



*The Tapestry community loves finding reasons to gather, celebrate and share a meal together.*

## ONE BIG TABLE

“During seminary, I realized that people feel especially lonely around a table,” Melissa Gonzalez recalls. “We feel together around a table too.” Years later, she is now Pastor Melissa and her belief in the power of food to connect people is central to her ministry at Tapestry, a worshipping community in Richfield, Minn. For this congregation largely made up of immigrants, these meals – shared on education and community nights as well as every time they worship – are opportunities to celebrate the many cultures represented and to share reminders of home.

As the community grew from a dozen people to its current Sunday attendance of about 50, found that Tapestry’s members had needs that went far beyond a few shared meals each week. Tapestry’s hunger program, supported by your gifts to ELCA World Hunger, is not seen as a separate ministry or outreach. As Pastor Melissa says, “It’s all part of one big table.”

Tapestry is especially grateful for its host, Oak Grove Lutheran Church, which generously shares its well-stocked kitchen. Funds from ELCA World Hunger cover food costs above and beyond what is donated, and these funds have been especially vital amid rising prices. Tapestry is feeding more people than

ever, including weekly food deliveries to more than 65 families this spring. “We started out just wanting to help, but this quickly turned into a lifeline for our neighbors,” says Pastor Melissa.

Because of the grants Tapestry receives from ELCA World Hunger, which include the recent Daily Bread Grants that address rising food insecurity across the country, the community has been able to put plans into action quickly without needing to fundraise first. One simple but effective addition has been offering small stipends to cooks who prepare food for larger groups.

“Thanks to your gifts,” says Pastor Melissa, “anyone who comes to our church will eat *so well* and experience hospitality that they might never have experienced here before.”

*“Together, we are living into the reality of the church as one body.”*

—Melissa Gonzalez



Be sure to join us on **Aug. 6** for our next **FIRESIDE CHAT**, featuring conversation and connection with the Rev. Yehiel Curry, newly elected presiding bishop of the ELCA!



## IN THIS TOGETHER — ELCA MISSIONARY HOME ASSIGNMENTS



During Dr. Jacqueline (Jackie) and Patrick Bencke's first home assignment, Jackie was eight months pregnant with the couple's second daughter. This spring, Jackie is visiting potential colleges with this daughter. The couple have served in Japan since 2006 and look forward to their 10th

home assignment to meet with the congregations and individual donors who have made their service possible – and who have watched their children grow up from afar.

For two months every two years, ELCA Global Mission personnel step away from their service sites and return to the United States to engage in learning, build community with one another, gather with family and friends, attend to their own care, and visit congregations that support them through prayer, relationships and financial gifts.

The Benckes recount with joy the wonderful people they've met during every home assignment over two decades. These friends are more than supporters now – they are cheerleaders and even substitute grandparents – and these relationships mean as much to the donors and congregations stateside as they do to the Benckes halfway around the world. If your congregation does not currently sponsor a missionary, the Benckes offer a great reason for you to consider doing so: "The congregations that sponsor us are part of everything we do. *Our* mission becomes *their* mission. We are all reminded that our work crosses borders and oceans, and we are all part of one mission."



*Hannah and Emilie Bencke like to go off on adventures while their parents are leading programs at the churches they visit.*

Congregations often tell us that hosting a missionary deepens their own sense of calling, making the mission that once felt far away suddenly feel close and personal. There is still time for your congregation to host a missionary during home assignment this summer! **Please reach out to [GlobalChurch@ELCA.org](mailto:GlobalChurch@ELCA.org) to learn more.**

**You can also scan the QR code to view the 2026 Global Mission Directory and learn more about all our missionaries, including how to support them.**



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**Join us this fall to see more of our shared mission up close on a Donor Immersion Trip! From Nov. 6 to 16, we will travel to Central Europe** to see God's work firsthand in Hungary, Slovakia and Poland witness ministries with refugees, meet with teachers in the Central Europe Teachers Program and learn about the context and culture of Lutherans in Central Europe. Learn more at [ELCA.org/LeadershipCircle](https://ELCA.org/LeadershipCircle).

**For more resources and longer version of these stories, check out the new [ELCA.org/LeadershipCircle](https://ELCA.org/LeadershipCircle)!**