

FAITH ACTION NETWORK

A Partnership for the Common Good

FAN Advocacy Report for Northwest WA Synod Assembly

We are grateful to be able to share these highlights of 2023-24 with you, and thank you for your generous support and partnership that makes important policy changes happen across our state!

Your support and engagement with FAN helped make possible positive wins and life-saving investments during our 2024 Legislative Session. We are celebrating the passage of several bills that will have tangible impacts in our communities, like a bias-incidents hotline and gun responsibility bills to enhance public safety; 100% zero-emission school buses to keep kids safe; and support for behavioral mental health programs for young people. We celebrate significant supplemental budget investments that will make a difference for our neighbors, including **over \$500 million** in the supplemental budget for critical needs, like support for asylum seekers in Tukwila and increased security grants for faith communities that have been targeted by violence. You joined other faith advocates in FAN to support these with hundreds of letters to legislators. We will persevere in areas where bills did not move, including housing and homelessness, environmental justice, police accountability, criminal justice reform, and in making our most regressive tax system more equitable.



You helped make possible FAN's 2024 Interfaith Advocacy Day (IFAD) on February 8. It was an energizing, successful day under sunny skies in Olympia! Nearly 200 advocates from 37 districts showed up from across the state, including the Puget Sound region to Bellingham, alongside Spokane, Wenatchee, Yakima, Vancouver, Aberdeen, and many places in between. It was a day of collective power and faith values in the service of justice, love and compassion!

Your advocacy makes a difference! Find our full listing of successes on our website under [Legislative Agenda](#).

And there is more work to do! Six citizen initiatives intended to reverse gains we've made in previous years absorbed considerable legislative time and attention. We will also be sharing resources about the three initiatives that will be on the ballot in November, and we will urge you to join us to vote no on them to preserve the Climate Commitment Act that is helping protect our environment, the Capital Gains tax that is funding education, and the WA Cares program that will provide long term care.

Civic Engagement & Voting: In the months ahead, we will be sharing resources and forums to help your churches become 100% Voting Congregations! We are excited to roll out this program and find ways to support your members in their civic engagement. Stay tuned and please join us!

At the national level, our ELCA Hunger Advocacy Fellow, Tomo Duke, is working with Region One synod hunger teams to advocate for **Farm Bill reauthorization in Congress.** We continue to watch for proposed cuts to SNAP benefits and increased work requirements. We also look for protection of workers and the environment in Farm Bill negotiations. Throughout the year, we meet other ELCA State Public Policy Offices across the nation and monitor legislation in Congress, collaborating on policies impacting housing, children, immigrants, climate, and other concerns from ELCA social statements.



Our Team: We have a strong team deeply committed to the work of justice, and they are eager to work with you and your congregations in the year ahead. This year, we are especially grateful to have support from ELCA Advocacy for a Hunger Advocacy Fellow, Tomo Duke, who continues to specialize in tracking anti-hunger and anti-poverty legislation at the state and federal level for our team. As an immigrant herself, she also tracks immigrant rights legislation and what is at stake for immigrants in our community, especially as a wave of asylum seekers has moved to Washington.

As Executive Director Elise DeGooyer leaves FAN this summer after 10 years of service, our staff and board are well-equipped to carry on this work while a transition team identifies the new executive director. Policy Engagement Director Kristin Ang will continue to lead our policy efforts; Partnership Coordinator Elizabeth Dickinson will continue to help equip faith communities for advocacy; and our regional organizers in Spokane and Wenatchee will join our administrative staff in carrying out the mission statewide.

Multi-faith mission and values: During our board-staff retreat in the summer of 2023, we clarified anew our mission statement and articulated the values that guide our work. [You can read more about them on our homepage,](#) and come alongside as we live into them! We seek to approach our work together with hope, resilience, and joy.

Engagement: You are part of a network of 168 faith communities and thousands of individuals across the state who have pledged to be a partnership for the common good. We currently have 41 ELCA churches as part of our network, and many others with whom we engage. Two of those churches enthusiastically hosted cluster meetings last Fall, including Christ the Servant Lutheran in Bellingham and Grace Lutheran in Wenatchee. Bishop Shelley hosted FAN interfaith leaders last August at the Synod offices. We are grateful for you!



Some NW Synod attendees at Interfaith Advocacy Day 2023 on the Capitol steps.

Thank you for your support that expands our hope and effectiveness—we are in this together!