



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Dear Friends,

Grace and peace to you in Christ's name! If you have ever worshiped in another congregation, setting or context, you may have noticed that not every worship service is exactly the same – even in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). That is exactly the point. While there are central things that link us together around the means of grace, we experience worship in a multitude of ways. Within the ELCA, we gather as worshiping bodies in more than 9,300 congregations weekly and amid 42 languages.

As a church, we center ourselves and our mission as God's people in worship. In worship around word, meal and bath. In worship, we gather to sing, pray and praise God. We bring who we are into worship. We bring our culture and the culture of our upbringing, the cultures of our neighborhoods, the cultures we are called into ministry, mission and service with, and we join with the cultures that everyone else brings with them into that worship.

How can the beauty and diversity of these cultures be seen as gifts in our assembly's worship life? How can culture help shape our liturgies and even our understanding of worship in deeper ways? How can these intentional conversations lead us into becoming a more richly diverse church? All of these questions and more are crucial to nurturing the worship life of each of our worshiping communities.

So, we have developed a resource, **“Can We Talk: Engaging Worship and Culture,”** as a gift for you and your congregation. We hope this will aid fruitful conversations about worship and culture and will enhance your worship life and form people in the faith of the church.

In this mailing you will find another gift, **“Worship Care: A Guide for Reflection and Connection.”** We hope to encourage and foster open and affirming conversations about worship in our congregations and synods. “Worship Care” asks a simple question: “How is it going?” We trust that the conversations will be fruitful.

In addition to these resources, we would also like to invite you to join us for our **Strong Center—Open Door: Engaging Lutheran Worship Today** events. In this 10th anniversary year of the publication of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, you are invited to attend an event focusing on Lutheran worship in our current context.

Pastors, musicians, lay leaders and worship committees: Whether you have extensive experience with ELW, are exploring it for the first time, or use other materials for your community's worship, you will find a place at these gatherings.

We will open anew the gifts of God at the strong center of worship in word and sacrament. We will explore how to open more widely the doors that welcome the world to these gifts and the doors that send us with these gifts into God's beloved and needy world.

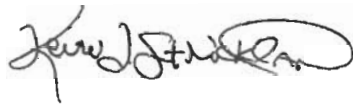
The locations and dates for this are listed at **ELCA.org/worship**. Please visit us there for more information about these great events.

Also, in 2017 and 2018 we will be hosting **Worship at the Center** events across the church. These two- or three-day events will be for pastors, musicians, lay leaders and worship committees. Each will have a different educational component, ranging from “Lent and the Three Days,” “Worship and Culture,” “Exploring the Occasional Services of ELW” and more. Information will be posted at **ELCA.org/worship** as it becomes available.

We also encourage you to sign up for our monthly e-news to stay up to date with all the latest events, resources and happenings in worship around the ELCA today. Sign up at **ELCA.org/worship**.

Thank you! Thank you for the many ways you help center and nourish God’s people within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in worship. Thank you for all the ways you engage this church with the world and this world with the church.

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin L. Strickland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

The Rev. Kevin L. Strickland
Assistant to the Presiding Bishop
Executive for Worship