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Seeds for the Parish

RESOURCE PAPER FOR LEADERS OF ELCA CONGREGATIONS

Affinity Groups Benefit Rural Congregations

Over 55 percent of the ELCA's 10,776 congregations in the United States, are located in rural communities.

These congregations represent a large and diverse, yet isolated, constituency that includes congregations in small towns neighboring major metropolitan areas and those with buildings surrounded by farmland.

In February 2003 a special Rural Ministry Advisory Committee chose an "alliance model" for Small Town and Rural Ministry (STaR Ministry) to make information and resource sharing easier for rural ministries.

This model has at its core the formation and operation of affinity groups—groups of clergy and laity brought together around themes of common interest, including leadership, economic development, cooperative ministry, stewardship, education, and advocacy.

Join Affinity Groups such as:

The Cooperative Ministries Affinity Group. In 2005 there were seven "seven-point" parishes in the ELCA (two in Texas, three in Minnesota, one each in Wisconsin and North Dakota), and a huge number of "two-point" parishes. The aim of the Cooperative Ministries Affinity Group is to share practical wisdom and to make ideas that have worked well in one setting more easily available to others.

The 2005 Congregational Report "Form C" will ask for more information about how two- and seven-point congregations presently cooperate, and a follow-up survey will solicit further information in order to streamline awareness, research and resource sharing. Cooperative ministry is a lively way to be in mission together.

The Discovering Hope Affinity Group *Discovering Hope*, uses an evangelism tool based on the book by the same name (available from Augsburg Fortress, www.augsburgfortress.org) that helps rural

and small town congregations rediscover their purpose and sense of mission. A companion video, *Stories of Hope in Rural Congregations*, focuses on three vital and effective rural congregations that are in very different geographical settings.

The Discovering Hope Affinity Group is producing a new video for use by parishes to enhance the *Discovering Hope* curriculum. The group has also been promoting the curriculum through speaking engagements and regional meetings.

The Theological Education Affinity Group initiated an online course for *Discovering Hope* in conjunction with Wartburg Theological Seminary. They also raised funds to provide scholarships. For more information, go to www.wartburgseminary.edu

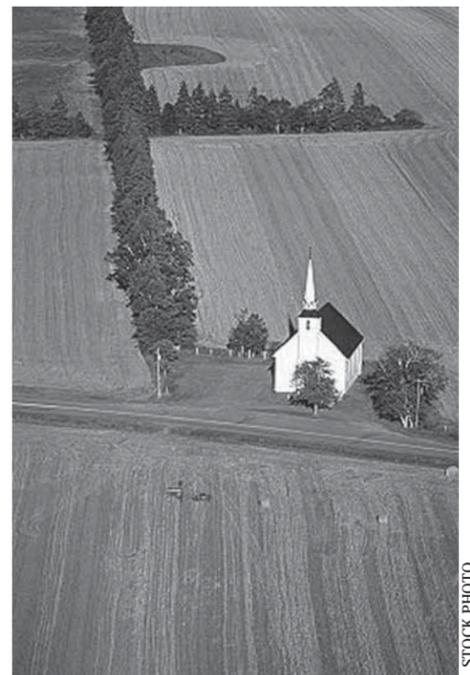
The Stewardship Affinity Group is considering ways to make resources for grant writing more available to parishes and synods.

The Health Care Affinity Group is preparing a strategy to realize the establishment of parish health care advocates throughout this church to assist in dealing with local health care systems, including approaches to Medicare and Medicaid.

Four worship planning and event planning affinity groups have been formed to support the annual gathering. These groups have developed worship resources that will be included the new hymnal, and have successfully planned two annual gatherings. Two new groups will be formed to support the next event at Susquehanna University in 2006.

The Future

The ELCA STaR Ministry Alliance and its affinity groups will continue to grow, with the availability of monetary resources and staff support. The groups must be inclusive in their initiative, and invite and nurture all cultures and groups in the ELCA to be participants in leadership.



Rural Pennsylvania church

STOCK PHOTO

It is possible to utilize affinity groups in other areas. People from all parts of the church as well as throughout the country can gather together under a common topic. Contact the Rural Ministry desk, 800/638-3522 to find a group of people who share your interests.

The alliance model can be applied to urban and suburban settings, as well as specific units within the church.

Affinity groups are a powerful technique to identify, empower, and affirm leadership; another strategic direction of the ELCA is to bring forth and support faithful, wise, and courageous leaders.

A membership application is available online at www.elca.org/rural/star Members of the alliance include individuals, congregations, agencies, colleges, seminaries, resource centers, camps, continuing education sites, and others. For more information call 800/638-3522, ext. 6556, or 773/380-6556.

Youth Gathering Spotlights Giving Opportunity

Young people attending the 2006 ELCA Youth Gathering in San Antonio are being called by their peers to assist people living in poverty through a "second mile" giving opportunity called *Hamiltons for Hunger*.

Because \$800,000 was raised for *Stand with Africa* and the ELCA Hunger Appeal through the *Quarters for Hunger*

campaign at the 2003 ELCA Youth Gathering, the board of the Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO) has issued another million dollar challenge to support ending of world hunger through the *Hamiltons for Hunger* campaign. "This campaign will be much less noisy, much lighter, and much easier to manage at the Gathering," says Heidi Hagstrom, direc-

tor of the Youth Gathering.

The theme of the 2006 ELCA Youth Gathering is "Cruzando: Journey with Jesus." As one LYO board member said, "The act

of giving from one's own pocket may be the first cruzando ("crossing over") experience for someone coming to the Gathering." Here, youth can learn how the Journey with Jesus takes

them to places they haven't been before.

Everyone who participates in the 2006 ELCA Youth Gathering is asked to bring at least three \$10-dollar bills for the *Hamiltons for Hunger* campaign. If everyone participates, this "second mile" giving opportunity will raise over \$1 million for the ELCA Hunger Appeal.



Alexander Hamilton's portrait on \$10 bill

Resources to help congregations educate youth about how to be stewards and not just collectors of money will be available through the *Getting Ready* materials for the 2006 ELCA Youth Gathering and online at www.elca.org/gathering

In This Issue ...

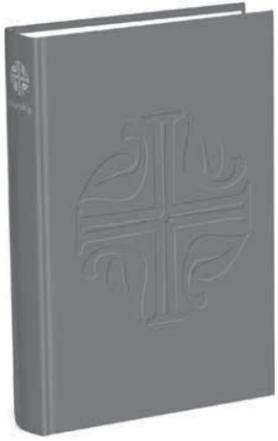
Articles

ELCA-UMC.....	2
Want to Scream.....	2
Disaster Relief.....	3
Prayer Ventures.....	7
Suicide Prevention.....	8

Sections

Ripe for Picking.....	4-5
Q&A.....	6

Congregations Prepare for New Book of Worship



Next October the ELCA's new book of worship, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, will be available in print and electronic form for congregations to purchase and begin using. Here are a few suggestions to help your congregation prepare.

- Get excited! Talk about the value of change. Work on developing good attitudes. Don't panic! Talk about the value of tradition and continuity. You'll need both parts of the conversation to be fully prepared.
- Watch for the introductory kit in March, and place your order before October 6 to get a 12½ percent discount. See www.renewingworship.org/about/PDF/ELW_Comparison.pdf for information about the new book, including pricing.
- Start strategizing on how to fund the purchase of the new book. Some

congregations may simply allocate a budget line for this use. Others may set up a system of memorial gifts (encourage members to buy one copy for home and another copy or two for the congregation). Think creatively! There are many other ways to fund such an important purchase.

- Use the study guide, *With the Whole Church*, in various settings and with different groups of people in your congregation. (Every congregation received one copy in September). Additional copies may be ordered from Augsburg Fortress, or downloaded from www.renewingworship.org
- Continue to explore the Renewing Worship Web site, which is updated regularly. Go to www.renewingworship.org
- One-day introductory events are being planned by every synod. Watch for notices about an event near you.
- Everyone interested in the future of worship renewal in the ELCA should mark August 3-6, 2007, on their calendar now! A churchwide celebratory, educational, and worship-filled event will be held in Chicago (prior to the 2007 Churchwide Assembly). More information will be announced as it becomes available.



Institute of Liturgical Studies

The 58th session of the Institute of Liturgical Studies will be held April 24-26, 2006, at Valparaiso University in northwest Indiana. This year's theme will focus on the connection between the liturgy and

the mission of the church. Keynote presenters include Thomas Schattauer, J-Glenn Murray, John Bell and Rebecca Larson. In addition, numerous workshops and seminars, many focusing on practical matters of worship, will be available. The highlights of each institute are the many diverse worship experiences.

While the Institute finds its historical roots in the Lutheran tradition, it embraces the wider evangelical catholic tradition and celebrates the heritage of the earliest Christian communities, the Reformation era, and the many and varied faith communities of the present day.

Transforming the church through worship is the mission of the Institute of Liturgical Studies, an institution that connects church leaders, congregations, and others concerned with the church's liturgy. It is a regular source of renewal and re-creation, through worship, music, and study.

For more information, see: www.valpo.edu/ils or phone 219/464-5309.

Want to Scream? Want to Talk?

If inquiring minds want to know, then information-overloaded brains want to scream. That's what happens to our minds in a world in which too much information is chasing too few brain cells. Because our brains are beset by information at every turn and besotted with trying to make sense out of it, most of us are not paying attention to most things (and most people) most of the time.

Social critics have been warning us about this growing phenomenon for at least 20 years, and neuroscientists started weighing in on the problem about 10 years ago. Simply stated, brains that are always working—humming along at 40 Hz, neurons firing at about 200 miles an hour—just can't be pushed to increase their speed or their processing. "Multitasking"

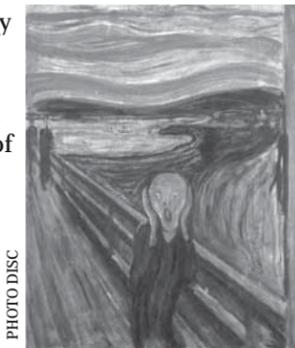


PHOTO DISC
The Scream, Munch

is actually rapid moving back and forth among tasks. The emotional tagging mechanisms of the amygdala (ah-MIG-duh-lah) don't speed up just because there's more information to process.

Moral compasses, decision making, and relationships don't get better either.

What to do about this? Screaming helps for a while, but conversation might be better for the long haul. If you want to talk about these matters write or call Bob Sitze, ELCA director for Hunger Education, at bob.sitze@elca.org or 800/638-355, ext. 2708.

To read more about this, try *Paying Attention: Focusing Your Congregation on What Matters*, Gary E. Peluso-Verdend, Alban Institute 2005, or *NOT Trying Too Hard: New Basics for Sustainable Congregations*, Bob Sitze, Alban Institute 2001. Order at www.alban.org or 800/486-1318, ext. 244.

ELCA-UMC Forge New Relationship

In response to the proposal for Interim Eucharistic Sharing between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the United Methodist Church (UMC), several voting members at the 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly stated enthusiastically, "It's about time!" The relationship between Lutherans and United Methodists has been forged through friendships, family ties, congregations, ecumenical councils, colleges, and seminaries. In countless places, we are partners in ministry. Now it is time to discover the gifts of the Holy Spirit in this particular *Kairos* of our life together.

The ELCA's ecumenical relationships are described in a 1991 policy statement, *Ecumenism: The Vision of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, which documents the deep desire of the ELCA to "manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity that the Spirit gives." One of four stages of an ecumenical relationship described in this statement is Full Communion. For the ELCA,

Full Communion includes: (1) a common confession of the Christian faith; (2) a mutual recognition of Baptism and sharing of the Lord's Supper; (3) a mutual recognition of ordained ministers to the service of all members of each church; (4) a common commitment to evangelism, witness, and service; (5) a means of common decision making on issues of faith and life; and (6) a mutual lifting of any condemnations that exist between churches.

The ELCA and UMC have discovered a profound convergence. Congregations from both churches are invited to use *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Discussion and Study Guide*, on the Web at www.elca.org/ecumenical

We hope that in the 71 paragraphs of *Confessing Our Faith Together*, you will be able to trace our joyful journey of mutual discovery. We hope this document will provide a helpful beginning to conversations that will lead us to Full Communion, which will strengthen our common witness in the gospel for the sake of the whole world.

Seeds for the Parish

www.elca.org/seeds

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Baby Boomers Present New Online Ministry Opportunities

Suddenly, and without fanfare, a new ministry for people 55 and older has emerged. With the average life span now approaching 90, there is a growing population that has a longer than ever retirement period! People over 55 will soon make up over a third of the U.S. population, but few congregations focus on this emerging area of ministry.

People over 55 have plenty of experience, wisdom, and leadership skills. They have seen many things come and go, and are thus unlikely to get caught up in every latest fad. Many have lots of time on their hands and have adequate financial resources to lead quality lives. But many of our congregations seem to ignore this group in favor of church growth and a focus on youth.

Of course, this age group, like any other, has its own unique difficulties. Health care and its costs, estate planning, diet, listlessness, loneliness, and sometimes even alcoholism, are common concerns of this generation.

One may wonder whether many in this age group are really interested in the church, Bible and theology. At Advent Lutheran Church in Harleysville, Penn., their recent responses to programs on "Russia and the Lutheran Church" and "The Seminary Today and Theological Education for Laity" and the congregation's regularly held Sunday morning adult forum were very encouraging.

George Keck, director of theological education

for laity at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (LTSP), has observed a few things about people in this group that relate to educational opportunities.

- They are open to theological education. While, for many, traditional Sunday church school teaching no longer makes sense, an updated approach to the Bible could be very timely and useful.
- For many others, the approach to the Bible is often literal or fundamentalist. No wonder TV evangelists hold a special appeal for them! Here is another opportunity for Lutheran ministry!
- They are concerned how the church today speaks to medical, social, and world issues in these unsettling times.
- Many are not aware of the wonderful worldwide ministry of the ELCA and the Lutheran World Federation.

Keck prefers not to think of the 55-and-over group as a "mission field" for new members. Rather this is a "ministry field" where one-third of our population needs help in understanding their faith at this stage in life. They need to hear the gospel speak to the issues that concern them in some fresh ways.

Where can synods and congregations turn for

assistance about this new area of ministry? One partner can be the Theological Education for Laity program at LTSP, which has among its resources some specific materials that are very timely and useful for adults 55 and over such as:

Reproducible studies: These five-session studies are designed to be used by small groups in congregations and other locations:

- *Aging is NOT a Disease!*
- *How Shall I Live, Knowing That I will Die?*
- *Clues for Reading Paul*
- *Creation and Fall: Genesis 103*
- *Walking Wet: Living our Baptism*

Online Theological Study: Individuals can log on whenever they have time and wherever they live. During the past five years, more than half of the students have been people who were 55 and over.

Honoring our Neighbors' Faith
Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of John
Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew
Modern Science and Christian faith in Dialogue

Faith and Leadership Academy: A six-session basic introduction to the Bible, church history, Luther and the Reformation, the Church today, leadership resources and Life Keys.

Complete details are on the seminary Web site at www.ltsp.edu

Natural Disasters, How Lutherans Can Help



Bethel Church, Biloxi, Miss.

This year, one natural disaster after another struck the Gulf Coast and various other regions of the United States. Recovering

can be a grueling process as these disasters continue to affect our communities. But volunteers are proving God's unending compassion through their selfless actions.

Note that a work crew is not always hammering or involved with hammering and heavy lifting

Put together a work crew

When the muck and debris are cleared away, there will still be plenty of work to be done. Work crews will be needed for building projects, for making minor repairs to some houses, for constructing temporary housing structures, or entirely new homes. Note that a work crew is not always involved with hammering and heavy lifting. Volunteers will be needed to make and distribute meals, visit affected families, or help with health-related issues. This means that anyone can take part.

To learn more, visit www.ldr.org

Donate gift cards

In the wake of a disaster like Hurricane Katrina, many people want to help by sending food or used clothing. But when truckloads of canned goods and used clothes arrive, local coordinators have to scramble to find storage space and unload the trucks, taking people from work crews. A great way for congregations to donate these sorts of items is by purchasing gift cards from stores such as Target or Wal-Mart. American Express now offers general gift cards

that can be used almost anywhere.

For information on purchasing gift cards for Gulf Coast families, visit www.target.com, www.walmart.com and www.americanexpress.com

Pray

Perhaps most importantly, affected people need our thoughts and our prayers. Long after cities like New Orleans have been physically restored and everyday life has returned to normal, the emotional scars of natural disasters will surely remain. God is always present wherever people are suffering. We Christians, are called to follow

Jesus' example through continued prayers for those who are hurting. For prayers and other worship resources regarding disaster relief, visit www.elca.org/disaster/resources

Following a major domestic disaster, Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) seeks to minister to the urgent needs of the people affected through hardship grants, volunteer coordination, spiritual and emotional care, and long-term recovery efforts. Lutheran Disaster Response is a collaborative ministry of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through the Church in Society program unit.



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

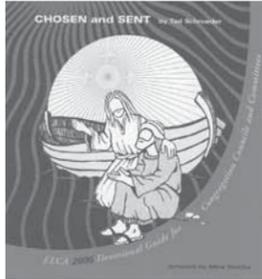


www.elca.org/mif

Ripe for Picking

2006 Devotional Guide

Ever wonder how to begin your council meeting—without asking the pastor to do the opening prayer again? Here's a resource for you! The 2006 *ELCA Devotional Guide for Congregation Councils and Committees* provides biblical texts, meditations, reflections, and prayers that will help focus your work together. It also includes artwork that congregations can use in bulletins, newsletters, or other print pieces. The Devotional Guide was sent to all ELCA congregations in the 2005 November–December Action Packet, and is also available free online at www.elca.org/communication/2006dev/



Green Jell-O®

If there were no Lutherans would there still be Green Jell-O? is a book that makes you smile.

The Rev. Steve Molin (a.k.a. The Sign Guy), pastor at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Stillwater, Minn., and Tundra Films' Gayle Knutson have teamed up to make a documentary on Molin's quirky signs.

Molin uses the sign in front of the church to attract interest. The sign, which changes frequently, carries clever sayings and jokes that turn many a driver's head as they pass the church.

If there were no Lutherans would there still be Green Jell-O? and a 12-minute documentary DVD are loaded with signs to make you laugh. For information visit www.churchsignguy.com

Catalog Targets Youth

Journeys 2006 is a catalog of servant events, high adventure camps, and volunteer opportunities for high school students and young adults.

Learn about programs for community service, social ministry, 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, visit www.elca.org/dcm/camps/journey.asp or request a printed catalog by calling the ELCA 800/638-3522.

Connect with LWF

Need a good global connection paragraph or two for your bulletin or newsletter? Check out the Lutheran World Federation North America Web site at www.elca.org/lwf. The site is updated frequently to keep your congregation in touch with the world.

Auction Begins

Trading Graces online auction is the first annual fundraising/awareness auction to benefit Lutheran health and human service organizations around the country. The proceeds will go directly to each organization. The auction is scheduled for February 26 through March 8, 2006.

Go to www.lutheranservices.org

Sent by God's Grace

Want ideas for Lenten midweek or Sunday services with a global focus? Global Mission (www.elca.org/globalmission/lent) offers everything you need for seven Lenten services: downloadable worship outlines and liturgies, sermons, bulletin covers, PowerPoint-ready photos and images, even recipes for global suppers! Materials for Ash Wednesday and Holy Week are also available.

This year's series explores the theme, "Sent by God's Grace for the sake of the world." Stories and sermons showcase the work of ELCA missionaries in Russia, Mexico, Guam, Senegal, China, Singapore, and Lithuania.

Users of previous Lenten series have found them useful. "Saved me lots of time in preparing for the Lenten season," wrote a pastor from Texas. "The recipes were very good and the members quickly volunteered to prepare the meals. We learned much about other parts of the world." A pastor from Washington state said, "Members appreciated the real-life perspective of doing ministry around the globe." "A good Lenten series that would have been impossible for us to do without. It is a well-organized and easily accessible series," wrote the leader of a congregation with no pastor.

For information visit, www.elca.org/globalmission/lent or contact the Rev. David Lerseth at David.Lerseth@elca.org or 800/638-3522, ext. 2641.



Students Sample Seminary

Attention high school youth ready to take on a summer challenge! Consider participating in Trinity Lutheran Seminary's Summer Sampler Program in Columbus, Ohio. This fantastic three-week program is open to sophomores, juniors, and seniors from across the country.

Youth will explore their gifts for ministry through service projects, special worship services, seminary classes, and more.

Vocational options for laity and clergy are explored with mentors.

Now in its eighth year, the program has influ-

enced college choices, majors, volunteer activities, and vocational direction for 138 faith-filled teens.

Participants actually earn money for college through their involvement. If you or someone you know would be interested in applying to the Summer Seminary Sampler, please print and fill out the application and reference forms that can be found at www.trinitylutheranseminary.edu. Click on Summer Seminary Sampler.

For further information, contact Pastor Ruth Fortis at 614/235-4136, ext. 4117. We hope to see you there!

LSM's Breaking Out! Begins in March

The first ever *Breaking Out! – LSM Spring Servant Experience* begins this March. *Breaking Out!* the Lutheran Student Movement's alternative spring break service project with three main aspects. First, each student involved will participate in a construction or environmental service project. Secondly, students will be trained by Lutheran social ministry professionals to be effective servants and social leaders. Thirdly, pastors and theologians will have the students reflect on the Lutheran understanding of service.

Breaking Out! will be a three-week long event with 30 different students participating each week. The participants will represent as many geographic areas as possible. The event will be

held in Atlanta during Spring 2006 (and possibly in the Gulf Coast area in 2007 as part of the ELCA's continuing response to recent hurricanes). The cost for each participant is \$75 for the entire week, including travel costs. LSM-USA is raising \$160,000 to sustain this event for two years, and to build a \$35,000 endowment to keep costs down in the future. With significant help from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and other donors, this goal will be reached.

Applications and more information can be found at www.lsm-usa.org. Please contact Rebecca Sorensen at lsm.usa@elca.org if you have any questions, or would like to donate to this special project.



Rural Ministry Conference Scheduled for 2006

The 25th Annual Rural Ministry Conference, "Living with Hope in an Age of Fear," will be held March 5–7, 2006, in Dubuque, Iowa.

"In an age marked by fear and overshadowed by terrorism, how and where do we find hope?"

"How do we respond to fear in our economy, politics, and our society?"

"How can we share our hope with our congregations, communities, and the world?"

Questions like these will be addressed at the conference. This will be accomplished by drawing upon the knowledge and expertise of pastors and theologians from a number of denominations and regions of the country.

For more information on the conference and the Center for Theology and Land, Winter–Spring 2006 Course Offerings visit www.ruralministry.com or contact Julie Phillips at jphillips@wartburgseminary.edu or 563/589-0273.

Ripe for Picking

Thank You From Tsunami Survivors

Bring a big THANK YOU! from Tsunami survivors to members of your congregation in January, when the public media will feature Tsunami anniversary stories. Resources for congregational use, available on the ELCA's Disaster Response Web site (www.elca.org/disaster), include a downloadable *Thank You!* bulletin insert, a six-minute thank you video (*Momma P*), and an anniversary report on post-Tsunami relief, psycho-social assistance and the long-term "Jubilee Village" rebuilding project of the Lutheran churches in India (picture at right). A 30-minute Mosaic video, "Beyond Tsunami: Lutherans Respond," can be ordered at www.elca.org/mosaic/Tsunami/index.html



Café Highlights Women's Issues

Café is an award-winning, online magazine from Women of the ELCA that features timely articles about faith and life, scripture reflections, and an opportunity for sharing your thoughts with others. The e-zine is addressed primarily to women ages 20–35, but its articles will inform and inspire women of all ages. Come to www.womenoftheelca.org/cafe Refresh your spirit.



Some of the latest topics covered in *Café*, are: the burden of credit card debt and its spiritual consequences; body image and negative self-talk; and forgiveness for good health. Upcoming topics include: "A Look at Hunger," by Kathryn Sime, director for the ELCA Hunger Appeal, and "Timelines and Transition," by Debra Farrington.

Café continues to be well received in young and older audiences alike in this church and beyond. For more information, visit www.womenoftheelca.org/cafe

The Lutheran Magazine's Top 11 Topics Chosen

Each month, in its themes section, *The Lutheran* magazine features an in-depth review of topics impacting our lives. Often these features become topics for discussion groups and are expanded into study guides.

In the August 2005 issue, a list of 25 "current" topics were listed and Lutherans were asked to vote for the top 10 on their minds that would become future topics.

Over 4,000 votes have been tabulated. The average vote total per topic was 162, with 11 of the 25 topics receiving above the average number of votes.

The number one topic was, "What does it mean to be Lutheran today?" A close second was, "Thinking biblically — modern thinking about ancient Scripture writing."

- The other topics on the top 11 were:
- 3) Greed. Is our society possessed?
 - 4) ELCA dissenters: Who is leaving and why?
 - 5) How does faith change?
 - 6) Nurturing prayer life
 - 7) Future of denominations
 - 8) Relationships with conservative evangelical churches
 - 9) Growing congregations: where and why?
 - 10) Busy-ness—pressures of modern life
 - 11) Science and creation

If you know of someone who could contribute to any of these topics, contact *The Lutheran* at 800/638-3522, ext. 2540, or www.thelutheran.org and let one of the editors know.

The Lutheran will continue conducting surveys and you are invited to participate on the Web or through the magazine.

Mosaic Produces Old Testament Video

Mosaic Television's newest resource, *Introducing the Old Testament*, complete with user's guide, is now available on VHS and DVD.

Who wrote the Old Testament? When was it written? How was it put together? Recorded in Israel, the West Bank, and Egypt, *Introducing the Old Testament* is a clear, useful presentation of the Old Testament with beautiful images and interviews with scholars.



The video features James L. Kugel, Starr Professor of Hebrew Literature at Harvard University and Professor of Bible at Bar Ilan University in Israel; Esther Menn, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago; Peter Marty, the host of *Grace Matters*; and Brooks Schramm, associate professor of Biblical Studies at Lutheran Theological Seminary Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

To order, go to www.elca.org/mosaic

Advocacy Days Begin March 10

The 2006 Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice occur Friday, March 10, and continue through Monday, March 13, 2006, in Washington, D.C.

In 2005 more than 900 people from over 26

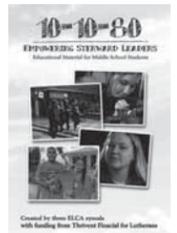
denominations participated in workshops, training and advocacy.

For more information, check www.advocacydays.org

Introduce Stewardship

Five kids went to the mall. Each received \$50. What did they do with it...?

For more information, check out an exciting new resource for confirmation class or a youth retreat at www.10-10-80.com The goal of this easy-to-use educational unit is to introduce youth to a life of balanced financial stewardship by sharing 10 percent, saving 10 percent, and spending wisely 80 percent of their income.



An eight-minute DVD for group presentations may be purchased for \$5. Send your request and check to: 10-10-80 DVD, 3462 Losey Blvd. S., La Crosse, WI 54601.

Cleaning Kits Help

Want to help with post-Katrina efforts? Here is a way to help with relief and recovery.

A plea for cleaning kits has been issued by FEMA for those moving into transitional housing such as a trailer, mobile home, or apartment. A cleaning kit is composed of kitchen, bedroom, and cleaning items.

Lutherans are joining together to provide cleaning kits. Each kit includes a bucket, broom, dustpan, sponge, all-purpose cleaner, dish detergent, and laundry detergent.

To launch this project, Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Baton Rouge, began assembling 100 cleaning kits per week. They bought the products in bulk from local businesses as a way to support the local economy. Although these kits might be created in other locations, congregations are encouraged to send "cleaning kit" funds to the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod through the synod office so that products can be purchased locally. The address is: Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod, 12707 North Freeway, Suite 580, Houston, Texas, 77060-1239.

Where Jesus Meets Us

La Frontera, a packet of information, is about living in the "between-place" of borders, regions, and territories. At its simplest, *la frontera* is a place. It can mean a "place of transition," a "place of indecision," a "place of struggle," "on the edge of a place," or a "place of uncertainty."

La Frontera includes Bible studies and supplementary activities for grammar school and high school students, and adults. A sample packet is available at www.elca.org/dcm/camps/curric.asp Order from Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648 for \$315 plus shipping.

Global Mission Mailing

Watch your mailbox for the annual ELCA global mission mailing in January.

Inside you'll find: The Global Mission Annual, a poster, registration materials for the 2006 Global Mission Event, and a helpful guide to ELCA resources on global mission. For additional copies, call 800/638-3522, ext. 2642.

What's New on the World Wide Web

There's something new at www.elca.org Keywords!

The Keywords option, found on the home page of elca.org is an efficient way to find specific resources, especially now that the site's popular feature, Selected Topics, has been expanded to the max. (Merely expanding that list renders it less SELECTed and certainly more cumbersome for visitors to use.) The Keyword search is a way to share specific resources much more efficiently.

For example: You are interested in a model constitution. Instead of painstakingly entering in www.elca.org/secretary/Constitutions/ConstitutionsIntro.html and hoping it is all there, now you can go to www.elca.org, keyword: constitutions.

Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations has launched a bimonthly e-newsletter, *Ecumenical Life*. It is a gateway into the everyday ecumenical activity in the ELCA and other organizations worldwide. The online publication and an

opportunity to subscribe via e-mail can be found at www.elca.org/ecumenical/life/index.html



Fisher's Net Offers Congregation Administration Course

Welcome to the Congregation Administration course.

Beginning January 2006, the Congregation Administration course will be offered online via Fisher's Net (www.fishersnet.net).

Think of Fisher's Net as a neighborhood where you are invited to participate in a variety of learning experiences. There is no charge for this course, you proceed at your own pace, and you are encouraged to invite other members of your congregation to participate in all or part of the experience with you.

Congregation Administration is designed as a collection of courses, led by separate facilitators, in which you will address some basic issues confronted daily by the pastor or lay administrator of a parish. Each course invites you to complete a project that you may immediately put to use in your congregation. You are also invited to share your project, as well as your comments and questions, with other participants in the course via the Forum. The course modules include:

Legal Issues for Congregations

In administering your congregation, it is best to know where you may encounter areas of vulnerability and establish sound policies and practices.

Records Management for Congregations

This course will give you the necessary information to create and apply a records retention schedule.

Maintaining the Parish Register

In this course, you are asked to address issues regarding the maintenance of your parish Register.

How to do a Congregation Self-study

Congregations do self-studies as part of a long-range planning process or as part of the preparation for the call process.

How to Present the Congregation's Public Image

How to get media coverage for events and offer-

ings. What can be done to help share news of their contributions to the community.

Preserving the Congregation's History—Building a Congregation Archive

Archives are the collective memory of an organization. In order to preserve the entire history of the ELCA, archives are needed in each congregation.

Who can take a course delivered online through Fisher's Net?

Anyone who desires to learn is welcome. Whether you are interested in lifelong learning, require continuing education credits, or have a desire to complete a seminary degree, courses delivered by Fisher's Net work for diverse educational goals. Keep in mind that courses require different means of registration. Courses listed on the Fisher's Net site will give details of enrollment and registration. Remember, there is no charge for the course in Congregation Administration.



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 nearest you, go to www.elca.org/communication/resourcecenters.html

Q We would like to know more about using projection during worship in the sanctuary. What do you recommend?

A *Icon Two: Visual Images for Every Sunday* (Augsburg Fortress, www.augsburgfortress.org) contains 250 sacred images by liturgical artist Lucinda Naylor. Perfect for use in bulletins, newsletters, and more. *Icon Two* also includes a handy index to help you find the right image for the right use.

—Susan Schlitter, director
The Lutheran Resource Center
Clear Lake, IA

A Projection in worship is not starting a new service or doing worship differently, but it is also a way to enhance what you already do in worship. There are a number of resources from which to choose, but here are some of my favorites: *Enhance Worship Resource* (Digistry Multimedia). This set of DVDs is an inspirational, royalty-free multimedia resource to enhance worship and Christian education in your congregation. They follow the Revised Common Lectionary (years A, B, and C) and include clips of video, photography, drawing, cartooning, 3D animation, music, and sound effects that are combined into short, meaningful Bible-focused video clips. They are available from Youth & Family Institute (www.youthandfamilyinstitute.org).

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

A I just ran across another great resource: *Abingdon Worship Photos, Volume 3: Projection BackGrounds for Lent and Easter* (Abingdon, www.cokesbury.com). They're very good!

—Pam Drenner, director
Lower Susquehanna Synod Resource Network
Harrisburg, Pa.

A So you want to use projection systems in your congregation. We'll leave all the details of projectors, software and sound system enhancements to professionals. We have some ideas that are often overlooked once you have the equipment in place. First, gather a video ministry team who love taking digital still and moving pictures, and have editing skills. Every week, or at least monthly, their ministry will be to create the visual material for prelude, postlude, offertory, and possibly even during the lessons. It is far more powerful to see images of congregation members than cute canned pictures from most purchased programs.

Next, build into your youth programs opportunities to create PowerPoint® presentations. Use these during worship. Also, purchase quality CDs of worship images (mentioned by others in this column). Select a team of youth and adults who love technology, and give them the ministry of selecting images that fit the lessons and theme for each day.

—Greg Kaufman, director
N.W. Synod of Wisconsin Resource Center
Eau Claire

A Congregations in small towns and rural areas may find help for locating equipment suppliers as well as local demonstrations through the musical instrument supplier in their area. Local high school band directors will be able to give you contact information for the suppliers. With the increased use of technology and visuals in music, these companies work together to provide quality experiences for every budget, and, they can refer you to other users as well as suppliers.

—Karen Kaufman, director
N.E. Ohio Synod Resource Center
Cuyahoga Falls

A A favorite resource of mine for a variety of uses but especially for worship, is *Behold: Arts for the Church Year* (Logos Productions, www.spiritseasons.com). The book and accompanying Seasons of the Spirit data CD is filled with images, scripture and texts that invite congregations to engage the season through mind and soul!

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

Editor's note: Richard A. Jensen's *Envisioning the Word: The Use of Visual Images in Preaching*, available from Augsburg Fortress (www.augsburgfortress.org) helps preachers use visual images creatively and responsibly.

Global Mission Volunteer Transformed by Experience

I Jumped Off the Bridge of What I Have Known and Am Embracing the Challenge of Learning to Swim

Above is the title of Tom Balsley's first e-mail newsletter from Montevideo, Uruguay.

A graduate of St. Olaf College, from Roscoe, Illinois, Tom is spending a year in Uruguay through the ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) program. Since their orientation last August, the 37 people currently in YAGM have settled into new communities, host families, faith communities, and work. Tom is a tutor for children and youth at La Obra Ecu-menica, a nonprofit organization in a neighborhood noted for poverty and high crime rates.

Tom is interested in a career in social work, but his experiences at La Obra are opening new possibilities. "I am realizing that I have a strong passion for education and working with youth," he writes.

A recent survey of the 83 YAGM "alumni" confirms this international mission service year is transforming. More than 80 percent of the respondents say that their career directions were impacted by their service. More than a third have entered seminary or are working in the church. And 90 percent bring their insights on global Christianity into their faith life as active members of congregations.

Applications are now being accepted for the 2006-2007 Young Adults in Global Mission program. The program is open to ELCA members, ages 19-30, who are active in their congregation or campus ministry. Young adults raise a minimum of \$3,500 toward their support. A wide range of ministry opportunities are available in eight countries: Argentina, Egypt, Germany, India, Kenya, the Philippines, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom.

Applications submitted by February 15 will get priority attention. The deadline for applications is March 1, 2006.

Details about countries and assignments, plus Web sites of some YAGM participants, can be found at www.elca.org/globalserve/youngadults For more information contact Global Mission at 800/638-3522, ext. 2520, or e-mail at globalserve@elca.org



Tom Balsley in Uruguay

Prayer Ventures

On January 23, *Prayer Ventures*, the guide to daily prayer for the ELCA's global and outreach ministries, invites you to pray for Helmut and Rotraut Diefenthal.

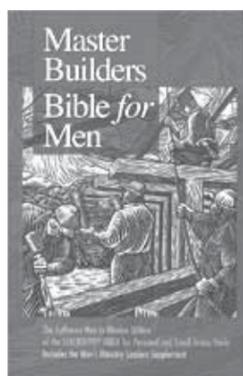
This couple has served in Tanzania for part of every decade since 1961. Helmut, a radiologist, and Rotraut, an X-ray technician, developed the Kilimanjaro School of Radiology at the Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Center in Moshi. Since 1988, they have spent 10 months each year training radiologists and assistant medical officers, and two months each year updating their skills in Minnesota.

More than 50 graduates of the program now work throughout Tanzania, using their knowledge of X-ray and ultrasound imagery to help local medical personnel diagnose diseases and abnormalities.

Dr. and Mrs. Diefenthal also train radiologists through the Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Center, which is part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania's Tumaini University.

Prayer Ventures may be downloaded from www.elca.org/prayerventures A print version may be requested by calling 800/638-3522, ext. 2642, or you may subscribe to a daily e-mail version at www.elca.org/it/list/listpr.html

LMM Committed to 1,000 New Ministries



On a given Sunday, fewer than 38 percent of adults worshipping in ELCA congregations are men. When men encounter Christ through an effective men's ministry, every area of congregational life benefits.

Lutheran Men in Mission (LMM) is committed to starting (or re-starting) 1,000 new congregational men's ministries in 2006.

They will assist as many as 15 congregations in each synod by starting, or restarting, an effective men's ministry. They will supply up to six men's leaders in those congregations with complimentary copies of *Master Builders Bible for Men*.

"We intend to assist in starting, or re-starting ministries that will connect men with Christ and reach into every area of the congregation and beyond," said Doug Haugen, LMM director.

Lutheran Men in Mission encourages four to six men to form a men's ministry leadership team in a congregation.

The Men's Ministry Leadership Supplement is a 32-page section of the *Master Builders Bible for Men* that walks leaders through each step of building an effective congregational men's ministry.

Synodical men's ministry leaders will distribute up to six *Master Builders Bible for Men* to congregational leaders who, in turn, will commit to work through the Leadership Supplement and share their names and contact information with the synod leader. For the purpose of support, the synodical and churchwide expressions of Lutheran Men in Mission expect to maintain a relationship with those receiving the resource. While each synodical men's ministry leader has been given a limited number of these resources to distribute, *Master Builders Bible for Men* may be purchased through Augsburg Fortress Publishers for \$20 plus shipping. Go to www.augsburgfortress.org



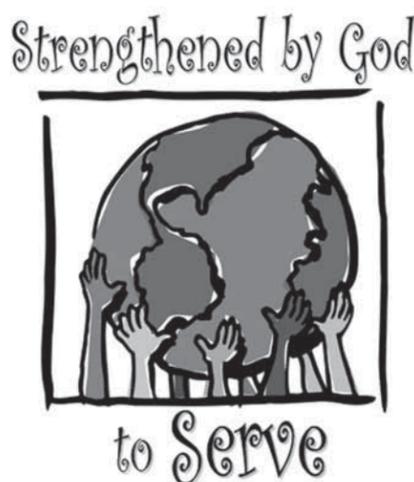
To find the Lutheran Men in Mission leaders distributing the *Master Builders Bible for Men* in your synod, go to www.elca.org/lmm click on "contact us" and go to "synod leaders."

This program is made possible through donations from individual men, as well as congregational and synodical men's ministries.

Strengthened by God to Serve - DAYLE 2006

Prior to the 2006 ELCA Youth Gathering in San Antonio, will be the Definitely-Abeled Youth Leadership Event (DAYLE). This event challenges youth who have disabilities to explore their faith and discover ways to use their unique gifts in the church and community. In addition to being a time of fellowship, Bible study, service, and worship, participants will go on a tour of the sites used for the Gathering, and experience parts of San Antonio prior to the Gathering.

As part of DAYLE 2006, each participant is invited to bring another young person from the congregation as well as an adult companion. This is a chance to share the experience of DAYLE with other members of the congregation who can lift up the gifts of definitely-abled youth.



DAYLE will be held July 2-5, 2006, at the San Antonio Marriott Rivercenter Hotel. It is open to any young person who is a member of an ELCA congregation, between the ages of 15 and 18 and/or entering grades 10-12 at the time of DAYLE, and has any type of disability, physical or mental. Each young person who attends DAYLE is encouraged to bring an adult companion, who must be at least 21 and can be a parent, friend, pastor, or youth advisor. A special track during DAYLE is designed specifically to meet the needs of the companion.

The cost is \$100 per person, and covers hotel, meals, and program. Adult companions must pay this DAYLE registration fee, but will receive complimentary registration for the Gathering. For more information contact Jon Vehar at 800/638-3522, ext. 2111 or by e-mail at Jon.Vehar@elca.org See us online at www.elca.org/gathering/dayle.html

Seeds New Design

With this issue of *Seeds for the Parish* we are pleased to present you with a new design.

All the familiar sections like the resource centers' "Q & A" and "What's New on the World Wide Web" are still here with a more streamlined look.

Included in the new layout are a new name plate (or banner) and a new masthead. You will also notice that the ever popular "Ripe for Picking" section is far more readable (not merely a string of three columns) and now contains more information than ever before. In general, our new design features more photographs rather than line drawings and should be much easier on the eye.

We invite you to share unusual or thought provoking sermon topics, stories on the way your congregations make use of resources and other materials you think would benefit those in other congregations.

If there is anything else we can do to improve *Seeds*, in appearance or content, please let us know. Contact Jan Rizzo at Janice.Rizzo@elca.org

Finding Help for People in Need

Traditionally, churches have been the refuge of those in trouble. To this day, clergy have the vital and often overwhelming responsibility of guiding people through many of life's challenges.

One of these responsibilities is to assist people at risk for suicide. Often the pastor can help in ways that mental health professionals or even close family members cannot. By listening to people and getting them the help they need, congregational leaders can make an important difference.

Each year, more than 32,000 Americans commit suicide. As Christians, we believe that life is a sacred gift from God, yet life for some is a living hell, torment without hope. It is difficult to understand why people take their own lives. Our efforts to prevent suicide grow out of our hope in God despite suffering and adversity.

Pastors, lay leaders, and congregation members have an opportunity to prevent suicide by recognizing the warning signs of suicidal behavior and understanding the factors associated with such behavior.

Quite often people who are thinking of harming themselves approach the clergy rather than mental health professionals. More than twice the number of people with diagnosable mental health problems will seek the counsel of a pastor as opposed to a psychotherapist. This indicates that people feel more comfortable

with their pastor than with a therapist, perhaps because religious counseling does not have the negative connotations commonly associated with mental health care. Besides, the cost of professional mental health care is prohibitive for many.

Although many pastors may be great counselors they cannot be all things to all people. They simply may not be qualified to offer therapy to those afflicted with mental illness or serious emotional problems. Even professional health care providers sometimes find it difficult to assess the risk of suicide. Thus, it is vitally important that people know their limitations while striving to recognize the warning signs of suicide.

The Warning Signs

People considering suicide often display warning signs and signals that something is wrong. Such warning signs include:

- talk about suicide or death;



STOCK PHOTO

- depressed, sad, withdrawn, or hopeless demeanor;
- significant changes in behavior, appearance, and mood;
- regularly abuse of drugs and alcohol;
- deliberate self injury, and
- giving away treasured belongings.

Ways to Help

You can help by:

- staying calm and listening;
- taking all threats seriously (there is a myth that those who threaten suicide will not go through with it);
- asking about their suicidal thoughts, and
- assuring the person it is okay and necessary to get help.

Getting help

- Accompany the person to a hospital emergency room, mental health clinic, police station, family doctor's office, or call your local crisis line, or
- call 911 if the person is uncooperative, combative, or otherwise unwilling to seek help.

Resources

American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC) www.aapc.org

Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) www.sprc.org



Our Volunteers raise more than walls.
They also raise hope.

At Thrivent Financial for Lutherans,[®] we're

putting our faith into action. In fact, we've committed \$100 million to Habitat for

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Thrivent Financial members will work with families in need to build decent, affordable

housing in their own neighborhoods.



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Making Gifts for Ministry Happen



Your congregation can use the services of the ELCA Foundation both as a pass-through service for outright gifts and as your agent for life income gifts, like charitable gift annuities and charitable trusts.

Our regional gift planners can show you how the Foundation can process gifts of appreciated securities from your members for a fraction of the cost you may pay locally. The ELCA Foundation manages over \$140 million in active life income gifts, with over 70 percent of the charitable remainder of those gifts designated to return to local ministries—like your congregation.

The ELCA Foundation serves as your congregation's primary resource for planned and major gifts. For more information, contact the ELCA Foundation at 800/638-3522, ext. 2970, or visit the Web site at www.elca.org/to for the ELCA regional gift planner nearest you.

Note about the Action Packet

www.elca.org/actionpacket

In January–February, we did not have enough material to merit the postage costs of mailing an Action Packet. We expect the March–April packet to mail as scheduled, in mid-February.