



Mission Interpretation

Telling stories of our hands doing God's work

Mission Memo #446

January 15, 2019

Second Sunday after Epiphany (January 20, 2019)



The Sundays after Epiphany continue to celebrate the revelation of the glory of God to us as it was made known to the magi and to those on Jordan's banks at the baptism of Jesus—today using wedding imagery. Our God rejoices over God's people "as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride." By the power of the Spirit there are gifts galore for everyone. In Christ Jesus the best wine is saved for last. Taste and see.

Readings

- [Isaiah 62:1-5](#) *As bridegroom and bride rejoice, so shall God rejoice over you*
- [Psalm 36:5-10](#) *We feast upon the abundance of your house, O Lord. (Ps. 36:8)*
- [1 Corinthians 12:1-11](#) *There are a variety of gifts but the same Spirit*
- [John 2:1-11](#) *The wedding at Cana*

Talk about Variety!

Epiphanies don't just happen in church—a sudden insight can lead to a "Eureka!" in scientific experiments, an "Aha!" in a detective's casework, a "Checkmate!" in a fierce chess game, and even a self-satisfied "Yes!" in Sudoku, crosswords, or finding a set of lost keys. So, too, epiphanies about the true nature of Christ come in a variety of words, actions, and places in our gospel readings during the Sundays after Epiphany.

First wise men from the east, then a dove from heaven and the voice of God, and now water into wine—all pointing to the glory and wonder of God-made-flesh. Just as we have been created and blessed with varieties of gifts, services, and activities, so too has God created and blessed us with varieties of epiphanies throughout human history. In our world that so often relies on an us-versus-them mentality, can we see the rich tapestry of differences as part of God's glory? Will we be able to look past our traditions, our comfort zone, and our familiarities to

see the glorious diversity of God's revelation? Are we open to an epiphany in any form so that we can in fact "do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5)?

Lutheran Disaster Response

As we begin the New Year we remember the many people and areas impacted by disasters during the past year. Lutheran Disaster Response brings God's hope, healing and renewal to people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the United States and around the world.



When the dust settles and the headlines change, we stay to provide ongoing assistance to those in need. [Learn more](#) about the work to address ongoing needs of people and communities who have been impacted by disaster.

- [U.S. Wildfires](#)
- [Indonesia Earthquake and Tsunami](#)
- [2018 Hurricane Response](#)
- [Gaza Humanitarian Assistance](#)
- [South Sudan Relief](#)
- [Africa Drought](#)
- [West Virginia Flooding](#)
- [Middle East and Europe Refugee Crisis](#)
- [AMMPARO: Protecting Migrant Minors](#)

You can find [disaster volunteer opportunities](#) in the U.S.

Exciting changes at Lutheran World Relief



Rural livelihoods and health are intrinsically linked. A family in poverty can scarcely afford health care. A sick breadwinner may be unable to earn income.

To increase their impact on breaking the cycle of poverty and promoting healthier families and communities, [Lutheran World Relief](#) and [IMA](#)

[World Health](#) are excited to announce they are joining forces.

The two humanitarian nonprofits are integrating Lutheran World Relief's work in rural economies and emergency response with IMA's global health expertise,

creating a unified organization helping millions more enjoy a healthier, more prosperous tomorrow.

Lutheran World Relief and IMA (which stands for Interchurch Medical Assistance) have worked together for more than half a century. In fact, Lutheran World Relief, in partnership with other faith-based relief agencies, founded IMA World Health in 1960 to provide medical supplies to the world's poorest populations. Today, in addition to our ongoing work that serves more than 35 million people around the world, the combined agency is expanding programs:

- To improve water and sanitation and thwart cholera in Haiti.
- Prevent the spread of Ebola along the Ugandan-Congolese border.
- And provide treatment for pediatric and cervical cancer in Tanzania.

Along with making an even deeper and more lasting impact in the lives of those in need around the world, the joint organization is set to become an even better steward of our donors' generous gifts by increasing operational efficiency and maximizing resources.

Daniel Speckhard, President and CEO, says "We remain an organization rooted in the Lutheran values upon which we were founded, and this new partnership will increase the impact of your generosity and compassion around the world."

HUNGER AND POVERTY BY THE NUMBERS



With so much information out there, it can be difficult to know the most accurate statistics for measuring hunger and poverty. But knowing the data about what is happening can go a long way to helping us talk about the issues accurately and craft effective, forward-looking responses.

Check out [ELCA World Hunger's new blog post](#) that compiles the data and shares important information about hunger and poverty in the United States and around the world.

Pressure on vulnerable people amplified by shutdown

After another week of stalled budget negotiations, the U.S. is now in the third week of the partial government shutdown. Various media outlets and agencies have covered important points over the past few days, such as the 800,000 workers left without pay, limited TSA service and shocking images of deteriorating national

parks as services close. But perhaps less noticeable are the growing effects that a prolonged shutdown could place on low income families.

Though many services and programs Congress authorizes are still temporarily running on necessary or "mandatory" funding, local agencies that work with federal contracts will start to feel a tighter and tighter squeeze the longer the government remains closed. For instance, local public housing agencies that provide housing aid will likely run lower and lower on their own funding the longer the shutdown goes, risking the closure of local operations. Other important low-income housing programs, such as certain types of rental assistance and [multifamily housing](#), may start to face serious challenges as well if the shutdown runs past February 1st. (Read more about the shutdown impact on housing programs [here](#).)

ELCA Advocacy encourages contacting members of Congress to encourage an end to the shutdown, but reminds us that during this shutdown, many traditional avenues for communicating with our lawmakers are also shut down. Consider often-monitored social media accounts, like Twitter, and local news outlets to urge reversal of the shutdown and re-stabilization of vital government services and relationships. Contact with their local offices should work as well.

by ELCA Advocacy on January 8, 2019

Morning Prayer with the LWF Ecumenical Commitments

"To be Lutheran is to be ecumenical." This conviction is at the heart of the Ecumenical Commitments that The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) will launch during a morning prayer service at the Ecumenical Center Chapel in Geneva on Wednesday, 16 January 2019.



Launching this publication during an ecumenical prayer service reiterates the Lutheran communion's commitment to ecumenical spirituality and to deepening spiritual life together in the body of Christ.

The general aim of the document is to promote ecumenism or unity among Christians around the world, and to give expression to the unity of the body of Christ. The first part of the document offers theological reflections about ecumenism, and looks at the ecumenical relations of the LWF and Lutheran understanding of ecumenism. The second part is the core of the document. It contains "six commitments." Each of these six commitments includes a strong self-commitment to ecumenism as well as suggestions for practical application.

The sixth and final commitment focuses on ecumenical spirituality, pledging to pray together and to translate the results of official ecumenical dialogues into ways of worshipping together. ([Click here](#) for the LWF's Commitments document.)

Applications for 2019-20 Young Adults in Global Mission now open

Do you or someone you know have an interest in being a servant leader, living and serving alongside one of the ELCA's global companions? ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) is a one-year international service-learning and faith-formation opportunity for young adults, ages 21 to 29. Young adults serve alongside Lutheran companion church bodies and organizations in one of 11 country programs, being shaped by the witness of our global neighbors in a cross-cultural journey of faith. Service opportunities currently exist in Argentina, Uruguay, Australia, Serbia, Cambodia, Jerusalem/West Bank, Madagascar, Mexico, Rwanda, Senegal and Tanzania. Areas of service include, but are not limited to, health and development, congregational ministry, human rights, education, homelessness, addiction recovery, women's issues, and children and youth. All site placements provide opportunities for young adults to confront issues of wealth and poverty, racial privilege, economic disparity and globalization through the lens of faith. **Applications are open now through Feb. 15, 2019; [learn more and apply today](#).**

Coming Events:

Date	Event/Activity	Resources
June 7 and 8, 2019	2019 MC Synod Assembly, Tinley Park Convention Center, 18451 Convention Center Dr., Tinley Park, IL	For more information visit http://www.mtselca.org/assembly/
Aug 5-10, 2019	ELCA Churchwide Assembly, at the Wisconsin Center, Milwaukee, Wisc.	For more information visit https://www.elca.org/churchwideassembly