

STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION | 2009

ELCA Grant Spurs Renewal Decatur, Georgia

St. Paul Lutheran Church in Decatur, Ga., was at a crossroads. The 50-year-old congregation, located in a first-ring suburb of Atlanta, **had only 30 people on average each Sunday** and couldn't afford a full-time pastor. The Reverend Charles Newman, St. Paul's pastor, says, "There was no longer a clear sense of mission and vision." One option was to move the congregation to a new location.



The **St. Paul community faced changes and challenges** such as declining incomes, a low high school graduation rate, and gentrification. **Newman says, "In the midst of that, the congregation was a stabilizing force in the community.** They were very committed to being God's presence in that community, so there was no doubt that we needed to be there."

Using an ELCA grant, St. Paul was able to bring in Newman full time. Newman says that the grant worked as hoped for the congregation. He started by emphasizing discipleship and getting people to read Scripture. The congregation committed to tithing 10 percent of its income and has been in the black ever since.

Now the congregation, with about 125 weekly attendance, is wrapping up a capital campaign for a community life center.

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
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