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[www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)

# Seeds for the Parish

RESOURCE PAPER FOR LEADERS OF ELCA CONGREGATIONS

## Water Flows for All

In the rainy Pacific Northwest, you might think water scarcity would be the last thing on the minds of members of Trinity Lutheran Church, Lynnwood, Wash.

But when Trinity members discussed whether they should air-condition the church gym, Rick Steves, well-known television travel host, pointed out that the same \$50,000 could provide clean running water for five or six thirsty villages. Money spent on air-conditioning, to be used only a few days out of the year, could provide healthy, clean water for villages “whose women walk for water every day rather than do the parenting they want,” said Steves.

“It’s not wrong to be comfortable, it’s not wrong to be wealthy,” said Steves in a May 2007 interview on *Grace Matters*, the radio ministry of the ELCA. “But I think as Christians, we need to be honest with each other and speak up when we tend to think our suffering is worse than somebody else’s.”

For the last four years, Trinity has participated in a program called “Living Water,” which educates parishioners about water scarcity issues around the globe and collects funds for sustainable water projects.

ELCA members and organizations are taking steps to safeguard clean, sustainable water supplies through various water projects, advocacy and conservation efforts.

### Conserving water at home

For Emily Isensee, wilderness camping has opened her eyes to the value of clean drinking water. Isensee, a student leader at Pacific Lutheran University, worked as a summer guide at Sky Ranch, an ELCA camp in the Rocky Mountains. “So many people,” she wrote, “especially youth, live in communities where they have access to endless water supply and don’t see the reasons why we need to conserve that water. I stress that water is a valued resource and an important part of God’s creation that we need to take care of, keep clean, and conserve.”

ELCA members and organizations are taking steps to safeguard clean, sustainable water supplies through on-

the-ground water projects, advocacy, and conservation efforts.

### International projects, advocacy

Paul Kleine and members of University Lutheran Church in Norman, Okla., have teamed up with their companion synod in Tanzania to provide water there for villagers and cattle. Kleine and his congregation raised more than \$75,000, with help from the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod and Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, to build 10 wells with pumps that provide clean drinking water for dozens of villages in the Morogoro Diocese in southeastern Tanzania.



Kleine visited the well sites in June 2007 with a delegation and wrote, “It was a joy to see the kids and grownups pumping away at the wells to fill buckets and carry them home.” When they visited a site where a new well will be dug, “the water looked exactly like the stuff that comes out of your washer after a load of dirty socks,” he reported. (See June 16 entry at [www.ulcsc.org/tanzania/](http://www.ulcsc.org/tanzania/)).

Other water projects are funded by ELCA members through Lutheran World Relief (LWR) and ELCA World Hunger Appeal around the globe. LWR funds provide water filters in the Philippines, water reservoir systems in Nicaragua, community rainwater containers in India and community wells in Mali.

### Advocating for clean water for all

Lutherans are advocating and acting for

clean water locally and internationally.

In northern Michigan, 400 Lutherans helped collect more than one ton of medicines and personal care products on Earth Day 2007. This group also had collected and disposed of 45 tons of hazardous chemicals on Earth Day 2006. (See ELCA News Service article: [www.elca.org/news/releases.asp?a=3591](http://www.elca.org/news/releases.asp?a=3591))

Other cleanup efforts require buy-in from corporations that use or pollute mass quantities of water. The ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program is part of an interfaith coalition that is working with a lead smelting company operating in one of the most polluted areas of Peru.

The CSR program has also published a Water Shareholder Proposal that advocates for people whose water resources are affected by corporations. Both of these efforts aim to create dialogue with corporations to ensure safe, sustainable water resources for local populations.

### Claiming the promise of water for all

The problem is not an easy one to solve. It takes more than individual acts of conservation, although that helps. It takes more than wells, pumps, sustainable technology and advocacy efforts to secure clean, safe drinking water for those in great need.

The ELCA social statement *Caring for Creation* acknowledges that we can find no “quick fix”—whether technological, economic or spiritual—to these environmental problems. It states, “A sustainable environment requires a sustained effort from everyone.”

Carol Fossum of Puyallup, Wash., reported that Women of the ELCA of the Southwestern Washington Synod took up this call to “sustained effort” in their 2006 convention. “We resolved that we would take actions personally and as an organization to understand water issues; conserve water in our own lives; and contribute in some way to the broader water crisis affecting thousands of God’s people around the globe,” she wrote in an online bulletin board. “So now we need to learn, take action, conserve and contribute,” added Fossum.

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## Online Water Resources

Blue Planet Run Foundation facts on global drinking water crisis: [blueplanetrun.org/water/facts](http://blueplanetrun.org/water/facts)

ELCA Advocacy Bring Your Own (Reusable) Bottle: [www.elca.org/advocacy/environment/byob.asp](http://www.elca.org/advocacy/environment/byob.asp)

ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility Water Shareholder Proposal: [www.elca.org/advocacy/corporate/resolutions/2007/water07.asp](http://www.elca.org/advocacy/corporate/resolutions/2007/water07.asp)

ELCA News Service May 10, 2007, article “Michigan Lutherans Help Collect Thousands of Pharmaceuticals”: [www.elca.org/news/releases.asp?a=3591](http://www.elca.org/news/releases.asp?a=3591)

ELCA World Hunger water resources: [www.elca.org/hunger/resources/water.html](http://www.elca.org/hunger/resources/water.html)

Friends of La Oroya, Peru (June 28, 2007, Religion & Ethics Newsweekly video

report) [www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1044/cover.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1044/cover.html)

*Grace Matters* May 13, 2007, interview with Rick Steves: [www.gracematters.org/listen.html#May](http://www.gracematters.org/listen.html#May)

Lutheran World Relief Water projects: <http://quilt.lwr.org/water>

Personal Water Use Calculator: [www.tampagov.net/dept\\_water/information\\_resources/Saving\\_water/Water\\_use\\_calculator.asp](http://www.tampagov.net/dept_water/information_resources/Saving_water/Water_use_calculator.asp)

Trinity Lutheran’s Living Water program: [www.trinitylutheranchurch.com/programs/livingwater.asp](http://www.trinitylutheranchurch.com/programs/livingwater.asp)

University Lutheran’s Tanzania water project: [www.ulcsc.org/tanzania/index.html](http://www.ulcsc.org/tanzania/index.html)

*U.S. News & World Report* May 27, 2007, article “Water Woes”: [www.usnews.com/usnews/biztech/articles/070527/4water.htm](http://www.usnews.com/usnews/biztech/articles/070527/4water.htm)

### In This Issue ...

#### Articles

Christian Principles in an Election Season.....	3
Convention and Visitors’ Bureaus .....	3
Web 2.0 for Congregations .....	6
Travel to Palestine .....	7
Lutheran Spirituality .....	8

#### Departments

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

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# ELW Provides Family of Resources and Continuing Conversation for Renewal

As long as this church has been talking about *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and the Renewing Worship process that led to its production, the challenge has been to understand the project as being about more than just a new book and its electronic equivalents. These resources form the core of primary worship resources for this church at this time. However, you've also been hearing about an "unfolding family of resources." The process of renewal is not over. A consultation on contemporary/emerging/alternative worship has already met. Conversations and resource development will continue to be developed.

**Indexes to Evangelical Lutheran Worship** provides a comprehensive set of indexes for the hymn materials in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* as well as the Revised Common Lectionary. Its most substantial index, *Hymns for the Church Year*, presents a rich and diverse offering of up to 15 hymn suggestions for each day, in addition to brief day introductions, prayer of the day, gospel acclamation, and reading citations.

**Musicians Guide to Evangelical Lutheran Worship** is an essential resource for any musician who leads the assembly using *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. This practical and useful text includes an introduction to how music serves worship, an interpretation of the rubrics related to music, and a look at the various styles of music in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and how to lead them. This volume features specific suggestions for each piece of service music, hymn, and song in the pew edition with the aim of assisting music leaders to enrich meaningful worship.

The **Guitar Edition** provides accompaniments for each piece in the service music section and every hymn in the pew edition. The two-volume set includes melody lines with full text, large size guitar chords, and bass indications.

The **Simplified Keyboard Edition** includes all the service music and hymn material from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* prepared in easy-to-play arrangements. This is an excellent option for assembly accompaniment, educational or social setting, home use, or when minimal rehearsal time is available.

**Introductions and Alternate Accompaniments for Organ, Volume 1** includes select alternative accompaniments

and introductions for hymns 239-303 (Advent through Epiphany sections). **Volume 6** includes the same for hymns 574-639 (Vocation, Ministry through Hope, Assurance sections).

**Introductions and Alternate Accompaniments for Piano, Volume 1** includes select alternative accompaniments and introductions for hymns 239-303 (Advent through Epiphany sections). **Volume 6** includes the same for hymns 574-639 (Vocation, Ministry through Hope, Assurance sections).

**Psalter for Worship, Year C** includes the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* version of the psalms as well as psalm tones, psalm refrains, and keyboard accompaniments.

**Festival Setting Two** is a festival setting by John Ferguson of Marty Haugen's Holy Communion Setting Two from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

**Gospel Acclamations for Summer and Gospel Acclamations for Autumn** provide choral gospel acclamations for the Time after Pentecost, Lectionary 8-22 with Lesser Festivals (Summer) and Lectionary 23 through Christ the King with Lesser Festivals (Autumn). Each volume contains acclamations for years A, B, and C that can be performed in unison with keyboard accompaniments.

The **Worship for Life Series** uses the resources in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* to help readers understand how worship shapes their faith, their relationships with one another, and their participation in the Christian assembly.

The **Kids Celebrate Worship** series introduces children and their parents to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Each 8-page booklet connects in some way to new or renewed content in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* in a fun, child-friendly way. Art, attention to worship practices, "treasure hunts" through the pew edition, music connections, and age-appropriate text encourage children to explore and learn about their "new book" while fostering engagement with and faith formation through worship. Provides helps and supports for parents, too.

**Lectionary for Worship, Year A** is now available in both **study** and **ritual** editions.



Staff Photo

Augsburg Fortress offers a family of resources for *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*

**ELW Gift Edition.** This expertly-crafted edition features the complete content of the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* pew edition with an elegant leather cover, gilded edging and ribbon markers.

**Notecards.** Two different sets of boxed notecards featuring art from the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* pew edition are now available. All notecards are blank inside, making them suitable for various occasions and uses.

**Art prints.** High-quality prints of selected art from the pew edition and ritual lectionary. Each print measures 12" x 18" and is suitable for framing.

## Seeds for the Parish

[www.elca.org/seeds](http://www.elca.org/seeds)

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

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## Resources for Renewal

To order any of the following resources for *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* go to Augsburg Fortress online at [www.augsburgfortress.org](http://www.augsburgfortress.org) or call: 800/328-4648.

**Musicians Guide to Evangelical Lutheran Worship** \$40.00, 978-0-8066-5389-1  
**Indexes to Evangelical Lutheran Worship** \$35.00, 978-0-8066-7012-6  
**Accompaniment: Service Music & Hymns 2 volumes** \$65.00, 978-0-8066-7024-9  
**Guitar Accompaniment Edition** \$65.00, 978-0-8066-7021-8  
**Simplified Keyboard Accompaniment Edition** \$45.00, 978-0-8066-5670-0  
**Intros and Alt Accomps Organ** vol. 1 \$30.00, 978-0-8006-3914-3  
**Intros and Alt Accomps Organ** vol. 6 \$30.00, 978-0-8006-3919-8  
**Intros and Alt Accomps Piano** vol. 1 \$30.00, 978-0-8006-2359-3  
**Intros and Alt Accomps Piano** vol. 6 \$30.00, 978-0-8006-2364-7  
**Psalter for Worship, Year A** \$30.00, 978-0-8066-5382-2  
**Festival Setting Two** \$24.95, 978-0-8066-5386-0  
**Gospel Acclamations for Summer** \$6.95, 978-0-8006-7857-9  
**Gospel Acclamations for Autumn** \$6.95, 978-0-8006-7862-3  
**Christ in Your Marriage** \$10.99, 978-0-8006-2114-8  
**Kids Celebrate Baptism Pre-Reader** \$6.95/12, 978-0-8006-2120-9  
**Kids Celebrate Baptism Young Reader** \$6.95/12, 978-0-8006-2121-6  
**Kids Celebrate Holy Communion Pre-Reader** \$6.95/12, 978-0-8006-2122-3  
**Kids Celebrate Holy Communion Young Reader** \$6.95/12, 978-0-8006-2123-0  
**Lectionary for Worship Year A Ritual** \$115.00, 978-0-8066-5613-7  
**Lectionary for Worship Year A Study** \$27.50, 978-0-8066-5614-4  
**ELW Gift Edition** \$45.00, 978-0-8066-5671-7  
**Note Cards Evangelical Lutheran Worship Logo** \$11.95/12, 978-0-8066-7018-8  
**Note Cards Assorted** \$11.95/12, 978-0-8066-7019-5  
**Art Print: Church Year** \$16.00, 978-0-8066-7029-4  
**Art Print: Holy Communion** \$16.00, 978-0-8066-7028-7  
**Art Print: Trees** \$16.00, 978-0-8066-7030-0  
**Art Print: Set of 4 Trees** \$55.00/4, 978-0-8066-7027-0

# Help with Putting Together the Special Event

The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of your congregation is coming up and you want to host an event that will attract members outside your area. How do you find out which hotels offer affordable rates? Where do you find a list of companies in your community that may sponsor a dinner? What about a speaker who can give an engaging and entertaining look at the history of your community? Sometimes word of mouth works, but not always. One option is to look to your local Convention and Visitors' Bureau (CVB).

CVBs are usually nonprofit organizations whose purpose is to promote their city, county, state or multi-state region. Funded primarily by hotel occupation taxes, most bureaus offer their services for free. They provide comprehensive lists of accommodations, restaurants, service providers, product vendors and entertainment contacts in the area. Most have user-friendly Web sites that provide information such as a calendar of events in the community. To find a local CVB anywhere in the world, visit [www.officialtravelguide.com](http://www.officialtravelguide.com)

June Lammers, from the Springfield, Mo, CVB, asserts "we are not just here for professional groups planning conventions. CVBs provide ideas, resources and prepare bidding inquiries with a vendor. In fact, local ELCA churches are some of our biggest clients. We recently helped an ELCA congregation with site selection for their women's retreat."

When calling or researching a CVB, identify the staff person dedicated to serving nonprofit clients, often called "SMERFS" (Social, Military, Educational, Religious or Fraternal). This



individual should provide prompt attention to your request, especially in a larger city.

Although a local Chamber of Commerce can be a useful resource for contacts within a community, the often-overlooked CVBs are set up to provide information specifically for planning events and travel. They can also be very helpful if you are planning a mission or experiential trip for your congregation nationally or internationally. (Also note that many international locations have a visitor information center, usually with a Web site, to help you research local attractions or find contacts for mission opportunities.)

—Michelle Daniels  
Assistant to the Executive Director and  
Office Manager  
ELCA Communication Services

## Do you Identify with the ELCA?

The ELCA emblem is being used in a special way in our parish. I had a visit from a parishioner, experienced in stained glass creation, who asked if I could think of a project she could work on for the congregation. I just had a conversation with our Worship Board about replacing the congregation's processional cross, and well, next thing I knew we were designing and creating a new cross.

I can't remember how we came to the idea of using the ELCA emblem. In hindsight it just seemed logical, and our stained glass person really got into reproducing the emblem in glass. Thankfully, we have another member who is an expert woodworker, and he worked on the cross section.

On June 17, 2007, the processional cross began its service in our sanctuary, a bright and modern in-the-round church building. Natural light permeates the space, and the central placement of this wood and glass cross allows it to capture and refract light from nearly every direction.

The process of creating and displaying this cross has provided opportunities for us to do more than remember our ELCA partnerships. It's also afforded us the chance to reflect on the colors and shape of the Christian year, the mission implications of the emblem's "Christ's Cross for the World" motif and the call to lift high the cross not just in our worship, but through the service that goes on in the world in the life of the baptized.

—Pastor Bill Hurst, Torrance, Calif.

## Using Christian Principles in an Election Season

When we affirm our baptism in the rite of confirmation, we acknowledge that "by the power of the Holy Spirit, we intend to live among God's faithful people, hear the word of God, share in the Lord's Supper, proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, serve all people following the example of Jesus, and strive for peace and justice in all the earth." Our baptismal identity, as expressed in these words, should not only guide our piety, but also ground us as responsible citizens of this world.



Despite the fact that 15 months remain before our national election day, we're already overwhelmed with televised debates, opinion poll analysis and feature stories tracking presidential candidates. It's easy to become sidetracked by the political mudslinging and partisan bickering, until we consider how our faith can inform our civic engagement.

As we see in the affirmation of baptism, our Christian faith compels us to address the world through the lens of our relationship to God and to one another, to "serve all people following the example of our Lord Jesus, and to strive for peace and justice in all the world." This is a clear call to activism and engagement in public life.

Government is a means through which God works to preserve creation and to help maintain a peaceful and just social order in a sinful world. Our faith values should inform how we look at public issues and interpret what is happening in political life. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is called to be a public church, and thus we have a responsibility to engage potential political leaders on the values and ethics affirmed by our faith.

This isn't about partisan politics. In order to protect religious liberty and our nation's democratic system, we must remember that it is not the church's role to promote any single candidate or endorse any activity that will

provide any form of partisan gain.

The following are principles intended for thoughtful consideration and prayer with regard to the 2008 electoral process.

- God created us for each other, and thus our security depends on the well-being of our neighbors. We look for political leaders who pledge to base their foreign and domestic public policy on cooperation, peace and the pursuit of justice.
- God calls us to be advocates for the most vulnerable. We look for political leaders who will focus on economic justice.
- The earth belongs to God and is intrinsically good. We look for political leaders who uphold our responsibility to be good stewards of the environment.
- Christians have a biblical mandate to welcome strangers. We look for political

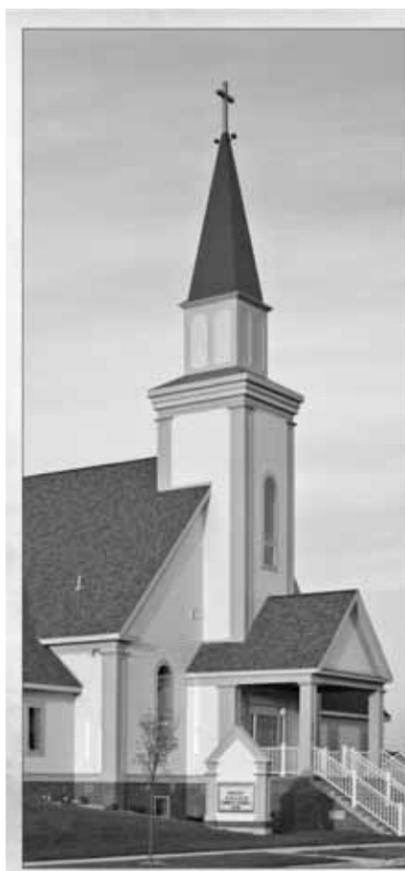
leaders who will pursue fair immigration policies and curb xenophobia.

- Christians are called to help heal the sick. We look for political leaders who will support affordable and accessible health care for all.

### Resources

- ELCA Election Resource Guide - coming soon at [www.elca.org/advocacy](http://www.elca.org/advocacy)
- Faithful Democracy - [www.faithfuldemocracy.org](http://www.faithfuldemocracy.org)
- IRS Guidelines for 501(c)(3) churches - [www.fec.gov](http://www.fec.gov)
- Join the ELCA's e-Advocacy network - [www.elca.org/advocacy](http://www.elca.org/advocacy)

—Dan Pieper  
ELCA Washington Office



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Investing with us isn't merely about what you receive. It's about what you make possible. With your investment, you're helping to build the church as well as your portfolio. That's because, as a ministry of the ELCA, the Mission Investment Fund uses your investments to provide low-interest loans to the Lutheran congregations and ministries that need them to expand, renovate or refinance. To find out how to help Lutheran congregations through your investments, call 877.886.3522 or visit [www.missioninvestmentfund.org](http://www.missioninvestmentfund.org).



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# Ripe for Picking

## Risk Management

The ELCA Office of the Secretary is pleased to announce the addition of a new risk management resource for congregations and synods. This monthly newsletter archive is now available at [www.elca.org/insurance/](http://www.elca.org/insurance/)

Titled *Church Safety Solutions*, it deals with a variety of important risk management and safety topics for protecting your congregation. These include emergency planning, building maintenance advice and church camp safety issues.

Newsletters will be provided online monthly, so you should check regularly for new information. We encourage you to share this information with other ELCA congregations and organizations.

## For the Parish Nurse

The Parish Nurse Center of Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn, is offering a basic Parish Nurse Preparation Course.

**October 29-November 2, 2007**, Mount Carmel, Alexandria, Minn.

**February 11-15, 2008**, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

**May 5-9, 2008**, Fargo-Moorhead area

The topics include: the role of the parish nurse, functions of the parish nurse, integration of faith and health, and aspects of program development.

The Parish Nurse Center program meets the requirements of 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. The courses are approved for 37 contact hours. The cost of the program is \$550.00.

For information, please call 218/299-3893 or e-mail [parish-nurse@cord.edu](mailto:parish-nurse@cord.edu)

## The Little Lutheran

For children age 6 and under, *The Little Lutheran* magazine makes a great gift for Christmas, birthdays or "just because." Not just another toy, this is a gift that keeps on giving: giving the gift of faith in the God you love, the gift of wonder in God's creation, the gift of confidence in God's love, and the gift of knowledge of God's children everywhere.

If you have grandchildren, children, godchildren, nieces, nephews or other children you love, visit [www.thelittlelutheran.org](http://www.thelittlelutheran.org) today and subscribe in their names.

Congregations may wish to order for nurseries, preschools, worship bags and much more. For discounted rates on bulk orders call Augsburg Fortress Publishers at 800/328-4648.

## Day of Prayer for Peace

ELCA members and congregations are encouraged to pray for peace on Friday, September 21, 2007. The World Council of Churches' (WCC) International Day of Prayer for Peace offers an opportunity for church communities in all places to pray and act together to nurture lasting peace in the hearts of people, their families and societies.

The ELCA Task Force for the Decade for a Culture of Nonviolence encourages congregations to participate, and it will hold its own service of prayer for peace for churchwide staff and others at the ELCA churchwide office on September 21. For more information visit <http://overcomingviolence.org/en/about-the-dov/international-day-of-prayer-for-peace.html> Additional prayer resources are posted at [www.elca.org/nonviolence](http://www.elca.org/nonviolence)

## New Video on Isaiah Offers Promise



The new video, *Isaiah: Visions of Promise*, studies four key themes that define the witness of Isaiah: peace, hope, justice and bringing good news.

Each study segment includes contemporary and classical art and vocal music to enhance the studies and to help interpret Isaiah's thought. There are also periods for group study. When using biblical materials, the study/discussion sessions focus on the biblical text rather than an explanatory narrative. Each study segment is self-contained and can be used independently or as part of the whole series.

Another feature is a discipleship skill-building exercise at the close of each study, according to Pastor John Kerr, who produced the course. "I spoke with a number of bishops about what they sought in Bible study. They said they wanted Bible studies that connected directly with discipleship in the world." The study segment *Bringing Good News*, for example, ends by presenting a simple, nonthreatening approach to witnessing.

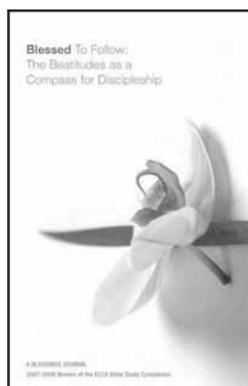
The Rev. Jane O'Hara Shields, currently ELCA mission director for New England Synod, presents the four major studies. The Rev. Eric Shafer, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Lansdale, Pa., and former ELCA communication director, offers the introductory session to the Isaiah literature.

The *Isaiah: Visions of Promise* package, which costs \$40.00, includes a DVD with over 100 minutes of video presentation and a CD Resource Disk. It is produced by Lutheran Bible Ministries and can be ordered by phone at 800/STAMP-56, at [www.bibleministries.org](http://www.bibleministries.org) and by mail: 1594 Hwy 9, #15, Toms River, NJ 08755. It is also offered by SELECT by phone at 877/675-6275, at [www.selectlearning.org](http://www.selectlearning.org) and by mail: 1568 Eustis St., St. Paul, MN 55108.

## Women's Bible Study Blog and Video Now Online

The 2007-2008 Bible study, "Blessed to Follow: The Beatitudes as a Compass for Discipleship," by Martha E. Stortz, opens in the September issue of *Lutheran Woman Today*. New this year are free online video introductions to each session of the study. In these short interviews, the author gives her unique insights into the text and the study session. The video introductions, filmed at Wartburg Seminary, are available on the magazine's Web site,

[www.lutheranwomantoday.org](http://www.lutheranwomantoday.org) and at a new



blog, <http://lwtmagazine.blogspot.com> The blog also offers a space where readers can discuss the Bible study together online. Just click the "comment" link at the bottom of each entry to add your comments.

The first session of the nine-session study is available free at [www.lutheranwomantoday.org](http://www.lutheranwomantoday.org). Download it, print it out, make several copies, and pass them around to show people what it's like—and then help a new friend subscribe to the magazine. To subscribe, call 1-800-328-4648. Only \$12 for one year (10 issues).

## Join the Global Celebration!

The ELCA celebrates our global Lutheran family on the first Sunday of October each year. This year Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Sunday is October 7 and we are celebrating the federation's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Resources for the celebration in your congregation can be found at [www.elca.org/lwf](http://www.elca.org/lwf) on the Web. These include:

- Global prayers, bulletins or newsletters for LWF Sunday and each week of 2007
- Sermon Stories
- A downloadable hymn written specially for this anniversary year
- Ordering information for free color bulletin inserts through the Augsburg Fortress Distribution Center ISBN # 978-6-0002-1919-2
- A downloadable black and white bulletin

- insert
- an adult forum lesson plan
- A Sunday church school lesson plan.

The LWF provides the "table" where the world's Lutherans can come together to pray, worship, discuss the pains of the world, seek solutions, study and celebrate. it represents 140 church bodies in 78 countries with a membership of over 66 million.

Celebrate! The LWF is 60 and we know that 66 million Lutherans DO make a difference!



## Popular World Hunger Christmas Card Available

ELCA World Hunger's popular Christmas card (ISBN 978-6-0002-2000-6) is available for purchase. One package contains 10 cards and 10 envelopes. The cost is \$4.00 plus shipping.

The front of the card displays an Ethiopian nativity. "Fitting with ELCA World Hunger's *God's Global Barnyard* emphasis, the nativity includes an ox, a donkey and a piglet," says Kathryn Sime, director of



ELCA World Hunger and Disaster Appeal. "This card reminds us of our World Hunger connections to families around the world who depend on animals like these to sustain their livelihoods."

The inside text is from Matthew 1:23, which reads: *And they shall name him Emmanuel, which means "God is with us."*

Order at [www.augsburgfortress.org/elcahunger](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/elcahunger) or call 800/328-4648.

# Ripe for Picking

## It's a Wrap: Mosaic Television to End Production

Mosaic Television, the ELCA's subscription-based video program, will conclude its 20-year run at the end of this calendar year. Mosaic's final issue in December will be *The Life of Apostle Paul*, hosted by Rick Steves.

Over the course of the ELCA's first 20 years, Mosaic has served this church with stories about its mission, individual members, social concerns, history, global ministries, ecumenical and interfaith issues, ecology and more. With each issue, subscribers received a 30-minute video and printed study guide.

Mosaic's three all time best selling titles are: *Opening the Door to Luther*, *Glory to God Alone: The Life of J.S. Bach* and *The Morning Star of Wittenberg: The Life of Katie Luther*. These titles and others in the Mosaic library will still be available for \$19.95 per issue. The special 10-DVD compilation is available for \$79.95. Find Mosaic titles on the Web at [www.elca.org/backissues.html](http://www.elca.org/backissues.html) To order, call 800/638-3522, ext. 6009. Mosaic productions also may be viewed at its Web site or on VideoGoogle.

Tim Frakes, Mosaic producer since 1993, resigned his position with the ELCA in March. Frakes formed his own production company, Tim Frakes Productions, and continues to work with ELCA Communication Services as a contractor.

A new format for creating and distributing video material – short-form video on the Web – will be introduced later this fall. The new short-form videos, featuring current, up to the minute stories, will be posted online. In addition to the short-form videos, televised productions will continue, including those for network television in partnership with the National Council of Churches Communication Commission.



Mosaic producer Tim Frakes

## Youth Resource

A new youth-centered resource, based on *Freed in Christ to Serve the Neighbor: Lutherans Talk about Human Sexuality*, will be available in early fall. It is designed to help leaders guide senior high youth through discussion of the same topics covered by the adult study.

The youth study uses clips from popular movies and songs and youth-oriented activities to engage young people in exploring questions about sexuality in our culture. Youth will read and discuss Scripture and excerpts from church teachings as they address questions they face every day.

As with the adult study, participants will be encouraged to fill out a response form and send it to the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality for use in writing a social statement on human sexuality. A draft of the social statement will be released in early 2008. Deadline for youth responses is December 15. (Responses to the adult study are due November 1.)

Visit [www.elca.org/faithfuljourney](http://www.elca.org/faithfuljourney) for more details or to download the study. For more information, contact the Rev. Kaari Reiersen in the Studies Department of ELCA Church in Society at 800/638-3522, ext. 2894 or [Kaari.Reiersen@elca.org](mailto:Kaari.Reiersen@elca.org)

## Coming of Age

Lutheran Men in Mission, in partnership with the Youth and Family Institute, is networking with leaders and congregations across the United States to promote understanding of and outreach to younger men. One of the products of this partnership is the scheduling of three Coming of Age Conferences later this year.

The conferences will take place at:

- Christ Lutheran Church in Charlotte, N.C. September 15
- St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Beaverton, Ore. October 23-24
- Bethlehem Lutheran Church in St. Cloud, Minn. November 16-17.

The Coming of Age Conference will help congregational leaders learn about younger men and how to reach them in their daily lives and faith journeys. Keynote presentations will be based on the major findings from the *Coming of Age* research and will be delivered by authors Paul Hill and David Anderson and Lutheran Men in Mission Director, Doug Haugen. Workshops will explore ways to connect with younger men in a meaningful way.

These events are made possible in part through a generous grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

For more information visit [www.tyfi.org](http://www.tyfi.org) or [www.elca.org/lmm](http://www.elca.org/lmm)

## Come to the Waters at the Women's Gathering

"Come to the Waters" and be refreshed, inspired and renewed! Join Lutheran women from around the country as they gather in Salt Lake City, July 10-13, 2008. The weekend will feature worship, workshops, Bible study and speakers who will teach, encourage and challenge you.

Speakers include the Rev. Heidi Neumark, author of *Breathing Space: A Spiritual Journey in the South Bronx*, which explores her own spiritual life and her work with an ecumenical community organizing group.

Another featured speaker will be Joan Chittister, O.S.B., who has been a visionary voice and spiritual leader for more than 30 years. She is an award-winning author of

35 books, the most recent being *The Ten Commandments: Laws of the Heart* (Orbis).

Workshops will address topics like how Lutherans read the Bible, money and spirituality, the ways we pray, and examples set by the women who followed Jesus.

Salt Lake City combines the best of being a major city with Western small-town friendliness. The surrounding area offers an abundance of natural beauty and places of historical interest.

Make plans now to "Come to the Waters" next July and be part of the Triennial Gathering of Women of the ELCA. Registration opens September 4, 2007. For more information, visit [www.womenoftheelca.org](http://www.womenoftheelca.org) or call 800/638-3522, ext. 2497.



## A Gift That Gives Back

A charitable gift annuity is a wonderful way to support your local congregation or favorite ministry. How does a charitable gift annuity work? You donate cash or stock through the ELCA Foundation, and in return you receive guaranteed annual income for the rest of your life.

Your gift is eligible for a charitable deduction, and a portion of your annuity payment is tax-free throughout the rest of your life; the older your age, the larger the tax-free portion. At the end of your life, the remaining balance goes to an ELCA-related ministry of your choice. There are multiple benefits of charitable gift annuities, but the greatest benefit might just be the satisfaction in knowing your gift will continue to support your favorite ministry even after you die.

Setting up a gift annuity is easy. For your complimentary gift annuity illustration, call the ELCA Foundation at 800/638-3522, ext. 2970, or visit [www.elca.org/fo](http://www.elca.org/fo) for the regional gift planner nearest you.

## ELCA PSA's

We all remember the "frying egg" Public Service Announcement (PSA) that first ran in 1987: "this is your brain" ... "this is your brain on drugs" ... "any questions?" It was part of an anti-narcotics campaign by Partnership for a Drug-Free America. Short and to the point, this non-commercial ad was broadcast for the "public good" and caught the attention of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, across the country.

The ELCA has PSAs available in 30- to 60-seconds spots intended to share the message of God's love with radio and television audiences, letting folks know that they are not alone and that the grace of God is with them always. The PSAs are a good way to promote the ELCA and to invite attendance at worship services in area congregations.

Deemed helpful to the public because they inform and educate, PSAs are run for no charge by television and radio stations. ELCA PSAs are available to stations or congregations who wish to place them on airwaves in their local area. Visit [www.elca.org/communication](http://www.elca.org/communication) to view/listen to these announcements and to find out more about placing them on outlets near you.

## Call for Photos

The Justice for Women program of the ELCA is calling for photos and stories of women throughout the ELCA to feature on the front page of the Justice for Women Web site.

- Submissions should include:
- a completed copy of the submission form
  - a photo of the woman making the submission
  - a short narrative of no more than 150 words telling who you are
  - the completed sentence, "Justice for women is...."

Women of all ages, ethnicities and locations are encouraged to enter.

For more information or to receive an entry form, visit the Justice for Women Web site at [www.elca.org/justiceforwomen](http://www.elca.org/justiceforwomen) or call 800/638-3522, ext. 2710. The deadline for submissions is October 31. Justice for Women is a program of the ELCA's Church in Society unit.



# What's New on the World Wide Web

## Farm Bill

The ELCA is collaborating with the Episcopal Church, United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church - U.S.A., and United Church of Christ to build statewide teams calling for reform on the 2007 Farm Bill. By joining Faith Farm Teams, you can receive e-mail alerts and get connected to local groups doing advocacy and awareness around the issues of hunger, land conservation, and rural poverty being addressed in the 2007 Farm Bill. Join at [www.faithfarmteams.com](http://www.faithfarmteams.com)

## Grace Matters Web site

Grace Matters Web developer Tracie Watkins has given the radio ministry's Web site a face lift. Along with a sleek new look and feel are features that make the site's pages easier to navigate. Do you want to get a heads-up on next week's program? Check out the new

home page, which offers a promo of what's ahead. While you are there you can also listen to the current program with Real streaming or download the Mp3 and podcast of current and past programs and take them with you. If you missed a program or want to hear a particular show again simply go to [www.gracematters.org](http://www.gracematters.org)

## Global Mission Event 2007

Missed the 2007 ELCA Global Mission Event? Visit [www.elca.org/gme](http://www.elca.org/gme) to find photos, video clips and news articles from the event, plus information on events coming in 2008.

## Churchwide Assembly Recap

Visit [www.elca.org/assembly/](http://www.elca.org/assembly/) for all of the news and information from the August assembly. Here you will find photos, voting results, and actions of the churchwide assembly.



## Shareholder Network

Join the Shareholder's Network! As new ELCA policies and issues papers are approved and new resolutions are filed with corporations, you will receive periodic updates in your inbox. Visit [www.elca.org/corporate](http://www.elca.org/corporate) to sign up.

# Latest Buzz on the Web — Web 2.0!

How many of you have a Web site? Send e-mail to your congregation? Record sermons (audio or video) and publish them online? Have a page on *MySpace*? Publish a blog? Listen to podcasts? Produce a podcast? Have an RSS feed on your Web site? Have been to *Second Life*?

If you answered "yes" to any of the above, you're a Web 2.0 user.

ELCA Web Manager Kristin Koskinen used these questions to begin her workshop on Web 2.0 at the "Let the River Flow" large congregation gathering held in June.

"Actually," says Koskinen, "Web 2.0 is a misnomer, because it leads people to believe that there was such a thing as Web 1.0 and that is not the case." Web 2.0 is a "buzzword," explains Koskinen—"the buzzword that encapsulates a new movement in Internet technology and philosophy."

Instead of static online content placed on the Web by programmers, Webmasters or Web editors, the new sites are all about average people sharing information in real time.

Still not sure what makes up Web 2.0? Koskinen gives the following examples to help get us started on our examination of this trend.

## Web 2.0 Elements

- **Blog** — The combination of two words "Web" and "log," a blog is an online diary or a commentary that invites responses by visitors. Blogs are hosted by free services

such as *blogspot* and *eblogger*. Take a look at what St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Washington, D.C., does for a fine example of a blog ([www.stpaulslutherandc.org/blog/index.html](http://www.stpaulslutherandc.org/blog/index.html))

- **Bookmarks** — Web-based bookmarking services make it easier for you to keep track of your favorite Web sites, like [www.elca.org/seeds](http://www.elca.org/seeds). The best part about using services provided by sites such as *del.icio.us*, *Google bookmarks*, *Yahoo Bookmarks* or *Windows Live Favorites*, is that you can access your bookmarks from any computer simply by signing in — you do not have to be at your own computer to get to your personal "favorites."
- **Photos** — Photo-sharing Web sites, like *Flickr*, are popular for sharing and storing searchable photographs. They are a big hit with bloggers, who merely need to add a link to a photo. Imagine sharing photos of a recent congregational event without having to call a meeting or pinning only a few of them to a bulletin board!
- **Wiki** — According to its entry in *Wikipedia*, a *wiki* is a collaborative Web site that can be edited directly by anyone with access to it. For the ELCA *Wikipedia* entry visit <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ELCA>. A caveat from Kris Koskinen: be aware that the info you find on a *wiki* may be questionable, as its sources are unknown and not verified.

- **Podcast** — Pre-recorded audio or video files that are downloaded from the Internet are called *podcasts*. For example, if you missed hearing a great *Grace Matters* broadcast simply go to [www.gracematters.org](http://www.gracematters.org) to download a podcast and listen to a specific program at your leisure. The same thing can be done with sermons or choir recitals.
- **Social Media** — An example is *MySpace*. At last year's ELCA Communicators' Conference, speaker Rick Klau claimed that "If you are not on *MySpace* you are not on the Internet." As Klau explains in his blog, "Since many younger members are spending considerable time there, they should at least pay attention to it and find ways of engaging the kids on turf that is familiar to them."
- **Video Sharing** — In Web sites like *YouTube*, users can upload, view and share video clips. After the 2006 Youth Gathering there were quite a few videos from the event posted on the Web. For a first-hand experience of what can be done with video go to [YouTube.com](http://YouTube.com) and search for "ELCA." Remember that in virtual reality, as in real life, there are pornographers out there putting up smut and using foul language. Stay clear of them. Keep an eye on your children and video sharing can be a good thing.

More to come on Web 2.0 in the November-December issue.



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.html](http://www.elca.org/communication/resourcecenters.html)

**Q** What's the scoop on labyrinths? They seem really popular now, but I've also heard that they are pagan or anti-Christian.

**A** Labyrinths first popped up in Christian settings as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The first known Christian labyrinth is at the Basilica of Reparatus in Orleansville, Algeria and contains the words "Sancta Ecclesia," which indicates its use for religious purposes. The Christian labyrinth became popular during the Middle Ages as a means for folks to go on "pilgrimages" without incurring the cost of trekking off to faraway places. For these ancient pilgrims, contemplatively and prayerfully walking the labyrinth was considered a holy experience.

With today's renewed interest in the labyrinth we must keep in mind that it can still be used effectively as a tool for Christian devotion.

—Jan Rizzo, editor  
*Seeds for the Parish*

**A** My spiritual director, a psychologist, an ordained clergywoman and certified pastoral counselor, regularly uses the labyrinth for retreats. At first I was skeptical, as it did not fit into my LCMS

childhood experience and view of the world. But I found it very meaningful; especially the connection to our Christian roots. My own experience with the labyrinth is that it is a meaningful form of prayer, especially for those who are kinesthetic learners or "brain-wired" to move. They are the same ones who usually go crazy when told to sit still and fold hands while we pray!

—Linda Staats, director  
Milestones Ministry  
The Youth & Family Institute

**A** I personally love labyrinths, and use the one by my house that the Presentation Sisters have made. It helps keep me centered in my prayers.

—Linnae Grabner-Hegg, director  
NW Minnesota Synod Resource Library

**A** Some helpful books are: *Praying the Labyrinth* (Geoffrion, Pilgrim Press), *Labyrinths from the Outside In: Walking to Spiritual Insight-A Beginner's Guide* (Schaper and Camp, Skylight Paths), *A Labyrinth Year: Walking the Seasons of the Church* (Kautz, Morehouse), *The Way of the Labyrinth: A Powerful Meditation for Everyday Life* (Curry, Penguin) and *108 Ways*

*to Use Labyrinths in Schools* by Gael Hancock. This is a drop in the bucket on this topic but these things are borrowed a lot and seem to be helpful to congregations and individuals.

—Julie Ageson, director  
Eastern North Dakota Resource Center  
Fargo, N.D.

**A** We have a finger labyrinth that is available from the Health Ministries Association ([www.hmassoc.org](http://www.hmassoc.org)). It's a useful tool for meditation as you "walk" the labyrinth path with your finger.

—Carol Hughes, director  
Chambersburg Resource Center  
Lower Susquehanna Synod

**A** We have a canvas floor labyrinth in our resource center that can be borrowed. It was designed by Lisa Moriarity of Paths of Peace. Our labyrinth is called Circle of Peace and is based on the labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral in Paris. Lisa designs other labyrinths as well. Her Web site, [www.pathsofpeace.com](http://www.pathsofpeace.com) contains a wealth of information and resources.

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

# Traveling in the Middle East

Even bishops float, travelers from the New England Synod discovered, at the Dead Sea in Qumran, Israel.

The swimming break on a hot afternoon in May was part of a two-week pilgrimage that introduced Bishop Margaret Payne and 23 ELCA members to the Holy Land.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of Christians visit well-known sites like Jerusalem's Via Dolorosa and the Garden of Gethsemane. They come home with their faith and spirit refreshed by their encounter with the roots of the Christian faith.

But in "walking where Jesus walked," it's easy for visitors to inadvertently overlook the people who live where Jesus walked—in a region that struggles daily with conflict and violence.

As a companion synod to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), the New England delegation wanted to make sure its trip also embraced today's residents.

"We wanted to learn from our brothers and sisters what their lives were like, how they face the challenges of the limitations imposed on them, and how they continue to live in the hope of Christ," said Pastor Tim Keyl of Christ the King Congregation in Nashua, N.H.

To achieve that goal, trip leaders worked with Lutheran ministries in Jerusalem to plan a trip that lifted up Christian, Jewish and Muslim voices while allowing plenty of time to explore Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth and Galilee.

The group spent many hours visiting Lutheran schools and ministries and meeting Palestinian Christians for meals and worship. Visits to a mosque and the Museum of the Holocaust, a Shabbat meal, and presentations by Israeli peace activists and Muslim scholars immersed them in Jewish and Muslim perspectives on the current situation.

Verses from Luke 24, the appearance of the resurrected Jesus to the disciples, framed each day's prayer and itinerary.

"We prayed the Stations of the Cross along the traditional Via Dolorosa in the Old City of Jerusalem, culminating at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, we sang songs, read Scripture, and rejoiced in how God makes all things new even through suffering and death," said Pastor Keyl.

"Everywhere we went, our question to presenters was 'where do you see hope?' Many told us, 'all that we have is hope.'"

A pre-trip orientation introduced travelers to the situation in the Middle East and let them share their hopes and concerns, especially about personal safety.

"First-time travelers were nervous," said Keyl. "We saw plenty of armed and uniformed men and women, and had to go through multiple metal detectors when approaching the Tombs of the Patriarchs in Hebron. Yet with our U.S. passports and the capable guidance of our leaders, we never felt threatened or in danger."

**Planning a balanced trip to the Holy Land**  
For Lutherans who have been a presence in the Holy Land since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, facilitating visits by North Americans is a priority.

"In a situation that seems increasingly hopeless, it makes a tremendous difference to Palestinian Christians to break bread with their brothers and sisters," said ELCA missionary Rev. Julie Rowe, who is assistant to ELCJHL Bishop Munib Younan in Jerusalem.

Julie and the ELCJHL staff can help ELCA members plan everything from a one-day visit to a two-week trip. "Some groups, like the New England Synod, ask us to integrate ELCJHL ministries and meetings with local leaders into a traditional, full-length Holy Land trip," she explained. "People who have already booked a standard tour often ask me to arrange one or two days of visits to help them touch bases with Palestinian Lutherans."

Talking about on-the-ground safety is also part of her job. "Everybody thinks it's dangerous, but after living here for three years, I think it's safer than U.S. cities like San Antonio, where I'm from," she said.

Julie and the ELCJHL can also set up meetings and conversations with leaders with



Photo Southeast Michigan Synod

*People from Southeast Michigan, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour and Bethlehem planting seeds of hope together at Beit Sahour school*

different perspectives on the situation in Israel and Palestine. That's important to the Southeast Michigan Synod, a companion synod of the ELCJHL which sends groups twice a year as part of its commitment to the ELCA Peace Not Walls campaign (see sidebar).

"We try to fill the itinerary with people from different religious and political backgrounds, and mix the ancient and contemporary so that people can see how it all ties together," said Pastor Marty Zimmann of St. John Lutheran Church of Dundee, Michigan. "For example, at the Church of All Nations, near the traditional Gethsemane site, we saw a 2,000 year-old olive tree next to an iron gate with bullet holes from the 1967 Seven-Day War."

According to Bishop John Schreiber, nearly 100 Michigan Lutherans have visited the Holy Land in order to increase their awareness of issues in the region. "Our primary goal is to help people get a sense of the political landscape and the church's response in the midst of it," he said. "The number one thing we hear from brothers and sisters there is that we need to be advocates in our own country, so that our government can re-engage the peace process."

Recently a group of Michigan teens spent 10 days exploring the Holy Land and participating in a work project at the Lutheran School in Beit Sahour. Because the ELCJHL school paired teens with local students, they were able to spend time in homes getting to know Palestinian Christian families.

"Being welcomed whole heartedly into their lives was the most important thing to me," said Sarah Bowers, one of the teens who participated. "Even though they are living in a country under military occupation, they have hope. That is amazing!"

## **New resource offers trip planning assistance**

A new Web-based resource, "Visiting the Holy Land and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land" can help you plan a fair and balanced trip that will give you a full picture of what life is like for Israelis and Palestinians, as well as meaningful experiences of biblical sites.

The resource offers:

- Sample itineraries
- Contacts for local Lutheran ministries and guidelines for working with their staff to plan your trip
- Outlines for pre-trip orientation sessions
- Hints for coming, going, and on the ground logistics
- Suggestions for sharing your experience later.

The 20-page resource is free and can be downloaded from [www.elca.org/peacenotwalls/accompany/travel.html](http://www.elca.org/peacenotwalls/accompany/travel.html)

## **New Resources Equip Congregations for Middle East Peacemaking**

"Peace Not Walls," the ELCA campaign to learn, pray and act for peace with justice in the Holy Land, is entering its second year.

Since the campaign was adopted by the 2005 Churchwide Assembly, the ELCA has been working with other Lutherans and with ecumenical and interfaith partners toward:

- safety and security for all Israelis and Palestinians
- reduction of poverty and unemployment
- a negotiated final status agreement that includes a shared Jerusalem as capital of two independent states and with access and full rights in the city for Jews, Christians and Muslims.

The results are positive, said Carol LaHurd, coordinator of the Peace Not Walls campaign. "We know that interest in Middle East issues is growing among Lutherans. And our partners in the Holy Land tell us that the voiced support of mainline American Christians encourages them and makes a difference in Washington."

Through the Peace Not Walls Web site, [www.elca.org/peacenotwalls](http://www.elca.org/peacenotwalls), your congregation can learn more about the history of the Middle East conflict and current issues, and find ways to participate in the campaign.

In the site's list of frequently asked questions, you can learn why the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is important, why the ELCA is involved in the issue, what changes the ELCA advocates, and how you can equip yourself and your congregation to make a difference. Find the FAQ at [www.elca.org/peacenotwalls/takeaction/faqs.html](http://www.elca.org/peacenotwalls/takeaction/faqs.html)

Besides the Web site, three other resources can help you design an adult forum or study group on the Middle East and the ELCA Peace Not Walls campaign, or prepare an orientation for a group planning to visit the Holy Land:

- Colorful bookmarks designed by the Lutheran International Center in Bethlehem that lift up the campaign and its Web site
- A nine-minute DVD, "Forbidden Families," a story about the separation wall and its effect on one Lutheran Palestinian family, that can help your congregation understand the conflict in the Holy Land from the perspective of Palestinian Christians.
- A color photo flyer introducing the ELCA Peace Not Walls campaign.

For copies of these resources, call 800/638-3522 ext. 2642. To learn more about the ELCA's Peace Not Walls campaign, visit [www.elca.org/peacenotwalls](http://www.elca.org/peacenotwalls)

# Spirituality for Lutherans

Interest in “spirituality” has increased greatly over the last 30 years, but what people mean by the word varies considerably. People alienated from the church often contrast “spirituality,” which they regard as personal and positive, with “religion,” which they see as institutional and negative. However, spirituality and religion are not necessarily opposites, for each religious tradition tends to foster some particular forms of spirituality.

The definition of spirituality that I find descriptive and non-polemical is this: *a set of practices that expresses and nurtures faith*. Christian spirituality has practices that express and nurture faith in Jesus Christ. Some practices such as preaching on the Bible are almost universal among Christians, while others, such as speaking in tongues, are encouraged only in particular traditions.

Lutherans have been late in giving serious attention to spirituality because to many it appeared contrary to the central Lutheran teaching of justification by grace through faith. (A look at the “spirituality” section of any large commercial bookstore supports this opinion, for most books there are really about self-help.) But there is clearly a strong element of spirituality in the grace made known in Jesus Christ. Mindful of this grounding of spirituality in Christ, ELCA bishops and seminaries have taken a more positive stance toward spirituality in the last decade.

From talking and working with Lutherans on spirituality for over thirty years, I believe that what draws most people to this concept

is the desire to grow in prayer. At least that was my own experience. I began to pay attention to “spirituality” in 1977 when I stumbled onto Christian contemplative prayer. A focus on prayer, however, can skew one’s understanding of spirituality, for in the minds of many Lutherans, spirituality gets equated with prayer, especially private prayer. A narrow identification of spirituality with prayer may also lead Christians to think they are not spiritual if they have difficulty maintaining a regular practice of private prayer.

But every Christian has spirituality. Attendance at worship includes a number of spiritual practices: gathering with a Christian community, hearing the Word of God, singing hymns or spiritual songs, receiving Communion, praying out loud and in silence, confessing the faith, reflecting on visible symbols such as the cross, and more.

When people manifest an explicit concern for “spirituality,” though, it usually signals a desire to deepen their relationship with God. And here is where special consideration of prayer generally bears fruit. As one gains experience with various forms of prayer, one may discover that certain ways of being attentive to God feed one’s spirit. Indeed, attention to prayer tends to foster open, receptive participation in other Christian religious practices such as reading



Scripture or receiving Holy Communion. Attention to prayer also nurtures moments of mindfulness of God, whether alone in the car, or in nature or in the bustle of daily life.

None of this is automatic. Prayer alone is not likely to result in mountaintop experiences. In fact, a person often muddles around before finding one or more prayer practices that fit. Nevertheless, a fairly regular practice of turning attention to God generally surprises one with other unplanned moments of awareness of God.

My experience in this arena has been greatly enriched by my involvement with Grace Institute for Spiritual Formation, which sponsors a two-year program that brings the same people together for a 45-hour retreat four times a year. The heart of this in-depth program is its grouping of about six people who meet three times each session and stay together throughout the program. Over the two years, participants gain experience in a wide range of meditative practices in a small group. Repeatedly I’ve seen lay and rostered people grow in faith in this way.

Some come to Grace Institute as a result of their congregation’s involvement in Natural Church Development that has been endorsed by Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission. Based on study of over a thousand churches in 32 countries, Natural Church Development identifies eight characteristics of healthy, growing congregations. Two of these characteristics are “passionate spirituality” and “holistic small groups.” Leaders of congregations that score low on one or both of these characteristics have found the Grace Institute program very helpful. Information about Grace Institute is available at <http://ministry.luther.edu/grace>

If you as a church leader want sustained, intentional strengthening of spirituality in your congregation, organization or synod, you must begin with yourself. Spirituality has to be more than just another tool in a leader’s toolbox. But for those leaders who make this a personal as well as corporate priority, resources are available.

#### Resources:

- Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast*, ISBN 978-0-6642-2947-4, \$16.95, Presbyterian Publishing Co., [www.ppcbooks.com/](http://www.ppcbooks.com/)
- Dorothy Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, ISBN: 978-0-7879-3883-3, \$18.95, Jossey-Bass an imprint of John Wiley, [www.josseybass.com](http://www.josseybass.com)
- Philip Krey & Peter Krey, eds., *Luther’s Spirituality*, Hardcover ISBN: 978-0-8091-0514-4, 39.95; Paperback ISBN 978-0891-3949-1, 27.95, Paulist Press, [www.paulistpress.com](http://www.paulistpress.com)
- Scot McKnight, *Jesus Creed*, ISBN 978-0-5670-4033-6, \$19.95, T&T Clark, [www.continuumbooks.com](http://www.continuumbooks.com)
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