

FOR SUPPORTERS OF ELCA WORLD HUNGER AND LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

**STORIES FROM OUR CHURCH'S
HUNGER AND DISASTER
RESPONSE MINISTRIES**

Fall 2026
ELCA.org/hunger | ELCA.org/disaster

Lifelines



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America



"Truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."
—Matthew 17:20

Friends,

God can work through a small thing to make a big difference. We see this many times in the Bible. In the book of Matthew, for example, Jesus teaches his disciples that faith the size of a mustard seed can become powerful enough to move a mountain. And of course, Jesus himself was once a small baby in a humble manger. Through him, the whole world was transformed by God's grace.

We also see God working through small things — and through people like us — in the world around us today. Your gifts to ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response are helping to provide simple gifts that are making an enormous impact in the lives of your neighbors. This issue of "LifeLines" contains just a few examples.

In Zimbabwe, one woman is redefining her future because you helped her access state-of-the-art computers and training courses in information technology. Elsewhere you are providing literal seeds that are growing to strengthen livelihoods and communities: A handful of okra seeds allowed a farmer in India to provide for his family, and a greenhouse and some steel planting beds are empowering a congregation in Chicago to plan a sustainable future for its community garden.

In Oklahoma, you helped repair the roofs of homes damaged by storms, restoring comfort and safety to the people who live under them. And in Honduras, you have given a migrant family the tools they need to create a stable home in a new country.

When you made your donation, you might not have known how powerful that act of faith would be. You couldn't have predicted how your gift would grow or all the incredible ways you would be sharing God's love with your neighbors around the world.

Because of your gift — no matter the size — we are closer to God's promise of a just world where all are fed and cared for. Thank you. When we come together in faithful community, nothing is impossible for us.

Together in Christ's fellowship,

Haemin Lee
Director, ELCA World Hunger

Maryn Olson
Director, Lutheran Disaster Response



Haemin Lee
Director, ELCA World Hunger



Maryn Olson
Director, Lutheran Disaster Response



John Eggen
Executive for Development

HOW TO GIVE

Online

ELCA.org/GiveWH
ELCA.org/GiveLDR

Phone

800-638-3522

Mail

Make checks payable to
"ELCA World Hunger" or
"Lutheran Disaster Response"
and mail to:

ELCA
P.O. Box 1809
Merrifield, VA 22116-8009

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"Our past doesn't define our destiny"

Justina Kanyata grew up in a family of eight in a shantytown in Lusaka, Zambia.

After her father died, her mother struggled to make ends meet. Even though things were hard, Justina says, "I had dreams of a better life." However, those dreams grew more distant when Justina became pregnant in her 20s. Her baby's father and his family rejected her, and Justina became a single mother struggling to support her son. She began a small business, offering hairdressing services and selling wigs, but in the beginning, she was barely breaking even.

Everything began to change when Justina learned about InfoHut through her church. The program, supported by your gifts to ELCA World Hunger, offers free technology and life skills courses. As soon as Justina heard about it, she says, "I saw an opportunity to change my life."



Your gifts helped Justina Kanyata strengthen her professional skills and her sense of self.

At the InfoHut facility, Justina found state-of-the-art equipment – provided by your gifts – and a place where she could thrive. She took classes in office technology, information technology and computer management. She also received life skills training that taught her valuable lessons about health and practices for safer sex.

Justina loves being part of the community at InfoHut. "I take pride in our collective learning experience," she says. She helps clean the computer lab every day and looks forward to Thursdays, when she and her fellow students share presentations and talk about what they're studying. She has invited her friend Lillian to take classes with her.

With her new IT skills, Justina found a job as a data entry clerk. That income, combined with the income from her growing beauty business, has enabled her to provide for herself and her



You support programs, including education and vocational training, that help people facing hunger, homelessness and other challenges to access jobs, increase their earning potential and break the cycle of poverty for good.



son. InfoHut has strengthened not only Justina's professional skills but her sense of self. "I am a changed person," she says. "InfoHut has taught me invaluable lessons: forgiveness, self-love, goal setting and resilience."

Your gifts have helped Justina feel the renewing power of God's grace. "Our past doesn't define our destiny," she says. "Instead we can learn from our mistakes and forge a better path." Through your generosity, you are showing up for Justina and others like her who dream of a better life – breaking the cycle of hunger and poverty and turning more of those dreams into reality.

"I am a changed person. InfoHut has taught me invaluable lessons: forgiveness, self-love, goal setting and resilience."

—Justina Kanyata

A garden for all of us

We should start a garden.”

Pat Harper remembers saying these fateful words to her pastor 17 years ago. She had just moved back to the South

Side of Chicago, where she had grown up. For over 35 years, she had lived in Evanston, a suburb just north of the city. But when she retired, she says, “my calling was to go back to the neighborhood I knew.” After she relocated, she began to get involved at St. Stephen’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, an ELCA African-descent ministry in the city’s Chatham neighborhood.

Though Pat had gardened in her own backyard before, she didn’t have any formal agricultural training. She had spent her professional career in healthcare. Still, when she saw the big plot of land outside St. Stephen’s, she was inspired. It was clear to her that the land should be filled with produce for the community. Her pastor agreed, and their garden ministry has not stopped growing since then.

These days, the St. Stephen’s garden includes 1,000 feet of growing space as well as a butterfly garden, handwashing stations, running water and electricity. A few years ago, St. Stephen’s partnered with ELCA World Hunger, and your gifts helped jump-start several long-term improvement projects to make the garden more sustainable. You helped



St. Stephen’s build a new fence, a greenhouse to extend the growing season, a new beehive area and custom steel planting beds. Your generosity is also helping to provide stipends for teens, new citizens and others to work in the garden. Those hours of labor can help people get started in the workforce or get back on their feet after a setback.

As the garden helps feed individuals, it nourishes the community in other ways too. Pat says it’s been amazing to connect with her neighbors through this ministry. She remembers one of her older neighbors saying that she never used to leave the house but that, after the garden was planted, she began walking by the church all the time just to watch the garden grow. The garden also draws community members for cooking and nutrition classes and for produce giveaways.

According to Pat, people often tell her that the garden is so nice, it looks as if it should be on the North Side, in a wealthier neighborhood. “No,” she



Your generosity provides care for our closest neighbors. By supporting programs here at home, such as feeding ministries, you help meet immediate needs for the most vulnerable and strengthen communities for years to come.



tells them, “we should all have this. It should be on every side.”

The ministry keeps getting bigger – one project leads to a new partnership that leads to more projects. Pat doesn’t think she could stop the momentum if she tried. “That’s how nature is,” she says. “It just keeps coming at you.”

Now Pat and her ministry colleagues are looking for ways to make the garden sustainable for the next 15, 20 or 30 years. They are partnering with a local organization and other nearby African-descent ministries to plant an orchard. They hope the orchard will eventually have a farm stand, a children’s play area and maybe a commercial kitchen – but they’ll start by planting 25 trees that will bear peaches, cherries and plums for generations to come.

Pat is deeply grateful for your support. “Your dollars are being used in a way that is driven by Jesus Christ,” she says. “He is working on us and through us to serve people that don’t have access to healthy, nutritional food.” But of course, she continues, “it’s not only the food itself” that is making a difference to the community. You are helping to grow food, build relationships and share hope. Thank you.



Planting seeds of hope

When we talk about the impact of your gifts to ELCA World Hunger, we often talk about seeds. Sometimes we use them as a metaphor — each gift, no matter the size, can be planted in a community and grow beyond our imagination. Other times, your generosity helps provide literal seeds that transform lives. That's what happened to Joydev, a farmer who lives in India. His journey to a stable income and hope for the future began with just 25 grams of okra seeds.

Joydev lives with his wife, daughter and son in a rural village. They have a small farm where they grow primarily rice. Joydev worked hard in his rice paddies, but a harsh climate and poor

soil worked against him. The rice he grew didn't provide enough income to support his family. To make ends meet, Joydev and his wife had to work as day laborers on other farms. Given the constant uncertainty about their income, Joydev says, "it was hard to dream of a better future for my children."

Joydev wanted to start growing different kinds of vegetables to sell in the off season, but he had no way to buy the quality seeds he would need. Eventually your generosity gave him a way to realize his vision.

A partner program of ELCA World Hunger had begun working in Joydev's area to improve the incomes and lives of rural farmers. When Joydev joined the program, he received some okra seeds that he planted and carefully tended. This handful of seeds produced over 400 pounds of okra. Joydev says that seeing so many fresh vegetables spring from one small plot of land "felt like a miracle."

He sold the produce at a local market, and the extra income brought joy and relief to his family. Joydev's okra earnings have helped to cover daily household expenses, fund his children's education and take care of the family's medical needs. His farm serves as a model for other farmers in his district, showing his neighbors how high-quality seeds and diverse crops can change their lives.

When Joydev received his first 25 grams of seeds, he says, "I never imagined it would change so much for us." Thank you for helping to plant seeds of hope and change in Joydev's life, and in the lives of so many of our neighbors around the world. Your gifts are taking root, and your impact continues to grow.



You helped change Joydev's life with 25 grams of okra seeds.



You support programs that give people the resources they need to grow food in sustainable, climate-resilient ways. Your generosity helps people facing hunger, homelessness and other challenges to feed their families, increase their earning potential and break the cycle of poverty for good.

The long journey to a *new life*



Pedro was born and raised in Venezuela. For a long time, his life there was peaceful. He owned and ran a small grocery store that supported him, his wife and their young daughter. Eventually, though, corrupt police officers began harassing Pedro and extorting money from him, making his life unbearable. Pedro and his wife made the difficult decision to migrate to the United States. “I knew leaving our home would be hard,” Pedro says. “But I never imagined everything we were going to face.”

First they had to cross the Darién Gap, which separates Colombia from Panama. Pedro describes it as “a relentless jungle where I witnessed the unimaginable.” They walked for days without food and had to avoid getting swept away by treacherous river currents as they traveled by the water. When they finally reached Mexico, they were kidnapped by a cartel. Their family back in Venezuela had to deplete their savings to pay a ransom for the migrants’ release. After that, Pedro and his family spent two years in Mexico, waiting for asylum in the United States. They survived by selling popsicles and other products on the street.

Eventually Pedro and his family surrendered to U.S. authorities, hoping they could wait for asylum in the United States. But they were deported back to Mexico. Rather than live in fear of being kidnapped again in Mexico, they decided to travel to Honduras.

In Honduras, you helped bring hope to Pedro through the “Return With Hope and Dignity” project, which is supported by your gifts to AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities). The project works to support the tens of thousands of migrants who are returned to Honduras or deported there from other countries. Like Pedro, many of these migrants have no family or community in Honduras. Participants are provided with crucial resources such as job training and psychological support to help them process the trauma of their journeys.

Through his participation in the program, Pedro began selling groceries and food dishes from his home country. He learned how to organize and keep better track of his products. As his income stabilizes, he can feel himself becoming part of the community. “Here in La Venecia,” he says, “people already know us.”

Through your gifts to AMMPARO, you are answering Jesus’ call to “welcome the stranger” — close to home and around the world. You come alongside our neighbors on many long, difficult journeys and stay with them even after their travels end, helping them build new lives in safer places.



Your generosity supports vulnerable migrants who are forcibly displaced and have arrived in the United States and other countries around the world. You help provide legal aid, vocational training and more of the resources they need to become contributing members of their new communities.

A network of faith in Oklahoma

Your generous gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response connect you to an interdenominational network of people, organizations and churches that care for our siblings in Christ who have been affected by disasters. Together with our whole community of faith, you show up

for our neighbors when storms arrive – and stay through the years that follow as they rebuild their homes and lives.

In May 2022, flash floods and storms with high winds damaged thousands of homes across 13 counties in eastern Oklahoma. Many families had to evacuate their homes. Some people stayed with family or friends while others sought refuge in emergency shelters.

Catholic Charities of Eastern Oklahoma, a partner of Lutheran Disaster Response, went to work right away, helping to provide gift cards to 165



Beth and Daniel's house was damaged by storms and a tornado in eastern Oklahoma. Thanks to you, their home is safe and whole again.



Lutheran Disaster Response shares hope, healing and renewal with people in the United States and around the world whose lives have been disrupted by disasters. Your gifts support disaster survivors as they work to rebuild.



Shawna (third from right) says that your assistance repairing her roof "was an answered prayer."

survivors so they could buy emergency necessities such as food and clothing. It also offered case management services to families that needed home repairs – particularly those outside of the declared disaster zone, who didn't qualify for government assistance.

Over the last four years, you have helped make those repairs. Gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response provided roofing materials, drywall, flooring, appliances, HVAC units, contractors and more.

One home you helped repair belongs to Shawna, who lives in Muskogee. In her town, 7 inches of rain fell in a single day, damaging more than just her house. "Our two barns, flight pens, storage buildings, vehicles, animals and other property were flooded and damaged," Shawna says. She didn't have the thousands of dollars she would need to repair everything, and the city was threatening to condemn her property.

Catholic Charities of Eastern Oklahoma stepped in to manage her case, and your gifts provided the supplies needed to fix her roof and make her home safe, dry and livable again. "We appreciate from the bottom of our hearts having our roof repaired, because this is the foundation of our home," Shawna says. "Your assistance was an answered prayer."

You also touched the lives of Beth and Daniel, who live in Okmulgee. In the wake of other storms in the area, a tornado struck their town, severely damaging their roof and causing multiple dangerous leaks. Unable to work due to a health condition, Daniel was waiting for disability benefits to be approved. Even before their house needed repairs, he and Beth had been struggling to get by on Beth's income. "We honestly did not know what we were going to do," Beth says.

Your generosity provided materials to fix yet another roof and keep another family safe. You helped restore their cozy home and their faith in the kindness of others. "There were times when I felt like giving up," Beth says, "and you kept us going."

Thank you for being part of this vast and loving Christian fellowship that is sharing God's hope and care with our neighbors who need it badly. You are answering prayers and sharing hope with so many of our neighbors in Oklahoma and beyond.

"There were times when I felt like giving up and you kept us going."

—Beth



Read more stories of your impact through Lutheran Disaster Response in the latest issue of "Thrive"!

The stories in the 2026 issue of "Thrive" show the holistic approach of Lutheran Disaster Response. As we accompany individuals around the world, from Hawai'i to Myanmar, your support for Lutheran Disaster Response demonstrates the value of our relationships and the impact of our long-term commitment.



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NEW SEASONAL RESOURCES FROM ELCA WORLD HUNGER!

This Advent and Lent, ELCA World Hunger invites you to strengthen relationships with our neighbors by sharing our abundance. This year's resources provide tools for your community to celebrate those you are connected to, near and far.

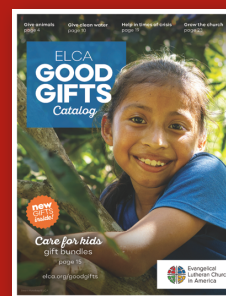


2026 LENT
CALENDAR

*"Filled With
Good Things"*



ACTION GUIDE
FOR CONGREGATIONS



GOOD GIFTS
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2026 ADVENT
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