



## Everyday Evangelists

Video transcript for 2010 synod assembly message  
from ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson

### **Bishop Mark Hanson:**

Blessings to you, my sisters and brothers in Christ, as you gather at your synod assembly. Thank you for your ongoing prayers, leadership and financial support. How do you tell the story of who we are as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? I'm drawn to our emblem as a way of telling our story, where we see the cross firmly centered in our world. In the affirmation of baptism, we promise to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed. That means we are all evangelists. Today I invite you to meet some ELCA evangelists who are living out their faith in word and deed.

### **Narrator:**

Coffee is brewing in the basement of Bethesda Lutheran Church in rural Illinois, but there's no time to drink it. The women who gather here every Wednesday have a strict quota to meet: 25 quilts before they call it a day at 3 o'clock.

### **Bernice Janssen:**

This is my church family, you know, the family of God.

### **Narrator:**

Each quilt they make by hand is a reminder that someone, somewhere, cared enough to create a gift of warmth and beauty.

### **Bernice Janssen:**

It is a type of evangelism, and it is a type of reaching out. And so as our quilts leave us, they go many, many places. So they are reaching out. We are touching someone, someplace.

If someone would say to me that I'm a hero or that we are heroes for what we do down here, I think we would all say, oh no, we just are doing what is good for us, which we like to do, and fortunately it's helping somebody else.

My faith is what I try to live, and so maybe just coming down here and doing these things I hope shows people that I am serious about my faith.

### **Narrator:**

Last year, the women of Bethesda Lutheran made 1,195 quilts. In 2009, ELCA congregations across the country shared approximately 220,000 quilts with people in need around the world.



Boston is known for its fine dining. One place to find a gourmet meal is Faith Kitchen. But the 50 guests who will be welcomed here tonight won't pay a penny. Some even help prepare the food.

**Pastor Tim Stein:**

Some people support it by prayer, some people support it by contributing to the church, some people support it by their thoughts, some people support it by serving soup. It's a ministry of the whole church.

**Narrator:**

At Faith Kitchen, everyone sits down together — guests and volunteers — to enjoy the delicious food and take a welcome break.

**Craig Simenson:**

The atmosphere of Faith Kitchen is very much like Faith Lutheran Church. It's a small church, it's ... there are a lot of young families and it's very family-oriented in the sense that it's small, tight-knit, intimate. I think Faith Kitchen has that spirit too, I think the church has given it that spirit. There are regulars: regular volunteers, regular guests. I use that distinction "guests versus volunteers," but actually most meals the lines seem pretty blurry. There may be some folks who show up early to help in the kitchen, and some folks who may just show up for a meal, but when we're together, there's not a clear sense of who the helper is and who the one being helped is.

**Narrator:**

After being away from the Lutheran church for years, divinity student Craig Simenson heard a call to ordained ministry while working part-time at Faith Kitchen.

**Craig Simenson:**

The evangelism of Faith Kitchen ... a lot of times folks think of evangelism being—you go out, out, out. But I think what Faith Kitchen does, is we bring folks in, folks who are hungry, folks who maybe don't have a kitchen or a place to cook, by themselves, folks who are on the margins, on the outside a lot of times. But Faith Kitchen opens the doors for those folks to come in.

**Kayle Frock:**

At my home church in North Canton, Ohio, my father and my pastor at the time started a soup kitchen. My sister and I would go and do whatever we could do, running and getting stuff from the kitchen, talking to the people that were attending the soup kitchens. So we just learned from a young age how to help out.

**Narrator:**

Kayle is one of many young adults who found a faith home at Faith Lutheran by volunteering at Faith Kitchen.



**Kayle Frock:**

When my father found out that I was involved he couldn't believe it, because all these years he had made me go and help. And he couldn't believe I was attending it myself and wanting to do it and enjoying it. So he thought it was great.

**Narrator:**

On a Tuesday evening, Faith Kitchen will feed 50 guests. The ELCA provided emergency food relief to nearly 80,000 people in Haiti in the weeks after the earthquake.

**Narrator:**

Jorge Cervera knows it takes a personal invitation to welcome others to Sunday worship. It's a cold morning southwest of Minneapolis, but he's ready to go out and knock on a few doors. First up: a warming moment of prayer with friends, including Jorge's pastor.

**Jorge Cervera:**

The ministry we are developing is called Puerta Abierta (Open Door). We want to reach the Hispanic people where they live and share with them the gospel and [its message] of salvation.

**Narrator:**

First Jorge had to knock on the door of St. John Lutheran Church.

**Pastor Randy Romsdahl:**

He and Pastor Luisa came to our church and came in very excitedly telling about how they had been out visiting other people in the community and how we had a great opportunity to reach out to those people who hadn't heard the good news of Jesus Christ.

**Sue Tjornehoj:**

Evangelism is absolutely a part of who we are as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**Jorge Cervera:**

[We] are able to take the love of God, the grace of God, to the people, through our voices, lives and examples.

**Pastor Randy Romsdahl:**

Evangelism isn't a program, it's about relationships. It is about being out in your life and in your community looking for people. The relationship, the connection, is made by people being friendly, by people being welcoming, and it's as simple as that. And to be open to strangers, to go out and look for people who are not like you, whoever that might be.



**Sue Tjornehoj:**

I really appreciate the investment of the ELCA in seeing and helping to develop people who have an openness. What we are about in this open door, this “Puerta Abierta,” is about being a people for whom Christ first opened that door, and our joy is to walk through.

**Narrator:**

This morning, Jorge knocked on three doors in Twin Cities neighborhoods. In 2009, the ELCA opened the doors of 32 new congregations and synodically authorized worshipping communities.

**Bishop Mark Hanson:**

These are just a few of the thousands of stories portraying who we are as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We are baptized believers in Jesus Christ, set free through faith to do God’s work with our hands. Yes, I am an evangelist. You are an evangelist, proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ through word and deed. That gospel sets me free to respond to God’s call to say, “Here I am, Lord, send me.”

**[Chorus of ELCA members]:**

Here I am, Lord, send me.