

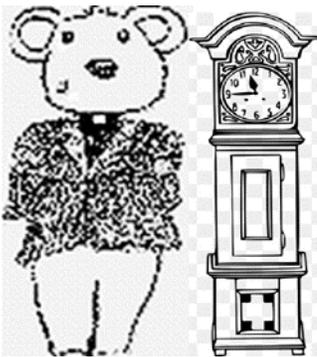


THE MESSENGER

Vermont Lutheran Church's Mission Statement:

Christians **A**ctively **R**eaching Out **E**xperiencing Christ and **S**preparing His Word

From Pastor Barry's Desk . . .



Beloved in Christ,

That is a term from St. Paul that is becoming quite popular again and I think it sounds nice. Instead of calling you "Sisters and Brothers in Christ" which is a little awkward, I think I'll try using "Beloved" ... what do you think?

Wow! It's a new year! I've really come to appreciate the old saying, "Hindsight is 20-20". I've altered it a bit to be, "2020 is Hindsight"... Either way, it's good to have the year 2020 in the rear-view mirror! Many people equated 2020 with the image of a dumpster fire, and it somehow seems fitting. The pandemic, especially, weighed heavily on us all. We have hope in the vaccines that have been developed, and it seems like there is an end in

sight – even though that might be a while yet, we're moving in the right direction and we're no longer worried that the light at the end of the tunnel might be an on-coming train!

The whole of Christian faith is about hope, isn't it? Hope in a new tomorrow. Hope in the 2nd coming of the Messiah. Hope that attests to God being in control. Hope that in the end most people are good. Hope in the resurrection of the dead. It's all hope.

Not that we want to escape from today or this world, for there is an awful lot of beauty and kindness and love in this world. For all of it's drawbacks and deficiencies, life in this world is pretty darned nice. Who doesn't appreciate the sight of a newborn? Babies are the evidence that God wants us to continue in the world! But even newborn animals are a-dor-able! Ingrid and I have gotten to be huge fans of Public Television's shows on animals and nature, and all it takes is one quick shot of a newborn hedgehog, or llama, or hippopotamus, or just about anything, and you'll hear us sigh together – "Awww!" Why newborns? Because they are so helpless and fresh and unspoiled, and because they represent just so much *hope* and possibility of what lies ahead. It's not a coincidence that the New Year is characterized as a baby in diapers looking forward to new growth and endless possibilities!

We have sayings that reflect our hope for our tomorrows: "Every day above ground is grace!" "Tomorrow, the sun will rise in the east and set in the west." "Love makes the world go 'round.'" We could name a lot of those sayings if we put our minds to it, but they often point to the fact that today is not all there is; tomorrow will come and give us a brand new start, a brand new slate on which to write our message on the blackboard of life!

Jesus may be the same today and tomorrow and forevermore (Hebrews 13:8), but our world is constantly changing. Change can be uncomfortable, but change can also bring hope for a new day of peace.

Keep hoping, beloved, there is much to be hopeful for when we know

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From Pastor Barry's Desk (continued)

that God is still in charge!

Peace!

Pastor Barry

News—Christmas Eve Stop in



Daily Discipleship

Transfiguration of Our Lord (A) – Matthew 17:1-9

Discipleship: *Following God's Beloved*

Focus Question: *How can a person show love towards God's Beloved?*

word of life

“While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with him I am well pleased; listen to him!’” Matthew 17:5 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 17:1-9

The text for Transfiguration Sunday describes the transformation of the human figure of Jesus while on the mountaintop. Jesus is not alone when this happens. He has taken the inner core of his disciples – Peter, James, and John.

Mountains in the Old Testament are the place where people encounter the presence of God. Perhaps the best known example is Moses receiving the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai. (Exodus 24:12-18) Thus, for Peter, James, and John to be taken along with Jesus to the mountain is quite impressive. They witness Jesus being transfigured. His face shines like the sun and his clothing becomes white. But more than that, Moses and Elijah appear.

1. *Describe this scene in your own words.*

What would it have been like to be with Peter, James, and John to witness this?

Moses and Elijah are two of the most well-known persons from the Old Testament, representing the law and the prophets. Peter does not know what to do, so he speaks. It might have been a better option to be quiet and humbly witness this scene. But Peter is known for jumping into a situation and blurting out his first thoughts. He states how good it is for all of them to be there and proposes to make shelters for Moses, Elijah and Jesus. Peter thinks they will remain on the mountaintop for a while.

Instead, the situation builds to a greater climax as God's voice is heard. The words are similar to those spoken at the baptism of Jesus. (Matthew 3:13-17) Jesus affirms the identity of Jesus as God's own Son and the Beloved. God is still well-pleased with Jesus, but God adds something new. God instructs those disciples on the mountain and disciples of all times to listen to Jesus.

3. *How does repeating these words reinforce the words spoken at baptism?*

What is the impact of adding new words?

It is not surprising for the disciples to be overcome with fear, but Jesus attempts to calm them by offering these words, “Get up and do not be afraid.” (Matthew 17:7 NRSV) By the time they look around, they see only Jesus. It is unclear how much time the disciples spent prostrate on the ground.

5. *What might have gone through the minds and hearts of the disciples?*

6. *How did fear block their experience?*

Is there anything the disciples could have done once they were filled with fear?

When they came down from the mountain, Jesus instructs the disciples not to tell anyone about the events

Bible Study (continued)

they witnessed until after the Son of Man has been resurrected. That is quite a request. Some people need to talk about their experiences to find meaning and a certain level of understanding, yet Jesus knows none of these events will make sense until after he has been crucified and raised from the dead.

word *among us*

Timmy never thought he would get married. He would date someone and find himself bored in the relationship. It made him quite sad, but Timmy realized it was his own problem. He knew these women were fantastic. At some point, he gave up searching for the perfect love of his life and devoted himself to his work. He knew his work would never fail to intrigue him.

Then one day he met Claire. She seemed to sparkle. They began to date and to build a relationship. This time Timmy made more of an effort, but one day he realized being with Claire took no effort. He waited for that awful feeling of boredom to descend, but it never came. Timmy knew he had found something very special and would not take their relationship for granted. He treated their relationship with tender care and acknowledged Claire as a rare gift in his life. In fact, he often referred to Claire as “my beloved” and continuously sought ways to share his love with her.

1. *What does it feel like to be the object of someone’s love?*

Is it comfortable for you to be the object of someone’s love? How so?

As long as Suzie could remember, she always wanted a Mustang convertible. Finally, she could afford to buy one. That car became “her beloved.” She hung pictures of the car in her office and spent most of Saturday keeping it cleaned and polished.

3. *What other objects can become the focus of love?*

What would you want to say to Suzie?

God makes it clear about the object of God’s love. God loves Jesus, regarding him as God’s Beloved. Simply put, God is well pleased with Jesus. God wants people to know Jesus and especially to listen to him. God is quite direct. “Listen to him!” (Matthew 17:5 NRSV) Those direct words spoken by God become an important reminder about setting priorities. God desires people to know Jesus, the one whom God loves and with whom God is well-pleased. In a world filled with distractions, it is helpful to be reminded of this One worth listening to.

5. *How might we listen to Jesus through worship?*

6. *How might we listen to Jesus in our personal devotions and prayer?*

How might we listen to Jesus through the conversations with others?

It is not always easy for a parent to let go of a beloved child as the child encounters new experiences such as first grade, high school, or college. Hopefully the parent’s love grounds their beloved child and helps guide them in making wise decisions. As a loving parent, God sent Jesus into our world, knowing it would be a difficult journey. God supported Jesus as he lived among us, encountered rejection, and even as he faced death on the cross. God’s love for Jesus did not waver. Through God’s love for Jesus, we encounter God’s love for us.

8. *How do you show love towards God’s Beloved?*

How else might you do so?

Prayer

Christ, help me to listen to you. Continue to claim me and keep me close.
Help me to show my love toward you in all that I do and am. Amen

Dig Deeper

Exodus 24:12-18

last word

This week,
assess your God-given gifts
and your stewardship of those gifts.



January 3

Boy in the Temple

Luke 2:41-52

January 10

Jesus' Baptism

Luke 3:1-22

January 17

Sermon at Nazareth

Luke 4:14-30

January 24

Fish for People

Luke 5:1-11

January 31

Healing on the Sabbath

Luke 6:1-16

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Jane	Mickelson	January 01
Henry	Olsen	January 01
Shirley	Brandt	January 02
Jude	Powers-Orth	January 03
Earl	Brandt	January 05
Cora	Hanson	January 06
Gretchen	Dauck	January 08
Susan	Schaub	January 08
Ryan	Howery	January 12
Richard	Johnson	January 14
Cara	Boebel	January 16
Joanie	Haugen	January 20
Ashlee	Adler	January 22
Janice	Cowan	January 23
Angela	Humphrey	January 23
Candy	Severson	January 23
Amanda	Hefty	January 24
Bob	Duhr	January 25
Reed	Adler	January 26
Jane	Field	January 27
Gregory	Herrling	January 28
Charlotte	McGree	January 29
Kristin	Antonie	January 31





Photo taken 12/10/2020

Vermont Lutheran Church Council Minutes

NONE

There was no Council Meeting held in December.

 STEWARDSHIP <i>Managing God's Gifts To Us</i>	
Financials: Year 2020	
Operating Contributions:	\$160,554.82
Total Operating Expenses:	\$125,417.29
Difference:	\$ 35,137.53
Minus Lutefisk Contributions:	\$ 4,034.00
Balance:	\$ 31,103.53

Attendance Matters	
<u>December 2020</u>	
6th	22 views
13th	17 views
20th	25 views
24th	Not Recorded
27th	15 views
31st	11 views

Pastor's Report

Church Council December 17, 2020

Baptisms: 0 Weddings: 0 Funerals: 11/28: Donald Schultz, 12/7: Dennis Aeschlimann

This past month saw the loss of two dear members of the congregation. Don Schultz had been a staple of the congregation serving in many positions. Dennis Aeschlimann was a member who was always ready to help with whatever the congregation needed, and was the first of our congregation to die of the COVID-19 virus. Both will be missed dearly.

Services have continued to be held on-line in light of pandemic restrictions. Services are recorded in advance and may be viewed from our website by congregation members and anyone else who wishes to join us.

Thanksgiving services were also held on-line as we participated in a combined service with the ecumenical pastors of the Mt. Horeb area.

I accepted an invitation to serve on a Human Growth and Development Committee for the Mt. Horeb School District. The committee is responsible for continued development of what used to be called the Sex Ed curriculum. We meet once a month for 1 ^{1/2} hours on Zoom through April.

Our Confirmation class was disrupted from meeting in person because of the stricter COVID restrictions and have met twice on ZOOM. Because the restrictions have been loosened once again, we will meet in person again for our next class.

Christmas Eve "service" preparations have begun and planned for. Though we cannot, in good conscience, have a normal Christmas Eve service, we can have an "open house" of sorts, with piano/organ music, a few readings of the Christmas Story and an offering of Holy Communion. I think that this will end up being a very meaningful time for those who wish to attend.

I hope everyone's holidays are joyful and filled with the hope of better times to come when we can once again meet in a community setting.

Pastor Barry

Building & Property Report – December 2020

PB has reported several times that the furnace for the Sanctuary has failed to come on for heat. Greg has contacted Modern Heating to diagnose this ongoing problem. Dave Olson's evaluation is that the problem is starvation of incoming furnace air. The ducting for this is undersized and therefore the furnace motor is being overtaxed in an effort to draw adequate air. Safety features cuts out the over stressed motor and that shuts down the unit. Modern Heating plans is to make the necessary duct changes and repairs to correct this problem on Dec 14th-15th. It will be a time and material cost. Greg is very familiar with the men involved at Modern and they will keep him advised about progress.

They also evaluated our water heater which is currently non functional and is reaching its life cycle at 15 years old. The recommended replacement will be a new On Demand water heater replacing our current model. The dinner servings at our Church put a high demand on the unit and any failure during those times would be extremely unfortunate. Dave Olson of Modern will install the new water heater at cost for us at around \$4000. This will also take place at the time of the furnace work being done.

Larry, Greg

WELCA News

JANUARY ALTAR DUTY

Bonnie Dauck & Sue Schaub

Synod News

What's A Synod?" Part 3

By Deacon Vicki Hanrahan

Assistant to the Bishop for Synodical Life

Last week we shared there are 138 worshipping communities in our synod. Did you know that 80% of our congregations are spread out in rural areas of the 12 counties we inhabit? To stay connected with one another for ministry, we organize ourselves through 12 smaller communities called "conferences." Each conference is made up of anywhere between 10-15 congregations that gather monthly for collegiality, to worship together, to share stories and struggles and to nurture each other. Each conference is led by a dean who is a rostered leader (on the roster of the ELCA as an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament or Minister of Word and Service) that has volunteered to serve the synod in this way. We are grateful!

Of late, during the pandemic, these conference gatherings are taking place via interactive video meetings. Most recently, these groups took on some heavy lifting as we asked the conferences to bring forward names of candidates for our bishop election. In this way, we were able to get input from throughout the synod. We will continue to look to our conferences to bring forward ideas for our shared ministry, for ways we can equip our laity and rostered, and in the future, to lift up candidates for other leadership roles in our synod. This collaboration is one of the ways we are church together at the synodical level. For a list of our conferences, visit our website: <https://c8t5e9v5.rocketcdn.me/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2020SCSWConferenceList.pdf>

That brings us to another story for this series and that is how our bishop was better equipped for a call to ministry by engagement in the regional expression of our church through synod leadership at the youth level.

In a recent interview, **Bishop Mortensen-Wiebe** recounted the seminal moments in her life that led to her answering God's call to serve God's church. Some of those moments revolved around participating in the larger synodical expression of the church. Here's her story:

"I was always very involved in church growing up. My parents would, upon my insistence, cart me across town for everything possible that I could be involved in with my church. We had an amazing youth group and youth pastor at the time. Even though I didn't know most of the kids in the youth group as my church was in a different part of town than we lived in, I got to know them, and those peers and relationships became very important to me. They became my community. Learning about Jesus with them was a big draw. It was a safe place to learn about Jesus.

I was also one of the primary babysitters for the pastor's family while I was in middle school. In 7th grade, I asked his wife once if I could be a pastor as a woman and his wife said, "Yes, they've just started ordaining women pastors, but I would not recommend it; it's very hard and it's probably not a great choice for a career." So I left the parsonage that day and got in my mother's car and said, "Mom, I think I'm going to a pastor." She said, "Honey, you tend to faint at church." Which was true because in Sunday school, it would get hot and I would tend to faint and keel over. So that's how my initial call story started.

Synod News (continued)

During that time, I was elected to the (old) Northern Wisconsin District youth board. I had many friendships develop out of that. The youth pastor, lead pastor and laity all had a role in affirming me for that position and encouraged me to stretch my skills.

It was easy to develop leadership skills because the adults allowed us to do a lot of the planning and execution of events. They trusted us to discern what would be best for the leadership of the district at the time.

Another big moment for me was when Rev. Bob Herder was elected bishop of the East Central Synod. I was asked to participate in his installation service. I was so excited. Bishop Herder had been a pastor to my family. He celebrated my parent's marriage as a new pastor himself. Then when they lost a child to AIDS, he ministered to them. He is the first pastor I remember as a child. It was such an honor to be a young person and be involved in his installation procession. I have never forgotten it.

After middle school and after not getting a ringing endorsement for going into ministry, I started thinking about what else I could do and decided I wanted to get a masters in social work and become a social worker. I started the program at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago to do that. God had different plans though and I found I could not run away from my call to ministry."

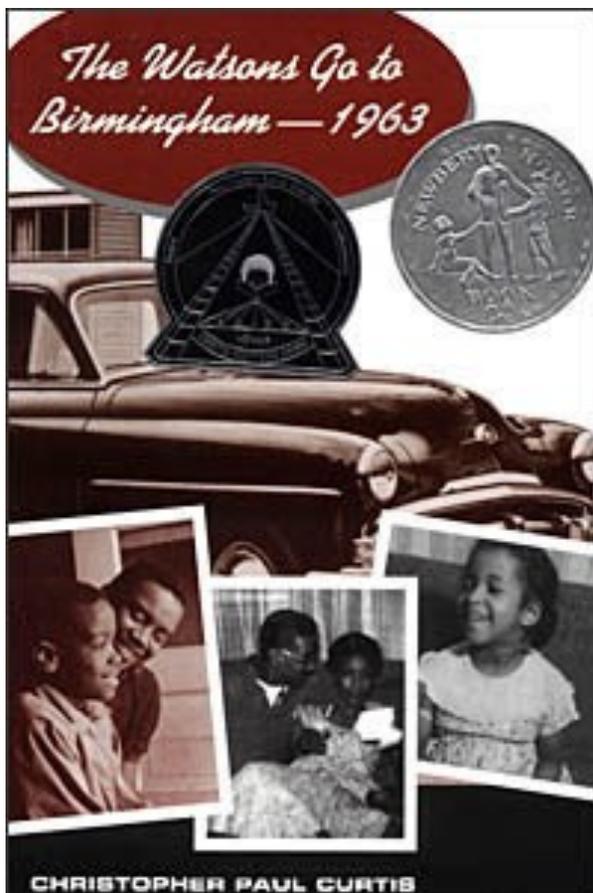
When asked what pastors, deacons and laity might look for in leadership qualities of people in the parish that might make them good candidates for leadership in the church, especially with youth and young adults, Bishop Mortensen-Wiebe shared her wisdom:

"I think I would say don't look for one particular thing. Don't be afraid to enter into relationships with all the kids that you encounter. That was true of two people I am thinking about now... two role models in Clem and Grace Stromske who were Sunday school teachers and then followed us all the way as confirmation teachers. They got to know every kid they came across. It didn't matter if you were a kid that loved church or a kid like my brother that needed to be dragged to church. The Stromske's were willing to meet you where you were at and just get to know you.

I don't think there is any one way that God lifts up leaders for the church. There is not one background where leaders of our future church will come from. They can be any person right now walking around because that's how God's Holy Spirit works and the call from God comes. So, I would say to any pastor, deacon, or laity just don't be afraid to enter into a relationship. It could be the quiet kid who's sitting there with a nose in a book that doesn't look up at you. It could be that rebellious kid that you might think is going nowhere good. Don't be afraid to enter into any relationship because God's Holy Spirit might be doing an amazing thing just a few short years from the moment you take the risk of getting to know someone. We have a surprising God!"

The blessing of ELCA congregations and synods working together is that we are able to draw upon a wealth of leaders, resources, networks, support, ideas, experiences, diverse perspectives and diverse communities for doing God's work in the world. All gifts that God has given us for God's purposes. Might God be calling you to use your gifts for the larger church for the glory of the Lord?

News from South-Central Synod



Join the WELCA Women of our Synod for a Book Discussion

**The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963
Book Discussion (Zoom)**

Jan. 14, 2021 at 7:00 pm

Janna Smith, retired school librarian and current SWO president, will be leading a book discussion on this young adult book (210 pages) by Christopher Paul Curtis. **The Newbery Honor** book tells the story of a loving African-American family living in the town of Flint, Michigan, in 1963. "When the oldest son (Byron) begins to get into a bit of trouble, the parents decide he should spend the summer and possibly the next school year with Grandma Sands in Birmingham, Alabama. The entire family travels there together by car, and during their visit, tragic events take place."

This book can be checked out of any public library. Many libraries are offering curbside pickup. Follow your library's protocols. Janna Smith has a few extra paperbacks and could mail a copy, if requested. The book needs to be returned after the discussion. (There is a book rate at your local post office, but it does often take extra time to mail at the book rate, so order as soon as possible). The Zoom invitation for the Jan. 14th meeting will be printed in the January Trumpeter. Remember, you can connect to Zoom without a computer or tablet. There is a number you can call using your telephone. It will be an audio connection, only, but you will be able to hear and participate in the discussion. Please contact Janna Smith, if you are interested in the book discussion (smithjanna55@gmail.com) or if you have any questions.

News from Lutheran World Relief



COVID-19 Defense Kit

\$25

Each COVID-19 Defense Kit contains face masks and essential hygiene items that help keep families healthy, allowing parents to work while keeping themselves and their families safe. Kits also come with self-care supplies like a toothbrush, towel and comb to help our neighbors maintain hygiene and dignity during times of fear and uncertainty.

These can be purchased at https://giftsoflove.org/covid-19-defense-kit?utm_source=activecampaign&utm_medium=GiftsofLove20eappeal1&utm_content=covid19kit&utm_campaign=GiftsofLove2020&src=GiftsofLove20eappeal1_covid19kit

ARE YOU RUNNING OUT OF COFFEE?

Buy some coffee from farmers that receive a strong up-front price for their beans and share in the profit from the sale of their coffee at <https://www.lwrfarmersmarket.org>

Especially in these times, it means so much to farming families coffee.

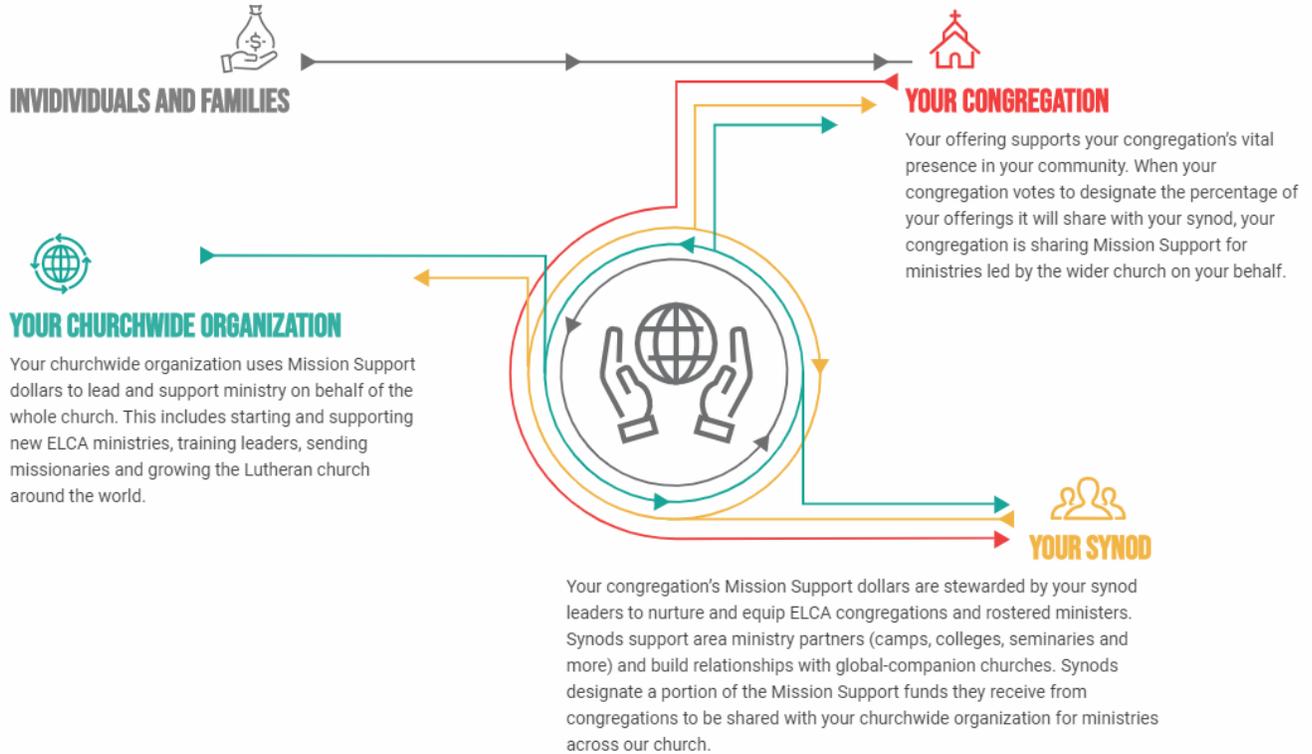


MEET A FARMER

For Jose Martinez Flores, coffee isn't just a crop – it's his legacy. He's been growing coffee on his family farm in Nicaragua his entire life. The crop has allowed him to raise and provide for his family, and his farm is what he is passing to his children and grandchildren. His eyes shine with pride as he talks about them. "Each one of my sons has a piece of land that they own. They can harvest [coffee] themselves because they own it."



HOW MISSION SUPPORT FUNDS MINISTRY ACROSS OUR CHURCH



WHERE DOES MY OFFERING GO?

In 2019, ELCA members gave \$1.7 billion in unrestricted offerings* to support God's mission and ministry through the three expressions of the ELCA. Thank you for your generosity!

94.5% – CONGREGATIONS

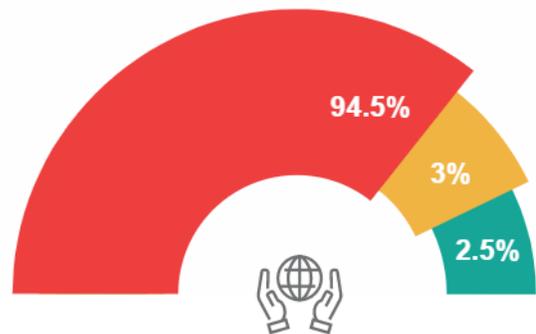
\$1.6 billion remained with and was stewarded by the ELCA's 9,100 congregations. \$93.5 million was shared by congregations as Mission Support.

3% – SYNODS

\$51 million was stewarded by the ELCA's 65 synods.

2.5% – CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION

\$42.5 million of Mission Support was stewarded by the ELCA churchwide organization.



*Unrestricted offerings do not include special offerings (e.g., congregational capital improvements or gifts to ministries such as Lutheran Disaster Response or ELCA World Hunger).



HOW YOUR OFFERING BECOMES MISSION SUPPORT

Mission Support enables the ELCA's 65 synods and more than 9,100 congregations to pool resources to love and serve our neighbors in ways no individual or congregation can do alone. Mission Support is one way we are church together – it's essential to who we are as the ELCA.

Through Mission Support, we expand our participation in God's life-changing work in our communities and around the world.



We are inviting people to study and reflect on Martin Luther's "[The Freedom of a Christian](#)" in 2020, its 500th anniversary year. It is an invitation to hear, share, and experience the Lutheran witness of the Christian faith as it relates to God's narrative of freedom in Christ.

This initiative extends our engagement in the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and builds upon the Presiding Bishop's 2016-2017 initiative inviting the people of the ELCA to engage with Luther's Small Catechism.

[Download The Freedom of a Christian](#)

[Download The Freedom of a Christian STUDY GUIDE](#)



Call or email

PRAYER

REQUEST to

Jan Cowan - 767-4616 - jancowan@tds.net
Kay Rettenmund - 767-2328 - rett@tds.net.

It is our time to build a legacy

Become a member of the Legacy Fund. Members of the Legacy Fund come from all walks of life and are united by a desire to preserve our beautiful Church and Cemetery.

Vermont Lutheran Church owns and maintains a cemetery, historic church building and Gathering Place with a hilltop viewscape. Christian stewardship involves the faithful management of all the gifts God has given us, including accumulated, inherited and appreciated resources. Therefore, we created the Legacy Fund to encourage, receive and administer these gifts.

Our goal is to generate a Legacy Fund of \$1 Million dollars, or more.

Through receipt of bequests, grants and/or gifts, contributions to the Legacy Fund and investment growth will serve two very important purposes now and into the future:

- To purchase neighboring land for expansion of the cemetery; and/or
- Provide funds for future maintenance of the cemetery and/or building and grounds needs of the Church.

Any legacy member whose contribution totals \$1,000 or more will be recognized with a brass plate on a prominently displayed plaque. Annual meeting reports will include all the names of those individuals who made a contribution of any amount that year.

February Newsletter
articles are due
January 29th

to Elizabeth Herrling at
vermont_church@tds.net

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Visit Vermont's Website:

www.vermontlutheran.org

Password: God'sWork

**Log on to see all Vermont
news and pictures!**

