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Seeds for the Parish

RESOURCE PAPER FOR LEADERS OF ELCA CONGREGATIONS

Think Globally, Learn Locally

The ELCA's Network of International Learning Centers offers on-location learning opportunities in Palestine, Germany and Mexico.

The Network's four centers—the International Center of Bethlehem, the ELCA Wittenberg Center, the Lutheran Center in Mexico City, and the Luther Institute in Washington, D.C.—offer programs for congregational members, pastors, staff professionals, college students, seminary students, scholars, youth, and continuing education students.

"The goal is to have more clarity about how our gospel calls us to follow the path Jesus followed," said the Rev. Kim Erno, director of the Lutheran Center in Mexico City.

International Center of Bethlehem
The International Center of Bethlehem (ICB) is a Lutheran-based ecumenical institute that hosts groups for eight or ten days, balancing four-night stays in Israel and four-night stays in Palestine. "Thousands of people have been through the International Center of Bethlehem," said Rana Khoury, deputy general director of the center.

The ICB presents an opportunity for visitors to encounter Palestinian Christians, hear personal narratives, see historic cities and sites, and learn about the struggles people face, living in a conflicted area.

"We've had seminary groups led by faculty, congregation groups, and artist groups, up to 40-50 groups in a typical year," said Khoury.

In spite of the difficulties and the history of conflict in the region, Khoury said that the center is a source of hope for the community and an inspiration to international guests.

ELCA Wittenberg Center
The ELCA Wittenberg Center takes

people to the historical heart of the Lutheran Reformation in the town where Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses nearly 500 years ago. It encourages visitors to achieve a deeper understanding of the theology, heritage, and spirit of the Reformation.

The center was established in 1999 in response to a request from the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD) for help in hosting pilgrims from the United States who wanted to become better acquainted with the life and home of Martin Luther.

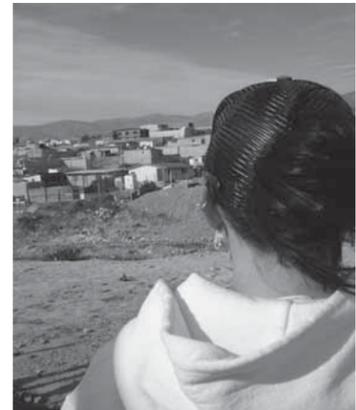
The Wittenberg Center is an ideal setting for sabbatical research, with more than 100,000 books, manuscripts, and letters from the sixteenth and seventeenth century plus a substantive collection of Reformation music and artwork.

"We're more than a tourist bureau—we're offering spiritual and educational resources," said the Rev. Stephen Godsall-Myers, co-director of the ELCA Wittenberg Center.

Groups can also study the German church in the twentieth century, which includes the story of Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his conflict with the Nazi regime, and the nonviolent resistance of the East German church under communist rule.

Lutheran Center in Mexico City
The Lutheran Center in Mexico City focuses on the realities of poverty in Mexico, bringing participants in direct contact with the most disadvantaged residents of one of the largest cities in the world.

"We go out into the city streets, local 'barrios,' and rural villages to hear the stories," said center director Kim Erno. Participants take part in the life of the community, study the Bible together, and experience the realities of poverty in Mexico.



Young woman from the U.S. at a rural village near Mexico City

Stock Photo

The center also offers intensive three-week Spanish immersion courses and family stays for those interested in Spanish ministry.

Luther Institute in Washington, D.C.
A fourth center has recently been added to the Network of International Learning Centers. The Luther Institute, based in Washington, D.C., promotes the exercise of faith in the public square through civil discourse, theological reflection, and attentive listening. Its current programs include lecture series, the Wittenberg Awards, and a pastoral presence in the nation's capital.

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Living in God's Amazing Grace: Thanks be to God

Almost 2,000 Lutherans from across the ELCA will gather at Chicago's Navy Pier August 6-11, 2007, for the tenth Churchwide Assembly, *Living in God's Amazing Grace: Thanks Be To God!*

On the agenda are elections for presiding bishop and secretary. Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson, who was elected in 2001, has indicated that he is open to a call for a second term, while the Rev. Lowell G. Almen, who has served as secretary since the formation of the ELCA, has announced his retirement as of October 31, 2007.

Assembly highlights include consideration of a social statement, *Our Calling in Education*, and a proposal for a new initiative, *Book of Faith: Lutherans Read the Bible*.

A draft of the education social statement was made available to congregations in early 2006. Responses from congregations were considered in the development of the version to be presented to the assembly.

Originally developed in response to a memorial from the North Carolina Synod, the *Book of Faith: Lutherans Read the Bible* initiative aims to articulate and apply a Lutheran approach to Scripture.

It discusses the authority of Scripture, Lutheran identity, biblical illiteracy, and contributions to contemporary life. It also encourages widespread reading of Scripture.

Voting members will approve a 2008-2009 budget for the churchwide organization, hear updates on this church's commitment to ethnic-ministry strategies, and consider routine constitutional amendments. They will also receive previously requested reports from the director for justice for women, the Blue Ribbon Committee on mission funding, and the task force for the development of a social statement on human sexuality.

Among the anniversaries that will be observed are the 100th anniversary of Lutheran Campus Ministry, the 60th anniversary of the Lutheran World Federation, and the 20th anniversary of the ELCA. The assembly will also hear greetings from full-communion, ministry, ecumenical, and inter-faith partners as well as other Lutheran church bodies.

Daily worship and many opportunities for prayer and Bible study will be part of the assembly schedule. Participants will officially receive the new core worship resource, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

One pre-Assembly event, *Worship Jubilee 2007: Thanks Be To God!*, will be held at Navy Pier August 3-6, 2007. Another, *Lutheran Men in Mission*, will be held at Navy Pier August 3-5.

The 2007 Churchwide Assembly promises to be a lively mix of worship, fellowship, and business. Visitors are welcome and congregations may send official observers. Visit www.elca.org/assembly/07 for more details.

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Exploring *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*

Introductory Kit

If your congregation has not yet explored the resources provided in the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Introductory Kit*, it is time to do so. The DVD, the recording, and the text files provide many materials that you will find helpful. The kits were mailed in September to every congregation and rostered leader.

Freedom and flexibility

There was a strong desire to strengthen the overall pattern of our worship, built on a solid foundation, while providing ample options in the details. This flexibility, while desired and appreciated by many worshipers, requires careful attention and preparation by planners and leaders. The layout of the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* pew edition is designed to help this process, but worshipers need to be taught how to use the book and to be helpful to visitors.

Balancing the new with the familiar

Every worshiping assembly is unique. Some would rather have the entire *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* put before all at once. Others are inclined to proceed in slow incremental steps, adding a little bit of the new over a period of weeks.

If you're going in small steps, consider starting with changes in the leader's texts that keep a familiar response by the assembly. For example, if your people are used to using, "Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**," you might try introducing "Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great**." Challenge your congregation with some new things, but balance them with things that are familiar. There are plenty of hymns, songs, prayers, and other texts that have not changed at all.

Hymn spotlight

The last Sunday after Epiphany—the Sunday before Lent begins—the church celebrates the Transfiguration of Our Lord. The hymn text for that day, "Jesus on the Mountain Peak" (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship* #317), by poet and pastor Brian Wren, has become well-known among Christian denominations in North America. It has not, however, found a common tune among churches. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* pairs this text with a new tune by ELCA composer Mark Sedio, from Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis.

Gathering

The Gathering portion of the Holy Communion service in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* includes two primary options: Confession

and Forgiveness (page 94) or Thanksgiving for Baptism (page 97). Both options speak of God's forgiveness and are appropriate at any time. You may, however, consider using the options seasonally. For example, Confession and Forgiveness may be used particularly in Advent, Lent, and the Sundays after Epiphany or Pentecost. Thanksgiving for Baptism may be especially appropriate during the Sundays of Easter, Christmas, and other festivals.

Word

After the second reading, the directions (rubrics) say: "The assembly stands to welcome the Gospel, using this acclamation, a sung alleluia, or another appropriate song." Notice the flexibility and the possibilities. The point is that we are a Christian community and, therefore, the stories of Jesus Christ from the Gospels, are central to our worship. We stand and sing Alleluia!

Following the tradition of "fasting" from "Alleluias" during Lent, there is a Lenten verse provided, as well. When using the proper verse during Lent, you would simply sing the text to one of the psalm tones or another melody.



Meal

The Great Thanksgiving begins with the dialogue between the presiding minister and the assembly. It includes the singing of the "Holy, holy, holy" and concludes with the Lord's Prayer. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* reflects two practices among Lutherans, providing for the simple proclamation of the Words of Institution within the Great Thanksgiving, and for the praying of a thanksgiving or eucharistic prayer that includes the Words of Institution. (In *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* these prayers are called *Thanksgiving at the Table*.) Both practices are part of one common tradition that begins with the dialogue and concludes with the Lord's Prayer.

Options are clearly indicated by a Roman numeral in a red box. You'll see that prayer one begins directly below "Holy, holy, holy" and continues on the next page. Option two (Words of Institution alone) continues directly

after "Holy, holy, holy" and concludes with the direction to continue with the Lord's Prayer. Options three and four (for specific seasons) are each on one page following. Additional options are on page 65 ff.

Sending

Fed and nourished by Jesus' body and blood, the last words of the liturgy are spoken by the lay assisting minister who sends the assembly into the world to continue their participation in God's mission. Look at the examples under "Dismissal" (page 115). The sending sentences are more varied than before. And there is a distinct rhythmic figure that signals to the congregation for a robust response of "Thanks be to God." While similar words might be used for sending, these were selected with great care and attention to the nature of the mission we share. "Serve the Lord" is very familiar. "Share the good news" recalls the great commission. "Remember the poor" reflects the admonition from Galatians, and "Christ is with you" is a powerful reminder that we are not alone.

Worship Jubilee 2007

Come to worship, learn, and celebrate with over a thousand others who are also excited about a future of ongoing renewal of worship in the ELCA. Details are regularly added to www.elca.org/worship. The schedule, registration costs, descriptions of workshops, information about presenters, and much more, has recently been added.

Seeds for the Parish

www.elca.org/seeds

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What To Do with Your Old Hymnals

Now that your congregation has the new *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, you might wonder what to do with your copies of the old *Lutheran Book of Worship*. This is a case where the simplest course is best. Just encourage your congregation members to take copies of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* home for family use. (If you are setting aside a special Sunday for the dedication of the new hymnal, this would be a perfect occasion!)

The "retired" hymnals should make an excellent and permanent addition to any the family's collection of religious books. These venerable books contain a wealth of wonderful features including:

- material for family or personal devotions
- an extensive collection of hymns
- a reference for the church year
- a resource for prayers, petitions, intercessions and thanksgiving
- standard versions of the Nicene, Apostolic, and Athanasian creeds

Because the ELCA is encouraging all congregations to acquire and use the new hymnal, it would not be helpful to donate your copies of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* to struggling congregations. Nor should you pack them up and send them to missions



overseas. If you want to help under-funded ELCA congregations, purchase and donate the new hymnals. This would truly be a Godsend for many churches that are finding it tough to make ends meet these days.

Likewise, what better way to support the various missions of the ELCA than to help defray the cost of the new hymnals? That way they can allot more of their precious resources to helping others and proclaiming the gospel of Christ.

Mission Interpreters: Sharing the ELCA Story



ELCA Global Mission reaches out to so many people worldwide (stock photo)

One way to make Christ known is to tell stories of how people's lives are changed through the missions and ministries of the ELCA.

The ELCA's Mission Interpreter Ministry equips lay leaders from throughout the synod with the ability to conduct presentations, write newsletter articles and otherwise remind all of our congregations how God makes

a difference in the world through the work of the church. It is through the efforts of trained mission interpreters that contributors understand more clearly how their prayers, volunteer efforts, offerings and special gifts help transform the lives of people throughout the world. Also through this effort, lay leaders are developed and become actively engaged in the mission and ministry of the church.

There are many stories a mission interpreter might share with a congregation today, such as how \$24 million in contributions have been raised to date for the ELCA Domestic Disaster Response, designated for Gulf Coast Hurricane Clean-Up. Or they might tell how congregations support 280 social ministries and organizations that serve over 3,000 communities nationwide.

Susan Morrell, of the Central States Synod (CSS), is among the dedicated mission interpreters who serve the ELCA and share our ministry story with others. Susan's enthusiasm grew following a recent tour of the churchwide office where she met with the staff that coordinates the ELCA's global ministry. "I feel so blessed to be a part of a church that reaches out and ministers in such great diversity to so many different people worldwide. From focusing on global ministry efforts, to having people on the ground serving in 47 countries, to coordinating hunger relief and disaster response efforts for those in need, our church has an amazing story to tell others about the ministry we are doing together, to reach people in the name of Jesus Christ. I am excited to help our church tell this story and to express appreciation for the support, which makes it all possible."

Susan is developing a two-tiered approach to this ministry that is taking hold and gaining strength. First, all congregations can receive monthly mission interpreter newsletter articles that tell how the CSS and the ELCA work together in ways no individual member or congregation could do alone. Second, individuals can be trained to give quarterly "Temple Talks" to their congregation about how the ELCA is making Christ known through their support. Susan has also set up an interactive electronic network for the mission interpreters.

Similar mission interpreter ministries are flourishing in other synods, and communication between these ministries helps make each one more effective. The trailblazing work by the Sierra-Pacific Synod, under the guidance of Margie Back, and that of the LaCrosse Area Synod, influenced by Cindy Berg, has been especially valuable. Cindy reports that, "there is an enthusiasm and an understanding of the need to share the story of what God is doing through our giving."

If you would like to learn more about the Mission Interpreter Ministry, please visit www.elca.org/stewardship/interpreting.html or contact your synod office.

2006 ELCA Youth Gathering Recap

What an incredible gathering it was! It's not about how many young people are gathered in one place at one time, it's about what they do there!!

When 39,000 youth and adults of the ELCA gather every three years they are immersed in worship, music, Bible study, community service, learning, play, prayer, the witness of leaders, reflection, caring, and new friendships. It's a time of change and growth because they gather in the presence of God's Spirit with others who journey with Jesus.

The theme of the 2006 ELCA Youth Gathering, **Cruzando: Journey with Jesus**, was both challenging and inviting. In the community of the Gathering, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, youths experienced a strengthening of faith that gave them hope, courage, and the determination to steer through life's problems rather than navigating around them or abandoning them altogether. They heard the call to **wake up** to who they are in Christ; **look around** and see Christ in the eyes of those standing beside them; **turn around** and walk in a new direction; **cross over** and experience

the new life that Jesus promises; and **go with God** into the world as witnesses to Jesus' way of healing, loving, and compassion.

If it sounds like a lot to experience, it is. The ELCA Youth Gathering is always this way.

Some facts and figures about the 2006 ELCA Youth Gathering in San Antonio:

- the ELCA Youth Gathering happens every three years
- 36,700 youth and adults attended in 2006
- 108 International Gathering Guests representing 19 countries attended
- 3,150 congregations from 65 synods were represented
- over 2,000 young adult and adult volunteers worked to make the Gathering possible
- 770 youth and adults attended the Multicultural Youth Leadership Event (MYLE) preceding Week 1 of the Gathering
- 60 youth with disabilities and adults

attended the Definitely-abled Youth Leadership Event (DAYLE) preceding Week 1 of the Gathering

- 400 youth participated in the Seventh Triennial Lutheran Youth Organization Convention between Weeks 1 and 2 of the Gathering
- the Gathering offerings totaled over **\$1 million**
- about 16,000 youth performed tens of thousands of volunteer service hours in the local community
- 5,000 school kits and 2,000 health kits were assembled for La Frontera Border Ministries and organizations in the San Antonio area

See you in 2009! To hold you over until then, you can order the 2006 highlight DVDs and the music CD from Old Lutheran at www.oldlutheran.com

For information about the ELCA Youth Ministry and Gathering, visit www.elca.org/youth or www.elca.org/gathering

Grace of God at Sea

Seafaring can be a lonely and dangerous business, and there are approximately one million seafaring children of God. How does the church reach out to them?

On September 20 at 4:00 a.m. on a darkened Long Island Sound, the *M/V Barkald*, an empty 600-ft. coal carrier en route to Halifax, and the *S/V Essence*, a 95-ft. sailboat en route to Greenwich, collided. In the darkness, the *M/V Barkald* rescued one sailor and the Coast Guard rescued two others, but one sailor, a 29-year-old woman, died from internal injuries in the hospital.

Later the same day, Ruth Setaro, a member of the Seafarers & International House port ministry team, and the Rev. Henry Pawluk, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in New Haven, boarded a launch for an hour-long ride to the *M/V Barkald* to offer pastoral care to its officers and crew. This is typical of Seafarers & International House, a social ministry of the ELCA.

Seafarers & International House needs your help. Your contribution can take various forms including a simple bequest, a charitable remainder trust, a charitable lead trust, a charitable gift annuity, other trust, or deferred gift structures. Through charitable planning, you can also create a living legacy to Seafarers & International House.

For more information, contact the Office of Development and Communications at 212/677-4800, ext.1203 or cvr@sihnyc.org



No one knows the needs of your congregation – and how to help it – better than we do. We have a one-of-a-kind insight into the challenges that your congregation faces. As well as unrivaled motivation to help find a solution. And for nearly a century, that's just what we've been doing. In fact, today we have more than 600 loans totaling over \$300 million at work throughout ELCA congregations and ELCA-related ministries in the U.S., Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Helping with everything from building new churches to renovating existing ones. And we stand ready to help your congregation or ELCA-related ministry, too. To find out how, call 877.886.3522 or visit us at www.elca.org/mif.

877.886.3522



www.elca.org/mif

Ripe for Picking

Select Online Courses



Select is entering its second year of offering online courses nationally for continuing education, Associate in Ministry candidates, and some synodical programs. Beginning in February, 2007 Select will offer:

- Interpreting the Old Testament (10 sessions)
- Ethics from a Lutheran Perspective (12 sessions)
- Lutheran Heritage (10 sessions)
- Evangelization and Lutheran Worship (6 sessions)
- Sent to Preach (8 sessions)
- Spirituality: An Invitation to a Closer Relationship with God (8 sessions)

For more information about Select Multimedia Resources, visit www.elca.org/select/ or www.selectlearning.org/. You may also contact the director, Skip Cornett, at 614/235-4136 or wcornett@trinitylutheranseminary.edu or the director of online courses, Jodi Hanson, at 605/274-4031 or jodi.hanson@augie.edu

Global Mission Annual

Where do ELCA missionaries work? What do they do? Find out in the 2007 *Global Mission Annual*, which showcases ELCA mission work around the world.

Learn more about:

- how ELCA funds support international proclamation, service, and accompaniment
- the mission model of accompaniment
- ELCA strategies for each continent
- companion churches like the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania
- how you can serve as a missionary
- how to connect to global mission and companion synods activities in your synod

To order this 56-page annual call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648 and ask for item 978-6-0002-1880-5.

Faith and Fitness

What does faith have to do with fitness? What is the connection between being spiritually well and physically well? Author Tom Hafer answers these questions as he explores the connections between a strong faith and everyday lifestyle choices in his new book *Faith & Fitness: Diet and Exercise for a Better World*.

Filled with practical ideas about food, exercise, and total wellness, the book explores the connections between real and spiritual sustenance, affluence, and exercise and the relationship between a healthy congregation and healthy individuals.

To order call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648 or visit www.augsburgfortress.org

What Can I Do?

How can anyone truly help someone who has experienced a loss? In her new book, *What Can I Do?*, best-selling author Barbara A. Glanz provides a collection of simple, concrete ideas gathered directly from those who have experienced suffering and loss, and ideas of things that helped them feel cared for and comforted. To order call Augsburg Fortress 800/328-4648 or order online at www.augsburgfortress.org

Join Women of the ELCA in Germany next April



Photo taken by Ben McDonald Colivet

Women of the ELCA is celebrating its 20th anniversary with a trip to Germany focused on the lives of Martin Luther, Katharina von Bora, and noted women of the Reformation. Developed in partnership with the ELCA Wittenberg Center, the trip is scheduled for April 16-30, 2007.

This unique itinerary features guided tours of Berlin, Wittenberg, Torgau, Leipzig, Dresden, Eisleben, Erfurt, and Eisenach. Trip highlights include visits to:

- the city where Martin Luther lived and taught for 36 years
- the ruins of Kloster Nimbschen, the convent where Katharina von Bora was a nun prior to marrying Martin Luther
- the church where Bach served as a music director.

You'll also be treated to a unique Reformation-era performance by local Wittenberg women, and much more.

Overnight accommodations feature some of the areas' finest hotels as well as an Augustinian monastery. Transportation throughout the trip will be aboard a 4-star motor coach. Cost of the tour also includes many meals. Participants must be at least 18 years of age and physically able to walk up to one mile. We recommend leisure attire and your favorite pair of walking shoes. There will be plenty to see and do!

Your registration and deposit are due no later than January 17. Space is limited. Price is based on double occupancy (single rooms available at additional cost). Find a more detailed trip itinerary and cost schedule at www.womenoftheelca.org or call Linda S. McKinsey at 800/638-3522, ext. 2497.

Ecumenical Middle East Peace Advocacy Conference

SAVE THE DATE - Ecumenical Middle East Peace Advocacy Conference, May 6-8, 2007, Washington, DC

Advocates from churches around the country will participate in this conference organized by Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP). The conference will focus on US policy and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with speakers, workshops, advocacy preparation, and a day of lobbying your elected officials. The program will begin on Sunday evening and conclude with Tuesday's Hill appointments and will include a special session for ELCA participants. Check CMEP's Web site for updates and information on how to register: www.cmep.org or www.elca.org/advocacy/issues/middleeast/default.asp

[elca.org/advocacy/issues/middleeast/default.asp](http://www.elca.org/advocacy/issues/middleeast/default.asp)



Conference on Lutheran Hymns in February

Join clinicians Carl Schalk, David Cherwien, Susan Cherwien, Fred Gaiser, and Robert Hausman on Saturday, February 10, 2007, at the Chapel of the Incarnation, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota. They will lead a conference to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the birth of Paul Gerhardt and the 345th anniversary of the birth of his co-worker, Johann Crüger. The day-long conference, with lectures and workshops, will begin at 8:30 AM and focus specifically on the work of Gerhardt and Crüger, and generally on the place of all hymns in today's worship.

The day will conclude with a service of Evening Prayer that is open to the public at 4:00 PM, featuring J.S. Bach's Cantata #92, "Ich

hab in Gottes Herz und Sinn" ("My Spirit Doth in God Abide"), performed by the National Lutheran Choir.

The conference is co-sponsored by Luther Seminary's Master of Sacred Music (MSM) program and the National Lutheran Choir. Lunch and refreshments are included with conference registration.

Pre-registration is recommended. To register, please contact the MSM Office at 651/523-1612 or

krongstal@luthersem.edu or www.luthersem.edu/gerhardt Cost for the conference is \$60 per person (\$40 for students) until January 26, 2007. The fee after January 26 will be \$75 per person (\$50 for students). Registration at the door is not guaranteed!



Experience our Lutheran Heritage!

The ELCA Wittenberg Center in Wittenberg, Germany, has been helping groups from congregations, universities, colleges, and seminaries plan programs and pilgrimages that guide them through the "Land where Luther walked." If members or leaders of your congregation are considering such a program they can contact the Center at ELCAWittenbergCenter@t-online.de or visit www.elca.org/wittenberg/index.html

The "Land where Luther walked," of course, is also the land of Johann Sebastian Bach,

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and the Confessing Church. It is the land of the 'Peaceful Revolution of 1989', the land of Schiller, Goethe, Philipp Melanchthon, Johannes Bugenhagen, and Lucas Cranach. All can be explored in the "Land where Luther walked."



"Thesis Door"

Ripe for Picking

Students Learn to Lead by Example

Almost a year and a half has passed since Hurricane Katrina, but the response to the 2005 hurricane season is still in full swing. Over the next several months, hundreds of college students will travel to the Gulf Coast region to participate in the second annual Lutheran Disaster Response, "What a Relief!" alternative spring break.

In spring, 2006 nearly 1,100 students from 54 colleges and universities made an impact on the affected regions with \$650,000 worth of in-kind service work.

Want to see volunteers in action? The new *What a Relief!* video is the perfect resource to engage your congregation in the long-term recovery effort. Watch the video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=uy_mvVveamo or copy and embed the video in your Web site, e-newsletter, or blog.

For information on volunteering, visit www.ldr.org/volunteer



Lutheran Statement on Sexuality Now Available

Free in Christ to Serve the Neighbor: Lutherans Talk about Human Sexuality invites participants to moral deliberation on human sexuality from the perspective of Paul's letter to the Galatians and Martin Luther's essay, "On the Freedom of the Christian."

Eight chapters form the core of the study, but additional resources accommodate Bible study and study of Luther's essay.

Each chapter is structured around a liturgical setting and begins with prayer and a passage from scripture. After offering some differing perspectives, the study presents a series of questions from which study leaders may begin the discussion.

The study sessions are:
Session One: Christian Foundations for Deliberation
Session Two: Created As Sexual Beings

Session Three: Sexuality, Culture, and Freedom
Session Four: Sexuality and Social Institutions
Session Five: Sexuality, Power, and Abuse
Session Six: Sexuality, Money, and the Bottom Line

Session Seven: Sexuality and Economic Justice
Session Eight: Facing Our Responsibility in the Freedom of the Gospel

Responses from ELCA members and congregations will help shape the social statement on sexuality that comes before the Churchwide Assembly in 2009. Response forms may be filled out in the booklet or online.

For more information visit www.elca.org/faithfuljourney To order multiple copies for a small fee, call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648.

Religion and Faith in the Military

Military personnel number nearly two million today. For most of them, religion and faith were shoved to the back of their minds when they enlisted, but quickly resurfaced in the face of real missions and long deployments.

United States Army Major William McCoy, who served in Iraq for nearly a year and a half, understands the tough job our service members have when deployed into harm's way. Both of his sons are currently deployed to Iraq and his daughter serves in the Coastguard.

His book, *Under Orders: A Spiritual Handbook for Military Personnel*, is an open

and engaging guide to faith for all military personnel.

Under Orders helps a person reflect on his or her faith and choices. Through ten easy-to-understand "orders," it examines key issues that are hot topics for military personnel. It is a contemporary and practical book, written in the language of military culture that is intellectually challenging and portable enough to carry to battle and back.

To order, call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648 or visit www.augsburgfortress.org

Faith Lens: Helping Youth Connect Life and Faith

Have you ever wondered how to help young people better understand their daily lives and world events in the context of their faith and scripture? *Faith Lens*, a free online weekly Bible study for youth (www.elca.org/faithlens), can do just that.

Faith Lens is posted every week and connects a current news story with the lectionary texts for the upcoming Sunday. This includes a summary of a current news story, discussion questions, a reflection on the Gospel text, suggested activities, and links to related resources.



ELCA Youth Ministry's *Faith Lens* is designed for senior-high-age youth but is adaptable for young adults and adult groups. You may even want to write your own *Faith Lens* when big news breaks close to home. Visit www.elca.org/faithlens/createyourown for suggestions and instructions.

Faith Lens is written by a different writer each week and is usually posted by Tuesday. A PDF version is available and you can send the current *Faith Lens* study to other leaders and congregations by using the links at the top of the page.

Observer Registration

Each ELCA congregation may register one congregation observer with the ELCA Secretary for the 2007 Churchwide Assembly. These observers will have reserved seating in the plenary hall and will receive a copy of the report of recommendations for assembly action as well as materials distributed on the plenary floor. The observers will have neither voice nor vote in assembly plenary sessions.

There is a registration fee of \$150 to cover administrative costs and materials. Observers may purchase the same meals as are provided for voting members. Transportation, housing, and other costs are the responsibility of the observer or the sending congregation.

Registration must be made before May 31. To learn more, contact Laura.Starr@elca.org or call 800/638-3522, ext. 2807.

ONE Lutheran

A major focus of the ONE Lutheran Campaign in 2007 will be the "Jubilee Sabbath Year." The concept of the Sabbath Year is rooted in scripture (Deuteronomy 15: 1-18). Lifting the burden of debt on the world's poorest countries is the goal of the Jubilee Sabbath Year.

In countries that have been relieved of debt, social spending has increased by 75 percent. For example:

- Mozambique has introduced a free immunization program for children
- millions of children have returned to school throughout sub-Saharan Africa because user fees were abolished
- in Burkina Faso, access to clean water has increased by 26 percent

Between 60 and 70 countries require full debt cancellation in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). How can you get involved? Become a ONE Lutheran Congregation. For information visit www.elca.org/advocacy

For information concerning the Jubilee USA grassroots conference in April, 2007 visit www.jubileeusa.org

Parish Nurse Basics

The Parish Nurse Center at Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota, is offering a 5-day course designed to prepare registered nurses in wholistic ministry to work with members of a congregation.

Participants will develop a support system, study parish nurse models, and learn about a variety of topics essential to the practice of parish nursing. The Parish Nurse Center will assist RNs who are in Parish Nurse roles to strengthen their practice.

The Parish Nurse Center meets the requirements to use the standardized core curricula developed through the International Parish Nurse Resource Center, in consultation with the National League for Nursing and the American Nurses Association credentialing center.

Tuition is \$550 and includes most meals, refreshments, materials, resources, all sessions and contact hour awards. A deposit of \$100 is due at registration.

This basic preparation course will be held March 12-16, 2007, at Calvary Lutheran Church, Golden Valley, Minn.

For more information or to register, contact Jean Bokinskie, director Parish Nurse Center, Concordia College, 901 S. 8th Street, Moorhead, MN 56562, 218/299-3893 or parish-nurse@cord.edu

What's New on the World Wide Web

ELCA Videos Available on Google Video and You Tube

With more than 100 million videos available and some 72 million visitors viewing the site each month, *You Tube* is the hottest site on the Web since the founding of *Google* in 1998.

You Tube, which came on the Web scene in February 2005, is a consumer media company that provides original videos for public viewing via the Web. Along with *Google Video*, these popular Web venues represent an affordable option for spreading the church's message.

ELCA videos are now available at both *Google Video* and *You Tube*. The ELCA has posted 87 videos in past 6 months, says Tim Frakes, associate director for public media, ELCA Communication Services. Since then, the posted videos have been viewed over 120,000 times and downloaded 4,145 times.

To view ELCA videos such as *The ELCA in Chile*, the 2006 Synod Assembly video *ELCA Identity*, and the *Story of the ELCA*, simply go to video.google.com and type "ELCA" into the search box. Search results will yield videos from the churchwide offices as well as individual congregations.

"With new video distribution systems like *Google Video* and *You Tube*, congregations can distribute their videos and target their audiences in a cost-effective way, in a way that they have never been able to do before," Frakes said. "You can take your production, whether it's a sophisticated marketing video or just a portion of the Sunday sermon, upload it and target it to a specific audience that has access to the Web," he said.

While *Google Video* restricts the posting of pornographic and graphically violent videos,

congregations should be aware that they are posting to an uncensored public marketplace, Frakes said. "It's important to understand that this isn't sanitized, and if you're going to put your message out there it's going to be out there in the open marketplace, so you can't be shocked by that. In fact, you need to celebrate it," he added. "That's what Jesus did, he went to where people needed to hear the gospel, and this is a way we can do that more effectively than we have in a long, long, time. We can go right to where people are."

Although he is NOT offering technical support Tim Frakes is available to supply more information at 773/380-2962 or Tim.Frakes@elca.org



safeguards to ensure security and privacy of benefits information, easy access to popular forms and calculators, in-depth benefits administration information for administrators and treasurers, an enhanced search functionality and intuitive design for easy navigation.

The site also includes three new sections designed to help people lead healthy lives and achieve financial security.

- **Live well** helps guide members toward living a well-balanced, healthy life based on the multidimensional aspects of the Wholeness Wheel.
- **Plan for my future** helps members make decisions about saving, investing, and planning at different life stages.
- **Manage my life changes** guides members through the process of changing benefits based on specific life changing events.

The site's design and technology set the stage for future growth and development, such as personalized access for sponsoring organizations.

Board of Pensions Launches New Site

The ELCA Board of Pensions launched its next generation Web site Dec. 4, enhancing members' and sponsoring organizations' access to ELCA benefits resources online.

Through a new design and new technology, the site establishes a foundation from which to offer members and sponsoring organizations more information about their ELCA health, retirement, and other benefits.

"The site is a new beginning to provide more online services in our promise to be faithful to the well-being of those we serve," said President John G. Kapanke.

Features of the new www.elcabop.org include registration and sign-in allowing plan members to view personalized benefits information,



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

Q What resources would you recommend we use in our congregation for the Lenten season?

A Gail Ramshaw's *The Three Day Feast* from the *Worship Matters* series (Augsburg Fortress; www.augsburgfortress.org) is a thoughtful invitation to meaningful celebrations of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter. I would also highly recommend *Quantum Grace: Lenten Reflections on Creation and Connectedness* by Judy Cannato. It's a beautiful collection of short essays for small groups or individual study that includes interesting insights based on new physics discoveries and old mystics! (Ave Maria Press; www.avemariapress.com) Several of our pastors recommend *The Last Week: A Day by Day Account of Jesus' Final Week in Jerusalem* by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan (Harper, San Francisco; www.harpercollins.com). Peter Gomes, Brian McLaren, Barbara Brown Taylor and others say this is a 'must read' for clergy and lay leaders alike.

—Julie Aageson, director
Eastern North Dakota Resource Center
Fargo

A Don't forget the online *Global Mission Lenten Worship Series*. Worship resources including sermons, bulletin inserts, and much more are provided for six weeks and Holy Week. Different missionaries and companion churches will be featured each week. The series materials for 2007, and those from the previous three years, are at www.elca.org/globalmission/lent/index.html

Also, consider using the Holy Land Communion Ware crafted in Bethlehem. Each synod received a set at the 2005 Churchwide Assembly. For more information visit

www.elca.org/peacenotwalls/resources.html
Each synod distributes the sets differently, so check with your resource center or synod office to learn more about borrowing it.

—Anne Basye, associate director
Global Resources,
ELCA Global Mission

A Visit the Recent Additions section of the new Shared Resources site www.elca.org/sharedresources This is a marvelous place where congregations share original ideas with the whole church. There are many, many resources there for Lent. Use them just as they are posted, or change them and make them your own.

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

A Some of my most popular resources are the *Lenten Dramas* by Curt Joseph (Trunk in the Attic Productions). Samples and the total listing of *Lenten Dramas* are at www.bible-dramas.com These dramas can be performed by either large or small congregations or as readers theater, using costumes and staging as simple or as elaborate as the director chooses.

—Irene Flynn, director
Florida-Bahamas Synod Resource Center,
Tampa

A Popular resources during Lent in our synod are three video tapes from Liturgy Training Publications (www.ltp.org): *The Liturgies of the Triduum -- Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Vigil* by D. Todd Williamson. Congregations celebrating the Triduum have enjoyed them.

—Cynthia Schnaath, director
Central States Synod Resource Center,
Kansas City, Mo.

A A new Lenten devotional is available from Augsburg Fortress: *Forty Days and Forty Nights* by Gail Ramshaw.

Based on images drawn from the Bible readings for Lent, Ramshaw provides a personal devotion for every day except Sundays. Sundays have a listing of the readings for the day, a few questions, and a prayer. This can be used for personal devotions or as a small-group resource.

—Mark Stahura, senior project developer,
Worship & Music, Augsburg Fortress

A Reformed Church Press recently released a study guide titled, *Unity, Reconciliation, and Justice: A Study Guide for the Belhar Confession*. It would make an excellent Lenten study. Faith Alive Christian Resources, has copies for sale at <http://shop5.gospelcom.net/epages/FaithAlive.storefront/EN/product/705210X>

The Belhar Confession was first drafted in 1982 by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa. It was adopted in 1986, and later it would become one of the standards of unity (along with the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism) for the United Reformed Church in Southern Africa, a merger denomination of two South African Reformed churches.

—Jane Schuyler
Reformed Church in America
RCA Helpline & Coordinator for Children
and Worship

A Lent is a terrific time to study environmental issues. It's a subject we tend to skim over. Lent gives us plenty of time to study and make plans for change and advocacy. Find the ELCA statement, "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice," at www.elca.org/SocialStatements/environment

—Anne Hafften, coordinator
Middle East Networking

Using the Holy Land Communion Ware

Use the Holy Land Communion Ware to:

- remember and witness the ELCA's mission in the Holy Land
- pray for Palestinian Christians and their Muslim and Jewish neighbors
- pray for peace in the Holy Land

Plenty of ELCA congregations are named Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Calvary, but there's only one Palestine Lutheran Church. Tucked away in Huxley, Iowa, the congregation celebrated Christ the King Sunday with communion ware crafted in Palestine.

"Norwegian settlers felt that their new land in Iowa flowed with milk and honey, too," according to Palestine's pastors, Gloria and Donald Keiser Dovre. "Now we also have members with strong roots in the Middle East. During our service, they welcomed the opportunity to lift up and pray for the Christian community in Palestine and Bethlehem."

Palestine Lutheran is one of over 1,000 congregations participating in the ELCA Holy Land Communion Ware Journey. At the 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, each synod received a set of communion ware crafted by Palestinian artisans at the International Center in Bethlehem. Now the sets are passing from congregation to congregation within the synods.

Christ Lutheran Church in Long Beach, California used the communion ware twice: once to celebrate its 50th anniversary, and once to celebrate Reformation Sunday. Both Sundays focused on the congregation's commitment to global mission. Linda Gawthorne, an ELCA missionary in Colombia sponsored by the congregation, served as a communion minister during the anniversary service.

Hosting the communion ware prompted Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Hickory, North Carolina, to invite a professor who has lived in several Middle Eastern countries to present an adult forum on the history of the Holy Land and prospects for the future. During worship, a speaker talked about her work as a human



Pr. Darcy Jensen, ELCA campus ministry at University of California, Santa Barbara; Pr. Kim Eifert-Krogstad, serving Our Savior's, Orange, CA; Ms. Kathryn Jones, parishioner at Christ Lutheran, Long Beach, CA

rights observer and art teacher in the West Bank, and led an adult Sunday school class.

"Combining use of the communion ware with adult education programs brought greater awareness to the congregation about what's going on and reminded them that there are Palestinian Christians and Lutherans who need our prayers," says Mt. Olive's pastor, Dave Keck. "We also helped Beit Sahour Lutheran School by selling recordings of the school's choir." The congregation also participates in the Ecumenical Prayer Vigil, which invites U.S. Christians to pray monthly for peace and healing in the Holy Land.

In Kansas, where the Central States Synod purchased 12 sets of the communion ware, a set is moving through each congregation. In June,

all 12 sets will be used at the Synod Assembly worship.

"In communion, we are reminded of our calling to be peacemakers," says Rev. Said Ailabouni, director, Europe and the Middle East for the ELCA Global Mission unit. "Using this set helps us remember all who are struggling with strife and yearning for peace in the Holy Land."

Contact your synod to arrange for your congregation to participate in the journey and visit www.elca.org/peacenotwalls/resources.html for bulletin inserts, suggested hymns and readings, and prayer petitions.

More resources for prayer are posted at www.pepm.org/PrayerVigil/PrayerVigilHome.htm

Three Global "Events" in 2007

Enjoy three opportunities to explore and celebrate global mission during 2007. Blending global culture, learning, and fun, these exciting multigenerational events are a premiere source of global formation and skill building for ELCA members engaged in Companion Synod relationships, short-term mission trips, or other global ministries.

ELCA Global Mission Festival in Florida January 26 to 28, 2007, Winter Park, Florida

Registration is still open! More intimate, shorter, and closer to home than a full-scale summer Global Mission Event, the GMF offers global music, engaging speakers, and learning opportunities for people 14 and over. It features global music led by Tom Witt, Mary Preus, and Antonio Machado of Bread for the Journey; ELCA missionaries from Latin and Central America; Rev. Rafael Malpica Padilla, executive director, ELCA Global Mission unit; Rev. Paul Moonu of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Guyana; and Bishop Munib Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

ELCA Global Mission Fiesta in Phoenix, Arizona February 2-4, 2007

A three-day opportunity for congregations engaged in or considering global ministry through the ELCA or a Lutheran parachurch organization. Enjoy festive, music-filled plenary and programming that will help your congregational team experience the accompaniment model of mission and build global mission skills. With global music led by Tom Witt, Mary Preus, and Antonio Machado of Bread for the Journey; several ELCA missionaries; and Rev. Pierre Sene, president of the Lutheran Church of Senegal.

ELCA Global Mission Event July 19-22, 2007, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

This full-length Global Mission Event will feature international presenters, global music, and multigenerational programming for children and junior and senior high youth. Immaculée Ilibagiza of Rwanda, who survived



Al Raja Folkloric Dance Troupe performed at the 2006 ELCA Global Mission Event

the 1994 genocide by hiding in a cramped bathroom of a local pastor's house for 91 days, will share her story of forgiveness and faith from a profound relationship with God.

To register, or to find program information on all three events, visit www.elca.org/gme

Reaching Out in Mission!

Want ideas for Lenten midweek or Sunday services with a global focus? The Global Mission Web page (www.elca.org/globalmission/lent) offers everything you need for eight Lenten services (Ash Wednesday through Good Friday) including worship outlines and liturgies, sermons, bulletin covers, Powerpoint presentations, and Lenten recipes with an international flavor.

This year's series explores the theme, "Living

in God's Amazing Grace—Reaching Out in Mission!" Stories and sermons focus on the work of ELCA missionaries in Mexico, Slovakia, Indonesia, Cameroon, Guyana, Palestine, Central African Republic, and Hong Kong.

Pastors who have used this series previously appreciate how it helps preparing for the Lenten season, and how it can enhance a congregation's vision. "It's a reminder of our greater mission, vision and the greater church

of Christ," says one pastor. "We were able to be in touch with the Lutheran Church around the world through this series," says another. "It made us proud to be members of the ELCA. Members thoroughly enjoyed this Lenten series!"

To access the series, visit www.elca.org/globalmission/lent

Prayer Shawl Ministries Blends Prayers, Talents, Gifts and Grace

Have you ever wondered what a prayer looks like? I have a prayer that is warm, soft, and pink that wraps around me. It is a prayer shawl. While it was being made each stitch was filled with prayers for me, and every time I savor its warmth I feel those prayers. It was a gift of God's love to me through the skill and the prayers of the person who made it.

All around the ELCA, women (and men) are knitting and crocheting these shawls filled with prayer. At Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church in Tucson, Arizona, the mission statement of the Prayer Shawl Guild is "We want to reach out to those in need with a prayer shawl of prayers and love to comfort, console and strengthen our family of faith. We want to be a reminder of God's promise that he is always with us."

At St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Beaverton, Oregon, the prayer shawl ministry, which started with three people, is now in its fourth year. In the first three years a total of 577 prayer shawls have been made and given. That's 577 times that the love of God and the prayers of the people of St. Matthew have been shared with others.

A pastor in Pennsylvania carries these carefully crafted blessings in his car, never knowing when a prayer shawl may be needed as a tangible sign of God's love in the life of a person suffering pain, or grief, or loneliness. He joyfully brings brightly woven shawls filled with God's prayers to new mothers to wrap around themselves and the precious child God has given them.

A group of employees at the ELCA churchwide office in Chicago met once a



week to knit and crochet prayer shawls. The shawls were given to a social service agency for distribution to those in need during the holidays.

They are called "prayer shawls" because the knitting (or crocheting) of the shawl is a spiritual practice for the crafter. A prayer is said as the shawl is begun and then many prayers are added with the stitches. Most of the time the recipient of the shawl is not known, but the recipient receives the message that many people have been praying for them and will continue to do so. Each shawl is a blend of prayers, talents, gifts and grace.

The shawls are knitted or crocheted in a pattern of three, symbolizing the Holy Trinity. Some knitters will say, "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" as they work. Crocheted shawls are usually done in a pattern of one row of single crochet followed by three

rows of double crochet. The rows of single crochet separate the shawl into a pattern of bands of three. Finished shawls are two to three feet wide and six to seven feet long with the finishing fringe. (See instructions below.) A prayer should be written and included with each shawl.

Shawls can be made in tweed, and colored brown, blue, or green for men, and pastels or jewel tones for women. A shawl filled with the colors of the rainbow may be given to a hospitalized child.

Prayer shawls are gifts freely given with no strings attached. They are not for sale. They are gifts of love. Selling a shawl would defeat the purpose of the ministry. Persons wanting to help could make donations to the prayer shawl ministry of the congregation. That gift could be used to buy more yarn for the crafters.

Instructions

(Suggest using Lion Brand Homespun yarn. It is washable and dryable. It is very soft. The yarn is bulky and works up quickly.)

Knitting

- Buy three skeins.
- Use size 11 or 13 needles.
- Cast on 57 stitches.
- Work in a pattern of knit 3, purl 3. Always start with knit 3.
- You should always knit the purls and purl the knits – you do not want a ribbing pattern to appear.
- Continue in the knit 3, purl 3 pattern until the shawl is six feet long.
- Finish off with generous fringe (4-6 inches long) on both ends. The yarn tends to unravel so each piece of fringe should have a knot tied in it.

Crocheting

- You may need 3 ½ skeins, as more yarn is used in crocheting than knitting.
- Use a size N hook.
- Chain 54 stitches or your desired width.
- Chain 1, turn, single crochet in each of the stitches to the end. Chain 3, and turn.
- Double crochet in top of each single crochet.
- Repeat this row 2 more times. Chain 1, and do 1 row of single crochet.
- Repeat the pattern of one row of single crochet and three rows of double crochet until the shawl measures six feet, ending with a row of single crochet.
- Finish with a generous fringe of 4-6 inches at each end. Tie a knot in each piece of fringe as this yarn tends to unravel.

For more information on this ministry, visit www.shawlministry.com

Leaving a Legacy

Investing in the future is what it is all about when members remember their congregations in their wills. Imagine expanding a ministry with a bequest of \$50,000; \$100,000; \$500,000; or more as legacy to the ministry of the church.

The ELCA Foundation can help members leave a legacy for ministry. The Foundation assists congregations to encourage the granting of bequests from their members and to establish a Mission Endowment Fund, which facilitates the receipt and distribution of those gifts.

Regional gift planners throughout the United States are ready to help congregations meet specific goals.

The Foundation can also provide congregations with free publications about estate planning such as:

- *Why Do I Need a Will?*
- *Take the Test: What Will Your Legacy Be?*
- *Will & Trust Workbook*
- *How to Create a Mission Endowment Fund: A Guide for Congregations*

For more information, contact the ELCA Foundation at 800/638-3522, ext. 2970, or visit www.elca.org/fo to locate the nearest ELCA regional gift planner.



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

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

Humanity[®] through our Thrivent[®] Builds program. Together, Habitat for Humanity and

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

housing in their own neighborhoods.

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