



Mission Interpretation

Telling stories of our hands doing God's work

Mission Memo #473

April 14, 2020

Second Sunday of Easter (April 19, 2020)



In today's gospel the risen Christ appears to the disciples and offers them the gift of peace. Even amid doubts and questions, we experience the resurrection in our Sunday gathering around word and meal, and in our everyday lives. Throughout the coming Sundays of Easter the first two readings will be from the Acts of the Apostles and the first letter of Peter. Even as the early Christians proclaimed the resurrection, we rejoice in the new birth and living hope we receive in baptism.

Readings

- [Acts 2:14a, 22-32](#) - *Christ's resurrection: the fulfillment of God's promise to David*
 - [Psalm 16](#) - *In your presence there is fullness of joy. (Ps. 16:11)*
 - [1 Peter 1:3-9](#) - *New birth to a living hope through the resurrection*
 - [John 20:19-31](#) - *Beholding the wounds of the risen Christ*
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Welcomed with Open Arms

Thomas is not the only one missing from the assembly the Sunday after Easter Sunday. We are not told why Thomas is missing, but we do know why plenty of other folks are absent from the assembly: vacations, traveling, spring break for the kids.

Thomas is criticized for doubting, but he asks for nothing more than the same experience of the risen Christ the rest of the disciples had. By the grace of God, Jesus returns a second time and offers his body as living proof to Thomas. In the presence of Jesus, Thomas discovers he did not need the proof he demanded. Thomas' story is our story. We are not always where we need to be. Sometimes we even find ourselves in places we should not be at all. But Jesus comes to us, seeking us out and giving us the gift of faith. Thomas is not criticized, he is not condemned. Instead Jesus loves Thomas back into a relationship and shows the disciples what the words "Peace be with you" mean when lived out.

The resurrection promise can be heard through Peter's powerful preaching in the reading from Acts as well. Jesus will triumph over death. Peter points to Jesus' death on the cross, but what of the little ways we die? The loss of relationships, the ending of friendships, the pain of being alone and left out, the despair of losing a job, the doubt that comes on the heels of a negative diagnosis. Jesus comes to bring a holy peace and resurrection into the world in these times as well. This Sunday is an opportunity to proclaim the power of the resurrection and the grace of God, who welcomes Thomas with open arms..

Bishop Eaton issues Earth Day message

Sin and captivity, manifest in threats to the environment, are not the last word. God addresses our predicament with gifts of 'forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation' (Luther, Small Catechism). By the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God frees us from our sin and captivity, and empowers us to be loving servants to creation.



—ELCA social statement *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice*, p. 5

As I work from home at our dining room table, I look out the front window and see the wildlife at my husband's feeders. God created such beautiful creatures. As Christians we are guided by the promise expressed in our social statement that we are empowered "to be loving servants to creation." It is our duty to care for God's earth.

Established in 1970, Earth Day launched the modern environmental movement, spurring development of landmark policies for a creation in crisis and defining a path toward a more sustainable planet. In this 50th anniversary year, under the theme "Climate Action," the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is joining the [Earth Day Network](#) as a featured faith partner. This partnership expresses our deep love for God's creation and a Lutheran understanding of our profound responsibility for it. The social statement describes our commitment this way:

Humans, in service to God, have special roles on behalf of the whole of creation. Made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth. God's command to have dominion and subdue the earth is not a license to dominate and exploit. ... [It] should reflect God's way of ruling as a shepherd king who takes the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7), wearing a crown of thorns (*Caring for Creation*, pp. 2-3). [\(MORE\)](#)

ELCA Church Council approves special COVID-19 fundraising appeal

Responding to the wide-ranging impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the ELCA Church Council approved a special fundraising appeal during a teleconference meeting that convened April 8. This fundraising effort of the ELCA will support congregations, synods, relief and development, global mission and affiliated ministries that have been negatively impacted by the pandemic.

The council also requested that the relevant churchwide organization units and offices provide periodic reports on the appeal to the executive committee and anticipate a recommendation for a timeline on the completion of the appeal.

In other action, the council authorized the churchwide organization to submit an application for a Paycheck Protection Program loan under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act. The council requested that the Office of the Treasurer provide monthly meetings of the Executive Committee with updates on the status, usage and forgiveness of the loan and on compliance with the liquidity provisions.

Coronavirus Disease 2019 - Our Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR)

The situation:

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), a new respiratory infection, has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). So far, more than 1.2 million people around the world have tested positive for COVID-19, and more than 70,000 people have died, according to WHO.

Our response:

Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) is responding to this pandemic here in the United States and around the world, including:

- Across the United States, LDR is providing support for ELCA World Hunger's Daily Bread grants, which are supporting congregational feeding ministries as they do the critical work of providing those who are in need in their communities with food.
- In New Orleans, LDR is aiding the expansion of Bethlehem Lutheran Church's community meal program, which targets the at-risk population who are impacted at this time.
- In Southern California, LDR is supporting Care Connection Network, a social ministry organization, to serve older adults and people who are home bound by delivering food and essential supplies, in collaboration with congregations in the Pacifica Synod.
- In China, we helped provide medical supplies including ventilators, protective face shields, disposable gloves and more, as well as daily necessities such as food.
- In Italy, through the ELCA's companion church, the Chiesa Evangelica Luterana in Italia, LDR is providing Betania Evangelical Hospital in Naples, Italy, with support and medical gear and supplies.

- In Palestine, LDR is working with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jerusalem and the Holy Land to provide food and necessities to families whose livelihoods have been impacted.
- In Sierra Leone, we are supporting the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sierra Leone so the church can participate in a national response plan with the government.
- LDR is also working with the Lutheran World Federation and the ACT Alliance to support their global responses.

As the situation develops, LDR will continue to be in communication with companions and partners at home and abroad to assess the needs and provide support. We anticipate this public health crisis will escalate in coming weeks and will affect many more people, particularly those who are most vulnerable in our communities. Here in the U.S., we stand ready to work with Lutheran social service organizations affiliated with LDR and with ELCA synods to address the needs of those impacted.

What you can do:

Pray

Please pray for our nation and the world as we face uncertainties. May God's healing presence bring peace and hope in this time of need. Pray that God will deliver comfort to those who mourn the loss of loved ones and strength to those who are working diligently to care for affected communities. [For more prayer suggestions, click here.](#)

Give

Gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response's general account enable us to respond quickly whenever and wherever disaster strikes. [Give now.](#)

Connect:

To learn more about the situation and the ELCA's response:

- Sign up to receive Lutheran Disaster Response [alerts](#).
- Check the Lutheran Disaster Response [blog](#).
- Like Lutheran Disaster Response on [Facebook](#) and follow @ELCALDR on [Twitter](#).

It should be noted that while COVID is a current disaster to be addressed, LDR continues to stay and provide ongoing assistance to those in need in many other places. [Learn more.](#)

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| • U.S. Tornadoes | • U.S. Wildfires |
| • U.S. Flooding | • 2019 Hurricane Response |
| • Cyclone Idai | • Indonesia Earthquake and Tsunami |
| • South Sudan Relief | • Africa Drought |
| • Middle East and Europe Refugee Crisis | • AMMPARO: Protecting Migrant Minors |

NGOs call for urgent action for the most vulnerable

NOTE: In spite of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the Trump Administration continues to withhold humanitarian aid for the Palestinians that has been approved.

(LWI) - The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) urges the government of the United States of America (USA) to "restart critical humanitarian and development programs

immediately in the West Bank and Gaza." Together with other NGOs and faith-based organizations, the LWF has written [a letter with this call](#) to the U.S. secretary of state, Michael Pompeo, and the administrator of the United States Agency for International Development USAID, Mark Green.

"In order to slow the expansion of COVID-19 globally, we must do more to address populations who are most vulnerable to its spread," the letter from 3 April states. "With additional and expedient resources, we have an opportunity to potentially save millions of lives and livelihoods."

"NGOs could scale up their programs immediately, and the East Jerusalem hospitals could be financially stabilized and avoid interruptions to patient treatment should the Administration release its hold on assistance to the West Bank and Gaza."

Taking action is particularly urgent, the letter states, as "the humanitarian situation facing Palestinians before the outbreak was already dire, and the presence of the disease will only intensify the suffering." The NGOs say more than 60% of Gaza's population lives with food insecurity and over half of the workforce is unemployed. "Due to the economic despair, many people lack access to even the most basic necessities required to slow the spread of the virus such as clean water and soap. Gaza is also one of the most densely populated areas on earth, with 2 million people living in overcrowded conditions with little access to healthcare."

"Without additional resources to alleviate the outbreak and its economic costs, the severely strained health systems in the West Bank and Gaza will soon be pushed beyond the breaking point," the NGOs conclude. [\(MORE\)](#)

BREAKING NEWS - Due to the continued and anticipated impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the [Young Adults in Global Mission - ELCA](#) program has decided to postpone sending volunteers until the 2021-2022 year of service.

This decision was made for the safety of volunteers and global companions, and in consideration of our companion churches, applicants, country coordinators and program staff, alumni and the wider ELCA. Young Adults in Global Mission is a foundational and meaningful program for the ELCA and its companions, and as such, YAGM country coordinators and the Global Service team will continue working to strengthen the program for the future of ministry together. More details will be available soon.

Coming Events: We look forward to the day we can again meet in person

	Event/Activity	Resources
June 5-6, 2020	Mission Moments - 33rd Annual Synod Assembly of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, Tinley Park Convention Center	For more information visit http://www.mcselca.org/assembly/
August 8-13, 2022.	2022 Churchwide Assembly Columbus, OH at the Greater Columbus Convention Center	For more information check www.elca.org