



Help middle-school youth 'take a stand' with Africa

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Ascension Lutheran's confirmation class in Baltimore, Md., learned about life in Africa through a Bible-based activity called *Banish Hunger: Stand With Compassion*. The 45-minute teacher-led activity looks at the true story of an AIDS orphan named Masese, and then at the Bible story of the feeding of the 5,000. As the students learned about Masese, a 14-year-old youth in Kenya, they also learned how her lifestyle is very different from their own and how precarious it can be to have enough food daily in Africa. The story of the feeding of the 5,000 taught them that Christians are called to follow Christ's example in demonstrating compassion to others.

Ascension's confirmation class was participating in the Stand With Africa campaign, a project of Lutheran World Relief, the ELCA World Hunger Program, and LCMS World Relief. The campaign supports African churches and communities as they withstand HIV/AIDS, banish hunger, and build peace. It gives special emphasis to a continent that is a place of promise and progress despite its problems. On the Stand With Africa Web site (www.standwithafrica.org), there are new resources for middle-school youth to help "Youth Take a Stand."

To learn about hunger in Africa during the class session, the students at Ascension Lutheran tried shelling enough peanuts for a week's worth of nutritious peanut sauce, a common dish in West Africa. As the teacher read the lesson out loud, a bell signaled it was time to read a food-supply announcement. For example, one announcement read: *Rains flooded your garden and washed away young maize plants. Time to replant.* After a statement was read, some people in the class had to stop shelling peanuts so they could experience what it felt like to have their food security interrupted.

Rob Sharps, instructor of the class said that the activity was an effective tool and it was clear that the members of the class could relate to Masese. Stephen Geiss, a student, added that he really liked the activity because it was so different from the typical Bible study he has experienced.



Ascension Lutheran's confirmation class in Baltimore, Md., shells peanuts as they learn about food and life in Africa through the "Youth Take a Stand" program.

Helena Woznicki, another member of the class, said the peanut-shelling activity helped her understand the reality of hunger in Africa.

At the end of the group session, students were encouraged to go home and visit the Stand With Africa "Youth Take a Stand" Web site to learn more about the campaign through interactive games and activities. They can play the Detest-Pest-Game, solve the Intercropping Puzzle, play the AIDS Game, take a virtual tour of Mukuru Agricultural Center, view a slide show of Masese's World, build a Peace Tree, and learn to speak some African language phrases. All of these activities inform youth about the Stand With Africa campaign and its work with grassroots partners in Africa.

Many sections have downloadable teacher guides and a student guide that can be printed for use in a group setting.

How to get involved

To learn more about Stand With Africa, and the special "Youth Take a Stand" Web resources, go to www.standwithafrica.org/ytas. Here are some things your youth group or confirmation class can do:

- Have the students visit the Stand With Africa "Youth Take a Stand" Web site. In their next session, give them the opportunity to share what games and activities they explored.
- Have a brainstorming session where youth plan an event to raise awareness and funds for the Stand With Africa campaign.
- Encourage your group to use the Stand With Africa Prayer Journal that can be downloaded at www.standwithafrica.org. Going to www.standwithafrica.org and clicking on the "Youth Take A Stand" navigation button will help you find these resources for youth.

Church workers and teachers can use these materials in Sunday school, confirmation classes, youth groups, and in other settings. These materials have also been used with intergenerational groups and adults. Click on the "Youth Take A Challenge" button and get ideas on how to get your congregation active in the campaign.

Also encourage your youth to sign the message board on the Web site (click on the photo of the four young people) so they can share what they learned.

Ways to use the new edition of *Making Christ Known*

"Making Christ Known 2004" offers 20 new colorful pages of stories that seek to explain who we are as the ELCA, what we do in ministry together, and how we fund it. This is the tenth anniversary issue of this popular resource.

Nowhere else will you find stories of churchwide ministries all in one publication—stories that span global mission, higher education, outdoor ministries, mission outreach and more. This year's issue spotlights ELCA young people and their contribution to ministries throughout the country and around the globe. And back by popular demand: the "Making Christ Known" crossword puzzle.

How to use *Making Christ Known*

- Highlight a ministry area and use as a display at a mission fair.

- Distribute at the annual congregation meeting, congregation council meetings, budget meetings, and stewardship committee meetings.

- Share with new members and confirmation students to introduce them to the work of the wider church.

- Discuss in adult education class, asking, "Where do you find yourself in these stories?" and "Which stories might be especially valuable for our congregation?"

- Use as a "thank you" to members for their generous financial contributions that make these ministries possible.
- Download any article or photo into your own format from the Web at www.elca.org/dcm/stewardship/makingchristknown.html

Order enough free copies of "Making Christ Known 2004" for each family in your congregation. Call Augsburg

Fortress at 800/328-4648 (ISBN 6-0001-7412-8; pay only postage).

In addition, a professionally made PowerPoint presentation based on "Making Christ Known" is now available on CD-ROM. One free copy per congregation is available from the ELCA Resource Information Service at 800/638-3522.

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Renewing Worship during Holy Week and Easter

The three days (Triduum) of Maundy Thursday evening through Easter Sunday stand at the center of the church year. The intense worship opportunities on these days provide the foundation for all we do in worship throughout the year.

Although the Renewing Worship provisional worship resources for specific seasonal liturgies (including Holy Week, Triduum, and Easter) are not yet available (look for them in the autumn of 2004), there are numerous items from the provisional materials already available that can be adapted and used this year.

Historically, the church's pre-eminent time to baptize, especially adults, is at the Easter Vigil. *Holy Baptism and Related Rites* (available from Augsburg Fortress by calling 800/328-4648; ISBN 0-8066-7002-9; \$15 plus shipping) provides a provisional baptismal rite (pages 5-10) that could be studied and used this year. Don't overlook the supplemental materials (pages 11-18). They provide some interesting alternative texts for parts of the baptismal liturgy. Musical acclamations to accompany the rites are available for free download e at www.renewingworship.org/resources/acclamations/index.html

As with all the Renewing Worship materials, be sure to send in your evaluation of these rites after you've used them.

During the Easter season, as a possible

alternative to the Brief Order of Confession and Forgiveness, consider using the Remembrance of Baptism rite provided in *Holy Baptism and Related Rites* (pages 100-103). If preferred, this brief rite can be used following the sermon, incorporating the creed (pages 104-105). Again, some interesting supplemental texts follow (pages 106-111) and the musical acclamations mentioned above may be included.

Many congregations are already exploring and evaluating the contents of the *Renewing Worship Songbook* (order by calling 800/328-4648; ISBN 0-8066-7050-9; \$7.50) and its accompanying volume *New Hymns and Songs* (ISBN 0-8066-7015-0; \$20). Numerous hymns in the collection are appropriate for use during the liturgies of the Triduum. Here are some ideas:

- **Filled with Excitement (Mantos y palmas), R140.** This rhythmic song, originally in Spanish, could be an interesting alternative to "All Glory, Laud, and Honor" at the entrance procession on Passion (Palm) Sunday.
- **Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross, R138.** A simple melody accompanies this text by Fanny Crosby (the author of "Blessed

Assurance") and could be used in a Passion (Palm) Sunday or Good Friday liturgy.

• **As the Deer Runs to the River, R136.** Loosely based on Psalm 42, and including references to the Exodus story, this hymn could be used as a response to the Ezekiel reading at the Easter Vigil.

• **Song over the Waters, R160, or Wade in the Water, R159.** Both these songs, one an African American spiritual and the other more contemporary, could easily accompany the renewal of baptism at the Easter Vigil as worshipers are invited to the font.

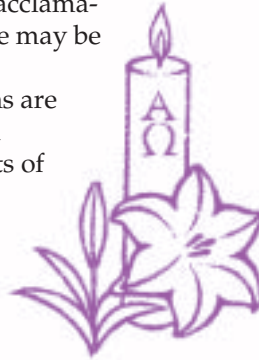
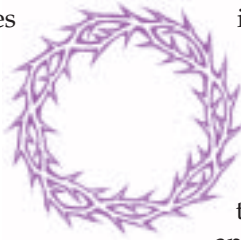
• **Blessing, Honor, and Glory, R151.**

Coming to us from the repertoire of contemporary Christian music, this chorus boldly proclaims the resurrection of Christ along with some of the same images from Revelation as the canticle "This is the Feast." It could be sung at the Easter Vigil following the Gospel, leading to the communion table.

Renewing Worship

Renewing Worship is a project of the ELCA leading to renewal of the church's worship life, beginning with conversation in your congregation. At the core of the project is the development of a new worship book and supportive resources.

To learn more about this important project, especially resources for engaging your congregation in conversation around worship matters, and to let your voice be heard, visit www.renewingworship.org



Check out resources for worship leaders, planners

Postmodernism in Christian Worship

The emergence of postmodern thought is beginning to affect the church in profound ways. To learn more about postmodernism and its impact on the church and worship, see these Web sites and recently published books:

www.elca.org/dcm/worship/worship/postmodernism.html (ELCA Web page)

www.emergingchurch.org (a site by a Lutheran Web master)

www.emergingworship.org (a site from the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.)

www.theooze.com (a very informative nondenominational site)

• *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World.* Robert E. Webber, 1999. Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Mich. (www.bakerbooksretail.com) ISBN 0-8010-6029-X) Explores the connection between classical Christianity and postmodern thought in the areas of theology, worship, spirituality, and mission.

• *A Primer on Postmodernism.* Stanley J. Grenz, 1996. William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mich. (www.eerdmans.com) ISBN 0-8028-0864-6) A helpful introductory overview of the various cultural expressions that make up postmodernism.

• *The Future of Protestant Worship: Beyond the Worship Wars.* Ronald P. Byars, 2002. Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville. (www.wjkbooks.com) ISBN 0-6642-2572-1) A compelling guide for moving beyond the modern "worship wars" to postmodern worship that is sacramental, communal, and metaphorical.

• *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age.* Paul Lakeland. Fortress Press, 1997. (www.augsburgfortress.org) ISBN 0-8006-3098-X) A discussion of the impulses and critical impetus behind the cultural, intellectual, and scientific expressions of postmodern thought and the church's mission in the postmodern world.

• *Texts under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination.* Walter Brueggemann. Fortress Press, 1993. (www.augsburgfortress.org) ISBN 0-8006-2736-9) Walter Brueggemann issues a passionate call for a bold restructuring of

the imagination of faith in our postmodern context.

• *Liquid Church.* Peter Ward, 2002. Hendrickson Publishers (www.hendrickson.com) ISBN 1-5656-3680-5) A vision of the church in the postmodern era.

Support for musical leaders

Here are some resources to support musical leaders in your congregation.

Keeping the Song Alive

Despite the name, the Leadership Program for Musicians Serving Small Congregations (LPM) provides an excellent program for musicians serving congregations of all sizes. Synods are encouraged to offer this program. Training for potential coordinators will be offered again this summer, June 29-July 5, on the campus of California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, Calif. In addition to training new coordinators, the program will provide practical enrichment opportunities for all church musicians, including 18 different workshop topics. Leaders include Jeffrey Rickard, William Bradley Roberts, Lorraine Brugh, Martin Seltz, Michael Burk, Scott Weidler, and Marti Rideout. Daily worship, valuable time for socializing, networking, and conversation round out the schedule. For information, see www.lpm-online.org or call Scott Weidler at 800/638-3522, ext. 2554. LPM is a cooperative program of the ELCA and the Episcopal Church U.S.A.

Conferences of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians

Each of the four regions of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians (ALCM) are offering an educational conference this spring or summer. Region 1: New Songs of Celebration Render, July 27-30, Frankenmuth, Mich. Region 2: Call and Response—Conversations between God and God's People, April 15-18 sailing from Port Canaveral, Fla. Region 3: Alleluias! Amens—Focus On the Fall Festivals, June 20-23 in Rockford, Ill. Region 4: Come Away to a Quiet Place, July 9-12, near Santa Fe, N.M.

For more information about the programs and registering, see www.alcm.org

Seeds for the Parish

www.elca.org/co/seeds

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

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Build support for future leaders of the church

Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Sun City West, Ariz., is one of several congregations rising to the challenge to support the identification and preparation of a new generation of leaders for the ELCA.

As part of their capital campaign, Lord of Life is designating 7 percent to the goal of the Fund for Leaders in Mission.

The congregation chose to support seminary scholarships through the Fund because members recognize the need to encourage and prepare future leaders for the church, says Pastor John Kautz.

Kautz says, "Well-trained leaders are critical to the future of our church, and including the Fund for Leaders in Mission in our capital campaign is a way of supporting the ministries of the wider church. This legacy of educated and well-trained pastoral leadership is part of our heritage as Lutherans—and it is a gift we as Lutherans bring to the wider church as well."

By conducting this campaign during the Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation Challenge to the Fund for Leaders in Mission, Lord of Life's gift to the Fund will be matched with \$1 for every \$2 given. The \$1 Million Challenge will match gifts given to the Fund through August 28, 2005.

Your congregation can help the church rise to the Challenge. Giving to the Fund for Leaders in Mission during the Challenge can significantly increase the impact of your gift with this one-for-two dollar match and help the ELCA reach the goal of increasing the number of students receiving scholarship support.

Resources to get you started

Brochures, bulletin inserts and giving envelopes are available free of charge to help your congregation participate in the Thrivent Challenge to the Fund for Leaders



Members of Lord of Life Lutheran, Sun City, Ariz., enjoy the kick-off to their "Room to Grow" campaign, which will support in part the Fund for Leaders in Mission.

in Mission. To order the brochure or for more information on how your congregation can participate in the Challenge, contact Fund for Leaders in Mission at 800/638-3522, ext. 2119, or visit www.elca.org/fof/fundforleaders

How to get involved in the ELCA Studies on Sexuality

There are promising signs of good participation by members of the ELCA in this study process, especially related to *Journey Together Faithfully, Part Two: The Church and Homosexuality*. The study guide's first printing ran out quickly and the booklet has now been reprinted. In addition, many congregations are starting this study with a review of, or perhaps a first look at, *Journey Together Faithfully, Part One: ELCA Studies on Sexuality*, which has also gone into a second printing.

In keeping with the request of the 2001 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, 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. There is a response form in the booklet to send back to the Task Force. This is your chance to be heard!

How are congregations using the study guide?

St. Stephen's in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, planned a six-week adult education forum. In a parish of about 100 active families, 40 individuals attended one or more sessions and 30 response forms were filled out. Congregation member Bill Rosberg led the study. In his evaluation, he said, "The comments were positive and affirming. I wasn't really sure how this forum series would go. I feared it might be divisive and negative. I can happily state that I was wrong. It was a great example of why St. Stephen's is a growing compassionate faith community." In the weeks before they started the study, Rosberg attended both of the congregation's two worship services to announce the program. "I told them it might not be fun—this is fairly heavy stuff—but that the church needs their input." He promised that they would share the comments and experience with the churchwide offices, which they did.

Other congregations have approached the study differently. The February 2004 issue of *The Lutheran* magazine tells the stories of three congregations and their different approaches to the sexuality studies. Later issues will follow up with these congregations as they complete various stages of the study process. An interview with Dr. James Childs, director for the ELCA Studies on Sexuality, appears in the same issue. Finding out how other congregations are using the study guide materials and learning a bit

about the feedback process can provide your congregation with reasons to study what is unarguably a difficult topic for many.

Reasons to participate

1. Learning to deliberate over tough issues as sisters and brothers in Christ and understanding one another better are important values. All who participate in this study process will do both.
2. Participation in the study can increase one's knowledge of the Bible and of Lutheran theology.
3. Writing a response—either as a group or an individual—can help clarify one's thinking and understanding of these issues. Go to www.elca.org/faithfuljourney/study02_response.html to complete the response form online, or to download a copy and mail it in.
4. The insights and ideas communicated in

the responses may present new possibilities that will be helpful as the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality begins the process of discerning what recommendations will assist the church in living and working together faithfully.

5. The report to the 2005 Churchwide Assembly on the ELCA Studies on Sexuality will summarize all feedback. All voices will be heard.

How to get started

The booklet *Journey Together Faithfully, Part Two: The Church and Homosexuality* can be ordered by calling 800/328-4648 (ISBN 6-0001-6848-9); the cost is \$1.50 per copy, plus shipping.

You can also find it on the Web at www.elca.org/faithfuljourney. *Journey Together Faithfully, Part One: ELCA Studies on Sexuality* is still available on the Web.

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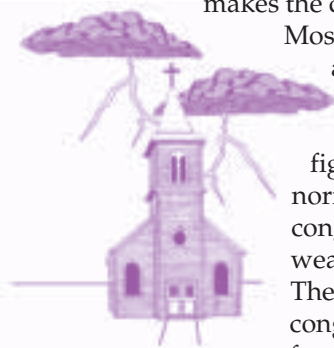
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Resource on discernment

Listening to God: A Guide to Discernment is the newest resource from Women of the ELCA. It further explores the 2002-2005 triennium theme, "Listen, God Is Calling." In six sessions this resource introduces women to tools they can use as individuals for discerning God's hopes and desires for their lives. These same tools are also used in the later sessions to help women's groups discern what their gifts are for ministry in their congregation or community. This resource can be used in a congregation, as part of a cluster or conference event, or as part of a synodical women's convention. The six sessions can be conducted over six weeks or over the course of a weekend as a retreat. The format is flexible, depending on the size of the group. *Listening to God: A Guide to Discernment* can be ordered through Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648 (ISBN 6-0001-9376-9; \$6.75 plus shipping).

New video on conflict

Conflict in a congregation, whether large or small, can be very painful and destructive—or it can have positive effects. What makes the difference?



Mosaic Television asks the questions: Why do congregations fight? Is conflict normal? How can a congregation weather the storm? The video profiles a congregation that faced a difficult

conflict and lived to tell about it. It also features congregational conflict experts such as the Rev. Peter Steinke and synod staff who specialize in conflict resolution.

The 30-minute video can help your congregation learn about what helps and what hinders in dealing with disagreements and difficult issues.

This resource has an accompanying user's guide that will help start discussions. The video is available on DVD or VHS for \$19.95 by calling Mosaic Television at 800/638-3522, ext. 6009, or go to www.elca.org/mosaic

Young adult ministry event

Are you 20, 30, 40, 50 or 60 years old and interested in young adult ministry? If you answered yes, then Come to the Feast. Come to the Feast is the young adult ministry event that will be held in Tampa, Fla., May 26-31. The event attracts key presenters and practitioners in the area of ministry with people between the ages of 18 and 30. It is a place for networking, learning, and experiencing ministry in different styles with different people.

Come to the Feast is organized and sponsored by the National

Council of Churches of Christ in the USA-Young Adult Ministry Team (YAMT). The ELCA is one of 36 Protestant and Orthodox member communions that, through YAMT, supports this event with a young adult presence and scholarship dollar resources. For information on the program and registration materials, go to www.cometothefeast.org

Planning for Earth Day

In 1993 the ELCA adopted a social statement on "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice." In an ongoing commitment to the work of caring for the environment, many congregations do something to build awareness around Earth Day, usually during the week of April 22. An Earth Day Sunday 2004 resource from the National Council of Churches' Eco-Justice Working Group is available for download or in print. This year's resource, "Life-giving Breath of God: Protecting Precious Air Resources," includes a bulletin insert, sermon starter, litany, community success stories, quick facts and advocacy information. A resource list for further study is also included. For download, see the ELCA's Division for Church in Society Environmental Web page at www.elca.org/dcs/epr/environment/ENVindex.html. For a print copy, call the Division for Church in Society resource request line at 800/638-3522, ext. 2996.

Help for newly called pastors

First Call Theological Education (FCTE) is a three-year structured program of theological education to assist newly called leaders in the transition to rostered ministry. One of the most dramatic transitions in the life of a newly rostered person is the transition from seminary status (or non-rostered status) to the first call to public ministry.

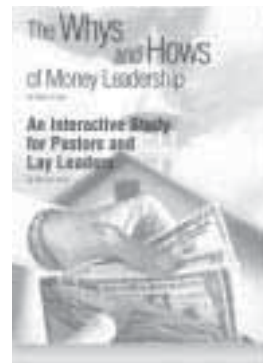
The ELCA Division for Ministry has a newly revised and expanded Web site on First Call Theological Education organized around (1) THE PEOPLE: Resources to support the First Call Participants, and (2) THE PROGRAM: Resources supporting the First Call program. Go to www.elca.org/firstcall to check it out.

In the section under THE PEOPLE, you will find book reviews, feature articles, lifelong learning opportunities, a Web board community, plans for a distance mentoring option, and online courses. You will learn what research has been done with first-call leaders and what the ELCA is learning about their perceptions of ministry preparation and needed areas of support.

In THE PROGRAM area, you will find a storehouse of information (with video clips) to answer questions such as: Why do we have First Call Theological Education (FCTE)? What does this program involve for newly called leaders and congregations? What kind of learning is involved in FCTE? How is FCTE financed? What resources are there?

Learn money leadership

Whys and Hows of Money Leadership: An Interactive Study for Pastors and Lay Leaders provides sound principles for congregational money management. This new in-depth, 80-page workshop resource suggests that nothing will make a difference in your congregation's



financial health until you examine your own beliefs about money and begin to connect money with your faith.

This seven-part workbook is ideal for pastors and lay leaders looking to connect their congregation's mission, vision

and goals with funding. It provides directions and handouts for 12 hours of study that may be held over a weekend, over seven evening sessions, or on two Saturdays a few weeks apart.

In a survey of newly rostered ELCA leaders, more than 500 respondents indicated they felt least prepared to plan a congregation budget, plan stewardship programs, and manage a church office. This resource is for them.

This material (or key sections of it) will work in a variety of settings: with congregational leaders, first-call theological education colloquy, conference-level continuing education for pastors, and synod assembly workshops.

Written by Michael Meier, coordinator for ELCA mission support, the resource is based on work by Mark Vincent, a Mennonite minister and author.

To order *Whys and Hows of Money Leadership*, call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648 (ISBN 6-0001-9148-0; \$15 plus shipping).

Multiple-point rural resources

Many congregations in rural areas are looking at an old strategy to address concerns of diminishing resources—shared ministry. In 1999 the Small Town and Rural (STaR) Team of the Division for Outreach, working with the ELCA Department for Research and Evaluation, conducted a study of Multiple-point parishes.

Multiple-point parishes are arrangements where two or more congregations share at least one pastor. These arrangements are not new in the church. The history of multiple point parishes stretches back into the 1700s and the early settlement of our country. The STaR Team study visited eight multiple-point parishes in four synods to learn more about these arrangements.

The study found that relationships are key to effective multiple point parishes. For more information about the study and for resources on developing multiple-point parishes, visit www.elca.org/dor/ruralministry.html. Print copies of the resource may be obtained from Helen Harms or Pat Franklin by calling 304/243-1114.

Network for youth ministers

What makes adult leaders, professional and volunteer, effective over the long-term in congregations? Education, networking, and support. The ELCA Youth Ministry Network exists to strengthen and empower youth ministry leaders in service to Christ. Annual conferences, a membership directory, a great Web site, resources, an annual salary survey, online discussion boards, listings of congregations with open positions, and a whole lot more are available to adult leaders.

And it's more than just education and resources. The Network links up members from around the country with each other to share and to support each other in their ministries.

For more information, visit and join the Network's Web site at www.elcaymnet.org. Or, call toll-free 866.ELCANET (866/352-2876).

Caring for the Caregivers

Caring for the Caregiver: A Guide for Congregational Support of Family Caregivers is a new resource from the Lutheran Deaconess Association (LDA). *Caring for the Caregiver* is a workbook designed to help congregations identify caregivers in their midst and to guide them in developing support systems. Sample congregations that tested the materials found them well organized, easy to understand, and easy to customize to their own needs. This would be useful for pastors, parish nurses, Stephen Ministers, and other congregation care team members. A CD with the complete text is included.

The cost is \$39.95 plus \$5.50 for shipping. To order, send a check to Lutheran Deaconess Association, 1304 LaPorte Avenue, Valparaiso, IN 46383 or call 219/464-6925. Go to www.valpo.edu/lda to learn more about the LDA.

Financial response

"With God's Permission" is a new program for congregational financial response that uses an asset-based approach. Located at

www.elca.org/dcm/stewardship/withgodspromise/

"With God's Permission" is a complete program for leaders who want to establish or improve the funding of God's mission in their congregations.

Three asset-based "mini-events" precede a modified "commitment Sunday." Each of the one-hour events involves all ages in exploration and sharing of basic, asset-based stewardship principles.

Bible studies, theme art, program ideas and asset-mapping techniques are featured on the Web site. Step-by-step instructions and intuitive navigation help

make the site easy to use. Printable handouts and leader instructions make the program easily transferable from the Web to planning meetings.

"With God's Permission" follows the philosophy and practices of the book, *The Great Permission*, published by the ELCA and mailed to all congregations in October 2002. This field guide for asset-based congregational planning is still available from Augsburg Fortress by calling 800/328-4648 (ISBN 6-0001-6960-4; \$6 each; \$5 each in quantities of six or more, plus shipping).

Resources look at Revelation

Congregations and preachers will have an opportunity to study the book of Revelation during the six Sundays of the Easter season, when the Epistle lessons are taken from this apocalyptic book. Two new resources by Professor Barbara Rossing of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago help Lutherans respond to the *Left Behind* phenomenon in light of the Bible, offering a more hope-filled interpretation of Revelation.

The Rapture Racket is a three-session video (20 minutes per session) on Revelation for adult forums and Bible studies, produced by SELECT video, available for \$20. To order, contact SELECT at 614/235-4136, ext. 4021, or by e-mail at select@trinity.capital.edu.

In her new book, *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation*, Rossing argues that there is neither a "rapture" of Christians off the earth, nor does Revelation predict a seven-year period of tribulation culminating in war in the Middle East. Rather, Revelation offers a vision of God's healing love for the world—a love that will not be left behind. The book is published by Westview Press and is available through bookstores or from www.westviewpress.com (ISBN 0-8133-9156-3; \$37).

Online book discussions

How often do you get to discuss a book with its author in a group setting? LutherLink book discussions give you and your congregation members that opportunity.

Each discussion will follow a similar pattern: a discussion area opened toward the beginning of one month, with information about how to order the book. During the following month, group participants and the author(s) will post questions, comments, background information and new observations. Posts can be made via the Web site, or you can participate completely via e-mail. Go to www.lutherlink.org/books/ to learn more. Here's the line-up for the rest of 2004:

March: *A Servant's Manual: Christian Leadership for Tomorrow* by Michael W. Foss

May: *Water from the Rock: Lutheran Voices from Palestine* by Ann E. Hafften

June: *The Right Road: Life Choices for Clergy* by Gwen Halaas M.D.

July: *Speaking of Trust: Conversing with Luther about the Sermon on the Mount* by Martin E. Marty

September: *Public Church: For the Life of the World* by Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda

November: *Breaking the Conspiracy of Silence: Christian Churches and the Global AIDS Crisis* by Donald E. Messer

Book on food and spirituality

Looking for a book for your reading group or adult forum? *Food for Life: The Spirituality and*

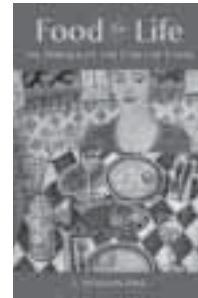
Ethics of Eating looks at creation, consumption, and life abundant—for everyone.

Author L. Shannon Jung writes about the everyday reality of eating, drinking, and the hungers that drive human life. He

places human hunger in its religious context and encourages readers to see eating as a spiritual practice that can renew and transform us and the world.

Jung takes readers from the personal to the global, looking at the religious meaning of eating (biblical and theological), shows how it dictates a healthy order of eating, discusses the eating disorders we experience (personally, culturally, and globally), and argues that these disorders can be reversed through faith practices, habitual activities (cooking, gardening), the church's ministry, and transforming our cultural policies about food.

The book is a way for people to connect their own struggles with food to the larger social and global struggle with food. L. Shannon Jung is director of the Center for Theology and Land and professor of Rural Ministry at the University of Dubuque and Wartburg Theological Seminary. To order, call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648 (ISBN 0-8006-3642-2; \$15 plus shipping).



What did Lutherans say?

Did Lutheran church bodies support or oppose U.S. military action in Vietnam? What about conscientious objectors? From temperance to pornography, from racism to Sunday closing laws, social issues have pressed the church for a faithful response from the beginning.

Now readers can research social statements dating from the 1920s, from the Augustana Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church in America, to the church bodies immediately preceding the ELCA.

Visit "Journal of Lutheran Ethics" at www.elca.org/jle and explore this treasure trove of church history by clicking on "Church Social Documents" in the "Research and Resources" menu. Put present-day social questions into historical perspective and stimulate conversation in your congregation.

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

ELCA Web site to get a new look

In the next few months you'll notice that www.elca.org is changing to help you find your way around its 20,000-plus pages more efficiently. A common page header is leading the way. The implementation of the header throughout the site provides consistent navigation options and identity. When completed, these improvements to the site will allow you to browse selected topics or search through an improved search engine from anywhere on the site. So keep checking it out!

New "Recently Featured" page

Have you ever said, "I know I saw something featured recently on the ELCA Web site, but now I can't remember the details"? Would you like an easy way to get reminders about current and recent Web resources featured at www.elca.org? If so, go to www.elca.org and click the link at the bottom of the page that says "Recent features" to see an index of recently featured items on the ELCA Web site.

On that page you may also sign up for biweekly e-mail notices of new and re-

cently featured items. Never miss out again on new and timely Web resources—sign up today.

Women of the ELCA

Women of the ELCA has completely redesigned its Web site as well as given it a new address: www.womenoftheelca.org

The new site offers easier, more efficient access to resources and programs featured on the Web, as well as improved navigation overall that makes locating the information and pages you need easier than ever before.

The redesigned site will be of interest to Women of the ELCA leaders and participants and to anyone interested in learning more about how Women of the ELCA is living its mission to mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

This fresh look for Women of the ELCA includes the Web pages for the organization's magazine, *Lutheran Woman*



Today—it also gets its own address at www.lutheranwomantoday.org

New site features include dynamic audio/visual clips, women's news (organizationally, nationally, and globally), a "get involved" section, daily Bible readings, "send this page to a friend," and many more. Look for it in early March.

Lutheran Vespers

Did you miss last week's broadcast of Lutheran Vespers? Do you live in an area without a local radio station that carries LV? Now you can listen to the Web version of the program at www.elca.org/lv/listen.html. Simply go to the Web site and click on the button that says "Listen to the Program." Each program runs approximately 25 minutes. On the same page, Pastor Walt Wangerin provides a new one-minute synopsis of what's coming up on next week's program. A complete listing of radio stations that carry LV, as well as the titles, texts and topics for upcoming programs, can also be found at www.elca.org/lv

Last chance for 'Peli' resources

Old friends of *Peli the Peli-can*: The last stocks of *Peli* resources are dwindling to minimal quantities. Introduced 10 years ago, this stewardship education program for elementary children features a pelican that teaches children to think about caring for God's gifts of creation, time, and possessions. The entire line of *Peli* resources will no longer be available after Fall 2004. If you're using this program, this is your last chance to order the resources. These include videotapes, puppet scripts, planning guides, stickers, newsletters, and an offering box. Most are still available for only the cost of shipping. For a free list of available *Peli* resources, call the ELCA Resource Information Service at 800/638-3522. Specify which *Peli-can Project* catalog you'd like: Stewardship of Creation, Stewardship of Money, or Stewardship of Health and Literacy.



Lutheran colleges prepare youth

Teens in your congregation are getting ready for college and careers. You want to continue to help them grow spiritually and serve their communities. That's exactly what Lutheran colleges want, too.

Beyond providing superb academic programs and excellent career preparation, Lutheran colleges are committed to helping students find mentors, grow in their faith, develop personal values and ethics, and enter adulthood with a sense of purpose in life.

Working together

The Lutheran Educational Conference of North America (LECNA) has developed communication tools and resources for students and parents that can also be used by congregations working with college-bound students and their parents. LECNA is always open to suggestions of how the church and colleges can work more closely. At www.lutherancolleges.org you'll find:

- college planning presentations — www.lutherancolleges.org/memberservices/connections

www.lutherancolleges.org/collegefairs

- details on college fairs — www.lutherancolleges.org/collegefairs
- list of Lutheran colleges — www.lutherancolleges.org/collegelist
- college planning brochures — www.lutherancolleges.org/memberservices/brochures

Lutheran College Fairs

Why not bring youth from your congregation to a Lutheran College Fair this year? Here is the Lutheran College Fairs schedule for this spring:

- Houston, Texas — Saturday, March 6
- Austin, Texas — Sunday, March 7
- Omaha, Neb. — Sunday, March 21
- Bay Area, Calif. — Saturday, March 27
- Irvine, Calif. — Sunday, March 28
- Vienna, Va. — Sunday, April 18
- Philadelphia, Pa. — Monday, April 19
- Bloomington, Minn. — Sunday, April 25
- Rochester, Minn. — Monday, April 26
- Fargo, N.D. — Tuesday, April 27
- Sioux Falls, S.D. — Wednesday, April 28

Visit www.lutherancolleges.org/collegefairs for details.

Resource centers look at ways to thank volunteers

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 We want to find a creative way to thank our teachers in May. What would you recommend?

A We have a collection called *Teacher Recognition Program* from *Church Teachers* magazine. It includes resources about teacher appreciation, themes for honoring teachers, and several programs to thank teachers. Unfortunately, it is no longer in existence, but we have permission to copy. Contact us at 701/232-3381 or julie.aageson@ecunet.org.

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

A We've hosted a salad potluck for volunteers and their families. The congregation provides a main dish and a dessert; everyone else brings a salad. It is a great opportunity for everyone to meet each other and visit together. Be sure to include "thank you" remarks and maybe even a small gift for each of the volunteers. —Dolores Wright, director, Sierra Pacific Synod Resource Center, Fresno, Calif.

A The Presbyterian educators in our area meet monthly. During a meeting last year, they shared

great ideas for thanking volunteers. Present teachers with a potted plant to symbolize the way their ministry makes children grow in Christ.

Have bookmarks printed with a picture of each teacher's class. Then present the bookmark along with a small devotional book to teachers during worship. Host a Sunday morning pancake breakfast for all congregation volunteers and their families. —Amy Lumanog, resource director for Christian education, Church Resource Center, Central States Synod, Kansas City, Mo.

A A favorite way we like to say "thank you" involves a trip to the local grocery store, Target, or Wal-Mart! Hand-deliver invitations to volunteers using a "PayDay" candy bar. Attach a note that reads: "It's PAYDAY! Join us on... as we celebrate the many gifts our volunteers share in the congregation!"

At the gathering, have a meal or finger foods, then give the gifts. Attach a note to each gift and be sure to call the individuals/groups forward while reading the note. Some examples are:

- "You really saved us!" Lifesaver candies

are a great gift for substitute teachers, or others filling in.

- "You created a symphony of love!" Attach a Symphony candy bar to present to musicians.
- "You wiped away tears of fear and left God's warm love!" Attach a container of wipes and give to nursery staff.
- "We're nuts about you! Thanks for bringing the kids out of their shells." Attach peanuts and give to teachers.

The possibilities are endless—just be creative! Call us and we'll fax additional ideas: 651/523-1607 or send e-mail to nstevens@luthersem.edu

—Sister Noreen Stevens, director, Eastern Minnesota Resource Center, St. Paul

A Try showing the five-minute video *Thank You: A Music Video Tribute to Sunday School Teachers*. A beautiful song of thanks compliments a montage of teachers doing what they do best. It's a great way to show appreciation. Unfortunately, it is no longer available for purchase, but can be borrowed from a resource center near you!

—Catherine Fink, director, Heilig Resource Center, Salisbury, N.C.

ELCA missionary teaches, builds bridges in Holy Land

The ELCA has long enjoyed a relationship with those who have inherited some of the earliest Christian traditions: the churches and their institutions in the Middle East. One of these is the Near East School of Theology (NEST) in Beirut, Lebanon, and it is here that ELCA missionary Austra Reinis teaches church history.



Austra Reinis

NEST is an interdenominational Protestant theological seminary serving the Evangelical (mainline Protestant) churches of the Middle East. It was formed in 1932, though its origins go back to 1835.

As a premier theological school in the Middle East, NEST trains pastors and church leaders for Presbyterian, Armenian Evangelical, Anglican and Lutheran churches in the region. Meanwhile, NEST is attempting to build bridges between Christians and Muslims. Besides the Islamic courses taught there, the seminary hosts several Christian-Muslim forums every year.

Lebanon itself was established as a shared nation between Christians and

Muslims. During the civil war in the 1970s and '80s, many Christians emigrated and Lebanon now has a Muslim majority. This is the modern reality of the church in the Holy Land.

For Reinis, whose academic background includes Reformation history and women in the church, living in the context where the Early Church had its roots provides a

fascination. She recalls a class in which the topic was the "controversy over the Mother of God." This conflict, in the years 428-431, was between Byzantine Empress Pulcheria and the Bishop of Constantinople as to whether the proper title for the Virgin Mary should be "Mother of God" or "Mother of Christ."

"The way Pulcheria saw things, since Christ was equal to God in divinity, it was fitting to refer to Mary as the Mother of God," said Reinis. "Furthermore, since

Mary had given birth to God, then symbolically it could be asserted that every woman in a mystical way is a 'God-bearer.' In Pulcheria's theology, the miracle of the divine birth from Mary conferred dignity on women in general."

A conflict emerged when Pulcheria's brother, the emperor, appointed Nestorius from Antioch in Syria as bishop. Nestorius disagreed with Pulcheria's understanding of Mary and women, and removed her from a privileged status within the church.

The challenge to Reinis' students comes in learning this kind of history of the church, a history that took place right in that area.

But more than anything, she likes the response she gets from students. "One told me once, 'I appreciate the community life, the family atmosphere and the critical thinking. Nobody forces you to adopt a certain position. You are given information and you have to find your own answer.'"

On April 26, you are asked to pray for Pastor Austra Reinis as part of the Prayer Ventures daily prayer guide. Pray for her, NEST, the Christian community in Lebanon and the region, and for peace in the land we call "holy."

ELCA Global Mission Events celebrate youth in mission

Did you know that half of the ELCA mission personnel who began global assignments in 2003 are under 35? That 20 percent are under 30? And that 55 children under 18 are growing up in ELCA missionary families around the world?

Claimed by God's Grace 2004 Global Mission Events

- July 15 – 18, Montana State University, Bozeman, Mont. (jointly sponsored by the ELCA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada)
- July 29 – August 1, Midwest Airlines Center, Milwaukee, Wis.

Find out more about young people in global mission at the 2004 Global Mission Events, taking place in July in Montana and Wisconsin. In one plenary session, a panel of young people who have served

in global mission will explore their call, their experiences, and how international mission is shaping their life and vocation. Rafael Malpica-Padilla, executive director of the ELCA Division for Global Mission, will moderate a lively conversation with

Angela Ruffin, who served two years in Namibia; Anne Hallman, who spent a year in the United Kingdom; Aaron Chan, a participant in the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel; and Tim Barr, who took part in a three-year Lutheran World Federation leadership program for youth that focused on issues of globalization.

Many current and former ELCA missionaries will also be on hand to talk about their work in countries around the world. Lively plenaries, Global University sessions, global music and cultural activities will round out each of this year's Global Mission Events—always an exciting, eclectic, and mutual conversation on God's mission in the world.

Junior high program explores Peru

During each Global Mission Event, junior high youth (11-13) will savor the flavors and sounds of Peru in a special program developed by the Concordia Language Villages of Bemidji, Minn. The

Friday-Saturday programs will immerse youth in Peru's food, language, culture, and Huch 'uy Runa, an ELCA-supported ministry that provides food, health care, and education to 250 street children in the Cusco area. In the evenings, youth may join their families or enjoy special swimming and pizza events for 11- to 18-year-olds.

The children's program will offer a creative mix of learning experiences to children 3 to 10. Child care is provided for children through age two.

Global Mission Events are great for people of all ages! For more information or to register, contact the Division for Global Mission at 800/ 638-3522, ext. 2642 or 2645 or visit www.elca.org/gme



LIRS helps "New Americans"

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) is a national partner for *The New Americans* project, which includes a seven-part dramatic TV series broadcast nationally on PBS this spring and supporting outreach materials (to learn more go to www.pbs.org/newamericans). LIRS endorses *The New Americans* project as an effective way to engage communities on the issue of the changing face of America.

The New Americans will look at the American dream through the eyes of immigrants and refugees—from Nigeria, India, the Dominican Republic, the West Bank, Mexico, and Vietnam. *The New Americans* hopes to build bridges and bring cultures together and to put a human face on the immigrant experience in the United States.

Faith-based discussion questions, devotional materials, and other resources for use with the project by Lutheran congregations, youth groups, adult forums, and others are available on the LIRS Web site at www.lirs.org starting mid-March.

Get resources to learn about Middle East

Interested in learning more about the Middle East? Considering an adult forum on Israel and Palestine? Here are two resources that can help—one electronic and one printed.

The print resource "Working for Peace in Israel and Palestine" provides an overview of the varied connections between the ELCA and people and ministries working for a just and lasting peace in Israel and Palestine. This colorful folder, illustrated with photos, lists phone numbers, ELCA actions and policies, Web sites, companion organizations, and more. It is designed to hold other more detailed information, such as statistics, maps, prayers, bibliographies, lists of resources, or specific information about advocacy efforts in the United States and with the United Nations, but can be used on its own as a quick reference guide. It will be particularly useful to

anyone making a presentation or leading a discussion about the Holy Land. To order call 800/328-4648 (ISBN 6-0001-7788-7; in packages of 20; pay only shipping).

Middle East Connections Web site

For continually updated information about the Middle East, go to www.elca.org/middleeast. This is the Middle East Connections Web site and from here you can access resources, news releases, and many other Web sites, including that of the ELCA's global partner, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan, Palestine, and Israel (ELCJ).

From the Middle East Connections Web site, you can join the Middle East Network listserv (an electronic mailing list). Some 350 people have already joined the list. They receive up-to-date information from ELCA staff and ecumenical partners who are in the region. The listserv communicates "action alerts" for advocacy efforts and facilitates local and global networking.



Congregations can address alcohol use—and abuse

It is estimated that 61 percent of Americans over age 12 consume alcohol to some degree.

The request for another “cold one” or a “double shot on the rocks” often walks the line between a socially acceptable behavior and the solitary attempt to ease the burden of the ongoing stress in our lives. It becomes even more complicated when issues of age, motivation, and circumstance come into play. And the presumed innocence of just having a drink or two—for some people—can be betrayed by genetic, social, and psychological factors that can be devastating.

Many people drink responsibly and carefully. But for some the use of alcohol can become an entry point to personal and family dysfunction. Its effect can be as minor as an irritating hangover—or as traumatic as living with auto fatalities, job loss, domestic abuse, and serious illness that is alcoholism.

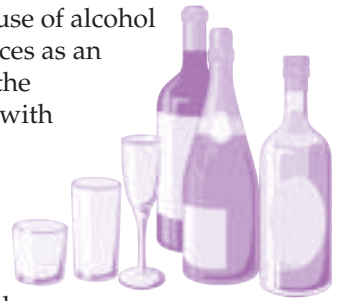
As the U.S. government, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), and other groups educate about alcohol abuse, some would wonder why the church should address this issue. After all, Jesus turned the water into wine at the wedding in Cana. Martin Luther’s wife brewed beer. Yet the church can help speak to the issue in a different way, to help people think about the choices they make in their daily lives, and how these choices affect their spiritual lives.

The question isn’t just about bottles of booze consumed. Author Harry Austryn once said, “We often mistake a desire of the body as a yearning for the soul.” Our challenge as a church is in interpreting faith for the sake of everyday discipleship. The range of this ministry includes an awareness of the need to teach healthy decision-making, conflict resolution, and building community as we inspire and equip people of all ages to live a lifestyle that is “Christ’s style.”

Ways to help

- Acknowledge and address real-life issues in proactive ways. Include alcohol use among your topics for small-group study among children, youth, and adults. Focus on the reality of alcohol abuse in our culture. Help members nurture a sense of faithful integrity as they encounter people and activities associated with alcohol use.
- Devote time to nurturing skills for effective communication, conflict resolution, stress management and decision-making. Invite members to consider criteria for making healthy lifestyle choices, and be aware of the realities of peer pressure at any age and the positive and negative consequences involved.
- Explore models for meditation and discernment about personal lifestyle choices and how they reflect our values.

- Discourage the use of alcohol and other substances as an option for easing the stress and coping with life’s challenges.
- Uphold and care for those who are alcoholics, fully aware that no one takes the first drink with the intent to become addicted. Give them the same “come-as-you-are” grace and support them as you do anyone else who strives to grow within your faith community.
- Provide ready access to organizations, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon, which provide specific support for alcoholics and their families.
- Include prayers for those dealing with alcoholism and other addictions.
- Plan family and intergenerational opportunities for people to talk about real-life issues from a faith perspective. Especially help youth realize the dangers of alcohol consumption as it pertains to choices about sexual behavior and other drug experimentation.
- Nurture self-esteem as a God-given gift to manage the stewardship of who we are as children of God, called to reflect God’s love and grace in the world.



Resources

- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) Web site www.alcoholics-anonymous.org
- Check out www.augsburgfortress.org for *Choices in the Ministry to Adolescence Program* (ISBN 0-8591-0804-X) and *Smart Choices* (ISBN 0-8066-372-6) from the Intersections Small Group Series.
- Also *The Heart of Addiction: A New Approach to Understanding & Managing Alcoholism and other Addictive Behaviors* (ISBN 0-0609-5803-0) at bookstores.
- You’ll find a variety of resources for children, youth, and adults at www.hazelden.org

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

Keep the wallet.
Keep the cash.


Return the wallet.
Keep the cash.

Return both.
Keep your self-respect.

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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.



Did you see the Action Packet?

- www.elca.org/colactionpacket
- The contents of the March-April Action Packet included:
- *Prayer Ventures*
 - *The Lutheran* 2003 Index
 - Mission Investment Fund loan flyer
 - Lutheran College Fairs schedule
 - *Ubuntu* mural poster
 - Lutheran Association of Christian Educators (LACE) brochure
 - *Procession* newsletter