

Questions

■ WHAT IS THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN MISSION SUPPORT AND ALWAYS BEING MADE NEW: THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE ELCA?

Mission Support is one way we act as a church together; we count on one another for the mutual work that Mission Support makes possible. However, many ELCA members and congregations are called to give in other ways as well, and this is what *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA* offers. *The Campaign for the ELCA* is a way for us to make designated gifts to the ministry priorities we are most passionate about, above and beyond regular offerings through our congregation. *Campaign* gifts are tracked and spent separately from the Mission Support budget. *The Campaign for the ELCA* is an investment in the future of the ELCA and an extension of our mission and ministry together.

MEET THE NEW DIRECTOR FOR MISSION SUPPORT

The Rev. Margaret A. Payne is the new director for Mission Support. In her role, Margaret shares her passion for stewardship and the life-changing ministries of this church. Ordained in 1984, Margaret served as bishop of the ELCA New England Synod for two six-year terms and as assistant to the bishop of the ELCA New Jersey Synod. She was pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Princeton Junction, N.J., and interim pastor of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Wilbraham, Mass. Margaret and her husband, John, have a Black Angus farm and forestry operation in Shelburne, Mass.

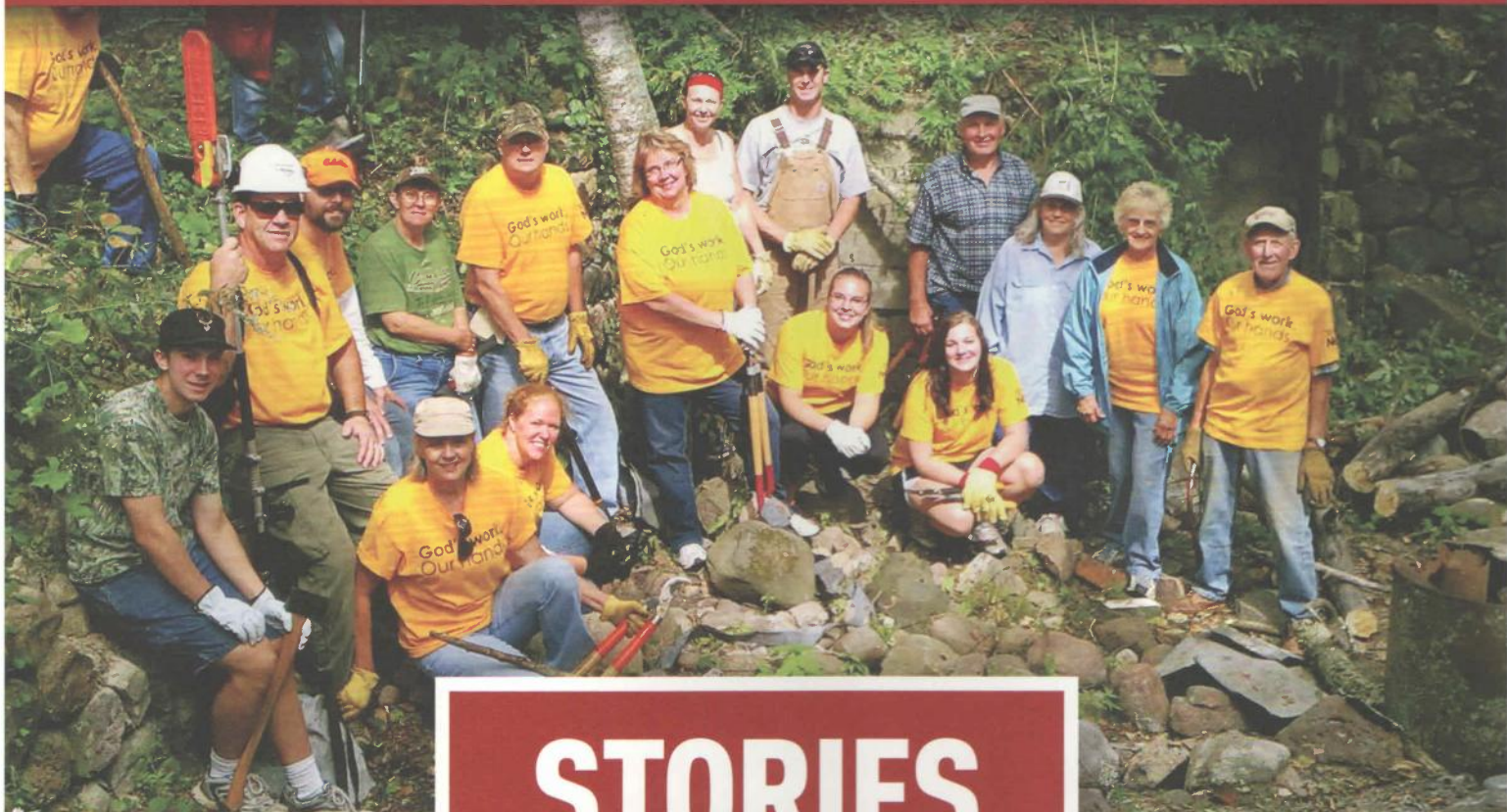
"Mission Support is the commitment that we make to one another to give our fair share, so that the ELCA can continue to be a strong witness to the gospel. Our legacy of theological riches and hands-on ministry are precious gifts that we bring to the Christian community. They are strengthened by faithful giving and demonstrate the power for good that the church brings to the world," she says.

"The Holy Spirit is always busy nudging people more fully into God's work in the world. We are drawn into Bible studies, mission trips and as partners to advocate for justice and peace. Sharing financial resources is another way to live into God's spirit and work, and along with our regular Mission Support, we have an opportunity with *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA* to provide even more strength for mission."

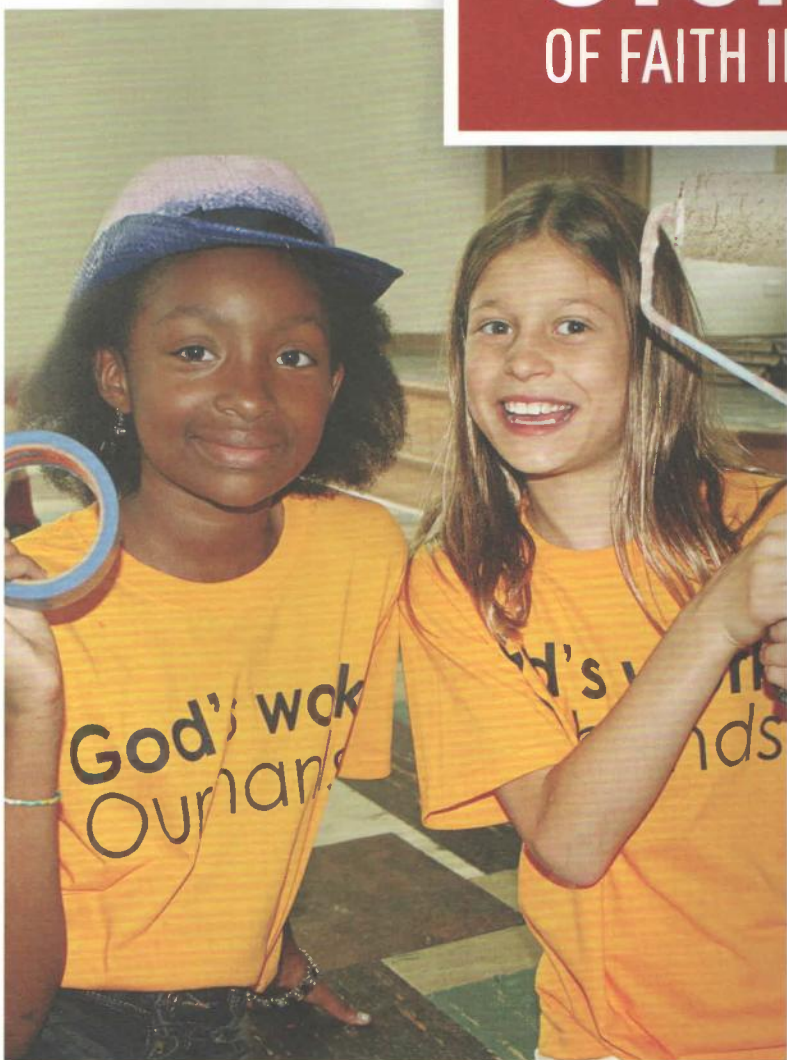


"Our giving binds us together and makes mission possible. It enables God's work to be done by the ELCA in powerful ways both locally and globally."

WE ARE CHURCH TOGETHER



STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION

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GLOBAL CHURCH

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CONGREGATIONS

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ABOUT THE COVER

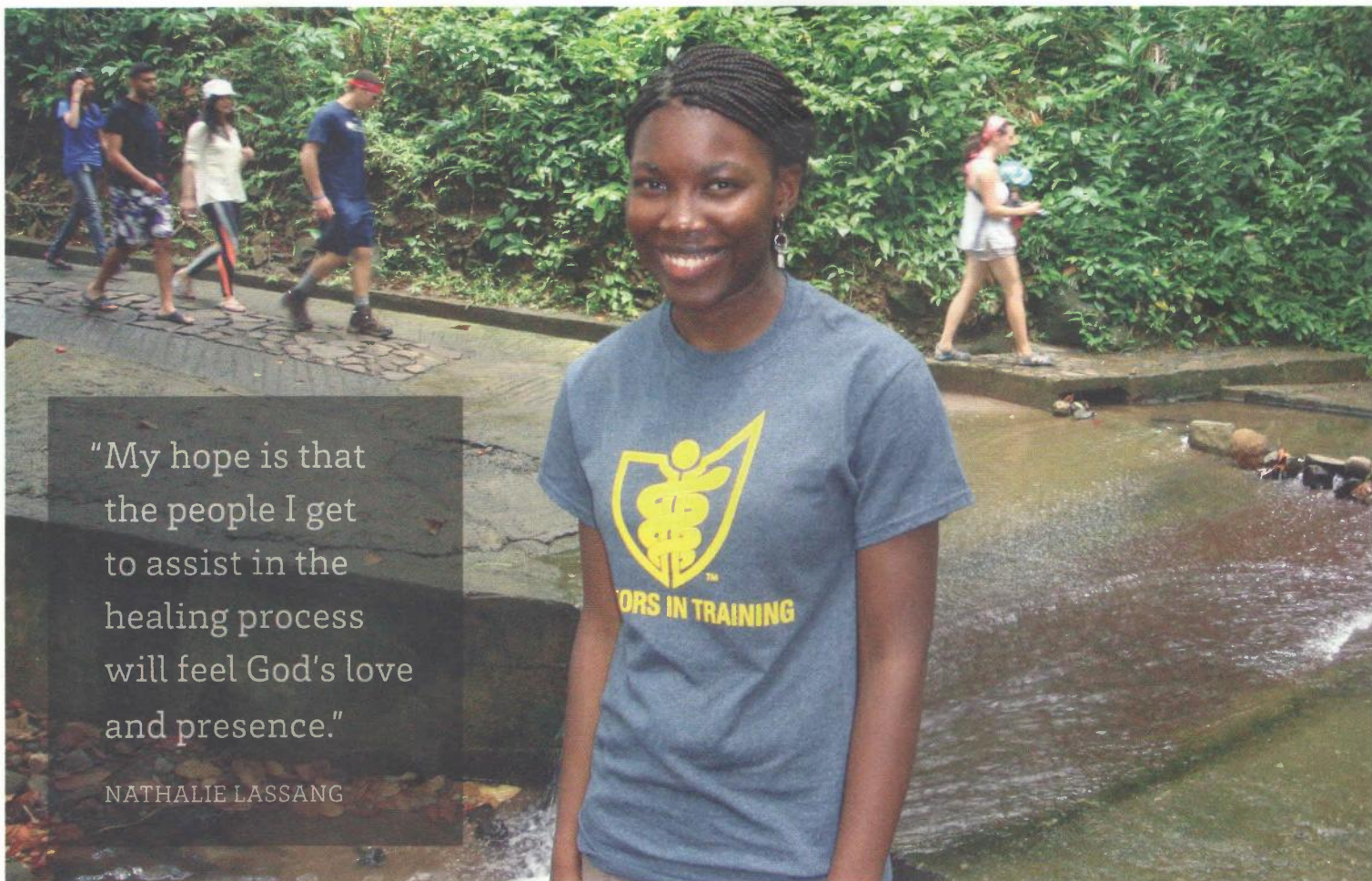
"God's work. Our hands." Sunday is a day of service in which the nearly 10,000 congregations of the ELCA take seriously Christ's call to action to serve our neighbors and share God's love. While congregations work to make their communities a better place every day, "God's work. Our hands." Sunday offers ELCA members a dedicated day to do this work together.

"We could visibly see the body of Christ in action," said Steven Bond, pastor of Advent Lutheran Church in Mentor, Ohio. Dressed in bright yellow "God's work. Our hands." t-shirts, members of Advent began their participation with worship.

"Our worship experience was done in a small sea of yellow," said Steven. After worship, members of Advent went to their various activities, and "we did not need to be told that we were part of something much bigger than ourselves. Being told that we were wearing 180 of the 58,000 t-shirts sold only heightened our realization that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves," said Steven, adding that "the t-shirts also had printed on the back, 'Advent – Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.' We wore those shirts with pride."

"God's work. Our hands." Sunday first took place in 2013 as part of the ELCA's 25th anniversary celebration and again in 2014.





"My hope is that the people I get to assist in the healing process will feel God's love and presence."

NATHALIE LASSANG

A PRICELESS GIFT

Nathalie Lassang has a passion for medicine and Cameroon, her home country. "I have wanted to help people who are ill for as long as I can remember. My desire is to return to Cameroon to work there as a physician," says Nathalie, a medical student and scholarship recipient in the ELCA's International Leaders program.

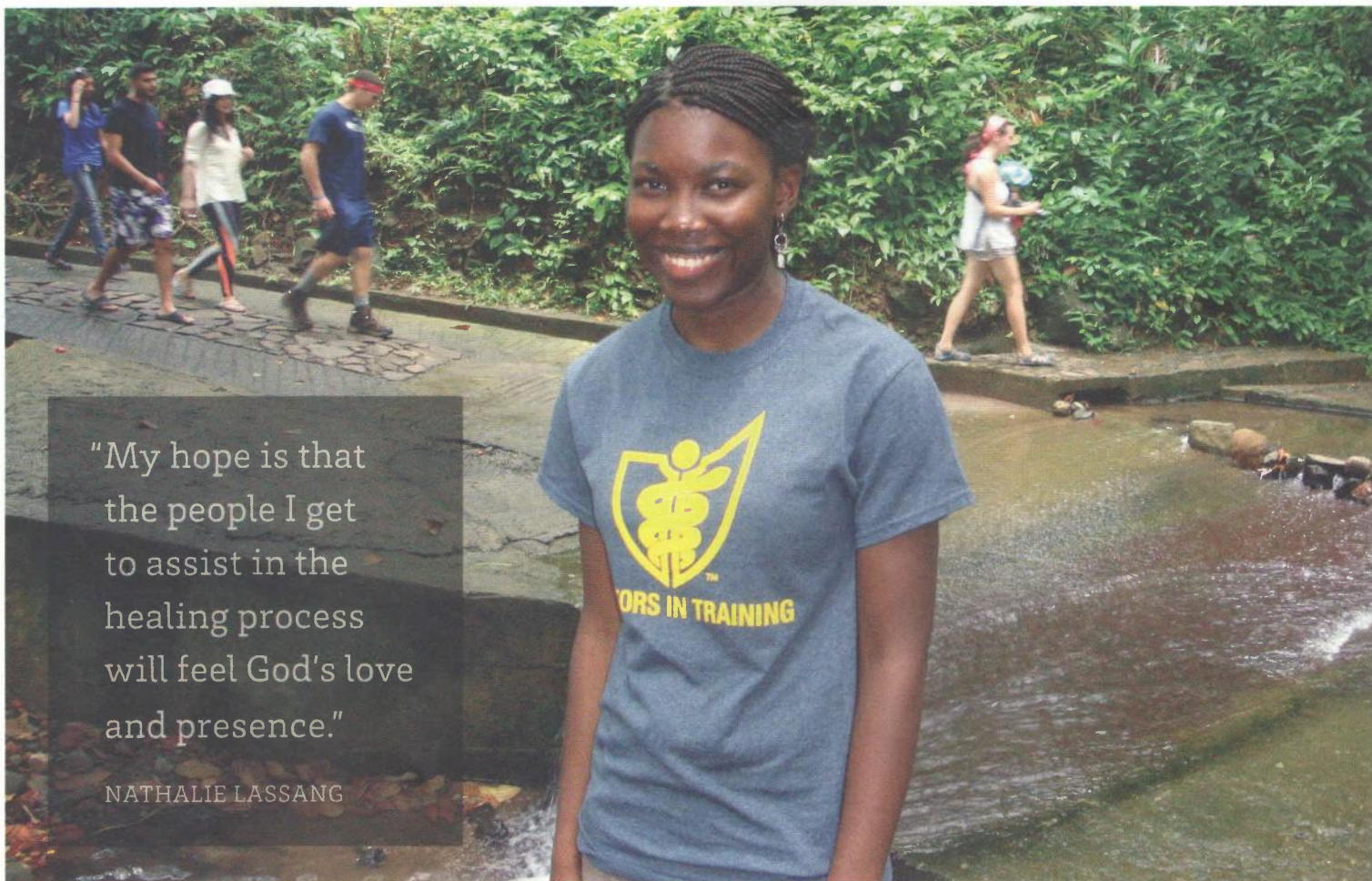
"While growing up, many of us kids would fall sick, especially with malaria," she says. "I wanted to do something to help." And thanks to a scholarship from ELCA churchwide ministries, Nathalie is now pursuing her dream.

Once she completes her studies and residency at Ross University School of Medicine in Dominica, Nathalie plans to return to Cameroon to serve as a physician with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon. Both the ELCA and the Lutheran church in Cameroon are member churches of The Lutheran World Federation.

"My hope is that the people I get to assist in the healing process will feel God's love and presence," she says, adding that her education "is a priceless gift."



Mission Support helps connect with our global companion partners and allows for membership within The Lutheran World Federation, a communion of 144 Lutheran churches around the world.



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DANCING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

On a sunny day in Bellville South, South Africa, a sea of women, young and old, are dancing and singing – full of life. The lyrics “I dance ‘cause I love; dance ‘cause I dream; dance ‘cause I’ve had enough; dance to stop the screams” ring out. Among them is a young woman from the United States, Abby Henderson, smiling and caught up in this one-day celebration of women’s empowerment that she helped organize.

**“I have begun to learn to see
God in all the heartaches,
as well as the joy.”**

ABBY HENDERSON

Abby is serving here through the ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission program, where she is working at the invitation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa, learning about their challenges and joys. Along the way, she’s had an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of young women through teaching dance.

In Bellville South, the challenges of hunger, homelessness, unemployment, rape, drug abuse and lack of education are widespread for women and men. “One of the most difficult parts of this year has been learning to see God in moments where I would be tempted to say God is not present. God is present everywhere, always,” Abbey says. “I have begun to learn to see God in all the heartaches, as well as the joy.” Young adults serving around the world are supported by contributions from family and friends, ELCA members, congregations and the ELCA churchwide organization through Mission Support.



"I can tell that God is raising up
a new group of people."

PASTOR NEWMAN CHU-SHENG CHIU

GENTLY GROWING A CONGREGATION

A birthday, a high test grade, a new driver's license – Pastor Newman Chu-sheng Chiu uses all these occasions to gather young, Mandarin-speaking students for a party and prayer.

Newman and his wife, Pastor Grace Chiu, are mission developers for Glory Lutheran Church, a new ministry supported with help from Mission Support in Torrance, Calif. They meet the young adults they serve by spending time on college and university campuses in Orange and Los Angeles counties, chatting with passing Chinese students who are thousands of miles from home and family.

Sometimes they bring along Chinese food for an impromptu picnic, or gather at Starbucks for coffee and a prayer. And for birthdays and other milestones, they ask students to invite friends to celebrate.

"We can have 15 or 20 young people eating, singing, talking and making new friends. It's so happy!" says Newman. "It doesn't matter what the reason for the gathering is, the one thing we never miss is the message of God."

For some young people, that message can be new. God's story, introduced during the informal campus get-togethers, is the primary focus on Friday nights and Sunday afternoons, when students from all five campuses meet at Glory for Bible study, prayer and worship.

About 70 students have been baptized in the five years since the beginning of Glory Lutheran, a congregation of the ELCA Southwest California Synod. While many have returned to Taiwan, Hong Kong or mainland China, others stay.

Committed to gently, gradually nurturing these young believers, Newman says, "The congregation will develop naturally. I can tell that God is raising up a new group of people."



FOOD TRUCK MINISTRY ON THE MOVE

If you happen to be on the east side of St. Paul, Minn., on Thursdays during lunchtime, there's a place where you can get a fresh, healthy meal — free of charge. Enjoy a homemade meat or veggie hand pie and salad, along with a cool glass of water and a genuine sense of community. And if you feel like hanging around, there's a Bible study and prayer service.

Shobi's Table, a mobile food truck restaurant and portable ministry, reaches out to people who are confronting homelessness and other hardships. Thanks in part to a grant from the ELCA churchwide organization through Mission Support, this new food truck ministry serves about 80 people every week.

Margaret Kelly, pastor of this unique mission start in the ELCA Saint Paul Area Synod, describes it as "a ministry of, by and for folks struggling on the margins in St. Paul."

About two-thirds of the volunteers who prepare food for Shobi's Table have been homeless, and some struggle with mental illness, addictions and unemployment. "They are the evangelists," says Margaret. "I'm there for good order. They walk up and down the block and invite people for a meal."

Noah says, "The reason I became a volunteer is because I was once homeless. I do it for two reasons — to give back to those that helped me and to show those we're serving that there is a way out, if you choose it. It may not be tomorrow, it may not be next year, but things can and will change."

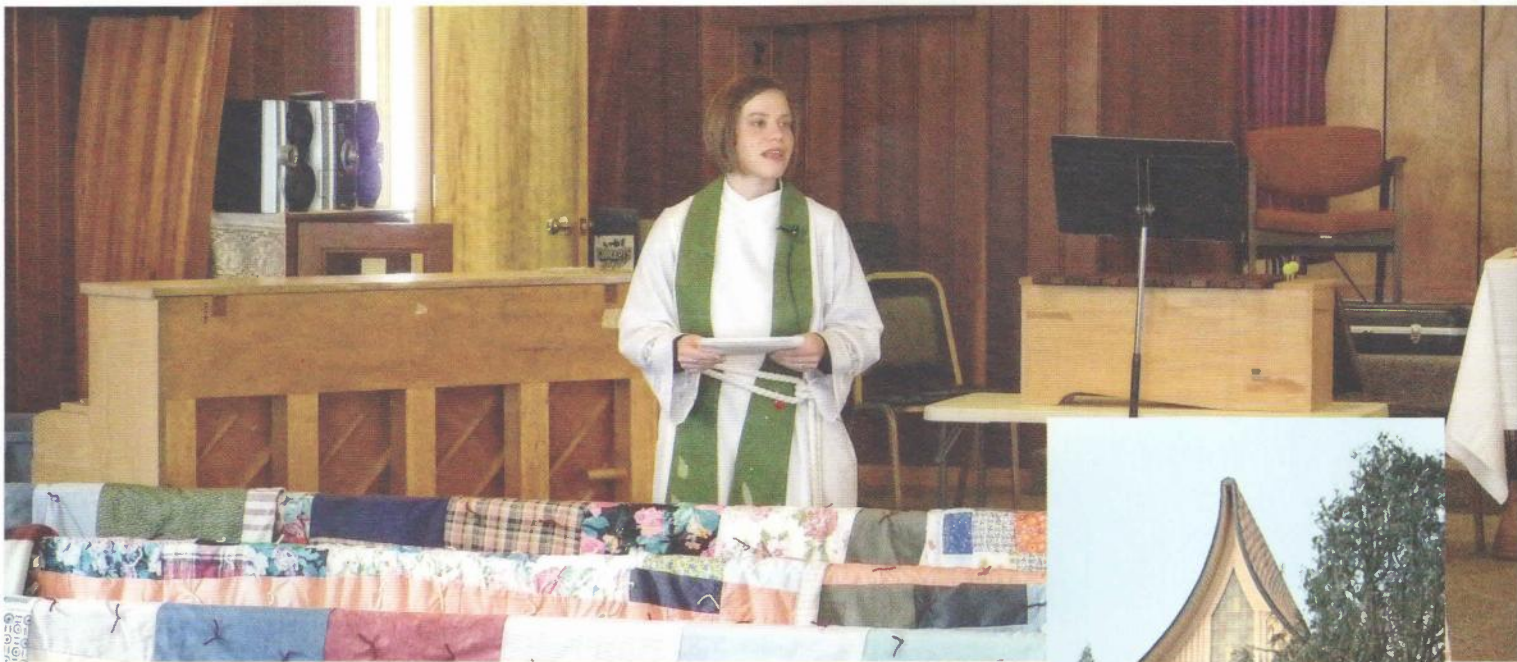
"It seems very big, but we're just serving a meal, saying prayers and being community together."

MARGARET KELLY

This ministry "just keeps opening for us, which is also very scary. We've been called into this and given the resources. It seems very big, but we're just serving a meal, saying prayers and being community together," Margaret explains.

"I'm happy that I have a shoestring budget because I get to be in relationship with some really phenomenal partners," says Margaret. "I wouldn't be able to do this without support from the ELCA, our synod and local congregations."





YOUTH WITH A HOPEFUL FUTURE

"We're different," says Renee Splichal Larson, pastor of Heart River Lutheran Church in Mandan, N.D. "Half of us are incarcerated," she says. "When half of the people at church can leave and the rest are locked up, it makes the struggles of life very real."

Heart River, a congregation of the ELCA Western North Dakota Synod, is housed on the campus of the North Dakota Youth Correctional Center. From its unique location, Heart River serves both the community and youth in the correctional center.

Taylor, 19, was incarcerated for using and selling drugs. When she was released, she came to Heart River. "It was at a time when I was really vulnerable," she said. The congregation "helped me find myself."

But Heart River is not just about reaching out to troubled kids. These young people fully participate in the life of the congregation. "We as a congregation feel it's not a ministry to, it's a ministry with," Renee says. "They are all very gifted and have a lot to offer to the life of the congregation."

When Taylor was released, members of the congregation surrounded her with the gift of a quilt and spoke a benediction – a tradition they do with every young person who leaves the center. "The quilt is still in my room," she says. "For me, it symbolizes a new beginning."

Through the ELCA social statement, "The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries," congregations are called to renewed ministry on behalf of those whom the system affects: victims of crime and their families, the incarcerated and their families, affected communities, those who work in the system and many others.



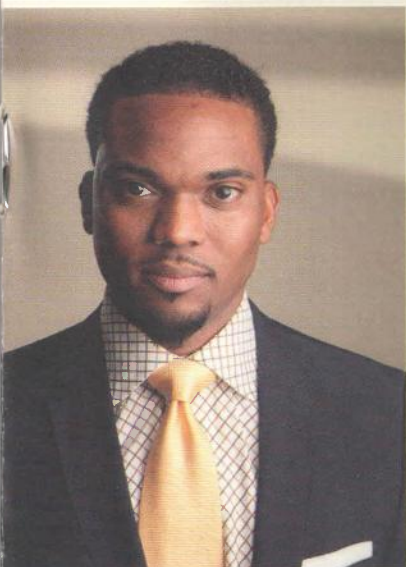
Mission Support helps coordinate the deliberation and discernment of current issues as they relate to the life of the church.



YOUNG ADULTS PUT FAITH IN ACTION

"Among 5,000 feminists, womanists, mothers, daughters and sisters from all over the world gathered in solidarity to uplift critical issues regarding women and girls' rights, there was me – a 'he' for 'she.'"

ULYSSES W. BURLEY III



Today's young adults are part of the Millennial Generation – one of the largest generations in U.S. history. About one-third of these young adults, born between 1982 and 1995, are not affiliated with a faith community.

The ELCA is expanding its vision of what it means to engage a population of young adults, particularly among those seeking to live out their vocations and callings in ways that help people and work for justice and peace.

And through Mission Support, ELCA congregations are offering opportunities for young adults to articulate their faith and engage in the world around them.

A group of ELCA young adults, for example, took part in the United Nations 58th Commission on the Status of Women in New York City, where participants focused on gender inequalities.

ELCA member Ulysses W. Burley III attended the commission as part of a cohort, intentionally including women and men. He reflects that among "5,000 feminists, womanists, mothers, daughters and sisters from all over the world gathered in solidarity to uplift critical issues regarding women and girls' rights, there was me – a 'he' for 'she.' My role at the Commission on the Status of Women was to listen, then learn, then use what I'd learned to speak up and speak out against the denial of the human rights of women and girls."

Ulysses and the other ELCA young adults have committed to a year of further learning, along with helping to identify other young adults to participate in the next round of U.N. deliberations. Through the newly evolving ELCA Young Adults cohort, working in partnership with other ELCA ministries like ELCA World Hunger and the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission program, young adults are coming together to make a difference.

An opportunity like attending the United Nations not only "raises new leaders in the church," says Rozella White, program director for ELCA Young Adult Ministries, but helps young adults "claim who they are and discover their unique God-given gifts and passions, as they engage in acts of service, justice and peace."



HOPE IN DETROIT

"There is so much hope here," says Meghan Sobocienski, diaconal minister at Grace in Action in Detroit, an ELCA ministry in the ELCA Southwest Michigan Synod.

If you only watch the news or read the papers, you are not seeing the entire story of Detroit. God is at work here in ways that can inspire us all and the communities in which we live. ELCA members are helping to build a resurrected community that is overpowering the despair that has taken hold, and declaring the good news of healing and hope.

"What are the longings and giftedness of the community, and how do you pair those together?"

Meghan and Pastor John Cummings, came to southwest Detroit in 2010 to begin a new ministry. And, with a grant from the ELCA churchwide organization made possible by Mission Support, Grace in Action was born. Gathering in a rented

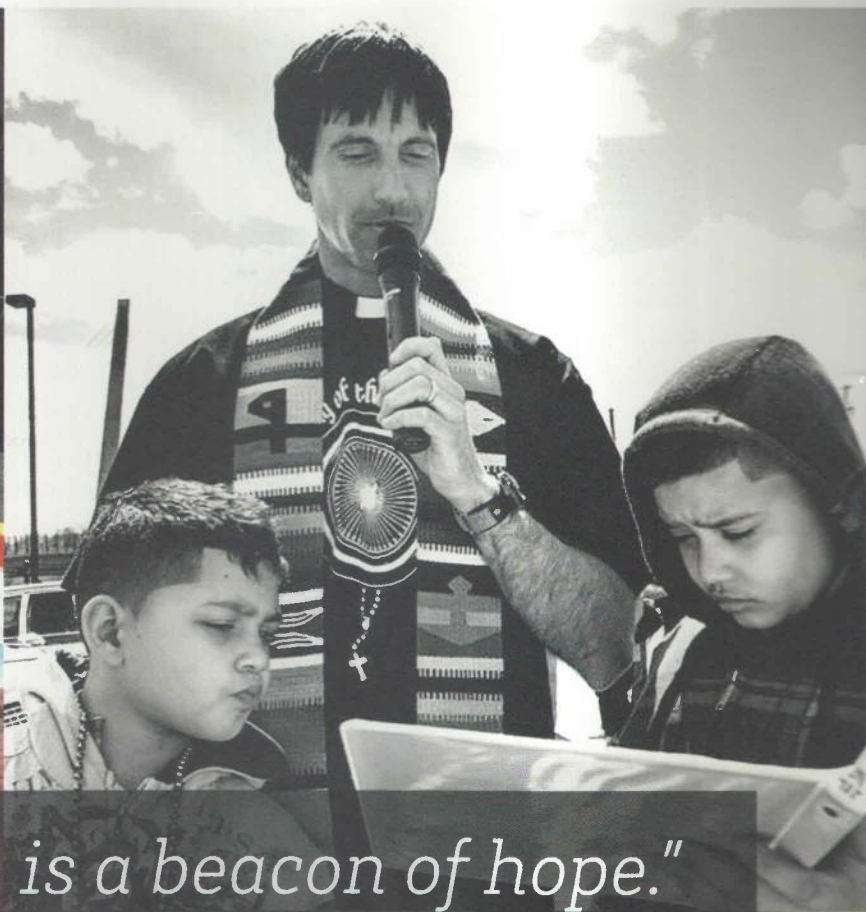
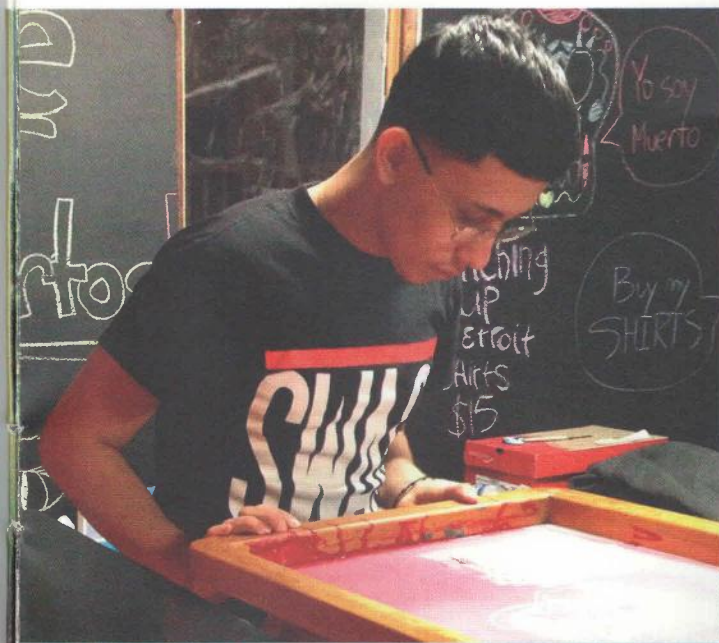
storefront, members and leaders of the new ministry are forming an ELCA congregation rooted in the Bible, faith and seeking to build community – together.

Developing a congregation rooted in the community took work, time and lots of conversations.

Meghan and John engaged in conversations with hundreds of community leaders and residents, and at the heart of every conversation were two questions: "What are the longings and giftedness of the community, and how do you pair those together?"

What emerged from these conversations were programs and partnerships that utilized the gifts of local residents to address their own most pressing needs. Together, they discovered they were not without the resources necessary for ministry – they were the resources.

With Detroit going through so many changes and neighborhoods facing tough challenges, Grace in Action is helping its members follow their dreams, create sustainable and marketable skills, and regain self-sufficiency in their lives.



"Grace in Action is a beacon of hope."



The impact has been positive and tangible. "Radical Productions helps me be clear about my future and allows me to start living my future now," says Elizabeth, a 16-year-old member of Grace in Action. Radical Productions Technology, a cooperative designed to build websites, is one of several youth-led cooperatives that are changing the lives and futures of youth in Detroit. The Stitching Up Detroit cooperative is another ministry venture of Grace in Action that focuses on fashion design. And there are guitar classes, opportunities to paint public murals, learn publishing and work with pottery. Youth teach each other, watch online tutorials and work with professional mentors. Then they work together

with local businesses and customers to provide marketable services and products.

As Grace in Action continues to grow so do their goals for the future, including finding a space to call their own and having a collection of worker-owned, self-sustaining businesses created by local individuals – youth and adults alike.

After witnessing firsthand the ministry of Grace in Action, ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton remarked, "I was impressed by the entrepreneurial spirit of the members of Grace in Action. This is not the most likely neighborhood for the kind of ministry and economic development that is going on. Grace in Action is a beacon of hope."

A PEOPLE OF HOPE

After the 1994 genocide, Rwanda is flourishing and so is the Lutheran Church in Rwanda – a church founded in the months following the 100-day-long slaughter.

Lutherans initially gained recognition in Rwanda thanks to post-genocide relief work by The Lutheran World Federation – a worldwide communion including the ELCA. When returning refugees organized the Lutheran church, they found that Hutus and Tutsis alike were willing to trust the new church because it was “neutral” and had played no role in the genocide.

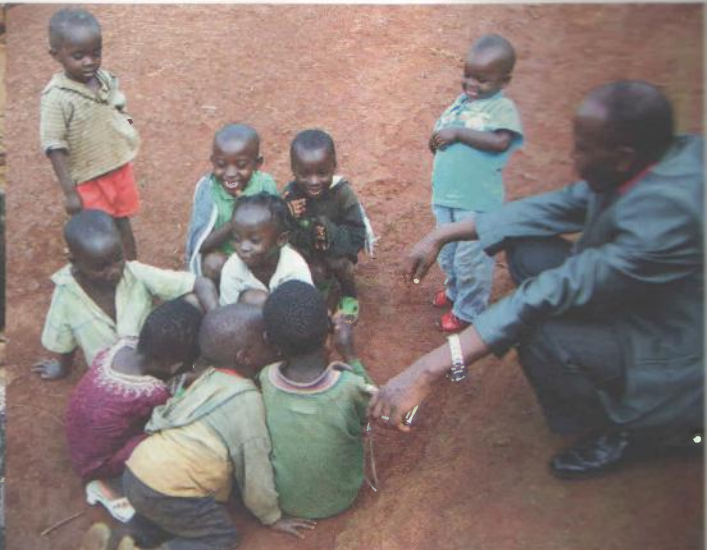
Today Rwandans of all backgrounds live, work and worship together. “In many areas, it’s hard to know who is who unless someone tells you which group they belonged to,” says John Rutsindintwarane, pastor and general secretary of the Lutheran Church of Rwanda. “People have hope, there is less corruption than in neighboring countries, and the country is more organized than countries that have never faced genocide.”

The Lutheran Church of Rwanda has grown to 40,000 members. Ministries focus on peace and reconciliation and also contribute to the continuing renewal of Rwanda, a country now marked by increasing stability.

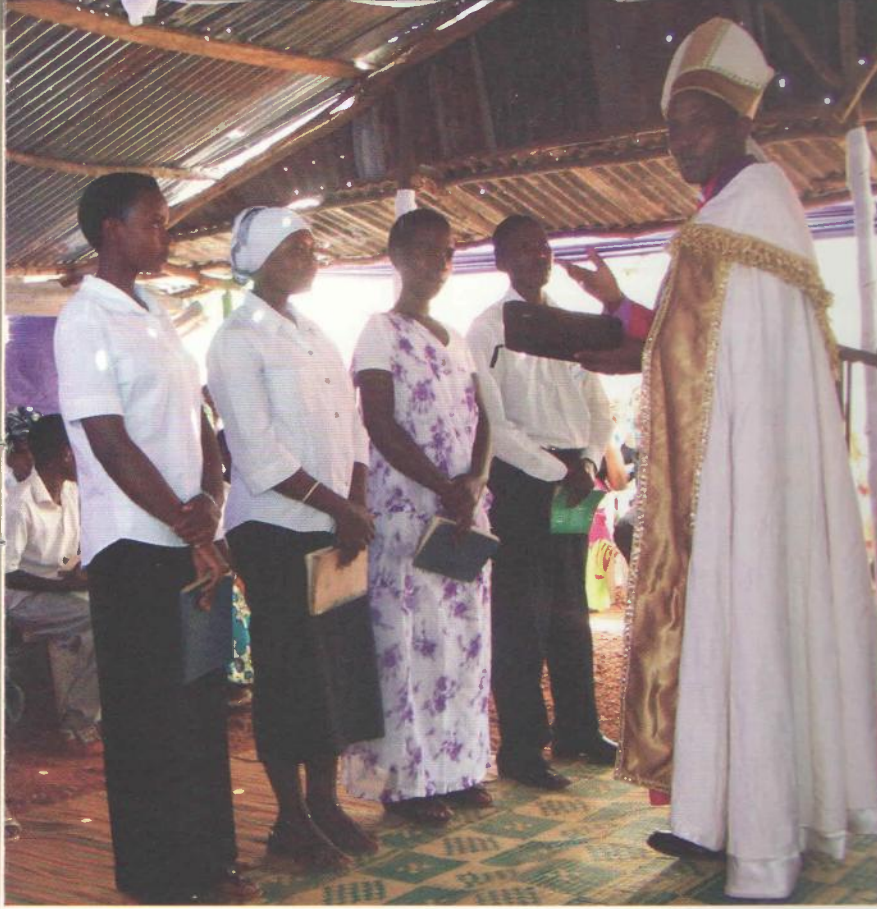
Grants and mission personnel, companion synod relationships, continuing work through The Lutheran World Federation and prayer are part of the day-to-day relationship between the Lutheran Church of Rwanda and the ELCA. With the ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission program expanding to Rwanda in 2014, relationships have deepened. As the shadows of genocide continue to clear, the young people will live among Rwandan Lutherans in the growing light of Easter hope.

“It’s unbelievable, and it’s not just people’s efforts alone. It is God who has enabled us to come back from exile,” says John.





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Frequently Asked

■ WHAT IS MISSION SUPPORT?

Mission Support is your congregation's regular financial offering that is shared with your synod and the churchwide organization. It is an undesignated gift to ELCA ministries that go beyond your congregation. These gifts are used where the need is the greatest, and they also make it possible for the ELCA's 65 synods and the churchwide organization to maintain ongoing commitments to ministry partners.

■ WHAT GUIDES THE CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION IN ITS DECISIONS REGARDING MISSION SUPPORT?

Voting members from across the ELCA meet as a Churchwide Assembly every three years to guide and direct the work of the churchwide organization. The ELCA Church Council functions as the interim legislative authority between assemblies. The churchwide organization's two strategic priorities are to accompany the nearly 10,000 congregations as growing centers for evangelical mission and to build the capacity of this church for evangelical witness and service in the world to alleviate poverty and to work for justice and peace.

■ HOW DOES MY CONGREGATION BENEFIT FROM MISSION SUPPORT?

Every congregation benefits as an active partner in the ELCA's mission to share God's love with the world. *Stories of Faith in Action* is filled with powerful examples of how lives have been changed because of the generosity of ELCA members and congregations through Mission Support. This money funds the work of the synods, and some of the portion of Mission Support that is shared with the churchwide organization returns back to your congregation and synod in the form of services, programs, resources or grants.

Typically more than 90 percent of a congregation's offering remains in the congregation to help pay for its own ministries, outreach, salaries, utilities and the building – ensuring your congregation's vital presence in your community.