What we are called to do is to welcome the stranger, to be hospitable, and this is an opportunity to do that. This is the work of the Church,” said Rev. Margaret Propp, the Lutheran Chaplain of the University of Calgary who is also on the Steering Committee.

Similar to LCM, Wakati Wa Kfrika (WWK), an organization run out of Zion Lutheran Church in Saskatoon, offers programming aimed at empowering vulnerable Afro-Canadian groups, including women, children, and elderly. WWK participates in need-based sponsorship programs for forcibly displaced immigrants—targeting immigrants from refugee camps in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia who have been forcibly displaced and living in precarious conditions.

They organize and offer educational activities that promote knowledge and learning on various issues around African history, culture,



LCM provides new arrivals from Hong Kong workshops and sharing sessions discussing the challenges of adjusting to Canada, and acts as a liaison for making connections within school and faith communities, and other community service agencies in Calgary.

and development, as well as skill-building programs such as enhancing language skills, enhancing employability, and providing assistance in meeting immigration requirements.

They also organize cultural activities that allow Afro-Canadians to celebrate their identity and nurture their culture. In the first few months of the program, they had about a dozen people attending programming on a regular basis.

“We had one participant whose English got so much better and stronger that now she’s able to work full-time,” said Kaylyn Scrivens, Office Administrator for Zion.

They received a grant from the Mission Fund near the end of 2022, and started developing the program throughout 2023. WWK began offering services and programming in the fall of 2023.

Each synod oversees the application and distribution of the grants locally, and it differs slightly per synod, but the Committee oversees the fund and discusses the needs of the church in consultation with various groups of people, such as participants in the programs and synod representatives.

“We want to know things like, how can we be better companions synodically and nationally, asking questions about how the church and world are changing, and how these funds need to adapt so that they can meet the needs that churches are experiencing,” said Rev. Snook. ●

Healthier Church



VICKY HUEHN

The first service in our new space.

Living our mission

St. Mark’s Kingston, ON is a downtown congregation committed to its mission of “God First, sharing the Love of Christ through the Holy Spirit.”

The first services were held over 70 years ago. Like many other churches, numbers of attendees at church have diminished. Despite the declining church membership, the social justice work for the congregation continued and grew to meet needs in the community.

Several years ago during some forward-looking planning, the congregation identified its strengths and developed a strategic plan to focus on three goals: provide opportunities for the community to build and grow by sharing the love of Christ through accepting all people with justice, equality, dignity and respect; build on the strong Lutheran foundation and practices of the congregation by ensuring that the required infrastructure is established; enhance the congregation’s ability to serve the entire community by sharing their physical space.

Recently the outreach opportunities have expanded with a grant from the Mission Committee of the Eastern Synod (made possible by the ELCIC Mission Fund). Housing and refugee service partners have many demands and few resources so the congregation is working with them to identify needs.

As training funds are non-existent and many of them work with people who have mental illness and/or addictions, the congregation is planning training for staff, volunteers and clients. A congregational member with significant experience in the field is volunteering their time and the mission grant will be used for expenses to hold daylong training. The Mission Committee’s support for this outreach is greatly appreciated and our Lutheran presence is making a difference.—Vicky Huehn



One flock, one shepherd: In Full Communion with Moravians

The full communion relationship between Lutherans, Anglicans, and Moravians was affirmed at the 2023 ELCIC Special Convention.



The Anglican Church of Canada



In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, love. That is the motto of the Moravian Church, with whom we have entered into a full communion relationship, alongside Anglicans.

“One of the gifts of the Moravian Church is their motto. We keep coming back to that, and I think it’s a really important piece for us to learn from. It’s one of their gifts to us,” reflected Bishop Larry Kochendorfer of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories (ABT), who has been at the forefront of our relationship-building and partnership with the Moravian Church.

The Moravian Church, like Lutherans and Anglicans, has roots in the ancient common tradition of the apostolic Church. All three have been shaped by the reformation

movements of 15th and 16th century Europe. As well—throughout various moments in our early histories as Churches, we have found important points of contact and collaboration. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has been in full communion with Moravians since 1999.

Moravian tradition can be traced back to Czech reformer John Huss (1369–1415), who believed that people should be able to read the Bible in their own language, to hear preaching in a language they could understand, and that all people should be able to partake in The Lord’s Supper. Huss set the stage for the great Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, and his teachings—over a century later—inspired Martin Luther.

Full communion is an important statement about the visible unity of the church, as Rev. James Hendrickson of Hosanna Lutheran Church in Edmonton, AB, explains in a video posted to the anglicanlutheran.ca website, on a page dedicated to our three-way full communion relationship (anglicanlutheran.ca/partnerships/moravian-church/).

“We three churches have come together, discussed our commonalities, and our differences, and have come to agree on what unites us, what we agree upon, what we hold as key values of our faith traditions . . . walking together, each in our own way but wholly supportive of each other. Willing to listen to each other and learn from each other, share with each other, and help each other where possible,” he said.



Diaconal Minister Faith Nostbaken, an ecumenical officer in the ABT Synod, has had the opportunity to preach in three Moravian congregations over the years, and has been an instrumental part in fostering our relationship with the Moravian Church.

"I know I benefit just as much as they do from the ecumenical gift exchange that happens when we come together. I learn from their hymns and their liturgy, and also

from their hospitality," she said.

"Wherever we can, let's foster closer relationships with other churches and do more together, because I think it reflects better to the world that Christians work together. We are enriched by sharing each others' traditions, we are enriched by a larger body working together for mission."

Though the full communion relationship was only affirmed in 2023, the intentional partnership

On Sunday morning at Assembly 2023, Anglicans and Lutherans were introduced to a Moravian Lovefeast (a literal interpretation of "agape"). It is a simple meal filled with singing that seeks to remove social barriers and strengthen the spirit of unity and goodwill among all people.

In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things love.

-Moravian Church motto



REV. STEPHEN GOHDES

between our churches has been nurtured for years, and spearheaded especially by those in the ABT Synod.

“The reason it began in Alberta is because there are only a few pockets of Moravians in the country, and Alberta is one of those hotspots. So there’s been a desire to do more partnership here,” explained Nostbakken.

“We’re had, in our Synod, for years, Lutheran pastors doing interims at Moravian churches. That was very common, so this for us seemed to be the next step,” said Bishop Kochendorfer.

“[We have] lots of similarity in terms of theology and practice. I really, really appreciate their worship style, and their leadership style.”

In March 2023, the synod held its first clergy day for all Moravians, Anglicans, and Lutherans in the Edmonton area, held at a local Moravian camp.

“It was an opportunity to really get to know each other. There was worship, including a communion service that was Moravian, led by two Moravian pastors, a panel discussion with the Anglican bishop, myself, and one of the Moravian pastors, about who we are. It was a relationship-building kind of focus. How can we move forward together? What does that look like?” said Bishop Kochendorfer.

The Moravians were also invited to the Alberta Synod’s Synod Study

Alloya Guest, Pat Wolf and Steve Gohdes from Christ Moravian Church in Calgary, showing handcrafted Moravian beeswax candles that are used on Christmas Eve at all Moravian churches throughout Alberta. The star above is a special feature of the Moravian Church symbolizing the “Bright Morning Star found in Jesus Christ.”

Conference in February 2024. Held in Canmore, AB, Bishop Kochendorfer invited rostered leaders from the Moravian Church's Northern Province. There, they shared some history on the Moravian Church.

Bishop Kochendorfer said that a goal moving forward in this relationship will be to have a Moravian with voice and vote on synod council.

"We've had, for many years of full communion, an Anglican on our Synod council, and we're moving so that hopefully this fall with a change in our constitution and bylaws that a Moravian will be there as well,

that's really important for us," he said.

Deacon Nostbakken will be attending the Moravian Synod (equivalent to Convention in our terminology) in Edmonton as a Lutheran representative, in June 2024.

Even if there are no Moravian pockets in physical proximity to certain regions, synods, or congregations, there is still opportunity to be ecumenically engaged, and expand our learning on our relationship with Moravians.

"There's opportunity for education, about what it means to be in full communion, even if you're not

going to fill each other's call because you don't have pulpit nearby. Bring information to our people, have a way of highlighting the whole ecumenical movement, particularly full communion relationships. We're stronger together where we reflect something more complete of the gospel," said Deacon Nostbakken.

"Let's expand our understanding of what it means to be the body of Christ. Let's make our church walls more porous. Full communion relationships enrich our experience as Lutherans, and creates more opportunities to work in a larger body." ●

Effective Partnerships

Celebrating 100 years of partnership in Sudan

MNO Synod staff and members of the MNO Synod Global Mission Committee participated in The Sudan Mission Centennial—the celebration of 100 years of Lutheran ministry and presence in what is now Cameroon and Central African Republic (CAR). The event was hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Global Mission in Minneapolis & St. Paul, MN, July 8–9, 2023.

The event included learning about the history of the work in Cameroon and CAR as well as hearing about the realities of the church today—which is fully led by local leaders.

Via technology, the bishop of the church in Cameroon, Église Évangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun (EELC), and the president of the church in Central African Republic, Synod Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne de la République Centrafricain (ELG-CAR), both expressed a firm commitment to the ongoing need for the church to be present and visible as a witness to the gospel.

Bishop Jason Zinko, Bishop Craig Schweitzer (Western North Dakota Synod), Bishop Constanze Hagmeier (South Dakota Synod), Bishop Jean Baguele (EELC) and



DEACON ERIN POWER

MNO Synod staff and members of the Global Mission Committee joined over 125 people to celebrate Lutheran co-operation in Cameroon and Central African Republic.

President Joseph Ngogé (ELG-CAR) reflected on the future of global partnership and accompaniment.

Our synod has a long-standing relationship with the National Lutheran Church in Cameroon. The formal relationship has been in place since 2003, when MNO Synod Bishop Richard Smith and EELC President Thomas Niewye met while at the Lutheran World Federation Assembly in Winnipeg.

Our synod partners with the EELC in supporting the Kids in Cameroon program and in expanding opportunities for women in leadership.

—Deacon Michelle Collins



Relational Leadership



DAVID KLASSEN PHOTOGRAPHY

CLAY 2023 participants pose for a group photo.

Ashes and Embers

The beloved youth ministry event, CLAY, returned to an in-person gathering in 2023, for the first time since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.



In August, around 300 Lutheran and Anglican youth and leaders from all across Canada gathered at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, ON, for Ashes and Embers—the first in-person CLAY gathering since Threads in Thunder Bay, ON, in 2018, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, a CLAY gathering, En Route, was held remotely, online.

The biennial CLAY (Canadian Lutheran and Anglican Youth) gathering is a deeply cherished component of youth ministry in our church that brings together youth from all over the country to cultivate their relationships with God and each other, and inspire their leadership within their faith communities. Canadian Lutheran Youth Gatherings (CLYG) have a history that stretches back to 1966, with the event becoming a joint gathering of the ELCIC and Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) in 2010.

“This is one of the most clear ways we can see [the ELCIC’s] vision statement being lived out,” said Deacon Gretchen Peterson, assistant to the bishop for youth and leadership.

“God’s grace and unconditional love calls us to be a diverse, inclusive community that celebrates all and upholds life-giving relationship.”

Engaging with youth in our

church, encouraging their involvement, and most of all, enabling them to be leaders in their congregations and communities is fundamental to not only our health as a church, but also our growth, theologically and relationally. The value youth bring to our ministry through their perspective and lived experience is pivotal.

Pastor Nathan Fong in Burnaby, BC, and Pastor Aneeta Saroop in Vancouver, BC, were the keynote speakers at *Ashes and Embers*. During their experience at CLAY, they

bore witness to the depth of theological thinking and compassion that the youth of our church have.

“I love youth ministry, because I think it is where the actual wisdom of the church is, this is where the actual theology of the church is. What I was hearing, was deep theological thinking about faith and about the church, and about their own lives,” said Rev. Saroop.

“The energy [at CLAY] reflected the amount of faith that these kids have. The amount of yearning for more, for knowing that what we do



Throughout the gathering, participants engaged in a number of learning opportunities.

ERIN ZHANG



TAMMY KIRKWOOD

The youth group from St. Paul's, Ellerslie, Edmonton.



TAMMY KIRKWOOD

CLAY 2023 was a time to rejoice in being together again.

in the world is important, that who we are, who we see ourselves to be and our contribution to society is important," said Rev. Fong.

"If we don't listen to what our youth are telling us, then we're missing a big part of what it means to be Christian and witnesses to God's love and grace in the world," Deacon Peterson reflected.

"Youth ministry suffered across all churches, it was one of the things that was deeply impacted by COVID. So we entered our first in-person CLAY again knowing it was a time to rejoice in being together, but also that it would be a time of rebuilding and hoping to support youth ministries locally, in that having this in-person event would

keep fuelling that rebuilding process across the country," she said.

Darya Saèd (19) from Good Shepard in Coquitlam, BC and Joey Mathers Scholl (18) from Trillium in Waterloo, ON both attended *Ashes and Embers*. They both attended *En Route* online in 2021, but *Ashes and Embers* was their first in-person CLAY gathering.

Even though it was a smaller gathering, the impact was just as significant, and allowed participants to get to know one another better.

"I had heard lots of great things from older youth that had gone to Thunder Bay, P.E.I. and even Kamloops. I knew this was going to be a smaller CLAY because it's the first one after [COVID], but I honestly liked the smaller numbers, it made it feel like I got to recognize every face," said Saed.

"You got closer to more people," Scholl added.

"I think it's pretty impressive that we got almost 300 people for



ERIN ZHANG

Youth and their leaders gathered for four days to worship, sing, play, and learn together.

the first CLAY back in-person, and I think [numbers] will continue to grow because it seems like a lot of the youth had a really good time, including both of us, and word of mouth is such a powerful thing.”

They both reflected on the importance of CLAY gatherings for community-building and youth engagement within the church.

“I think it’s really important that youth meet other youth with like-mindedness. We all believe the same things but have slightly different traditions to go with it, so it’s important to see how other people worship,” said Saed.

“Going to worship with youth is so much different than going to your regular youth services with all

the adults... it’s cool that youth can see how worship can be different, and more interactive and engaging for younger people, and hopefully be able to take some of that home with them,” said Joey.

Both Scholl and Saed are youth representatives on the planning committee for the next CLAY gathering, to be held in 2025. ●

Relational Leadership

Serving the global communion; sixteen ELCIC members participate in LWF Assembly

On Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2023, the Thirteenth Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) began from Kraków, Poland under the theme *One Body, One Spirit, One Hope*. In attendance at the week-long gathering were 16 members from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

With roles varying from delegates, advisors, communication team members, presenters, as well as committee chair and key member of the worship planning committee, ELCIC members at the international event served many important roles among the 355 delegates and over 1,000 participants.

The Thirteenth Assembly of the LWF was preceded by the pre-Assemblies and is not only celebrating the communion and contexts of member churches, but also carrying out the official functions of the Assembly.



ELCIC participants at the Thirteenth Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation in Kraków, Poland.

One such function was the selection of a new president of the LWF, to serve as the presiding officer of the assembly, the council and the executive committee. With Rev. Dr. Panti Filibus Musa (Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria) having fulfilled his term, a new president, Henrik Stubkjaer (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark) was elected. Serving as chair the assembly nominating committee, Synod of Alberta and the Territories Bishop Larry

Kochendorfer shared his hope for the Assembly.

“I am hoping to experience and be transformed through an even deeper and wider experience of our Lutheran communion,” Bishop Kochendorfer said. “I am looking to dig deeper into its vast and varied contexts, realities, challenges and opportunities, as well as the many impactful resolutions and actions living out of the Assembly theme: *One Body, One Spirit, One Hope*”

A commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion

The ongoing work of the church.

In 2023, hard work continued on the equity, diversity and inclusion goals of the ELCIC.

Notably, 2023 was the first full year in which the role of assistant to the bishop for diversity, equity and inclusion was operating in the National Office. Carmen Ramirez assumed the new role in August of 2022, a position that came from recommendations of the three ongoing task forces: the Task Force on Addressing Ableism, the Task Force on Addressing Racism, White Supremacy and Racial Injustice, and the Task Force on Addressing Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia.

These task forces, which were formed out of convention action at the 2019 ELCIC National Convention, have been engaged in ongoing work and recommendations since then.

At the 2023 ELCIC Special Convention in Calgary, each task force had four sessions on the agenda to introduce their work as well as facili-

tate a Q&A and table conversation. Each task force had a final session where the task force recommendations formed motions for convention delegates to consider and vote upon.

The recommendations of the Task Force on Addressing Racism, White Supremacy and Racial Injustice include, but are not limited to, ongoing certified anti-racism training, the creation of Racial Justice committees in each Synod (based on the Eastern Synod model), the development of an ELCIC National Church Theological Study on Anti-Racism, White Supremacy and Issues of Racial Injustice to encourage ongoing reformation, and that the ELCIC review and modify nomination, election and hiring processes to ensure that intentional efforts are made to achieve diversity, equity and inclusion. The 2023 ELCIC Special Convention voted unanimously to adopt the report and recommendations of the task force.

The recommendations of the Task Force on Addressing Ableism include implementing ongoing accessibility and ableism training, and that the work of the task force continue for at least another three years. Delegates at the Special Convention voted unanimously to adopt the report and recommendations of the task force.

“We as a church have an opportunity to create environments welcoming to all by asking how we can help and then providing opportunity for each person to be their full self as a child of God,” said Deacon Sarah Rudd, who chaired the Task Force on Addressing Ableism in 2023, at the Special Convention.

The recommendations of the Task Force on Addressing Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia include exploring options for recommending how to provide reparations for 2SLGBTQIA+ folx who have been harmed by the ELCIC in the past, an increased usage of



CARTER BROOKS

pronouns, the creation of a naming liturgy service to publicly affirm and celebrate transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse members of the ELCIC, the implementation of ongoing certified SOGIE (sexual orientation, gender identity and expression) training, the encouragement of congregations to begin a “Reconciling in Christ” process.

Delegates voted to adopt the report and recommendations, with

an amendment for the addition of a new recommendation, encouraging the ELCIC “to create national resources which would support listening, safe conversations, and discernment at all levels of the church around healthy, consensual relationships, including ethical non-monogamous relationships.”

The recommendations included a public apology to 2SLGBTQIA+ folk who have been harmed by the

Members of the ELCIC Task Force Addressing Racism, White Supremacy and Racial Justice Issues at the 2023 ELCIC Special Convention— L-R: Rev. Paul Gehrs, Rev. Ron Flamand, Richard Kotowich, Rev. Aneeta Saroop, Carmen Ramirez, Dr. Mary (Joy) Philip.



Members of the Task Force Addressing Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia included, L to R: Rev. Lindsey Jorgensen-Skakum, Haiden Werboweski and Rev. Steve Hoffard.

ELCIC, which has taken place on multiple occasions, including one at the Special Convention.

Ramirez reports that in 2023,

12 ELCIC members participated in two different Deepening Understanding for Intercultural Ministry sessions through the Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning. One session was held in Paris, Ontario in March, and the other in Edmonton, Alberta, in July. Previous to this year, only three ELCIC members had attended these sessions.

Ramirez is also developing a series of four anti-racism workshops for

the ELCIC, with the first two workshops being offered in 2023. She is also working with the task forces to develop future workshops addressing ableism and homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia.

“I’m available to those who need my help in any way, visiting churches and things like that. If you need me, I’m here, and we can set up a meeting or have a conversation in any way,” Ramirez emphasized. ●



Presenting the report from the Task Force on Ableism: (L–R) Judy Verge and Deacon Sarah Rudd.

Church leaders join in solidarity

On Sept. 5, spearheaded by The United Church of Canada (UCC), denominational leaders from the UCC, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Anglican Church of Canada and the Presbyterian Church in Canada visited Camp Morgan to stand in solidarity with those gathered there. Among them was ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson.

Camp Morgan has been situated near the entrance of the Brady Road landfill since December 2022. It is one of two current camps (Camp Mercedes at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights) within Winnipeg honouring the lives of two missing and murdered Indigenous women, Morgan Harris and Mercedes Myran, who are believed to be homicide victims buried at one of Winnipeg's landfill sites.

Recalling her experience that day, Johnson said that, "along with the sense of the real tragedy of the space



ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson (far right) joined multi-denominational leaders at Camp Morgan to stand in solidarity with those gathered there.

and what that mean, and the loss of people's lives, there was a lot of emotion."

"A commitment to reconciliation, and racial justice, must be upheld," she said, "because we believe that God has created every one of us in God's own image, and that includes how we look at race."

ELCIC members step forward in support of partners in the ELCJHL

At the beginning of November, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada launched an appeal to support our partners in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL).

The ELCJHL Appeal was launched following an update ELCJHL Bishop Dr. Sani-Ibrahim Azar shared on the impact of the Israel-Hamas war with the ELCIC.

Bishop Azar noted that due to the increase in violence, schools have had to close; checkpoints between the West Bank and Jerusalem and between areas such as Ramallah and Bethlehem have been nearly completely closed off, preventing many people in these communities from being able to travel to and from work; and there has been a devastating impact on families whose livelihoods are connected to the tourism and hostility industry. Bishop Azar asked for support in helping to cover one month of salaries of teachers at ELCJHL schools and half of the salary for ELCJHL pastors, which amounts to \$263,000.

"These are our Lutheran siblings," Bishop Johnson noted, referencing a recent conversation with Bishop

Azar who shared with her that the appeal and support from the ELCIC will make a significant difference in people's lives at a time when the local church is needed more than ever.

To assist in reaching the ELCJHL emergency appeal donation target, the ELCIC's National Church Council approved a one-time contribution to the appeal for \$100,000. The Eastern Synod—which serves as a companion partner of the ELCJHL—provided another \$50,000 in support. Combined with support from across the church, the appeal is close to reaching its goal.



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU *Give...*

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) functions through THREE major expressions: **locally** as congregations, **regionally** as synods and **nationally** as the ELCIC.

Each expression of the church has unique ministries as well as ministries which are shared with the other expressions.

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

In 2022, ELCIC members gave over **\$58,016,248** in regular offerings to support the Church through these three expressions of the ELCIC.

Collecting offering at Abundant Life, East St. Paul, MB. L-R: Amelia Nichol, Christina Nichol, Kathy Yerex, Jim Griffiths, Bruno Yerex, Bea Yerex.



CATLIN KOSTNA



\$55,055,769 was used by **CONGREGATIONS** to fund local ministries. Your weekly offering supports the work of your congregation and its ministry.

\$2,960,515 was shared to support the ministry done through **ELCIC SYNODS**. This includes supporting congregations and leaders within your synod.



\$822,607 was sent through the synods to the **NATIONAL CHURCH** to support the wider mission of the ELCIC.

FIND US Online

The ELCIC has a social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, X and YouTube.
Share *your* stories and photos about living Lutheran — use the hashtag **#myELCIC**.



stmattkw Some of the pets and their humans who joined yesterday's blessing of the pets.

#blessingoftheanimals #stfrancisofassisi #myelcic #partofthefamily



mnosynod Chocolate, construction paper, battery-operated candles, markers and random magazines can only mean one thing: youth leader training. Hold youth leaders in prayer this afternoon as we gather for learning, fellowship and worship together. #myELCIC



Living our Faith: Love

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

333 subscribers

Like, Comment, Share, Clip, Save

VOCATIONAL SUNDAY

Holy God, we pray for our church as we continue to engage in renewal: that the Spirit would guide us and enlighten us, and that in living into a renewed vision of the church we may all be strengthened for ministry in and for our church, and in and for our world. We give you thanks for the gift of being called through baptism. Bless the church with faithful pastors and deacons. Inspire us all to pattern our lives on our Lord Jesus Christ, in gratitude to you and in service to others. Grant us courage, patience, and vision, and strengthen us all in our Christian vocation of witness to the world and of service to others.

Amen. — *F&W*, pg. 24

talents *Applied MISSION*
VOCATION MINISTRY calling


#vocationalsunday



Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
July 2, 2023 · 🌐

Assembly 2023 concludes for the Lutherans. Prayers for all who are traveling home and with the Anglicans as they complete their final business sessions and conclude later this afternoon. What a joyous and wonderful gathering. #fullcommunion #myELCIC



 moravianchurch.np Christ Moravian Church in Calgary, Alberta was the setting for a joyful celebration of the growing relationship among the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), the Anglican Church of Canada, and the Moravian Church Northern Province. Betsy Miller preached a message on unity; Archbishop Linda Nicholls, Primate of the Anglican Church and Rev. Paul Gehrs, Assistant to Susan Johnson, National Bishop of the ELCIC, brought greetings. Other guests from our siblings in Christ included the Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer, Scott Sharman and Pilar Gateman.

A proposal to enter a full communion relationship with both the ELCIC and Anglican Church of Canada will be considered at the 2023 Northern Province Synod. The Moravian members of the dialogue team are James Lavoy, Matt Gillard, Rowan Simmons, and Blair Couch.

#moravian #moravianchurch
#evangelicallutheranchurchincanada #elcic
#anglicanchurchofcanada @canadianlutherans
@canadiananglican

Towards a world without gender based violence.

#ThursdaysInBlack

Towards a world without rape and violence
THURSDAYS IN BLACK



 revdrjerry Queen City Pride Parade 2023 Luther College at the University of Regina Luther College High School #myELCIC #lutherpresident

National Office

MEET OUR TEAM

ELCIC National Office staff:

- (1) Rev. Susan C. Johnson • *National Bishop*
- (2) Peace Anthony-Idoko • *Director, Finance and Administration*
- (2) Carter Brooks • *Communications Specialist*
- (4) Norman Coull • *Proofreader, Canada Lutheran*
- (5) Catherine Crivici • *Graphic Designer*
- (6) Trina Gallop Blank • *Assistant to the Bishop for Communications and Resource Generation*
- (7) Rev. Paul Gehrs • *Assistant to the Bishop, Justice and Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations*
- (8) Desiree Mendoza • *Office Manager, Meetings and Communications Co-ordinator*
- (9) Shalini Narula • *Office Assistant and Canada Lutheran Circulation*
- (10) Deacon Gretchen Peterson • *Assistant to the Bishop, Youth*
- (11) Carmen Ramirez • *Assistant to the Bishop, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion*
- (12) Bayea Saboleh • *Accountant*
- (13) Rev. Peter Wall • *Assistant to the Bishop, Worship*



The National Office team share fellowship in varied activities together, from worship and joint lunches with our CLWR office neighbours; to lunches out with visiting deployed staff and Christmas cookie decorating.

Thank you
WITH APPRECIATION

We warmly thank all who assisted with this annual report.

Your contributions through writing, editing, photography, printing and support illustrate how we are making a difference in so many ways together, *Living Out God's Grace & Unconditional Love.*





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