



Iceland (ELCI) NBC 2022 Country Report

1. Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers

The church has been serving migrants/refugees for decades – but actively for over twenty years.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Icelandic Church, and pastors for new immigrants, have been serving refugees from Ukraine as a special focus project.

A pastor for new Icelanders (immigrants) within the ELCI has been serving the church for over 20 years. He has in recent years, in cooperation with other pastors and a group of Volunteers, put together a platform for migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees to have prayer meetings and social gatherings in three churches in the Reykjavík area.



2. Climate issues

ELCI takes its role as a guardian of God's creation seriously and has for some years now been active on a spiritual, international, governmental, and ecumenical level as well as in practical work on climate issues. On a local level, we have established green congregation projects, baptism forests, wetland recovery restoration programs, green forestry, and land protection on church-owned land.

ELCI has been participating actively in the Arctic Circle Assembly and adding to its spiritual dimension. At the same time, we have been connecting actively with environmental actors in Iceland. In connection with the Arctic Circle Assembly, we have for quite some years held a seminar in Skálholt with numerous national and international participants.

3. Separation of the State and ELCI

There were major changes in the relationship between the Icelandic State and ELCI in 2021. The Church gained financial independence from the state.

The church also became independent in internal affairs at the same time.

4. Skjólíð – Shelter for homeless women

To be Lutheran is to be diaconal. We looked at who the most vulnerable group in our society was, and where the church could step in and make a difference in people's lives. Homeless women did not have any shelter during the day in Reykjavik. We thought that there the church could step in and provide a shelter. The Centre for homeless women was established in February 2021. It is open on weekdays 11.00-15.00. The need for this service was obvious from the beginning. The women have often lost connection with their friends and family and have no place to go until the night shelter opens in the evening. Lunch is served plus coffee and refreshments in the afternoon. Among the facilities are showers, washing machines and recreational rooms.

5. Icelandic Church Aid

The role of Icelandic Church Aid (founded 1970) is to initiate and coordinate the humanitarian and relief work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland both locally as well as abroad. From the start Icelandic Church Aid has participated in development work in collaboration with the Lutheran World Federation in various places around the world and it has also provided direct support to societies and organizations in various countries. Icelandic Church Aid is a member of ACT International, Action of Churches Together, a global alliance of churches and related agencies working in emergency relief.



6. One story – One step

One story – One step is a collaborative project of Samtökin '78 (National Queer Association of Iceland) and ELCI that Samtökin '78 has led for the last two years.

The project was formally presented by the Bishop of Iceland and the chairman of the Samtökin '78 at Reykjavík Pride on August 8, 2020. Its purpose is to begin settlements and learn from the history of inequality against gay people within the church. The project is based on personal experiences of prejudice and the national church's opposition to the rights of gay people over the years. Stories from gay people of inequality and prejudice in the church were collected and recorded. The stories are now available on the project's website.



7. Elections to the General Assembly

Elections to the General Assembly of ELCI took place in May. A new assembly will take office in October.

The term of office of the church assembly is four years, so this assembly will operate until 2026.

8. New Hymnal

A new hymnal for ELCI will be published this autumn. The last issue was published in 1997.

The publication of the hymnal is a major milestone for ELCI, and Icelandic music life and culture. The new hymnal will be printed in 17.000 copies.



9. Elections for new suffragan bishop in Hólar

A new bishop will be ordained to the office at Hólar in Hjaltadalur in August.

Elections ended today. Two priests were in the running. The term of office is 5 years for suffragan bishop.



10. New strategic planning for ELCI

The Icelandic Church was responsible for making strategic planning last year. Over a hundred people from all over the country worked on this planning. The conclusion was apparent. The Church's work with children and the youth is the most important thing the Church should be working on in the coming years, and now there is an action plan for how this work will be done.

