

What it means to be part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Through your membership in an ELCA congregation, you are part of a church-wide organization that includes over 4.5 million members in 10,348 congregations with over 17,600 pastors in the United States. Together as congregations, synods and the churchwide expression, we do God's work in ways we could never accomplish as individuals or as an individual congregation. You are part of:

- approximately 204 congregations that are in development
- 159 existing congregations intentionally focused on mission and ministry renewal
- ministry and projects in over 90 countries
- eight seminaries, 28 Lutheran colleges and universities, 187 campus ministry organizations, 1530 early childhood education centers, 267 Lutheran K-8 elementary schools, 147 outdoor ministries and so much more
- disaster relief projects across the globe. This currently includes over \$12.6 million in relief to Haiti, an amount that continues to increase
- the millions fed and clothed annually through Lutheran World Relief's efforts
- the 67 million Lutherans all over the world united through the Lutheran World Federation
- 233 missionaries in 48 countries
- 120 Companion Synods

What we do together in the Northeastern Minnesota Synod (continued)

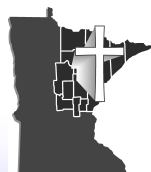
Each year our synod meets in assembly to worship, study, pray, deliberate on issues, and learn new ways to do ministry. We develop relationships with other Lutherans through participation in learning and mission opportunities. The annual *Extravaganza!* has proved to be effective in assisting with congregational mission and ministry. In our synod, we work together to raise incredible amounts of money to alleviate hunger and to reach out to those affected by flooding, hurricanes, or earthquakes. Together, our 141 synod congregations gave \$291,950 to ELCA World Hunger in 2010.



When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.

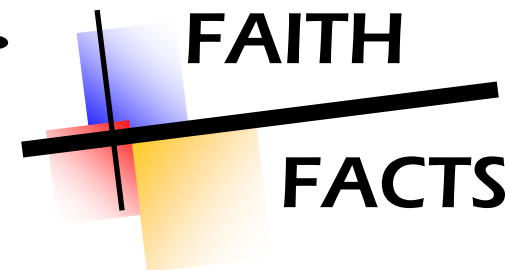
For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

I Corinthians 13: 11-13



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A decision was made

In August 2009, the ELCA Church-wide Assembly voted to adopt its 10th Social Statement: "*Human Sexuality; Gift and Trust.*" Social Statements are not canon law, but guides to ethical deliberation. It was comprehensive; covering marriage, divorce, sexual abuse, global sex trade, youth and their relationships, professional misconduct, the sanctity of marriage, and a condemnation of pornography. It draws from Scripture and Lutheran Confessions. We also agreed to find a way for people in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders in those congregations who want to call them and agreed to honor those who believe we should not roster people in these relationships.

We recognized our differences

ELCA members have differing opinions on how to regard lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships. We identified and upheld four positions that faithful Lutherans hold in relation to homosexuality:

1. Same gender sexual behavior is sinful.
2. While homosexuality may not be sinful, it does not follow God's original intention.
3. Lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships should be supported, but not equated with marriage.
4. Same gender, faithful, monogamous relationships should be supported and held to the same high standards as heterosexual marriage.

We agreed to live together as a church with respect, recognizing that equally faithful Lutherans do interpret passages in Scripture differently. They decided to love our neighbor, honor one another's bound conscience on these matters, and bear the burden of being a church that can hold divergent views on this particular subject, which has had many years of study.

This isn't our first disagreement

The necessity of circumcision, slavery, civil rights, divorce of church members and divorce of clergy, interfaith and inter-denomination marriage, and the ordination of women are just a few of the issues over which Christians have disagreed throughout the centuries. At various times the church has held positions on these and other issues that were later reversed. Then, as now, we agreed to disagree and stay together.

Your congregation calls its own pastor(s)

As in the past, each congregation is responsible for calling its pastor and any other rostered leader. Congregations are free to ask questions of potential pastors whom they may call to serve them. Questions about the pastor's sexuality as well as questions about her or his beliefs and how he or she intends to preach and teach on these and other issues are valid questions to ask candidates. Congregations have always called and will continue to call the pastor who will best serve them.

What it means to be part of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA

As a member of your congregation you are part of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, one of 65 synods in the ELCA, with a territory of 13 counties in northeastern Minnesota. You are joined with 75,000 other Lutherans in 142 congregations in this synod. The Northeastern Minnesota Synod helps prepare pastors and other rostered leaders; assists congregations struggling through times of financial hardship, conflict or transition; does background checks for potential rostered leaders; and stands ready to assist you each day.



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

What we do together in the Northeastern Minnesota Synod

Through your mission support, you support the Lutheran Youth Organization under the guidance of synod staff member Catherine Anderson. You participate in events like the Middle School Gathering, Senior High Retreats (Cardia Deo), and the National Youth Gathering. With Catherine, you help train youth to become disciples of Jesus Christ. You support Catherine's leadership in training youth leaders, paid and volunteer, on the basics of Christianity and youth work.

Through your mission support, you offer a safe place for sailors on the Great Lakes at the Twin Ports Ministry to Seafarers; a warm bed, phones to call loved ones, a place to worship together and new clothes in the name of Christ.

Our synod has energetic teams for the purposes of doing ministry regarding immigration and refugee justice, rural life concerns, and world hunger issues. Through our synod you are connected in ministry to companion synods in Russia, Honduras, and India. You've stuffed the downstairs of our synod office with baby hats, toys, medical supplies and diapers for outreach.

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