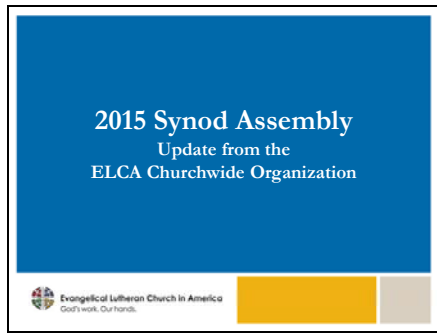


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Hello Metropolitan New York Synod! Now I don't have one of those fancy voting machines, but I want it to go on record that I am SO EXCITED TO BE HERE! I greet you on behalf of our ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and all of your partners in ministry at the ELCA churchwide offices and across this church.

I'd like to start our time together in prayer. The Lord be with you *[and also with you]*.

Good and Gracious God, Thank you for the opportunity to gather together today here at this synod assembly. As we, your church, strive to faithfully participate in your mission in the world, help us to be your church together for the sake of the world—knowing that we are strengthened by our faith in you and by one another as the Body of Christ in the world. Bless our time now and the work we do together, for the healing of the nations. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Good morning! My name is Jessica Nipp Hacker. I'm an ELCA Diaconal Minister, and I serve the ELCA in Chicago as the Director of Donor Relations and Donor Stewardship. My favorite part of this new job is getting to meet with the people who faithfully support the ministries of the ELCA, and to thank them—to thank YOU—for the work that we do together, the work that you make possible.

Slide  
2



Your generosity is one of the best examples of how we are church together. As individuals, as congregations and as the synod, you support the ministries of the ELCA as we reach out to people in our neighborhoods and across the globe with the healing gospel of Jesus Christ. **Thank you** for these precious gifts. In the next minutes, I'll show you some of the ways in which your gifts, through the ministries of the ELCA, are changing lives.

So, that's my current job! Until a few months ago, I had a different fabulous job for the ELCA - as the Coordinator of the ELCA Malaria Campaign. I had the honor of helping to encourage individuals, congregations and synods to support the work of 13 malaria programs in Africa. I look forward to sharing some of my Malaria Campaign experiences with you later on in this presentation.

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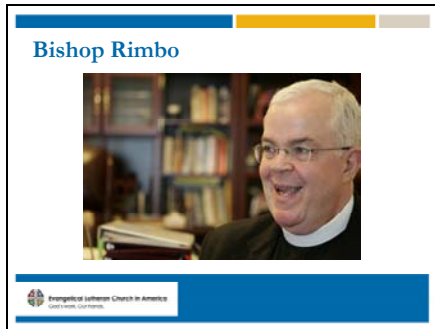
Before the ELCA Malaria Campaign, my life and faith were shaped by many wonderful Lutheran institutions, including Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa; camp EWALU and Sky Ranch Lutheran Camp; the Helen Keller School for Blind Children in Palestine; Urban Servant Corps in Denver; the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago; the ELCA Wittenberg Center in Wittenberg, Germany, and the Collegium Oecumenicum in Munich, Germany.

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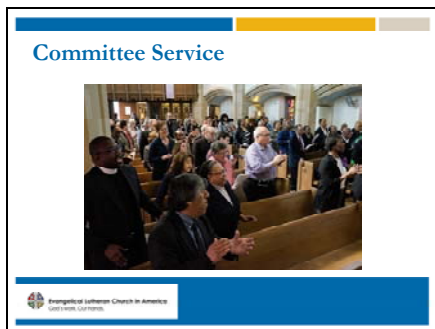
And my life is currently being shaped by the love of these two guys, who are awaiting my return in Chicago!

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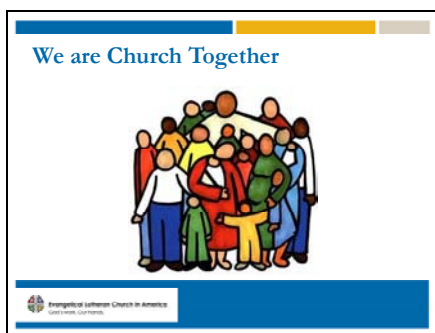
I want to express my thanks to all of you, and especially to Bishop Rimbo, for the invitation to join you this weekend. I would like to thank Bishop Rimbo for the services he provides to our whole church as a member of the Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations Committee and the Immigration Ready Bench. He also serves as musician for many of the worship and devotional services of the Conference of Bishops. Bishop Rimbo also leads this synod in your Companion relationships with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania and the Northwestern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. Thank you, Bishop Rimbo, for your service to the church in the synodical and churchwide expressions of the ELCA, and among our sisters and brothers in Christ throughout the world.

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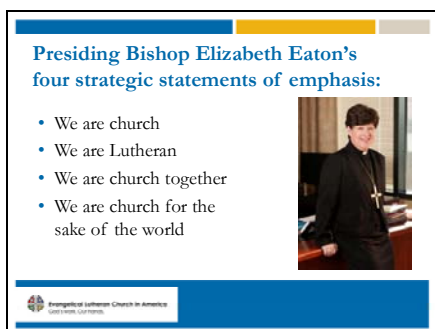
I'd also like to lift up those members of your synod who serve the ELCA on Churchwide committees. If you're here, would you stand as I say your name? From the Metropolitan New York Synod, Christine Connell serves on ELCA Church Council; Fern Hagedorn serves on the Women and Justice Task Force; and two members of your synod are serving on the Word and Service Task Force (whose work lies close to my heart): Melinda Lando and John Litke. Thanks to all of you for your service to the whole church!

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It is truly a great honor to share this churchwide report with you all under the theme, "We are Church Together." Our church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, is a church that shares a living, daring confidence in God's grace. Our faith is based on the good news of Jesus Christ, which gives us the freedom and the courage to wonder, discover and boldly participate in what God is up to in the world. Together, we-- the 4 million members, nearly 10,000 congregations and 65 synods-- are the ELCA and "we are church together."

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When ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton talks about who we are as the ELCA, she uses these four touchpoints:

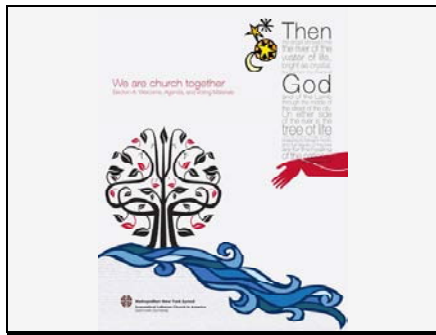
We are church.

We are Lutheran.

We are church together.

We are church for the sake of the world.

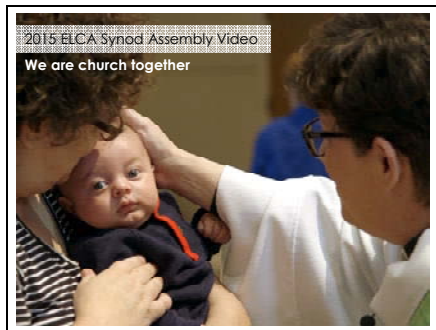
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We are church together! When your one congregation engages in service and ministry in your local community, you *are* the church in *your* place—taking care of that part of God’s creation. As we hear in our theme verse from Revelation, “On either side of the river [of life] is the tree of life... and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” As the church, we are each called to be a leaf of the tree of life, proclaiming the grace that gives us life. We are called then to be that church together, for the healing of the nations.

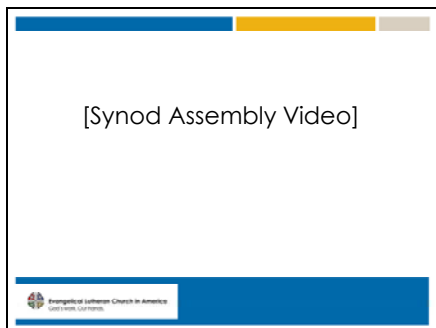
When we act as church together, we move from membership to discipleship. It’s not about more people in the pews—it’s about sharing the story of who we are as Lutherans, as the ELCA, as church together!

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This year’s ELCA synod assembly video explores the questions of what it means to be the church, and to have God at work in us. The video is about 7-1/2 minutes long and will be shared at all 65 synod assemblies this year. You may notice some familiar faces as we look more closely at the love of God that draws us in and sends us out! Let’s watch the video together now. **[ROLL SYNOD ASSEMBLY VIDEO, 7:30]**

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**[After video]** I think this video is tremendously moving and serves as a great reminder of who we are, together, as a church, as the ELCA. Day-to-day, it is easy to see only the piece of God’s work that we are doing in our location. But in each of our communities and congregations, when we share stories of being found by Christ, when we share our joys and sorrows, when we reach out to one another in love, when we pray, re-present Christ in the community and when we gather in worship around the sacraments, we are one Body, one church together abiding in God’s promise through Christ.

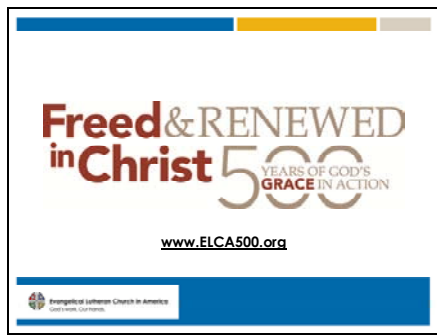
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One of the great things about being part of the larger church is that when we “show up”—we show up in a big way! Especially when we wear bright gold t-shirts and collectively get to work.

How many of you participated in last year’s “God’s Work. Our Hands. Sunday?” [pause] Yes! You are invited to join in the third annual event, and as always the *way* you participate is up to you. ELCA congregations serve year round, but this is the one day each year where we show up together as the church! Mark your calendars for Sunday, September 13 and visit the website for more information.

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We also have the opportunity to join with our Lutheran sisters and brothers across the globe in observing the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. You can visit this website for more ideas and information. This milestone invites all of us to consider what it means to be Lutheran, to be freed and renewed in Christ; what it means to be the church together. ELCA members are invited to the Grace Gathering, which will be a gathering of non-voting members concurrent to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. The gathering will help congregations and synods to prepare for their observance of the Reformation anniversary in 2017. How will you celebrate?

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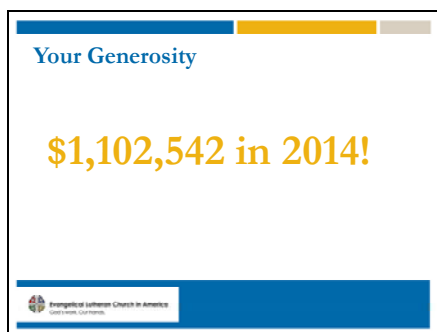
What does the ELCA mean to me? Why does it matter that we are a church and that we are a church together? The ELCA is now in the second year of our first churchwide campaign, "Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA," which was officially launched in February of 2014. The Campaign for the ELCA is a five-year, nearly \$200 million effort to truly transform and grow the work we do together as a church.

In 1987, our three predecessor church bodies came together to form the ELCA. They came together in ministry so we could:

- Start and renew more congregations
- Train more leaders for ministry and service
- Raise up the next generations of youth and young adults
- Do more to end poverty and hunger
- Increase and deepen global support and relationships

This is important ministry that we as the church have been doing for a long time, and this is a chance to strengthen our commitment. I'm happy to share with you that so far, we have already raised over \$48 million toward the Campaign – representing more than 24 percent of the goal! The Campaign highlights so many of the creative and wonderful ways that we are church together. Each synod is going to participate in Campaign-related efforts differently, including here in Metro New York.

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Gifts from congregations and individuals in the Metropolitan New York Synod to The Campaign for the ELCA and its ministries, including ELCA World Hunger, ELCA Malaria Campaign, ELCA Fund for Leaders, ELCA New Congregations, Renewing Congregations, Disability Ministries, Youth and Young Adults, Young Adults in Global Mission and Missionaries, International Leaders—Women and Global Church Sponsorship, totaled **\$1,102,542 in 2014**. You are already an important part of the Campaign! Thank you!

Let's take a closer look at a few of the priorities of the Campaign for the ELCA, and how the people of the Metropolitan New York Synod are participating together:

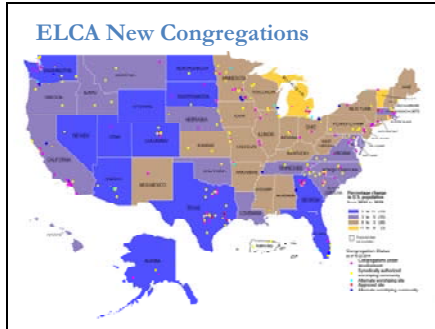


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We are a church of 10,000 congregations. 500 of these congregations are new since the birth of the ELCA in 1987—and 53 of them were organized last year. The exciting growth of the ELCA can be seen clearly in the microcosm of the Metropolitan New York Synod, where mission partnerships, new starts, and congregations in renewal are grace-filled—and plentiful! *Three* of the ELCA's 2014 new congregations are in your synod!

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These are visionary new ministries: some with the mission of reaching out to particular neighborhoods and ethnic communities; some centered in creating Christian community through art, social media, and shared meals; and all sharing a concern for God's people who are poor, hungry and marginalized.

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### MNYS New Congregations

- Ascension Table – Bronx (Pastor Eric Mull)
- Church Of The Parable – Brooklyn (Pastor Ben McKelahan)
- Latino Ministry of Advent Lutheran Church (Pastor Gary E. Mills)
- New Hope for all Saints – Bronx (Pastor Michael A. Thomas)
- St. Lydia's, Brooklyn – (Pastor Emily Scott)
- Two Or Three Project – Harlem (Pastor Anna Rieke)

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Lutherans Welcome

If your ministry is listed here, would you stand when the name is read?  
 -Ascension Table (Pastor Eric Mull)  
 -Church Of The Parables, Brooklyn (Pastor Ben McKelahan)  
 -Latino Ministry of Advent Lutheran Church, New York (Pastor Gary E. Mills)  
 -St. Lydia's, Brooklyn (Pastor Emily Scott)  
 -Two Or Three Project, Harlem (Pastor Anna Rieke)  
 Let's share an expression of thankfulness and encouragement for these ministries [applause].

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As the church is changing and evolving, we have also launched 160 renewal efforts in congregations this past year, including *twelve* in this synod. These congregations are reinvesting in their communities; renewing and revitalizing their ministries in English, Spanish and Arabic; ministering among people who are homeless and transgender; and reaching out to their neighbors.

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### MNYS Congregations in Renewal

- Trinity of Manhattan Lutheran Church – New York
- St. Luke Lutheran Church – New York
- Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church – Deer Park
- Salam Arabic Lutheran Church – Brooklyn
- Spanish Lutheran Church Transfiguration – Bronx
- Church of the Holy Redeemer – Brooklyn
- New Hope for All Saints Lutheran Church – Bronx

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Lutherans Welcome

Again, if your congregation is named here, please stand so we can recognize you!

- Trinity of Manhattan, New York – Pastor Heidi Neumarck
- St. Luke, New York – Pastor Jorge Ospina
- Ascension, Deer Park – Pastors Justin Lathrop & Patty Avila
- Salam Arabic Lutheran, Brooklyn – Pastor Khader El-Yateem
- Spanish Lutheran Church Transfiguration, Bronx – Pastor Paul Block
- Church of the Holy Redeemer, Brooklyn – Coverage Pastor Kipp Zimmerman
- New Hope for All Saints, Bronx - Pastor Michael Thomas

- St. Paul's International, Floral Park – Pastor Dan Peter
- Messiah/St. John, Greenpoint - Pastor Amy Kienzle
- Grace, Astoria - Pastor James Klockau
- Sion, Manhattan -Pastor Eduardo Arias
- East African Ministry, Valley Stream - Pastor Perucy Butiku

What a wonderful witness you are to God's healing and renewing powers! [Lead applause]

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The Metropolitan New York Synod is full of examples of creative ways to be church together.

For example, the joyful merger of Augustana Lutheran Church in East Elmhurst and Grace Lutheran Church in Astoria – two congregations a mile apart in Queens who learned that they could be stronger together. The merger has revitalized the ministry of both legacy congregations.

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When St. John's Lutheran Church by the Sea in Long Beach was flooded by SuperStorm Sandy in 2012, the small but vital congregation was determined to live out its commitment to serve the neighborhood. Despite the flooding and widespread power outage, the church continued to open its doors to the community groups with whom it shares space, and their grateful neighbors responded by helping the congregation to repair their sacred space. Committed lay members, led by Deacon John Prosen, have kept St John's strong outreach ministry alive during a 2-year pastoral vacancy. Coverage Pastor Rebecca Pollicino says, "These faithful disciples see abundance where others see scarcity."

Another congregation impacted by the destruction of SuperStorm Sandy was Redeemer-St. John in Brooklyn. Pastor Khader Khalilia began a part-time call there in 2013. Through neighborhood outreach, a new preschool, a revitalized choir and shared space and shared ministry with community organizations, the congregation has become strong enough to call him full-time. Pastor Khalilia says that at Redeemer-St. John, "We welcome people to come to church for their own reasons and on their own terms."

Metropolitan New York Synod, you—we—are church together!

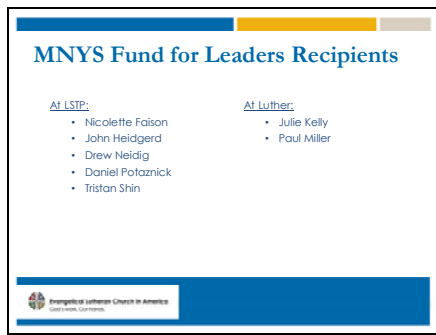
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As we work to bring God's healing to the nations, we come together to lift up the next generation of leaders who will provide vision and energy for the future. How are rostered leaders and pastors being prepared for ministry in the ELCA?

Our church supports 26 ELCA colleges and universities and 8 ELCA seminaries. Currently through the ELCA Fund for Leaders, 241 people are studying on full or partial scholarships at our ELCA seminaries to become pastors and deacons. Seven of those Fund for Leaders scholarship recipients come from among you!

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Scholarship recipients, if you are with us this weekend, could you stand as I read your name?

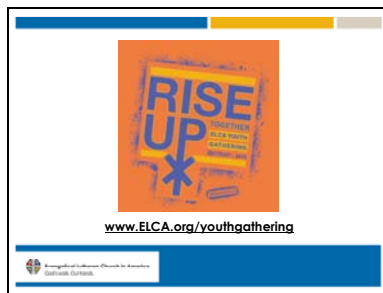
Studying at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia:

Nicolette Faison, John Heidgerd, Drew Neidig, Daniel Potaznick,  
Tristan Shin

Studying at Luther Seminary: Julie Kelly and Paul Miller

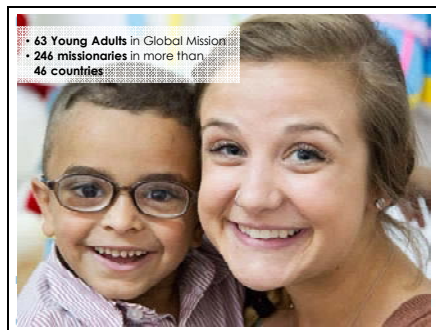
The goal of the Fund for Leaders is to create an endowment strong enough to support full-tuition scholarships for ALL seminarians preparing to serve the church as rostered leaders. [pause] Even as we support these leaders in training, we look also to the younger generation of leaders in our church.

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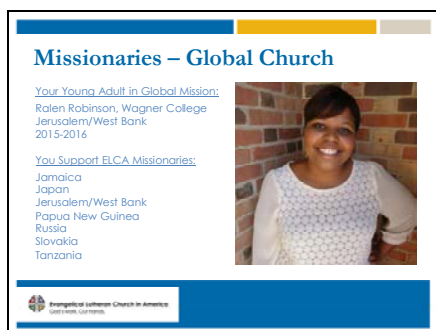
This summer, 30,000 of our high school leaders will gather in Detroit for the ELCA Youth Gathering, under the theme of "Rise Up Together." I'd love to see those congregations who are sending a contingent of youth to this triennial event! Rise up, church!

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Young adults in the ELCA have the opportunity to serve as missionaries through our Young Adults in Global Mission program, or YAGM. Currently, 63 young adults are volunteering in global service through the ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission Program. Next year, 79 young adults will be sent out, including one young woman who was nurtured and shaped by one of the ministries of your synod:

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Ralen Robinson, who comes from Philadelphia, studied Family Studies and Sociology at Wagner College, and participated in campus ministry. As she embarks on her journey as a YAGM in Jerusalem/West Bank this fall, Ralen will have the support and prayers of the Wagner community.

ELCA Global Mission currently supports more than 240 international missionaries serving in over 40 countries. As a church, we also awarded 71 scholarships this year to promising young international leaders from our global companion churches. Individuals and congregations in your synod are sponsoring missionaries and Young Adults in Global Mission in Jamaica, Japan, Jerusalem/West Bank, Papua New Guinea, Russia, Slovakia and Tanzania. We are truly church together! Thank you for your prayers and financial support of all these ways we are a church that rises up together for the healing of the nations.



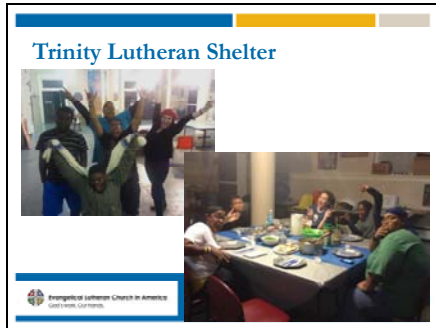
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Thank you, thank you, thank you for your generous support of our work together to eradicate poverty and hunger through ELCA World Hunger. In 2014, gifts to ELCA World Hunger totaled over \$19.3 million. And gifts to ELCA World Hunger from individuals and congregations in *this synod* totaled over \$371,500 last year!

ELCA World Hunger supports life-changing ministries in 60 countries, including our own. In addition to your local congregational efforts to alleviate poverty and hunger, 17 ELCA World Hunger Domestic Hunger Grants were awarded in the state of New York for a total of \$48,275.

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Right here in your synod, Trinity Lutheran Church of Manhattan is one of those ministries. The Trinity Place Shelter offers support in the face of the growing crisis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender youth experiencing homelessness in New York City. The Trinity Place Shelter provides a safe, stable, nurturing environment where LGBT youth can live, meet their basic needs, receive counseling and care and transition to secure, empowered, healthy and hope-filled lives.

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In 2014, more than \$6.1 million was given to Lutheran Disaster Response, including \$48,500 from this synod. LDR used these resources to respond to disasters in 18 states and 32 countries, providing hope and healing to people rebuilding their lives after disaster. LDR is currently responding to 50 disasters around the world. Right here in your synod, Lutheran Disaster Response is working with Lutheran Social Services of New York to provide disaster case management, construction management and assistance with unmet needs in response to Hurricane Sandy. A grant from the American Red Cross is funding a portion of this work. Lutheran Disaster Response is also working with Lutheran Social Services of New York to provide for unmet needs and legal assistance for unaccompanied and migrant children.

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One of the disasters that touched many hearts this spring was the earthquake in Nepal. Almost 200,000 people have been displaced and over 8,000 people have been killed since the 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck on April 25. The Lutheran World Federation—our global family of Lutherans— has been active in Nepal since 1984 doing disaster risk reduction and community empowerment work, and was able to begin immediate, large-scale emergency response in and around Kathmandu on the day of the quake. Our designated gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response will go directly to the efforts to support the establishment of shelters and camps and the distribution of clean water, food and sanitation supplies. Generous ELCA members have already given more than \$800,000 to Lutheran Disaster Response toward Nepal earthquake relief efforts.



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And so we have arrived at the ELCA ministry that is closest to my own heart (and to many of yours) – the ELCA Malaria Campaign. Together, we are supporting malaria programs in 13 countries in Africa—programs that reach out to those most vulnerable to the disease and empower families and communities to create health, hope and sustainability.

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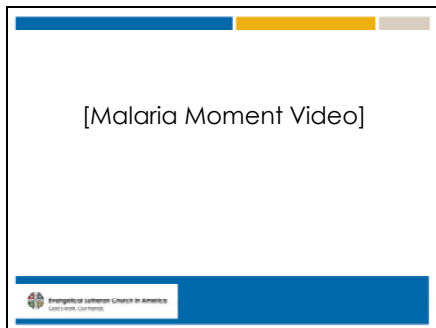


Here in the Metropolitan New York synod, you have been great supporters of making a difference together through the work of the ELCA Malaria Campaign—in wildly creative ways, including the ascent of Mount Kilimanjaro!

I'm so pleased to be here in person to say this: Congratulations on meeting, and then exceeding, your synod's fundraising goal for the ELCA Malaria Campaign!! It has been my pleasure to walk with you as you led your congregations in generous giving, and inspired so many people in the Metropolitan New York Synod to support this life-changing effort of our Lutheran sisters and brothers in Africa.

I'd also like to point out that you have a fabulous resource in your midst. Arden, will you stand? Until recently, Pastor Arden Strasser was serving as an ELCA missionary in Zambia. There he worked with our Lutheran sisters and brothers on many projects, including their malaria outreach. If you see Arden in the halls, please ask him how the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zambia has "grown up" as a result of their participation in malaria programming.

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**[Roll Malaria Moment video, 90 seconds]**

[After video] I am pleased to share that as of today, more than \$14.3 million in cash has been raised to support anti-malaria efforts, which brings us over 95% of the way to our 2015 goal. Together, we are empowering communities, helping to create health and hope, and making malaria history.

Though the ELCA Malaria Campaign special focus will conclude this year, our work is not done and the commitment to walking together with companions and supporting their health-care ministries will not end. Our global Lutheran partners who choose to prioritize malaria programming after 2015 will be supported through ELCA World Hunger, which has a long history of supporting health-related programming here in the U.S. and around the world.

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I'd like to take a few minutes to tell you some stories about the ways in which your generous gifts to the ELCA Malaria Campaign, ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response are changing lives in Burundi.

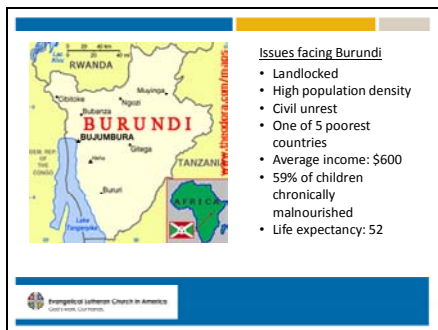
Almost exactly one year ago, I returned from a trip to East Africa. I had the honor of visiting the malaria program sites that the ELCA Malaria Campaign is supporting in Burundi and Uganda. Our implementing partner in Uganda and Burundi is the Lutheran World Federation. I want to take a few minutes to paint a picture for you of the context in which these malaria programs are taking place—to help you see some of what I saw.

When we left Burundi, we promised our colleagues that we would tell their story. I am grateful for this opportunity to do so.

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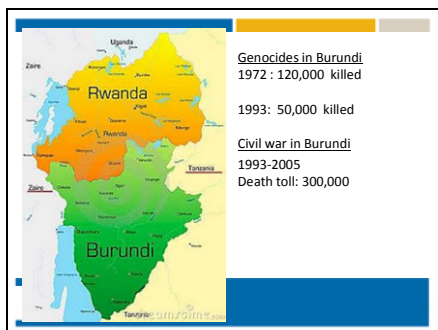


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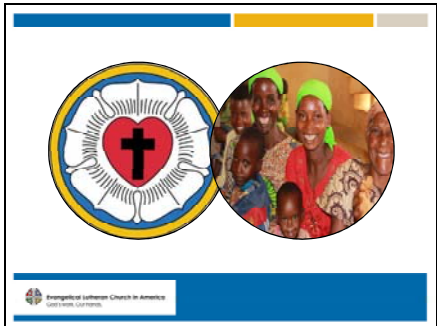
Burundi is a tiny, landlocked country in East Africa (about the size of Vermont). Its 10 million inhabitants give it the second-highest population density in sub-Saharan Africa, and its landlocked geography and long history of civil unrest make it one of the five poorest countries in the world. The average income for a family in Burundi is about \$600 USD per year. More than half of Burundi's children suffer from chronic malnutrition. Life expectancy in Burundi is 52.

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I think we've all heard about the Rwandan genocide that decimated the country's population in 1994. But somehow, the similarly shocking events in Burundi, which pitted the same ethnic groups against each other, have escaped our radar. For 12 years, a murderous civil war raged in Burundi, and hundreds of thousands of Burundians fled to refugee camps in Tanzania.

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And that's where the Lutheran story comes together with the Burundi story. The refugee camps in Western Tanzania that accepted hundreds of thousands of Burundian refugees were run by Lutheran World Federation, the global communion of Lutherans of which the ELCA is a member—and supported by Lutheran Disaster Response.

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One of the Burundian refugees was Bugera Barnabe. “At the beginning, I was a refugee,” Bugera says. “And then I become a volunteer. Being a refugee was sad because I had to flee my country,” Bugera said. “I was cut off from social, economic, and spiritual roots. You have to learn. You have to make all efforts to fit in.” Bugera started to volunteer with LWF at his refugee camp. He worked to empower his fellow refugees with skills and education. In a difficult situation like that one, he reflects, “you learn to use your potential. You see yourself succeed in another country; you use the gifts you got from God. I created a sustainable life; I managed to educate my children. I helped create a secondary school in Tanzania. It was good to see Burundians come home educated.” When it came time to return home, more than a decade later, Bugera was deeply connected with Lutheran World Federation.

He was hired to help start the “Program for Peace,” which was the first LWF program in Burundi. It took place in the Cankuzo province in Burundi—one of the poorest provinces, and also the one that received the most repatriated refugees. The Program for Peace focused on humanitarian support—helping former refugees to repatriate into a land they could hardly remember.

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The program helped to settle land disputes, provided seeds for the subsistence agriculture that most Burundians rely on, and helped to build physical and social infrastructure—roads, schools, hospitals—for communities suddenly burgeoning with recently repatriated.

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"But of course," says Bugera, "the program couldn't just deal with emergency care forever. It can't continue like that. Just providing monetary donations doesn't build capacity."

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So LWF-Burundi began its second program: the Community Empowerment Program. This program shifted focus dramatically: from providing relief and humanitarian assistance, to empowering communities to strive for development. The Community Empowerment Program, or CEP, has been supported by ELCA World Hunger funds for several years. (You see how everything comes together!)

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The CEP has three interrelated emphases: sustainable livelihoods, human rights, and leadership and conflict resolution. The program helps communities by teaching skills and helping to create useful social networks. One method is encouraging collective entrepreneurship. So far, there is a successful banana plantation, a goat-rearing and a cattle-rearing collective, a sunflower association, a shoemaking group, and a beekeeping collective operating in the Cankuzo Province. The program also teaches sustainable agricultural methods—a must in a densely-populated land where deforestation is a growing problem.

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Bugera says, "We want to teach them to know what's available in the environment. We want people to be able to take control of their development, of their lives, without relying on outside donations. And dependence is slowly disappearing."

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The Community Empowerment Program has taken root in the Cankuzo province and has changed the social fabric. Gervais, one of the participants in the sunflower association, says, "We now have a common goal and a common idea. We feel happy together. We're a united community." This unity is a real accomplishment in an area where just a few years ago, ethnic tensions and fear divided the community.

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The banana plantation is another success story. The collective began with one banana field in 2011, and they have expanded to three fields this spring. They have been able to share banana seedlings with their neighbors, as well, and they plan to begin cultivating pineapples later this year. "The banana trees are doing well," says Leonard, who is the leader of the banana collective. "There are now many people in the association, and they have an increased confidence and courage now. We are all very satisfied and happy because the project wasn't just beneficial for us but also for others."



We're proud to serve as a model." LWF-Burundi has built up a network of relationships in Cankuzo, and has a reputation for inspiring and supporting positive change.

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And that's where the ELCA Malaria Campaign comes in. Bugera explains why the Campaign Against Malaria is so important in Cankuzo:

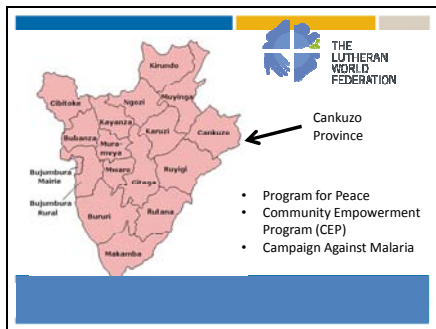
"In implementing our community programs, we came to see so many people suffering from malaria; so many resources going to malaria. Malaria was taking the time of the people. It was taking the resources of the people. We thought, if we don't deal with malaria, then there will be no community development ever. If we don't deal with malaria, all other outcomes will be jeopardized completely."

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Leonard agrees. "When my family is sick with malaria," he says, "we have so many problems. When I am sick, it is difficult to work in the banana field and my business suffers. When my family is sick, nothing gets done in the household; our home is paralyzed."

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And so, at the end of 2013, Burundi became the 12<sup>th</sup> of the 13 countries participating in the ELCA Malaria Campaign. The Campaign Against Malaria in Burundi stands proudly on the shoulders of the other LWF-Burundi programs that have paved the way.

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Repatriated refugees whose lives depended on LWF those first few years are taking charge of their health, and participating with gusto.

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Communities and households who have learned new skills through the Community Empowerment Program are eager to learn how to protect their families from malaria. The malaria program hit the ground running, and the change is already tangible.

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One day during our visit, we attended a big event in a small community. It was a malaria messaging competition: teams from three neighboring villages came together to share the songs, performances and dramas that they use to educate their neighbors about malaria prevention and control.

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The performances were musical, energetic and passionate.

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One drama showed the entire process of going to the health clinic to be tested and treated for malaria. In some rural areas, malaria has been seen as a result of witchcraft, and so sick people would go to the local witch doctor for a counterspell. These visits used up their resources, but didn't cure their disease. So the malaria teams are spreading the word that high fevers, chills, vomiting and diarrhea are symptoms of malaria, and are best treated at the health center. And their skits and dramas demystify the process.

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Mediatrice is one community member who has benefitted from the LWF malaria program. The program is working hard to link community members with Community Health Workers, who are employees of local health centers. Before the LWF program, Community Health Workers were not widely known in the communities. Now, that has changed. So when Mediatrice got sick, her family knew to send for ...

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...Filip, the Community Health Worker who is assigned to their area. Filip had been trained by the LWF malaria program, and he immediately recognized the symptoms that Mediatrice was exhibiting. Filip and her family members carried Mediatrice to the clinic on a stretcher, because her fever was so high she could no longer walk. She recalls, "at the health center, they did the rapid diagnostic test, and it came out positive for malaria. So they gave me the medicine, both an injection and the pills." Mediatrice has been healthy ever since.

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Thank you, Metropolitan New York Synod! Thank you for the part you have played in supporting the Lutheran malaria programs in Burundi and in 12 other countries in Africa. Thank you for supporting Bugera and Gervais and Leonard and Filip and Mediatrice in their efforts to protect their families and build up their communities. I want to celebrate your generosity today!

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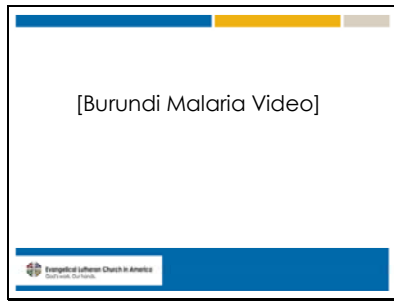
Members and congregations of the Metropolitan New York Synod have given **\$224,857.06** to support this work—THANK YOU! That's enough to support more than a year of malaria programming in Burundi.

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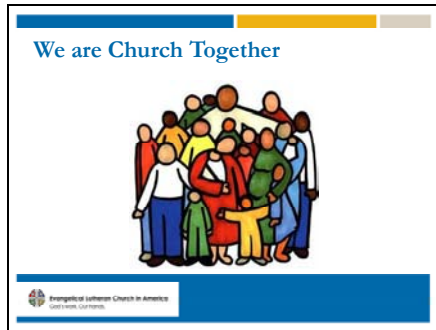
As Bugera Barnabé says, "You have done good work! You get full marks for this. We are very encouraged by your support. I have more strength as a program coordinator because of the malaria program. In Burundi, healthy people are producing unexpected results!" I'm proud to stand among you today to thank you for this marvelous generosity.

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I'm proud to show you this video, which will help to demonstrate the impact that your gifts have had in changing lives and empowering communities in Burundi. **[Roll Burundi video, 3:30]**

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Together, our gifts to ELCA World Hunger, the ELCA Malaria Campaign and Lutheran Disaster Response reach communities most in need throughout the world and right here at home—thank you. Together, we raise up new leaders for Christ's church, we reach out to our neighbors with the promise of healing, we walk together with our companions all over the world. Together, *we are church*.

*Thank you, Metropolitan New York Synod!* I look forward to continuing our conversation throughout this assembly. Please feel free to stop me in the hall or over meals.

What does the ELCA mean to me? To me, the ELCA is a place to belong, and a tradition that taught me who I am in Christ. It is a family around the world, caring for one another. It is a place where I work, and a community with whom I worship, and it is a lens through which I understand the greatest story ever told - the good news of Christ's love for us. It's a way to be stronger together, to organize *millions* of people to combat hunger and poverty and malaria. The ELCA has, in so many ways and through so many organizations and people, formed me into the person and the minister and the beloved child of God that I am today!

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What does our church mean to *you*?