



How these congregations helped World Hunger Appeal

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"Gimme, gimme, gimme!" is the message many parents hear as the Christmas season rolls around each year. That's what Carolyn Waterstradt heard from her 5-year-old daughter last year. Waterstradt is youth and family minister at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Muskegon, Mich., which shares its pastor and staff with St. Luke's Lutheran Church, North Shores, in a partner congregation arrangement.

Waterstradt asked herself what she could do to get her children—and children in the congregations—to think about children who are less fortunate. She brought her concerns to a staff meeting. From that discussion, she and Michelle Jablonski, minister of congregational life, began planning a world hunger emphasis that raised awareness of hunger issues, especially in Africa, first with the children and through them, with the adults. The activities also had components that raised funds for the ELCA World Hunger Appeal.

The two coordinated a comprehensive set of activities that began in Advent and lasted through Epiphany to "de-commercialize the holiday season."

Setting the stage

While Our Savior's had taken occasional offerings for world hunger, they had involved adults only. And to members of St. Luke's, social ministry has been very important. To honor this tradition at St. Luke's and to implement a Christmas-season world hunger emphasis together—and one that would involve all ages—it had to be big, Jablonski says.

Jablonski and Waterstradt brought the developing ideas to other groups and leaders in the congregations to enlist their ownership and participation: "We got the Sunday school teachers on board and got them excited."

The planners first considered local needs—food banks and pantries—and then they started thinking of ways to help other children worldwide.

The ELCA World Hunger Appeal's *Alternative Giving Ideas Catalog* provided a basis for ideas for the children to help on a global scale. One of the projects listed in the catalog is the Global Barnyard. Giving toward this project helps people escape

cycles of poverty through the provision of animals or training in raising animals, which provides income.

"When we could tie in animals—kids are always interested in animals—and get them to help other people, we knew we found a good and fun combination," says Jablonski.

How they did it

- The congregations held a dinner, sponsored by the youth, as a kick-off at the beginning of Advent. To help

members focus on the ELCA World Hunger Program's Stand With Africa campaign with LCMS World Relief and Lutheran World Relief, the dinner featured many African foods. "Some were *very* unusual. We had to promise, 'No zebra meat!'" Jablonski says. The food "opened the kids' eyes." "This is what they have? There are no McDonald's down the road?" the children asked.

Waterstradt organized middle-school youth who put on a puppet show following the meal. The puppets were all animals, and the show told the story of the birth of Christianity in Africa.

At the end of the evening, people received coin boxes and the calendar, *Hunger: A 40-day Journey, to use from Advent to Epiphany*. The children and adults were challenged to start saving for the Global Barnyard project.

- Every year, Pastor John Grostic has traditionally used the children's sermons in Advent to introduce a new part of the manger scene, adding figures of animals, then shepherds, etc., to the crèche each week. Last year, during the world hunger emphasis, the focus was on the animals. Grostic asked the children to imagine what other animals might have been present at Jesus' birth, such as honeybees, that poor



Carolyn Waterstradt's daughter, Rebecca, became part of the manger scene last Advent when she sat among some of the fruits of the congregations' labor during a world hunger emphasis.

people in Malawi now raise to produce honey to sell. Handmade cardboard figures of bees and other animals were then placed in the crèche each week as reminders of what the children were raising money for. "The kids were so excited," Jablonski says. "I'm goin' for a cow!" exclaimed one little boy from Our Savior's." During these weeks, in Sunday school, children heard stories of World Hunger Appeal-supported projects like this that use animals to improve people's lives.

- To involve the adults, "Fish and Flowers," a campaign in which people were invited to make an extra donation to the Global Barnyard project when purchasing poinsettias, was started. "The adults were just as excited as the kids," says Jablonski.

- As Christmas approached the congregations also wanted to remember local friends. On Dec. 22 they held a Christmas party for the children. They were treated to many stations of fun activities. By far, the favorite station was where the kids assembled and decorated quart-sized jars of dried potato soup. The jars were placed in the congregations' food pantry, which is part of a network of food banks in the community. The kids then made personal cards that were attached to the jars to let people know they cared.

- On Epiphany, the children brought the donations to the manger. The kids were thrilled with the total—\$2,391. Jablonski says the congregations' members felt like they "bought the farm!"

Jablonski attributes much of the success of this emphasis to the creativity of Waterstradt. But "what was truly wonderful was learning that many of our children began to care about people less fortunate than themselves. During the season of hope, they were able to share hope with others."

Resources from ELCA World Hunger Appeal

All of these resources are free. Order by calling Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648. For more World Hunger resources for children and for Advent/Christmas, visit www.elca.org/hunger/resources

Alternative Giving Ideas Catalog Updated and redesigned for Advent-Christmas 2003, the catalog lists projects that you can support in honor of some one. Ideal for choosing gifts for children and for congregational gift fairs. ISBN 6-0001-6900-0; entire catalog is at www.elca.org/hunger/resources/altgiving.html

Hunger: A 40-Day Journey This new and updated 40-day calendar offers adults and children opportunities to pray, discuss, read, count, write, and give money to help hungry people

around the world. ISBN 6-0001-6851-9. Limit one per family per congregation.

Hunger Appeal offering boxes and coin banks Updated with a fun new design! Popular accompaniment to 40-day calendar, these banks feature faces of children from around the world. ISBN 6-0001-6338-X

Stand With Africa: In God's Global Barnyard: A Story Book for Children An eight-page booklet of five stories from four African countries on

how animals are used to help improve the lives of poor people there. ISBN 6-0001-6480-7

Information (including recipes from African countries) Visit the Web site of Country Packets from the ELCA Division for Global Mission at www.elca.org/dgml/country_packet



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Resources to help you plan worship for Advent, Christmas

There is something about this time of the year that stirs up a great sense of longing. Maybe it is the longer nights; maybe it is the barrage in the marketplace to buy, buy, buy. But there is a great awareness that something is missing. Hurts seem more hurtful, and anxieties are heightened. People who may never have heard the old, old story find that the Spirit has blown them into your congregation, along with those who have not heard it in decades.

"What do You Seek? Welcoming the Adult Inquirer" is a resource that helps pastors address the challenges of how to meet the needs of the variety of seekers. To order call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648 (ISBN 0-8066-4031-6; \$22.50 plus shipping). You can find out more about Christian Initiation of Adults on the Web at www.elca.org/dcm/worship/catechumenat/resources.html and www.catechumenate.org

Advent and Christmas ideas

One of the greatest challenges of keeping Advent in our consumer-driven culture is often what to do with Christmas carols during the four weeks of Advent. As worship leaders, the first thing to do is to be very prepared to discuss Advent, steeped in the depth of the season. *Sundays and Seasons* (order from Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648; ISBN 0-8066-4543-1; \$35 plus shipping) can be of great assistance in both worship preparation and education. The second bit of advice is to not be legalistic about it. Once keeping Advent by not singing Christmas carols becomes a rule rather than a joy, it has lost its character and intent. Even carols that may not be appropriate in the liturgy may be helpful during other times of congregational life, such as Advent suppers, educational times, times for decorating and making Advent wreaths together. The emphasis should be on preparing for the coming Christmas.

(To learn more about Advent wreaths, go to www.elca.org/dcm/worship/faq/worship_space/advent_wreath.html)

But don't overlook the possibility of singing Christmas carols that may be appropriate in an Advent liturgy. "O Little Town of Bethlehem" (LBW 41) may work when the Micah 5 text is read. "Lo, How A Rose" may be appropriate with some of the Old Testament prophecy readings. "Joy to the World" ("...let every heart prepare him room...") certainly is appropriate, especially as a closing hymn on the Sunday immediately before Christmas.

New Hymns and Songs (and the congregational version, *Renewing Worship Songbook*) contains several Advent hymns and songs that are worth exploring this December. If your congregation cannot handle more literature this year, consider having your choir or a soloist sing some of these new gems. They include "Come Now, O Prince of Peace" (a prayer of reconciliation from a divided Korea), "Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning" (an energetic commentary from the African American tradition on the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids), "The King of Glory" (with roots in the Middle East), as well as several revised translations of traditional hymns, including "Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying," "Creator of the Stars of Night," and "Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming."

Teaching new Christmas carols is often difficult because there are so many already available. However, being open to new things while broadening our vision and repertoire can be a good thing. The Christmas section of *New Hymns and Songs* includes numerous carols from around the



world that would make an excellent prelude or offering at Christmas.

These include:

- Jesus, What a Wonderful Child, R110 (African American)
 - Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light, R111 (Germany)
 - Midnight Stars Make Bright the Sky, R113 (China)
 - Now Let Us Go, O Shepherds, R115 (Latin America)
 - Love Has Come, R116 (England)
 - That Boy-child of Mary, R117 (Africa)
- Additional resources for keeping Advent and Christmas are found at www.elca.org/dcm/worship/church_year/christmas_cycle.html

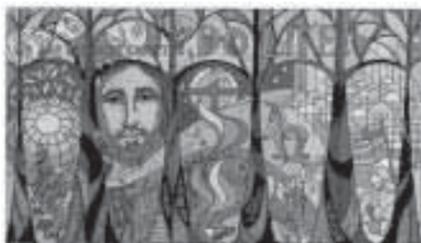
Acclamations available

Holy Baptism and Related Rites and Life Passages: Marriage, Healing, Funeral have been available for some time now. These rites include suggestions for acclamations and refrains that may be sung, however no musical settings were provided. They are now available for free, in diverse musical styles, on the *Renewing Worship* Web site at www.renewingworship.org. Our church has never had musical resources for these moments in the liturgy. Congregations are encouraged to try these out and provide feedback about how they worked.

See the *Renewing Worship* Web site for complete information about this important project that will lead to replacement of *Lutheran Book of Worship*. Evaluation and feedback by congregations are a critical part of the process.

Get Youth Gathering mural posters, artwork

Two murals, each 20 feet high and 35 feet wide, were painted by participants of the 2003 ELCA Youth Gathering in Atlanta (TAG), and presented to the 2003 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Milwaukee, Wis., last August.



Ubuntu! I am because we are. We are because Christ is. Do life! Go to www.elca.org/gathering/murals to order a copy of a poster featuring the murals and promot-

ing the 28 ELCA colleges and universities, to download mural wallpaper for your desktop, to read artist David Hetland's interpretation of his mural designs, to see photos from TAG and the Assembly, and to check out related links and resources.

Sponsored by ELCA campus ministry (www.campusmin.org), schools and centers, and colleges and universities (www.elcacolleges.org), the murals celebrate the Youth Gathering's theme:

Check out these worship-related events

Renewing Worship events

The one-day events introducing the *Renewing Worship* process continue during the coming month. Events in November include:

- November 8 near **Detroit, Mich.**, and **Madison, Wis.**
- November 9 near **Chicago, Ill.**
- November 15 in **Fairfax, Va.**, and **Worcester, Mass.**
- November 16 in **Reading, Pa.**

For more details, a complete list of events and registration information, see www.renewingworship.org

Event on Daily Prayer in the Parish

On Saturday, January 24, 2004, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the Philadelphia Liturgical Institute will sponsor an ecumenical conference on "Praying Together: Recovering Morning and Evening Prayer in the Parish."

The Rev. Paul Bradshaw will be the main speaker for this event, to be held at

Philadelphia Cathedral, 3723 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia. Bradshaw is an Anglican priest and professor of liturgy at the University of Notre Dame, and director of the Notre Dame Undergraduate Studies Program in London, England. The conference is scheduled from 9:00 am to 3:30 pm, and includes presentations, panel discussion, ecumenical dialogue, and experiences of praying daily prayer. Exhibits and displays are welcomed.

For brochures and registration forms, and more information about the Philadelphia Liturgical Institute at Philadelphia Cathedral, contact Sylvia Brockman at 215/386-2216 or e-mail liturgy@philadelphia-cathedral.org or go to www.philadelphia-cathedral.org

This conference is made possible through collaboration with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Grand Rapids, Michigan, with funds provided by Lilly Endowment, Inc.

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Ways to use Vacation Bible School materials all year

Do you ever wish Vacation Bible School were named something different because the V in VBS seems to imply *summer* vacation?

VBS resources are so packed with activity ideas that it is impossible to do all of them in four or five summer days. What might happen if congregations expanded the seasonal boundary of the V, and used VBS resources to create opportunities for exciting, fun-filled faith sharing at other times of the year?

VBS all year

- **Winter:** Introduce Sunday school kids to next summer's VBS music during the winter months so they will be familiar with it long before summer hits.
- **Spring:** Host a spring break VBS leadership camp for youth. Encourage all youth interested in leading music, drama, and small groups of kids to attend, and train them to be leaders.
- **Summer:** Do VBS. Provide families with the opportunity to purchase a CD or cassette of the music so they can sing VBS songs together in the car or at home long after summer vacation is over.
- **Fall:** Host a VBS reunion for the entire congregation. Retell the Bible stories, sing the songs, do favorite activities, and try some of the activities there wasn't time for in the summer! Invite kids and adults to share stories of their favorite VBS moments, and eat a meal together. Provide a teaser for next summer's VBS theme and watch the excitement build!

VBS in January

- When the long month of January arrives, worship and Sunday school

attendance are often down, and kids and their parents are catching their breath after the excitement of the holiday season. Do VBS during Sunday school in January, and make everyone wonder what you're up to! Reuse resources from a previous summer or try a VBS program that is new to you. Decorate your learning spaces to illustrate the theme, and spend each Sunday in January exploring Bible stories in VBS fashion.

VBS Church Family Style

- Many congregations are interested in doing inter-generational ministry, but may have difficulty getting started. VBS resources offer an exciting option for planning and doing ministry with folks of all ages because they contain oodles of activity options for each of five Bible stories. Get your feet wet in inter-generational ministry by holding five inter-generational events a year, one event for each story, and celebrate faith sharing – church family style!

VBS Mini-Camps

- Have a series of mini-camps on *no-school* days throughout the year, or plan to hold them on Sundays during Advent or Lent. Use the guidebooks from past VBS activity sites to provide ideas for each camp, then invite adults in your congregation who are interested in sharing their passion for art, drama, cooking, science, sports, gardening, fishing, woodworking, reading, music, and anything else you can think of to spend time with kids at your mini-camps.

2004 VBS from Augsburg Fortress

Developing resources that expand the boundaries of VBS has become a priority at Augsburg Fortress. VBS 2004, Davey and

Goliath's Camp Creation, features a mission project called the Mission Well (also known as the "Deep Wells" project). During VBS, a three-foot cardboard Mission Well can be decorated and filled with offerings from kids. These offerings will be used to dig deep tube wells that will provide safe drinking water for the people of Bangladesh.

After VBS, the Mission Well can be used year-round for Bible story skits, sermon illustrations, food drives, and stewardship events—expanding the mission message of VBS into the life of the congregation!

Congregations can receive the cardboard Mission Well free when they order a Camp Creation VBS Starter Kit by December 31, 2003.

To learn more about Davey and Goliath's Camp Creation or to take advantage of the free Mission Well offer, call 800/328-4648

or visit www.augsburgfortress.org/vbs

In your congregation you can bring the V of VBS into fall, winter, spring, and summer—and celebrate VBS-style learning across all ages, all year long.

Camp Creation starter kit: ISBN 0-8066-4850-3; Mission Well: ISBN 0-8066-4866-X.



Learn what's new at Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs

Check out these resources and events that can help your congregation's social ministry committee give assistance to those living in poverty and advocate for peace and justice in the world.

E-Advocacy

The Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs, the advocacy office of the ELCA, is developing and expanding its capacity to communicate, educate, and advocate electronically. This effort requires cleaning and re-populating their database. If you wish to receive legislative fact sheets, education materials, or the Legislative Update electronically or participate in e-advocacy, please send e-mail to Jackie_Maddox@elca.org, contact them through at www.loga.org or write to 122 "C" Street, NW, Suite 125, Washington, D.C. 20001, or call 202/783-7507.

Resource packet for congregation food pantries, soup kitchens

There are 33.6 million Americans who are "food insecure," hungry, or at risk of hunger. Only about 60 percent of individuals who are eligible for the Food

Food Stamps:



Helping to Fill Grocery Bags

Stamp Program actually participate, even though the U.S. Conference of Mayors reports ever-increasing numbers of people going to emergency food providers and 16 percent of the demand going unmet. Proper nutrition is critical for kids to be successful in school and for the elderly to remain healthy.

You can help fill the grocery bags of families and elderly individuals who are in need. A new packet of information, "Food Stamps: Helping to Fill Grocery Bags," has been designed by the Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs for congregation-based food pantries and soup kitchens.

The packet may be obtained from each synod's World Hunger leader. Contact your synod office if you are uncertain who this person is, or you can download and reproduce the material from the LOGA Web site www.loga.org

Ecumenical Advocacy Days

Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice will be held March 5-8, 2004, in Washington, DC. The theme is "I will feed them with justice."

This gathering will focus on building peace, nuclear disarmament, Jubilee, and economic justice with emphasis on four regions: Africa, Asia (Korea), Latin America, and the Middle East (Israel and Palestine, Iraq).

The event will offer challenging speakers, issue briefings, and advocacy training workshops. There will be opportunities to speak with your senators and representatives in the U.S. Congress or their key foreign policy staff. There will also be common times for fellowship and networking, a keynote address and banquet, and a special ecumenical service of worship for participants and the public.

For information, go to www.AdvocacyDays.org or contact the Lutheran Office for Governmental Affairs, 122 C Street, NW, Suite 125, Washington, DC 20001; phone 202/783-7507.

You can help develop a network for visually impaired leaders

"How many blind pastors are there in the ELCA?" This question is frequently put to the Rev. Duane L. Steele, pastor of Gladesboro Lutheran Church, Hillsville, Va., because he is totally blind. The truth is, we do not know.

The ELCA is discovering the answer by encouraging visually impaired pastors, church musicians, and other professionals to develop a network that allows them to converse with one another about their ministries. Networking would provide opportunity to share electronic books and periodicals, worship and devotional publications, logistical concerns like transportation, and other common challenges facing blind and visually impaired pastors and lay professionals.

The Rev. Lisa Thogmartin Cleaver, director for ELCA Disability Ministries, has established an online network with LutherLink that is bringing together rostered leaders and other church professionals with special needs in conversations on topics ranging from how to conduct worship to how to educate parishioners about their disabilities.

"Conversation with other pastors and church professionals would strengthen my own parish ministry by removing the pervasive sense of isolation that so often accompanies persons with disabilities who think they're alone in their ministries," says Pastor Steele, who also serves as consultant for the ELCA's Braille and Tape Ministry.

If you are reading this article in Braille, or if someone is reading it to you because you can't read the print, you already qualify to be part of this special network that will bring together blind and visually impaired Sunday School teachers, organizers, choir directors, administrators, associates in ministry, and pastors in an environment that will generate open sharing of gifts, resource materials, and the support and nurturing of those with special needs.

If you or someone you know would like to be part of this emerging network for blind and visually impaired church leaders, contact Pastor Thogmartin-Cleaver at 800/638-3522, extension 2692, or e-mail lcleaver@elca.org.

Faith practices for teens

Way To Live: Christian Practices for Teens is an engaging book developed by a group of adult and teenage authors to help young people reflect on how they can live their faith in their everyday lives. Chapters focus on the difference faith makes in 18 areas of life, including food, time, creativity, forgiveness, justice, prayer, and friendship. The book can be ordered through any bookstore or through the book's Web site, www.waytolive.org

A leader's guide is also available for free download on the Web site, along with interactive introductions to the 18 practices, a "music room" where young people can share music they record, and applications for a related grants program. Dorothy C. Bass, a member of Christ Lutheran Church, Valparaiso, Ind., co-edited *Way To Live* with Don C. Richter, a Presbyterian minister and educator. It was published by Upper Room Books in 2002.

Also check out www.practicingourfaith.org Recently relaunched, this Web site includes some thought-provoking questions and study suggestions regarding faith practices, a "library" of resources about Christian practices, and information about how to apply for a Practice Grant of up to \$10,000 to 'strengthen communities of practice' in your congregation or organization.

Students will gather in D.C.

It's not too late to tell college students about the Lutheran Student Movement (LSM) national gathering. LSM is heading to Washington D.C. from Dec. 31, 2003 to Jan. 4, 2004 for its annual national gathering. In celebration and memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have A Dream" speech, the theme for the gathering is "DC - The Dream Continues...to change us, to challenge us, to take a chance on us."



The gathering will include worship services with Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson, guest speakers, time for regional meetings, a performance by the satire group "Capitol Steps," a day to tour the downtown area, and other activities. For information, visit the LSM-USA Web site at www.LSM-USA.org or the campus ministry Web site at www.elca.org/dhes/lsm/gathering/

Get prayer bracelet kits

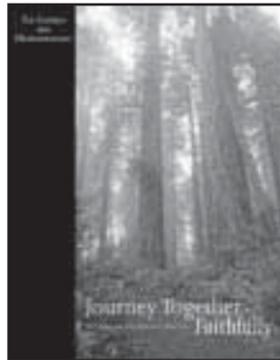
During the 2003 Youth Gathering in Atlanta, the ELCA Commission for Women offered Prayer Bracelets at the Interactive Center. The youth gathering theme Ubuntu which means "I am because you are, we are because Christ is," encourages a relationship of oneness and reconciliation. The

prayer bracelet packages are now available for use in your congregation, in time for Advent or Lenten programs.

The sand beads were hand-made and purchased from a cooperative in Ghana, West Africa. Each package has supplies to make two bracelets. After making one bracelet, a prayer is then written and placed in the bag in order to exchange the bracelet and prayer with another participant. Participants then make a second bracelet for themselves. So, at the close of the exchange, participants will have two bracelets—one created for someone else, along with a prayer, and the one they made for themselves! Each package has supplies (beads and leather rope) to make two bracelets. The cost is \$10 plus shipping for a package of 50 bracelets (ISBN 6-0001-7496-9). To order bracelet kits, call 800/328-4648.

The church and homosexuality

The booklet "The Church and Homosexuality" was recently mailed to all rostered leaders and



is also on the Web at www.elca.org/faithfuljourney The study focuses on questions of blessing gay and lesbian unions and ordaining, commissioning, or consecrating people in

committed same-sex unions. It is rich in biblical and theological reflection and seeks to present the views held by members of the ELCA as clearly and fairly as possible.

Now is the time for congregational leaders to promote participation in this study. The Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality will be listening to the responses from those who participate. This is your chance to shape the future decisions of our church. There are many different ways to promote participation. Some ideas include: small groups, house meetings, inter-generational forums, retreat settings, inter-congregational discussion groups.

Free video for outreach

There's a new free outreach video to help you reach the unchurched people in your community. "Welcome! Finally some good news" is a four-minute video in which different people share a short testimony of why they go to church.

You can use this video as a companion piece along with a postcard or letter from your congregation's welcome or invitation packet.

The videos are shipped to your congregation in quantities of 100 and they are free—but there's a stipulation that the congregation needs to submit a report to the

ELCA evangelism office six months to a year after ordering the videos to tell how they were used and what kind of feedback you got. For more information, call Bernice Griffin at 800/638-3522, ext. 2597, or e-mail bgriffin@elca.org.

Prayer for Christian unity

Celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with congregations around the globe! During the week of Jan. 18-25, 2004, individuals and congregations will join together in celebrating the Word of God with an ecumenical perspective. The theme for 2004 is taken from John 14:23-31: "My peace I give you ... not as the world gives. Let not your hearts be troubled..." To guide you in participating in this celebration, the Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute offers a daily Scripture and prayer guide, prayer cards, posters, worship guides, and bulletin covers. Order forms for these materials are available through the ELCA Resource Information Service by calling 800/638-3522 or through the Department for Ecumenical Affairs by calling 800/638-3522, ext. 2610, or visiting their Web site at www.elca.org/leal/Resources/dearsce You can visit Graymoor on-line at www.geii.org/main.html to obtain resources.

Help for church libraries

A Handbook for Church Libraries by Linda Beck is a practical manual for churches starting or maintaining a church library. The handbook covers topics such as funding, book selection, cataloging, promoting, even computer decisions. Information for church librarians is hard to come by and tends to be dated, so this manual can really fill a need. This book is published by the Lutheran Church Library Association (LCLA) and is available from them for \$15 to non-members (\$12 to members) on their Web site at www.lclahq.org

LCLA is a resource for congregations. Its members receive a quarterly newsletter and topical booklists throughout the year. There are chapters throughout the country for personal interaction. More information can be found at www.lclahq.org

Looking for a 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

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

Tranformational pastors event

Put it on your calendar: the fifth annual ELCA Transformational Leaders Gathering (TLG) will be held Feb. 9-12, 2004. This gathering will offer a two-site location held in conjunction with Community Church of Joy (CCOJ) 17th Annual Evangelism Conference and the ELCA's new Vital Congregations Net-work's regional simulcast. The Transformational Leaders Gathering began as part of Trinity Lutheran Seminary's Transformational Leadership Initiative program funded by the Lilly Endowment and has now grown into a national network of ELCA pastors seeking to equip pastors and congregations for mission-led, vision-driven ministry.

Gathering planners are now coordinating with CCOJ to reach pastors, especially in mid-size congregations, who are searching for colleagues and mentors with whom to network for growth and support. Building on CCOJ's theme of The Ancient-Future Church (featuring Walt Kallestad, Tim Wright, and Leonard Sweet), TLG will provide specific breakout groups, a meeting area, and resource center at CCOJ and at Christ the King Lutheran Church, Charlotte, N.C., the East Coast simulcast site.

For more information, go to www.peopleoffaith.org\tilg.htm or call 734/284-1922, or e-mail heatherbrae@comcast.net.

Help mission congregations

Two ListServes are now available for congregations to share their time or possessions with mission congregations:

Mission Volunteers. ELCA mission congregations and ELCA-related agencies may share their need for volunteers on this site.

Church Items. Mission congregations may share their need for church furnishings, equipment, and/or supplies on this site.

Established congregations or individuals may advertise similar used items that are available at no or low cost.

See www.elca.org/dol/opportunities.html to learn more.

New book on health ministry

Healing Bodies and Souls: A Practical Guide for Congregations by W. Daniel Hale, Ph.D., and Harold G. Koenig, M.D., offers a practical primer on developing health ministries for pastors, parish nurses, lay leaders, and concerned parishioners. This volume mixes real-life congregational case studies with information to equip members in helping people manage illness, navigate the health-care labyrinth, manage or avoid disability, and even provide some life-saving and preventive medical services.

While the authors' case studies report on the many kinds of engagement congregations have

taken on, each chapter also provides basic information on the most common health-care challenges—diabetes, skin cancer, strokes, heart disease, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, breast cancer, prostate cancer, glaucoma, and depression—and what can be done in congregations.

To order, call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648 (ISBN 0-8006-3629-5; \$15 plus shipping).

New resource for Christian ed

TALK is "Teaching And Learning with Kids," a quarterly resource for Christian educators that includes a 16-



page reproducible newsletter (called TALK Time) along with a set of five copies of a classroom

tool for teaching (called TALK Tool). Aimed at teachers of pre-kindergarten through sixth-grade classes, TALK's first issue appeared in late September.

Previews of TALK have met with great reviews. Attendees at summer Teaching and Learning Clinics across the country were enthusiastic that there is finally such a resource for them. "It's like *Parish Teacher*, only better," said one teacher.

The TALK Basic Pack order includes five TALK Tools, but extra sets of five TALK Tools can be ordered as well. TALK is available on a standing order basis, so a single order ensures that you receive it every quarter. The TALK Basic Pack—reproducible TALK Time newsletter and five TALK Tools—is only \$10 per quarter plus shipping (ISBN 6-0001-7368-7). You can order extra TALK Tools by ordering TALK Plus Packs (each \$5, ISBN 6-0001-7369-5). TALK can be ordered through Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648, or online at www.augsburgfortress.org

Comic strip for bulletins

Agnus Day' is a lectionary-based comic strip, available free of charge, for one-time use in church bulletins, Web sites, and newsletters. Just complete the subscriber box on their home page and you'll receive each week's comic strip, via e-mail, (about 100kB in JPEG format) the Tuesday before you need it. You can learn more at their Web site at www.agnusday.org Check out some of their past comics to see if they might appeal to members in your congregation. The comic strip is the creation of the Rev. James Wetzstein, associate university pastor at Valparaiso University.

Manual on immigrant work

A new manual from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) can help congregations reach out to immigrants and refugees by drawing on the experiences of those who have successfully planned and implemented immigrant-focused

social ministry. *Responding to the Call: A Manual for Congregations Reaching Out to Immigrants Through Ministries of Service and Justice* is available from LIRS for \$9 for a spiral-bound print copy. Send a check to *Responding to The Call*, LIRS, 700 Light Street, Baltimore, MD 21230. *Responding to The Call* is also available for download in PDF format at www.lirs.org/responding

Authors Online in 2004

Here's the lineup for *Authors Online* book discussions on LutherLink for the first months of 2004. Participating in these online book discussions with the authors is easy. Point your Web browser to www.lutherlink.org/books and select the discussion you'd like to join. Order and read the book, then sign up for the appropriate online discussion with others from across the ELCA. Start organizing a book group in your congregation now to talk about:

- *Ordinary Saints: An Introduction to the Christian Life*, Second Edition, by Professor Robert Benne, coming in **January 2004**;
- *Our Lives Are not Our Own: Saying 'Yes' to God*, by Harold Eppley and Rochelle Melander, in **February**.

Asset-based youth workshop

What can a packet of sticky-notes, a bold marker pen and a blank wall teach the youth in your congregation about stewardship? You might be surprised!

In Mark 6:38, Jesus asked the 5,000 people assembled on the hill,

"How much bread do you have?" The five loaves and two fish were evidence of the Holy Spirit at work. Imagine that power applied to the spiritual lives



of the young people in your congregation!

In this new workshop, *You Have Permission!*, some sticky-notes and a marker take the place of the loaves and fish. Developed as a result of interaction with the 40,000 youth at this summer's ELCA National Youth Gathering in Atlanta, *You Have Permission!* helps young people begin to identify their gifts, passions, skills, and particular interests. Participants make their own *asset maps* that help identify appropriate "next steps" on the road to building their God-given assets.

You Have Permission! opens the door to further leadership and stewardship training for your congregation's youth. For more information about how *You Have Permission!* might work in your congregation, call the ELCA Division for Congregational Ministries, 800/638-3522, ext. 2767, or contact your Salt Stewardship Specialist at www.elca.org/dcm/stewardship/salt_staff.html for details.

See what's new and helpful on the World Wide Web

Have you seen www.elca.org lately?

"So," you ask, "how does the ELCA use www.elca.org?" Visitors are:

Finding a church - whether traveling, relocating, or looking for a Lutheran congregation for the very first time, the nearest ELCA congregation is just a click away at www.elca.org/findachurch.html

Participating in events - Visitors view photos, videos, and receive all the latest news from the Churchwide Assembly (www.elca.org/assembly03), ELCA Youth Gathering (www.elca.org/gathering), The Lutheran World Federation Assembly (www.lwf-assembly.org), and other major events.

Sharing ministry resources - Daily Bible readings, worship resources, leadership materials, issues of the church in society, and essential Q&As about Lutheran Christians are at www.elca.org/spiritual.html

Usage statistics for 2003 show that over 2 million people have visited the 20,000-plus pages of www.elca.org. Browsers have accounted for over 16 million pages viewed, averaging more than 2 million pages distributed a month for 2003. Thank you for using this communication tool, and keep coming back.

Adult education ideas

Looking for a good book for adult education? Looking for a collection of essays on historical Lutheran themes?

Wondering how you can help your congregation reflect on recent events through the prism of their faith? The online Journal of Lutheran Ethics (www.elca.org/jle) wants to help you make the best use of extensive online resources. With each new monthly issue, it offers the parish pastor and educator ideas for adult study and discussion. Click on the new menu choice "JLE in your congregation" under the research and resources button.

Respond to *The Lutheran* magazine

The Lutheran magazine now offers a way for you to respond to articles. It is expanding its online discussion boards (webboard.elca.org:8080/~thelutheran) as another way to provide an open forum for discussion about issues affecting members of the ELCA. September kicked off what will be a regular online feature: guest Web hosts. Within the discussion boards, guest Web hosts will answer your questions and respond to your concerns. To find out who is hosting, visit www.thelutheran.org and click on "hosts" under discussion boards in the top-right section of the page.

Newly redesigned evangelism site

"You Shall Be My Witnesses" is the theme at www.elca.org/dcm/evangelism



There you will find resources for individuals, leaders, congregations, and synods. Check out the assessment link to learn about hospitality, spiritual gifts, and reaching younger generations. There are also links to the ELCA Evangelism Strategy and information on new resources for use in Advent and Lent.

Online course for young adults

Beginning in January 2004, thousands of college-age and post college-age adults and their mentors can participate in a new online course titled "What's God Up To?" The project was designed as a resource for campus pastors, college faculty, parish pastors, youth directors, camp directors and others who work with college-age and post-college age adults.

Throughout six sessions, the groups will explore the connection between faith and daily life in order to provide greater meaning and purpose to their work and relationships.

"What's God Up To?" is a product of the Western Mission Network—a collaborative venture of the ELCA colleges, seminaries, continuing education centers, and Lutheran campus ministry sites in Regions 1, 2, and 3. For more information, check the Web site at www.whatsgodupto.org. Or, e-mail Fisher's Net staff Gloria Doherty at res00klm@gte.net or Jason Misselt at jmisselt@fishersnet.net.

Consider education at the Wittenberg Center in 2004

Are you yearning to experience Lutheran spirituality at its roots? Have you always wanted to walk in the footsteps of Martin Luther and Katharina von Bora? Are you seeking to deepen your understanding of the great spiritual leader and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer? The summer of 2004 offers you three learning opportunities at the ELCA's continuing education center in Wittenberg, Germany.

"Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther"

will be offered June 5-12 and, in addition to exploring the texts of Bonhoeffer and hearing expert local presentations, will allow you to visit key Bonhoeffer sites in



Berlin and Buchenwald. Daily seminars will be held in Wittenberg under the instruction of the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Sorum.

For registration information, contact Cheryse Sloan at 507/280-9457 or e-mail danorrie@semsynod.org.

"Roots of Lutheran Spirituality," offered June 20-July 3, will include presentations, daily worship, and pilgrimage visits to formative sites for Lutheran spirituality. Co-sponsored with the Grace Institute for Spiritual Formation, this seminar will be led by the Rev. Cheryl Doely, the Rev.

Richard Bruesehoff, and Dr. Bradley Hanson. Registration information is

available from Sherry Alcock at 800/225-8664 or e-mail alcock@luther.edu

"Luther Through the Ages" will be offered Oct. 3-16 by Dr. Andrew J. White, professor emeritus of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. This travel seminar, in addition to presentations by Dr. White and local experts, will include visits to Berlin, Wittenberg, Halle, Eisleben, Torgau, Leipzig, Eisenach, Marburg, Worms, Mainz, Buchenwald, and Jena. Registration information may be obtained from Ida Jeanne Smith at 717/261-1213 or e-mail stluke@innernet.net

More information, including costs and registration forms, is available at www.elca.org/wittenberg or by sending e-mail to ELCAWittenbergCenter@t-online.de. Continuing education units (CEU's) are available for all Wittenberg Center programs.

Resource centers look at devotions for depression

In every issue of *Seeds*, ELCA resource center staff pull together a "Q&A" on topics that they discuss in their meeting on LutherLink. To find the resource center near you, go to www.elca.org/co/centers.html

Q I'm looking for recommendations of devotional resources for a parent living with a teen who is suffering from depression. What do you recommend?

A I recommend *Prayers for Help and Healing* by William Barclay, which features simple, practical and comforting prayers. Other resources on depression are *Wrestling with Depression: A Spiritual Guide to Reclaiming Life* by William and Lucy Hulme, and *When You Are Depressed* by Barbara DeGrote-Sorensen and David Allen Sorensen. All are available from Augsburg Fortress.

www.augsburgfortress.org, 800/328-4648
—Catherine Fink, director, Heilig Resource Center, North Carolina Synod, Salisbury, N.C.

A After the Psalms, I recommend a devotional that focuses on a God who, in the words of Isaiah, exalts every valley, brings every mountain low, straightens the crooked paths, and smoothes over the rough roads.

Here are a few of my suggestions: *Glimpses of Glory: Daily Reflections on the Bible* by Carol Bechtel (Westminster John Knox, www.wjk.org 800/227-2872), *Sacred Journeys: A Woman's Book of Daily Prayer*, by Jan L. Richardson (Upper Room, www.upperroom.org 800/972-0433), *Bread for the Journey* by Henri Nouwen and *Christ in Our Home* by Ronald Klug (www.augsburgfortress.org 800/328-4648).

I've also enjoyed *A Guide to Prayer for All God's People* and look forward to the next volume: *A Guide to Prayer for All Who Seek God* (www.augsburgfortress.org 800/328-4648). One more that is next to my bed: *Women's Uncommon Prayers: Our Lives Revealed, Nurtured, Celebrated* (Morehouse Publishing, www.morehouse.com 800/877-0012).

—Jane Schuyler, congregational support specialist, Reformed Church in America

A *Sleeping With Bread: Holding What Gives You Life* by Matt, Sheila and Dennis Linn (Paulist Press) is a helpful little book that teaches how to use an examen daily to find one's way through consolations and desolations

(paulistpress.com 800/218-1903).

—Ruth Miller, director of ministry resources, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Wescosville

A I'd recommend Marva Dawn's *To Walk and Not Faint* or *Joy in Our Weakness*. Both are somewhat deep Bible study/reflections. They deal with the realities of tough situations in life and God's presence in the midst of those tough times (www.eerdmans.com 800/253-7521).
—The Rev. Kay S. Richter, Calvary Lutheran Church, Two Rivers, Wis.

A For anyone struggling with depression and any other situation of loss, grief, struggle, despair: Marty Haugen's new collection called "Turn My Heart: A Sacred Journey from Brokenness to Healing" is really gorgeous. The CD is one of a kind and the accompanying book by Haugen and the Rev. Susan Briehl is beautiful. This collection came about in response to the despair following September 11. It's powerful! (www.gia-music.com 800/442-1358.)

—Julie Aageson, director, Eastern North Dakota Resource Center, Fargo

ELCA missionary assists in education in South Africa

For many years South Africa, with its apartheid system controled Namibia and left this southwestern African country with a legacy that denied competent education to the indigenous people. Today many who yearn for higher education in independent Namibia are challenged by their lack of English, the official language of the country.

Loretta Carter serves with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia, specifically teaching English at the United Lutheran Theological Seminary at Paulinum. "My job is to remediate their inadequate language skills so that they can understand, read and write English to be successful in the classroom," Carter says. But her presence as an ELCA missionary goes beyond her teaching duties.

"I am somewhat of an amazement to my students because of my age and vigor," notes Carter. "People work very hard here and get old very fast. Students have a great



Loretta Carter

respect for their elders and I am the senior staff member."

Carter's compassion is what gathers people around her. Some seminary community members seek her advice when they have personal or academic problems. "Some of my younger students have been having problems of depression. When I

approach them with concern for their well-being, they are most grateful."

Life expectancy in Namibia is now around 45, due mainly to HIV/AIDS. Sometimes students lose two or three relatives a month. "They need to hear words of faith and hope from someone who cares. Also, they have many emotional wounds, and struggle financially as many have no means of finding work to assist themselves. Now they are faced with the burden of becoming competent to deal

with the AIDS pandemic which is decimating the population."

Carter's understanding of ministry reflects that which is found in the missionary community. "My joy in life is doing what I am doing. I daily ask God for discernment to meet the needs of people within my sphere of influence. This isn't always my students; it's often my friends, co-workers, people in the community."

As you pray for Loretta Carter on Dec. 27 as part of the Prayer Ventures daily prayer guide, give thanks for all missionaries and consider how you can be involved, too. "The global mission work of the ELCA gives a person an opportunity to be an active part of the church in the world today," says Carter. "We are partners in God's mission to go into all the world not with our own agenda, but to be instruments of love and service empowering and uplifting God's people. What we receive is far greater than what we give in service. We become inspired and spiritually enriched by living in cultures different from our own."

Learn how young adults can serve in global mission

"Dale tiempo al tiempo."

Give time some time.

Those wise words from a pastor helped John Flack find his rhythm during a year of parish and school ministry in two suburbs of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

As a participant in the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) program, John was bewildered at first by a new language and environment. "I had expected sunny South America, vibrant and happy, and full of picturesque plazas, but I got winter, exhaust fumes, protests against the government, and warnings about traveling or walking after 9 at night. I had expected to immediately fall in step with the work going on here, but I forgot about a little language called Spanish."

As John gave time some time, he caught on to Spanish, joined his colleagues in sipping *mate* (Argentina's national tea drink), and settled into his work. Now home in Tulsa, Okla., he is sharing stories of Argentina's Lutherans and contemplating a career in ministry.

In August 32 new YAGM participants began serving in seven countries – Argentina, Egypt, Germany, Hungary/Ukraine,

Kenya, Thailand, and the United Kingdom. Applications are now being accepted for the 2004-2005 YAGM program.

Open to ELCA members ages 19-30 who are active in church, campus, or outdoor ministries, the YAGM program gives young adults an opportunity to develop their leadership skills within an international context.

Volunteers may teach English, work with youth and children in church settings, with special needs children and adults, or in outreach, refugee, social justice, and environmental ministries.

Participants raise a minimum of \$3,000 toward their support. A 10-day ecumenical orientation program helps prepare them for their assignment.

Throughout the year, YAGM participants meet with peers to reflect on their work and their call to serve. When the year ends, they bring home new gifts and skills



Volunteer John Flack with students he worked with in Argentina as part of the YAGM program

to their communities and the ELCA.

"When we do what is called global mission, we are encountering the grace of God in a place we don't know, and we find ourselves caught up in a service that is not ours," John Flack

says of his year in Argentina. "The best part of this is waking up one morning and finding out that you love the people you are living and working with, and that you feel very much at home in this place that is not very strange after all. You know you've succeeded when you feel like you are leaving your family at the end of the year."

Applications for the 2004-2005 program year will be received until March 15, 2004. For further information, contact the ELCA Division for Global Mission at 800/638-3522 ext. 2520, by e-mail at dgmserve@elca.org, and on the Web at www.elca.org/dgml/youngadults

Notice about urban grants

In 1997, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly approved an "In the City for Good" Initiative. One part of that was the goal of funding \$500,000 in urban ministry programs and projects each year. After five years of grants, it is clear that some improvements are now ready to be implemented.

In order to strengthen the quality of the projects and increase the funding available, there will not be an "In the City for Good" grant process for 2004. The year will be used to strengthen the endowment fund, provide for education and strategic direction, and build momentum for 2005.

For more information about the program or on how to make a donation to the In the City for Good Endowment, contact Mary Ann Peterson at MPeterso@elca.org or Dave Daubert at david_daubert@elca.org. For information on other urban ministry resources, go to www.elca.org/do

Connect to rural ministry alliance

Approximately 55 percent of the ELCA's 10,776 congregations are in small town and rural settings. In order to better serve this large and diverse constituency, the ELCA is developing the Small Town and Rural Ministry Alliance (STaR).

Members of the STaR Alliance will include individuals, congregations, agencies, colleges, seminaries, resource centers, camps, continuing education sites, etc.

Annual membership fees will financially support the STaR Alliance, and alliance members will sustain one another and their communities through prayer, action, and education.

ELCA Small Town and Rural Ministry Alliance will make sharing information and resources about rural ministry easier by nurturing and supporting "affinity groups."

Affinity groups will be formed around particular areas of interest, such as moral

deliberation, community development, leadership development, evangelism, and resource development.

Each of the affinity groups will have a "weaver" who initially will be a member of the ELCA rural ministry staff. The weaver will put people with similar interests in contact with each other.

The STaR Alliance inaugural annual meeting will be June 24-26, 2004, at

Newberry College in Newberry, S.C. The meeting theme will be

"Celebrating Rural Life." The featured keynote speaker will be Tex Sample.

To become a member of the Small Town and Rural Ministry Alliance, fill out the application form at www.elca.org/star and send it, along with your membership dues, to Sandra A. LaBlanc, AIM, ELCA Rural Ministry Resources and Networking, 2930 East 13th Street, Des Moines, IA 50316-1444.

For more information about the ELCA STaR Alliance, go to www.elca.org/star or call 800/638-3522, ext. 6556, or send e-mail to slablanc@elca.org.



Giving support during remarriage and blending families

It's estimated that by 2007 step-families will outnumber nuclear or traditional families in the United States.

"I do's" along with the more recent occasions to "redo - the - do's" have become an important part of congregational life. Even so, marriages and remarriages create a dynamic in our congregations that needs to be considered as couples and their children strive to find faith, hope, and security that will equip and empower them to embrace the many joys, challenges, and uncertainties that reside within their own versions of family. They are searching for programs, relationships, and inspiration that will give them the confidence and wisdom to deal with whatever another day might bring.

This reality is intensified by some statistics indicating that the number of couples who resign or forgo their initial intent may be as high as 50 percent of all first marriages, approximately 70 percent of all second marriages, and up to 90 percent of third or more marriages.

How congregations can be supportive

- Our ministries must embrace the heart of the people's needs and circumstances. Individuals carry a sense of vulnerability with the hopes and dreams they bring into relationships. Unresolved issues, feelings, and past life experiences have the potential to affect the intimacy, openness, and communication necessary to really thrive.
- Use sermon illustrations that are real

and relevant. Provide invitations and entry points for people of all ages to gain insights for their own daily lives from biblical stories.

- Regard the individual needs and strengths of blended or step-families apart from those of a nuclear family. Though they have many similarities, they are fundamentally very different. Invite people of all ages from a variety of family configurations to periodically assess the content and approach designed to welcome, nurture and engage them.
- Provide pre-marriage classes with options for ongoing small group fellowship and support. Plan retreats for couples and families to join with others to enjoy inspiration and support.
- Give family members an opportunity to nurture basic skills for communication, coping and conflict resolution through parent-child, inter-generational, and couples events. A resource titled *Faith Family Style: Generations Growing Together* is available through Augsburg Fortress by calling 800/328-4648 (ISBN6-0001-3236-0). *Just Family Nights*, a home-based activity book, is available through the Institute for Peace and Justice at www.ipj-ppj.org. Include occasions to acknowledge and nurture individual family identity and common intent as you assist them in

creating a common family vision or mission statement.

- Provide and promote resources in your church library for personal and family enrichment. Scan through a variety of Web sites, including The Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment, www.bettermarriages.org, Stepfamily Association of America, www.saa-families.org or InStep Ministries, www.instepministries.com for information and resources.
- Invite couples or families who have endured specific challenges and transitions to walk with those who are currently involved in similar stages of family life. Offer mentoring relationships for fellowship, encouragement and support.
- Nurture a sense of understanding and pastoral care in Sunday school teachers and congregation leaders. Encourage them with an open and affirming heart to shape attitudes and misbehaviors that are typical of children trying to manage family transitions. (Most negative behaviors stem from feelings of insecurity and perceived neglect or insignificance.)
- Include specific prayers for new marriages and step-families for a few weeks following the actual wedding date. Keep a cumulative record of the dates to honor anniversaries with recognition and prayer.

—Mim Campbell is director for children and family ministries, ELCA Division for Congregational Ministries



Lobster with vendor.

Steak with the guys.

Meatloaf with the kids.

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Give your pastor a lift

During the holiday season, let your pastor know his or her well-being is important to you and your congregation. Consider doing something for your pastor that highlights one of these components of wellness:

Spiritual – Pray for and with your pastor.

Physical – How about giving a gift certificate for a sporting goods store or setting a time to walk together?

Emotional – Go out of your way on Sunday to provide words of encouragement for your pastor.

Social/interpersonal – Gather a few people and schedule a walk or prayer time with your pastor.

Vocational – Make a contribution for your pastor to attend a workshop.

Intellectual – Give a gift certificate for a book from Augsburg Fortress.

The ELCA Division for Ministry and Board of Pensions provides tools and resources to help pastors and other ELCA church workers on their health and wellness journey at www.elcaforwellness.org

Did you see the Action Packet?

www.elca.org/colactionpacket

The contents of the November-December Action Packet included:

- *Prayer Ventures*
- *Pericope Partners*
- 2004 Devotional Guide for Congregation Councils and Committees
- Fund for Leaders in Mission flyer: *Rise to the \$1 Million Challenge*
- *Procession* newsletter
- The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity resource order form
- *The Deaconess* newsletter