

Your congregation's plan for **MISSION SUPPORT** 2016



Photo by Franklin Ishida



The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

II Corinthians 9:6-8



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

A message from the Presiding Bishop



PHOTO BY MICHAEL WATSON

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As a synod bishop and now as presiding bishop people sometimes ask me, with a certain look in their eyes and an edge to their voices, "What do we get from the synod?" or "What do we get from the churchwide organization?" That is the wrong question. It is not about what we get from the synod or the churchwide organization; it is about what we get to do as the church.

The ELCA – your church – responds to God's liberating grace in so many ways. As church together, we prepare men and women for ministry,

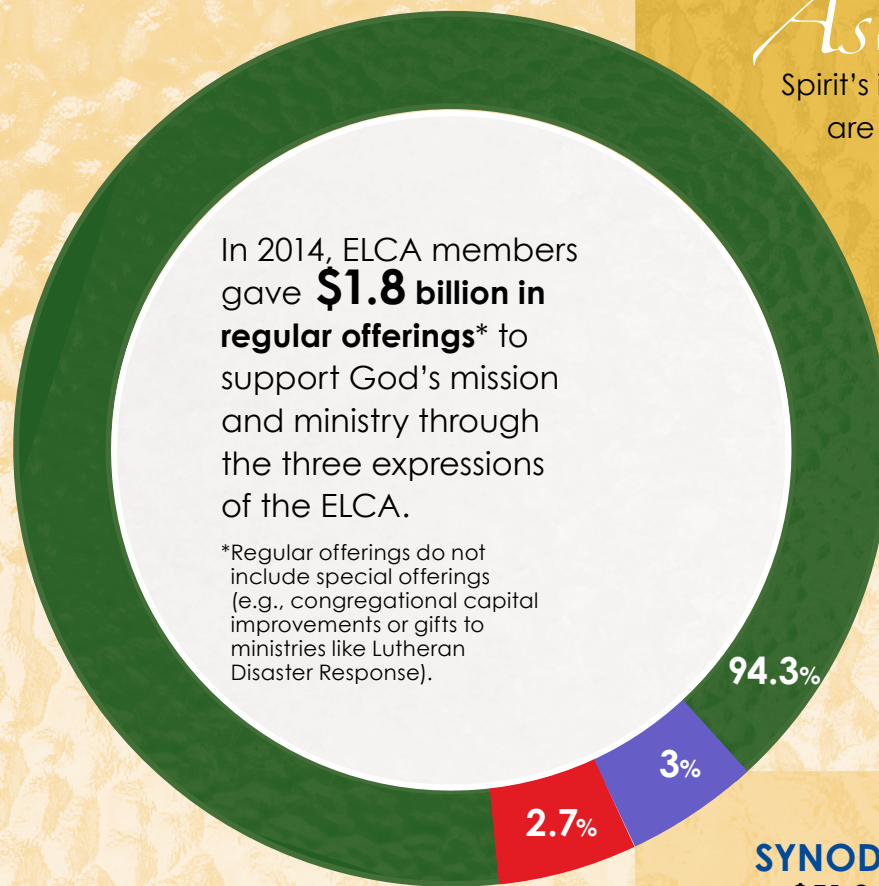
send kids to camp, feed the hungry, start new congregations, equip and send missionaries, deepen ecumenical partnerships, advocate for the vulnerable, teach, preach, publish, worship, sing and pray. No one member or congregation could do the work that we do together. Your unrestricted Mission Support helps make our shared ministry possible. Thank you.

As you consider your 2016 Statement of Intent, I invite you to grow in your support. Not only do we get to do more, but giving is actually good for us. It is a spiritual practice that is liberating. It is a way for us to learn to live by faith. It is a way to participate in God's generosity and abundance. It is a way to move beyond ourselves. It is also a way for us to be connected one to another. Responding to the grace and prodigal love of God expressed in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, we are set free to give freely.

Please accept my thanks for your faithful support, and please accept my challenge to increase unrestricted Mission Support in the coming year. Together we can do more.

Grace and peace,

Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



In 2014, ELCA members gave **\$1.8 billion in regular offerings*** to support God's mission and ministry through the three expressions of the ELCA.

*Regular offerings do not include special offerings (e.g., congregational capital improvements or gifts to ministries like Lutheran Disaster Response).

CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION

\$48.4 million was invested in churchwide ministries

YOUR churchwide organization

Your churchwide organization uses Mission Support dollars to support congregations, respond to local and worldwide ministry opportunities, engage in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, and lead churchwide initiatives on behalf of the whole ELCA. A few of those ministries are highlighted in this publication, but there are many others that together create a strong witness to the gospel.

WHAT IS MISSION SUPPORT?

As members of the ELCA, we are freed in Christ to love and serve our neighbor, open to the Holy Spirit's invitation to be active in the world. By sharing your time, talents and financial resources, you are participating in God's work throughout the United States and around the world.

When you give to your congregation, a percentage of that money is shared with your synod and with the ELCA churchwide organization. The portion of your offering that is shared with the wider church is called **Mission Support**.

CONGREGATIONS

\$1.7 billion was invested in congregational ministries

YOUR congregation

Your offering is stewarded by your congregation's council to support the work of your congregation. When your congregation votes to adopt its annual budget, your congregation designates a portion of your offering to be shared with your synod and the ELCA churchwide organization. These funds are called Mission Support.

SYNODS

\$51.3 million was invested in synodical ministries

YOUR synod

Your congregation's Mission Support dollars are then stewarded by your synod leaders to support the work of the synod. Your synod uses Mission Support to nurture ELCA congregations and rostered leaders, support local partners and accompany the synod's global companion churches in their ministry. Synods also share a percentage of the Mission Support funds they receive to be sent to the churchwide organization.

Why we give

Our financial generosity is one expression of our love for God and our neighbors. Mission Support enables us to do God's work in ways that no individual, congregation or synod can do alone. **We are church together for the sake of the world.**

MISSION SUPPORT = YOUR OFFERING AT WORK

All that we have and are comes from God. Many ELCA members fill out forms pledging their commitment to give a percentage of their income to their congregation each year. Similarly, ELCA congregations and synods pledge a percentage of their income for Mission Support.

Frequently asked questions

What is Mission Support?

Mission Support is the portion of 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 goes 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 ELCA 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 our church's mission to share God's love with the world. "Stories of Faith in Action" is filled with 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 goes 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 ministries, outreach, salaries, utilities and the building—ensuring your congregation's vital presence in your community.

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 do more, together, through 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.

For more details, watch a video from the Rev. Margaret Payne, ELCA director of Mission Support, available at www.ELCA.org/missionsupport.



This year's issue of *Stories of Faith in Action* features the images and stories of people whose lives have been touched by ELCA ministries, all made possible with support from your congregational offering. Together we do God's work in the world in ways that no individual, congregation or synod can do alone.

Learn more about how your offering is put to work throughout the United States and in the world. Order your free copy of "Stories of Faith in Action" today!

To order free copies call 800-638-3522, ext. 2580, and ask for ELCAMA1266.

Or order online at www.ELCA.org/resources and search for ELCAMA1266. You'll only pay for shipping!