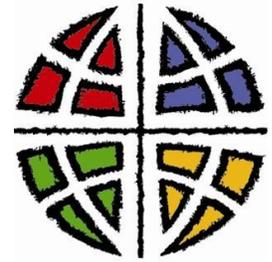


MISSION MOMENT

ELCA Expands Efforts to Increase Inclusivity of Outdoor Ministry Programs



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has announced a new initiative entitled *Total Inclusion!*: Widening the Welcome at ELCA Outdoor Ministries. The new program is designed to equip and empower outdoor ministry organizations as they move toward more intentional welcome of people who historically have been marginalized in the church — especially people of color, people with disabilities and people who identify as LGBTQIA+.

Total Inclusion! is a collaborative effort between the ELCA churchwide organization and Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (LOM), the association of camps and retreat centers affiliated with the ELCA.

An inviting and welcoming church is one of the stated goals for the ELCA, expressed in its strategic document *Future Directions 2025*. Through the stated priorities of this goal, the ELCA will address discrimination and oppression by equipping and supporting church members to understand, speak out and act against discrimination based on race, gender, disability, sexual orientation and social status.

“As is the case with so many ministry organizations of the ELCA, outdoor ministries have found it challenging to serve and be led by people who are often marginalized,” said Don Johnson, executive director, Lutheran Outdoor Ministries. “We expect that we will be making great strides in this regard during the next few years because of the *Total Inclusion!* initiative. The grant will provide the financial resources to actually do something about it, rather than simply dreaming about what we might do.”

The *Total Inclusion!* initiative is divided into two phases:

- The first phase, in 2020-2021, will focus on educational opportunities for outdoor ministry leadership that will provide a framework to understand the barriers to full participation in camp and church life, and develop a fundamental and common understanding of demonstrated best practices for welcoming and including all people.
- The second phase, in 2021-2022, will involve two cycles of a granting program for local initiatives that will provide financial resources to support organizations' strategic inclusion plans developed during the first phase. Two types of grants will be awarded: Leadership grants for ministries that have been leading the way in inclusive practices and want to expand their impact, and Widening the Welcome Grants, for ministries that look to take beginning steps toward inclusiveness and invitation.

“Camps and retreat centers have a knack for making people feel safe, welcomed and included,” said Johnson. “In addition, the camps and retreat centers that are members of Lutheran Outdoor Ministries are committed to providing experiences that reflect the lessons Jesus taught us: ‘Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.’ *Total Inclusion!* will help all our ministries manifest the love of Jesus with all people, whether or not they have a prior connection with the ELCA.”

The program has been made possible by the Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies.

More information about *Total Inclusion!* is available [here](#).

Questions about *Total Inclusion!* should be directed to: TotalInclusion@elca.org.

<https://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/8022>