



Gohar Ashoughian, University Librarian
Laurier Library
519-884-0710 ext. 3380 or gashoughian@wlu.ca

Susan C. Johnson
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
204-984-9150

SEPT. 6, 2017 | 126-17

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada partners with Laurier Archives to preserve historic church records

WATERLOO – The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) has partnered with [Wilfrid Laurier University Archives](#) to ensure a significant collection of historic church records will be preserved for years to come.

Adding to the archives' already robust collection of Lutheran materials, the records provide a window into both the history of Lutheranism in Canada and into the broader communities in which the church has operated.

"We are thrilled by the deepening of our relationship with the ELCIC and the possibilities this donation opens up to researchers in a wide range of academic fields, including gender studies, immigration, childhood and the environment," said **Gohar Ashoughian**, Laurier's university librarian and archivist. "The addition of these records further cements Laurier's status as the national centre for the study of the Lutheran church, and Lutheran communities, across Canada."

The archives include records from across the ELCIC, including those from congregations and regional synods.

"These records represent our history, our legacy; they have enormous significance for our church, its members and the wider public," said the **Rev. Susan C. Johnson**, national bishop of the ELCIC. "The Laurier Archives has already done a wonderful job preserving the records of our eastern synod and we are thrilled that they will be taking on these additional records for safekeeping."

The national-level records include information about the church policy, including documents on such issues as full communion with the Anglican Church in Canada, the ordination of women and the blessing of same-sex marriages. The records document the church's international relief and missionary work, as well as policy statements that have covered such topics as people living with HIV/AIDS, apartheid in South Africa, gun control, and right relations with Indigenous peoples. The congregational materials, by contrast, include local records such as baptismal registers, church council minutes, as well as photos and scrapbooks from the Women's Auxiliary and youth-focused Luther League chapters.

Many of the now-defunct congregations had a strong immigrant flavour, and were populated with recent arrivals from countries such as Germany, Norway and Latvia.

"Many of the significant chapters in Canadian history are reflected in the Church archives," said **Julia Hendry**, head of the Laurier Archives. "To cite just a few examples, the ELCIC records document the early days of some Canadian communities; the hardships of Great Depression; the women's movement and the youth movement of the 1960s and 1970s; up to the ELCIC's more recent response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. Since many of the early congregations were immigrant churches, the records give an intimate look into the 19th and 20th century immigrant experience."

... more

Laurier was originally founded as the Waterloo Lutheran Seminary in 1911; in part because of this historical tie, the Laurier Archives have long been keepers of the records of the Lutheran Church's Eastern Synod, which encompasses congregations across Ontario and Eastern Canada.

The archives team is currently going through the collection to catalogue its contents in finding aids to assist visitors in locating specific items, and is also in the process of generating digital copies of select items to make them available to the world online. The results of this work will begin to roll out to the public in the fall of 2017.

Hendry stresses that, going forward, the archives will continue to collect the records of the ELCIC as it continues to make history as a living organization.

"The value of this partnership is that it gives us the opportunity to make these rich historic documents available, and also ensures that we will continue to document the work of the ELCIC going forward," she said.

- 30 -