



ELCA Ministries of Diverse Cultures and Communities



Quarterly Report: Q3 2026 September 2026

The Ministries of Diverse Cultures and Communities (MDCC) team assists the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in becoming more culturally diverse and anti-racist by working with ELCA congregations, synods, churchwide colleagues, communities, agencies, and institutions. Within the ELCA, the MDCC team strives to accomplish the shared goal of full partnership and participation of people from African Descent, African National, Arab and Middle Eastern, Asian and Pacific Islander, Indigenous, and Latino communities in the life of this church.

Sincerely in Christ,

Tammy Jackson, MDCC Senior Director, ELCA Service & Justice Unit

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- **Multicultural Gathering:** Planning continues for One Vine, Many Branches: A Multicultural Celebration of Faith and Unity, Jan. 20-22, 2027, in Minneapolis. The invitation-only gathering, held in partnership with the [2027 Extravaganza](#), will bring leaders from across the church together for cross-cultural learning, networking and community building.
 - **ELCA Ethnic Associations:** The [Deaconess Community of the ELCA](#) provided a \$40,000 gift to each of the five ELCA Ethnic Associations: the African Descent Lutheran Association, American Indian and Alaska Native Association, Association of Lutherans of Arab and Middle Eastern Heritage, Association of Asians and Pacific Islanders and Association of Latino Ministries. The Deaconess Community board also approved a 2026 Mission Grant of \$2,000 for each association, extending its support for the ministries and strengthening relationships with ethnic-specific communities.
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Ministry Highlights:

African Descent & African National Ministries (AD/AN)

- **Interim Leadership:** [Judith Roberts, Senior Director for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Human Resources](#), is serving as Interim Director for African Descent and African National Ministries while the search for a permanent director continues. She is providing leadership and oversight for ongoing initiatives while working with churchwide colleagues, synods, congregations, ministry partners and networks.
- **New Start Reinvestment Project:** The African Descent (AD) New Start Reinvestment Project, paused during the staff vacancy period, is beginning again under the leadership of Judith Roberts with support from churchwide Mission Development Funds. Project consultants will continue working with

four ELCA AD ministries: Gathered by Grace, Southeastern Synod; Emmaus, North Carolina Synod; Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Reformation, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod; and Trinity Lutheran Church, New Jersey Synod.

Arab & Middle Eastern Ministries (AME)

- **Our Lady of Salam:** [Rev. Charbel Zgheib has started Our Lady of Salam](#), a new worshipping community in Staten Island, NY. The community is hosted at Christ Lutheran Church.
- **Leadership Development:** Seminarian Jamil Zoughbi has begun his internship and will reach out to AME communities in the Albany area. Joseph Zarzour is beginning his seminary education at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (PLTS) and will engage Arab and Middle Eastern communities in the San Francisco Bay Area.
- **Public Witness:** Pastor Khader Khalilia spoke at the Women of the ELCA gathering about the situation in the Holy Land and the ELCA's SUMUD initiative. Participants also watched the film *The Voice of Hind Rajab*.
- **Continuing Education:** AME pastors will gather Sept. 23-26 at Bethlehem Arabic Lutheran Church in San Diego, CA, for three days of continuing education, fellowship and mutual support. The program will include sessions on digital media, emotional and spiritual care for congregational members, stewardship and social ministry.

Asian & Pacific Islander Ministries (API)

- **Leadership Development:** Rev. Grace Lee of Hawaii (Pacifica Synod) was ordained in June 2026. Hosea Huang, Metro New York Synod, is preparing for ordination in September 2026. The ACTS-Indonesian program will launch Oct. 9-11 in Riverside, CA, with 22 Indonesian lay leaders enrolled.
- **New Ministries & Accompaniment:** New ministries include St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Filipino, in Glendale, CA, and Resurrection Lutheran Church, Chinese (WelcomeNet), in Rochester, NY. API Ministries also participated in August and September site reviews of Trinity Faith Chinese and Mara Evangelical.
- **Resources:** A Chinese translation of *Luther's Small Catechism: An Exposition of the Christian Faith in Asian Contexts and Cultures*, translated by Evangeline Dai and edited by Dr. Edmond Yee, has been printed by Taosheng Publishing House for distribution in North America and Asia.
- **Sharing Stories:** [Living Lutheran's "Rooted and Rising"](#) highlights the development of the 2026-2030 API Ministry Plan and the experiences of API Lutherans who shaped it.

Indigenous Ministries (IM)

- **Truth Seeking & Truth Telling:** IM is expanding its Truth Seeking & Truth Telling Initiative to synods nationwide in 2026. More than 100 laypeople and rostered ministers have participated through gatherings, discussions, research and educational efforts examining Lutheran and broader Christian involvement in Indian boarding schools and their continuing impact on Native peoples.
- **We Remember:** In preparation for the Sept. 30 National Day of Remembrance for U.S. Indian Boarding Schools, IM is also providing an [ELCA Truth-seeking and Truth-telling Initiative on Indian Boarding Schools Learning Toolkit](#), including a prayer service, workshop materials, educational handouts and other resources for congregations, synods, educational institutions and organizations.

Latino Ministries (LM)

- **Leadership Search:** Following the Rev. Hector Carrasquillo's retirement as [Program Director for Latino Ministries](#) in early July, a search is underway for the ministry's next leader.

Feature Story:

Mission & Ministry: Beyond remembrance: ELCA acts on truth telling

By Joan Pinnell



In 2025, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly committed to encouraging and equipping congregations, synods and affiliated ministries to observe the National Day of Remembrance for U.S. Indian Boarding Schools annually on or near Sept. 30. The action also calls for continuing education, research, truth telling, healing and repair related to the church's involvement in Indian boarding schools.

One year later, Indigenous Ministries, part of the Ministries of Diverse Cultures and Communities (MDCC), is drawing attention again to the Indigenous children who were forcibly removed from their families and communities and sent to schools designed to suppress their languages, cultures and identities. The day also recognizes boarding school survivors, descendants, families, tribal nations and communities still living with the consequences of a system in which Christian churches, including Lutheran bodies, participated.

Sept. 30 is also observed as Orange Shirt Day, named for boarding school survivor Phyllis Webstad's account of having her orange shirt taken from her on her first day at a residential school. Wearing orange

has become a visible way to remember Indigenous children affected by boarding schools and the loss of culture, identity and belonging those institutions sought to impose.

A personal story: [Wanda K. Frenchman, a member of the Oglala Lakota and Lenape tribes](#), currently serves as the interim director of Indigenous Ministries. Here she shares her story:

"One day in September, the 30th, is set aside to remember Indigenous children who died, those who survived and the families and communities impacted by the federal boarding school era. As an Indigenous person who was raised by Catholic boarding school survivors, that one day becomes every day.

"My Lakota grandparents were raised at Holy Rosary Catholic Mission in Pine Ridge, S.D., in the 1930s by German-speaking Catholic nuns and priests. They weren't offered God's love as grace and kindness but shown God in the worst light possible through punishment for the sin of being born as Lakota people.

"My grandparents weren't parented by their own Lakota families. Therefore, they parented their kids much as they were raised. The cycle of generational trauma was started with young children at boarding schools and continues still today."

Frenchman's family history with Indian boarding schools extends beyond her grandparents' experiences as students. Her mother taught at the federally operated Phoenix Indian School in the early 1970s, and her paternal grandmother worked there as a dorm matron in the 1960s.

Read More: [Beyond remembrance: ELCA takes action on truth telling \(Living Lutheran\)](#)

More Stories:

6/26/26 - [Young leader sets the tempo: From slide decks to youth-focused events, one young leader reshapes the church for the next generation](#)

"It's about the community you grow in," she said. "You can leave for weeks and come back, and people receive you like you were never gone."

8/20/26 - [Rooted and Rising: A strategic vision for Asian and Pacific Islander Ministries](#)

Living Lutheran Fall 2026 (print): "As a community, this represents our gifts that we offer and contribute, the challenges we face and address, and our hopes for and with the wider Lutheran community, the neighborhoods where leaders are planted to serve and the world."

9/10/26 - [Beyond Remembrance: ELCA Takes Action On Truth Telling](#)

Sept. 30 is National Day of Remembrance for Indian Boarding Schools

9/16/26 - [A church that sounds like home: Arabic-language ELCA community launches in Staten Island, N.Y.](#)

"This is how we evolve with people," Zgheib said, adding that worship should be "culturally sensitive to people" while preserving essential theological and liturgical elements.

9/17/26 - [Rooted and Rising: Full article in Living Lutheran online](#)

"We cannot do this without destabilizing the 'power over' systems, enduring discomfort for the sake of justice and our message of grace for all," Valeriano said, "embodying the words and Word we proclaim within the systems, communities and with our neighbors."



Image: Members of an ELCA Asian and Pacific Islander Ministries listening team visit a historical marker titled "The Wharf: First Steps on U.S. Soil," which commemorates the arrival of immigrants at the Angel Island Immigration Station in California. Chinese immigrants were the largest group processed here.

Closing Notes / Future Hopes:

MDCC is actively contributing to the ELCA's cultural diversity and anti-racist commitments through shared events, strategic planning, ministry support, and leadership development. We appreciate your attention to our efforts and thank you in advance for your continued support. We cannot continue this invaluable, faith-focused work without your partnership.

Questions? Please contact tammy.jackson@elca.org. Thank you.