



How one congregation grows with online connection

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A static church Web site is no longer enough. Bringing the congregation online and into fellowship with one another outside of Sunday morning is what is capturing the attention of growing congregations.

"Using the Internet to bring my congregation into daily contact with one another is one of the most simple and useful benefits of the modern age," says the Rev. Kerry Nelson, pastor of Covenant Lutheran Church in Houston, Texas. "It removes the miles between us and provides immediate support to the church community."

Pastor Nelson is no stranger to innovative uses of the Internet. For the past five years he has been the author of a daily devotion electronically mailed to over 5,000 subscribers worldwide (found at www.elca.org/spiritual.html click on "Devotions" link).

Pastor Nelson has been working to bring his entire congregation online. "We have small groups of people in our congregation who collaborate together online daily using the services of Faithgroups.com. By late fall we intend to have the entire congregation online for several different purposes, including electronic distribution of newsletters and announcements, prayer support groups, youth chats, and online discussion groups that support the various ministries of our church." (For more information on Faithgroups.com, see accompanying box or visit www.faithgroups.com/congregation.html)

According to the April 2004 Pew Internet and American Life report, 64 percent of active churchgoers use the Internet for spiritual or religious purposes. This figure represents 82 million Americans, and reflects a substantially higher number of online religious faith seekers than ever before measured by Pew. While

17 percent of the entire Internet population looks for information online about where they can attend religious services, 38 percent engage in online communication of a spiritual nature, using services such as e-mail. These figures illustrate how talking and communicating together online has over twice the appeal of simply reviewing information published on the Web.

Most ELCA pastors are used to thinking about the church Web site as a necessary publication tool. The congregation homepage promotes the mission of the congregation, coordinates member activity, and provides information to seekers. "I want my congregation to enjoy Christian community daily, and short of all living on the same street together, the only way it can happen is by using innovative online services," says Pastor Nelson.

"Kerry's congregation is just one of many in our synod that recognize the challenge and opportunity presented by the Internet for church growth and renewal," says Rob Moore, assistant to the bishop for Communications, Outreach, and Call Process for the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod. "Our synod office has used tools provided to us by Faithgroups.com over the past year, and we are very pleased with how it has improved our communication with the churches that we serve," he says. "It would be great if all of the congregations we serve would explore and develop the congregational 'egroup' model that Kerry's congregation is embracing."

"Our church is a busy, growing congregation," says Pastor Nelson. "We pur-



Pastor Kerry Nelson, Covenant Lutheran Church in Houston, is finding innovative ways to foster community.

chased land across the street from our current facility and are building a new sanctuary. Our staff and congregational leaders are involved in the new building, as well as overseeing ongoing ministry and outreach. We often don't have time to even plan a face-to-face meeting, let alone carve out the time to attend one. Working together online is efficient and convenient, and it's fun too."

Pastor Nelson is also involved in a redesign of the congregation Web site and in the conversion of their newsletter to an electronic format. "I can't imagine that we will stop producing a printed version of our church newsletter any time soon, but the lower cost of distributing the newsletter electronically is very appealing."

For information about starting your own congregational Egroups, see the box below for links to Faithgroups.com.

For additional ideas and resource for enhancing your congregation's Web site, go to www.elca.org/webministry

Communication services from Faithgroups.com

Faithgroups.com offers congregations a variety of communication services, including online community and collaboration tools, affordable telecommunications products, and discount Internet services.

The Congregational Egroup service at Faithgroups.com can be found at www.faithgroups.com/congregation.html It includes e-mail distribution lists, Web-based online collaboration tools, easy-to-manage groups of online users, live chat, calendaring, and many other features that allow entire congregations or subgroups in a congregation to work together online. It's simple to use and easy to link to your congregation's homepage.

Other services Faithgroups offers to congregations include affordable local and long-distance phone services (www.faithgroups.com/phone.html), and discount domain name registrations for as low as \$8.75 annually.

Faithgroups.com manages online services for the LutherLink online community (part of www.ecunet.org). As a result, congregations using the Congregational Egroup product from Faithgroups.com will also find additional ELCA resources made available to them at no charge. These resources

include invitations to churchwide discussions on current issues, announcements, and news stories from the ELCA.

"The Congregational Egroup service is a logical extension of the online community we've been building on LutherLink for the past 16 years," said Paul Edison-Swift, director for Interactive Media and Networks in the ELCA's Department for Communication. "Over the years pastors and congregational lay leaders have learned the value of online discussion groups for studying the Bible and discussing issues of faith and society. It's time to bring the best possible online tools to the important task of congregational communication," he said.

Edison-Swift went on to say, "Faithgroups.com provides opportunities for sharing ideas and mutual support, as well as giving members easy access on LutherLink to offerings such as the 'Authors Online' book discussion series, in which Augsburg Fortress authors discuss their books online (www.lutherlink.org)."

Faithgroups.com is managed by Brian Lang, an ELCA member, founder of OnePlace.com, and author of the

Thomas Nelson book, *Making the Internet Family Friendly*. Faithgroups.com is majority-owned by Ecunet, whose board includes members from the ELCA, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Episcopal Church, and the American Baptist Church, among others.

The Congregational Egroup service described on this page costs \$149.95 annually for an unlimited number of groups. A discounted rate of \$99.95/year is available with a plan that allows external ads to appear at the bottom of messages in your groups.

More information and online registration forms are available at www.faithgroups.com/congregation.html



faithgroups.com

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Check out what's new from Renewing Worship



Provisional Resource for Daily Prayer

Daily Prayer, the seventh provisional resource in the Renewing Worship series, focuses on patterns of prayer linked to the rhythms of the day and of daily life, primarily in the church's gathering in assembly for these liturgies. It includes examples of how daily prayer may unfold in smaller groups and in personal use. These materials include the following:

- A brief description of a fundamental common pattern for daily prayer, illustrating also the variations in the ways evening prayer, morning prayer, and night prayer reflect this pattern.
- Text-only presentations of the proposed rites of Evening Prayer, Morning Prayer and Night Prayer (Compline) for assembly use, so that these can be seen and evaluated apart from the musical settings of some of these texts.
- A section of alternative and seasonal texts for elements of the liturgy.
- A narrative describing how the fundamental pattern for daily prayer may be fleshed out in situations other than the worshipping assembly is followed by four examples that illustrate a few specific ways how this might happen.
- A sampling of psalms illustrating several approaches to the question of psalm translation. Some of these psalms, with a variety of systems for musical pointing, are available on the Renewing Worship Web site at www.renewingworship.org
- A small section of Scripture readings suitable for daily prayer and related to the Sunday readings, chosen for the period from Advent to Transfiguration in year A (2005).
- Musical settings of the primary psalms and canticles for evening prayer and morning prayer. The musical settings in this part of the resource are only a sample to illustrate the range of possibilities.

It is important to emphasize that this volume is not a complete collection of the

texts and liturgical music to be proposed for daily prayer in the worship resources that will replace *Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW)*. This provisional volume includes mostly a sampling of new materials offered for testing and evaluation.

Longer-term core resources also will include some materials carried over from current usage. Feedback from congregations about existing materials and response to these newly proposed materials will help determine the balance between "new" and "old" that will be recommended for use.

More extensive information on *Daily Prayer* is included in the introduction to the volume. To gain the fullest use of these provisional materials, be sure to read the introduction to each volume in the series.

All volumes in the Renewing Worship series are available from Augsburg Fortress. Call them at 800/328-4648 or visit the Augsburg Fortress store online at www.augsburgfortress.org to place your order. *Daily Prayer* is \$15 plus shipping (ISBN 0-8066-7007-X)

Complete information about the Renewing Worship process is available at www.renewingworship.org

Worship Planning Help

It is not too early to begin planning worship for the church year that begins with this coming Advent. If your congregation is taking an active role in evaluating provisional hymns and songs from the Renewing Worship process, an index has been prepared to assist with your worship planning.

The index for Cycle A (Advent 2004 – Christ the King Sunday 2005) refers to both *Congregational Song: Proposals for Renewal* and the *Renewing Worship Songbook*. The recommendations relate primarily to the readings appointed by the Revised Common Lectionary and to the days and seasons of the church year. This resource, along with all Renewing Worship materials, is at www.renewingworship.org

It's not too late to get involved with Renewing Worship

Next summer the churchwide assembly will receive a proposal from the Renewing Worship team outlining a strategy for the future of worship renewal and resources in the ELCA. It's not too late to get involved! If you are just getting started with Renewing Worship, here are a few ideas for engaging your congregation in this important churchwide conversation.

- Begin with foundational principles and conversation. Don't jump immediately to debating your favorite hymns. Use *The Use of the Means of Grace* and *Principles for Worship*, along with their supporting educational materials, to begin talking together about important things that matter to the life of the church.
- Knowing that each congregation can't do it all, select one piece of the provisional materials for trial use in your congregation. Perhaps leaving the liturgical texts and music alone while exploring new hymns and songs would work in your congregation. Others may choose to sing familiar hymns while working hard to learn some new liturgical music. Still others may choose to try out some of the new texts, including confession and forgiveness, baptismal remembrances, eucharistic prayers, and so forth.
- Finally, whatever you choose to do, make your congregation's voice heard. Evaluations of all principles and resources are critical to the design and content of future materials and directions.

See www.renewingworship.org for complete information about this process, provisional materials, and ways to offer your evaluations.

New book series on 'Worship Matters'

A new multi-volume series from Augsburg Fortress, titled *Worship Matters*, examines key worship issues through studies by pastors, musicians, and lay people from throughout the ELCA. *Worship Matters* volumes will explore worship issues raised by the ELCA's Renewing Worship initiative and consider how worship speaks in today's world.

The books in the *Worship Matters* series are meant to appeal to a broad audience within the church: both those who already have a strong interest in the church's worship as well as those who would consider themselves "non-experts."

Each book in the *Worship Matters* series provides discussion questions at the end of every chapter. These can be used in group settings or for individual reflection. In addition, each volume will include a list of related resources for further reading. All *Worship Matters* volumes are priced at \$9.99 plus shipping and are available from Augsburg Fortress (800/328-4648 or www.augsburgfortress.org).

This September, the first four *Worship Matters* volumes will appear. Additional volumes are being planned on a variety of topics.

- *Why Worship Matters* by Bishop Robert A. Rimbo, Southeast Michigan Synod (ISBN 0-8066-5108-3). This first in the series is a foundational piece that explores just what the title suggests. Why does our worship matter? Why is it important to

attend to what we do when we gather as a community called together by God?

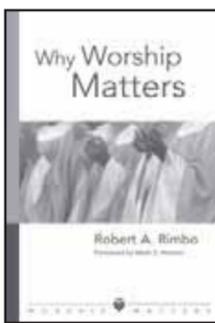
- *A Three-Year Banquet: The Lectionary for the Assembly* by Gail Ramshaw, ELCA

layperson and professor of religion at LaSalle University in Philadelphia (ISBN 0-8066-5105-9). Using the image of a lavish and variety-filled banquet, Ramshaw introduces us to the lectionary: what it is, why we have it, how readings are chosen, and how lectionary texts affect our worship and the assembly.

- *Daily Bread, Holy Meal: Opening the Gifts of Holy Communion* by Samuel Torvend, ELCA layper-

son and assistant professor of religion at Pacific Lutheran University (ISBN 0-8066-5106-7). Torvend invites the reader to consider the multiple meanings of Holy Communion. The communal character of Eucharist, Communion as a gift of reconciliation and as a pattern for service in the world, are all explored in the context of both liturgy and daily life.

- *A Place of Encounter: Renewing Worship Spaces* by D. Foy Christopherson, ELCA pastor and former executive director of Augsburg Fortress Ecclesiastical Arts (ISBN 0-8066-5107-5). One of the four particular dimensions of the church's worship addressed in the ELCA's *Principles for Worship (Renewing Worship, vol. 2)* is worship space. Using the principles developed in this volume, Christopherson shares with the reader what Lutherans care about when thinking about space for worship, and why they care about it.



Seeds for the Parish

www.elca.org/co/seeds

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New resources focus on women and children in crisis

Women of the ELCA has produced a three-piece set of resources that addresses youth and violence, sexual exploitation, and children at risk.

Rachel's Day: Women Boldly Speaking Up for Children

Rachel's Day was launched in 1996 as a day to broaden awareness of the violence children face and the actions the church can take to address it. Progress has been made, yet violence continues to escalate and more children are exposed to violence than ever before. Violence has become commonplace in our homes and in the back seats of our minivans through computer games, video games, music videos, and television. Even more action is needed now. We need bold voices speaking up for children everywhere, in every community.

Many ELCA congregations across the country celebrate Rachel's Day on the first Sunday in May. "Rachel's Day: Women Boldly Speaking Up for Children" helps further our efforts through biblical reflec-

tion, worship suggestions, a plan for action, and educational opportunities for adults and children.

Let your voice be a driving force behind the abolishment of violence against children around the world. Your first effort should start in your own community. Help organize your women's group and congregation in taking a stand. *Rachel's Day: Women Boldly Speaking Up for Children* can be downloaded from www.womenoftheelca.org

A Day Full of Light: Ending Commercial Sexual Exploitation

This powerful new resource responds to the 2002 Women of the ELCA Triennial Convention action that asked for resources to educate individuals and congregations on the effects commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) has on society.

Commercial sexual exploitation occurs when advertisements promoting strip clubs, escort services, and pornography appear in newspapers and in magazines, on billboards, and on the Internet, and in telephone directories. Worldwide, between 700,000 and 2 million women and children are trafficked across national borders for prostitution. Pornography alone is estimated to be a \$10 billion industry, which makes it a bigger business than professional baseball, basketball, and

football combined. You can shed a new light on this corruption by educating your congregation and community on the violence this industry brings about and offer ways end to this exploitation.

A Day Full of Light provides background information, a worship service, and a bibliography of organizations and resources that address CSE. Visit www.womenoftheelca.org to download *A Day Full of Light*.

Observance of Children's Sabbath

The National Observance of Children's Sabbath is an intergenerational and interfaith event that unites thousands of religious congregations and organizations. Its purpose is to draw attention to the needs of children at risk in our world. Traditionally, the annual celebration of *Children's Sabbath* day happens the third weekend in October.

Women of the ELCA offers *Say that I am a Child of God: Assuring Justice and Care to Leave no Child Behind*, a resource derived from *A Children's Sabbath Multifaith Manual*, which is endorsed by more than 200 denominations, faith groups, and religious organizations. It will guide you to use activities and worship material prepared by the Children's Defense Fund.

Involve your women's group and congregation, and continue your efforts to assure justice and care for all children. Download *Children's Sabbath* from www.womenoftheelca.org



New grant program to help develop young leaders

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans has announced a new grant program that will help develop young leaders for church and society.

Through its Youth Leadership Initiative: *Developing Youth Leaders Through Service Learning*, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans will partner with selected grant recipients to develop young leaders through service-minded learning.

"The goal of this grant initiative is to provide experiential and formative service learning opportunities that prepare youth and young adults from age 14 to 24 to become strong, service-minded leaders and members of the Lutheran church and society," said Lori Goudreau, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans program manager.

Goudreau said that eligible grant requestors will be contacted by Thrivent Financial and informed on how they can take advantage of the program, which distributes grants from \$5,000 to \$100,000 to both independent requestors and requestors who have formed partnerships with other eligible requestors.

The deadline for submitting grant proposals is **October 15, 2004**.

Eligible grant requestors include Lutheran

- high schools

- colleges and universities
- seminaries
- outdoor ministries
- campus ministries
- ELCA regions and synods

For more detailed information and proposal forms for this youth leadership development grant program, visit www.thrivent.com/leadership or call 800/

847-4836. For general information, you can contact Rod Boriack in the ELCA Youth Ministries/Gathering office at rod.boriack@elca.org or call 800/638-3522, ext. 2535.

Links to the grant information Web sites can also be found on the opening page of the ELCA Youth Ministries/Gathering Web site, www.elca.org/dcm/youth



New mission congregations don't need a bank for startup funds. All they need is the church - and the Mission Investment Fund. As a ministry of the ELCA, we provide loans to congregations in the U.S., Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. So, if you're interested in buying land, or building or expanding your church, we have the financing you need. At a rate you'll find very competitive. Talk to us today. And watch your plans come together.

877.886.3522



www.elca.org/mif

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

Election year guidelines

In an election year questions come up about what type of political activities congregations can participate in. Here are some Web-based resources that cover the topic of political activities by religious organizations.

The first is a 24-page document from the Pew Forum, "Politics in the Pulpit: A Guide to the Internal Revenue Code Restrictions on Political Activity of Religious Organizations." Go to <http://pewforum.org/publications/reports/IRCbrochureBIG.pdf>

The second is another very comprehensive article titled "Political Activity Guidelines for Catholic Organizations," but is equally applicable to all religious groups. Go to www.nccbuscc.org/ogc/guidelines.htm

While no resource covers every question, these two resources go a long way in addressing most issues. Please feel free to provide this information to your synod, congregation, and other organizations to assist them in determining what political activities are and are not allowed. For additional resources on voter participation and involvement, see <http://faithfuldemocracy.org/>

Day of prayer for peace

Working and praying for peace in our world is an important part of our faith life together. The

ELCA is a participant in the Decade to Overcome Violence, a major program of the World Council of Churches (WCC), which runs parallel with the United Nations "Decade for Peace." September 21 is designated by the UN as the International Day of Peace. The

WCC is asking that congregations observe it by engaging in a world day of prayer. Many congregations will be doing special prayers for peace on the preceding Sunday, September 19. Check out the ELCA Web site at www.elca.org/nonviolence for resources and information about the Decade to Overcome Violence. There you'll find a special Litany for Peace bulletin insert that was prepared by the WCC for the Day of Peace.

Congregation ads available

Do people in your community know about your congregation? Are you looking for ways to tell them about your church? Here's help!

The ELCA has just developed a series of new print ads that can be downloaded by congregations and customized with their own information. Go to www.elca.org/ads to see the ads, which are in black and white, and in two sizes in a PDF file format. The PDF file has an open area that allows a congregation to enter its name, address, Web site, and phone number. The

ads feature a variety of photos and engaging headlines to appeal to different age groups and demographics. You'll notice the use of the ELCA's new tag line, "Living in God's amazing grace" in these ads. A tag line is a way of building a "brand identity" (think of Nike's "just do it") that helps the public form a positive impression of an organization. To learn more about the ELCA tag line, go to www.elca.org/colgraphstd.html

You can use these new ads in local newspapers or community ad books (for instance, at school or sports events) as one-page flyers or enlarged into posters, as door-hangers, and in mailings to get the word out about your congregation and the ELCA. Check out www.elca.org/ads today.

I'm a Lutheran coloring book

New "I'm a Lutheran" coloring books are available for children of all ages. These would be especially fun to help celebrate Reformation Sunday at the end of October. Line drawings illustrate a simple song, highlighting basic Lutheran concepts in kid-friendly way. To order, call Augsburg Fortress 800/328-4648 (ISBN 6-0001-9708-X; Available in packages of 10 for \$6 plus shipping).

Candlelighting mental illness

The Lutheran Network for Mental Illness and Brain Disorders (LNMI) will again sponsor the annual All-Lutheran Candlelighting for Mental Illness during October, which is Mental Illness awareness month throughout the United States. LNMI is a joint effort of the ELCA and The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Its mission is to educate about mental illness and brain disorders so that congregations may support families living with these illnesses, and so that these families and individuals may be full participants in the lives of their congregations. ELCA congregations can support this effort by becoming more knowledgeable about mental illness and more welcoming, including and supporting people living with mental illness and their families. The Candlelighting includes a call to worship and prayers for people living with mental illness. A free reprintable bulletin insert is available through the Disability Ministries program of the ELCA Division for Church in Society by calling 800/638-3522, ext. 2996. Questions about LNMI and the work it is doing may be directed to Pastor Lisa T. Cleaver by e-mail at lisa.cleaver@elca.org or call 800/638-3522, ext. 2692.

Guidance for investors

The church seeks to witness the meaning of the Gospel to the private sector by offering guidance to individuals' consciences and to church institutions. To this end, the ELCA has produced a series of

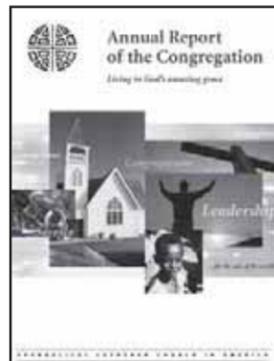
nine shareholder proxy voting issue papers on topics such as sustainability, global warming, and human rights. Individual investors or groups interested in discussing this aspect of the church's role in public life may download the issue papers at www.elca.org/advocacy/corporate/ Corporate Social Responsibility is an advocacy ministry of the ELCA Division for Church in Society.

International adoption help

International adoption gives hope and a future both to waiting children around the world and to prospective parents here in the United States. The Lutheran Adoption Network (LAN), a network of Lutheran Services in America, is now offering free informational guides to the adoption services provided by 30 member agencies that span the country from New England to the Pacific Northwest. The resource, titled "International Adoption: a Basic Guide," contains vital information about the adoption process and specific requirements in the 10 countries where LAN operates programs. The theme of the informational brochure is from Jeremiah 29:11 (paraphrased): "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for good and not for harm, plans to give you hope and a future." To request the brochure, call 877/278-2416.

New annual report covers

The ELCA Annual Report of the Congregation cover is a colorful



wraparound sheet for your annual report materials that includes a sung prayer to begin your annual meeting, a brief explanation of ELCA churchwide ministries funded by your congregation's

mission support, and a message from ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson.

Use as a cover for your congregation's annual report. Keep extra copies on hand as an overview of your congregation's ministries for members who join in the coming year. Make it a part of the archived record of your congregation's activities.

Available in packages of 50 for \$5 plus shipping (ISBN 6-0002-1174-0). Order the number of packages you need (for example, 200 covers = four packages).

A sample of the new Annual Report Cover was sent to all ELCA congregations in a special stewardship mailing in August.

Augsburg Fortress now accepts standing orders from congregations wishing to receive the Annual Report Covers automatically each year as soon as they are available. To place your standing order, call 800/328-4648 and ask for ISBN 6-0001-6738-5.

2005 servant events, camps

"Journeys 2005" is a catalog of servant events, high adventure camps, and volunteer opportunities for junior-high and senior-high students and young adults. Learn about programs for community service, social ministry, hunger and justice education, and adventure in the outdoors. These experiences encourage lifelong learning, commitment to service, faith development, and a stronger sense of community. To find out more, go to www.elca.org/dcm/camps/journey.asp or request a printed catalog by calling the ELCA Resource Information Service at 800/638-3522. Get multiple copies of Journeys 2005 by calling 800/638-3522, ext. 2593.

Online grants catalog

"Granting Hope" is the domestic hunger grants catalog of the ELCA, which describes 236 congregations and programs in the United States and the Caribbean that received funding from the World Hunger Program in April 2004. The online catalog includes information about how the grants process works and lists the criteria used in determining which programs receive funding.

Does your community have a program that serves people who are hungry, people with low incomes, or people who are homeless? Use this resource in your congregation or synod to raise awareness about hunger ministries in your area that received funding or to help similar programs apply for a grant. **The deadline for applications is October 1.** Visit the catalog at www.elca.org/grantinghope

New family devotional

Davey and Goliath are bringing more fun and a new name to the family devotional, *The Home Altar*. Now titled *Davey and Goliath's*



Devotions, each issue features a flexible weekly format that makes it easy and fun for busy families to share faith with each other. For more information or to download a sample week of devotions, go to the Web site at www.augsburgfortress.org/dg

Online classes this fall

The Center for Theology and Land at Wartburg Theological Seminary (Dubuque, Iowa) is offering three online classes this fall. Courses begin on Sept. 15, but it's not too late to register if you contact them before September 20. Go to www.ruralministry.com to learn more about these offerings or

call them at 563/589-3117. Cost is \$200 per class, plus material fees.

- "Engaging the Gospels: Perspectives on Following Jesus" with Dr. James L. Bailey, Wartburg. This course is designed to provide participants a basic introduction to the Gospels.

- "Learning Communities" with Dr. Norma Cook Everist, Wartburg. Students will consider how to set and maintain effective learning environments, discover the theological base for a variety of teaching methods, and strengthen leadership skills to empower others in their teaching.

- "The Vocation of Ministry" with Dr. Gary Neal Hansen, University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. What does it mean to be a minister? One of the challenges facing those in ministry, either lay or ordained, is the struggle to define it. The goal will be for each student to develop his or her own theology of ministry.

New resource on conflict

Is your congregation tired of all the debate that faces the church these days? According to Pastor



Walt Wangerin, debate is nearly as old as the church itself.

As speaker for Lutheran Vespers, the radio ministry of the ELCA, Wangerin has recorded a half-hour program titled *To Churches Engaged in Internal*

Debate. Well-known as a storyteller, Wangerin uses his own experience of catching a live bat as a metaphor for debate within the faith community. Wangerin prefaces his message with commentary on 1 Corinthians, chapters 12 and 13.

This could be used in an adult education setting, listening to the CD together, and then having time to discuss the main points. A limited number of CD copies and printed transcripts of *To Churches Engaged in Internal Debate* are available; the suggested donation is \$10 for the CD and \$5 for the printed transcript. To order call 800/638-3522, ext. 2967, or go to www.elca.org/lv

ABC-TV hunger documentary

Major figures in the fight to end hunger came together in Washington, D.C., this summer to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the hunger advocacy organization Bread for the World. A National Council of Churches (NCC) film crew was there, capturing comments from participants such as Bread for the World's CEO David Beckman and NCC General Secretary Bob Edgar.

The interviews will be part of *Hunger No More: Faces Behind the Facts*, a television documentary to be broadcast nationwide on ABC network affiliates beginning October 24 as part of ABC's interfaith "Vision and Values" series. Case studies of specific projects by various humanitarian and advocacy groups will be included.

In addition to Bread for the World and NCC, sponsoring partners also include the ELCA's

World Hunger Program, the United Methodist Committee on Relief, the Society of St. Andrew, the ecumenical humanitarian agency Church World Service, and Mennonite Media.

Check your local ABC television listings for specific days and times for the program to air in your area beginning October 24.

See Board of Pensions site

ELCA health plan contribution rates for 2005 are available on the Board of Pensions' Web site at www.elcabop.org (look under *Quick links*). While viewing the contribution rate for your congregation, use the online calculators to figure annual and monthly contribution amounts you will pay, defined compensation and total compensation (with benefits). Note: The total compensation calculator and the contribution amounts calculator include the option to calculate either 2004 or 2005 contribution rates for ELCA benefits coverage.

Contact the Board of Pensions' Service Center at 800/352-2876 or e-mail mail@elcabop.org with questions about rates and other benefit issues.

Alban strategic planning book

Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations, a book from Alban Institute by popular consultants and authors Gil Rendle and Alice Mann, casts planning as a "holy conversation," a congregational discernment process about three critical questions: Who are we? What has God called us to do or be? Who is our neighbor? Rendle and Mann equip congregational leaders with a broad and creative range of ideas, pathways, processes, and tools for planning. To order call the Alban Institute at 800/486-1318 or go to the Web site at www.alban.org (ISBN 1-5669-9286-9; \$25 plus shipping).

Leaders in Mission fund

This year, the Fund for Leaders in Mission will award 32 new scholarships and provide continuing scholarship support to 40 past recipients studying at the eight ELCA seminaries.

Through August 31, 2005, the Thrivent Foundation will give \$1 for every \$2 given to this church-wide seminary scholarship program. New materials to help you and your congregation learn more about ways you can participate in the Thrivent Challenge and support seminary scholarships are available free of charge.

Fund resources include bulletin inserts, display board/posters, offering envelopes, brochures, and speakers, including Fund scholarship recipients as their schedules permit. To order materials or schedule a speaker, call the Fund for Leaders in Mission at 800/638-3522, ext. 2970, or e-mail cynthia.halverson@elca.org.

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

Resources about and for women

It didn't all begin with ordination. The ELCA Commission for Women has recently added an online historical resource to its Web site that outlines the many and varied ways women have served the Lutheran church as leaders long before the ordination of women was accepted. See photos and read short stories about women missionaries, deaconesses, and teachers who proclaimed Christ and witnessed to many throughout the world. Also featured on the site are the seven women who are synodical bishops, opportunities for connecting with mentors, interviews with women clergy, and resources for peace-making and non-violence. Find it all at www.elca.org/cw

New prayer site

New on the ELCA Web site is a prayer section. Check out www.elca.org/prayer to find meditation material, prayers for healing, resources, a place to submit prayer requests, and daily devotions. You can find information about starting prayer ministry and networks in your congregation, a Bible study on prayer, an anthology of prayers, and links to much more.

Office of the Treasurer

Have you checked out the ELCA Office

of the Treasurer Web pages lately? Go to www.elca.org/lot. There you will find the churchwide organization's 2003 year-end report; 2004 income proposal and spending authorization; resources for congregational treasurers and bookkeepers; insurance programs; various forms and procedures for synod treasurers and bookkeepers; mileage rate reimbursement; a printable file to share with your members, "What Does My Offering Do," and more.

Free online course explores faithful living in Christ

Stewardship is just another name for faithful living in Christ, says Mark Vitalis Hoffman, professor of New Testament at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, and he explores that theme in a course that is now available free online. Go to www.stewardshipoflife.org to learn about "Four Gospels, One Stewardship," a five-part course—complete with PowerPoint® presentations and hand-outs—designed to introduce Lutherans to the Gospels as a guide for living. The course is designed for congregational use or small-group study, but can also be useful for



individual study. Dr. Hoffman devised the course for Gettysburg Seminary's Arthur L. Larson Stewardship Council and its nonprofit partner, the Stewardship of Life Institute.

Walking With the Church in Liberia Web site

The Web site at www.elca.org/liberia is part of the newly established ELCA Liberia Support Network. This site highlights the situation in Liberia and the work of the Lutheran church in this struggling West African nation. Liberia is just now emerging from a 15-year civil war which claimed more than 250,000 lives, displaced another million, and has left the country's infrastructure in shambles. The site includes updates from the Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL), reports about Lutheran World Federation (LWF) work in the country, and stories about the church's efforts to be at the forefront of healing the wounds of war. If you want to receive regular e-mail updates, www.elca.org/liberia is where you can sign up to join an electronic-mailing list. This will help coordinate efforts of Lutherans wanting to accompany the Liberian church during this difficult time of reconstruction, reconciliation and peace-building.

Book quantity discounts

Did you know that Augsburg Fortress offers a discount when your congregation purchases multiple copies of the same book? Think of the ways you might use any of the books in the Fortress Press, Augsburg Books or Lutheran Voices book lines—book groups, adult education, new member classes, gifts for confirmation, and church libraries. Typical discounts: 1-99 copies, 20 percent; 100-249 copies, 25 percent; 250-499 copies, 30 percent. There are more discounts for higher quantities. Call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648 to learn more.

How to get involved in global mission

The congregation is where mission starts, and people nurtured and encouraged in their faith beginning in the congregation have turned out by the dozens to serve in many parts of the world through the ELCA.

During this year's spring and summer period, more than 130 individuals have been deployed as missionaries. They have come from places from Alaska to Florida. They represent all ages. Some have had experiences in outdoor ministry settings or campus ministry, others have none.

Many of these people are volunteers, spending their own funds to serve far from home. And all find support through their home congregations and beyond.

The need for missionaries continues.

Various opportunities for mission service emerge during the course of the year. Some jobs are set for 2005 summer starts. Specific opportunities include regional representatives in various parts of the world: English teachers in Slovakia and Japan, the Young Adults in Global Mission program, a mechanical engineer in Liberia, and many others.

It is never too late for you to consider participating in the global mission of this church through dedicated mission service. Check www.elca.org/globalserve or call 800/638-3522, ext. 2639, to learn more about how you or someone you know can serve in this important work.

Resource centers look at women's study, programs

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 What are some really good Bible study or program materials for women?

A I am absolutely thrilled about Walt Wangerin's new video from Paraclete Press (www.paracletepress.com or 800/451-5006), *The Lord's Prayer*. I think women would get a great study from it. Kerygma studies (Augsburg Fortress, www.augsburgfortress.org or 800/328-4648) are also wonderfully done if your group is looking for something meaty.

—**Bonnie Weber, director, NW Synod of Wisconsin Resource Center, Eau Claire**

A We've got some exciting resources from Women of the ELCA. The new Bible study *Everyday Surprises: The Parables of Jesus*, is a nine-session study appearing in the September 2004–May 2005 issues of *Lutheran Woman Today (LWT)*. To learn more and download the first session for free go to www.lutheranwomantoday.org. Another new study is *Listening to God: A Guide to Discernment* (Augsburg Fortress) which helps women discern what God is leading them to do in their lives and in their congregations. *Witness of Women* is a program designed to study and recommit to evangelism. *Crumbs from the Table* is a two-session cross-cultural Bible study. *Making the Reach: Year One of Reaching aCross* and *Year Two of Reaching aCross* are two studies which focus on the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Others can be downloaded from www.womenoftheelca.org such as *The Story of Peter* and

Cornelius: An Anti-Racism Bible Study on Unity; Listen, God Is Calling (eight programs with varying topics); and *For Your Liberation and Mine: Women of the World Working Together for Justice*. Call The Women's Resource Center at 800/638-3522, ext. 2737, for more ideas and a free catalog of Women of the ELCA resources.

—**Laura Barkenquast, resource specialist, The Women's Resource Center, Women of the ELCA, Chicago**

A *Bad Girls of the Bible* by Liz Curtis Higgs (Waterbrook Press www.randomhouse.com/waterbrook or 800/733-3000) uses either books or videos for group study. Everyone in our synod who has used them has raved about them. We can't keep them on our shelves!

—**Darlene Kalfahs, director, East Central Synod of Wisconsin Resource Center, Appleton**

A *The Story of Ruth* by Joan Chittister (Eerdmans Publishing, www.eerdmans.com or 800/253-7521) is a prime resource for women (and men) that follows the texts from Ruth and to my mind is Bible study at its best. It's a great recommendation for study groups! Also, a program like *Micah 6* (www.micah6.org) would be a good option: it's biblical and practical, involves small groups, focuses on the basic premise, "What does God require of us?", has activities for youth and adults, and can involve the whole congregation. Another resource I'm recommending is Amy Jill Levine's video series from

EcuFilm (www.ecufilm.org or 888/346-3862), *What's God Up to? Bible Stories through New Eyes*. Levine did a theological conference here and is an engaging teacher. Her work might be good supplementary material for the study on the parables.

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

A *Simpler Living, Compassionate Life* and *Food & Faith* from Living the Good News (www.morehope.com/ltgn.htm or 800/824-1813) are two books with study guides for groups. *Simpler Living* is one of our most heavily used books!

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

A I would definitely recommend the *Lutheran Voices* series from Augsburg Fortress. Depending on the interests of the group, I always find a couple of titles that are a good fit. Also *Sing the Faith* (Augsburg Fortress) studies are very accessible to folks who love the hymns of the church.

—**Sara Johnson, Resource Service Center, Southwestern Minnesota Synod, Redwood Falls**

A *Coffee Break* began years ago in the Reformed Church in America as an outreach-focused Bible study program for women. It remains a popular program across the country. The various studies—basic, intermediate, and advanced—focus on books of the Bible or are topical. Learn more at www.coffeebreakministries.org

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

How a congregation sows seeds of accessibility

Sheridan Lutheran Church, Lincoln, Neb., is the recipient of the 2004 Accessibility Award given annually to a congregation of the ELCA that demonstrates care and concern for people who are physically and mentally disabled. The award is given to one congregation with innovative practices in building accessibility, programs, and shared ministry to meet special needs, and offer overall hospitality.

"The Accessibility Award is important for two reasons," said the Rev. Lisa T. Cleaver, director for disability ministries, ELCA Division for Church in Society. "First, it brings awareness to ELCA congregations about the need to be totally accessible and inclusive of all people who are differently-abled. Second, it provides examples of some of the excellent work that is being done in the area of disability ministries."

The awards are made by an interunit selection committee made up of church-wide staff, Cleaver said.

At Sheridan Lutheran Church, members and visitors will find special parking for people who are disabled, a wheelchair accessible entrance and rest rooms, and special hearing devices, said Cheri R. Peterson, the congregation's share care, older adult and health ministries coordinator. Large screens are in the worship center for easy viewing, signers are provided regularly for those with hearing impairments, pews have been removed or reduced in size to accommodate wheelchairs, and an automatic door-opener has been installed to provide accessibility to the building.

Sheridan has maintained a ministry to serve hearing-impaired people for 25 years, Peterson said. Recently it obtained a church bus with a wheelchair lift, she said. It also provides volunteers who assist people at home.

"We have a trained group of volunteers who will go into homes and install home

safety improvements as needed to allow residents to remain in their own homes as long as possible," Peterson said. The program — CHERISH (Churches Helping Elderly Reside in Safe Homes) — is funded in part with a grant from Immanuel Health Systems of Nebraska, affiliated with the ELCA Nebraska Synod, Omaha.

Sheridan maintains a "lending stockpile" of home health aids. "We encourage members to donate no-longer-needed health equipment such as walkers, wheelchairs, crutches and bath aids, and then [we] lend this equipment to others in need," Peterson said.

"We have purchased a new wheelchair, walker with a seat, cane, and other aids for lending." The congregation has three wheelchairs available for worshipers to use.

Hospitality volunteers and ushers have been educated to help them as they greet people with various disabilities, Peterson said. A gardening group was formed to plant gardens for people who visit homes or provide care to others so they can take the flowers to the people whom they contact, she said.

The congregation is also the recipient of gifts from people with special needs who are served by the congregation. People in the congregation's deaf community manage fundraisers to benefit the congregation and the people it serves. Members who are elderly and disabled lead prayer chains and visit others.

"Our youth invite, eat with, and play bingo with the elderly and people with disabilities," Peterson said. "They write family history and faith stories for them. Youth and their families also participate in our "Hand-in-Hand" ministry by making



Sign interpreter Kathy Ahrendt helps make Sheridan Lutheran, Lincoln, Neb., more accessible for the hearing impaired.

craft gifts, writing Bible and inspirational verses, and making visits to deliver these along with fresh flowers and homemade bread."

The church's inclusive ministry is part of its responsibility to reach out to the community to share a "rich and warm" worship experience, Peterson said. Still, there is much more to do. "Our members need to do more for our church to reach out to people with disabilities," Peterson said. "We learn so much from them about our own faith walks, and learn to look at life from a different perspective."

Pastors serving Sheridan Lutheran Church are the Rev. Larry D. Arganbright and the Rev. Gregory S. Bouvier.

Three other congregations were cited with honorable mentions in the Accessibility Award program. They are First Lutheran Church, Topeka, Kan.; Grace Lutheran Church, Hartford, Conn.; and St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Philadelphia. To learn more

Information about ELCA Disability ministries, including an "ELCA Accessibility Guide" and the Accessibility Awards contest, is at www.elca.org/dcsleprl/disability/

Alternative gifts – an antidote to Christmas Shopping Frenzy

Are you susceptible to CSF (Christmas Shopping Frenzy)? One symptom: you really think your Aunt Jen would like the Rudolph sweatshirt with the blinking nose.

Fortunately, there are antidotes—alternative giving resources to help you give and get "Go and do likewise" gifts—gifts that reflect Jesus as the reason for the season. Unless otherwise noted, all of the resources mentioned here are free (including free shipping) and available from Augsburg Fortress. Call 800/328-4648 or order online at www.augsburgfortress.org.

The **ELCA World Hunger Alternative Giving Ideas Catalog**

(ISBN 6-0001-6900-0) is a key resource. The catalog gives shape to your gift donations to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal, Stand with Africa, and International and Domestic Disaster Response. For example, \$30 could offer a month of care for an abandoned child, or buy chickens for a family, or provide agricultural tools, seeds, and cuttings to a refugee. Find gift-donation ideas from \$1 to \$16,000 in the catalog. Use the **Alternative Giving Christmas Card Enclosures** (ISBN 6-0001-9057-3), seven different cards ranging from the serious to the silly, to announce your gifts.

You can request just a few catalogs and one set of card enclosures for your personal alternative Christmas shopping. Send one on to Aunt Jen with a note, "I'd love to have my gift come from this catalog." You

might also request a number of catalog and card enclosure sets, enough to leave out in the back of the church during November and December, or enough to distribute to your church group.

The new **Lutheran World Relief "Be Involved"** brochure details important LWR parish projects, including quilts, sewing kits, layettes, and school kits. Request the free brochures from LWR (800/LWR-LWR-2, lwr@lwr.org). You can request one brochure for yourself, or enough to distribute to your church group.

LWR Fair Trade Chocolate (sweet justice!) and **Coffee** (delicious justice!)

are great gifts that provide a life-saving, living wage for families. Order enough to give as stocking stuffers, hostess gifts, and colleague and classroom treats. You could also distribute order forms and collect orders from your congregation. Church groups can use the coffee and chocolate as fundraisers. Learn more at www.lwr.org (click on "Fair Trade") or call 800/LWR-LWR-2.

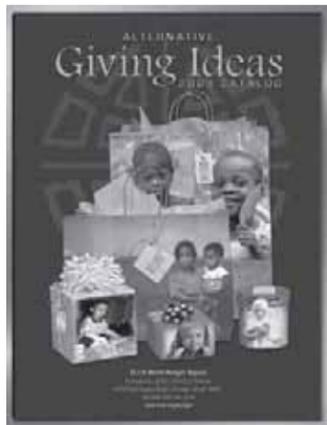
LWR Handcraft Project, in partnership with SERRV International, offers fairly traded items from 34 countries ... accessories, angels, baskets, candles, food, games, nativity sets, jewelry, kitchen items, musical instruments...many for \$10 and under. Call 888-294-9660 to request an LWR Handcraft Project catalog for your personal shopping or to request several

catalogs to distribute to your church group. Or go one better and get a kit to host an LWR Fair Trade Fair at your church, selling a selected group of items on consignment. Find lots of good information about this on the LWR Web site at www.lwr.org

Connect need and passion for an appreciated gift. Is Aunt Jen a nurse? Would it please her to know a donation in her name to ELCA International Disaster Response helps provide health services to Sudanese refugees? Learn about the needs of neighbors near and far at www.elca.org/disaster and www.elca.org/grantinghope

Some congregations are having great success in offering **Alternative Gift Fairs**. These Fairs can include (1) alternative gift donations chosen from the Alternative Giving Ideas Catalog for ELCA World Hunger, as well as other charities and organizations, (2) in-kind gift collections, such as LWR parish project kits, (3) the sale of Fair Trade items such as coffee, chocolate, or handcrafts, (4) the "sale" of free ELCA World Hunger resources, such as bookmarks (ISBN 6-0002-1175-9), magnets (ISBN 6-0002-1211-9), and the devotional 30-day journey "checkbook" (ISBN 6-0002-1175-9). Fair-goers "shop" the tables, make their selections on an order form and make one check payable to the congregation (which then distributes the collection). Shoppers are given cards to announce their gift-donations (for card ideas call 800/638-3522, ext. 2764 or e-mail hunger@elca.org).

To be in contact with someone who has set up an Alternative Gift Fair in their congregation, send a note to hunger@elca.org.



Ways to support those living in retirement

Adults 65 years and older represent one out of every eight Americans, or 12.3 percent.
—AARP Profiles

Retirement today has put a new “spin” on a time once devoted to “riding off into the sunset.” In fact, many seniors are “puttin’ their feet up” just long enough to change into their jeans and jogging shoes!

Seniors are living longer, staying healthier and more active than any other generation. They are keenly aware of the “inevitable” realities of aging, but their visions for living life to its fullest are inspiring them to stand the test of time.

Many congregations are in need of updating their impressions and expectations of seniors as the “been-there and done-that” generation. In honor of their active service while their kids were involved in congregational life, sometimes congregations “free them” from any further obligation to leadership and service. But, contrary to popular opinion, many people are actually looking forward to retirement as a time for finally tending to their passions for travel, continuing education, volunteerism, service, faith life, and family time.

How congregations can support this stage of life

Embrace Philippians 1:6, “being confident of this very thing, that the one who began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” as we find ways to affirm, empower and engage

seniors in meaningful ministry and service.

- Offer a formal blessing for those who are entering into retirement. It might include a time of recognition, followed by a prayer for God’s lead and discernment as they establish new patterns for living.

- Organize small groups for people moving into retirement. Encourage fellowship and support, along with some devotional thoughts. Many people see retirement as a whole new world and may experience the same anxieties they did when they were young adults, struggling to embrace new freedoms to shape the quality of their lives.

- Honor their wisdom and experience. Invite them to use their personal/professional gifts to mentor and support others, such as youth, young adults, and first-time parents.

- Offer a wide variety of ways to engage seniors in leadership and service. Ask them to consider being involved in tutoring young children in school and after-school programs.

- Identify snowbirds or folks who maintain a residence in warmer places during the winter months. Consider sending them regular e-mails, cards, and care packages (as you might for any young adults and college students who are off on their own). Keep them connected by sending your

congregation newsletter.

- Establish a weekly “Do-Drop-Inn” for coffee and informal conversation and support.

- Hold a consultation for seniors in your congregation to affirm the significant roles they play in your congregation and community. Ask them to identify their needs and strengths for ministry and daily living, and talk about how they would like to serve and be served. Agree to act accordingly, and encourage them to assist you using their own gifts.

- *Lutheran Partners*, a periodical for pastors and other rostered leaders, featured several articles on ‘Retirement and Transition’ in its July/August 2004 issue. You can read it on the Web at

www.elca.org/lp/0407_04.html

- Use stories of people who encounter and cope with the realities of this stage of life as sermon illustrations.

- Check out www.aarp.org for a wealth of resources on a variety of topics related to Americans over 50 years of age.

—Mim Campbell serves the ELCA as an associate director for Christian education, children and family ministries.



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Keep the cash.

Return the wallet.
Keep the cash.

Return both.
Keep your self-respect.

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New video on grandparenting

When your children have children, you become a grandparent. That’s the easy part. But what is a good grandparent? *Good Grandparenting* is a new, 30-minute video documentary from Mosaic Television.

Today there are more grandparents than ever: Nearly 60 million Americans are over the age of 55. Grand-parenting roles once modeled by their grandparents have changed dramatically. Americans live longer and are more mobile than any generation before. Given the many changes in our society and in the makeup of the family, many grandparents wonder what their role is. What do children need and how can grandparents use their talents and influence to fulfill those needs?

Use this video for an adult forum or as a discussion starter for an older-adults group.

Cost of this program on DVD or VHS is \$19.95 (includes shipping). To order call 800/638-3522, ext. 6009, or go to www.elca.org/mosaic

Have you seen the Action Packet?

www.elca.org/col/actionpacket

The contents of the September-October Action Packet included:

- ELCA Board of Pensions’ *The Right Road* postcard
- Fund for Leaders in Mission “A Second Year of Opportunity” flyer
- Top 30 ELCA Resources Catalog from ELCA World Hunger
- *Stewardship Resource Guide*
- A Message on *Living in a Time of Terrorism*
- A Social Policy Resolution on *The Donation of Organs, Tissues, and Whole Blood*
- *Procession* newsletter
- *Prayer Web site* bookmark sheet
- Evangelism Partners Network flyer