September - October 2005

Seeds for the Parish

RESOURCE PAPER FOR LEADERS OF **ELCA** CONGREGATIONS

www.elca.org Vol. 18, No. 5

Building with ELCA'S Mission Builders

Mission Builder director Tom Chase and his wife Arline have been hammering nails on church building projects since 1997, but like all Mission Builders, they have built more than physical structures. They've also built community, friendships and faith.

Mission Builders is an ELCA organization of men and women from all over the United States who help congregations build, expand or repair their houses of worship. The congregation provides volunteers, workers' compensation insurance and minimum wages for the Mission Builders crew; the Mission Builders, in turn, manage the project for several months, usually over the summer, living either in their own RVs or in housing arranged by the congregation. With Mission Builders' help, congregations are able to reduce their construction costs or expand the size and scope of their plan. More important, the projects quickly become a mutual ministry for the Mission Builders, the congregation, and local volunteers.

Bob Borgstrom

The construction of a new church for Bethel Lutheran Church in Little Falls, Minnesota, is one example of the "building" that takes place when Mission Builders and congregations work together. The Chases first came to Little Falls in January 2002 to meet with the building committee and congregation council, the architect, and then with the entire congregation. "Together, they led the congregation to do something that some thought impossible, always leading us forward in faith, always sharing the gospel through their word and deed," Pastor Carl Larson says.

By July the project was in full swing as Tom led six other Mission Builders and numerous volunteers in putting up the outer structure, walls, and roof. Tom met weekly with the building committee to fine-tune the plans. "The congregation had an uncanny ability to listen to everyone's ideas, reach consensus and make the right decisions," he recalls.

"When the actual construction started, Tom, Arline, and the whole Mission Builder crew, led us to a more confessional understanding of the church by helping us realize that each and every move we made was to be done for God's glory," Pastor Larson remarks.

According to Jerry Lochner, chairman of Bethel's building committee, volunteers from Bethel and other denominations logged 7,000 hours of service by the time the Mission Builders left in November, and then contributed another 5,000 hours to paint and finish the inside on their own.

Many of those hours were logged by 77-year-old Bob Borgstrom, a retired maintenance supervisor who volunteered all but nine of the work days during the year-long construction. Bob admits that there were times when he wondered if they would actually be able to complete the project. "I'd stand in that big space and I'd feel overwhelmed," he says. But Bob and the other volunteers and Mission Builders met the challenge with faith and energy. "You never know how talented people are until you get into a project," he says, recalling how people would step forward to solve a problem and then show others how to do it as well. "It was the greatest year I've spent in my life," Bob exclaims.

Bethel Lutheran Church

For Bob and everyone else on the project, the goal was not to get the job done, but to get the job done well. Because they weren't working according to a rigid production schedule, they were able to focus on the quality of their workmanship, a level of quality that in many aspects exceeds that of commercial builders with deadlines to meet.

The project involved volunteers of all ages, from school children to a man in his 80s who helped put up trim. "Arline Chase was great at recognizing people's talents and putting them to work," Jerry Lochner recalls. Sunday school and confirmation classes helped clean up the construction site, sorting nails and bits of lumber. Les Sandbakken, a member of the congregation, built the steeple and cross. Other volunteers, under the leadership of Bob Borgstrom's wife Ardis, cooked meals and served snacks. Morning devotions were held regularly during the first break of the day, and some of the Bible study groups that evolved out of that practice continue today.

During their stay in Little Falls, the Mission Builders entered fully into the life of the congregation. Some sang in the choir, others joined in Bible study and outreach. Arline called on shut-ins, and everyone gathered for Saturday potlucks. When Little Falls held its annual craft fair, the Mission Builders joined the congregation in making hundreds of fruit cups that were sold at the church's booth.

The friendships that were built over the summer remain strong and deep. Several of the Mission Builders returned for the dedication on Pentecost Sunday 2003, and one Mission Builder couple moved to Little Falls permanently and are now members at Bethel. A year or two after they left, Tom and Arline received a birth announcement from a young couple they had mentored during the couple's pre-marriage preparation at Bethel.

As a part of the body of Christ, Mission Builders are both a resource to congregations in need of helping hands, and a way for individuals and couples to lend a hand in building God's kingdom. To learn more about Mission Builders, call 800/643-5295 or visit *www.elca.org/outreach/missionbuilders*

Beyond the Ramp

Thanks to the support of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and Wheat Ridge Ministries, congregations and synods have an opportunity to host learning experiences designed and conducted by youth with disabilities.

A grant from Thrivent funded the training and Wheat Ridge Ministries is paying expenses for team members to conduct three learning experiences.

Twelve teams have been established. Each team consists of a disabled youth who will share his or her personal story and an adult co-facilitator. Interactive learning experiences will be custom-designed for each location and audience, and may be three to six hours in length. Each of the 12 teams has the resources to serve a variety of audiences, but the teams are specially equipped to work with teens. A possible venue could be a mini-retreat for your congregational youth group.

The learning experience is presented by The Definitely-Abled Advisory Committee of the churchwide Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO). The Definitely-Abled Advisory Committee began at the 1997 LYO Convention and now serves as advocate for youth with disabilities.

To meet grant guidelines, the learning experiences must be conducted by December 31, 2005.

For more information call Heidi Hagstrom at 800/638-3522, ext. 2479, or e-mail *heidi.hagstrom@elca.org*

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

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With the Whole Church

Preparing a congregation to receive and accept new worship resources can be an exciting task. It can also be a challenge. The process of implementation is most effective when it is well-planned and grounded in primary things — things that really matter.

With the Whole Church is a study guide prepared especially for this purpose. A complimentary copy will be distributed to all ELCA congregations in mid-September. Information about obtaining additional copies will be included with that distribution.

This seven-session study is intended for pastors, lay staff members and any individual member of a Christian faith community.

It is designed to be used in a variety of settings such as small groups, classes, committee meetings and in the home.

An entire congregation can read and then discuss the essays. An individual can use the booklet as a guide for reflecting on his or her part in the church's worship life. The object is to get as many people as possible to think and share with one another an understanding of worship and how worship draws us into God's own mission.

Each session includes a reproducible essay with suggested discussion questions and activities that will help shape the conversation. Leader aids are also provided.

With the Whole Church is not intended to cover everything about worship. But because worship does matter, this study has the potential of being a great gift to the church — the whole church.

Consider This

Another valuable way to prepare for change is to discuss the way we do things. The ELCA statement on the practice of Word and Sacrament, *The Use of the Means of Grace*, makes it clear that worship renewal in this church is about unity, not uniformity. (See Principle 4 *www.elca.org/dcm/worship/worship/sacraments/umg.html#preface*) The way we do things is a good topic for worship committees or other groups in a congregation to discuss regularly.

Rather than waiting for new worship books to arrive or to overwhelm a congregation with change, consider initiating a conversation about the meaning of church practices.

One resource to help stimulate conversation was published in this newspaper several years ago, called "Consider this…." The brief suggestions therein have been gathered together at *www.elca.org/co/seeds* Each entry is an invitation for you to consider, or possibly reconsider, the way you do things.

The goal is not to get all congregations doing things the same way. The goal is to get all congregations to do what they do with some intentionality and understanding.

If you have suggestions for future "Consider this …" topics, please e-mail them to *worship@elca.org*

Planning for October 31

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed 95 Theses of Contention to the Wittenberg Church door. This date, that Lutherans observe as Reformation Day, is also the eve of All Hallows Day or All Saints

Martin Luther

Day (or Halloween). Naturally, Luther was concerned with debating his theses, not marking the pagan Celtic festival of the dead.

In the eighth century, Pope Gregory II moved the date of All Saints Day to November 1, thus offering a substitute for the popular celebration of the Celtic New Year.

The pagan festival embodied the belief that the dead rose to mingle with the living on that date and any ghosts who visited the houses were greeted with tables loaded with food. After feasting, villagers would don costumes representing the souls of the dead and parade to the outskirts of town.

Historically Lutherans observed All Hallows Day to honor all saints in heaven. At the time of Luther it was one of the most solemn observances of the church year. Because of its significance Luther chose this day to exhibit his theses because among other things, more people than usual would be attending church.

Today, Halloween, with its decidedly pagan flavor, is now one of the country's busiest commercial holidays, second in sales only to Christmas. In 2004 alone, it was estimated that Americans spent between $5 to $7 billion on such Halloween paraphernalia as costumes, candy, and decorations. According to Hallmark, over 50 million Americans participate in Halloween activities.

How can congregations deal with the ever-popular Halloween celebrations and at the same time commemorate Reformation Day?

Here are a few suggestions:

Host a Reformation party, set-up like a Renaissance fair, where both adults and children dress up as Reformation period characters. Serve apple cider and other treats. Offer a puppet show ala *Commedia dell'arte* depicting stories from the Bible. Have a booth for face painting and another one for games. Instead of trick-or-treating for candy host a hunger meal. Models

Katharina von Bora Luther

for different types of meals that illustrate issues of hunger and abundance are available at *www.elca.org/hunger/resources/youth.html*

The Lutheran Story

Hold a book discussion group using a Luther biography or present a video, like Mosaic Television's "The Lutheran Story." This one DVD contains: Opening the door to Luther - a video journey through Lutherland with Rick Steves!; Morning Star of Wittenberg - the life of Katie Luther; Glory to God Alone: The Life of J.S. Bach; Lutheran Roots in America. - the history of Lutheranism in the U.S.; The Story of the ELCA - the story of the establishment of the ELCA . "The Lutheran Story" runs for two and a half hours and is priced at $39.95.

You might also sponsor a fundraiser that sells fairly traded chocolate. Youth or youth groups buy the chocolate at wholesale prices and sell it at retail. A percentage of the profit goes directly to Lutheran World Relief for its work with small farmers. For more information visit *www.lwr.org/fairtrade/index.asp*

Seeds for the Parish

www.elca.org/co/seeds

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

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

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

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

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

How to impact the life of a college student

LOOKING FOR WAYS TO IMPACT THE LIFE OF A COLLEGE STUDENT? Here's how!

Help them seek out Lutheran Student Movement-USA!

LSM-USA is a national movement of Lutheran college, university, and seminary students. Many young people venture off to college unaware of Lutheran student groups on campus. Be sure they know about LSM and all it has to offer (Go to *www.lsm-usa.org* for tons of information!).

Encourage them to attend the LSM-USA National Gathering!

Send them to sunny San Diego, California, this New Year's holiday! The annual gathering of Lutheran college and university students will be held December 28, 2005-January 1, 2006. This is the ultimate opportunity for students to not only bond with other young adults from their school, but also to meet others from around the country and world! About 500 students will be in San Diego later this year, sharing in worship, service projects, and fun times. The 2006 theme is "Out of the Boat and Into the Water…A Faith Immersion." Come jump in the water with LSM!

Send them a care package made by LSM!

There is hardly anything else in the world that surpasses the joy college students feel when there is a *package* in their mailbox! If you or your congregation would like to let a student know that you are thinking about them and keeping them in your prayers, let them know by sending them a care package put together by LSM. Each Care Package includes the following: a stainless steel travel mug with the LSM logo, school supplies, magnets, LSM temporary tattoos, an LSM worship booklet - *Oremus III+*, yummy snacks, and his/her campus ministry contact information. Also included is information about LSM-USA and our National Gathering this year in San Diego,Calfifornia. All this for only $15!

The 2005 LSM-USA National Council

Remind them of the service-learning opportunities!

This year in particular, many service-learning events are happening thanks to grants from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans! LSM is pleased (more like ecstatic!) to announce the approval of a challenge grant from Thrivent in the amount of $62,500 toward our goal of $150,000 for a national service project titled "Breaking Out! LSM Spring Servant Experience." This enables LSM to sponsor 90 students to take part in an intentional service-oriented project during the next two spring breaks. If the $150,000 goal is reached, the Spring Servant Experience will probably be offered annually. Tell your college students to watch for this opportunity because space is limited and interest is high!

Give them your love & support!

What college students need most (besides a full night's sleep and free food) is the love and support given to them by all of you. Keep it up!

If you would like to:

- find out more about Lutheran Student Movement,
- get more information and register for the National Gathering,
- order a Care Package (or several!),
- learn more about the Breaking Out service-learning project or
- donate to LSM General Fund or to the Breaking Out service project,

go to *www.lsm-usa.org* or contact Becky Sorensen at *lsm.usa@elca.org* or 800/638-3522, ext. 2852.

Education from the Wittenberg Center

Are you interested in the "heroes" and the "villains" of the 16th century Reformation? Are you yearning to understand what role prayer, scripture, and service have played in Lutheranism? If so, the ELCA Wittenberg Center, the ELCA's continuing education center in Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Germany, has two interesting programs scheduled for the summer of 2006.

"Voices and Visions of Reformation," led by Dr. Kirsi Stjerna, associate professor at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, will be held from July 23-August 5, 2006, and will take participants to German cities such as Marburg, Erfurt, Eisenach, Buchenwald, Zwickau, Leipzig, Wittenberg, Torgau, Eisleben, and Berlin. With presentations by Dr. Stjerna and local experts, these places will provide the framework for discussion of the many and varied voices of the 16th century Reformation, along with focusing on how these historic voices have shaped the life of the modern German Protestant churches. For registration information, contact Marlene DeWulf at 773/380-6551 or by e-mail *Marlene.DeWulf@elca.org*

Back by popular demand, "Roots of Lutheran Spirituality" will take place from June 25-July 9, 2006. Co-sponsored by the Grace Institute for Spiritual Formation, this pilgrimage seminar led by Rev. Richard Bruesehoff and Dr. Bradley Hanson will offer participants the chance to visit a number of cities associated with the Lutheran Reformation. They include Prague, Hernhut, Torgau, Leipzig, Wittenberg, Halle, Eisleben, Erfurt, Eisenach, and Mainz. In addition to pilgrimage visits to these sites, there will be presentations by group leaders and local experts and time for worship, retreat, and reflection. Registration information is available from Sherry Alcock at 800/225-8664 or by e-mail *alcock@luther.edu.*

More detailed information is also available at *www.elca.org/wittenberg/* or the ELCA Wittenberg Center e-mail: *ELCAWittenbergCenter@t-online.de* Continuing education units (CEUs) are available for all Wittenberg Center programs.

The Wittenberg Center also offers an online Sabbatical and Journey Planner, where sabbaticals or vacations may be planned.

The center programs focus on a wide range of topics including but not limited to: Language and culture, Women of the Reformation, Music and Liturgy, and continuing education centers in Germany. Information on many of the places, people, programs, and facilities may be found at *www.elca.org/wittenberg/sabbatical*

The church can help strengthen your beliefs. Offer solace during difficult times. Or simply inspire you to be a better person. But did you know the church can assist you with your finances? At the Mission Investment Fund, we offer a variety of excellent investment options to help you save for college, retirement or a rainy day. While your money works hard for you, it also works for the Lutheran church, providing loans for building new congregations and renovating existing ones. As the only investment fund for individuals that's a ministry of the ELCA, we serve a greater purpose. And that helps you – and the church – build for the future.

877.886.3522 MISSION INVESTMENT FUND OF THE ELCA www.elca.org/mif

Writers Conference

The Rev. Sue Lang, author of church leadership books and resources, announces the 3rd Annual RevWriter Writers Conference to be held from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 8, 2005, at St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Sellersville, Pa. "The purpose of the conference," says Rev. Lang, "is to bring together those interested in writing for the local congregation and beyond."

Workshops for all those interested in writing for the larger Christian market will include:

- "Snapshots of Grace" with the Rev. Sue Lang
- "Christian Playwriting" with Mindy Starns Clark
- "Creative Liturgical Expression" with Donna H. Barthle
- "Developing a Book from Concept to Product" and "Creating a Writing Life" with the Rev. Rochelle Melander
- "Prayer Journaling: Word Dancing with Our Awesome God" by Rebekah Fawn Cochran, author of *Echoes of a Silent River*, and
- "Maximizing Your Potential as a Christian Writer" with Lisa Crayton

For additional information or to register, contact RevWriter Sue Lange at 215/4530-5066 or visit her Web site at *www.revwriter.com*

The scriptural foundation for prayer

New September 1, 2005
Prayer video; the Fall issue of 2005 Mosaic Television.

Prayer looks at the scriptural foundation for prayer in both the Old and New Testaments and examines what Martin Luther had to say about prayer.

The video also goes on a prayer journey across the church to see how prayer ministries are being lived out in synods, congregations, and in the lives of individual Christians. Some examples:

- In the Northern Great Lakes Synod, the Internet is helping to connect people who pray.
- In Rochelle, Illinois we meet a woman who has developed a prayer scrapbooking ministry.
- In New Orleans a group of prayer-walking women are covering their congregation in prayer.

Individual copies of Mosaic Television are available for $19.95 including shipping. You can order by phone at 800/638-3522 ext. 6009, or on the Web at *www.elca.org/mosaic*

Study tour

Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary is happy to announce that it is resuming its study tours to Israel-Palestine in December and next May.

Palestinians and Israelis alike welcome this development, and we rejoice that security has returned to the Holy Land. Both study tours are designed and taught by Dr. Monte Luker, professor of Hebrew Scriptures at the seminary and member of various faculties in Jerusalem.

The first study tour is a three-week immersion experience from December 28 - January 18 that focuses on meeting with various Palestinian and Israeli groups as well as exploring the historical and religious sites.

The second is an 11-day experience in the beautiful springtime, May 20-30. For further information, itinerary, and registration form, e-mail *LLuker@LTSS.edu.*

Early registration is highly recommended. Information is also available on the seminary Web page: *www.LTSS.edu*, click on Faculty-Led Tours, Cross-cultural Opportunities.

Candle Lighting for Mental Illness

The Lutheran Network for Mental Illness will again sponsor the annual All-Lutheran Candle Lighting for Mental Illness during October.

The candle lighting includes a call to worship and prayers for people living with mental illness. ELCA congregations are encouraged to use this short litany in one of their worship services during October, which is mental illness awareness month throughout the United States. A free reproducible insert is available through ELCA Disability Ministries in the Division for Church in Society. Congregations may request a copy of the insert by calling 800/638-3522, ext. 2710 or accessing *www.elca.org/disability/candlelighting/*

The Lutheran Network for Mental Illness 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 congregations can support families living with these illnesses. Its hope is that individuals and families with mental illness will be able to be full participants in the life of congregations. For further information about the Lutheran Network for Mental Illness and Brain Disorders, contact Pastor Lisa T. Cleaver at 800/638-3522, ext. 2692 or *Lisa.Cleaver@elca.org*

Wheat Ridge Seals

Wheat Ridge Ministries is pleased to announce the availability of its 2005 Special Anniversary Edition Christmas Seals.

This year, Wheat Ridge is celebrating its 100th anniversary of seeding health and hope in the name of the healing Christ. For the third straight Advent and Christmas seasons, Wheat Ridge is issuing special commemorative Seals sheets with re-creations of some of their favorites from the past 100 years.

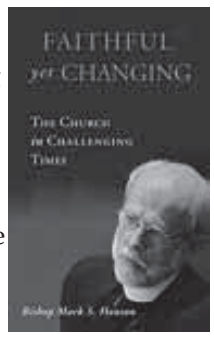
The brightly colored, self-adhesive Seals are a wonderful way to witness faith and hope in the Lord when affixed to Christmas greetings.

Christmas Seals are distributed free to congregations, organizations, and schools for families and individuals. To place an order for your congregation or school, please contact the Wheat Ridge office at 800/762-6748 or order online at *www.wheatridge.org*

Faithful and Courageous

Wisdom and Inspiration from the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA

In the newly released *Faithful and Courageous: Christians in Unsettling Times*, ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson calls Lutherans and other Christians to live a courageous faith for the sake of the church and the world. In this sequel to his *Faithful yet Changing: The Church in Challenging Times*, he reflects on four key topics:



1. Trusting God's faithful promises
2. Pondering Jesus' probing questions
3. Obeying Jesus' unsettling commands
4. Discerning our way in the world

From the Preface: "My hope is that this book will encourage holy conversation about what it means to be a follower of Jesus in unsettling times. I hope it will be read by individuals who then will gather with other believers in new member classes, adult study, church councils, and other settings for lifelong learning in the church. May the Spirit bless our search for wisdom and our witness to the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

To order call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648 (ISBN 0-8066-5182-2; $6.99, plus shipping). Visit the Web site at *www.augsburgfortress.org*

Online Courses

Seen & Heard: Foundations for Youth & Family Ministry
Dr. Nathan Frambach, assistant professor of Youth, Culture and Mission, Wartburg Theological Seminary. This course has been rescheduled for 2006. Date: TBA.

Understanding Loss and Grief
Dr. Dan Olson, professor of Pastoral Care, Wartburg Theological Seminary.

Discovering Hope: Best Practices for Building Vitality in Rural Congregations
Dr. Shannon Jung, professor of Rural Ministry, Saint Paul School of Theology.

For more information or to register go to *www.ruralministry.com* or contact Julie Phillips at *ruralmin@wartburgseminary.edu* or 563/589-0273.

ELCA Good Gifts Catalog

ELCA Good Gifts: The Giving Catalog of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America makes it easy and fun to honor a special person and support vital ministry at the same time.

The proceeds of purchased gifts from this illustrated 32-page catalog help support the efforts of World Hunger, global mission leadership development and more. The catalog also contains Web site addresses and other contact information. Gift enclosures from the catalog may accompany your special holiday, birthday, or anniversary card. A special four-page mini-catalog is inserted and can be requested on its own. Use *ELCA Good Gifts* as your gift resource or send it to loved ones as your own "good-wish list."

Call 800/638-3522 to request a single copy of *ELCA Good Gifts* (ISBN 6-0002-0607-0). For multiple copies contact Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648 or order online at *www.augsburgfortress.org/elcahunger* The mini-catalog can be ordered in packs of 50 using ISBN 6-0002-0608-9. View the catalog and give online at *www.elca.org/goodgifts*

Questions? E-mail *GoodGifts@elca.org* or call 800/638-

Leadership Events

The Division for Ministry of the ELCA annually sponsors a series of learning opportunities for those serving multiple-staff congregations.

These conferences are for pastors, their associates, and lay staff members. The seminars are held at The Duncan Center in Delray Beach, Florida.

The Head of Staff seminar, February 2-5, 2006, is offered to pastors who are called to lead a ministry staff. The focus of this event is building a solid foundation for effective staff leadership and improving skills in leadership and supervision. This event is the

The Duncan Center

first part of a two-year project and participants are encouraged to attend in consecutive years.

The Ministry Staff seminar, January 28-31, 2006, is offered to associates in ministry. The focus of this event is serving in a staff setting. This event is part of two-year project and participants are encouraged to attend in two consecutive years.

For more information or to register for these events go to *www.elca.org/leadership/events*

Education Study

The ELCA study *Our Calling in Education: A Lutheran Perspective* will be the topic for an online discussion during September. Members of the ELCA Task Force on Education who prepared the study will take part in the discussion.

Our Calling in Education is the first publication in the development of a social statement to be considered by the 2007 Churchwide Assembly. Responses to the study will help the task force prepare a first draft of the social statement that will be available in early 2006. The deadline to respond to the study is October 1, 2005.

The online discussion begins September 6. Each week the study will focus on different parts of the study;

Sept. 6-11: Parts 1 and 2
Introducing the Study
Education in Light of Our Faith in God
Sept. 12-18: Parts 3 and 4
Educating in the Faith for Vocation
Educating Children and Youth in Faith
Sept. 19-25; Part 5
Educating Young People in Public Schools
Sept. 26-30: Part 6
Our Church in Education

To get a single complimentary copy of *Our Calling in Education*, call the ELCA Division for Church in Society's resource request line: 800/638-3522, ext. 2996. For multiple copies, call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648 (ISBN 6-0002-0196-6; $3 plus shipping).

Prayer for peace

This year the World Council of Churches calls all churches to join faith communities worldwide September 21 in observance of the International Day of Prayer for Peace.

Prayers and resources are available on the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) Web site for this year's event, with more to come. The DOV will be publishing a pamphlet for distribution with a special attention on the Annual Focus in Asia.

This printed pamphlet is free and will be available by request from the DOV office, as well as electronically on the web site at: *www.overcomingviolence.org/dov.nsf/*

The International Day of Prayer for Peace will be observed in conjunction with the United Nations International Day of Peace.

To learn more about initiatives of the UN go to the International Day of Peace Web site at: *www.worldpeace.org/peaceday.html* And the International Day of Peace Vigil Web site at: *www.idpvigil.com/*

"Overcoming violence - Churches seeking Reconciliation and Peace." An occasional information letter from the DOV coordination office in Geneva, Switzerland.
DOV Coordination Office
World Council of Churches
P.O. Box 2100
1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland
www.overcomingviolence.org

Faith Streams

Faith Streams, a service of Faith and Values Media, is a new, electronic library of faith-based video. If you have access to the Internet you are just a few clicks away from a large selection of high quality faith-based video, including programs from the ELCA.

Available 24/7 without cost or obligation you can enjoy streaming video, video-on-demand and a vast library of articles and features.

Explore a topic to find information on everything from religion and spirituality to arts and culture to faith and healing.

Go to *www.FaithStreams.com* to register for a free trial subscription to Video On Demand.

Go the Extra Mile!

Whereas…

- Two out of every three Americans are now overweight or obese
- Obesity significantly increases the risk of developing serious chronic health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, certain cancers, respiratory problems, chronic back pain and depression
- ELCA leaders taking the 2005 online Mayo Clinic Health Risk Assessment self-reported
  - 65% at risk from obesity
  - 72% at risk for poor nutrition
- Healthful eating and active living are keys to a healthy lifestyle and better quality of life

- Achieving energy balance, balancing amount of calories eaten with calories burned through physical activity each day, is the best way to prevent weight gain

Therefore, the ELCA Board of Pensions and the Division for Ministry proclaim September 28, 2005:

- as "Lutherans on the Move Day"
- as a day of action to increase physical activity an extra 2000 steps, eat 100 fewer calories, and live prayerfully.
- as a day for ELCA Pastors, Diaconal Ministers, Deaconesses, Associates in Ministry, lay leaders and all the baptized, to join together with people across the country for "America on the Move" to make positive changes for their lives, their families, their congregations, and for the world.

Healthy Leaders Enhance Lives! Watch *www.elcaforwellness.org* for more information.

What's new on the World Wide Web

Communication site redesign

The Department for Communication (CO) launched its new Web site in early September.

The revamped, streamlined site offers quality information through an easy-to-use navigation system that is intuitive and gives visitors the ability to move quickly through the departments' many offerings.

The site offers resources for congregations, leaders, and synods with such things as the "ELCA Style Guidelines" and helpful hints for building and maintaining your own Web sites.

There is also a section for the various ministries of the CO department such as up-to-the minute news releases, links to Mosaic Television (showing Christ's love at work in the world), *Grace Matters* radio ministry of the ELCA, the ever-popular *Davey and Goliath* and the soon to be released Web site for *Seeds for the Parish*.

ELCA News Services offers resources for journalists, columnists, and other members of the media.

There is a list of ELCA synodical & regional resource centers, and several resources developed by that network.

The Communication Web site has everything you need to run a successful communication department of your own. Print ads, news, events and much more are available at *www.elca.org/communication*

When disaster strikes

When disaster strikes, be it flood, earthquake, hurricane or tsunami, many of us want to help.

The new ELCA disaster response site, launched in late July, is the best place to find out how you can pitch in. With up-to-date bulletins on disasters worldwide, the site offers easy access to information about specific events, the ELCA response and how you can help.

To find out more, go to *www.elca.org/disaster*

Joseph Sittler Web site launched

The ELCA and the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC), under the auspices of the Joseph Sittler Archive Committee, have partnered to develop a Web site entitled "The Expanding Scope of Grace" (*www.josephsittler.org*).

Lutheran theologian Joseph Sittler understood grace. He saw the scope of God's grace to be wider, broader, and deeper than had often been expressed in the past. He saw this grace active in all spheres of human life and throughout the cosmos, and he knew that God's grace was continually reaching out to include all aspects of every human life, even the ordinary things. Sittler once wrote in praise of Polish sausage in a little piece entitled, "*Polish Sausage, St. Augustine, and the Moral Life*." This was Joseph Sittler's expanding scope of grace.

Joseph Sittler's influence as a theologian was profound. Although he spent most of his career as a faculty member of academic institutions, including the Divinity School of the University of Chicago and the Chicago Lutheran Seminary in Maywood, Illinois, he did not write many books or scholarly papers. Instead, he preached and gave speeches and workshops at colleges and seminaries around the country, influencing both students and faculty with his ideas on a wide range of topics. Sittler's interests included the environment and ecology, the arts, ministry in daily life, aging, biblical interpretation, ethics, the role of the ordained and many other topics. In the late 1950s he was featured in a *Life* magaine article on America's "Ten Most influential Theologians."

The new Sittler Web site features a biography, a comprehensive bibliography, a catalogue of the Joseph Sittler Archives collection, an image library, a collection of free streaming audio recordings and videos and a growing collection of online articles, sermons, essays and even a complete book, *Running with the Hounds*.

Joseph Sittler died in 1987, but his expanded concept of the universal nature of God's grace, in each aspect of human life, is needed now, both in the church and in the world, more than ever before.

The Joseph Sittler Archives was formed in 1997 to honor the life of and gather and disseminate the work of Joseph Sittler. The Sittler Archives Committee includes representatives from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Trinity Lutheran Theological Seminary, the University of Chicago, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Sittler family.

The Joseph Sittler Web site is dedicated to honoring the life and preserving and disseminating the work of this pastor and theologian of the church.

Visit "The expanding scope of Grace" at *www.josephsittler.org*

Resource centers re-creating

In every issue of *Seeds*, ELCA resource center staff pull together a "Q&A" on topics that they discuss in their meeting on LutherLink. For this issue of *Seeds*, being prepared in July, the resource centers have taken a short vacation to re-create. The usual column will return to this space, in the November/December issue.

We all need time away to re-create to help reduce the stress of jobs, or just plain everyday life. Here are 36 ways for a Christian to reduce stress and re-create.

1. Pray
2. Go to bed on time.
3. Get up on time so you can start the day unrushed.
4. Say "No" to projects that won't fit into your schedule, or that will compromise your mental or physical health.
5. Delegate tasks to capable others.
6. Simplify and unclutter your life.
7. Remember that less can be more. (Although one is often not enough, two are often too many.)
8. Allow extra time to do things and go places.
9. Pace yourself. Spread out big changes and difficult projects over time; don't lump the hard things all together.
10. Take one day at a time.
11. Separate worries from concerns. If a situation is a concern, find out what God would have you to do and let go of the anxiety. If you can't do anything about a situation ... forget it.
12. Live within your budget; don't use credit cards for ordinary purchases.
13. Have backups; an extra car key in your wallet, an extra house key buried in the garden, extra stamps, etc.
14. K.M.S. (Keep Mouth Shut). This single piece of advice can prevent an enormous amount of trouble.
15. Do something for the kid in you everyday.
16. Carry a Bible with you to read while waiting in line.
17. Get enough exercise.
18. Eat right.
19. Get organized so everything has its place.
20. While driving, listen to a tape that can help improve your quality of life.
21. Write down thoughts and inspirations.
22. Every day, find time to be alone.
23. Having problems? Talk to God on the spot. Try to nip small problems in the bud. Don't wait until it's time to go to bed to try and pray.
24. Make friends with godly people.
25. Keep a folder of favorite scripture verses on hand.
26. Remember that the shortest bridge between despair and hope is often a good "Thank you, Jesus!"
27. Laugh.
28. Laugh some more!
29. Take your work seriously, but yourself not at all.
30. Develop a forgiving attitude (most people are doing the best they can).
31. Be kind to unkind people (they probably need it the most).
32. Sit on your ego.
33. Talk less; listen more.
34. Slow down.
35. Remind yourself that you are not the general manager of the universe.
36. Every night before bed, think of one thing you're grateful for that you've never been grateful for before. God has a way of turning things around for you.

"If God is for us, who is against us?" (Romans 8:31).

Global Briefs make global mission come alive

A unique new educational resource from the ELCA Division for Global Mission can help link your congregation to exciting ministries around the world.

Global Briefs are a collection of story cards and maps that highlight global mission in different regions. Some show the work of ELCA missionaries and others describe companion churches and ministries supported by the ELCA.

Each card includes a short story and a biblical verse with activities, questions, and additional resources from which you can build a session covering a particular ministry, or global mission in general.

Two maps are also included: a 4-color map that shows where the ELCA is at work around the world, and a black-and-white map that can be adapted to suit your needs. Use the black-and-white map to challenge participants to find countries mentioned in the stories, or customize it by adding newspaper headlines or photos of missionaries or projects your congregation supports.

Global Briefs were produced with confirmation-age youth in mind, but they are suitable for everyone junior-high-age and above. They are an ideal complement to the *Global Mission Annual*, which provides an overview of the ELCA's global mission work and includes photos and addresses for all ELCA international personnel.

Global Briefs and the 2005 *Global Mission Annual* are available free-of-charge from the Division for Global Mission. For a copies, or information about other global worship resources, call 800/638-3522, ext. 2642.

Kansas Congregation wins Accessibility Award

First Lutheran Church in Topeka, Kansas, has been named winner of the 2005 ELCA Accessibility Award. This award is given annually to a congregation of the ELCA that demonstrates outstanding care and concern for people who are physically and mentally disabled. Applicants are judged on the basis of three criteria: the physical accessibility of the church building, how the congregation reaches out to individuals with disabilities in the community and how individuals with disabilities are included in the worship life and the leadership of the congregation.

First Lutheran was chosen on the basis of its all-encompassing ministry for people with disabilities. In addition to having a building that is fully accessible, First has a

bus ministry that offers rides to worship and other destinations for people who are mobility challenged. People with disabilities are also a very obvious part of the leadership of the parish, taking part in the congregation council, heading up committees and participating in many other ministries.

In addition to First Lutheran, three other congregations were awarded honorable mention in the annual contest. They are Saron Lutheran Church in Ashland, Wisconsin, Christ Lutheran Church in Middle Town, Connecticut, and Trinity Lutheran Church in Kiester, Minnesota.

As the winner of the Accessibility Award, First Lutheran in Topeka will receive $1000 from the ELCA's Mission Investment Fund and a plaque from the Division for Church in Society. To apply for this award go to *www.elca.org/disability*

Prayers requested

Recent news from Liberia is heartening. Through a major peacekeeping effort, Liberians are moving beyond conflict and towards elections. But the long war took its toll. Over 14 years, hundreds of thousands of people were killed or displaced. The country's economy and social infrastructure all but collapsed. Every town and village was damaged.

The Lutheran Church in Liberia and its schools also suffered. At the beginning of the war years, as many as 90 Lutheran schools were in operation. By the end of the war, only 20 schools were open.

Veteran ELCA missionary Bette McCrandall has supported the Liberian church throughout the conflict. As coordinator for the LCL's education ministry, she is part of the effort to rebuild Lutheran schools. Today, schools are reopening and students are returning. About 40 Lutheran schools have been rebuilt and reopened already.

On October 5, *Prayer Ventures* invites you to pray for Bette McCrandall and give thanks to God for the ministry of the Lutheran Church in Liberia. Pray that God might strengthen Bette and the LCL as they rebuild church institutions and structures and continue their faithful service in preaching, teaching, and healing.

Seeds for the Parish has new editor

Janice Rizzo, who has a 23-year background in publishing as both an editor and writer, is the new editor of *Seeds*. For 15 years, Rizzo worked for the publishing arm of the American Dental Association. She was also a beat reporter for the *Chicago Tribune* before becoming a founding partner of her own Web design company, American Communications Enterprises, Inc. Jan looks forward to working with readers of *Seeds*.

Food-Force video game available

A plane circles over a crisis zone. War. Drought. People are hungry. The aircraft goes into a steep climb before launching its first airdrop of food aid. A truck struggles up a muddy, treacherous road, and rebels loom. People are anxious, waiting, and food is scarce.

This is the virtual world of "Food Force." Not an action film, but the first humanitarian video game about global hunger unveiled by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) at the International Children's Book Fair in Bologna, Italy, in April.

"Communicating with children today means using the latest technology," said Neil Gallagher, WFP's director of communications. "Children in the developed world don't know what it's like go to bed threatened by starvation. In an exciting and dynamic form, "Food Force" will generate kids' interest and understanding about hunger, which kills more people than AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis combined."

While playing the game's six different missions alongside "Food Force's" crack team of emergency aid workers, children aged 8 to 13 will be faced with a number of realistic challenges to quickly feed thousands of people in the fictitious island of Sheylan, piloting helicopters on reconnaissance missions, negotiating with armed rebels on a convoy run, and using food to help rebuild villages.

The video game is available as a free internet download from *www.food-force.com* It is currently available in English, with translation into other languages planned. Versions are available in both PC and MAC. It is a stand-alone game and requires just over 200 megabytes to download.

The video game format, rather than traditional educational game technology, has the attraction of full screen video and 3D imagery. The *www.food-force.com* Web site is designed with a dedicated area for kids to post their high scores. You can also see which countries hold the highest scores.

"How to Help" section provides ideas on fundraising and community involvement. For educators, WFP has teamed up with the "Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger" Web site to provide downloadable teachers' lesson packs in multiple languages.

"Food Force is a game that parents will encourage their children to play at home, and that teachers will find stimulating to use in the classroom," said Gallagher. "So many parents complain about the blood and gratuitous violence that kids are so frequently exposed to in video games, this is a fun and action-packed alternative."

Within six weeks of its launch, the game that few expected to be a smash hit has shown the international games market that a non-violent, educational video game about hunger is "cool" to kids.

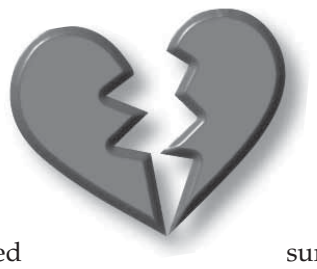
As the commercial gaming world gathered for the largest annual game forum — E3 in California — the dynamic new humanitarian video game for kids, attracted its millionth user.

Based in Rome, Italy, the World Food Programme is the world's largest humanitarian agency. It is active on the frontlines of more than 80 countries in order to feed some 90 million people each year. Through emergency relief to hot meals in schools, WFP's vision is to end hunger that stalks more than 800 people in the world today.

Church leaders encounter divorce

In recent years, the divorce rate for Protestant clergy has risen to match the general population's.
Newsweek, June 28, 1997

Even the clergy are vulnerable to the dissolution of marriage. In fact, many pastors/leaders are often caught off guard by the onset of problems in their own family life. Even the most effective in tending their marriage and ministry may encounter events beyond their personal control. And this situation is further complicated by the dynamics of a vulnerable faith community.



While some in Christendom debate the moral implications of divorce, many pastors/leaders are struggling to identify the fine lines between personal responsibility and public accountability. After all, the negation of what many Christians consider sacred cannot be taken lightly and usually carries several layers of effect or consequence. Although the Gospels record definite perspectives on divorce, we must consider that Jesus saw every challenge as an opportunity for ministry, regardless of a person's stature or position in daily life or ministry. Thus it becomes the privileged task of the church once again to graciously embrace all who are challenged, "weary and heavy laden."

Things a congregation can do

Don't assume that a life style devoted to full-time ministry cushions it from the painful realities of difficult family transitions. Be sensitive to the delicate balance between your pastor's personal and professional needs for privacy and support.

Uphold the integrity of your pastor/leader and your congregation as you strive for an appropriate measure of honesty and discretion. Dispel any temptations to further speculate or surmise. Seek the guidance and support of your synodical leadership as you consider any formal steps you may need to take.

The congregation's task goes beyond tending the impressions and perspectives of its membership. Though a time of grief is indicated, the pastor/leader and his/her children and spouse are deserving of your consideration. Find appropriate ways to express your support, such as sending a card or e-mail to express your sympathy.

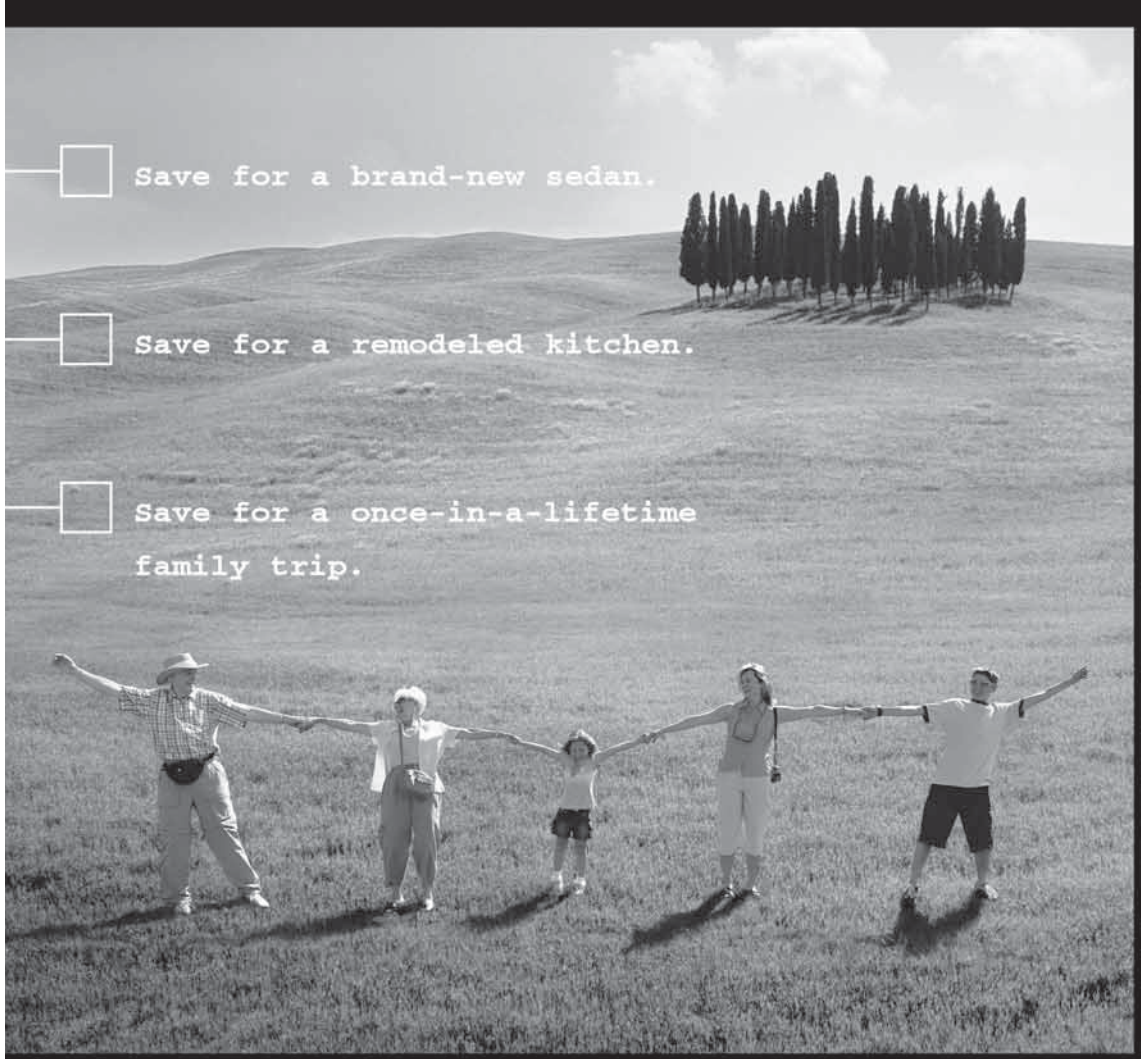
Pray for God's gracious support of your leader, his/her spouse and children as they cope with the necessary changes involved. Although it was the pastor/leader who formally responded to your call to ministry, his/her spouse and family are still vulnerable to the pressures of a public position and the expectations of the congregation.

Be mindful of the traumatic repercussions that often follow a divorce in the ministry, such as the loss of a cherished church home and the security of established relationships.

A divorce does not necessarily affect a person's ability to minister to the congregation. Deal with the realities your pastor and your congregation must endure during this time. Acknowledge the rhythm for living articulated in Ecclesiastes 3 as you affirm the integrity and resilience of your membership and ministry in the midst of uncertainty. The congregation is a family system in itself and has the potential to provide necessary and appropriate support for its pastor and membership.

Look for God's grace as you reflect on the life of your congregation. Realize that the congregation's call to leadership and ministry is not defined by a specific time, challenge, or personality. It is by God's grace alone, through the presentation of Word and Sacrament, that an individual inspires life and breath in an ongoing faith community.

Pray for God's grace and strength as you experience joy, challenge, transformation, and renewal throughout these days!



The fact is, choices are never easy. Very often, our choices in life are dictated not only by our resources, but also by our values. At Thrivent Financial for Lutherans we understand, because we share your values. We can help you build enough financial resources to do the things you need to do, as well as things you'd like to do. To contact one of our financial representatives, call 800-THRIVENT, or visit www.thrivent.com

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Mission Endowment Funds

Imagine what your congregation could do for ministry if it received new gifts of $50,000, $100,000, $250,000 or more each year. Many congregations receive at least one large gift that the donor intends as a lasting benefit for ministries of the church. If congregations are unprepared to receive such gifts, they fail to truly maximize the donor's intent.

Creating a **Mission Endowment Fund** can help an individual congregation enhance ministries of the whole church by using endowment funds to support mission work at home and around the world, above and beyond regular offerings.

THE ELCA FOUNDATION

Promoting your mission endowment fund also encourages faithful stewardship of all resources, including gifts of accumulated assets. Your fund will attract current giving in cash, as well as planned and future gifts, as people desire to leave a legacy for ministry.

The **ELCA Foundation** has many resources that can be of assistance in creating and managing a mission endowment fund in congregations. For more information, call 800/638-3522, ext. 2970, or visit our Web site at *www.elca.org/fo* to download "How to Create a Mission Endowment Fund" and other helpful tools to promote and optimize your congregation's mission endowment fund.

Did you see the Action Packet?

www.elca.org/co/actionpacket

The contents of the September-October Action Packet included:

- *Seminary Scholarships for Faithful Leaders* brochure
- *Your Guide to Ecumenical Life in the ELCA* brochure
- *Update: Evangelism Resources*
- *Renewing the Passion: A guide to Spiritual Revival* booklet