**Why Give ELCA Mission Support: Building the Case**

Many congregations ask “Why give mission support?” For congregations that remember their early days and the role of the larger church in providing guidance and financial support, the answer to this question may be very clear. However, for older congregations the reasons may not be as clear. Actually, the reasons go beyond the age of a congregation. Building the case begins with who we are.

**Our Lutheran Identity**

 As Lutherans we understand ourselves to have first received from God, and

 then to respond by giving a portion to God. This faith practice of giving is

 based on recognizing God’s grace, accepting freely and appreciating

 gratefully God’s generosity. As a faith practice, giving is lived out in three

 ways – in proportion to what we have received, in priority from what was

 received first, in progressive amounts as one has been blessed. These

 reflect a core practice that is taught, learned and live out through the

 ministries of this church.

**Our Historical Practice**

 Individuals are taught, invited and encouraged to practice first fruits giving.

 Congregations are encouraged to give the first 10% or more of offerings to

 mission support as a way to make ministries and outreach possible beyond

 the walls of the congregation. Some congregations have adopted this

 practice more fervently and give a third or more of their offerings beyond

 their walls. This practice has inspired more than 200 ELCA congregations

 to pass on 20% or more of their offerings in mission support. It is this

 historical practice that has created a model for – it is just what we do!

**Our 21st Century Strategy**

 As the ELCA enters the second decade of the 21st century, two clear

 priorities have emerged – building capacity for evangelical witness and

 alleviating poverty by working for justice and peace. The pursuit of these

 priorities is directly connected to congregations as growing centers for

 evangelical mission. As we strengthen our partnership, we do together

 many things that we could not do alone. One significant way this is made

 possible is through mission support income from ndividuals, congregations

 and synods. This income is the lifeblood of the work God does through the

 ELCA.

**Our Competency as Stewards**

 In bringing forth and supporting faithful, wise and courageous leaders, we

 engage and shape well-formed stewards. This recognizes the holistic nature

 of a competent steward – physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually,

 financially. These stewards embrace financial health as an expression of

 faith in this interdependent church. Understanding the perspectives of

 abundance, grace, gratitude and generosity, faithful stewards express their

 response through regular offerings, special gifts and planned gifts. These

 gifts support local ministries and through mission support fund God’s work

 through the ELCA.

**Our Constitutional Polity**

 Financial stewardship within the ELCA recognizes congregations,

 synods and the churchwide organization as interdependent partners who

 share responsibility for mission. In this relationship all share responsibility

 for ministries and services to develop, implement and strengthen the

 financial support of the whole church. This partnership is reflected in our

 mutual ministries of community service, education, discipleship and

 leadership development.