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Statement of Purpose

Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, is the ministry of publishing for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The constitutional description of this unit appears in continuing resolution 16.31.A05, printed in Section X of this volume.

Stewardship and the Ministry of Publishing

Augsburg Fortress is both a ministry and a business. As a self-funded unit of the ELCA, not a for-profit company, Augsburg Fortress encourages leaders throughout this church to make “stewardship” decisions with every purchase of curricula, Bibles, books, and worship and music resources. All profits made by Augsburg Fortress are reinvested into the development of new ministry resources for this church and the larger Christian community.

2009–2011 Accomplishments

Over the past two years, Augsburg Fortress has focused on growing its publishing ministry in two core areas:

- supporting congregations by creating innovative resources to be used in community for faith formation and worship; and
- supporting academic scholarship by creating textbooks and reference materials for higher education institutions teaching religion and theology.

Resources are created using traditional print and a variety of digital formats. Augsburg Fortress is noted among denominational publishers as being a leader in the delivery of ministry resources using digital media. For example, the Fortress Press team has close to 2,000 titles available via Kindle, Nook, and other eReaders.

Among the congregational resources launched in this biennium are:

- A growing family of resources in support of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* published in partnership with ELCA Worship and Liturgical Resources, including *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Occasional Services for the Assembly*, *Hymnal Companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, and *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Compact Accompaniment Edition*.
- The long-time bestseller collection of resources, *Sundays and Seasons*, continues to grow in popularity year after year, in both the annual print and the Web-based subscription resource, www.sundaysandseasons.com.
- A collection of resources in support of the Book of Faith initiative, published in partnership with the churchwide organization, including *Lutheran Study Bible* (in a variety of formats), foundational courses including *Making Sense of Scripture*, *Making Sense of the Christian Faith*, *The Greatest Story*, and very popular annual Book of Faith Advent and Lenten Journey books. There are also three different Book of Faith adult Bible study series: *Together in Faith* for those who want lectionary-based studies, *People of Faith* for those who want to focus on the people of the Bible, and *Books of Faith* for those who want book-by-book studies.
- *Spark*, the Web-based and print, Bible-centered Sunday school curricula for children age 2 through 6th grade provides congregations with the choice of content for classic, lectionary, or rotation teaching formats. With an online subscription, congregations have the option to use all three for different age groups or times of the year. An illustrated *Spark Story Bible* and engaging *Spark Bible (NRSV)* for older children are core resources for *Spark* Sunday school.

They are also being widely purchased as gift Bibles by congregations and family members.

- In the first quarter of 2011, *Spark Family*, a new quarterly resource to help bridge church to home, was launched. Using the same artwork and engaging style as the *Spark Story Bible* and *Spark* Sunday school curricula, *Spark Family* may be purchased in bulk by congregations to share with families in their congregations, schools, or neighborhood. Individual subscriptions also may be purchased.
- *Fed and Forgiven* communion education resources include print and DVD resources to provide education about Holy Communion for children, youth, and adults.
- *Washed and Welcome* baptismal education resources include print and CD-ROM resources for pastors, parents, and sponsors including *Washed and Welcome Living the Promises of Baptism: 101 Ideas for Parents*.
- One of the most popular resources since 2005 has been the Web-based confirmation education resource, HereWeStandConfirmation.org. In 2010, a new and significantly updated version of it for ELCA congregations was launched.
- As Augsburg Fortress continuously learns about creative uses of technology to proclaim the Gospel, it is experimenting with a number of different Web-tools to provide free information to congregational partners in ministry. These include several Facebook and Twitter accounts, the Augsburg Fortress YouTube Channel, and others. A comprehensive listing is available at www.augsburgfortress.org/social.jsp. Free educational opportunities to congregational leaders are also offered through regularly scheduled webinars on a wide range of topics. Participants may explore the topics and register at www.augsburgfortress.org/webinar.

In late summer 2009, a new resource design group, sparkhouse, was launched. Its mission is to spark new life in Christian communities. It is doing so by intentionally inviting ecumenical creative partners (including authors, graphic designers, musicians, and videographers) to create dynamic resources for mainline congregations. More information about sparkhouse resources is at www.wearesparkhouse.org. The first congregational resources from sparkhouse are:

- *ReNew: The Green VBS*, encouraging congregations to move away from the carbon-footprint-intensive traditional VBS curricula to one that demonstrates care of creation not only through its content, but its delivery of the content.
- *re:form*, an innovative ecumenical confirmation resource that includes entertaining videos, a comprehensive leader guide and an *Anti-Workbook* for learners. *re:form* uses a learning methodology of “Encounter, Engage, Respond.”
- *re:form Traditions*, print and video expansion kits to *re:form* confirmation that explore Lutheran, Reformed, and Methodist faith traditions. And, in late summer 2011, *re:form Ancestors*, a Bible study resource for youth, will be published.

- Two free Web-based communities:
 - www.thehardestquestion.org helping lectionary preachers and teachers answer the question, “What fresh and compelling word of the Lord for my congregation can be found in the lectionary readings of the day?” and
 - www.clayfirecurator.org, a worship design blog designed to supply ideas and provoke discussion around creativity, spiritual formation, and innovative leadership in worship.

For almost 50 years, Fortress Press has been celebrated as the publisher of high quality text and reference resources written by ecumenical and international authors for undergraduate and graduate education in colleges, universities, and seminaries. A sampling of some of the many resources published by Fortress Press in this biennium includes:

- Barndt, *Becoming an Anti-Racist Church*
- Bonhoeffer, *Berlin: 1932-1933 Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 12*
- Brenner, Chi-Chung Lee, and Yee, editors *Genesis: Texts @ Contexts*
- Brueggemann, *Disruptive Grace*
- Burkee, *Power, Politics, and the Missouri Synod*
- Christenson, *Questioning Assumptions*
- Chung, Duchrow, Nessian, and Bloomquist, *Liberating Lutheran Theology: Freedom for Justice and Solidarity in a Global Context*
- Cortés-Fuentes y Rodríguez, *Romanos (Conozca su Biblia series)*
- DeYoung, Gafney, Guardiola-Saenz, Tinker, and Yamada, *The Peoples’ Companion to the Bible*
- Drane, *Introducing the New Testament*
- Duran, Okure, and Patte, editors *Mark: Texts @ Contexts*
- Gilbert, *The Journey and Promise of African American Preaching*
- Glancy, *Slavery as a Moral Problem*
- Gritsch, *A History of Lutheranism*
- Groppe, *Eating & Drinking*
- Hill, *Christianity*
- Kaltner, *Introducing the Qur’an*
- Lathrop, *The Pastor: A Spirituality*
- Janz, series editor, *A Peoples’ History of Christianity*
- Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament*
- Lange, *Trauma Recalled: Liturgy, Disruption, and Theology*
- Lott, editor, *New Proclamation Year C, 2010, Easter to Christ the King*
- Muesse, *The Hindu Traditions*
- Nessian, *Shalom Church: The Body of Christ as Ministering Community*
- Olson, *Issues in Contemporary Christian Thought*
- Padilla, *Juan (Conozca su Biblia series)*
- Palmer, *Philosophy of Religion*
- Pugh, *Devil’s Ink*
- Ray, *Working*
- Rogerson, *A Theology of the Old Testament*
- Scroggs, *The People’s Jesus*
- Sharma, editor, *The World’s Religions: A Reader*

Schnasa, Jacobsen, and Kelly, *Kairos Preaching: Speaking Gospel to the Situation*
Stivers, *Disrupting Homelessness*
Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction*
Weaver and Koenig, *Pastoral Care of Alcohol Abusers*
Westberg, *Good Grief, 50th Anniversary Edition*
Wilson, *Luther*
Hermeneia on CD-ROM 2.0 Old Testament
Hermeneia on CD-ROM 2.0 New Testament

Stewardship of Resources

What is perhaps most remarkable about this list of resources from Augsburg Fortress, sparkhouse, and Fortress Press is that in 2009 Augsburg Fortress had approximately 170 full-time employees. It now has approximately 130 full-time employees. So, productivity has been substantially increased while rave reviews are received from our customers for the high quality and innovation being delivered to assist with their ministries.

In February 2010 the lease was renewed on headquarters office space at 100 S. Fifth Street, Minneapolis, Minn. After months of analysis and negotiation with CB Richard Ellis, a leasing agent, and four possible landlords, a 66-month extension was signed at the current location that will save approximately \$170,000 per year during the period 2010–2015, as compared to the previous lease.

One of the goals over the past biennium has been to improve the balance sheet. One of the ways this is being done is by minimizing inventory. In part, this is being accomplished through reduction of lower margin, non-proprietary inventory items (items being resold rather than created). In addition, approximately five years ago, a “Print on Demand” process for book publishing was initiated. This keeps books “in print” after demand declines late in their product life cycle. It also assists in minimizing the carrying costs of inventory while responding to customer demand in a timely manner. About 1,200 titles are available using this new technology.

Decisions Regarding the Augsburg Fortress Defined Benefit Pension Plan

In late December 2009 letters were mailed to approximately 500 participants in the Augsburg Fortress Defined Benefit Pension Plan informing them that the plan was severely underfunded, and the payment of benefits would use all of the money available to pay benefits in approximately five years if nothing was done. Had Augsburg Fortress done nothing, approximately 60 percent of the plan participants would have received nothing. This did not seem fair or equitable. After thoroughly evaluating options for the plan, it was determined that terminating the plan would allow for a more equitable distribution of the money in the plan among the greatest number of participants and beneficiaries.

In late January 2010, a second letter was mailed to each participant indicating the amount of his or her lump-sum payment along with instructions on how to elect for a rollover or direct distribution. Plan participants were asked to respond with their

preferences regarding rollover or distribution of their lump sum payments and then the distributions were made to them.

In April 2010, a lawsuit was filed against Augsburg Fortress, the ELCA, Chief Executive Officer Beth Lewis, Chief Financial Officer John Rahja, Vice President for Human Resources Sandy Middendorf, and a number of unnamed Jane and John Doe defendants. In January 2011, seven of the 12 counts in the lawsuit were dismissed by Federal Court Judge Michael J. Davis. The other counts have not yet been reviewed by the court.

Terminating the Augsburg Fortress Defined Benefit Pension Plan was regrettable, but doing so and distributing plan assets across the entire pool of plan participants (rather than allowing the plan to simply run out of funds to the benefit of only a handful of participants) was the most fair and equitable option available at the time. As a result of these actions, substantially more plan participants received benefits than those who would have received benefits had no action been taken.

2011–2013 Plans

In the next biennium, the Augsburg Fortress strategic plan focuses on serving core customers in congregations and higher education by:

- continuing to look for opportunities to support initiatives of this church, such as Book of Faith, while also serving the ELCA’s full-communion partners;
- creating clearly superior products to shape the market and deliver unmatched value;
- continuing to move toward a greater than 90 percent proprietary product mix to drive higher financial margins;
- leading the market in branding and “Web marketing” to deeply engage customers;
- utilizing low cost, high impact channels to efficiently and effectively reach core constituents;
- putting technology at the center to drive efficiency and develop insights into the needs of congregations and higher education customers; and
- remaining agile to move quickly to optimize both the business and the ministry of publishing.

The staff and trustees of Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, express appreciation to the many talented authors, writers, editors, composers, arrangers, and artists with whom they work. In addition, they thank the leaders of congregations and institutions of higher education for their support and use of the resources provided by the ministry of publishing of the ELCA.

Ms. Janet Thompson, *board chair*

Ms. Beth A. Lewis, *president and chief executive officer*

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