

# WE ARE CHURCH TOGETHER



## STORYTELLING ENGAGEMENT

### JUNE 2025 MISSION SUPPORT MEMO

#### It Is Not Good to Be Alone

A story from our [Northwestern Minnesota Synod](#)

As you read this story, what inspires you?

How is your congregation connecting with

As a church, we are called to build community together. Our Creator God calls us together: “Then the Lord God said, ‘It’s not good that the human is alone. I will make him a helper that is perfect’” (Genesis 2:18 CEB).

In the border town of Bemidji, Minn., [Peoples Church](#) has been a vital worshiping community for 27 years. Located on the “border of three Ojibwe Indigenous peoples’ reservations — Red Lake, Leech Lake and White Earth — Peoples Church is an [Indigenous ministry of the ELCA](#), which means that it faithfully witnesses to the ways Native American religious traditions and Lutheran Christianity are in harmony with one another. They are a multicultural and indigenous ministry of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) that welcomes anyone from anywhere.

They are a church that lives out its call to love and serve Creator God by opening its doors year-round as an overnight shelter, providing hot meals for the community every day and joyfully celebrating in a festival worship meal every Sunday. Peoples Church believes everyone deserves shelter, a meal, community and dignity. They provide overnight shelter to the least and lost in the region, hosting an average of 24 people each night, from youth to whole families, and even a 79-year-old elder. Jesus knew that people needed to eat, and he fed them often. This ministry makes sure folks can center their day with a good breakfast every morning and end it with dinner five nights a week, serving 80-95 meals a day. Peoples Church exists to serve both the spiritual needs and the basic living needs of many who would otherwise go without. Shelter and food are where healing begins, and community and fellowship bring a hope for what lies ahead.



Their call is to lift up the dignity that the Creator has given to every person who walks through the doors. People who access Peoples Church are in extreme need. “Folks on the margins experience, daily, things that dehumanize them, turn them into numbers, a nuisance,” explains the Rev. Birgitte Simpson, the church’s mission developer and pastor. “Peoples Church may be the last place people go, and when they do, they get services, love and care.” This is a place where folks need not pretend to be anything other than exactly who they are — with imperfections and quirks, with longings and failures, with all their hopes and their visions of the future.

After a fruitful ministry review — completed two years ago by the Rev. Rebel Hurd, director for evangelical mission for the Northwestern Minnesota Synod — Peoples Church began a new phase that has led to Holy Spirit transformation, renewed hope and vital new partnerships. In addition to Pastor Simpson, the church is blessed with Julia Plum, a synod-authorized minister who directs the shelter, and church friends who help with welcome, meals and hospitality. The church's generous community partners include Greater Minnesota Community Services, a weekly therapist, a monthly public health nurse, a daily food pantry and shelter advocates. Generously funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the [Northwestern Minnesota Synod](#) and the ELCA (through Mission Support for strategic ministry), Peoples Church is planning for the future, having received just over \$750,000 from the state for long-needed building renovations.

Every day, Peoples Church sees the power of community, dignity and unconditional love. As a nonbinary person, Angel (last name withheld) had been hurt by Christianity, but then their spiritual journey led them to Peoples Church. After 18 months of support and community at the shelter, Angel moved into their own apartment. "This is my church," says Angel. "Worship on Sundays. Eat regularly. This is the only place I see God at work." This is how our Creator God calls us together. Learn more at [www.facebook.com/peopleschurchbemidji](http://www.facebook.com/peopleschurchbemidji).

## ENGAGE WITH US

### Have you said thank you?

The upcoming summer months provide an opportunity for a more relaxed schedule (or so we hope). They're an ideal time to take advantage of the pen and paper at your desk to handwrite thank-you notes to generous people in your community who make a difference in the life of your ministry. A personalized thank-you note speaks volumes in our email-laden lives. If you set a goal of writing one personalized thank-you note a week all summer to someone who impacts your community and your mission, you'll have thanked a dozen life-changers with a personalized message that embodies not only your gratitude but also their investment in what God is doing through your community. If your whole leadership team or even your whole council takes up the practice, the graceful thanks increase exponentially. Take up pen and paper, personalize your note, and take these longer days to linger in gratitude.

Have a great stewardship resource to share? Please send articles, books, movies and other media to [Tim.Brown@elca.org](mailto:Tim.Brown@elca.org). The best gifts are those that are shared!

## GRATEFUL

We are grateful this month for the 65 ELCA synods whose leaders and staff welcome a representative of the churchwide organization to their annual assemblies. Synods make time in their assembly agenda for an ELCA message and make sure the representative have meals, lodging and transportation. Most importantly, they introduce our ELCA representatives to synod teams and members of various congregations, show them vital ministries, and live out how we are church together.

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

