



**YOUR
MISSION SUPPORT
GIFTS AT WORK**

JULY 2023 Mission Support Memo

STORYTELLING ENGAGEMENT

Stories That Heat Us Up

Karen Kretschmann

A story from our ELCA churchwide organization

As you read this story, what catches your attention?

How are you gathering to explore church together?

We arrived to record-high temperatures in Phoenix, where locals worked to convince us “it is dry heat.” It was hot, yet we were still eager to connect and learn from each other. In July leaders across our church gathered for the 2023 Rostered Ministers Gathering. Nick Kiger and I joined this gifted group to hear, share and gather stories and learn about our church. Many of our churchwide organization staff and Grand Canyon Synod leaders, who rely on Mission Support to do their work, were there to support this gathering, which had been canceled during the pandemic but now was happening. We were together, sharing in joy, words of action and solemn lament, yet with our voices lifted high in song. It was good to be together as one.

These words from the Rev. Philip Hirsch, director for Christian Community and Leadership in our ELCA, provide a beautiful reflection on this time together:

“In good Lutheran theological fashion, the Rostered Ministers Gathering was a balance of things held in tension: The 117-degree heat outside was experienced along with air-conditioning that was often too chilly for short sleeves. Seven hundred leaders worshiped and heard presentations that were about the head and heart, the gospel of unconditional love, the demand of justice to do better, and the need to interact and to be alone. It sought to care for the whole person of those often stressed to the brink by polarizing and declining membership and a job that never stops. I was glad that our denomination made the effort to minister to those who give their lives to lead and care for others. It was that right time to try to gather for this purpose, and whatever comes of it in the future, this kind of attention to our leaders will always be needed and appreciated.”

We were grateful for insightful messages from Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, the Rev. Carmelo Santos, Jeff Chu and Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, as well as many others who facilitated Bible study and workshops. Our churchwide organization leaders also made this gathering a time of learning, rest, worship and care. We are especially grateful for the Rev. Sara Cutter and her team, who organized this gathering. We are church together!

ENGAGE WITH US

We are excited to share that our monthly “Mission Support Memo” is available at the ELCA SOFIA site. In addition to our annual publication “Stories of Faith in Action,” these monthly issues of “Mission Support Memo” show how our Mission Support makes incredible mission happen across our church.

<https://www.elca.org/resources/stories-of-faith-in-action#MissionSupportMemo>

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GRATEFUL

After being with our rostered ministers, we must express gratitude for them. For the ways they minister to their congregations. For mission developers guiding new and strategic ministry into being. For chaplains walking alongside our military, health care services and long-term care facilities. For mission leaders serving across our globe. For rostered ministers serving a variety of organizations in creative ways. Of course, for our churchwide organization and synod ministers, who guide our local, national and global church work and values. We think especially of each synod’s candidacy leader, who focuses on finding, recommending and supporting the calls of these rostered ministers across our church. What a joy it is that our ELCA members faithfully give to their congregations Mission Support that is shared with our synods and our churchwide organization, so that rostered ministers can live out their call to serve Christ near and far.

Blessings from your churchwide organization Mission Support team,

Victoria Flood, Senior Director for Mission Support

Nick Kiger, Director for Mission Support

Karen Kretschmann, Coordinator for Storytelling Engagement

