



Mission Interpretation

Telling stories of our hands doing God's work

Mission Memo #451

March 5, 2019

First Sunday in Lent (March 10, 2019)



These forty days called Lent are like no other. It is our opportune time to return to the God who rescues; to receive the gifts of God's grace; to believe with the heart and confess with the mouth the wonder of God's love in Jesus; and to resist temptation at every turn. This is no small pilgrimage on which we have just embarked. It is a struggle Jesus knew. It is a struggle Jesus shares. The nearness of the Lord, in bread and wine, water and word, will uphold and sustain us.

Readings

- [Deuteronomy 26:1-11](#) - *The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand*
- [Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16](#) - *God will give the angels charge over you, to guard you in all your ways. (Ps. 91:11)*
- [Romans 10:8b-13](#) - *If you confess that Jesus is Lord, you will be saved*
- [Luke 4:1-13](#) - *The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness for forty days*

An Identity on Which We Can Rely

In Luke's gospel, the story of Jesus' temptation comes immediately after his baptism and a lengthy listing of his ancestors. Both help confirm the identity of Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. Now Jesus is led into the wilderness, where his identity is put to the test by the devil. The specific temptations are in some ways secondary to the question that introduces two of them. Twice the devil asks, "If you are the Son of God . . ." (Luke 4:3, 9), perhaps implying that the devil believes he knows better than Jesus what it means to be God's Son. But Jesus, "full of the Holy Spirit," is able to stand firm in his identity and deny the devil's attempts to redefine who he is.

In our baptisms, we too are given the identity of God's child, and we are given the presence of the Holy Spirit. Our baptisms do not protect us from temptation, even as Jesus himself endured temptation. However, in our baptisms we are given an identity that can help us endure the temptations and the challenges that our lives

are bound to include. Baptism gives us the confidence to trust that our identity is defined by our relationship to God, and not by anything else. In this confidence, we can accept our failures and shortcomings and live boldly in a manner that seeks to emulate Christ's own life.

FROM Lutheran Disaster Response

On Sunday March 3, powerful tornadoes hit Alabama, Georgia and Florida, causing widespread destruction. At least 23 people have died in Lee County, Ala., and the death toll may rise as several people are still unaccounted for. More than 1,000 homes have been damaged, and many people must now find a way to rebuild their lives, homes and communities. I'm writing to ask you



to [give today to help people whose lives have been impacted by these devastating tornadoes](#). You can help provide hope and practical support to survivors. Lutheran Disaster Response is working with those in the impacted states, including partnering with congregations in the Southeastern Synod to respond with immediate relief.

Please join me in prayer and partnership, and use this [bulletin insert](#) in your congregation to help spread the word. [Please encourage people to give now.](#)

With gratitude for your partnership in ministry,

The Rev. Daniel Rift

Director, ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response Funding

ELCA Conference of Bishops issues statement on Venezuela

The Conference of Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) stands with and holds up in prayer the people of Venezuela during the current multifaceted crisis within their nation. We care about the consequences of this crisis as already felt in neighboring countries and about its wider impact on international peace and security.

We fervently support our companion church the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Venezuela (IELV) and second the call from the Rev. Dr. Nestor Friedrich, vice president of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) for Latin America and the Caribbean Region, for "a negotiated, peacefully constructed resolution" of the

crisis. (Letter from the Rev. Friedrich to IELV Pastor President the Rev. Gerardo Hands, January 31, 2019.) In that regard, and in light of the history of U.S military interventions in Latin America, we are concerned about statements from the U.S. presidential administration that do not rule out military options. We also support the LWF statement, issued on January 29, 2019, that notes the hazards of "external interference, including threat of intervention and military action" and the benefits of utilizing "the existing multilateral UN and Organization of the American States mechanisms to peacefully address the current crisis in the country" and to "provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Venezuela." In view of the crisis, the ELCA Conference of Bishops joins the LWF in calling on all parties to respect internationally recognized human rights, in calling for a halt to the deportation of Venezuelans currently in the U.S and in calling for a new presidential election in Venezuela as soon as possible, one that will be administered by new electoral authorities, conducted under international supervision, and overseen by a neutral government.

We affirm the ways that our church has already been assisting Venezuelans within and outside their country through our ELCA International Disaster Fund, including the following support offered:

- to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Venezuela, to distribute food at its children's home, its preschool and the food pantries of its congregations;
- to the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELU) in Argentina and Uruguay, to assist Venezuelan migrant families arriving in Posadas, Misiones, Argentina;
- to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO), to create a humanitarian assistance center for Venezuelan migrants in Colombia;
- to Educación Popular en Salud (Popular Education in Health), to provide humanitarian health assistance to Venezuelan immigrants in Chile;
- to the World Association for Christian Communication, to respond to the Venezuelan migration crisis in Colombia;
- to the LWF-World Service office in Colombia, to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to Venezuelan migrants in Saravena-Arauca settlements; and
- to Lutheran World Relief in Peru, to assist in providing humanitarian assistance to and advocating for migrant rights for Venezuelans in Peru, in partnership with Iglesia Luterana del Perú.

We also affirm with gratitude the other significant work being done by our companion churches and their partners in Colombia, Peru, Chile and Argentina as they receive and support refugees from Venezuela.

Cognizant of Venezuela's location in the Caribbean Basin, we remember our **Churchwide Blueprint for Action in Central America and the Caribbean** (adopted by the ELCA Church Council in 1990), which calls us to "work for justice and peace, including supporting a negotiated solution to the conflicts, ending all U.S. war-related aid to the region, and advocating for unrestricted humanitarian assistance."

ELCA ADVOCACY ANNOUNCES 2019 POLICY PRIORITIES

ELCA Advocacy works for change in public policy based on the experience of Lutheran ministries, programs and projects around the world and in communities across the U.S. This year, ELCA Advocacy's policy priorities will focus the work of the ELCA in Washington, D.C., on actions that will reduce poverty and hunger, promote safe and healthy communities, and protect our environment. This year 11 priorities are outlined. [Click here for more information.](#)

2019 DOMESTIC HUNGER GRANT AWARDS



ELCA World Hunger Domestic Hunger Grants accompany congregations and their partners throughout the U.S. and Caribbean as they draw on the strengths of communities to attack the root causes of poverty and hunger. This year, grants have been awarded to 77 ministries across the U.S. for a total three-year (2019-21) investment of over

\$1,187,000 (an average of \$15,400 per ministry). [Click here for more information and a list of all awards.](#)

YAGM Cambodia update

There are many great stories of how and where we as a church are making a difference in the lives of many around the world. The [YAGM Cambodia Facebook](#) includes information and pictures from recent site visits that show again a few examples of how we through the YAGM and our partners in ministry are making a difference in the lives of others. I encourage you to check them out.



SHARE YOUR STORY AT THE 2019 ELCA WORLD HUNGER LEADERSHIP GATHERING: SUBMIT YOUR VIDEO TODAY!

The [2019 ELCA World Hunger leadership gathering](#) — taking place July 18-21 in Minneapolis, Minn. — will focus on how creative congregations and courageous leaders can contribute to a just world where all are fed.

Are you part of a congregation creatively addressing hunger and poverty in your community? Are you a courageous leader? Then you are invited to submit a 90-second video sharing your story, for the chance to be selected as a guest speaker for the gathering. Learn more about how to submit a video [here](#).

Synod Assembly Opportunity to Share Your Story

Once again we will have the opportunity to provide Mission Moments at the Synod Assembly. If you have a special story of work that your congregation is doing that you would like to share, please let me know. Time is a bit more limited this year due to the election of our next Bishop during the meeting, but we will have six spots available. Please let me know ASAP so we can include you on our list.

Coming Events:

Date	Event/Activity	Resources
April 27, 2019	LSSI Spring Fling 2019 - Westin Chicago Northwest, 400 Park Blvd., Itasca	For more information, contact Mariah Heinz 847.635.4656 or Mariah.Heinz@LSSI.org or visit https://www.lssi.org/
May 9, 2019	Lutheran Day 2019 - Illinois State Capitol, Springfield	For more information contact Joy Medrano 847.635.4653 or Joy.Medrano@lssi.org or visit https://www.lssi.org/
May 12, 2019	Good Shepherd Sunday 2019, All congregations statewide	visit https://www.lssi.org/
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
Sept 8, 2019	"God's Work. Our Hands." Sunday At as many locations as possible	For information and resources see https://elca.org/dayofservice