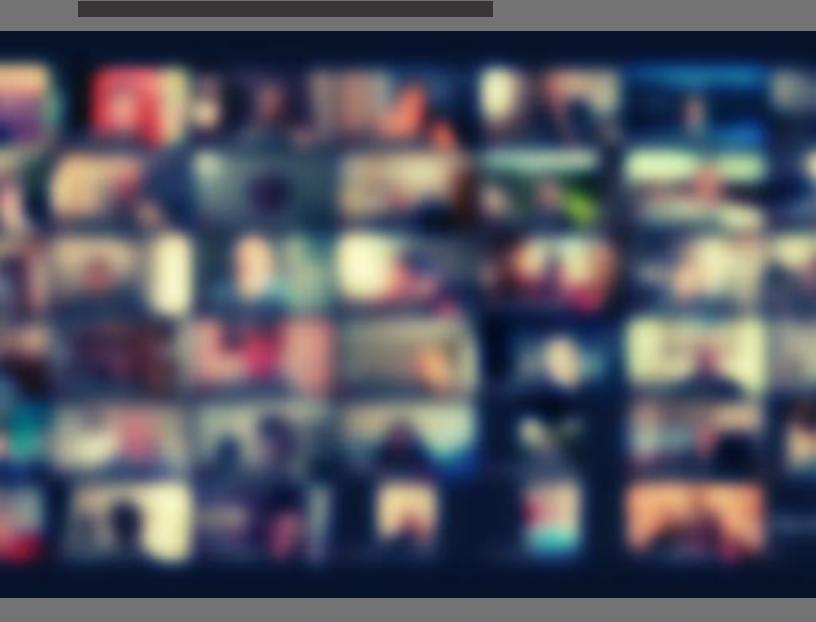
2021 MINISTRY MAGAZINE





CHRIST'S CHURCH, BETTER TOGETHER

WWW.RMSELCA.ORG/MINISTRY-MAGAZINE

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the <u>lor</u>d, because you know that in the <u>lor</u>d your labour is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 5:58





Friends in Christ,

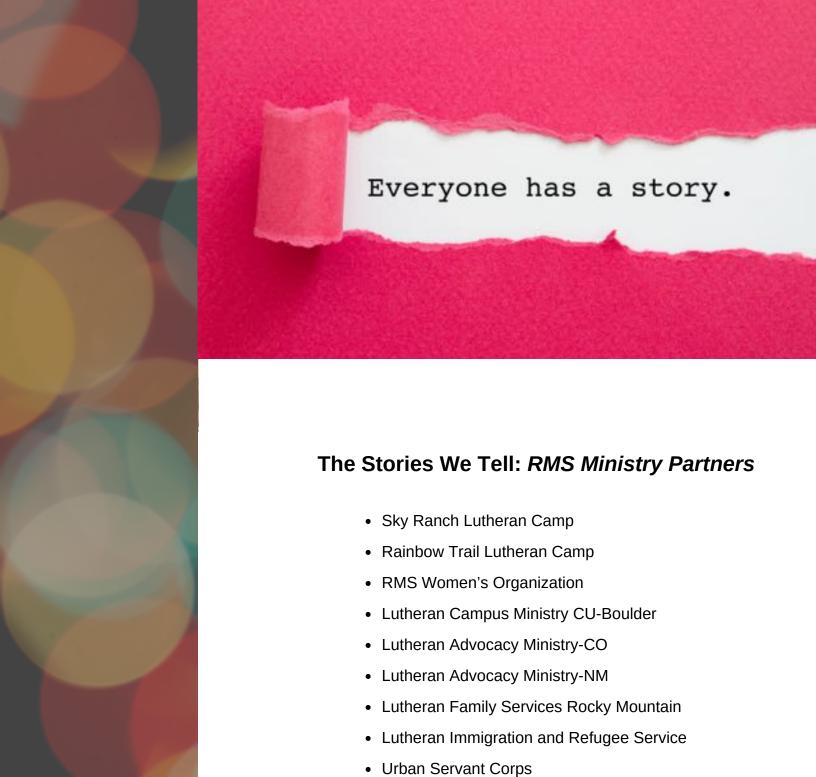
Indeed, the Church is always open- gathering, serving, worshipping, and proclaiming the Gospel. Alongside our congregations, our partners in ministry adapted and responded to the challenges and needs of their communities and those they serve. Our ministry in 2020 included digital and distanced camp, meal delivery to college students, advocating for vaccine equity and hunger policy, ministry transforming World Hunger grants, and much more. We are a church becoming, and the ministry and witness of our ministry partners continues to shape this unfolding story of who we are.

In Gratitude,





Mission Investment Fun A FINANCIAL MINISTRY OF THE ELCA



Veteran Servant Corps

• RMS Hunger Network

RMS Development

• Excellence in Leadership

• Educate, Equip, Enact (3E)

Sky Ranch Lutheran Camp

A Year of Change and Transformation



"The ministry of Sky Ranch exists in context, being the influencer as well as being influenced by events. Yet by the grace of God, we always give witness."

2020 was an unforgettable year in the life of Sky Ranch, a year full of surprise, grace, and resurrection. It is a year that will forever be remembered for COVID and the Cameron Peak Fire. It is a ministry that shaped the faith of tens of thousands over the past 57 years. 2020 was no different...although it looked radically different.

Despite Covid restrictions and fire evacuations, summer staff were hired, trained, and empowered to share the gospel in new, creative ways. Campers, who were unable to gather on the mountain top, were still touched by this ministry. And because of your incredible support to help restore and rebuild, campers will be able to join us again in 2021.

Sky Ranch continues to focus on our commitment to "Facilitating an encounter with Christ on the mountain tops." During last summer's Black Lives Matter movement, our summer staff asked the board to consider if camp really was open and welcoming to all. The board could have given an excuse of having other important matters to attend to, or simply said we affirmed we are welcome to all, instead the board created a task force to explore what actions we could take to address this question.

We engaged pastors Barbara Berry-Bailey and Richard Gianzero, to lead *Courageous Conversations* for the task force, staff, board, and members of the Urban Servant Corp. We met twice a month, September 2020 through February 2021. Through conversations and readings, we are looking to see what prevents us from being truly inclusive. Sky Ranch continues the work of ensuring *all* can have an encounter with Christ on the mountain tops.

- What is one positive thing that has changed in your life/ministry this past year?
- Where do you feel most welcomed and why?
- How might humility help us define "neighbor" more inclusively?

Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp

Living Into The Possibilities



What a summer! A summer none of us could have ever imagined. As an organization, Rainbow Trail chose not to close in 2020, but rather to live into the possibilities of what this summer could be. The RTLC Board made the decision in March to hire and pay our summer staff no matter what. There was a strong sense that we needed to be the church *now* and not wait until this pandemic was over.

We created over 40 pages of COVID protocols, created a brand new website for RTLC@HOME for our online camps, recorded over 14,000 temp checks, and recorded close to 50 hours of video.

Our first week with campers on site was July 5-11. There were several changes with protocols and all of us wearing masks. But even with masks, it still felt like camp. "Mask up, Mask on!" became a mantra every week. We found that, because villages had to stay together more than normal, they became closer than in other years.

Bible Studies were richer and deeper. We had campers who have been coming for ten years who said this was their best week of camp at RTLC ever. We ended up having four weeks of youth camp and one week of family camp in person on site.

By the grace of God and the hard work of our staff, we had no cases of COVID with staff or campers during the whole summer. In all, we served 818 campers: 440 campers on-site, 345 campers through 22 online Day Camps, 33 campers through backpack, along with 62 summer staff.

As we look back on this summer, we know we provided something that people needed. We knew there were some risks involved, but there will always be some risks in any summer. The summer ministry team was phenomenal. They were courageous, adaptive, inventive, persistent, innovative, fun-loving, adventurous, incredible problem solvers, and true followers of Christ.

- What has been the thing in your life where you knew there was going to be some risk involved, but once you did it, it was a game changer for everyone involved?
- What does it mean to be the church in this day and time?

Rocky Mtn Synodical Women's Organization

Detour Ahead



A year ago, the Rocky Mountain Synodical Women's Organization had a busy year planned! Some of us were to attend the 11th Triennial Convention and Gathering in Phoenix, Arizona and our own Synod Women's Convention was to be held last fall. But, of course, last March, along with everyone else, we found ourselves having to take a DETOUR from what we knew to be normal schedules and routines. During the past year, with the Lutheran Center in Chicago closed, the Women of the ELCA Churchwide staff began working from home. The Rocky Mountain Synodical Women's Organization (RMSWO) board continued to meet, but by Zoom instead of in person or by phone. Many congregational women's groups either ceased meeting in person or began Zoom Bible studies. Quilting, sewing and craft groups, however, managed to be productive as many groups continued to deliver quilts and kits to the Urban Servant Corps in Denver for Lutheran World Relief.

So, what does the rest of 2021 entail?

The Churchwide Women's 11th
Triennial, "Just Love," will be a Virtual
-Digital convention held August 3-5.

The RMSWO Fall Convention will also be virtual/digital and will take place Friday, Oct. 8 and Saturday, Oct. 9.

With few women's groups meeting in person, and then not collecting offerings, financial support for the churchwide organization dropped off dramatically. As of Feb. 1st, Churchwide Women of the ELCA is keeping only two staff on full time, with the remaining staff cutting back to part-time. During these continued difficult times, the RMSWO remains committed to helping women in crisis, families in need of food and shelter, and helping to end sex trafficking of our young people.

Julie Elmquist, president, RMSWO sjelmquist@msn.com

Questions for Reflection

What women do you know who need some support – materially, emotionally, spiritually?

What can you do to lift up the women of your community?

Lutheran Campus Ministry at CU Boulder

BreadEx



The heart of our ministry is a weekly, Tuesday night meal that we call, 'Bread+Belonging.' It's a project we support along with St. Aidan's Episcopal Church. In normal times it's a place where students get to stop, take a breath, share a meal, and a place where students know they belong.

We spent last summer figuring out how to keep our weekly, Tuesday night dinners going, but now, outdoors with social distance. Before that first Tuesday night of the fall we tried to take every detail into account. There were chalk arrows and signs. We carefully arranged the tables with placards that said how many people could sit at each one.

Then the students arrived. They paid particular attention to our instructions. After they picked up their food they walked right past our carefully aligned tables, sat down on the ground, and formed a large circle (still responsibly distant). After six months of isolation, more than anything, they wanted to see each other's faces and to reconnect.

In October rising COVID cases led the City of Boulder to implement a monthlong lockdown that applied only to 18-22

year olds. After a couple of weeks of gathering outside it seemed that our weekly Tuesday night meals had come to an end.

Then inspiration struck. If students couldn't come to us, then we would go to them. We sent word out to our regular dinner hosts and in just a couple of days we had prepared and delivered over 50 meals to homebound students.

It was a massive undertaking. Our staff had to navigate a menagerie of dietary requirements. Some homes had vegans. Others were gluten-free. There were dairy and nut allergies. And yet, working with members of local congregations, each week for a month students and their roommates received a warm meal.

With the help of over a dozen of our supporters, through financial gifts, in October we helped over 200 students stay connected to a community that cares for and supports them.

Campus Ministry during a pandemic has been far from perfect. It is not what it should be. Still we have faith that it will be enough to see us through.

- What unrecognized resources can your community utilize for ministry?
- How has your community supported young adults during the past year?

Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-Colorado

Loving Our Neighbors through Better Policy



At its core, advocacy is a ministry of loving our neighbor. As the church engaged in the public square, we speak to the policy-making arm of our government on the basis of our theology and social teaching. We seek to accompany people in Colorado who are experiencing hunger, poverty, homelessness, and other realities that can be addressed through better policy.

In 2020, the Colorado legislature split its session into two halves due to the onset of the pandemic. Lutheran Advocacy held its annual Day at the Legislature on February 27, 2020, with little notion that the world would very soon look quite different. Nonetheless, Lutherans met with their elected leaders to discuss a variety of issues, including election reform, housing, and the death penalty.

We vocally supported the successful passage of Senate Bill 20-100, which ended the use of capital punishment in Colorado.

The ELCA has long been committed to the abolition of the death penalty in favor of an alternative vision of criminal rehabilitation. In 2020, by joining our voices with hundreds of people of faith leading the way, abolition finally became a reality!

In the fall, we supported ballot measure campaigns that lived in a primarily digital realm. One successful effort was the passage of Proposition 118, creating a paid family and medical leave program in Colorado for the first time.

As we all adapt to new realities launched by the pandemic, we have found that our core advocacy message remains the same: we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves, and so we fight for policy that supports our vision of world in which all of God's people are fed, housed, and cared for, and in which the dignity of each child of God is respected.

- 1. What does it mean to love our neighbor as ourselves? Who is our neighbor?
- 2. How does God's call impact the way we show up as members of the body politic?
- 3. Besides advocacy, what are other ways we can show up in public as the church?

Lutheran Advocacy Ministry- New Mexico

Church Becoming



As the 2020 Spring Meeting of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry - New Mexico's Policy Committee came to an end, members had no way of knowing the long and challenging road that would be traveled over the next year. Indeed, meeting and advocating in person would become impossible, coalition work would transform, engaging congregation's advocacy was put on hold for much of the year, and two special sessions of the New Mexico legislature, and one 60-day regular session, were held entirely on the Zoom format. It was indeed a year of transformation and learning, one of "Church Becoming" in the ministry of advocacy.

What was learned and what transformed? New Mexico's already existing crises in hunger, poverty, housing, and healthcare, would become worse than they already were. Racial and cultural injustice in public policy would become far more obvious.

Successful advocacy, dependent on building relationships with legislators and other state officials in-person could indeed be done online. Legislators, advocates, and the citizens of N.M. could learn to interact in Zoom meeting rooms, impacting policy, and causing transformational changes. New Mexicans would participate in the legislative process in record numbers due entirely to the new online access.

LAM-NM is a ministry of the Rocky Mountain Synod in partnership with ELCA World Hunger. We advocate for justice in public policy, with a particular emphasis on alleviating poverty and hunger. We support ELCA members and congregations, our extensive ecumenical and interfaith partners, and the New Mexico Conference of Churches in the ministry of advocacy. LAM-NM speaks on behalf of the official positions of the ELCA as applied to the specific context of public policy issues in New Mexico.

- 1. How does your faith impact your positions on public policy in your state? Should it?
- 2. How can you and your church engage in making systemic change up-stream?

Rocky Mountain Synod Hunger Network

A Time for Deep Learning and Conversation



What a time this has been for all of us! The old ways of doing ministry have been turned upside down. But, in many ways, the Era of Zoom has enhanced our work.

With a virtual team retreat and our ability to have 12 people participate in the January ELCA World Hunger Leaders Gathering, we learned that deep conversations are possible even in a time of social distancing.

The depth of learning has also increased in the time of Zoom. All the sessions of the Gathering were recorded, and we have been able to view them again and again. We can also share them with anyone who wants to learn with us.

During our regular monthly meetings, we learned about the ministry being done by two of our Domestic Hunger Grant recipients: Posada in Pueblo, CO, and New Beginnings inside the Denver Women's Correctional Institute.

Now, we invite *anyone* to learn with us at 6:30 pm on the second Tuesday of

every month. The Zoom link and topic will be on our synod webpage. Just drop in. No commitments, promise!

We also want to hear how your congregation is involved in bringing about a just world where all are fed. You do the talking; we do the listening. Maybe you have a poverty ministry housed in your congregation, maybe you are partners with a community ministry, whatever! Fighting hunger includes everything from housing to education. Let us hear from you through the webpage link or via email to: mcdivittc@mindspring.com.

Justice ministry is happening all across our synod: from congregations in Albuquerque joining forces to add a staff person for a feeding ministry because older volunteers were restricted during COVID to seven-year-old Aaron Carson sending \$6 from his birthday money to ELCA World Hunger and challenging others to match it because his family has enough food every day and other people do not.

- How does racism impact hunger?
- Before your congregation starts or participates in a poverty ministry, how do you know where there are gaps in services?
- How is rural poverty different from urban?

Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains

Rebuilding Together





Like you, we too are learning a new normal. During the last year we have had to discover new ways to serve the most vulnerable in our communities, and new ways to provide services, and new ways to stay connected to our supporters. Through it all, LFSRM team members throughout the Rocky Mountain Region have continued to navigate these changes helping hundreds of people who seek help, healing and hope from LFSRM.

At the onset of the pandemic, many of our family support programs were closed, only reopening with new procedures and strict CDC guidelines. Staff remained connected to families, assessing their needs, and delivering food and basic supplies. Many of the families served through these support programs were already near crisis and the home environments for children were difficult. It has been especially imperative even during quarantine to continue to connect with these families.

Since last year, our Lifework Aging Solutions program has been making weekly deliveries of meals, and much needed supplies to older adults throughout the Metro Denver area.

In Albuquerque, LFSRM staff has been working in the community helping to disseminate COVID-19 information in different languages, including testing, quarantine assistance, vaccine information, and more. Through their efforts and with assistance from community partners, staff has been able to deliver food, rental assistance, diapers and more to stabilize families, find new employment to alleviate financial stress, and rebuild their lives after the pandemic.

Thanks to the support of partner organizations and congregations, neighbors, and communities, LFSRM remains committed to building stronger individuals, stronger families, and stronger communities.

- How has your ministry adapted in this past year?
- What adaptations have brought new life to your ministry?
- What changes will remain post-pandemic?

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Neighbors in Need



When the coronavirus pandemic hit, LIRS knew we had to take action for the immigrant and refugee community.

Our New American family members were hit hard by COVID-19 and its effects; many lost their jobs in the service, hospitality, and production industries, while many more risked their lives on the front lines of healthcare and food production. Many of our immigrant brothers and sisters were excluded from government stimulus packages, while others were hesitant to get medical care for fear of retribution.

We established **Neighbors in Need** as an emergency fund to serve these critical needs. In just four months, we were able to provide \$342,000 of emergency financial assistance to 361 at-risk families who suffered illness, job loss, or other hardship due to the crisis.

One such family in Minnesota found themselves unable to afford rent after the father was laid off due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The family of five had lived in the US for about eight months and were just starting to establish themselves. Despite several efforts to apply for unemployment insurance and grants, the family was unable to secure any other sources of income.

Their savings had dwindled to less than \$200 when they received news that the Neighbors in Need fund would pay for their next month of expenses. They were so grateful and relieved to learn that they would not have to choose between paying their bills and feeding their family.

Their story highlights the unique vulnerabilities that many refugees and immigrants face in this pandemic, particularly in light of limited and lacking federal aid, and underscores the essential role LIRS' Neighbors in Need fund plays in filling the gaps during this unprecedented moment in American history.

To learn more about the work of LIRS in this critical time, visit **LIRS.org**

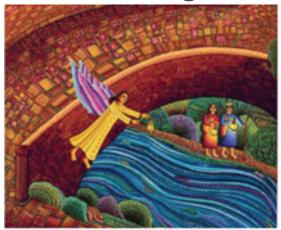
Questions for Reflection

Read Matthew 25:34-40.

What parallels do you see between this passages and life around us today? How would you describe God's attitude toward migrants? How might your congregation be called to accompany our refugee and migrant neighbors?

AMMPARO

Guardian Angels



Until the pandemic led to the shutdown of immigration court in the Spring of 2020, I was participating in the ELCA AMMPARO "guardian angel" program in Denver. In groups of two, we observed court days on days when unaccompanied minors from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador were appearing before an immigration judge. We would introduce ourselves to the children and family members (if present) while they were waiting for court to begin. We would tell them that we were praying for them and that the church was standing with them, and then we would offer them a prayer card printed in Spanish. Although many of the minors were teenagers, I also observed toddlers and young children appearing before a judge. My experience with AMMPARO deepened my understanding of bearing witness and accompaniment.

Although COVID halted in-person court watch, I have continued to seek opportunities to advocate for justice for migrants and refugees through LIRS and other organizations. As unaccompanied children and families continue to arrive at the southern border it is urgent that we join with other people of faith and goodwill to continue to advocate for comprehensive reform to repair our broken immigration system and address the underlying injustices that drive people to flee their home countries.

Carolyn Swenson
St. Paul Lutheran and Catholic
Community of Faith Denver, CO

We will have a Migrant Ministry meeting with Mary Campbell, director of ELCA AMMPARO, on May 22 at 10am via Zoom. For more information email rmsammparo@gmail.com

Questions for Reflection

Where are there migrants in your community?

Can you identify how they are struggling?

How might you accompany them on their journey?

Urban Servant Corps

Service! Simplicity! Spirituality! Intentional Community!



"This year has been completely transformational..." ~Tatum

"Our community has: worshipped, cried, laughed around the dinner table, held each other accountable, challenged our norms, and so much more!" ~Sydney

"Overall, my year of service so far has greatly tested my flexibility and has challenged the way I perceive and show up in the world through a constant state of learning and unlearning, and I wouldn't have it any other way!" ~ Ciara At USC, we believe that service is transformational -- it creates the opportunity for shared humanity and to faithfully respond to one another's needs.

Our full-time volunteers live in an intentional community house in downtown Denver with others who are committed to social justice, racial justice, and accompanying vulnerable populations.

Food, housing, health insurance, a monthly stipend and an annual "growth and development" allotment are provided.
Additionally, Spiritual Direction, alumni mentorship, and professional development opportunities are offered as part of this experience.

USC is a Reconciling in Christ ministry!

Questions for Reflection

- 1) Are you a young adult dedicated to social justice and a simpler way of life?
- 2) Are you someone who hopes to explore or deepen your faith?
- 3) Are you seeking experience in the non-profit/ministry field?

www.urbanservantcorps.org

Veterans Servant Corps Project of RMS



The Rocky Mountain Synod has a new ministry, the Veteran Servant Corps Project. This ministry is to support military members and their families.

Veteran Servant Corps Project in the Rocky Mountain Synod is part of the ELCA's Memorial to provide a welcoming and supportive environment for returning military personnel to effectively provide healing ministries to military veterans and their families.

This mission will:

- -Provide training for ELCA clergy and pastoral support staff to understand veteran's issues.
- -Provide no-cost retreats at ELCA camps for veterans and their families.
- -Provide ideas and materials for veteran awareness and celebrations in the ELCA community.

The first no-cost retreat will be for ten veterans and their families on September 10 – 12, 2021 at Sky Ranch Lutheran Camp in Colorado. A future retreat is planned for Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp in Colorado.

To donate, please go to the RMS web site, click the Ministries tab at the top, go to Servant Corps and select Veterans Servant Corps Project, and scroll to the bottom of the page for the "Donate" button.

For further information contact Vicky Daub at Ivdaub2@gmail.com.

Reflection Question:

 How can you and/or your congregation change the lives of veterans and their families?

Excellence in Leadership (EiL)

Expanding Perspectives



Courageous, resilient, and faithful leaders for the sake of the world

"You don't need a title to be a leader."

Anonymous

By Rev. Julie Brooks
Trainer, Excellence in Leadership
Pastor, Saron in Strasburg &
First in Longmont

This past year, while working on my own transformation for the sake of God's work in the world, I attended a reconciliation event at Zion Baptist Church in Five Points, Denver. It was the four-month anniversary of George Floyd's death. Afterward, standing in this vast and historic place, Reverend Davis, lead pastor at Zion Baptist, talked about the urgency and immediacy of God's work in this mostly-black community. As he spoke, I could sense a profound space expanding inside of me.

Excellence in Leadership encourages us to embrace vulnerability and connect beyond our usual social location. We look at culture as it sways our point of view—which for me began with a suburban, middle class, white upbringing—and how it bestows stereotypes that neglect the actual experience, while causing real harm.

At one of the churches I serve, First Lutheran in Longmont, we decided to study race. In a six-week class, we learned about the fallacy of genetics in race, the historical experience of black and brown people in this country, the blindness of privilege, and the justifications around guilt. People of faith, rooted in love, were broken open by the reality of injustice and were wondering what to do next. Harm to one is harm to all and connecting stirs us to action. God is always in solidarity with suffering!

Showing up and being fully present takes some work, but it is a joyful and worthwhile endeavor. Our flawed and redeemed selves can be leveraged for the loving purpose of God's emerging future. This might include knowledge about theories, but it's also making ourselves available as people who are "brave, awkward, and kind." (Brené Brown) As Jesus-people, may we ever deepen with our neighbors far and near, knowing we'll emerge with something beautiful and life-giving.

- What gets in your way of loving your neighbor?
- How might you and your neighbor share your meaningful stories?
- Where do you feel the nudge to be part of God's emerging future? What is your first step?

Rocky Mountain Synod Development

An All-Expense Paid Trip

By: Tina Kvitek, RMS Development Officer

Have you ever been to an 'all-inclusive' resort or on a cruise ship – where you pay one upfront fee, then you get to eat and drink yourself silly? I have not... but I often dream of great vacations and what it would be to experience a trip like that.

During our lifetime, we work hard to build that dream of an 'all-inclusive' life by accumulate major assets, such as a home and car; by saving for specific events like college or retirement through investments and other types of accounts; and by protecting our families and our lifestyles with tools like life insurance, etc.

But what is your plan for when the dream comes true? When the promises God made to you at baptism become the gift you receive forever? When you no longer need to use those assets and you are free to pass them on to loved ones and a ministry you care deeply about to continue their good work beyond your lifetime?



Photo: Eldar Nazarov

Questions for Reflection:

- What plans have you made to care for your loved ones – and your favorite church/charity – at the end of your life?
- How soon should those plans be reviewed, and who should know about the details?

I can help!
Let us schedule some time to talk.
Here is my **new** contact information:

Tina Kvitek
RMS Development Officer

Email: tkvitek@rmselca.org
Cell: (720) 238-3763

Educate, Equip, Enact (3E)

Where Are You Going?



"If you don't move forward and change, you're not going anywhere."

That's what Charlene Coulson, a decades-long member of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church (SOTH) in Cañon City, Colorado, who currently serves as the Congregation Council President, recently shared as she reflected on SOTH's journey in stewardship ministry.

Three years ago, SOTH participated in 3E's Stewardship for All Seasons (SAS) program. SAS guides congregations and its leaders in learning and carrying out fruitful stewardship programs that enliven a culture of generosity. But, SAS wasn't the right fit for SOTH at the time and the congregation left SAS.

When Charlene began serving as council president, honoring SOTH's legacy and seeing ministry opportunity in the present, she said, "We've got to be doing better than this."

SOTH decided to join 3E's fall 2020 online *Beginning a Culture of Generosity* program, created for congregations who have not yet participated in SAS.

At SOTH, Beginning a Culture of Generosity hit the sweet spot. The number of people pledging more than doubled over the prior year and projected income grew by 27%. Charlene said people were truly excited as they decided to fund new local, national, and international ministry initiatives in their Web of Grace fall stewardship campaign.

While 3E hopes to offer effective programs, it's bold, trusting, daring leadership and vision like Charlene's and that of others at SOTH that helped the congregation move forward in sharing God's love in the world.

Responding to what God is prodding them to become in this new day, SOTH trusts where it's going.

- How do you feel about the opening quote?
- What excites you about the ministry of your congregation?
- What can you learn from what doesn't go right?
- Who is God prodding you to become?

Rocky Mountain Synod Creation Care Team

A self-organizing committee of the Rocky Mountain Synod whose main focus is on changing how people treat the Earth.

Our goal is for all congregations to become loving Creation Awareness Centers.

rmscreationcareteam@gmail.com Rocky Mountain Synod Creation Care Team | Facebook

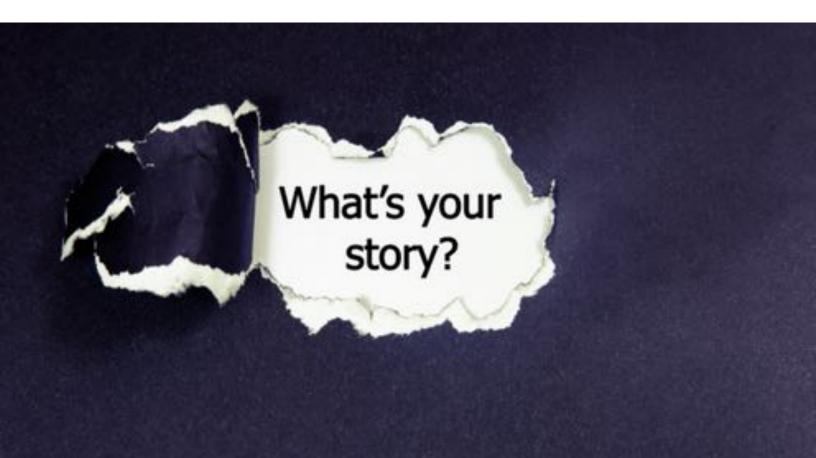














Christ's Church Chetter together