



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

ANNUAL REPORT **2024**



ON THE COVER (clockwise)

The annual Ice Cream Giveaway by the chaplains at the University of Calgary —the longest standing university tradition, running for over 50 years.

Photo: Faith and Spirituality Centre staff

Campers reading outdoors at Footpaths, an after-school community outreach and faith formation program at Trillium, Waterloo, ON.

Photo: Nathan Mantey

Catherine Schmidt, president of the Lutheran Student Movement, enjoys a "Lutheran latte" at the chaplain's office at the University of Edmonton.

Photo: Rev. Richard Reimer

AT RIGHT

Camp staff together at Luther Village, Kenora, ON. The camp is proud of its 75% rate of returning staff.

Photo: Luther Village



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FROM THE NATIONAL BISHOP



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

I'm doing a lot of looking back these days—looking back over the 18 years I've served as your National Bishop. It's bittersweet to have this be the last annual report where I will greet you.

My hope and prayer for you going forward is that you will continue to become a healthier church, with effective partnerships, encourage relational leadership and lead with compassionate justice. The words and priorities might change slightly, but this is what it means to be disciples of Christ, following Jesus in this troubled world. More than ever, we need the strength and accompaniment of each other to stay faithful.

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

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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



Encouraging
Relational Leadership



Seeking to cultivate
Effective Partnerships



Leading with
Compassionate Justice

2024 YEAR-AT-A GLANCE

The work of the ELCIC spans the country and reaches abroad, living out our vision that God's grace and unconditional love calls us to be a diverse, inclusive community that celebrates all and upholds life-giving relationships.



National Bishop Susan Johnson preaches at the Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem.

JANUARY

18: The ELCIC took part in recognizing and uplifting the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity—an ecumenical celebration which traditionally is held each year from January 18–25. This year's theme was based on Luke 10:27—*You shall love the Lord your God... and your neighbour as yourself.*

23: National Bishop Susan Johnson preaches at the Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem during a solidarity trip with our Global Mission partner, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

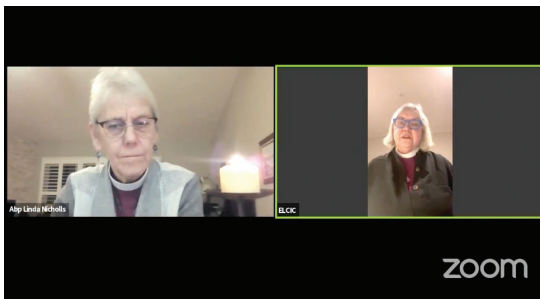


FEBRUARY

4: 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.

16: ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson and ACC Archbishop Linda Nicholls hosted an online prayer session to conclude the Day of Prayer and Fasting for Israel/Gaza and Ukraine.

ELCIC Bishop Susan Johnson and ACC Archbishop Linda Nicholls host an online prayer session.



ELCIC Congregational Insurance Information Session

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in conjunction with Aon cordially invites you to attend a webinar on church insurance. This will be an informative session geared towards helping church councils understand the insurance marketplace and what to look for when placing and renewing insurance coverage for their church.

The ELCIC insurance program is open to all Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada congregations. The program is administered by Aon Canada, a leading global professional services firm providing a broad range of risk, retirement and health solutions.

If you are unable to attend the session, it will be recorded and available after the webinar.

Saturday, March 9
1:00 p.m. Central
SCAN THIS QR CODE TO REGISTER

22: The ELCIC in partnership with AON hosts the first of two congregational insurance information sessions as webinars for those interested among Church Council members to help understand the insurance marketplace and how to properly renew coverage for their churches.

25: The ELCIC lifted up Diaconal Ministry Sunday, celebrating the witness expressed through service (*diakonia*) and leadership offered by the ELCIC's diaconal ministers.

MARCH

15: ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson wrote to Canadian health and justice ministers expressing support for just and universal access for all to dignified, quality mental health care services.

19: ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson shared a pastoral message with the church and 2SLGBTQIA+ community on upholding the dignity of all people.



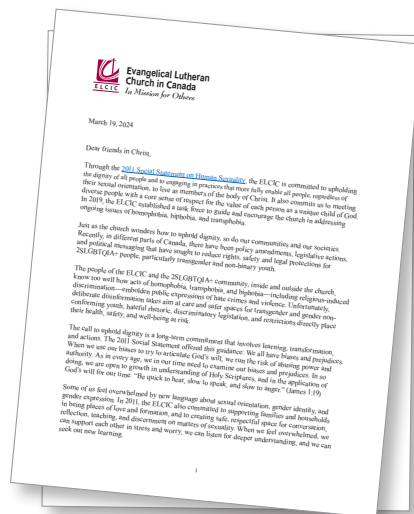
DIACONAL MINISTRY

in the ELCIC



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 Slave Trade (March 25).

21: “We must stand against anti-semitism whenever we hear or see it,” wrote ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson and ACC Primate Linda Nicholls in a joint statement in advance of Holy Week.

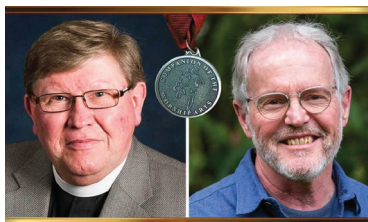


2024 YEAR-AT-A-GLANCE

APRIL

8: The ELCIC and ACC announced the recipients of the 2024 Companion of the Worship Arts (Rev. Lyle McKenzie, ELCIC and the Ven. Dr. Richard Leggett ACC). They were further honoured in July at the 2024 National Worship Conference.

16–23: Lutheran and Anglican leaders made the public call for their congregations to take action against climate change in their letter to the church in advance of Earth Week. The ELCIC lifted up Earth Week 2024, which also included Earth Day on April 22.



2024 Companion of the Worship Arts recipients (l-r) the Ven. Dr. Richard Leggett ACC and Rev. Lyle McKenzie, ELCIC.

28: ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson attends the Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Unida (IELU) Assembly, to which she congratulates Pastora Mariela Alejandra Pereyra on her election and installation as IELU President during closing worship at Congregacion La Paz, Eldorado, Argentina. ILEU is a partner church of the ELCIC and is also a companion synod partner with the Saskatchewan Synod.

MAY

For the fifth 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.

3: The ELCIC's national publication, *Canada Lutheran*, was recognized with six awards at the annual Canad-

ian Christian Communicators Association annual awards program, including the A.C. Forrest Memorial Award which recognizes excellence in socially conscious religious journalism.

7: The ELCIC and ACC held a webinar on the theme of church engagement for social and ecological justice work: from discernment to action.

9: ELCIC Assistant to the Bishop for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Carmen Ramirez hosted two online racial justice workshops, free to join for all ELCIC members.

22: ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson participated in the Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage: Canadian Churches for Just Peace as part of the Church Leaders Pilgrimage to Parliament Hill in Ottawa. In addition to the pilgrimage, the church leaders also participated in a media conference and met with members of Parliament.



National Bishop Susan Johnson with IELU President Pastora Mariela Alejandra Pereyra.

**Racial Justice WORKSHOP**

Looking for a way to start conversations on addressing racism in the church and Canadian society?

Sign up for an upcoming online Racial Justice Workshop.

Carmen Ramirez (she/her), ELCIC's Assistant to the Bishop for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion will hold two workshops on racial justice. These are intended to be taken together.

REGISTRATION

ELCIC members Free
Presbyterian members \$50
Sign up early as each session will be capped at 50 participants.

SESSION 1 — MAY 9, 2024
11:30 am EST to 2:00 pm EST
[Click here to register](#)

SESSION 2 — MAY 9, 2024
3:00pm EST to 5:30pm EST
[Click here to register](#)

23: After years of thoughtful consultation and hard work, the ELCIC excitedly unveiled its brand new logo and tagline. The journey began several years ago, when a dedicated task force, with input from members across the church, crafted a vision statement that truly reflects our collective hopes and dreams. Inspired by this bold vision, a journey began to redesign the logo and tagline in a way that visually expresses this call. The modern design signifies energy and forward momentum. The new tagline encapsulates our call to mission and ministry.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
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24: Delegates to the MNO Synod Convention re-elected Rev. Jason Zinko as synod bishop on the first ballot. Zinko received 59 votes out of a possible 76.

31: Delegates to the Saskatchewan Synod Convention elected Rev. Dr. Ali Tote to serve as their next bishop. Tote was elected on the second ballot.

JUNE

The ELCIC joined in lifting up National Indigenous History Month—a month for building relationships, deepening engagement with Indigenous history and discerning action for healing and reconciliation.

21: On the fifth ballot, delegates to the Eastern Synod Assembly elected Rev. Carla Blakley as their next bishop.

24: On the fifth ballot, delegates to the Synod of Alberta and the

Territories Assembly elected Rev. Trish Schmermund as their next bishop.

JULY

18–21: The ELCIC held its National Worship Conference—The Stones Cry Out: Praying with the Land—in Regina. Attendees had the opportunity to talk and pray about ways to transform worship authentically and explored experiences, biases and hopes for new ways of being the church.



STONES CRY OUT:
Praying with the Land

ELCIC/ACC National Worship Conference
July 18–21, 2024 — Regina, Saskatchewan

Left: National Bishop Susan Johnson participated in the Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage at Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

Below: Bishop Jason Zinko, Bishop Ali Tote, Bishop Carla Blakley, Bishop Trish Schmermund.



2024 YEAR-AT-A-GLANCE



AUGUST

The Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth (CLAY) released a video announcing that the next CLAY gathering will be held August 2025 in Saskatoon, SK. The theme for the 2025 gathering is Rooted and Rising.

SEPTEMBER

The ELCIC's Task Force on Addressing Ableism officially changed its name to the Task Force on Ability and Inclusion, through a motion passed at the September 2024 ELCIC National Church Council meeting.

OCTOBER

1: ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson joined ecumenical leaders in writing to the House of Commons on finding peace in the Philippines.

7: National and synod bishops wrote to the church, inviting continued prayer and advocacy, on the one-year anniversary of the war between Hamas and Israel.

18: The ELCIC joined with partner Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) in expressing concern for the situation in Lebanon. Working together with other organizations in the region, CLWR is providing critical, life-saving aid including emergency food, drinking water, shelter, medical care kits, hygiene kits and more to those in dire need.

18: National Bishop Susan Johnson joined with Archbishop Anne Germond of the ACC in writing a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on the urgent need for peace in Palestine, Israel and the Middle East.

27: National Bishop Susan Johnson preached at Congregacion Filadelfia for Reformation Sunday, one of 14 congregations that make up the Iglesia Lutherana del Peru (ILEP). ILEP is a partner church of the ELCIC and is also a companion synod partner of the BC Synod.

NOVEMBER

5: The first ever ELCIC Cross-Canada Lutheran Day of Learning took place both online and in-person from Waterloo, ON. An event geared towards bringing the church together from coast to coast, the day-long experience featured 12-hours of activity, presentation and education, concluding with the final segment of a five-part Bible study, Experiencing Gospel, by Rev. Dr. Gordon Jensen.

National Bishop Susan Johnson preached at Congregacion Filadelfia, one of 14 congregations that make up the Iglesia Lutherana del Peru (ILEP).



7: National Bishop Susan Johnson and Synod of Alberta and the Territories Bishop Trish Schmermund wrote to the church on the rights and safety of transgender and non-binary youth.

12: The ELCIC held a series of online workshops on addressing racism in the church. Carmen Ramirez, assistant to the bishop for diversity, equity and inclusion led the four sessions.

17–24: The ELCIC recognized and lifted up Restorative Justice Week, inviting congregations to reflect on how restorative justice can be applied to daily challenges. The work highlighted by Restorative Justice Week is carried out through the Canadian Council of Churches, of which the ELCIC is a member.

20: The ELCIC joined with people and organizations around the world in observing Transgender Day of Remembrance, honouring the memory of the transgender people whose lives were lost in acts of anti-transgender violence.

DECEMBER

The ELCIC joined with people around the world in observing 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence, an initiative spearheaded by partner KAIROS.

1: Beginning December 1, 2024, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the Anglican Church of

Canada and the Moravian Church in Canada started using a joint cycle of prayer with recommended petitions for use each Sunday throughout the 2025 calendar year.

7–9: The ELCIC welcomed World Council of Churches general secretary Rev. Dr. Jerry Pillay to Winnipeg for an ecumenical partners visit to Canada. Rev. Dr. Pillay participated in a tour of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, met with Indigenous church leaders, had an ecumenical dinner with young adults, visited the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, spoke at a panel discussion co-hosted by the Manitoba Multifaith Council and shared a breakfast at the ELCIC National Office with church leaders and representatives.

25: National Bishop Susan Johnson and Archbishop Anne Germond shared a joint video greeting, wishing Canadian Anglicans and Lutherans a peace-filled Christmas.



National Bishop Susan Johnson and Anglican Archbishop Anne Germond shared a joint video greeting for Christmas.



World Council of Churches general secretary Rev. Dr. Jerry Pillay shared a breakfast at the ELCIC National Office with church leaders and representatives.



Supporting experimental and creative expressions of ministry

Many community initiatives receive support through the ELCIC Mission Fund.



Faith Gaston's children, Joslyn and Jaxon, who come in often to help organize donations.



Some of the physical items donated to the program.

COURTESY MEGAN KELLEY

The ELCIC Mission Fund continues to help support congregations and missional projects from coast to coast to coast. A legacy gift from a predecessor church, it is entrusted to the ELCIC as an inheritance for the current and future church and used to provide funds for current Canadian mission projects, while the capital is saved as a gift for the future church. Serving as an annually dispersed reserve, the funds are administered at the synodical level, with oversight from the National Church.

In supporting upwards of 50 different projects across the country over the past year, the fund was very active in 2024. With hundreds of thousands of dollars once again awarded to congregations and other organizations to help support their outreach initiatives, the grants helped fund an impressive list of both experimental and traditional mission outreach activities.

"The funds are ideally designed

to encourage experimental and creative expressions of ministry in our synods," said ELCIC Mission Committee Co-Chair Rev. Adam Snook. "We want people and groups to experiment, we want them to take risks, we want them to try something new, we want them to be brave and bold and not be afraid of failing. We want them to learn and try something that perhaps without these funds wouldn't have been possible."

Funds are dispersed from the National Church to all of the five ELCIC synods, where they are put to use in a variety of ways. Most synods utilize an application process as operated by the bishop, a committee or the office of the bishop. Over the years, the funds have been used for work relating to the welcoming of newcomers, building Indigenous relationships, as well as helping sponsor food insecurity programs and continuing outreach for the homeless.

There are other avenues to which

synods have spent the money, as well, says ELCIC mission committee Co-Chair Deacon Michelle Collins.

"The MNO Synod is one of those synods that is using part of the funds to staff a position that it otherwise would not be able to supply," she said. "The opportunity that these funds have created to support the synod in this capacity to help do its work should not be minimized. There is a growing interest in paying attention to your context and the particular realities of the communities and asking the question, 'what are the needs, and how can we help?' And doing so from a perspective of God's abundance rather than the church's scarcity."

One such project is that of the Mom to Mom Box outreach program of Trinity Lutheran in Fort Erie, ON. Co-organized by cousins Megan Kelley and Faith Gaston, the initiative draws from the idea of mothers helping other mothers with basic, daily needs.

"The two of us worked together to create the base of the program, and then put it into motion a couple years back," Kelley shared. "Entering our third year now, we are primarily donation-based. We accept everything from clothing, toys, diapers, to anything that has to do with kids, children, teens and parents. We take the donations, sort through them,

and then twice a month we are open for business. They sign in and then take anything they need in a box or bag."

With no parameters on who is allowed in or limits as to the number of items taken, Kelley and Gaston know that people from all areas and walks of life can be in need at any given time.

"It's not just clothes and toys either," Kelley added. "Big ones are diapers and wipes, shampoo, a bunch of different hygiene stuff too. We have had cribs here; it all depends on what is donated. It's basically what you can fit into three grocery-sized bags. We originally had a connection to boxes, but we realized soon that a lot of our pop-



Healthier Church

Helping our vulnerable neighbours

The congregation of Hosanna, Edmonton, has been evaluating its food security and assistance ministry. This work includes serving as one of the longest-running foodbank distribution depots, providing meals for the Inner-City Pastoral Ministry (ICPM) Sunday services, being a part of a local winter-warming meal program, and offering five community meals a year.

Most of this was disrupted by COVID. During COVID we continued as a food bank depot, but our community meals were shut down. The ICPM and winter warming meals became bag lunches. None of these ministries were the same as before, with the personal contact and community-building aspects primarily gone.

Declining resources and aging volunteers hindered our ability to re-establish the programs. We knew we

wanted to help but weren't sure how that would happen—then came the phone call that changed things.

The person on the phone asked if we would consider letting them use our kitchen to prepare food for people in need as part of a group that prepared a hot meal and served it on Sundays at a local park. Their kitchen was set to be leased to another agency, and we had one that fit.

This group, Helping the Homeless in West Edmonton, operated totally on faith. They didn't even have a bank account. As part of our contribution to the work, we now administer their funds, volunteer, donate and provide necessary resources (water, power, cleaning supplies, etc.). Our annual "Socks, Undies and So Forth" drive collection was distributed at the Christmas meal this year.

Hosanna couldn't possibly provide this ministry alone. Together, we serve between 200 and 350 hot meals a week! I have long known that the Spirit often works in mysterious ways. However, I was not expecting it through a phone call.

Now, the biggest challenge has become trying to conduct worship while the pleasant aroma of lunch emanates from the kitchen.

—Rev. Dr. James Hendricksen



Using the Hosanna kitchen for Helping the Homeless.



Left: Rev. Michael Mills with Elder Duke Redbird. Above: Marc Meriläinen performing in the Redeemer sanctuary as part of the program.

ulation that came in were walking, so they couldn't necessarily carry a box or two all the way back. We made the switch to bags and it has worked out quite well."

With the program taking off, Kelley and Gaston opened their homes to serve as drop-off centres. But with items showing up around the clock, they knew a change was needed.

"Our pastor suggested we apply to the synod for some funding and grants, as we weren't getting enough from the community to be able to get what we needed outside of donation. We submitted our proposal to the ELCIC Mission Fund and it was deemed successful," she said. "We ended up using the money to create the basic infrastructure of the program. We purchased a bunch of totes for clothing storage and organization. We purchased a second shed for our property at the church so we could store all our

items, and then used the remainder to purchase personal hygiene and baby products, as those are always big movers."

The Mom to Mom Box outreach program helped upwards of 2,000 individuals in 2024. Kelley says she has submitted a proposal to the Eastern Synod for continued funding for the 2025 calendar year.

Just an hour-and-a-half north up Highway 403 you will find Redeemer Lutheran in Toronto, the congregation that hosted Spirit Songs: Indigenous Truths on June 1. Serving as the latest in a series of local events, Spirit Songs offered Indigenous words, poetry, songs and teachings from a variety of local artists in an ecumenical event.

"Spirit Songs was very well received," said Redeemer Church Council Chair John Kleiner. "Our congregation has taken significant steps to inform itself and remain educated around areas of truth

and reconciliation in recent years. I had the idea for a number of years of doing a Spirit Songs event that dovetailed with that. It soon became clear to me that this was not an event that I could program as I had in the past. This needed to be Indigenous-led."

Organizing the event, renting the space and providing for the artists all takes resources. According to Kleiner, that is where the ELCIC Mission Fund came into the picture.

"Without the support, we would not have been able to mount this program on our own, there was no way," Kleiner said. "The costs involved far outstripped what we would have been able to generate. We have very small sanctuary and our capacity is just not enough. The support from the Mission Fund was absolutely essential in order to be able to offer this program as we envisioned it. So, we are extremely grateful." 🌻



Walking together

Partnerships are at the heart of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

Through mutual support, shared faith and deep relationships, the ELCIC walks alongside our Global Mission churches, learning from one another in times of both challenge and hope. As ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson nears the

conclusion of her final term this year, she reflects on the profound impact of these partnerships.

Whether her visits were conducted out of solidarity for sibling churches enduring difficult times, or that of fiduciary responsibility around awareness of the programs we support, her experiences continued to serve as a reminder of strength through partnership.

"These partnerships are important because they help us stay out of the bubble of only concerning ourselves about our own church," Rev.

Johnson said. "These trips have led to deepened personal relationships with leaders and members of those churches. And for our church, I hope that in all of these partnerships that we have, that it has strengthened those global companion relationships. I think it allows our church and people at the congregational level to say they are in partnership with people in Peru, or partnered with people in Jordan and the Holy Land, and elsewhere."

With roughly 10 percent of Bishop Johnson's time dedicated to her global companion travels each year,



MADDI FROILAND, ELCJHL

Top: Visiting at an ELCJHL partner school in Bethlehem. Right: Dedicating new classrooms in one of the schools of the IELU in Jose C. Paz, Argentina.



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National Bishop Johnson and Bishop Ibrahim Azar visiting the Director of the Jerusalem Waqf, Sheikh Azzam al-Khatib, in his office near Al Aqsa Mosque.

2024 included visits with partners in Peru and Argentina, as well as Jordan and the Holy Land.

Her visit to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) came on a request from Bishop Ibrahim Azar for a solidarity visit. His church was feeling especially despondent, given the ongoing war in Gaza and how the increased violence in the West Bank was affecting the church, its ministries, the diaconal ministry, congregation life and the work of the schools.

“Our partnership with the ELCIC—and especially with Bishop Susan Johnson—has been very fruitful for many years. Bishop Susan has been

a wonderful friend in solidarity and prayer and was the chair of our international COCOP partner board for several years,” said Bishop Azar.

“Over the last few years, we have faced significant challenges as a church including the COVID-19 pandemic and the last 15 months of war. Support from our siblings in the ELCIC toward our Diaconal work and our Educational Ministry has been crucial to maintaining our ministry as Christians in the Holy Land during a time when our people are in great need.”

With the ELCIC currently in a time of transition in leadership, while dealing with the realities of becoming smaller in size, Bishop Johnson

says her travels to partner churches are both rewarding and life-giving.

“The reality is, these days we are often feeling a little pinched as our church becomes smaller,” she reflected. “It’s really helpful for us to have partners like the ELCJHL, which only has six congregations, or the churches in Peru and Argentina, both of which are smaller than we are, to help us remember that it’s not about size but faithfulness that matters in the church. And it doesn’t even matter what size we are or end up being. Our partners teach us that we will still have the capacity to do ministry to remain a part of the Lutheran world Federation, and to have companions

around the world, who will help us as we transition into being a smaller church.”

The ELCIC has companion relationships (a partnership between ELCIC synods and other Lutheran World Federation churches) with the Lutheran churches in Peru (ILEP)—BC Synod, Argentina (IELU)—Saskatchewan Synod, Colombia (IELCO)—Synod of Alberta and the Territories, Guyana (ELCG)—Eastern Synod, Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)—Eastern Synod, and Cameroon (EELC)—Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod.

“Bishop Susan has been a sister in the journey of this small and minor church in the Global South and we have always felt that the ELCIC has accompanied and supported us in the particularly challenging years both in Argentina and Uruguay,” IELU President Rev. Mariela Pereyra said.

“We are grateful to God for the partnership and are very excited about the future visit of a group from the ELCIC again to the IELU; we pray for their ministry. We are grateful for the presence and accompaniment of Bishop Susan Johnson

in all these years that the Good Lord has called us to serve in this

wonderful work, from one end of our continent to the other. We remain faithful through God and will continue walking together hand in hand.”

Rev. Ofelia Dávila Llimpe, who serves as the president of the ILEP, was quick to point out the importance of Bishop Johnson’s visit to Lima in October. The trip was especially meaningful for Rev. Llimpe, as the opportunity to physically spend time together and learn from one another through the missional work was something that really hadn’t happened in the ILEP since COVID.

“Walking together as a church with ELCIC and ILEP companion churches is a blessing,” she shared. “We feel accompanied and distances are shortened when you come and share with us. For us it was very good to know your experiences and expectations and we listen to

Left: National Bishop Johnson with Pastor Yoli and Pastor Irene at ILEP’s church in Iquitos, Peru.

Below: Meeting with congregation members in Iquitos.



PHOTOS: TRINA GALLUP BLANK

each other as a family of faith. God calls us to share the good news as our journey weaves networks of commitment and listening while we continue developing the mission in the Amazon in Peru.”

Having travelled to visit these partner churches quite regularly over the course of her 18 years as

National Bishop, leaving Argentina for the final time was an emotional goodbye for the outgoing officer.

“We were just finishing up the bus trip on our way back from where the assembly was held in a different part of the country when we started saying farewells,” Bishop Johnson said. “But the tears that

came up, and especially my tears, as I realized that it would be the last time I visit in this role, saying goodbye to those relationships. Even as they look forward to their ongoing partnership with our church and with the next bishop, just the sadness of saying goodbye, that was really memorable for me.” ✝



Effective Partnerships

Lutheran Campus Ministry Saskatoon

Lutheran identity and Lutheran Campus Ministry (LCM) are closely intertwined. It’s not much of a stretch to refer to Luther himself as our “first campus chaplain.” As it has been since its Reformation beginnings, campus ministry is a dynamic, creative and active ministry which gives us a glimpse of the church’s growing edge.

In late-2023, LCM Saskatoon held “Shining Light”—a meal with entertainment and speakers to bring folks up-to-date on campus ministry and build support for the ongoing work. Thanks to hard work from the LCM board in organizing the meal, everyone (including the always-hungry students) went away satisfied. A free-will offering during the event raised just under \$10,000.

As a caring ministry on campus, LCM has changed the way we partner on campus. At our on-campus office in the USask Community Centre, we work closely with the Peer Health team. We partner with the Muslim faith leader as he provides another day for “Good Breakfast” and have strong help from the Roman Catholic chaplain Fr. Andre, who has become part of the University counselling services. Most notably we are now fully partnering with the Ecumenical Chaplaincy



Students at the Good Breakfast provided by LCM, Saskatoon.

who represent the United, Anglican and Presbyterian churches on campus. They contract with Chaplain George for 10 hours of ministry each week. Our ministry of care is becoming increasingly integrated as we collaborate.

LCM Saskatoon continues to operate a five-room dorm at the Campus Centre. This fall all our rooms are full. Along with three homegrown Lutheran students we have students from Kazakhstan and Tanzania. Our building is 20 years old and repairs are always just around the corner. Despite economic challenges, the Campus Centre gives us the opportunity to do ministry in ways that few other groups can do. It opens the door to the care we are called to in the gospel.

—George Hind



Winds of change

A time of meaningful transition within the ELCIC.



DAVID SOLHEIM

Bishop Ali Tote, Saskatchewan Synod.



Bishop Carla Blakley, Eastern Synod

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Over the course of a month from late-May to late-June, the ELCIC's synodical leadership changed in three of the five offices of the synod bishops.

With Bishops Sid Haugen (Saskatchewan Synod), Larry Kochendorfer (Synod of Alberta and the Territories) and Michael Pryse (Eastern Synod) choosing to not let their names stand for re-election to their long-term synod bishop roles, a trio of new bishops were elected into office. This officially began a transition in direction and leadership that saw the three new bishops installed for the start of their respective six-year terms later in the fall.

Meanwhile, delegates at the Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod convention re-elected Bishop Jason Zinko for his second term on the first ballot in late May. Bishop Kathy Martin, who serves as the British Columbia Synod Bishop—was not up for election this year as she has

another three years remaining on her term, which began January 1, 2021.

The first synod to see a change in leadership was that of the Saskatchewan Synod, which elected Rev. Ali Tote on the second ballot on May 31. Rev. Carla Blakley (Eastern Synod) and Rev. Trish Schmermund (Synod of Alberta and the Territories) were the final two bishops elected—each coming on the fifth ballot

at their respective conventions in late-June.

While they are spread out across the country, the three newly-elected bishops share a common goal—to build a kinder, more inclusive Lutheran Church. None of them, however, is expecting an easy road ahead.

“We will go with the winds of change. Some churches are redeveloping, some are closing and others are sharing space. This is all part of



CARTER BROOKS

Bishop Jason Zinko, Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod.



BISHOP KATHY MARTIN

Bishop Kathy Martin, British Columbia Synod.

God's work. We are not alone. There's a lot of hope in this. I'm very excited about the future of the church, and it's okay that it's going to be different," says Blakley, who has since taken up office in Kitchener, ON.

Synods gather every three years in their respective conventions, where delegates elect officers, bishops and council members. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these gatherings have not taken place in-person in six years.

"Inclusion is about how we view

one another in all of our differences and our humanity," Schermund said. "It's a way of seeing all of our humanness and not being afraid of the other. God made this incredibly diverse world and we're still learning how to love that diversity."

"There are a lot of things that the church at large needs to own up to. As a woman in ministry, I bring a different approach to these things. I'm not afraid of controversy and conflict but I won't stand for people being excluded or harmed in the work of ministry. That's pretty ideal-

istic but that's what we strive towards," she added.

In Saskatchewan, Bishop Tote continues to lift up the work of the ELCIC Task Force Addressing Racism, White Supremacy and Racial Injustice as a focal point. At the 2023 ELCIC Special Convention, the ELCIC received recommendations from three task forces that focus on inclusion, diversity and equity for all. A native of Cameroon, Tote says he hears regularly from other Black individuals that the church should be more thorough with inclusivity and diversity.

Tote was humbled by the amount of support he received in the election and admits that the amount of trust placed in him has been "overwhelming."

"I'm going to listen carefully. If they have that much trust in me, it means they're looking at me to do that which they are longing for," he said. "I'm going to be paying attention to what motivates them, what they're seeing and what we need to work on. The strong mandate for me is to listen and act together."

With the change of leadership at three points across the National Church, one more election is still to come at the 2025 National Convention: the role of National Bishop. Following 18 years of service, Rev. Susan Johnson announced she will be stepping down from her role.

"It's a huge time of change for the church," she said. "Part of me wondered if I should stay on for sta-

**Bishop Trish Schermund,
Synod of Alberta
and the Territories.**

COURTESY BISHOP TRISH SCHERMUND



bility, but it feels like a good time for me to step away. I think we need fresh leadership and a new bishop with new ideas and perhaps a little more energy.”

“I think the church has become more outward looking during my

time as bishop. We’ve become a more missional church, and I think people are taking seriously their responsibility to do mission in their own communities, not just to think about themselves as a club for members, but participating in

God’s mission in the community,” Johnson added.

The election for National Bishop will take place in Winnipeg during the National Convention set for July 10–13, 2025 at the University of Manitoba. ✠



Relational Leadership

Walking in the light

There is something very special that occurs when women gather in a place where they feel safe, honoured and accepted. In our over-scheduled, hectic lives it’s so important to take time to reflect, study scripture, enjoy good food, sing, laugh and play together. Thirty women gathered on Feb. 24, 2024 at New Hope, Regina under the theme “Walking in the Light” where we welcomed women from the community, our congregation and other area churches for our congregation’s 18th annual women’s retreat.

Our goal for the women who attend is that they will leave embracing the precious gifts that God offers for our lives. We hope that participants will feel refreshed spiritually, physically, mentally and socially. A delightful breakfast brought us together in the morning. A nutritious lunch, and break times with goodies to share kept us fueled throughout the day.

As retreat leaders, Rev. Wanda Walter and Rev. Darlene Harrison invited the women to consider “the light of God” in their lives.

Rev. Walter focused on the text from Matthew 5:14–16 reminding us that we are a light of Christ to the world, while Rev. Harrison explored the story of Jesus and woman of Samaria from John 4:1–42.



DARLENE HARRISON

Hand-decorated gift bags for retreat participants.

The day concluded with Holden Evening Prayer and the celebration of Holy Communion.

When reflecting on the day, one woman commented, “Thank you for creating a safe place to risk and be vulnerable. Sharing our faith stories was my favourite part.” Others said, “The day was a blessing to me.” and “I loved the music, movement and messages.”

Why not take time to consider how you can be the light of Christ in this world?



Climate change, climate justice

An injustice rather than a tragedy.



COURTESY ÉTIENNE EASON

Marching in a climate demonstration in Ottawa.

For the ELCIC, caring for creation is not just a responsibility, but a calling, woven into our mission for justice and faithful stewardship. Across the church, Lutherans are finding ways to respond, from advocacy and activism to everyday choices that reflect our commitment to sustainability.

One such example of that is Étienne Eason, a 20-year-old creative-writing student and climate change activist from Montreal who has been featured in *Canada Lutheran* thanks to his work in activism over the past year. “When even just talking about the climate crisis can leave us feeling locked-jawed and paralyzed, taking action may feel daunting, futile. Yet now I know: whatever steps we take—God will be there,” Eason wrote in his column, “By grace, through faith, in jail” for the July/August 2024 issue of *Canada Lutheran*.

Eason, who is originally from Ottawa, studies at Concordia University and regularly attends St. John’s Lutheran. But it’s not in the pews where his deepest prayers are offered.

“This is a really big challenge for us and sometimes the only way to get our community to notice is to keep talking about it, keep praying about it,” Eason shared. “A big part

of the problem is not only seeing a policy shift in the government, but also seeing a cultural shift. Right now, when the polls come out asking about what the top priorities are for Canadians going into an election, the climate crisis rarely even cracks the top five. It’s just not an issue that’s very deeply ingrained

into people’s decision making. We really need to make it known that this sort of behaviour or cultural approval is unacceptable. Change starts with each of us.”

Eason is a big believer in taking public transit or riding his bicycle



ÉTIENNE EASON

when able. He has a learner's permit, but is in no rush to graduate to a full driver's license. He says his sister has given up eating meat for environmental reasons, while he also approves of many of the conscientious decisions he sees his friends, family and other like-minded individuals making on a daily basis. Eason describes the climate crisis as more of an injustice than a tragedy.

"A tragedy is often thought of

as a hopeless situation where you can only sit and watch, and there is nothing you can really do," he said. "But when you frame it as an injustice, that brings to light the fact that we do have choices to make and there are much better choices that we as individuals, and as a society can be making to essentially avoid much of the suffering that's going to come about because of our lack of intervention."

"My generation often gets made

fun of as being called 'soft' and not willing to make sacrifices," he chuckled. "But I definitely do see young people being willing to make changes in their lives with how they eat or how they choose to get around. This age group seems a lot more willing than some generations prior."

This spring, Eason plans to participate in the Pilgrimage for the Planet—a two-day bike pilgrimage from Montreal to Ottawa, involving



Compassionate Justice

Planting seeds

Nature and nurture sound alike for a reason. Good Shepherd, Coquitlam, BC, believed that Earth Day was a wonderful reminder to be proactive and a time to nurture nature. We called upon those interested to form a committee to plan a small event. Much inspiration came from one of our congregants who came forward with artwork, photos and writings; the Earth Day ideas took off from there.

We chose to host the event after a church service in April. We extended our coffee fellowship hour, while congregants and friends were invited to enjoy a time of prayer, plants, pollinators and no plastics!

Outdoors, under our lovely tree canopy we offered a breath prayer station and a tree sensory station. Inside, the stations included informative materials about indoor plants that can improve air quality and emit oxygen, a "fun facts" table about pollinators, gardens, mushrooms and more.

We provided information about our new rose garden which was spearheaded by a parishioner. People enjoyed the origami craft area shared thoughts on



REV. ERIC KRUSHEL

From left to right: Gail Tremain, Ruth Roberts, and Marjun Blishen, hugging a tree.

where they see God in nature on the bulletin.

We wanted to get people thinking about those "imperfect" vegetables they grow... the two-legged carrot or the twisted pepper and why grocery stores don't sell them/why we don't buy them, and the repercussions of this for farmers. Valuable information was posted about the harmful effects of plastic, and people wrote their thoughts.

There was much to see and to learn. It's all about "planting seeds," making changes, and letting love for our creation bloom!

—Gail Tremain



REV. DR. ANDREA WILHELM

Above: Rev. Dr. Andrea Wilhelm biking home from work. Left: Tree planting at First Lutheran, Winnipeg. At far left is Korpo Sailley, a member of the ELCIC Task Force for Carbon Neutrality.

a demonstration in the capital calling on the Canadian government to sign on to the *Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty*. In making the 200-kilometer ride without the help of fossil fuels, Eason and company aim to raise awareness for a journey towards a fossil fuel-free future, while putting the onus on the government to implement the right policies going forward.

In Alberta, Rev. Dr. Andrea Wilhelm is helping lead the ELCIC's charge toward a state of balance between the carbon emitted into the atmosphere and the amount absorbed into the earth. Serving on the ELCIC Task Force for Carbon Neutrality has given Wilhelm a platform to speak out on causes dear to her heart.

"It's about compassionate justice, but it's also a big part of our vocation as followers of Jesus, and as believers in the Triune God to respect creation and to live within the crea-

tional boundaries that God has given us," Wilhelm said. "And we haven't been doing this, especially in first world countries such as here in Canada. And by not doing this, we are not only hurting ourselves, we're also hurting all our relations, whether that is human beings in other parts of the world or our non-human relations."

A member of the task force since its beginning, Wilhelm is pleased to continue pushing towards the ELCIC's goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2050. The goal of carbon neutrality is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to help limit global temperature increases and, therefore, reduce the impacts of climate change. The ELCIC has developed a Green House Gas (GHG) Inventory Calculator for Congregations to assist faith communities in monitoring emissions, something Wilhelm is a proponent of.

Her practical suggestions for lowering daily emissions include lowering the thermostat, walking or biking to destinations, reducing consumption of consumer goods, refusing to buy overpackaged items, reducing waste, using public transit, driving a smaller or hybrid vehicle, insulating above code, living in a smaller home, using solar power and heat pumps, as well as supporting politicians with earth-friendly agendas.

"It is part of loving God, and loving our neighbours as ourselves," she concluded. "We experience the destabilization of the climate as we speak, with increasingly devastating effects. Stopping the emission of greenhouse gases is imperative for Christians, including myself, to reduce the harm global warming causes to people—including myself and my loved ones—and the rest of creation." 

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 2024, ELCIC members gave over **\$70,596,107** in regular offerings to support the Church through these three expressions of the ELCIC.



\$67,699,448 was used by **CONGREGATIONS** to fund local ministries. Your weekly offering supports the work of your congregation and its ministry.

\$2,115,468 was shared to support the ministry done through **ELCIC SYNODS**. This includes supporting congregations and leaders within your synod.



\$781,193 was sent through the synods to the **NATIONAL CHURCH** to support the wider mission of the ELCIC.





Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Living Out God's Grace & Unconditional Love

OUR NEW VISUAL IDENTITY

Introducing the new ELCIC logo and tagline

The year 2024 was notably highlighted by a time of visible change within the ELCIC's colour scheme, logo and tagline.

Inspired by a new vision statement—as developed through extensive consultation with members across the church—a task force spent significant time putting together a vision statement that properly embodies the collective hopes and dreams of ELCIC members.

"I'm so thankful to the work of the task force and the groundwork they did to lay the steps for what would come next," said ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson. "During the process, it became clear that as part of our work going forward, as we moved into fully living out this new vision statement, it would mean revisiting our logo and tagline."

THE NEW LOGO

Visually, the logo comes together in a modern, contemporary design signifying energy and forward momentum.



The dove and olive branch

Symbolizing love, peace, and hope.



The cross

At the heart of all things is Christ, our faith, the Holy Spirit, and forgiveness.



The open hand

Symbolizing God's grace, welcoming, openness.

ICON DEVELOPMENT



FINAL DESIGN



The new logo brings all these elements together, presenting a contemporary expression of looking to the future of the church, while representing elements of faith presented in a modern way.

The simple, compact design pays homage to the previous logo's burgundy branding, while the gradation of colour moving from left to right provides a sense of energy and forward momentum.

THE NEW VISION STATEMENT

God's grace and unconditional love call us to be a diverse, inclusive community that celebrates all and upholds life-giving relationships.

Through this, ELCIC members are challenged to be outward-focused, rooted in God's grace and unconditional love, while being called forward as a diverse, inclusive community that celebrates all and upholds life-giving relationships.

THE NEW TAGLINE

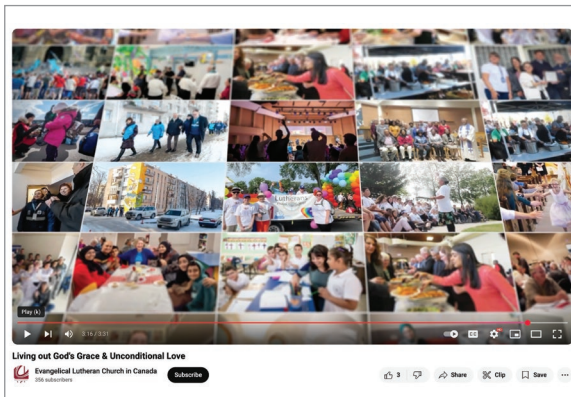
The new tagline encapsulates the heart of the ELCIC's vision:

Living Out God's Grace & Unconditional Love

A simple, memorable statement serving as a reminder of the commitment to embrace diversity, foster an environment that is inclusive, and nurtures the life-giving relationships that reflect the transformative power of grace and love.

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**.



Kimberlynn Mueller -McNabb
May 29, 2024 · 🌐

How excited am I? #myELCIC a freshly painted banner for the sanctuary. This is being the church! This is the new Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada logo and tagline. Lutheran Church Of The Resurrection is living this on the East Coast!

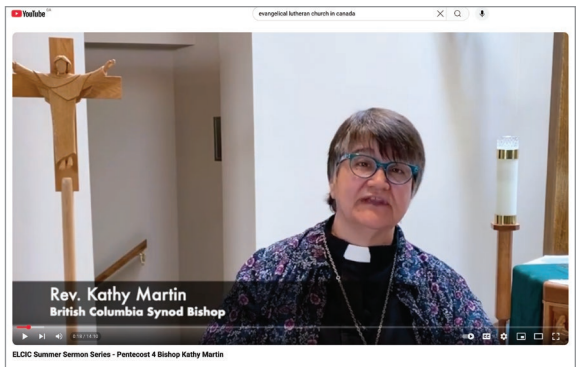


canadianlutherans Spotted at camp! So great to connect with colleague and bishop-elect Trish Schmermund at the lake #myelcic
36w



Messiah Lutheran Church
Winnipeg
October 27, 2024 · 🌐

Giving thanks to God for the gift of baptism and the 4 young people who affirmed their faith and baptismal promises today at our Confirmation Service. #sharegodsloveandgrace #mnosynod #myelcic #sacristyselfie



Connect with others across the church
and see how they're Living Out
God's Grace & Unconditional Love.

MEET OUR TEAM

ELCIC National Office staff

(1) Rev. Susan C. Johnson
National Bishop



(2) Tatiana Aguirre
*Office Assistant and
Canada Lutheran
Circulation*



(3) Peace Anthony-Idoko
*Director, Finance and
Administration*



(4) Carter Brooks
*Communications
Specialist*

(5) Norman Coull
*Proofreader, Canada
Lutheran*

(6) Catherine Crivici
Graphic Designer

(7) Trina Gallop Blank
*Assistant to the Bishop,
Communications and
Resource Generation*



(8) Rev. Paul Gehrs
*Assistant to the Bishop,
Justice and Ecumenical
and Interfaith Relations*

(9) Sarah Malina
Editor, Canada Lutheran

(10) Desiree Mendoza
*Office Manager,
Meetings and
Communications
Co-ordinator*



(11) Deacon Gretchen
Peterson
*Assistant to the Bishop,
Youth and Leadership*

(12) Carmen Ramirez
*Assistant to the Bishop,
Diversity, Equity and
Inclusion*



(13) Lucy Randa
Accountant

(14) Rev. Peter Wall
*Assistant to the Bishop,
Worship*

THANK YOU

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.*





**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in Canada**

400–185 Carlton St., Winnipeg, MB R3C 3J1

Ph: 204-984-9150 Toll free: 1-888-786-6707 www.elcic.ca

Facebook: facebook.com/CanadianLutherans Instagram: instagram.com/canadianlutherans

X: x.com/ELCICinfo ELCIC News and press releases: info@elcic.ca

Canada Lutheran: canadalutheran.ca