

Please read Presiding Bishop Yahiel Curry's first message to the church. It is a thanks to those helping the least among us and a call to action to continue those efforts "especially when government abdicates its responsibilities for the common good." –SJA Ministry



A Pastoral Message for These Troubled Days

November 12, 2025

When I was installed as your presiding bishop, the preacher proclaimed that in times of division, disruption and fear, God calls us, through love, to lift up one another just as Christ lifts us up. I have taken that to heart and been alert to all the ways in which we, made into God's own beloved through word and sacrament, testify to that love in daily service and ministry. Across the ELCA, I have seen and am deeply grateful for:

- Ministries mobilizing to serve meals and distribute food amid the harm, chaos and confusion of a government shutdown and the ongoing blocking of food assistance for 42 million people in our nation.
- Congregations offering accompaniment and hope as they come alongside neighbors made vulnerable by aggressive and indiscriminate immigration enforcement.
- Leaders from Lutheran Disaster Response urging members of Congress to commit to programs that lift up those made vulnerable in disasters.
- Congregations reaching out to federal workers by supplying meals, meeting daily needs, providing gift cards and helping them find work.
- Preachers faithfully proclaiming the theology of the cross that illuminates the brokenness of sin but also the mystery of a grace that claims us, frees us and sends us to be messengers of hope in a hurting world.

As a church, we do not hold back in lifting up those whom God calls us to serve, even and especially when government abdicates its responsibilities for the common good. My installation as your presiding bishop coincided with the start of the longest government shutdown in our nation's history. In this moment, I draw strength from the writings of Martin Luther, who used the example of Mary and the words of the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) to urge the rulers of his time to exercise power in ways that serve all people.

Jesus gave us an image of a vine and its branches (John 15:1) to illustrate our connectedness to him and, through him, to one another. Our rootedness in Christ sustains

us with his love. His love connects us to one another. We must stay connected to face the challenges of this moment.

An end to the government shutdown will not immediately resolve food insecurity, so we will keep feeding and supporting our neighbors. The racial profiling and harm to our immigrant neighbors show no signs of diminishing, so we will heed God's call to show up alongside these neighbors in solidarity. Our broken politics and partisan divisions will not heal by themselves, so we will show up through participation, bridge-building and advocacy.

No matter what happens next, we must continue to care for all neighbors, especially those who are marginalized. Our 1994 social message "Community Violence" tells us that "we have the responsibility to join with others to hold government accountable for protecting society and ensuring justice for all, and to seek changes in policies and practices toward these ends" (p. 4). As we do, I am confident that Christ's grace will be sufficient, freeing us to lift up others and seek justice for everyone.

I invite you to pray for and participate in ELCA ministries that support the well-being of all including by taking [advocacy action](#), applying for ELCA World Hunger [Daily Bread Matching Grants](#) to support your hunger ministry, and watching the recent ELCA Advocacy webinar "[Faith Communities and the Realities of Food Assistance](#)."

Gracious God, we pray for our public servants, that they do their work in a spirit of wisdom, charity, and justice. Inspire them to use their authority to serve faithfully and to promote our common life. Guide our leaders to govern in such a way that all people enjoy a peaceful and just society. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. —All Creation Sings, p. 50

In Christ,
The Rev. Yehiel Curry
Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Use this QR code or this Weblink to read the letter with active hyperlinks on the ELCA website: <https://www.elca.org/news-and-events/a-pastoral-message-in-these-troubled-days>



Advocacy Action Weblink: <https://act.elca.org/page/89852/action/1?chain>

Daily Bread Matching Grants Weblink: <https://www.elca.org/our-work/relief-and-development/elca-world-hunger/get-involved/domestic-hunger-grants>

Faith Communities and the Realities of Food Assistance Webinar Weblink:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3JlYQyN-H0&t=874s>