



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Spring 2020

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel;
it is the power of God for salvation
to everyone who has faith,
to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”
—Romans 1:16

Dear friends in Christ,

As we enter a new decade, I invite this church to consider what it might mean to thrive. Think about your congregation, your synod, the entire Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). What does thriving look like? What has God provided for us to spread the gospel and deepen faith for all people? How do we renew and strengthen evangelism?

This year is the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's treatise *The Freedom of a Christian*. I'm inviting members of our church to study and reflect on it. One way to think about what it means to be a thriving church is by reflecting on God's liberation of the world in Jesus Christ.

While you are together at your synod assemblies, take time to hear and share stories of who you have seen Jesus to be. I pray that this time might be an opportunity for us to listen to one another and develop a deeper understanding of who we are as a Lutheran church and of our Lutheran witness of the Christian faith as it relates to God's narrative of freedom in Christ.

In 2020, the ELCA observes the 50th anniversary of women's ordination to the ministry of word and sacrament. We also celebrate 40 years of women of color being ordained and the 10th anniversary of the church's decision to remove barriers to ordination for people in same-gender marriages. This church has been blessed and has thrived by the gifts of ministry of those called to serve as pastors.

When pastors and deacons gather at the Rostered Ministers Gathering this July in Phoenix, I hope these rostered ministers will be rekindled and reenergized to share God's word in accessible and compelling ways. Through all that we do, this church is committed to equipping new leaders for evangelism and empowering congregations and communities of worship for deepening faith, hope and openness to change. Together, we will create a vision for the ELCA that we are becoming, a thriving church spreading the gospel and deepening faith for all people.

Thank you for your faithful partnership and witness to the gospel. May God bless your time together as you gather and share the good news of Jesus Christ.

With hope,

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