

STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION

Frequently Asked Questions about Mission Support

Q. What is mission support? I've heard this term used, but I'm not sure what it means.

A. Mission support is the portion of your financial offering that your congregation shares with your synod and the churchwide organization, the other two expressions of this church.

As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), we do mission together through our financial giving. We do God's work in ways that no individual, congregation or synod can do alone.

Q. Is mission support different from my weekly offering?

A. Mission support is a small percentage of your weekly offering. It's best defined as that part of your gift that moves on to the other two expressions of this church—your synod and the churchwide organization—to fund the work of the broader church. Many synods set a goal of 10 percent from each of their congregations.

The rest of your offering (about 90 percent) remains within your congregation. You help pay for local ministries, outreach, salaries, utilities and the building, ensuring your congregation's vital presence in your community.

Q. Does mission support do more than fund the work of ELCA missionaries in other countries?

A. Yes. Mission support is the lifeblood of the work that God does through the ELCA, providing over 80 percent of the resources for our ministries.

"Mission" is a broad term used to describe all the ministries of this church, not just those relating to missionaries. "Support" is the financial backing that covers the costs of delivering these ministries (including administrative costs, materials and more) here and abroad.

Supporting our missionaries through the Global Mission program unit is an example of one of the many ways mission support enables us to do God's work with our hands.

Q. How does my congregation benefit from mission support?

A. Every congregation benefits as an active partner in the ELCA's mission to share God's boundless love with the world. Stories of Faith in Action is filled with powerful examples of how lives have been changed because of our members' generosity.

More specifically, some mission support funds may return to your congregation in the way of grants, services, programs and resources. Check with your pastor for concrete illustrations that apply to your congregation, as well as opportunities to explore for the future.

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Frequently Asked Questions about Mission Support (cont'd)

Q. Sometimes I write a check to ELCA World Hunger or to Lutheran World Relief. Is that the same as mission support?

A. When you designate your gift to one of the many ministries within the pan-Lutheran community, this is not mission support.

Mission support is, by its very nature, an undesignated gift to the broader church. It enables the churchwide organization to respond to ministry opportunities as they become available and ensures the ongoing financial stability so essential to our future.

We applaud your designated support of such programs as ELCA World Hunger, a ministry of this church, and Lutheran World Relief, a partner ministry with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. But we recommend that such gifts are above and beyond, and never in place of, your commitment to your regular offering in your congregation.

Q. What guides the churchwide expression in its decisions regarding mission support?

A. The members of the ELCA and its various expressions and institutions share a calling. We proclaim in our mission statement that, "Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we have been claimed, gathered and sent for the sake of the world." This vision shapes all decisions and activities of the churchwide expression, especially budget planning.

More specifically, the churchwide expression looks to the churchwide assembly, the highest legislative authority of the churchwide organization, for direction and guidance. The ELCA Church Council functions as the board of directors of this expression and acts as the interim legislative authority between meetings of the churchwide assembly.

In April 2003 the ELCA Church Council adopted five strategic directions to guide the churchwide organization through 2012:

- Support congregations;
- Grow in evangelical outreach;
- Step forward as a public church;
- Deepen and extend our global, ecumenical and interfaith relationships; and
- Bring forth and support faithful, wise and courageous leaders.

For more *Stories of Faith in Action*, visit www.elca.org/stories. Do you have a story to share? E-mail us at stories@elca.org.



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