



**Mission Investment Fund**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
 God's work. Our hands.

## About the Mission Investment Fund

The Mission Investment Fund (MIF), a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, makes low-interest **loans** to established ELCA congregations, new-start congregations and ELCA-related ministries for capital projects.

Established congregations use MIF loans to renovate, expand or relocate. New-start congregations rely on MIF loans to buy land and construct their first church buildings. ELCA-related ministries use MIF loans for a variety of capital projects.

To fund these loans, MIF offers a variety of **investments** for congregations, their members, synods and ELCA-related ministries to purchase. MIF investments offer adjustable- or fixed-rate terms and earn interest at competitive rates.

The Mission Investment Fund is **financially strong and stable**, with a record of steady, controlled growth:

- With total assets of \$661 million and net assets of \$192 million at year-end 2014, MIF achieved a capital ratio of 29 percent—maintaining MIF's position in the top tier of well-capitalized church extension funds.
- At year-end 2014, loans for capital projects for more than 780 ELCA congregations and ministries totaled \$461 million. MIF investments by congregations, their members, synods and ELCA-related ministries totaled \$464 million.

## Investments and Loans in the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod

### *As of December 31, 2014:*

- 15 Mission Investment Fund loans, with a balance of **\$7,939,552**, are at work throughout the synod.
- Investments in the Mission Investment Fund by 166 individuals, 41 congregations, 5 ministries and the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod totaled **\$9,015,690**.

### *MIF representative for the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod:*

The Rev. Kent Peterson, Regional Manager: Tel. (276) 698-7970; e-mail: kent.peterson@elca.org



## Portico Benefit Services — 2015 Report to Synod Assemblies

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Healthy, resilient leaders shape healthy, resilient faith communities. This ELCA core belief is referenced in guiding church documents, and explains the enduring partnership between ELCA organizations, their leaders, and Portico Benefit Services. As one community, we're called to strengthen ministry.

ELCA organizations are expected to provide sustainable livelihoods for their leaders, and give them time to tend their well-being. Leaders are expected to tend their well-being so they are able to shape healthy congregations in changing, often challenging, times. Portico delivers cost-effective benefits, resources, and inspiration, helping leaders use services and tools to strengthen their financial, emotional, and physical well-being.

This partnership comes to life in a story Portico shared during last year's Open Enrollment. Erik Heskin, pastor at Bethany Lutheran Church in Escanaba, Michigan, required an organ transplant in 2013. Supported by his congregation and the benefits it provides, Pastor Heskin is now reclaiming his role in parish ministry.

Yes, his care was costly — in fact, about 1% of members incur one-third of annual health claims. But on any given day, through illness or injury, any of us could find ourselves in Pastor Heskin's shoes. By standing together as a community, purchasing health care wisely, and maintaining healthy lifestyles, we're better able to shape resilient faith communities and afford quality care for leaders in need.

### To Strengthen Ministry — ELCA Organizations Support Their Leaders

*Benefits are an investment in God's ministry as carried out through the lives of rostered leaders and lay employees.*

— ELCA Philosophy of Benefits

Last year, 7,085 ELCA organizations partnered with Portico to sponsor one or more leaders in the ELCA benefit program, honoring the ELCA's long-standing commitment to protect members and their families against the impact of aging, illness, injury, disability, and death. Since the ELCA's founding, the number of its pastors enrolled in the ELCA benefit program has remained above 90%.

This commitment was evident during last year's Open Enrollment. Ninety percent of sponsoring employers chose to offer the Gold+ health benefit option for 2015, despite an 11% health contribution rate increase triggered by higher than expected health claims. While this kind of increase isn't typical for Portico, it is typical in the marketplace. Since 2007, Portico's average health contribution rate increase has stayed well below the average U.S. employer rate increase, saving millions of dollars for ministry.

ELCA sponsoring organizations also partner with Portico to administer benefits efficiently. In 2014, we automated several manual processes and encouraged sponsors to save time and increase accuracy by paying their monthly bill online. Currently, 48% use this simple, cost-saving process, and we're encouraging the rest to take this stewardship step in 2015.

"In every respect, I have been thankful to our church for providing such a superb retirement program. As a third generation pastor in our family, I am pleased with the way in which our denomination has progressed in its care for all of her pastors and lay professionals. Thank you!"

Pastor Ken Gamb, Retired  
Iowa City, Iowa

## To Strengthen Ministry — Leaders Strive to Live Well

*The ordained minister needs to be an example of self-care, as well as caring for others.*

— ELCA Vision and Expectations

Annually, Portico invites health plan members and spouses to take stock of their health, and then take a small step to improve their emotional or physical well-being. In 2014, our members responded in force.

Eighty-one percent of ELCA-Primary health plan members took the Mayo Clinic health assessment, up from 77% the year before. This increase helped the number of sponsors earning the 2% discount on ELCA health contributions jump for the sixth consecutive year to 97%, saving the ELCA \$2.3 million collectively.

Even more impressive, over 51% of ELCA-Primary health plan members earned all their wellness dollars by completing last year's featured wellness activity, up from 44%. One result of these healthy steps: Among those taking the health assessment each year from 2010 to 2014, 5.4% are no longer at risk for poor nutrition, and 7% are no longer at risk for poor emotional health.

Other ways leaders stepped up their use of ELCA benefits in 2014:

- In an average month in 2014, 769 ELCA-Primary health plan members received the fitness center discount by visiting a fitness center at least eight times during the month — an 11% increase from 2013.
- As of Jan. 1, 2015, 47% of plan members are now partnering with Portico to strengthen their future financial well-being by making pretax retirement contributions, up 8% from last year. Forty-eight percent of plan members who made pretax retirement contributions in 2014 increased their contribution amount for 2015.
- 955 sponsored members and 24 retirees purchased a discounted long-term care insurance policy as part of Portico's first-year offering.

"I have let my 'be still' practice spill over into the church I serve and it is having GREAT effects. We gather for guided silence now before the Lenten Wednesday evening services."

Keith Weber, Dir. of Music  
Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Houston, Texas

## To Strengthen Ministry — Portico Helps Leaders Tend Their Well-being

*Benefits should support and enhance the unique needs of this church.*

— ELCA Philosophy of Benefits

To best serve ELCA sponsoring organizations and leaders, Portico routinely asks the ELCA community for feedback. In 2014, we gathered survey responses from members and sponsors, as well as input from our advisory committees, the Conference of Bishops, synod assembly participants, synod office staff, theological conference attendees, our own Live Well ELCA Facebook page, and the ELCA Clergy Facebook group.

Through this intentional listening, we improve our offerings. For example, after hearing a number of members request long-term care insurance, we used our collective purchasing power in 2014 to offer it at a discounted rate. Another example: Using Customer Advisory Committee feedback, we were able to streamline last year's Open Enrollment process, a clear benefit for time-strapped sponsors and members.

Portico continues to steward the ELCA investment program with efficiency and precision, carefully selecting managers and calibrating asset allocation to enhance the performance of the funds. In 2014, more than 70% of Portico’s investment managers exceeded their benchmarks. This was not the case for most of the investment industry. Morningstar reported that fewer than 20% of U.S. stock mutual funds exceeded their benchmarks during 2014.<sup>1</sup> What’s more, our actively managed funds, with few exceptions, performed better than comparable mutual fund peer group benchmarks during the year — in some cases, by a wide margin. Importantly, this also holds for 10-year and longer time periods.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond the ELCA, Portico’s ongoing involvement with multi-denominational church benefit organizations like the Church Alliance continues to deliver value. When a federal district judge struck down the clergy housing allowance exclusion as an unconstitutional preference for religion under the First Amendment in Nov. 2013, Portico, as part of the Church Alliance, jointly filed an amicus brief urging the court to uphold the exclusion’s constitutionality. Thanks, in part, to our effort, the U.S. Court of Appeals, 7th Circuit, acted in Nov. 2014 to preserve the clergy housing allowance exclusion.

“A few of our staff members petitioned our local gym to be on the Fitness Center discount list, and I can now continue my daily workouts (aka sanity sessions) and save money, too! Thank you for such great benefits to help keep me healthy, ELCA!”

Pastor Amy Stewart  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Manchester, Missouri

## Together, for Life

Our partnership with sponsoring organizations and members is enduring. In 2015, we’re partnering with synods to learn how Portico can better support sponsors and leaders in the ELCA call process. And to simplify things for our members, we’ve begun to enable “single sign-on” access to our benefit partner websites. As of Jan. 2015, members can access Mayo Clinic’s new Healthy Living website directly from myPortico, and we intend to expand single sign-on to other health benefit partners later in the year.

As always, we thank you for your partnership in this shared call to strengthen ministry.

In Christ,



The Rev. Jeffrey D. Thiemann  
President and CEO

1. Source: Return of the Stockpickers, S. Max, Barrons — The Dow Jones Business and Financial Weekly, Jan. 12, 2015.

2. Find specifics about ELCA Retirement Plan investment fund performance at [myPortico.PorticoBenefits.org](http://myPortico.PorticoBenefits.org).



**METRO DC SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION (SWO)  
2014-2015 REPORT TO THE SYNOD**

**PURPOSE STATEMENT OF THE METRO DC SWO**

As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.

**THE METRO DC SWO MINISTRY MARCH 2014 THROUGH MAY 2015**

**Our Annual Convention.** The Annual Convention, with the theme of “Love Thy Neighbor,” was held at The Village at Rockville, in Rockville, Maryland. It has been a number of years since we have held a Convention in Maryland, and we were pleased to have a total of 89 participants, exhibitors, speakers, and guests, from all three areas of our Synod – Maryland, Washington, DC and Virginia.

The SWO hosted a two-hour long seminar on “Human Trafficking,” in partnership with The Global Peace Foundation’s Safe Harbor Project. The Safe Harbor Project is an inter-faith program to educate, build advocates, and ultimately stop this horrendous violence against woman and children in our world. Gail Hambleton, Vice President of the Global Peace Foundation, drew upon Assistant District Attorney for the State of Virginia, G. Zachary Terwilliger; human trafficking survivor Barbara Amaya; with The Rev. Dr. Charles Oberkehr, as moderator. Because churches are one of the top two places victims of human trafficking will go when in need of help, we must be aware of the ways to identify women and children that are victims. This session was the first step in a program the Synodical Women’s Organization has embarked upon to educate the women in our units on the issue of human trafficking.

The special worship service developed by Pastor Christine Dunn, homily given by Assistant to the Bishop Philip Hirsch, and the Bishop’s remarks provided a much needed faith balance to the morning activity.

Offerings given during our worship were split evenly between the Women of the ELCA and the Lutheran Campus Ministry Campaign. In-kind offerings were donated to the residents of The Village at Rockville.

Delegates to the business meeting adopted a budget of \$11,282 and elected the following Officers and Board Members: Vice President, Wilma Dublin, Holy Trinity, Falls Church, VA; Treasurer, Cheryl Dwyer, St. Mark, Springfield, VA; Board Member, Karen Agar,

Peace, Alexandria, VA; and Board Member, Barbara O'Keefe, Good Shepherd, Alexandria, VA. Elected to the Nominating Committee Mary Seale, All Saints, Bowie, MD with two more to be appointed by the President and with Board approval in the near future.

**Communication.** The website and Facebook page created in 2013-2014 have enjoyed a growing level of activity. The website is being used to promote SWO events and Metro DC Synod events, to post links to the Women of the ELCA and the WELCA Blog, and to follow the adventures of Maddie Tallsman as she serves in Argentina with Young Adults in Global Mission. There is a link to *The Joyful News*, and this allows ALL women in the Metro DC Synod to see the SWO news, events, activities, and stories. This year more than half of the SWO Convention registrations were made using the website.

The Facebook page is also enjoying a growing level of activity. Like us and become our friend so you can follow us and share what is happening with your fellow sisters-in-Christ. For your information: Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/metrodcswo> and SWO Website: <HTTP://DWYERCL2.WIX.COM/WELCA-METRODCSYNOD>

**Ninth Triennial Gathering 2014.** And what a time it was. 2,400 women celebrating the theme “of many generations” through incredible speeches in the plenary sessions, worship, workshops, a plethora of exhibits, and wonderful times of fellowship. This Triennial Gathering was an experience and a blessing. I encourage you to read the numerous stories and reports from the Triennial Convention and Gathering by going to the SWO Website, click on *The Joyful News*, and then click on August 2014.

The **Tenth** Triennial Gathering will take place in Minneapolis, MN on July 13-16, 2017. This is going to be a wonderful Gathering with lots of exciting speakers and special events. Start planning now, save those pennies, and join us in Minneapolis for a great experience.

**The Joyful News.** The SWO newsletter was published in August, December, and March and sent to all synod congregations. A “special edition” was published in June that promoted the Triennial Gathering. The August edition contained reports from the delegates participating in the Triennial Convention Business Meeting, as well as stories from those who attended the Gathering. *TJN* is available to **ALL** women on-line through the SWO web site, and we have begun delivering it as a PDF document via email to make it easier for everyone to share with others. Printed copies continue to be sent to those units not able to receive e-mail. If you have not read *The Joyful News*, do take a minute and check it out thorough the website.

**Growing the SWO.** This is a mission to expand our active units in the Synodical Women’s Organization. Presiding Bishop Eaton tells us, “We are church together.” With this in mind, as we talk with unit contacts to better understand their needs and desires, we are also sharing the message that we are able to do more together than we could do as an individual church. This is a diverse group and we are “of many generations.” The WELCA of today provides many opportunities for women from

subjects for circles and bible study groups, ideas and opportunities for service, the Café group younger members that provides topics for discussion, and a blog filled with great conversations. We are involved in social justice issues, offer scholarships and grants, participate in the global efforts of the ELCA. Please invite us to come to your congregation and explore with you the opportunities with the WELCA of today.

**The 2014-2015 giving project for the SWO.** The Lutheran Campus Ministry campaign has been our focus of our giving this past year and will be active until June, 2015. You can explore the story of being a Christian on the University of Maryland campus, and learn about the “caring” programs in which these students are involved, by visiting ([www.lutheranterps.com](http://www.lutheranterps.com) and [www.lutheranterps.com/caring.html](http://www.lutheranterps.com/caring.html)).

We are pleased to announce that we have met, and slightly exceeded, our goal. Funds will be distributed in the very near future. A new project is being researched and developed.

**A Thank You.** To all women in the congregational units, and to our Pastors, administrative assistants, and church leaders - thank you for the support and leadership you provide to your congregations’ ministries and to the ministry of the Metro DC Synodical Women’s Organization. It is a sincere pleasure serving together and carrying out God’s work with our hands.

## **CURRENT OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS** **April, 2015 – April, 2016**

### **OFFICERS:**

President – Kathleen Meier, St. Matthew’s, Woodbridge, VA  
Vice President – Wilma Dublin, Holy Trinity, Falls Church, VA  
Secretary – Sue Orndorff, St. Matthew’s, Woodbridge, VA  
Acting Secretary – Fran Eck, St. Mark’s, Springfield, VA (appointed)\*  
Treasurer – Cheryl Dwyer, St. Mark’s, Springfield, VA  
(\*serving as Sue Orndorff recovers from medical situation)

### **BOARD MEMBERS:**

Karen Agar, Peace, Alexandria, VA  
Marcia Ihnen, Holy Trinity, Falls Church, VA  
Kay Garrett, New Jerusalem, Lovettsville, VA  
Barbara O’Keefe, Good Shepherd, Alexandria, VA  
Bonnie Priebe, First Trinity, Washington, DC

## 2015 Region 8 Report to Synods

*Submitted by Nancy E Gable, Diaconal Minister, D. Ed.*

In the ELCA Constitution, the region's primary mission is to connect, resource, support and network those serving in leadership in our synods and congregations. The following examples represent the work of the region:

***Candidacy and Assignment of First Call Candidates*** is, perhaps, the primary area of responsibility in my portfolio. Rostered leaders are prepared to proclaim the Word through preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and prayer; my work supports this effort.

- In addition to my service at every synod's candidacy committee meeting, I serve as the 'go to' person for all things candidacy. This varies from month to month, but, includes arranging Theological Review Panels and Competency Assessment Panels (as well as the follow-up report writing) and responding to the particular questions that often stymie synod staff people.
- With the 2016 CWA on the near horizon, churchwide staff is busy editing the ELCA Candidacy Manual. To obtain vital input from those on the ground who serve on candidacy committees in 2014 we held two Region-wide candidacy gatherings for each synod's candidacy staff and committee chair person; also invited were any number of colleagues in ministry from across the region. In 2014 we utilized the skill of several LTSG colleagues to discuss the implications for the candidacy of the changed Association of Theological Schools' guidelines for Masters of Divinity degrees and ongoing work in the development of a competency based MDiv program at LTSG.

***First Call Theological Education (FCTE)*** is a natural extension of candidacy's preparation of rostered leaders and first call assignment's work to match candidates' gifts with congregations' missional needs. As these newly rostered leaders venture into service the ongoing support of their existent abilities to proclaim the Word of God is supported through their FCTE.

- While not all regions operate in this manner, Region 8 finds value in cooperating on some key aspects of the FCTE program. Primarily this means the planning and implementing of a Region 8 FCTE Annual Conference; the office works with a Region-wide advisory council in planning.
- With all of the changes in theological education and candidacy, Region 8 partners took the opportunity to review and restructure our approach to the annual FCTE Conference. The program components were identified by the Region's bishops and the structure developed as a result of the collaboration between the bishops and the FCTE advisory council. That structure debuted at the November 2014 Conference
- In addition to the conference, each synod also provides more contextual opportunity.

***Support of newly called synod staff*** is yet another aspect of my service.

- This year's election of Bishop Michael Rhyne in the Allegheny Synod and his appointment of synod staff (as well as new synod staff throughout the Region) offered me the opportunity for both extensive and intensive conversations about the goings on of mission throughout the Region and in particular synods.
- Two regional gatherings for the Assistants were held to nurture the sense of comradery and trust among the synods' staff. At each gathering folks got to know one another more deeply through worship, conversation, learning opportunities, and the sharing of best practices.

***Global Gathering efforts*** continue to take new shapes in response to both churchwide directives and synodical partnerships.

- We are currently planning a "Networks for Mission Gathering" for September 2015 to include network partners such as mission interpreters, DEMs, stewardship, global mission, malaria, synod communicators, and stewardship.



*Bearing witness to the gospel at the crossroads of history and hope,  
Gettysburg Seminary forms public leaders for the church and the world*

## 2015 Seminary Report: Gettysburg Seminary Leans Forward

**Gettysburg Seminary's innovative MDivForward curriculum** offers unprecedented access to theological education through MDiv3 and MDivFlex options (see [www.ltsg.edu/about-us/news/2015/mdivforward](http://www.ltsg.edu/about-us/news/2015/mdivforward)). This redesign represents the most sweeping change in our school's pedagogical approach since internship.

**Others Tap Gettysburg Talent:** Recognized for her shaping of leading edge theological leadership, Gettysburg Seminary said thank you to Dr. Robin Steinke as she became the first woman president of Luther Seminary. Similarly this spring, Dr. Kirsi Stjerna accepted an appointment to teach at PLTS. We have joyfully welcomed new colleagues in new roles, Dr. Kristin Largen as interim dean, Pr. Lauren Muratore in Admissions, and Dr. Angela Zimmann, who works in Advancement and teaches preaching.

**Leadership Circles Take "Annual Fund" to New Level:** Through the diligent efforts of our Advancement team, we broke through the half-million-dollar ceiling and achieved a 30% increase in donor support. Strong ELCA, Synodical and individual support and continuing stringent expenditure controls enabled the Seminary to repeat its "balanced budget" of \$5.2 million.

**Seminary Ridge Museum Global Award-Winner:** In its first year of operation, the Seminary Ridge Museum welcomed upwards of 50,000 visitors. The Museum gained international acclaim from the British Travel Writers Guild, received the construction industry's national first place Eagle Award for historic building rehabilitation, and garnered a half-dozen other regional and state awards.

**Other Leading Edges:** Gettysburg again offered a MOOC (massive, online open course, 230 enrollees), and pioneered the offer of one course simultaneously on two campuses (Luther and Gettysburg, Religion and Media). The Seminary was among a small group of schools awarded grants by the American Academy for the Advancement of Science; this will expand attention

to science and religion, coupled with special events to address emerging issues. Please visit the resources of the Seminary's new website [www.LTSG.edu](http://www.LTSG.edu). These leading edges and more are laid out in the Seminary's 2014 updated strategic plan "Gettysburg 20/20."

**Long-Standing Partnerships Expand and Deepen:** Gettysburg is doing more than ever with its neighbor Gettysburg College (housing) and its neighbor seminary, The Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia (LTSP) (faculty and administrative sharing). And officers of the two seminary boards, as well as presidents and deans, have paved the way for such expanded sharing.

**Faculty impact:** LTSG faculty members were tapped for two new series by Augsburg/Fortress Publishers: Dr. Kristin Largen authored *Interreligious Learning and Teaching* in the Seminarian series, and Pres. Cooper-White coauthored with Dr. Pamela Cooper-White *Practices of Ministry* in the new Foundations for Learning series. Other faculty published significant scholarly articles, offered new compositions, and contributed in other venues.

**Ringing the Praise of God:** In what some might see as unusual recycling, the Seminary brought to campus three historic bells from the former Emanuel Lutheran church building in Philadelphia. Through the generosity led by seminary students, funds were raised to install the tower and bells adjacent to the chapel, which now call us to daily prayer and toll the hours. During Fall Academy, the bells were dedicated as a memorial to the peacemaking legacy of missionaries and veterans.

**We are thankful for all** who have responded generously, all who continue supporting the Seminary's mission with your encouragement of prospective students, your prayers, and of course, your critical financial support.

*The Rev. Michael L. Cooper-White, President  
Dr. James Lakso, Chairman of the Board*

## Report of the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries To the Synods of Regions 7, 8 and 9 Spring, 2015

Since its founding in 1995, the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries (ECLS) has fostered strong collaboration between the three eastern schools and other partners, enhancing our common task of theological education for a broad spectrum of students and lifelong learners. In these challenging times when all seminaries seek new approaches to forming leaders for the Church, we are also engaged with the other ELCA seminaries, our regional synods and additional partners in the search for financial sustainability and programmatic flexibility.

A separately incorporated entity, the Cluster is governed by a Board of Directors made up of board chairs and other officers from each of the three schools. One of the three seminary presidents serves in rotation as Cluster executive director. With the retirement of Philadelphia's president Phil Krey, the Cluster is pleased to welcome David Lose as the new leader of LTSP. We continue on with only modest core funding from the seminaries. One of the key partnerships that has made the work of the Cluster flourish has been the reception of over \$6 million in grants from foundations to support common projects and subsidize seminary budgets.

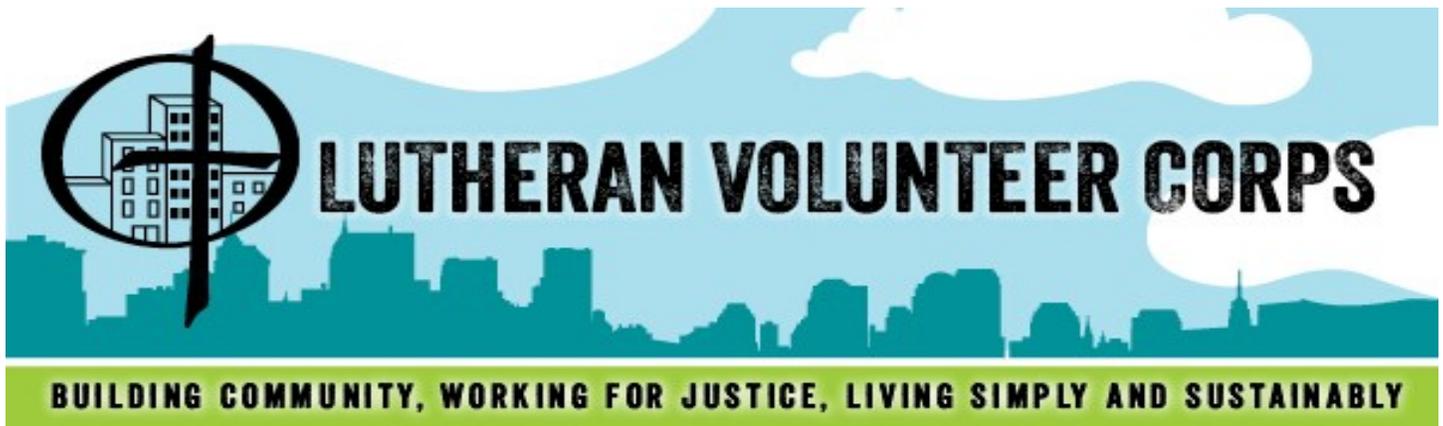
### **Current Collaborative Programs**

- The Cluster's *One Library Under Three Roofs* links the collections at Gettysburg, Philadelphia and Columbia, providing students, faculty and other borrowers with access to a vast array of books, periodicals and e-resources.
- Through the Cluster-sponsored *Project Connect*, hundreds of young persons have been invited to "consider their callings" over the past half-dozen years. This project has now been completed and the Cluster is moving on to other major projects. The Cluster is working with a grant researcher who will help to identify potential partners for future work.
- The *Abundant Life Grant* was received this past year from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. Totaling \$750,000, this grant enables each school to engage in research on the subject of seminarian indebtedness and explore means by which to reduce graduate debt.
- Given the geographical proximity of the two Pennsylvania seminaries, Gettysburg and Philadelphia have joined forces in exploring new ways to work together, including field education, CPE, and faculty sharing. The two boards are also working together to discuss future collaborations.

**Future Cluster Directions:** Following the merger of LTSS with Lenoir Rhyne University, the Cluster is exploring new directions and new strategic partnerships for the coming years.

**With Appreciation:** The Cluster is grateful for support to theological education and our seminaries from our partner synods and churchwide organization. Special appreciation is expressed to Phil Krey for his many years of faithful service to the Cluster and the church.

The Rev. Dr. Bill Trexler, Cluster Board Chair  
The Rev. Dr. Clay Schmit, Cluster Executive Director



**In August 2014, 21** LVC Volunteers began a year of **simple, sustainable living** in four **intentional communities** working in the following placements for **social justice** around Washington, DC:

#### ***Dietrich Bonhoeffer House***

- Pat Brackley— *Academy of Hope*
- Amelia Collins—*National Council of La Raza*
- Kristina Heeren—*Bread for the City*
- Emily Henkelman—*N Street Village*
- Sarah Holland—*Luther Place Memorial Church*
- Kate Ingersoll—LVC

#### ***Emmaus House***

- Drew Bongionvanni—*Washington Interfaith Network*
- Sarah Foster—NVRDC
- Sarah Leonard—*Miriam's Kitchen*
- Dorothy Mugubu—*Metro DC Synod*
- Adam Stone—*Bread for the City*

#### ***Dag Hammarskjold House***

- Jasmine Cornell—*FLOC*
- Amanda Kirsch—*Brainfood*
- Cindy Marte—*La Clinica del Pueblo*
- Georgia Metz—*Lutheran Campus Ministry at UMD*
- Angela Neely—*Briya Public Charter School*
- Torrance Winder—*Thurgood Marshall Academy*

#### ***Rigoberta Menchu House***

- Sammie Chapman—*Lifeline Partnership*
- Rebecca Eastwood—LIRS
- Samantha Grant—*Thurgood Marshall Academy*
- Kyndall Ray—*Samaritan Ministry of Greater Washington*

#### **What is LVC?**

***LVC is a community of faith that unites people to work for peace with justice.***

- LVC Volunteers live together in intentional household communities of 4-7 people.
- LVC is recognized as a social ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and is a member of both Lutheran Services in America and Catholic Volunteer Network.
- LVC is on a Journey to an Inclusive Community, forming and strengthening alliances among people of many cultures and communities and intentionally dismantling racism in our organization, the church, and society.
- As a Reconciling in Christ organization, LVC welcomes and encourages the full participation of people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.

#### **How Can I Support LVC?**

- **Tell someone about LVC!**  
Who in your life is being called to LVC? Adults 21 and older, many of whom are recent college graduates, find rich opportunities in LVC for spiritual growth and vocational discernment while working for justice.
- **Support our program**  
Encourage your congregation to learn more about the program and its Volunteers. Contact Sue Gaeta to arrange for a visit on a Sunday morning or other fitting time.
- **Make a financial gift** through your congregation, through Gifts of Hope or individually
- Stop by our display booth at synod assembly to learn more!

**For more information visit**  
[www.lutheranvolunteercorps.org](http://www.lutheranvolunteercorps.org)

## Bulletin of Reports Mar-Lu-Ridge Camp and Retreat Center, Jefferson MD

This past summer's theme, Christ Carries Us, resonates with me as I reflect on 2014 and the many challenges and joys we experienced at Mar-Lu-Ridge. I know the love God has for us. I am sure of his mercies and his grace. When we get weighed down by the daily challenges such as broken furnaces or waterlines, I remember that Christ is our foundation – and I rejoice.

We saw continued growth in all areas of the ministry in 2014. Our retreat business has grown to the point that we are often busy during the week, and every weekend is full throughout the year. We welcome retreat guests from a variety of religious backgrounds, as well as community and school based organizations. It is a joy to show hospitality to each guest – providing a clean, comfortable, upgraded facility, delicious food that is healthy and nourishing, and programming that develops individual and group confidence. Recent projects to renovate cabin restrooms, seal cabins against weather and insects, and provide more accessible rooms at the Ridge Inn will increase our efficiency and provides better accommodations for all our guests. New windows in Salem on the Mountain Chapel improve an already beautiful view and we thank the community for providing the funds for this project.

We received two generous donations in 2014 that enabled us to plan for the future. A gift from the closure of St. Timothy Lutheran Church has been invested with the ELCA Foundation Fund A, creating an endowment that will be used to pay down the debt associated with Agape Hall. We are grateful for this gift and have been faithfully paying our mortgage each month, working toward the day when we can so utilize this gift and be debt-free. A second large gift from Divinity Lutheran Church allowed us to replace the furnace in the chapel, and complete the installation of our sound and projection system in Agape Hall. The remainder of this gift will be used to upgrade the Ridge Inn.

New programs during summer camp were very well received and we had a wonderful summer serving 750 campers on site through our residential and day camp programs. Cooking camp, Around the World camp, and Pioneer camp were all well attended, as were the old favorites such as Night Owls, Sr. High, Horseback, and Hammock camp. We served 8 different communities and congregations through our Mobile Mar Lu day camps, reaching 200 more campers, and we enjoyed the gifts and talents of a diverse staff. We were once again certified by the American Camp Association, and had a very safe summer.

Remembering that the community of Mar-Lu-Ridge is spread across the globe, we continue to use social media, our electronic newsletter, and personal invitations to events and activities to keep everyone connected. We are thankful for the many volunteers who serve the ministry as pastors and nurses during camp, and by caring for our facilities throughout the year. We are committed to upholding our mission statement: We welcome all people to a mountain-top experience of Christian community that changes lives, makes disciples, builds friendships and encourages care of God's creation.

In peace,

Sarah Lefler  
Executive Director



## Caroline Furnace Lutheran Camp & Retreat Center

You Are Welcome Here

The past year has been all about relationship at Caroline Furnace. With a new Executive Director (Reuben Todd marked his first anniversary at CFLC on 2-1-15), comes an automatic time of transition. We were purposeful about that transition, focusing our energy and resources on relationships.

Some relationships were strong and we sought to affirm them. Some relationships needed care and we sought to strengthen them. Some relationships did not yet exist and we sought to form them. We worked to create, improve, and celebrate our ties to our supporting synods, congregations, and communities. In the midst of working on all these relationships with people, we kept at the forefront our purpose: supporting individuals as they nurture their relationship with God. We are a place to be quiet, to play, to rest, to worship, to study, to fellowship, to learn, to listen, and most of all, to seek God's presence in our daily lives.

We seized the opportunity of being new and having "fresh eyes" to look around and discover all that works well at camp, as well as being open to change when things could be done better. Our goal has been to work smarter, not harder, and we're utilizing some new technology to do that.

We celebrate the successes of the past year, achieved because of your partnership and help. We are excited about renewed facilities, thanks to record attendance at work weekends and other service events to care for our property. We lift up the amazing summer staff who worked with our campers and the volunteers who enriched the weeks when they served. We are enriched by the stories shared by retreat groups of the impact their time with us made on their group. We are continually renewed by the enthusiasm of our campers as they grow in their relationship with Jesus and experience our intentional Christian community.

One of our biggest goals was, and continues to be, to communicate more with those who we could serve, as well as those who could help us to serve others. Our new website is the centerpiece of that effort. We hope you will visit us at [CarolineFurnace.org](http://CarolineFurnace.org) and learn more. There is a place for you at Caroline Furnace! Join us!