

WE ARE CHURCH TOGETHER

2024



DECEMBER 2024 Mission Support Memo

STORYTELLING ENGAGEMENT

Companion Connections

A story from our Oregon Synod bishop

As you read this story, what inspires you?

How is your synod partnering with your companion synod?

Each of our ELCA synods engages with at least one companion synod in another country, a global accompaniment funded by your Mission Support. In this time of Advent wonder, we want to share with you an edited version of a story by Laurie Larson Caesar, bishop of the [Oregon Synod](#), about her recent experience with the [Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland](#). This is a synopsis of a story from Bishop Laurie about her wonderful experience.

Some of you may remember that, in 2022, an exciting occurrence happened where the some 70,000 Polish Lutherans from 140 congregations came together with elected leaders and voted to ordain women. Nine women were ordained and number of our Oregon synod members stayed up until 1:00 a.m. to be a part of the livestream!). Recently, I traveled to visit our companion synod.

I knew I would love the pierogi, especially the classic cheese-and-potato version. I suspected I would relish the rich history and stunning architecture in the old cities of Krakow and Warsaw, which of course I did. I'd been told I would be overwhelmed by the hospitality, the cakes and handmade gifts, and that was beyond true. As in Oregon, people in Poland love their coffee, the arts, film, good beer, laughter, their mountains and rivers, and song.

For years, our women's organizations at Zoar Lutheran in Canby and St. Peter Lutheran in Tillamook have been faithful leaders in this relationship, and when they invited me to come to Poland and speak to their Annual Women's Forum, I felt honored and curious. How was the church there navigating their recent, historic ordination of nine women? What were other pressures, dreams and hopes unique to their context of walking the Way of Christ? That brings me to:



Eight Things About Poland and Polish Lutherans That I Didn't Know a Month Ago

- 1. You cannot walk around cities in Poland for very long without seeing a fully robed priest, monk or nun.** The culture, the television and the politics are shaped by the assumption that most viewers are Catholic, while fewer and fewer young people attend Mass.
- 2. The war in Ukraine is ever present.** Most churches are still hosting Ukrainian refugees, especially women and children, and offering Polish and even English classes to Ukrainians seeking safety in Polish towns and cities.
- 3. Seminary education is fully state-funded.** Religion is a subject in public school, and Poles believe in supporting people's vocational calls with education, whether on technology, mechanics, Christian ministry or Jewish leadership.
- 4. Climate change is on their minds.** Summers are lasting longer, and winters are warmer and warmer. Ultimately, it's not good.

5. *Young people in the cities are leaving the Catholic Church and seeking membership in Lutheran congregations. They want to recognize the call to ministry of married people and women pastors, and to raise their children in a context of faith with that kind of vision, play and freedom. (Godly Play is popular.)*
6. *On the issue of LGBTQIA+ calls to ministry, most people I spoke with said that right now it is a “don’t ask, don’t tell” situation for LGBTQ leaders.*
7. *The Deaconess Community there consists of fewer than 20 sisters. The last one just retired, they told me as they continued in their centuries-old ministry of assisting orphans, older adults and the sick.*
8. *Lutheran congregations are largest in the south of Poland, just near the Czech and Slovak borders. Congregations can be as large as 5,000 members, especially in Silesia. Some southern villages have a Lutheran but not a Catholic Church.*

The Lutheran leaders and churches in Poland remember us in Oregon often and with gratitude. Quilts of Mount Hood, trees and symbols, and Eastern Oregon’s golden hills were almost everywhere I visited. The church there longs for our mutual relationship to continue. Please hold our sister synod and its congregations in prayer as we continue to walk together the Way of Christ.

Click [here](#) to read Bishop Laurie’s full story and learn more about the Poland Lutheran Synod.

ENGAGE WITH US

[Webinar: Introduction to “6 Weeks on Money,” a Resource for Aligning Your Pocketbook to Your Values](#)

Are you curious about ways to align your pocketbook with your values? Do you wish there were a resource to help your community think critically about how it uses, saves and views the resources God has given it?

We seek 12 congregations from across the ELCA to participate in a pilot project that will use a collection of digital resources called “6 Weeks on Money.” These resources will help participants to thoughtfully analyze their relationship with money, to act on those gifts and to delve deeply into the “why” behind this stewardship. On Monday, Jan. 13, webinar participants will walk through the six-week course, see what it entails and have an opportunity to participate in the free pilot project. Participants can see how the project might encourage greater financial literacy and leadership in their congregation, and they can learn what might be needed to enhance the resources as we prepare to use them throughout the church. For more information, contact the Rev. Tim Brown at Tim.Brown@elca.org. No registration is required to attend the introductory webinar.

Mark your calendar:

Monday, Jan. 13, 6-7 p.m. Central time

[Join the webinar here.](#)

Meeting ID: 832 5688 2761 - Passcode:87700

GRATEFUL

We are grateful for how Mission Support connects us globally. As the story above reveals, Mission Support fosters relationships between ELCA synods and 65 companion churches, for a total of 127 official relationships. Your support also accompanies new Lutheran churches, expands ministries, and trains leaders and evangelists. By this we learn, support and strengthen the global church and justice work. We wish you hope, peace, joy and love in this Advent season.

In deep gratitude,

Victoria Flood, Senior Director for Congregation and Synod Support

Nick Kiger, Director for Mission Support

Karen Kretschmann, Coordinator for Storytelling Engagement



Find more stories at: www.livinglutheran.org/sofia/mission-support-memos-2024.php