



## How healthy is your congregation's pastor?

Augsburg Fortress Publishers  
Seeds for the Parish  
Box 1209  
Minneapolis, MN 55440-1209

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

The ELCA has completed a study on Ministerial Health and Wellness that has the general answers to that question. Think about your own pastor's health and wellness. Is your pastor a role model for healthy behaviors? Are there work-related issues that are detrimental to your pastor's health? Has your pastor taken a vacation or a sabbatical recently? Do you encourage your pastor to attend lifelong learning opportunities, spiritual enrichment retreats, or collegial study or information exchange? What business do members of the congregation have concerning the pastor's health, anyway?

The study showed that many ELCA pastors and rostered lay leaders are experiencing stress, are overweight, are physically inactive, and have high blood pressure or high cholesterol, which lead to heart disease. We all live in a culture that glorifies work and leaves little time for family, healthy eating, physical exercise, spiritual renewal or lifelong education. The results include depression, obesity, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, cancer and other illnesses.

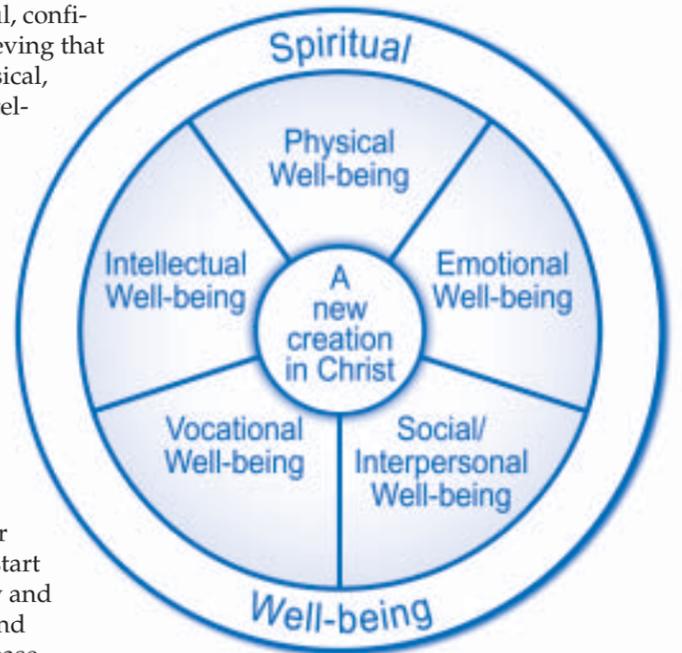
What does that mean for the church? What impact does it have on Bishop Mark Hanson's vision for a witnessing, worshiping, engaging, equipping, inviting, connecting, changing and praying church? This vision is of an active church whose

members and leaders are faithful, confident, joyful and energetic. Achieving that vision requires attention to physical, emotional, social, vocational, intellectual and spiritual health.

The ELCA Division for Ministry and the Board of Pensions are working in partnership with the synods, seminaries and congregations to promote health and prevent disease. Starting with the picture of health in 2002, programs and resources will be developed to address all areas of health over the next several years, including educational resources for individuals and for congregations. The intent is to start with increasing physical activity and addressing the issues of stress and nutrition, as well as specific disease management programs for heart disease.

### How you can help

Does your congregation have a wellness committee? Do you know who the health promotion advocates are in your congregation? Do you plan your church activities and meetings, keeping healthy behaviors in mind? Do you encourage and support your pastor's healthy activities? This is the beginning of an important journey toward improved health and wellness.



Wheel of Health from [www.elca.org/dm/health](http://www.elca.org/dm/health)

### To learn more

For more information, see the Web site [www.elca.org/dm/health](http://www.elca.org/dm/health) or [www.elcabop.org](http://www.elcabop.org) or contact [gwen\\_halaas@elca.org](mailto:gwen_halaas@elca.org). The full report can be downloaded from the Web sites or ordered from Augsburg Fortress by calling 800/348-4648 (ISBN 6-0001-6535-8; \$2 plus shipping).

—Gwen Wagstrom Halaas, M.D., director, Ministerial Health and Wellness

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Minneapolis, MN  
Permit No. 533

### Ecumenical student gathering with LSM

Do you know any college students looking to stretch their own faith while learning more about the faith of their brothers and sisters in Christ? Are there students you know who are hoping to have a great time and meet lots of people over the New Year's Day holiday? Make sure they attend the Celebrate IV College Student Gathering in Albuquerque, N.M., from Dec. 28, 2002 through Jan. 1, 2003.

Many people are familiar with the yearly gathering held by Lutheran Student Movement (LSM-USA), a pan-Lutheran network of college students. Every four years, LSM-USA works with partner denominations through the Council for Ecumenical Student Christian Ministry (CESCM) to organize the Celebrate gatherings.

This year's speakers include Millard Fuller, founder and president of Habitat for Humanity International; the Rev. Marilyn Ascarza, pastor of discipleship and spiritual growth at Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Tucson, Ariz.; and Paula McGee, a former basketball player, now president of Paula McGee Ministries.

The cost is \$295 per person, which includes program fee, lodging for four nights with quad occupancy, and all meals (Saturday dinner through Wednesday lunch). Registration forms are available at [www.cescm.org](http://www.cescm.org).

For more information, contact LSM-USA at 773/380-2852.

### Book offers asset-based planning model

The members of the stewardship committee of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin were losing steam. It was difficult to attract new members to the committee, and the old members were burning out. Then they tried mapping their assets, asking, "What are we good at and what do we like to do?"

They discovered they shared a passion for telling humorous stories. That led to producing a collection of

first-person interviews in a video for the next synod assembly. Suddenly they discovered assets for the task they never saw before.

This asset-based process is outlined in a new book recently sent to your congregation: *The Great Permission: An Asset-Based Field Guide for Congregations*. It includes theological background, case studies and how-tos for congregational leaders – all directed toward an asset-based approach to congregational life.

With this approach you will discover you have more assets than you think. Your congregation's culture will become more positive and hopeful.

After mapping their assets, your leaders will be ready to make decisions about what to do next and act quickly. They'll have new energy for the tasks ahead because it'll be fun!

Asset-based approaches have a

successful track record of more than 30 years in North American and overseas community development.

Try this approach with your congregational council, youth committee, stewardship committee, adult forum series, women's group planning team, or as a spiritual gifts inventory with new members.

Look for this easy-to-read 140-page field guide sent to each congregation with "Stewardship Now" and the annual report

cover in mid-October. Order extra copies for your leaders from the ELCA Division for Congregational Ministries, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631; 800/638-3522, ext. 2555 (\$4.50 each, bulk rate available).

To view a sample, see [www.elca.org/dcm/stewardship/gp](http://www.elca.org/dcm/stewardship/gp).



### In this issue ...

- Advent and Christmas alternatives, p. 7
- Celebrate and support older adults, p. 3
- Congregations shop smarter, p. 3
- Consider This worship column, p. 2
- Deaconess serves in Japan, p. 7
- Resource centers 'Q&A' on planning, p. 6
- Reach out to the visually impaired, p. 8
- Ripe for the Picking, pp. 4-5
- World Wide Web column, p. 6
- Worship planning resources, p. 2

# Learn about worship planning resources – and a prize for sacred music

## World AIDS Day

Worship and prayer resources for observing World AIDS Day, December 1, can be found on the Web at [www.elca.org/dcm/worship/worldaidsday.html](http://www.elca.org/dcm/worship/worldaidsday.html).

## Advent wreath

Did you ever wonder how or why we use the Advent wreath? Check out this brief article on the ELCA worship Web site at [www.elca.org/dcm/worship/qal/Adventwreath.html](http://www.elca.org/dcm/worship/qal/Adventwreath.html). Many other responses by the ELCA worship staff and others to frequently asked questions can be found at [www.elca.org/dcm/worship/qal/index.html](http://www.elca.org/dcm/worship/qal/index.html).

## Revised Common Lectionary for PDAs

The *Revised Common Lectionary* texts are now available to download onto Palm OS and Pocket PC/WinCE hand-held devices. The lectionary contains the entire texts of the appointed first and second readings, and Gospel for each Sunday of the church year and major festivals. You can choose to download the “typological” (used in the ELCA) or “semi-continuous” set of Old Testament readings. The cost is \$16 per year. Visit the *Consultation on Common Texts* Web site at [www.commontexts.org](http://www.commontexts.org) and click on the RCL for Palm/Visor link.

## Life Passages: Marriage, Healing, Funeral

*Life Passages: Marriage, Healing, Funeral* is the fourth volume in the *Renewing Worship* series of trial-use resources. It contains revised and additional rites for life transitions and pastoral care, including marriage, funeral, and healing. It focuses on the patterns of God’s people as they gather for worship at these times.

The volume includes core materials that can be used within a eucharistic liturgy, as well as a number of resources that can be used to expand the rite. These supplemental materials provide options that enable these services to be shaped to meet particular pastoral needs and circumstances. \$15 plus shipping (ISBN-0-8066-7004-5). To order, call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-

4648. Or order online at [www.augsburgfortress.org](http://www.augsburgfortress.org).

## 2003 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January

Celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with congregations across the globe. During the week of January 18-25, individuals and congregations will join together in celebrating the word of God with an ecumenical perspective. The theme for 2003 is taken from 2 Corinthians 4:5-18: “We hold this treasure—this gift—in earthen vessels ...therefore we do not lose heart ...”

To guide you in participating in this celebration, the Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute offers a daily Scripture and prayer guide, prayer cards, posters, and worship guides/bulletin covers.

Order forms are available through the ELCA Resource Information Service by calling 800/638-3522 or the Department for Ecumenical Affairs by calling 800/638-3522, ext. 2610, or visiting their Web site at [www.elca.org/lea/Resources/dearsee](http://www.elca.org/lea/Resources/dearsee). You can also visit Graymoor on-line at [www.atonementfriars.org](http://www.atonementfriars.org) to get resources.

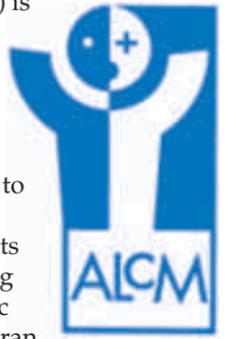
## Crosses for Lenten use

Handmade in the Holy Land by Palestinian Christians, these 1 3/4 inch olive-wood crosses can be given away in Lenten programs or the Good Friday liturgy. They can also be used for Sunday school, hospital visits, prison ministries, in evangelism, or as choir gifts. They have a hole for a cord. Cost is only 33 cents each but they must be ordered in bags of 100 (\$33 per bag, includes postage). Check must accompany order (no credit cards), payable to the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut. Allow three weeks for delivery.

To order, or for more information, contact Laird Mortimer, Evangelism Committee, Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut, P.O. Box 571, Tariffville, CT 06081-0571; e-mail [elairdm@prodigy.net](mailto:elairdm@prodigy.net).

## Association of Lutheran Church Musicians offers prize for composition

The Association of Lutheran Church Musicians (ALCM) is accepting nominations for the 2003 Raabe Prize for Sacred Composition. This prize was established by Dr. William and Nancy Raabe of Columbus, Ohio, to recognize and encourage significant accomplishments in composition contributing to the body of sacred music for the church in the Lutheran heritage.



The Raabe Prize is awarded for a single, specific musical work—published or unpublished. The composition must have been written within the last five years. Nominations must be made by someone other than the composer, and composers need not be Lutheran. While any sacred piece may be nominated, works which include the voice or voices are preferred over those for instruments alone.

The \$2000 monetary award is to be shared equally by the recipient and a musical or ecclesiastical organization chosen by the composer. Nomination letters and a copy of the nominated composition should be sent to the ALCM national office at P.O. Box 6064, Ellicott City, MD 21042, and must be postmarked no later than Jan. 2, 2003.

The panel of judges will announce the winner in March, and this work will be performed and the prize presented publicly at the 2003 ALCM National Conference in San Diego, June 29-July 3. For more information, contact: Tom Leeseberg-Lange, ALCM Administrator, 800/624-2526; e-mail [alcm@valpo.edu](mailto:alcm@valpo.edu).

## Consider This looks at new beginnings

December 1 begins a new church year and presents an opportunity for renewing congregational worship practices.

As worship leaders evaluate current worship practices and look forward to planning the coming year, a very useful tool is *Sundays and Seasons, Worship Planning Guide 2003, Cycle B*.

This resource provides a full set of worship planning suggestions for every season and Sunday of the church year. Each season has ideas for art and environment, preaching, the shape of worship, congregational song, music, alternate worship texts, and seasonal rites such as the Blessing of the Advent Wreath, Lessons and Carols for Advent, and Midweek Evening Prayer for Lent.

Each Sunday contains suggestions for involving children in worship, preaching, hymn, song and choral selections, and a set of prayers.

To order, call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648; ISBN 0-8066-4284-X (\$35 plus shipping). Consider these possibilities for the new year.

## Prayers

The Prayer of the Day used in most congregations is taken from the *Lutheran Book of Worship*. An alternative to this set of Collects can be found in *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*, a recently published resource containing newly written Prayers of the Day and Intercessory Prayers for the three-year lectionary. These prayers, proposed by the Consultation on Common Texts, were developed ecumenically and

reflect the many styles of various faith traditions.

To order, call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648; ISBN 0-8006-3484-5 (\$25 plus shipping).

## Worship space

Have you ever considered the environment in which your congregation worships? Over time, people get accustomed to a particular space, but others who experience it for the first time may see it quite differently.

How does your congregation’s worship space communicate a sense of God’s mystery or witness to Christian faith and truth? Is a baptismal font containing a generous amount of water located in a prominent place? Is there ample room for people to gather before worship?

Interest in the worship environment is increasing as the church rediscovers the important relationship between worship space and those who gather for worship.

A good place to begin your discussion of worship space is *Principles for Worship* from the *Renewing Worship* series. The section on Worship Space and the Christian Assembly presents foundational principles for approaching the subject of the worship environment. *Principles for Worship* is on the Web at [www.renewingworship.org](http://www.renewingworship.org).

To begin to see how these principles might take shape in your congregation, see the excellent book *Re-pitching the Tent: Reordering the church building for worship and mission* by Richard Giles, ISBN 0-8146-2709-9 (\$29.95 plus shipping). To order call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648.



## Seeds for the Parish

[www.elca.org/co/seeds](http://www.elca.org/co/seeds)

*Seeds for the Parish* (ISSN 0897-5663) is published six times a year, bimonthly. It is distributed without charge to the professional staff and lay leaders of the congregations, synods and regions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Editorial office: *Seeds for the Parish*, Department for Communication, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631; 800/638-3522. E-mail [kelliott@elca.org](mailto:kelliott@elca.org)  
LutherLink: KATE ELLIOTT

Editorial Staff: Kate Sprutta Elliott, editor, Paul Edison-Swift, Kristi Bangert.

Note: Not all the resources and program ideas listed in *Seeds for the Parish* have received official ELCA review or endorsement.

*Seeds for the Parish* is a member of the Associated Church Press.

Publication Office (circulation and production): Augsburg Fortress, 100 S. Fifth St., Suite 700, Minneapolis, MN 55402; 800/426-0115.

Copyright © 2002 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. All rights reserved. Permission is granted for ELCA congregations to reproduce excerpts from *Seeds for the Parish* provided that copies are for local use only and that each copy carries the following notice: “Reprinted from *Seeds for the Parish*.”

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Seeds for the Parish* Circulation, Box 1209, Minneapolis, MN 55440-1209. Or e-mail [LuffS@augsburgfortress.org](mailto:LuffS@augsburgfortress.org).

# Congregations can be smart shoppers

Does what you believe influence how you shop and act? Can it influence the ways your congregation does purchasing? Many of us make everyday decisions that reflect our values.

For instance, we nurture family relationships, we choose to support local businesses, and we put our recycling container at the curb every week.

But sometimes we forget to bring our values through the door of our churches. Sometimes our faith and finances are like mixing oil and water.

Here are some ways your congregation might bring these two together as acts of conscience.

## Coffee

Wisely choosing the coffee you serve in your church can benefit everyone, particularly coffee farmers and migratory birds. With fairly traded, shade-grown coffee, farmers receive a fair price for their product and migratory birds have a home.

Did you know that about 90 percent more migratory birds are found in shade-grown coffee areas than in areas where coffee is grown under other conditions?

Pastor Janet Grill of St. Andrews Lutheran Church in Pittsburgh, Pa., sums up her congregation's choice this way: "We



started buying and serving fair trade coffee as a justice issue—the people who harvest our foods deserve to make enough money to live; but it ended up being a benefit for us! Not only is Fair Trade and shade-grown coffee grown so that the land is not clear cut, which is better for the environment and all the animals who live there, and farmers use fewer or no pesticides which is better for our bodies, but also Fair Trade coffee tastes really good."

One source of fairly traded coffee for your congregation is through the Lutheran World Relief Coffee Project. Learn more at [www.lwr.org/coffee/coffeecong](http://www.lwr.org/coffee/coffeecong).

## Rugs

Many of our congregations have some type of area rugs in their buildings. They are often chosen by wear qualities, color and texture. Have you ever wondered how your rugs are made?

By going to the Rugmark Web site ([www.rugmark.org](http://www.rugmark.org)), you will find descriptions of working conditions in India, Nepal and Pakistan, where many of the rugs are produced. Some of these working conditions include children under the age of 14, working 12-hour shifts, seven days a week.

In order to improve this situation Rugmark is working to end child labor, educate children and offer consumers the best possible assurance that no illegal child labor was employed in the production of your carpet. Consider purchasing a rug

with the Rugmark label next time.

## Recycling

Your congregation can help protect God's creation from harm by keeping the three Rs in mind: Reduce, Re-use, and Recycle. For instance, paper made out of recycled material instead of virgin fiber uses about 60 percent less energy and 55 percent less water, and significantly reduces both air and water pollution. Recycling other materials produces similar results.

Find out what, where, and how you can recycle a variety of materials in your own community by checking out the Web site at [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org).

## Investing

More and more congregations have some monies invested outside the normal checking and savings accounts at their local bank. In these situations, it is helpful to decide where your money is invested.

Visit the Web site for the Corporate Social Responsibility program, an advocacy ministry of the ELCA through the Division for Church in Society, and see how the church looks at responsible investing at [www.elca.org/dcslcorp.html](http://www.elca.org/dcslcorp.html).



# Learn how to celebrate and support older adults

"Our congregation hasn't been the same since we have been having 'Bless the Years' Sundays," observed a Minnesota older adult Lutheran. "There's a warmer reception for us older members."

## Bless the Years

"Bless the Years" is an annual project of the Association of Lutheran Older Adults (ALOA), an independent national Lutheran organization for those 55 years of age and older.

Five packets of resource materials are available to assist congregations in Sunday observances that recognize God's blessings to and through senior members.

The latest (Packet #5), titled "Rites and Rituals," includes brief rites recognizing retirement, birthdays of people over 65, volunteer service achievements and other senior milestones to be inserted in services of worship. Packets cost \$15.

## Share the Years

ALOA also encourages senior members to share their wisdom and experiences by providing its "Share the Years" program, which consists of booklets on 36 different topics of interest to senior adults, for small group discussions. Among the topics are "Loneliness," "Diet for Decades," "Picking Up the Pieces," "To Have No Job," "Grandparenting," "How Safe Are We?" and "Retirement Planning."

## Lutherhostels

ALOA co-sponsors ALOA Lutherhostels, week-long learning and sharing experiences held in various retreat centers and on campuses across the country. Seniors have the opportunity to benefit spiritually from church leaders and theologians and to make new friends from other parts of the country.

## Pilgrimages

ALOA Pilgrimages are travel opportunities overseas and domestically that focus on the Christian presence in various localities.

## Membership

Those people who join ALOA through annual membership gifts of \$25 or more receive the quarterly *Encore Times* newsletter. ALOA relies chiefly on these gifts for its support, in addition to gifts from "Covenant Congregations," and a nominal fee for the materials it produces.

ALOA's motto, "Celebrate and Serve" summarizes the organization's mission

statement: "The Association of Lutheran Older Adults is a national organization that seeks to ensure that the needs and blessings of the years be understood, shared and celebrated to the benefit of older adult."

To learn more about ALOA or to order resources, you can call 800-930-ALOA or e-mail [aloe.aloe@verizon.net](mailto:aloe.aloe@verizon.net) or go to their Web site at [www.aloa1.org](http://www.aloa1.org).



## BUILD THE CHURCH WHILE YOU EARN INTEREST



When you invest in the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA, your financial resources earn interest while you help to build ELCA congregations. Select from these investment opportunities: MissionPlus, with checkbook availability; MissionTerm, with adjustable and fixed rates; and the MissionFuture investment, to save for children from birth to age 18. Call today for current interest rates!

**(800) 638-3522, ext. 2943**



**MISSION INVESTMENT FUND OF THE ELCA**

8765 W. HIGGINS ROAD ♦ CHICAGO, IL 60631  
E-MAIL: [MIF@ELCA.ORG](mailto:MIF@ELCA.ORG) ♦ WEB: [WWW.ELCA.ORG/OT/MIF](http://WWW.ELCA.ORG/OT/MIF)

Mission Investments are subject to certain risks. See "Risk Factors" following the introduction in the Offering Circular. As securities issued by a non-profit religious institution, the investments are not insured by FDIC, SIPC or any federal or state regulatory agency. The securities are sold only by means of the Offering Circular, which can be obtained from the Mission Investment Fund.

## Stewardship e-mail resource

*Salt Seasonings*, a communication, education and awareness resource of the ELCA Division for Congregational Ministries, can now be delivered right to your desktop by e-mail. *Salt Seasonings* reflects the depth of stewardship, focused in three areas: life management, funding the mission, and leadership development. *Salt Seasonings* features thought starters, Bible study, congregational information, facts and statistics about stewardship and suggested prayer topics. Each issue is designed to be included in congregational newsletters, adult study series, or Sunday morning bulletin.

An annual subscription delivers 12 issues of *Salt Seasonings* to the e-mail inboxes of up to three congregational leaders for \$60. Plus, with your new subscription, the previous 12 issues of *Salt Seasonings* will be sent at no additional charge. To subscribe call 800/638-3522, ext. 2767, or e-mail [salt@elca.org](mailto:salt@elca.org).

## Get Christmas seals/devotions

Wheat Ridge Ministries is once again offering its Christmas Seals and Advent Devotions booklets.



The theme for 2002, "In Keeping With His Promises," provides inspiration and encouragement.

Christmas Seals are a way to witness faith and hope in God. The 2002 Advent Devotions booklet, written by Wheat Ridge staff associate and Lutheran pastor Thomas Zehnder of Williamsburg, Va., links God's Word to real life, day-to-day concerns. Wheat Ridge Christmas Seals have been a source of holiday inspiration for almost 100 years. Christmas Seals are distributed free to congregations and schools for families and individuals. The devotion booklets are 50¢ each. To place an order, please contact the Wheat Ridge office at 800/762-6748 or order online at [www.wheatridge.org](http://www.wheatridge.org).

## See essays on nonviolence

Thanks to the ELCA Task Force for the Decade for a Culture of Nonviolence, November's *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* will focus on the issue of nonviolent responses to terrorism. Visit *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* ([www.elca.org/jle](http://www.elca.org/jle)) on November 20 to read several thought-provoking essays on how we have responded to September 11. Writers will tackle topics such as the diversion of resources into anti-terrorism, why terrorists were willing to kill themselves for their cause, what active nonviolence is capable of achieving, how power is used in international relations, how we are transformed in the structure of the Eucharist, and Lutheranism's just peace tradition.

The *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* is produced by the ELCA Division for Church in Society and can be found at [www.elca.org/jle](http://www.elca.org/jle).

## Hunger video for children

"If Esther's Dreams Could Fly" is a new video for children from the ELCA World Hunger Appeal. This 11-minute educational video helps elementary-age children learn about the needs of poor people and how Lutherans are helping people help themselves.

The concept of sustainable development is shown in kid-friendly terms by featuring Esther, a 12-year-old orphan in Kenya, and her friend Nancy. Nancy's family has received chickens from a Lutheran World Relief partner. Her family sells the eggs from the chickens and uses the income to help Nancy stay in school. The video explains that we can help people like Esther live a better life through our church and its World Hunger Appeal. The video features lots of animals, both on family farms and in a visit to an African wildlife refuge.

To borrow a copy, call your synod's Resource Center. Or call the World Hunger Appeal office at 800/638-3522, ext. 2764, to borrow or buy a copy for \$5. The video comes with ideas for teachers and group leaders for its use.

The video is part of the 2002-2003 *Open a World of Possibility World Hunger* project for children, which focuses on Africa as part of the ELCA's Stand With Africa theme with The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and Lutheran World Relief. The *Open a World of Possibility: "Stand With Africa"* print packet to be used with the video was mailed free to all congregations in July. To order another copy, call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648; ISBN 6-0001-6481-5. The project also has a Web site for children at [www.elca.org/hunger/children/Africa](http://www.elca.org/hunger/children/Africa).

## Mid-East and Africa event

An educational and advocacy event for people of faith committed to working for just U.S. policies toward Africa and the Middle East will be held, Feb. 23-26, 2003, in Washington, D.C.

The gathering will offer two distinct learning/advocacy tracks, one focused on Africa and the other on the Middle East. Both tracks will provide challenging speakers, issue briefings, and advocacy training workshops. There will be opportunities to speak with senators and representatives in the U.S. Congress, or their key foreign policy staff regarding Africa or the Middle East. There will also be common times for fellowship and networking, a keynote address and reception, and on the second evening of the gathering, a special ecumenical service of worship for participants and the public.

The gathering is co-sponsored by several church-related organizations, including the Stand With Africa campaign, which is a

combined effort of the ELCA World Hunger Program, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and Lutheran World Relief; the Washington Office on Africa; the Africa Faith and Justice Network; Churches for Middle East Peace; and Church World Service.

Registration and other information is available through the ELCA Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs (see [www.loga.org/advocacy2003.htm](http://www.loga.org/advocacy2003.htm)) or contact Anna Rhee at 301/384-3615 or e-mail [anna@cmep.org](mailto:anna@cmep.org).

## Wouldn't you like to know?

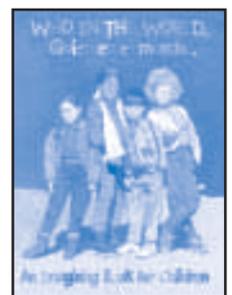
For use in adult forums, Select Video has produced two videotapes called "Wouldn't You Like To Know?" that contain 15-minute answers to questions such as: What do Lutherans teach about the Rapture? Can Jews and Muslims be saved? What makes a church Lutheran? Where did the Bible come from? What do Lutherans teach about miracles of healing? What do Lutherans teach about evolution versus creation? Why does God permit suffering? Is it all right to doubt?

Speakers include Walter Bouman, Steve McKinley, Mark Powell, Walter Taylor and Wayne Weissenbuehler.

Order from Select, 2199 E. Main St., Columbus, OH 43209; phone 614/235-4136 ext. 4021. \$30 for the set of two tapes.

## Imagining book for children

*Who In the World - Quien en el Mundo* is an "imagining" book that allows children to use their imaginations to think about God and their lives, school time, family and friends. The 24-page activity book helps children think about their present and future



ministries. Because the book is in Spanish and English, it also invites children to have fun with another language.

The book is geared to the interests of children in grades 3-6, their parents, teachers and other significant adults. It can provide an opportunity for parents who want to talk with their children about the assets they and their children possess, gifts with which to do God's work in the world. In school and congregational settings, the book will encourage children to imagine how their lives have value in the greater scheme of things. Pages can be copied and sent to grandparents for special occasions, put on bulletin boards at school and home, or used for projects.

Copies of *Who In the World - Quien en el Mundo* may be purchased for \$4 (1-5 copies); \$3.50 (6-19 copies); \$3 (20-plus copies) and ordered from the ELCA Division for Ministry, ELCA, 8765 Higgins Rd., Chicago, IL 60631. Make checks payable to SPLASH.

## “Listen, God Is Calling” series

Women of the ELCA has a number of new resources based on their triennium theme of “Listen, God Is Calling.” This series of eight programs for use by individuals or groups



offers a wide variety of opportunities for responding to God’s call to build up the body of Christ among us.

- *Called to a Global Perspective: Passport to Your Heart* (ISBN 6-0001-6483-1)
- *Called to Be Global*

*Sisters: Seeing Each Other with New Eyes* (ISBN 6-0001-6484-X)

- *Called to Be Political: But I Don’t Want to Be Political!* (ISBN 6-0001-6485-8)
- *Called to Be Women in Mission: Exploring New Opportunities* (ISBN 6-0001-6494-7)
- *Called to Deal with Difficult Issues: A Challenging Ministry* (ISBN 6-0001-6488-2)
- *Called to Ethical Decision Making: No Easy Answers* (ISBN 6-0001-6486-6)
- *Called to Love as God Loves—Unconditionally!* (ISBN 6-0001-6490-4)
- *Called to Obey God: It’s Not Easy Being Jonah* (6-0001-6489-0)

These new resources are available at no cost (except shipping charges) through Augsburg Fortress by calling 800/328-4648. They are also downloadable at [www.elca.org/wolresource/lgicseries/index.html](http://www.elca.org/wolresource/lgicseries/index.html).

## Check out servant events

*Journeys 2003* is a catalog of servant learning events, high adventure camps and volunteer opportunities for junior-high and senior-high students and young adults. Learn about programs for community service, social ministry, hunger and justice education, and adventure in the outdoors. These experiences encourage lifelong learning, commitment to service, faith development and a stronger sense of community. To find out more, go to [www.elca.org/dcm/camps/journey.asp](http://www.elca.org/dcm/camps/journey.asp) or request a printed catalog by calling the ELCA Resource Information Service at 800/638-3522. Get multiple copies of *Journeys 2003* by calling 800/638-3522, ext. 2593.

## Sample several video clips

From worship planning to evangelism for seekers and young adults to conflict management and community building, you can now sample video materials online to see if they might fit your needs. Go to [www.elca.org/dml/leadership/multimedia](http://www.elca.org/dml/leadership/multimedia) to watch some short video clips about

- How symbols in worship convey the theology of the church in the resource, “How Do Symbols Mean?” (featuring the Rev. Donald Wiser)
- How preaching the Gospel message can be more informed by

how lay people live their faith in their daily lives in “Partners in Preaching” (featuring two pastors and a group of lay learners)

- How to respond to young people and seekers who question the very foundations of faith and Christianity in “Why Christian? for those on the edge of faith” (featuring Dr. Douglas John Hall)
- The relevance of the institutional Christian church in an age of post-Christendom and religious plurality in “Why Christian? Why Church?” (with Dr. Douglas John Hall)
- A process for having safe and helpful dialogues as Christians about tough issues where we disagree in “Dealing with Tough Issues as Christians”
- An interactive retreat workshop for congregational leaders on how to build and nurture a healthy congregational community in “Community Making: How to Nurture True Community.”

## Resources for global mission

### Global-themed worship helps

Worship at the Global Mission Events is always an exciting blend of global music, colorful liturgical décor, and electrifying preaching.



Opening procession at the GME in Hickory, N.C., July 2001.

You can bring the richness of global Christian worship to your congregation with a new resource included in the 2002 Global Mission

Tool Kit, mailed to all congregations in September. *Global Devotions and Worship Helps* offers outlines for nine global-themed services appropriate for Sunday or mid-week worship. Each outline includes suggestions for hymns, prayers, readings, and liturgical responses, and a global story related to the theme.

### Expert help on global mission resources

Want to know about other global worship resources? Need to design an Adult Forum on HIV/AIDS in Africa or a Sunday School session on Papua New Guinea?

Expert guidance is available from Mia Cortez at the Division for Global Mission, 800/638-3522, ext. 2642. She can help you select just the right resource for your global worship, event or educational presentation. Mia can also link you with your local Global Mission Advocate. Your advocate knows what’s happening in global mission in your synod, and can connect you to missionaries or international students who may be able to visit your congregation.

### Middle East Network list and connections

Lutherans in the Middle East have asked us to pray for them and tell their stories. They also need congregations’ willingness to be involved in efforts for peace with justice in Palestine and Israel.

One way to support this effort is

to join the ELCA Middle East Networking List via e-mail. The list brings advocacy information and on-the-ground reports to those who sign up. To join, go to one of these Web sites: ELCA Division for Global Mission – [www.elca.org/dgm](http://www.elca.org/dgm) or LOGA – [www.loga.org](http://www.loga.org).

The new Middle East Connections Web site – [www.elca.org/middleeast](http://www.elca.org/middleeast) – provides education ideas, advocacy suggestions, prayer and worship resources, media sources and more. Our partners in advocacy are the Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs (LOGA), Churches for Middle East Peace, and the Church World Service and Witness Middle East Forum.

## New annual report covers

The ELCA Annual Report of the Congregation cover is a colorful wraparound sheet that provides

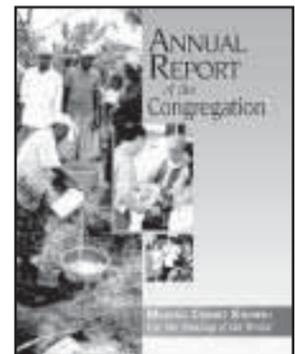
- devotional materials to begin your annual meeting,
- brief explanations of ELCA churchwide ministries funded by your congregation’s support,
- scored and offset spine for ease in inserting and stapling annual report materials, and
- space for your congregation’s name on the front cover and your mailing information on back cover.

A sample of the new Annual Report Cover was sent to all ELCA congregations in a special stewardship packet mailed in mid-October. It is also available online at

[www.elca.org/dcm/stewardship/resources/print.html](http://www.elca.org/dcm/stewardship/resources/print.html).

You can download the pdf version (without the hymn).

Or order from Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648. Cost is \$5 for a package of 50; ISBN 6-0001-6407-6. Order the number of packages you need (i.e., 200 covers = 4 packages).



## New book on preaching

*Preaching God’s Compassion: Comforting Those Who Suffer* is a new book about human suffering and the church’s efforts to minister to those who are suffering. It uses the resources of contemporary pastoral care to understand situations of suffering. Centering on five particular situations of suffering – loss, illness, violence, fear and failure – the book suggests ways in which the pastor can preach to parishioners who are experiencing one or more of these traumas.

Three sample sermons illustrate how to preach on God’s gracious activity while avoiding “psychologizing the text” and reducing the Gospel to cheap therapy for individual problems. Call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648 to order. (ISBN 0-8006-3577-9; \$18, plus shipping)

# What to check out today on the World Wide Web

## Free ELCA Web feeds

The ELCA now offers four Web feeds, free of charge, to any Web site that wishes to display dynamically changing content straight from the ELCA churchwide office. This service requires no maintenance. Once the code is inserted into your site, the latest content from the ELCA will automatically appear without any additional effort on your part. The code behind this service is only one line long, making it easy to implement on any Web page. Currently four feeds are available: ELCA News, Today's Bible Reading, Today's Bible Verse and ELCA Prayer Ventures. ELCA News displays the latest news headlines from the ELCA straight into the feed. The rest of the feeds are changed daily to help inspire your Web site's visitors. Go to [www.elca.org/webfeeds/](http://www.elca.org/webfeeds/) to learn how to add these to your site.

## Study the Bible with Lutherans around the world

The Tenth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation will be held next summer in Winnipeg, Canada. The theme will be "For the Healing of the World." As the

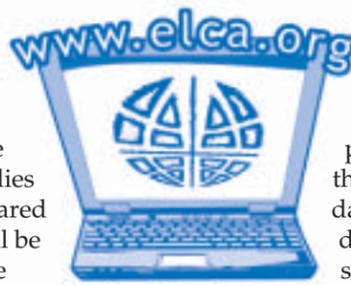
Lutheran world prepares for this event, one of the things we can do together is study the Bible. The Bible studies that have been prepared for the assembly will be available online. Use them for your regular weekly parish Bible study or for a retreat, or use a smaller part as devotions for a meeting. Go to [www.lwf-assembly.org](http://www.lwf-assembly.org) for the latest information about the assembly.

## Action Packet on the Web

Now the Action Packet is on the ELCA Web site. You can find it at [www.elca.org/col/actionpacket/index.html](http://www.elca.org/col/actionpacket/index.html). You'll find the current and previous packets' description cover sheets, with links to each piece in the packet that is currently available online.

## Text study resources

There's a virtual study desk for students, teachers and preachers at [www.textweek.com](http://www.textweek.com). Click on a date to find direct links to a wide variety of contemporary and historical resources for



study and liturgy for each lectionary week and pericope, or check out the Scripture Index to locate links to study resources relating to specific passages. Artwork indexed by biblical theme can be found in the Art Concordance. And there's a Movie Concordance for lists of movies indexed by spiritual theme.

Some of the best text study discussions on the Internet happen on LutherLink (part of Ecunet) the longest-running online community for people of faith. LutherLink discussions are convenient – you can either read and write through your Web browser, or participate fully using your e-mail software.

To sign up, go to [www.lutherlink.org](http://www.lutherlink.org) and click the "Join GOSPEL NOTES FOR NEXT SUNDAY" link. LutherLink "Lite" membership is free and allows you to join up to three discussions. A full membership (\$28.95/year) provides access to unlimited discussions and the ability to start new public or private online meetings about Bible texts or any other topic. To learn more, go to [www.lutherlink.org](http://www.lutherlink.org).

## Looking for a specific resource?

Looking for resource ideas? There's a treasure trove of resources on the ELCA Web site, but you may need help in finding the exact ones you're looking for. So where do you begin? Go to



[www.elca.org/resources.html](http://www.elca.org/resources.html)

and click on the ELCA ResourceFinder magnifying glass. This feature can quickly search the items in the ELCA resource database and get you what you need.

## CBS-TV Christmas special features ELCA

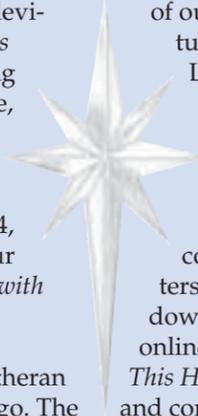
Tune in to your local CBS television station for *A CBS Christmas Special: This Holy Night* featuring the ELCA. The worship service, filled with lessons, carols and a special holiday message, will be broadcast nationally on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2002, at 11:35 p.m. EST, the hour usually filled by *The Late Show with David Letterman*.

*This Holy Night* will be pre-recorded at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saint Luke in Chicago. The television production offers a wealth

of outreach and evangelism opportunities for your congregation.

Last year's broadcast drew an audience of 1.85 million households.

Promotional materials, including reproducible art, will be available for use in congregation bulletins, newsletters and flyers in both print and downloadable formats. Check online for details about promoting *This Holy Night* in your congregation and community by going to [www.elca.org/col/broadcast.html](http://www.elca.org/col/broadcast.html).



# Resource Centers 'Q&A' looks at planning resources

## Q Our congregation needs help with long-range planning. What do you recommend?

A I'd recommend the *Discovering Hope* book and video from Augsburg Fortress. They examine qualities that will keep a congregation thriving over the long haul. Although these resources focus on rural congregations, they would probably be helpful in many settings. *Natural Church Development* (ChurchSmart Resources, 1996) is designed to help you look at characteristics of healthy congregations and to develop those characteristics in your own congregation. Also, Alban Institute (800/486-1318; [www.alban.org](http://www.alban.org)) has some great resources, like their book *Transforming Church Boards into Spiritual Leaders*.

—Kay Richter—Pastor, Calvary Lutheran, Two Rivers, Wis.

A *Turn Around Churches* (Augsburg Fortress) is an excellent resource that helps congregations keep going strong. Leonard Sweet's video kit "Aqua Church" ([www.aquachurch.com](http://www.aquachurch.com)) is quite thought-provoking for congregational leaders looking toward the future. Kennon Callahan's *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church* has led many congregations through planning processes, and they keep coming back for more of his resources because he insists on total involvement in the process. Or, for something completely different, take a look at the Web site [www.easumbandy.com](http://www.easumbandy.com) and a new process called "strategic mapping" in the free resources section.

—Sonnee Steveson—Director, Lutheran Resource Center, Clear Lake, Iowa, serving Iowa and Illinois Synods

A Take a look at the new *The Congregational Leader Series* from Augsburg Fortress (800/328-4648 [www.augsburgfortress.org](http://www.augsburgfortress.org)). This set of nine books will help leaders and their pastors collaborate and move forward in mission. Each book looks at congregational life and culture through the same 3D lens of three communities—one church: a community of spiritual formation, a non-profit organization, and a voluntary association. You'll find the books easy to read, interesting, and full of practical tools that make them especially useful. Reproducible tools can be downloaded and customized from the Augsburg Fortress Web site, a great asset for communication and training. Titles include: *Our Context: Exploring Our Congregation and Community*, which helps a congregation evaluate itself and its surrounding community; *Our Mission: Discovering God's Call to Us*, which guides congregations through a strategic planning process; *Called to Lead: A Handbook for Lay Leaders*, which offers chapters on strategies, conflict management and discerning gifts; and *Our Structure: Carrying Out the Vision*, which reminds congregations that no structure will work if there is no mission or vision in place.

—Irene Flynn—Director, Florida-Bahamas Resource Center; Tampa, Fla.

A I often recommend *Everyday Creativity* from StarThrower ([www.starthrower.com](http://www.starthrower.com); 800/242-

3220). This stunning video helps a group establish guidelines before they get started with their short or long-range planning; namely, that there is more than one right answer and that they shouldn't be afraid to fail. When a group can agree on these concepts, the possibilities are expanded. From that point on, members of the group can offer thoughts without feeling the need to come up with the right answer. Also, they know it will be OK if an idea fails because they will learn more from their failures than if they had not tried something new.

—Linda Beckman—Director, South Dakota Resource Center, Sioux Falls

A Before people get too serious and task-oriented (as many of us are inclined to do) why not take a look at FISH!? (Charthouse, [www.chartthouse.com](http://www.chartthouse.com); 800/328-3789) This video will help you imagine a place where everyone chooses to bring energy and a positive attitude to their task and help you lead people toward creating that environment. —Fran Dieter—Director, South Conference Resource Center, Viroqua, Wis.

A A book from Morehouse Publishing ([www.morehousepublishing.com](http://www.morehousepublishing.com)) called *Ten Dumb Things Churches Do and How to Avoid Them* has chapters on planning, decision-making, identity, boundaries and fear—all handled in a practical but light-hearted way. Philip Wiehe wrote this for an Episcopalian audience, but the concepts are universal. —Kate Elliott—Editor, *Seeds for the Parish*; Chicago, Ill.

# Deaconess serves as short-term missionary in Japan

The short-term mission service program to Japan has been in existence for more than 45 years. Through it, the ELCA and its predecessor church bodies have accompanied the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) in providing teachers and other church workers for the many ministries in Japan.

Sister Marla Wood is one of several short-term missionaries currently serving with the JELC. Unlike others who are



Sister Marla Wood

teaching English in JELC-related programs, Wood is assisting with projects that have been identified as central to the JELC's "Power Mission 21" strategy. A large component of this is "The Next Generation" program, in which youth are to be further embraced in the life of the church.

Using her training as a deaconess of the Lutheran Deaconess Association, Wood is helping identify the needs and gifts of the church. "Through prayer and talking to many people, I am gradually gaining a sense of ideas and approaches that may help the church be more welcoming and meaningful to young people," she says. "While there is much I do not yet understand, I have been

given the gift of being the 'outsider.' I can see things from a different perspective, and offer suggestions and observations that others may have missed."

Wood's focus will be on training lay leaders as well as connecting the church to the experiences and resources of youth ministry organizations in Japan and the United States. "The possibilities are exciting, and I am overwhelmed and thankful that I have been chosen to serve here. As a young adult with much to learn about bringing the Gospel of Jesus to youth, I pray I may walk alongside the people here as they face the challenges and grapple with the possibilities."

Please include Marla Wood and other missionaries in Japan in your prayers on Nov. 5, 2002, as you continue to use Prayer Ventures in your daily devotions.

## Try alternative activities for Advent and Christmas

Tired of trying to find just the right gift for someone at Christmas? Can't escape the commercialism of the holidays? Want to do something different this year?

Use these ideas to help members of your congregation celebrate Advent and Christmas in meaningful ways.

### Alternative gift giving

To "the person who has everything," give a gift that will help people around the world who have very little. *The Alternative Giving Ideas Catalog* lists various ELCA World Hunger projects to which you can give in honor of some one.

For example, you can "buy" a week's worth of food for AIDS orphans in Africa for your son, or a cow or goat for a Rwandan for your wife.

A single sample copy of the catalog was sent in the Fall 2002 ELCA World Hunger Resources Packet, mailed free to all congregations in September. Order additional copies from Augsburg Fortress (ISBN 6-0001-3409-6), or find the catalog, with fun ideas for cards to announce your gift, at [www.elca.org/hunger](http://www.elca.org/hunger).

### Alternative gift buying

The Lutheran World Relief Handcraft

Project gives you an opportunity to buy fairly traded gifts from SERRV International while supporting artisans from developing countries, the same kind of people the World Hunger Appeal, through LWR, supports.

Whole families benefit when artisans are able to market their beautifully crafted products. You can buy angels from Kenya, bells from India and chimes from Peru.

A promotional flyer for the Handcraft Project, which contributes 10 percent of your congregation's total sales back to you for further investment in ministry (or you can pass it on to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal), was sent to all congregations in

the Fall 2002 ELCA World Hunger Resources Packet. Or to receive an information packet, call SERRV at 800/423-0071, or e-mail [orders@serrv.org](mailto:orders@serrv.org).

### Alternative practices

Alternatives for Simple Living is an ELCA World Hunger Appeal partner that "equips people of faith to challenge consumerism, live justly and celebrate responsibly."

Its popular annual booklet, *Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?*, is designed to help individuals, families or small groups get more meaning out of the season.

The booklet includes biblical reflections, worshipful ceremonies, activities, an Advent calendar, and suggestions for remembering those in need.

To order the Lutheran version of the *Whose Birthday* booklet, which also comes in a shorter Spanish version, contact Alternatives at 800/821-6153 or 712/274-8875, or send e-mail to [Alternatives@SimpleLiving.org](mailto:Alternatives@SimpleLiving.org), or visit [www.SimpleLiving.org](http://www.SimpleLiving.org).



## For World AIDS Day

Busisiwe Nhleko, a woman in a town in South Africa, struggles to take care of 24 children, 14 of whom are from adult relatives who have died of AIDS. Her parents and husband have died as well. In her town, 35 to 40 percent of the people are carrying the virus. (*Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 28, 2002, "Orphans a Tiny Hint of Africa's Apocalypse")

HIV continues to spread in this country and around the world. World AIDS Day, December 1, is an excellent time to remember those affected by HIV/AIDS and to learn more about HIV prevention. A new *Observing World AIDS Day* folder is available to help congregations remember the day, with worship planning helps, and a reproducible bulletin insert. An updated free copy of *A Ministry of Caring: An HIV/AIDS Resource Packet* is also available from the ELCA HIV/AIDS Clearinghouse and Speakers Bureau in the Division for Church in Society.

Obtain a free copy of one or both of these resources by calling the ELCA Resource Information Service at 800/638-3522. For more information about HIV/AIDS, visit [www.elca.org/dcs/hiv/aids.html](http://www.elca.org/dcs/hiv/aids.html). To learn about the Lutheran AIDS Network (LANET) visit [www.LutheranAIDS.net](http://www.LutheranAIDS.net).

## What you should know about year-end contributions

"My last contribution to the church does not appear on my annual statement" said the church member. "The check was dated December 30. I put it in the offering plate on the first Sunday of January." Another member of the church chimed in, "I wrote a check on December 30 and mailed in on December 31. My donation appeared on my statement."

Should both of these contributions have been on the annual statement? What determines the correct year for the contributions?

First off, the date of the check is not the determining date. Many people don't realize this. Sometimes people will date a check December 31 even though they wrote it on January 1, thinking that the date is what counts.

One of two dates is the one that counts: either the date on which the church receives the check or the date a check is postmarked when mailed.

If a member writes a check on December 30, but does not bring it to the church until January 2, the donation has not been made until January 2 and should be recorded in the new year. If a member writes a check on December 30, but puts it in the mailbox after the last pickup on December 31 and therefore gets postmarked January 1, the

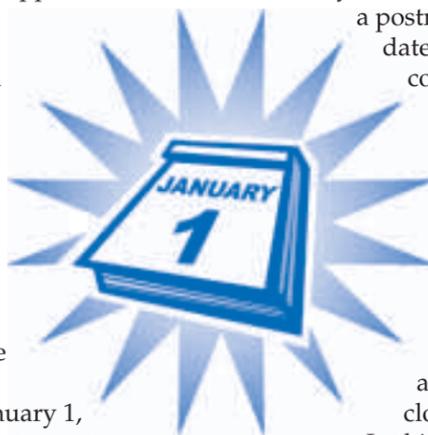
donation is recorded in the new year. If the member writes the check on December 30 and puts it in the mailbox so it gets postmarked December 31, it gets counted in that year even though the church does not receive it until the new year.

Anything put in the offering plate on the first Sunday of January that does not have a postmark on it to verify the date sent, is counted as contributed in the new year.

Some congregations will announce that any contributions received after a certain date will not appear on the annual financial statement of that year in order to allow the treasurer to close the books on the year. In this case, it is up to the donor to know the rules about which year to include the donation for an itemized deduction on his/her tax return.

Remember, it is a good practice for congregations to note the correct year when these end-of-the-year donations appear in case a donor is audited and asks the church for proof of the correct date of the contribution.

—Richard H. Goodlin is pastor at St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Baltimore and a tax preparer for Jackson-Hewitt.



# Reaching out to people with visual impairments

Every seven minutes, someone in America will become blind or visually impaired. —American Federation for the Blind

Living in a world focused on visual acuity, we are challenged to realize that a person's livelihood is largely dependent on his or her own ability to adapt to it. This is especially true for over 10 million children, youth and adults who are either blind or visually impaired in the United States.

This statistic may not be too far from home. As people age, it is a known fact that we all seem to experience some degree of visual impairment. (A visual disability can range from not seeing at all— to having difficulty seeing what is in front of you.)

Some of us may just need to start wearing glasses or find stronger sources of light. Others will develop glaucoma or need lens implant surgery. As people strive to cope with their own limitations, many will shy away from places, programs and events that do not honor their presence by attending to their needs.

There are more than 10,000 people in the ELCA who are either blind or visually impaired. The ELCA Braille and Tape Ministry provides resources such as hymnals, devotionals, *The Lutheran* magazine and *Lutheran Woman Today* to approximately 2000 of these individuals. Bible study, confirmation and Sunday school materials are available upon request.

For more information about the ELCA Braille and Tape ministry, contact Pastor

Lisa T. Cleaver, director for Disability Ministries at 800/638-3522, ext. 2692, or by e-mail at [lcleaver@elca.org](mailto:lcleaver@elca.org).

## Practical ways to support people in need of visual accommodations

- Increase the size of the print in your congregational resources, such as newsletters and worship bulletins. This will also benefit younger readers who are just learning to focus. (14 Pitch is good, 18-20 pitch is better.)
- Print the whole worship service in the bulletin. It will allow for a smooth transition between the various resources used. If you have traditional worship services at your church, you may want to invest in one or two Braille hymnals. They are available through Augsburg Fortress.
- Try not to stereotype. Not all blind people read Braille and visual disabilities come in many degrees. Be observant as you acknowledge the realities of each person and ask what might be helpful.
- Don't hesitate to talk with a visually impaired person. When a person is unable to recognize facial features, voices become important identifiers. Make a point of stating your name at first, when you approach them. But, once they get to know you, you can recognize that they do.
- Discourage media projection during

worship. It is difficult to gain a clear focus on a screen especially at the angle and position that many screens are placed.

- Transportation is important. Whether a person is blind or just not seeing so well, the odds are that getting to church is going to be a challenge, especially after dark.
- Nurture a person's right to a sense of dignity and integrity, no matter what their impairment. If the person looks lost or confused, ask if you can help. If you need to assist them in a physical way, let them take your elbow as you lead them.
- Visual impairments do not imply the existence of other impairments, such as hearing. Speak in a normal volume, unless you are aware of a need to speak louder.
- Get good lighting in your sanctuary. Churches that are dark or have high vaulted ceilings often lack sufficient light for reading. It is vital that all people have the opportunity to fully engage in activities that nurture their faith and confidence in the Light of the World.
- Check out the Association for the Blind at [www.afb.org](http://www.afb.org) and the National Federation for the Blind at [www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org) to gain further insight about the realities of living with visual impairment and resources for accommodating people with visual needs.

—Peter Heide is a pastor at Living Christ Lutheran Church in Hanover Park, Ill.



**Thrivent Financial for Lutherans™**  
A Century of Serving the Lutheran Community™

## What's the good news about retirement planning?

That Thrivent Financial for Lutherans can help you meet your retirement goals! With a wide range of competitive retirement products and personal service, Thrivent Financial is a financial services organization dedicated to serving Lutherans, their families and communities. That's the Thrivent Financial for Lutherans difference. And that's good news for you.

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. Experience the difference.

20451 N9407  
200204332  
Appleton, Wisconsin • Minneapolis, Minnesota • [www.thrivent.com](http://www.thrivent.com)

## An idea for year-end giving

As the end of the year approaches, some members of your congregation may want to make a gift to the church and take advantage of charitable tax deductions, but they haven't had time to decide which particular ministries they want to support. A donor-advised fund, available through the ELCA Foundation, may be the perfect solution.

Through a donor-advised fund, members can build a fund to benefit ministry, receive an immediate tax deduction this year, and decide next year and each year thereafter where their gifts will go. These funds provide flexibility to decide annually which ministries to support, such as a congregation's or synod's special ministry. For more information on donor-advised funds, call the ELCA Foundation at 800/638-3522, ext. 2970, or visit [www.elca.org/fo](http://www.elca.org/fo) for the name of the Regional Gift Planner nearest you.



## Did you see the Action Packet?

[www.elca.org/colactionpacket](http://www.elca.org/colactionpacket)

The contents of the November-December Action Packet included:

- *Prayer Ventures*
- *Pericope Partners*
- Board of Pensions information on flexible spending accounts
- Board of Pensions information on the ELCA retirement plan
- Augsburg Fortress new resource sheet
- *Salt Seasonings* stewardship resource flyer
- Evangelism and prayer brochure
- Social Ministries for Congregations program brochure
- "Imagine the World" brochure
- *Procession* worship newsletter
- 2003 ELCA Devotional Guide for congregation councils and committees