



## May 2026 Mission Support Memo

# STORYTELLING ENGAGEMENT

### Full Circle of Faith

A story from our [New England Synod](#)

**As you read this story, what inspires you?**

**How has your congregation served kids in your neighborhood?**

In 1886, a Lutheran church in Worcester, Mass., was founded to serve the needs of non-English-speaking immigrant families living in the surrounding neighborhood. Today this church, Concordia Lutheran, has come full circle, back to serving a diverse neighborhood of immigrants and refugees. In over 140 years of ministry, the congregation has experienced vital times, challenging times and unpredictable times, maintaining a steadfast presence and adapting to an ever-changing neighborhood.

Concordia is committed to remaining an inner-city congregation that accompanies the community as it changes. It's sometimes hard to differentiate whether Concordia adapts to the neighborhood or the neighborhood has partially been shaped by the ministries and partnerships the congregation fosters. When the neighbors began aging, the church acted as the Worcester senior meal site, supporting seniors in their ministry. As the number of unhoused neighbors increased, it created a breakfast-and-clothing-closet ministry and welcomed AA and NA groups. It partnered with Lutheran Social Refugee Service (LSS) to resettle people from Laos and Cambodia, then refugees from Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Liberia, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Uganda, as well as nonrefugee-status immigrants. LRS benefited from being housed in the church because it was seen as a "center for immigrants," a welcome safe place. This meant other ministries were welcomed for a time when they needed a space. Ingelsia Luterana San Juan started its ministry here, as well as Café Con Dios, a Saturday-evening "coffeehouse" with fellowship and music.

But the cornerstone ministry of Concordia is its children's ministry. Members know that immigrant families are challenged. Parents struggle to maintain jobs and to find jobs that pay a living wage; they have to work multiple jobs and extra hours, stretching their dollars so they can send funds to family members still living in their country of origin. Concordia wanted to be there for the families and saw a need to offer neighborhood children a safe place to gather.



To be more visible, the church started Mothers of Pre-schoolers (MOPS) and outdoor vacation Bible school, but its members knew there was more they could do, and this was the beginning of Kids Express and Teen LOGOS. Every Friday, the fellowship hall is noisy with kids, 8 years old through high school age, playing games, chatting with friends, pulling out chairs to gather around tables to eat a healthy meal family-style, and participating in worship and Bible study. The importance of offering a space of fun and a Friday hangout that is safe is vital to this community. Over 2,000 kids have come through the program since it began 20 years ago, and now alums are returning to volunteer, bringing their own kids and even creating a young-adult ministry. The church has expanded this program, creating an anti-gang summer program, sending kids together to summer camp at Camp Calumet in N.H., and offering older kids a chance to gather with others across the nation at GenOn Youth Summit.



Lest we think it is just about Friday and camping fun, Concordia makes sure the kids and teens are front and center in worship every third Sunday, offering Kids and Teen Sunday, when youth provide the music by picking the hymns and playing and actively lead the service. Because Concordia focuses on kids and LOGOS has been so successful, the church is sharing with others across the nation to develop similar ministry that creates other congregations that are centers for kids' care and faith-formation, and that welcome immigrants.

## ENGAGE WITH US

### Stewardship Kaleidoscope Conference Mark your calendars: Sept. 21-23, Baltimore, Md.

In partnership with the Presbyterian Foundation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the ELCA Stewardship and Generosity team is proud to present a three-day conference dedicated to digging deeply into stewardship and generosity, utilizing workshops and plenaries that highlight diverse and authoritative voices from across the PCUSA, ELCA and partner church bodies. This year the event will be in Baltimore, Md., exploring how stewardship is a matter of "doing more with less" and featuring a number of voices engaged in both practical and cutting-edge thoughts around fueling ministry. Stewardship Kaleidoscope offers real tools for real ministry and is perfect for both rostered ministers and lay leaders. The mission of the conference is to ignite generosity, give practical tools for cultivating congregational generosity, expand leadership capacity for stewardship leaders, and cultivate adaptive approaches for funding Christ's mission throughout the world. Very limited partial scholarships are available! Contact the Rev. Tim Brown at [Tim.Brown@elca.org](mailto:Tim.Brown@elca.org) if interested. For information and registration, visit [Annual Conference - Stewardship Kaleidoscope](#).

## GRATEFUL

We are grateful for the welcome our churchwide staff receive while attending synod assemblies and sharing how, together, we make ministry happen across our church. Our team truly enjoys connecting with our diverse synods and hearing your stories.

In gratitude,  
Victoria Flood, Senior Director for Congregation and Synod Support  
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