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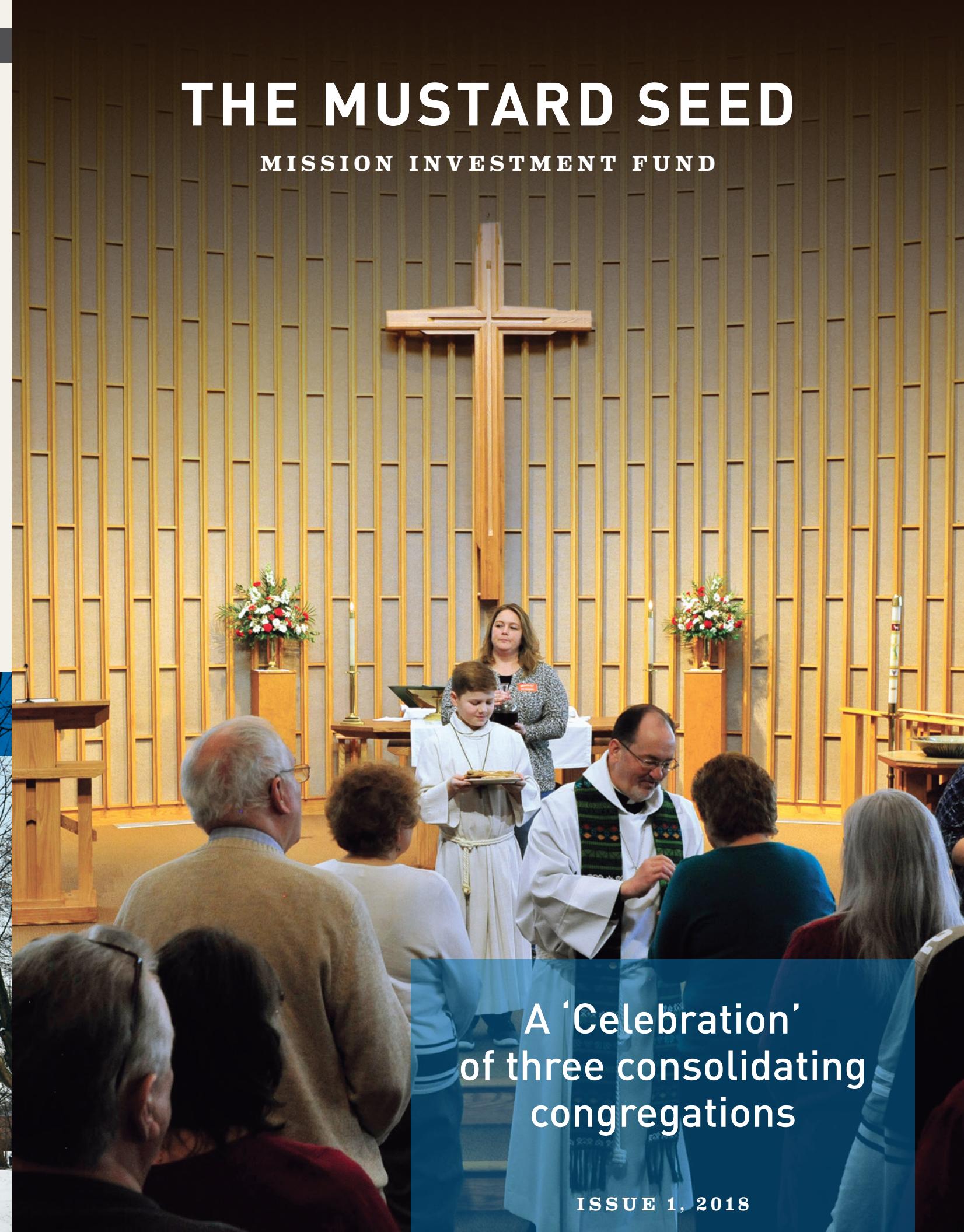
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THE MUSTARD SEED

MISSION INVESTMENT FUND

ISSUE 1, 2018

A one-time Catholic church became the chosen site for the newly consolidated Celebration Lutheran Church in Westland, Michigan.



A 'Celebration'
of three consolidating
congregations

ISSUE 1, 2018

Coming together at Celebration Lutheran Church

A Mission Investment Fund loan helps three congregations unite for mission and ministry in a singular, new space.

*A time to question,
and a time to discern.*

*A time to close doors,
and a time to open new ones.*

*A time to mourn,
and a time for celebration!*

Hundreds of faithful Lutherans from three congregations, one spirited pastor and one thoughtful Director of Evangelical Mission (DEM) in suburban Detroit lived out these contrasting experiences recently as they charted their future—together.

Several years ago, these three congregations joined together as one—with a new name expressing their new-found joy: Celebration Lutheran Church. Last year, they moved into a new spiritual home in Westland, Michigan, appropriately located on Joy Road.

"When I came to Christ the King Lutheran Church in Livonia, Michigan, in 2006, my colleagues and I shared our belief that there were too many ELCA Lutheran churches in the area," the Rev. Jim Fogle says. The suburban area some 20 miles west of Detroit was home to seven ELCA congregations at that time. "With the help of our DEM, we began to talk about coming

together for the sake of mission and ministry."

One traditionally Finnish congregation, St. John's Lutheran in Redford, Michigan, with declining membership, had made the difficult decision to close and opted to merge with Christ the King. Another congregation, Prince of Peace Lutheran in Westland, Michigan, began relying on Christ the King's Pastor Fogle to provide pastoral leadership. After some time of doing ministry together, in 2013, Prince of Peace and Christ the King made the decision to consolidate into a single congregation.

"As a newly consolidated congregation, we all wanted a new, neutral site for worship—not my building or your building, but *our* building," recalls Pastor Fogle.

The newly forged congregation also adopted a singular mission: to celebrate God by reaching out

***"To everything there is a season,
And a time for every purpose under heaven."***

—Ecclesiastes 3:1



*Above: The joyful members of Celebration Lutheran Church wear name tags during worship—the better to reach out to one another.
On the cover: Communion in the revamped Celebration Lutheran Church.*

to one another, the community and the world. And "Celebration" became the chosen name for this joyous congregation.

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The renovation of Celebration Lutheran Church focused on expanding the sanctuary's altar area—and adding a newly designed wooden cross.

The transition

Transitions can be trying. "We had promised to relocate to a new, neutral site, but it took longer than expected to find the right home for us," Pastor Fogle says. The congregation reviewed nearly 100 locations—churches, schools, banquet halls, empty lots. "During this long search, we lost some members."

Celebration finally met success. The Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit was undergoing a change process of its own, with parishes closing and consolidating. Divine Savior Catholic Church in Westland proved to be an optimal site for Celebration, and congregation members voted overwhelmingly to purchase this church building. This new site was positioned at the juncture of four suburbs—three of which did not have an ELCA congregation. The Catholic parishioners, meanwhile, were ecstatic that another church would buy its property, and the sale to Celebration was completed in August 2016.

MIF's loan enabled renovation

With a Mission Investment Fund loan, Celebration went to work on some renovations. Plans called for doubling the area for the altar and pulpit and installing a ramp for ease of access.

The dramatic backdrop to the altar is a hanging wooden cross—a new one expressly designed for this new, consolidated congregation. As a nod to the traditions of the three original congregations,



Above: Pastor Jim Fogle greets members following worship in the spacious sanctuary.

Celebration retained each congregation's altar cross and installed each in a different location on the property. Christ the King's cross greets members in the welcome space, St. John's graces the great hall, and Prince of Peace's cross oversees the chapel.

As so many churches are doing these days, Celebration added glass panels to separate the sanctuary from the fellowship area. Members who aren't feeling

well—or who have active children—may choose to stay in this area and fully participate in the worship experience via a state-of-the-art sound and video system, complete with two 70" monitors. Throughout the sanctuary and fellowship area, congregants sit in chairs, not pews, to allow flexibility as needed.

Celebration also built out offices in a large, available space and refurbished its Sunday school area

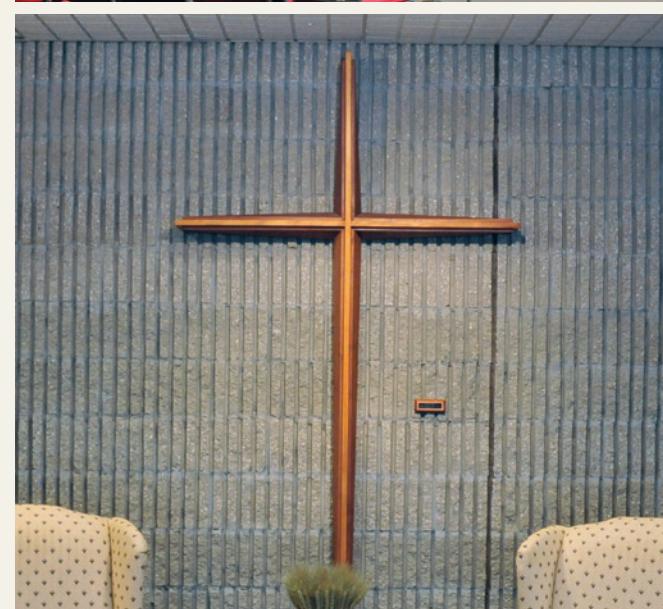
Above: Glass panels separate the sanctuary from the fellowship area, seating is flexible, and video monitors broadcast worship throughout the fellowship room.

to accommodate the youngest members.

The consolidated congregation held its first worship service in the newly refurbished church in January 2017. Over this past year, the congregation grew its attendance back to 120 folks worshiping on a typical Sunday—the original number of Sunday attendees before the consolidated congregation began searching for a new home. 2017 also saw the congregation welcome 17 new members and baptize 9 children.

Reaching out

This consolidation turned out to be a true interreligious and ecumenical project. The original



Right: While a new cross for the new church hangs in the sanctuary, Celebration embraced the crosses of the original three churches by placing them throughout the church building.

Evangelical congregation whose church was being razed for a new highway. And of course, Celebration's new building was most recently a Catholic church.

"When we completed our renovation and hosted an open house, we invited the members of Divine Savior Catholic Church to attend. They returned, along with members of another Catholic church, for our Reformation commemoration," says Pastor Fogle. "The priests and I offered a joint sermon, and the Catholic-Lutheran relationship was just perfect that day."

"We went a long way to reach out to our new community—and that is our combined mission."

See what's new from the ELCA Federal Credit Union!

The ELCA Federal Credit Union is fast approaching its second anniversary. And this new ministry has been busy enhancing products and services for its members. As the not-for-profit credit union for the members and ministries of the ELCA, its mission is to provide the best service possible—and help its members save money.

Consider these innovations:

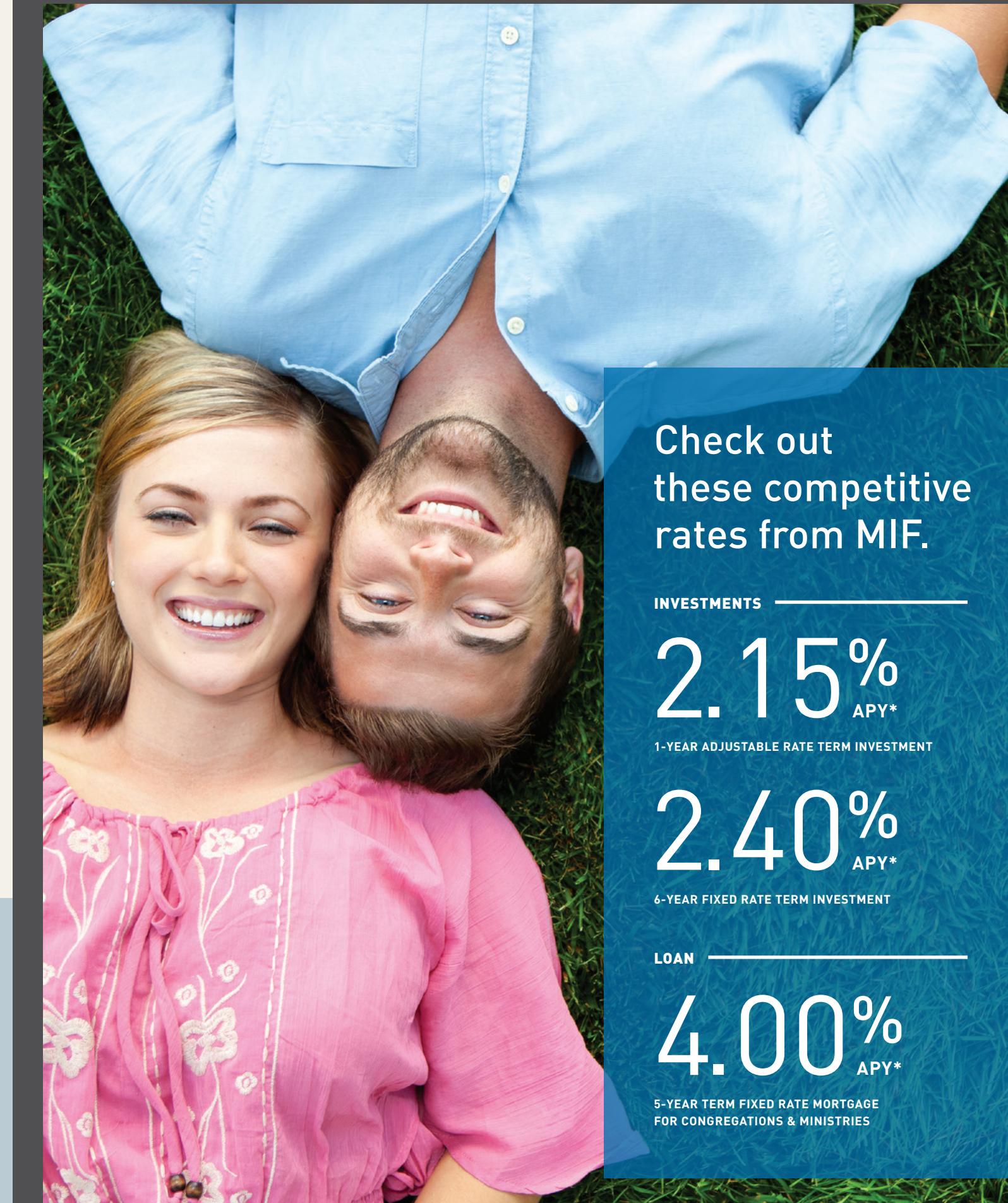
- The credit union is now offering savings accounts and Certificates of Deposit to **ELCA congregations and related ministries**.
- As of March 1, the credit union has raised interest rates to **0.40% for all member and ministry savings accounts** and **0.55% for a 12-month Certificate of Deposit**.
- And now, ELCA members can give to their congregations by using **ELCA Federal Credit Union credit and debit cards**. The ELCA has just announced a **preferred vendor agreement with Tithe.ly** to allow ELCA members to make one-time or recurring gifts to their congregation through the congregation's website or mobile app. All ELCA congregations can set up a Tithe.ly account. Gifts made by using ELCA Federal Credit Union

Have you joined the ELCA Federal Credit Union yet? All it takes to become a member is opening a credit union savings account with a minimum deposit of \$25. With that, you'll open up new savings opportunities—from great rates on car loans and personal lines of credit to savings accounts, CDs, and credit and debit cards.

Watch for more innovations coming from the credit union throughout the year.

Want to learn more—or become a member?

Visit the ELCA Federal Credit Union website: elcafcu.org



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*APY = Annual Percentage Yield.

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