

WE ARE CHURCH TOGETHER



STORYTELLING ENGAGEMENT

DECEMBER 2025 Mission Support Memo

Healing. Community. Hope.

A story from the [Virginia Synod](#)

As you read this story, what inspires you?

How is your congregation trying something new?

On a quiet residential street in Radford, Va., atop a high hill overlooking the New River, sits a Lutheran church. Once it was a vibrant congregation in this nine-square-mile community of Radford, but, much like the community, it experienced a downturn. Then, in 2021, the [Rev. Libby Pfaff](#) was called to serve as pastor of Christ Lutheran Church. Pfaff knew she was meant to be in Radford, meant to shepherd a new beginning in a place where people might have felt as if God had given up on them, but knowing God will never abandon.

So, on the second Sunday of Easter in 2023, Christ Lutheran closed their church and became Nineveh Lutheran Justice Ministry. As Pfaff shares, “Nineveh, a city centrally featured in the Hebrew book of Jonah, represents the people who everyone has given up on, but who God will never abandon.” Funded with monies bequeathed by Christ Lutheran and a new-start grant from the ELCA, Nineveh started its work with and among the people and organizations in Radford. This synod-authorized worshiping community is a safe haven and house of healing for any and all seeking the justice, mercy and compassion of the Spirit, especially people on the margins: those suffering from addiction and their families and friends, and those seeking an affirming and inclusive faith community in the New River Valley.



The goal of Nineveh is to create a coalition of worship, service and other community organizations to work together, lift up existing resources and identify unmet needs. That’s why it supports Old Brick Presbyterian Church’s food pantry rather than starting another one.

Nineveh works with [New River Valley Community Services](#), supporting folks affected by mental health and/or substance use disorders and even piloting a program at the church for kids and families. This year, the church is doing an intergenerational, art-based Advent series called “What Do You Fear?” with Christiansburg Presbyterian Church, as well as hosting a Blue Christmas service. It is also a [Reconciling in Christ](#) congregation.

All these partnerships align with the ministry's mission and welcome. "Nineveh strives to be a place where diversity is celebrated as good and wonderful," reads part of the church's [welcome statement](#). "We envision a world where all forms of discrimination, exploitation, and oppression are transformed by the healing love of God as revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and poured out upon us by the power of the Holy Spirit." [Full Welcome Statement](#)

Nineveh has created many ways to connect. Imagine the mix of aromas at the monthly potluck and feel the welcome at worship services, where fellowship brings all into a sacred space together. Or hear the bonfire crackling in the back parking lot when the Campfire Collective gathers LGBTQIA+ people and their allies for a monthly meeting to hear each other's pains, joys, needs and wonders. Or feel the weight of a book in your hands when I'm With the Banned Book Club meets on the fourth Monday of each month. Or join Pastor Libby for coffee in a Main Street shop where each of you can be your honest self.



Nineveh Lutheran Justice Ministry is still discerning how God might be calling it into community in Radford. Does that include this church building on the hill? Does the building look more like a laundromat? Nineveh knows that God has called it to envision "a community in which there are no disparities among neighbors, free to live and work together toward love, justice, and peace for all, where the image of God is valued and recognized in each person." That's Healing. Community. Hope.

ENGAGE WITH US

ELCA Innovation Team Wants to Visit You!

The Innovation and Ideas team is the public face of the [ELCA Innovation](#) team, which works closely with synods, congregations and other ELCA ministry partners as they explore new and unique ways of doing ministry. A key approach to this work is through synod engagement. As a relatively new team, Innovation and Ideas is prioritizing in-person visits to synods and congregations to learn about all the creative ways your church is doing ministry. If you would like the Innovation and Ideas team to visit your synod, please email lab@elca.org and follow along with the team's work on the [ELCA Innovation Lab Instagram!](#)

GRATEFUL

In this time of Advent — a time of watchfulness, preparation and waiting for the light of Christ to come — your Congregation and Synod Support team continues to be grateful for the ways we stay connected. We cherish the moments when we connect with our bishops, our directors for evangelical mission, our stewardship leaders, our storytellers and communicators, our congregational leaders and every person who engages in our ELCA work of Mission Support, storytelling and stewardship. All these connections allow us to celebrate the anticipation and wonder of Christ's light more fully. We continue to be grateful for your generous Mission Support and hope you feel the wonder of all it allows us to do — together.

In gratitude,
Victoria Flood, Senior Director for Congregation and Synod Support
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Karen Kretschmann, Coordinator for Storytelling Engagement

