



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

“For by grace you have been saved through  
faith, and this is not your own doing;  
it is the gift of God.”

– Ephesians 2:8

Dear Friends in Christ,

We are Lutheran. For the past year it has been “all Reformation all the time!” So now what? The Lutheran Confessions teach that God freely and graciously creates a trusting relationship between us and Jesus. As we gather to meet in synod assemblies, let us remember that our hope is in the living Christ and share that assurance with the joy of the gospel.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are free of the burden of making ourselves acceptable to God. The cross of Christ and the living Christ assure us that God’s final word for us is life and freedom in Christ. Lutherans confidently and enthusiastically claim this promise: “For freedom Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1). How does this claim affect your faith journey as an individual, a congregation, synod or member of the church universal? Through his death and resurrection, we have a truly living Lord who meets us, forgives us and calls us to follow, and in that we find our freedom.

Because we are set free in Jesus Christ, we are free from trying to save ourselves and free for loving and serving others. As a church, we walk by faith, trusting God’s promise in the gospel and knowing that we exist by and for the proclamation of this gospel word.

### **“Future Directions 2025”**

Through “Called Forward Together in Christ – Future Directions 2025,” we are addressing the challenges and embracing the opportunities of the church we are becoming – a church that is confident about who we are in Christ and what God is calling us to do. I invite you to lift up these goals and engage how we journey forward in Christ as church together. You can learn more by visiting [ELCA.org/future](http://ELCA.org/future).

### **ELCA Youth Gathering**

Many of us will be together at the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston June 27-July 1, 2018. I look forward to sharing in the excitement and energy of our young people as they experience the wonder and joy of being with more than 30,000 Lutherans and grow in their faith formation. For information and resources on the Gathering, go to [ELCA.org/gathering](http://ELCA.org/gathering).

### ***The Campaign for the ELCA***

We are in our final year of *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*. Help us rally to the end! As of Dec. 31, the campaign has received more than \$138.6 million in cash and multiyear commitments, representing 70 percent of our \$198 million goal. Read more about the campaign’s progress at [ELCA.org/campaign](http://ELCA.org/campaign). Thank you for your continued support!

## **“God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday**

Sept. 9 is our suggested date for the 2018 dedicated day of service. If your congregation cannot participate on this date, please consider another day. “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday is an opportunity for us to explore one of our most basic convictions as Lutherans: that all of life in Jesus Christ – every act of service, in every daily calling, in every corner of life – flows freely from a living, daring confidence in God’s grace. To order T-shirts or download resources, go to [ELCA.org/dayofservice](http://ELCA.org/dayofservice).

## **Join the conversation**

There are two opportunities for you to provide feedback about what this church says on important issues. One is “Draft of a Social Statement on Women and Justice.” The draft is in two sections: basic theses and fuller explanations, which speak about how sexism harms us all in church and society. The task force wants to hear from you about the content of the draft and this innovative format. Find the draft, supplementary materials and order information at [ELCA.org/womenandjustice](http://ELCA.org/womenandjustice). The other is on the draft of “A Declaration of our Inter-Religious Commitment: A Draft Policy Statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.” The comment period is open from now until June 30, 2018. Visit [ELCA.org/ecumenical](http://ELCA.org/ecumenical) for more information and the document.

I have shared some of the ways we are loving and serving our neighbor. This is what being free in Christ looks like. This is part of our Lutheran story. This is part of your congregation’s story and your synod’s story.

Wherever you are for your synod assembly, from the Alaska Synod to the Caribbean Synod, there is something that we all have in common – our life in Christ. We have our life in Christ – in the crucified and risen Savior, in the one who poured out his life for us, the one who gave himself away for the life of the world so we may be free. As Lutheran Christians, we live in the freedom of Christ.

With gratitude,



The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America