



2008 Message from ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson Video transcript

Bishop Mark Hanson:

Together, we are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In congregations small and large, urban and rural, we are a church that is centered in Christ and alive in the Spirit.

Gathered around Word and Sacrament, we receive God's grace, confess our sins, and are sent to spread the Good News, to remember the poor, to serve the Lord, for Christ is with us.

God has entrusted this work to our hands. What a mandate for mission! It is God's work. Our hands.

I'm Mark Hanson, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. God is active in the ELCA. We are a large church with 4.8 million members, in nearly 10,500 congregations. Think what God has to work with, not only hands, but dollars.

The dollars we put to work, which we call mission support, come from you. Let me show you three wonderful ways God is at work with our mission support dollars:

- through a renewed focus on Scripture;
- through young adults, who make a difference around the world;
- and through congregations that revitalize their communities.

God's work. Our hands.

To do God's work, we need to know God's word. That is why we have launched the Book of Faith initiative, because we are committed as a church body to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture.

Diane Jacobson:

When you open Scripture together, your story and the story of Scripture -- God's story -- become connected.

It's a way of calling us to live our lives engaged in God's world and for the sake of others. The Book of Faith initiative is an initiative of ELCA which is inviting everyone across the church to become involved with Scripture, to open up Scripture, to read Scripture together, to hear the Word -- and we're talking about from kids to adults.



Every synod is invited to think about how they might become engaged in the best way for their own folks, their own territory. We would encourage everyone to go to the web site at www.elca.org/bookoffaith, and join in.

You can log on and join the forum and learn from other congregations and other organizations what they're doing and tell them what you're doing. And so, we can start a conversation across the church about how Scripture might engage us and enliven us, and how we can live into our calling to open Scriptures and read it and study it together.

Bishop Hanson:

What happens when we let the word of Christ dwell in us richly? The Word sets us free to embrace the world in a life of service. As I travel throughout this church, I hear from young adults that they want to be part of a church that is making a difference.

Kristen Glass:

Young adults in the church are people who are excited. They are passionate, committed. Creative, contemplative, smart. They love to engage in deep theological reflection. They love to engage in service. They love to share their story and they love to hear the stories of other people.

Young adults serve in their local congregations, in their local communities by being involved in many hands-on leadership opportunities, things that put them in the community, where they can understand themselves to be making an impact and understand that impact to help, not only the church, but help the world.

A great example of this is the ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission program, where there are nearly 50 volunteers who spend a year of service in countries all over the world. Those folks are writing often, daily blogs about their experience in other cultures.

Krista Oppie is a very good example of what I see in young adults in the ELCA. Krista is somebody who grew up in the church, and as she moved through the stages of young adulthood, she was asking those questions: "Now what? Now how do I figure out what to do with my life? I have faith, I know I do, but how do I do something that makes a difference in the world?"

Krista Oppie:

I feel I meet God in people. In a lot of ways, I think young adults see that connection with people, those stories, that life as connecting with God in a really unique way; and being able to share their faith in a unique way. It's not necessarily sitting down and saying here's the Gospel, but here's how I live the Gospel.



Kristen Glass:

Young adults in the ELCA are doing God's work, but more importantly, they are living God's work. And so young adults engage not only in the life of congregations, but they engage in the life of communities.

Bishop Hanson:

God's work. Our hands. What a vibrant witness young adults are in our world today, boldly living out their faith on campuses, in their workplace and in our communities.

Our hands doing work in communities create relationships. Those relationships can renew existing congregations and, sometimes, birth new ones. In 2007, 52 new ELCA congregations were started, including one that began as a community outreach effort to reach young men on the south side of Chicago more than a decade ago.

That endeavor has evolved into a thriving ELCA mission congregation. At Shekinah Chapel, young people are engaged and have shaped their worship services -- from the music to the message.

Yehiel Curry:

Our style is a lot -- it's pretty different; we have the leaders of the ELCA to thank for that. I think early on they realized that our youth were not staying in the church. And so they created this formula for which we call Shekinah today by which the youth would have a service.

The goal wasn't to become a church at that time; it was simply to serve. It took us a couple years, but we realized that these young men were bringing their girlfriends, and the girlfriends were bringing their parents, and then they were having children.

So before we knew it, we looked up one day and there were a couple hundred youth. And so we really realized we were onto something and started to organize to become a congregation. We've tried to adapt our service to what was going on in the community in the type of worship they were used to.

So on a Friday evening every quarter, our youth have the opportunity to lead an alternative worship service called holy hip hop. To use music and the arts as an expression of faith to God.

We all have an assignment, and I believe it's the assignment of Shekinah Chapel, to always go out and seek the youth between the ages of 19 and 35. I believe that we should be in the community, advocating for the community -- that we should be the glue that brings the community together.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Bishop Hanson:

Your generous mission support gives this church the capacity to make vital ministry happen, including the Book of Faith initiative, young adult ministries, new congregations and so much more. On average 93 cents of each dollar you place in the offering plate supports local ministries in and around your congregation. The remaining seven cents support broader missions through your synod and the ELCA Churchwide Organization.

Your mission support dollars provide more than 80% of the resources used to fund ELCA churchwide ministries -- the staff, networks and relationships that enable all of us to carry out God's work throughout the world.

Thank you for your mission support and for joining hands with brothers and sisters across our church to say "Yes!" to God's work throughout the world. It is God's work. Our hands.