



VIDEO CONTEST

God's Work. Our Hands:
Freed in Christ to Serve



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

JUDGING CRITERIA: VIDEO CONTEST

How to Win

What does it mean for your congregation to “serve Christ as Lutherans?” We are reminded of the Biblical passage: “For freedom Christ has set us free ... only do not use this freedom as an occasion for self-indulgence, but serve one another in love. - Galatians 5:1, 13

Gathering for word and sacrament. Coffee. Potlucks. Rolling up our sleeves and doing God’s work with our hands. ELCA members don’t sit on the sidelines! We’re everyday evangelists who bring the gospel message with us wherever we go. God’s Work is being done in your community. Take a look!

So, what does this mean for you? How do you, freed in Christ, serve Christ in God’s World as a Lutheran congregation, serving in today’s world? Grab a video camera and share your story now.

Want to win one of our great prizes? To be eligible, your video must:

- Be 30 to 120 seconds in length
- Have the following introduction: “We are [fill in group name from congregation’s name], and this is how we serve as Lutherans.” Or “Our congregation is [name/city or nearest town if rural], and this is how we serve as Lutheran.”
- Include a reference to the this theme, “**Freed in Christ to Serve**” based on Galatians 5:1, 13:

Need more help? Keep these ideas in mind:

- **Creativity and ability to inspire.** We welcome stories that inspire, make us laugh and make us cry. Think small as well as big when planning your video entry. “Freed in Christ to serve” happens in those little interactions between friends or strangers, as well as in recovery efforts after a natural disaster. Use your creativity to share your faith story.

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If you want to “dig deeper” and think some more about “Freed in Christ to Serve” here is a theological background adapted from the www.elca.org website

ELCA members are actively engaged in the world in God’s name. But why do we do this work? What compels us as the ELCA to raise money for those affected by the Pacific earthquake and tsunami or to plant new congregations in Hutchinson, Mn, Philadelphia, PA, or other places? It’s not to call attention to ourselves, but to be about God’s healing of a broken world. We act not out of obligation, fear or guilt but **out of gratitude** for all we have been given!

Even in the midst of change, the ELCA is the church it has always been, one that is renewed daily in the freedom that comes along from Jesus Christ. The liberating power of the gospel releases us from our human limitations, so that we may reach out in love to our neighbor. Thanks be to God! *We are freed in Christ to serve.*

"Freed in Christ to Serve" expresses the very heart of our faith. Freedom is God's gift that has been flowing to us and through us since the day of Christ's death and resurrection. Through word and sacrament, freedom flows to the center of our being, transforming our very life and making us into servant vessels of the Spirit's liberating work.

"Freed in Christ to Serve" was the theme for the 2011 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and it is more than just a theme. It expressed the heart of our faith. In Christ we are both bound to be free from the power of sin, death and the devil, and free to be bound to God in faith and to our neighbor in service.

The grammatical nuance in "freed" (rather than "free") makes clear that our present status of freedom is God's work and it is already accomplished, as Martin Luther explained in the Small Catechism, "[Christ] has purchased and freed me from all sins."

Once and for all; once "for you"

This freedom won by Christ is a fact of history. This freedom was not won on a battlefield, ordered by a court, argued as an axiom of political philosophy, achieved through self-actualization, granted by God as a reward for righteous living or right teaching. Freedom in Christ happened both once and for all on the cross, and once "for you" in the baptismal dying and rising with Christ. Being "freed in Christ" is God's gift of grace received through faith so that there is no doubt about it. "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

The character of this freedom in Christ is relational. Relationships today often are imprisoned by distrust, suspicion, alienation, cynicism, polarization. In contrast, the relational freedom in Christ is trust. In faith we trust Jesus' promise, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciple, and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32). Luther called this freedom the "power of faith," the freedom of the "inner person" who is liberated from all the powers that would keep a person separated from God.

In relationship with one another

"Freed in Christ" also means we are in relationship with one another, liberated from the powers that separate us from each other. Faith in Christ actually places us in restored relationship with God and with God's people in Christ.

Standing together, we are a church that rolls up its sleeves.

So, "freed in Christ," Lutheran Christians move very quickly to their neighbors, whom they are "freed to serve." The familiar slogan "free to be me" is too little freedom for Christ's liberated people. Standing together, we are a church that rolls up its sleeves. We experience our liberation in working together for the common good. Our voices and bodies sing freedom most fully and truly when we work to restore the human community to reconciled wholeness.

Living in the covenant

This service is a mark of the life of the baptized. Freed in Christ and living in the covenant God made with us in holy baptism means serving all people, following the example of Jesus and striving for justice and peace in all the earth.

'Freed in Christ to Serve' is our faith and our way of life.

When we are freed in Christ to serve, we also serve the very gospel through which freedom in Christ is given. What does it mean that we serve the gospel? In the Affirmation of Baptism, we promise to "proclaim God in Christ through word and deed." That means that you serve the gospel as an everyday evangelist.

Our way of life

Serving the gospel might mean singing "Jesus Loves Me" with a grandchild, extending a hand of friendship to a new neighbor, calling a grieving friend, helping someone in need, seeking reconciliation in the midst of conflict or speaking words of forgiveness. We serve the gospel whenever we share the good news of God's love in Christ for the whole world.

"Freed in Christ to Serve" is our faith and our way of life. It calls for humility and mutual accountability, courage and compassion. It causes us to ask, "Who is my neighbor?" It reminds us that we are freed in Christ to serve.