



November-December  
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[www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)

# Seeds for the Parish

RESOURCE PAPER FOR LEADERS OF ELCA CONGREGATIONS

## ELCA Good Gifts Keep on Giving

Juana fought back her tears. Her prayers had been answered in the shape of 10 fluffy chicks. For Juana and Miguel, who have four teenage boys, these little chicks make a big difference. In just a few months the chickens will lay eggs that help satisfy the appetites of their growing boys. And Juana and Miguel's chicken business will provide stable nutrition and a sustainable source of income. The ELCA World Hunger Appeal provides relief, development, education and advocacy for those living with chronic hunger and poverty. You can find all kinds of ways to support this truly Christian initiative in the *ELCA Good Gifts* catalog. For just \$10, chicks make a great impact for a small price. Find them on page 15 of the catalog.

Brian and Katie spent a year in Kenya. They went to teach young children and young adults as participants in the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission program. Who knew that living simply on a low, monthly stipend for 12 months could be so enriching? Last year, 39 young adults participated in the program by serving in countries such as Argentina, Germany, India, the Philippines and Slovakia. Participants are transformed by their experiences, equipped to take on responsibilities in the church upon their return. With a gift of \$192, you can support one young adult for one week. Find this gift on page 6 of the catalog.

God called and Stephanie answered. Fortunately, so did countless others with their financial support. Thanks to the ELCA Fund for Leaders scholarship program, funded by generous members of this church, Stephanie is now a full-time student of theological studies at one of eight ELCA seminaries. She will graduate with 31.5 percent less debt than her classmates and will be able to

take a call in a small, struggling congregation where others cannot afford to go. A gift of \$200,000 establishes a fully endowed scholarship that will train leaders of this church forever. Find this gift on page 5.

Patrick was a victim of HIV/AIDS. Several years ago, his parents died from AIDS. Patrick knew that life as an orphan in Tanzania would be an uphill battle against hunger and poverty. Today, he's a strong survivor attending a two-year carpentry training program. Gifts to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal help fund the program that cares for Patrick and other children orphaned by AIDS. The program provides basic supplies and financial assistance for school and health care. With a

gift of \$350, you can provide one year of tutoring for at-risk youth in India. Find this gift on page 11.

*ELCA Good Gifts* count twice. Each gift from the 28-page *ELCA Good Gifts* catalog counts as two—one for your loved one and one for someone you may never meet who is supported by our churchwide ministries. And many of the gifts continue to give for years to come. Take it from Patrick, Juana, Katie, Brian, and Stephanie. They know first-hand just how good a gift can be.

With almost 100 different gift-giving options at your fingertips in this catalog, making a difference in the world has never been so easy. The 2007-2009 *ELCA Good Gifts* catalog is perfect for Thanksgiving, Christmas, birthday and wedding gifts. It's also a great resource for Sunday school teachers, youth group leaders and adult forums, teaching



stewardship and the joy of giving. Your congregation can give good gifts in recognition of your pastor and leaders or sponsor a project altogether with a special offering.

Tell others what you have done. Use *ELCA Good Gifts* tribute cards included in the catalog to announce your gift. Go to [www.elca.org/ecards](http://www.elca.org/ecards) to spread the good news electronically with one of our many e-cards. Or, with your gift of \$10 or more, we'll send you a gift card to share with your loved ones.

Get started today. Grab your holiday shopping list and an *ELCA Good Gifts* catalog. Call 800/638-3522 to order up to five *ELCA Good Gifts* catalogs. For larger orders, call 800/328-4648 and reference ISBN 978-6-0002-1950-5. While you're at it, order an extra for the neighbor down the street. He's not Lutheran, but he might be after he sees what this church is up to.

ELCA  
Seeds for the Parish  
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Chicago, IL 60631

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

## ELCA World Hunger Good Gifts Resources



This Christmas, make a difference in the lives of people less fortunate around the world and close to home with your gift donation to ELCA World Hunger Appeal. What a *good* gift!

A wide variety of greeting cards, postcards, e-cards and more are available to help announce your gift donations to friends and family. Resources with an ISBN (order

number) can be requested through Augsburg Fortress by calling 800/328-4648 or visiting the online store at [www.augsburgfortress.org/elcahunger](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/elcahunger). The free resources are shipped without cost to you and they include:

**World Hunger/ELCA Good Gifts Card**  
The front of this all-occasion card features the animals of God's Global Barnyard and reads, "Your gift isn't easy to wrap." Flip it over to the back to see the ways that your gift combats hunger. These cards are perfect to announce gift donations for God's Global Barnyard (ISBN 978-6-0002-1998-7; 1 pkg = 10 cards and envelopes).

### God's Global Barnyard Bookmark

The free bookmarks would make a special "thank you" for those who contribute to ELCA World Hunger and God's Global Barnyard (ISBN 978-6-0002-1996-3; 1 pkg = 25 bookmarks).

### World Hunger Christmas Postcards

This free sheet of seven postcards includes whimsical and traditional ways of announcing your Christmas gift donation to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal. Send one through the mail, tuck one into a greeting card, or wrap one in a box (ISBN 978-6-0002-1751-8; limit 200 sheets).

### Ethiopian Nativity Christmas Cards

This Christmas, send warm wishes to friends and family with this card that supports the ELCA World Hunger Appeal and shares the Good News of Jesus. (\$4 plus shipping. ISBN 978-6-0002-2000-6; 1 pkg = 10 cards and envelopes)

### "Go and Do Likewise" Gift Card

This free vivid-blue, all-occasion card includes the story of the Good Samaritan and leaves a space to personalize your tribute gift (ISBN 978-6-0001-9705-6; 1 pkg = 10 cards and envelopes).

### Holiday and All-occasion E-cards

For birthdays and baptisms, Thanksgiving and graduations, Valentine's Day and Mother's Day, Christmas and Easter, visit [www.elca.org/ecards](http://www.elca.org/ecards) to view and send e-cards to friends and family to announce your gift in celebration of the holidays or a special occasion. There's a special "thanks for your care of the flock" e-card for pastors and other leaders in the congregation. It's not too late to mail a card or to make an online donation ([www.elca.org/giving](http://www.elca.org/giving))!

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# Worship in the Season of Advent

The First Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of a new year in the church. It is a time when we yearn for the gift that God promises the world through the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. As a worshipping assembly, we lean forward to anticipate the fulfillment of the promise of new life and confidently proclaim the present reality of all things new in Jesus Christ. In our Advent worship the readings, prayers, hymns, sermon and Advent traditions reflect hopeful expectation and present the reality of Christ's tangible presence in a world that longs to be healed and renewed.

## Advent Wreath

In Advent, the first season of the church year, the light becomes brighter on Advent wreaths in our churches and in our homes as we anticipate and acknowledge the presence of the light that no darkness can overcome, Jesus Christ. The wreaths also symbolize expectant anticipation for the fullness of God's presence in Jesus Christ and the faithfulness of God in the gift of eternal life. Consider using all white candles or blue candles that coordinate with the clerical trappings of the season. (The older practice of using a pink candle on the Third Sunday of Advent as a symbol of joy is no longer consistent with the current lectionary.) Provide resources for families to begin the tradition of the Advent wreath in their homes. One possibility is *Come, Lord Jesus: Devotions for the Home: Advent/Christmas/Epiphany* by Susan Briehl (\$6.99, ISBN 978-0-8066-2982-7 from Augsburg Fortress, [www.augsburgfortress.com](http://www.augsburgfortress.com) or 800/328-4648).

## Advent Hymn

The text of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)* Hymn #261, "As the Dark Awaits the Dawn," was written by Susan Palo Cherwien and captures the themes of the Advent season. The hymn's poetry is rich with images of expectancy and yearning. Because the melody by Carl Schalk will be new to your congregation and can be initially challenging with its wide intervals, have a soloist or the choir sing this hymn the week before the congregation sings it so that the tune can become more familiar.

## Proclamation

The biblical readings for the Sundays in Advent give voice to a jarring reality: this violent, tragic, sin-filled world desperately needs the healing, reconciliation and peace of the presence of the Savior who is God-with-us, Jesus Christ. The proclamation of the Word of God in Advent carefully balances the realistic confession of our human brokenness and longing for Christ's healing with the tangible presence of Christ's presence that is already at hand. Exegetical and homiletical reflections on the biblical texts appointed for the Sundays from Advent to Holy Week are available in *New Proclamation: Year A 2007-2008, Advent to Holy Week* (\$25.00, ISBN 978-0-8006-4257-0, Augsburg Fortress, [www.augsburgfortress.com](http://www.augsburgfortress.com) or 800/328-4648). For online resources visit [www.newproclamation.com](http://www.newproclamation.com).

## Sending

"Go in peace. Serve the Lord." Advent is an ideal time to emphasize the places where the expectant hope of Christ's presence intersects with the needs of the local community and world. Try making the announcements that

pertain to the church's participation in God's mission in the world just before the blessing and dismissal to emphasize the connection between worship and mission. As the rubrics in *ELW* liturgies suggest: "Brief announcements may be made, especially those related to the assembly's participation in God's mission in the world."

## Mid-week Prayer

Advent is an appropriate time to introduce a daily prayer liturgy. The weekly observation of Morning, Evening or Night Prayer offers the assembly a time of devotion and contemplation that counteracts the busyness of the season and underscores the Advent themes of hope and expectance of the presence of God in Christ. Appropriate biblical readings for the season can be found in the daily lectionary found on page 1121 of *ELW*. These daily readings were prepared by the Consultation on Common Texts. They are also available in *Revised Common Lectionary Daily Readings* (\$30.00, ISBN 978-0-8066-4930-6, Augsburg Fortress, [www.augsburgfortress.com](http://www.augsburgfortress.com) or 800/328-4648.)

## ELW Occasional Services Provisional Materials Available for Review

In the *ELW* family of resources, the prayers and orders of service that are comparable to those in the current single volume *Occasional Services* book will appear in two volumes. Volume One will contain prayers, readings, and rites for use by rostered leaders and lay persons in a variety of care giving situations. In addition to the content categories found in the *LBW Occasional Services*, the *ELW* care ministry volume contains expanded prayers and resources for life passages.

Provisional versions of the care ministry volume contents are now available at [www.elca.org/worship](http://www.elca.org/worship).

## Chalking the Door at Epiphany

Since the end of the Middle Ages, families and communities have gathered for a blessing on the Day of Epiphany (January 6) with readings, prayers and by inscribing the door lintel with the year and the letters, C, M, and B (20 + C + M + B + 08). The letters represent the names of the magi. (Church tradition since the seventh century names the magi Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar even though the narrative of Matthew does not dictate the number

of magi or their names.) This yearly ritual reminds the inhabitants of a home that their lives reflect the light of Christ. You can find a version of this ritual at [www.worship.ca/docs/l\\_chalk.html](http://www.worship.ca/docs/l_chalk.html).

## Evangelical Lutheran Worship Leader Guides

Three related volumes in the Leader Guide series will help worship leaders make the most of the resources of *ELW*. Available now is *The Sunday Assembly*, written by Lorraine Brugh and Gordon Lathrop, which includes a general introduction to the liturgical materials in *ELW*, and a focus on the role of music in these services (\$35.00, ISBN 978-0-8066-7013-3, Augsburg Fortress, [augsburgfortress.org](http://augsburgfortress.org) or 800/328-4648).

Coming in early 2008 are two more Leader Guides: *The Christian Life: Baptism and Life Passages*, by Dennis Bushkofsky and Craig Satterlee, and *Keeping Time: The Church's Years*, by Gail Ramshaw and Mons Teig.



## Education and Training Opportunities for Worship Leaders

St. Gregory Episcopal Church, San Francisco, **California Winter Conference**, January 19-24, 2008. Please contact [info@allsaintscompany.org](mailto:info@allsaintscompany.org) for more information on the conference.

The annual conference on liturgy at **Mount Olive Lutheran Church** in Minneapolis, January 11-12, 2008, and is entitled "Liturgy and Justice." The keynote speakers include Marva Dawn and William Cavanaugh. For more information, visit [www.mountolivechurch.org/liturgy\\_conference.htm](http://www.mountolivechurch.org/liturgy_conference.htm).

The **Calvin Symposium on Worship**, Grand Rapids, Mich. January 24-26, 2008. Seeks the deepening and integration of all aspects of worship in interdisciplinary and ecumenical conversations in seminars and workshops. For more information, visit [www.calvin.edu/worship/sympos](http://www.calvin.edu/worship/sympos).

The **Institute of Liturgical Studies** at Valparaiso University sixtieth session meets March 31-April 2, 2008, on the theme of "Liturgy in the Public Square." Plenary presenters include Gordon W. Lathrop, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, and William T. Cavanaugh. For more information on the Institute and Preachers' Retreat, visit [www.valpo.edu/ils/](http://www.valpo.edu/ils/).

## 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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# Stewardship Key Leader Program Helps Nebraska Congregation

When the folks at Messiah Lutheran Church, Aurora, Neb., found themselves with too little space and too much debt to plan for expansion, they turned to the ELCA's Key Leader program. The result was a brighter outlook for early debt retirement, which will allow them to start an expansion project in the near future.

A relatively young congregation, Messiah Lutheran was founded 30 years ago in an older building. Seven years ago, the sight of buckets on the floor to catch the drips was a clear indication that a new building was in order. "The roof was in very bad shape, so it was definitely a good time to start a fundraising campaign," said Pastor Sheryl Kester Beyer, who's been with Messiah for five years and recently celebrated 20 years of ordination.

For-profit fundraising firms were used for two campaigns. "These were successful, but expensive," Pastor Sheryl said. "When we talked about a third fundraiser (for early building debt retirement), some were suffering from 'campaign fatigue.' The council asked members to continue their present level of giving, so we've been able to meet our obligations on the mortgage."

A growing congregation in a progressive community, Messiah's sanctuary comfortably holds an average of 160 at Sunday worship. But the congregation needs more space for education. About 25 preschool children attend Sunday school. The elementary grades meet in a resource room. Meanwhile, the high school class gathers in a room once used for storage.

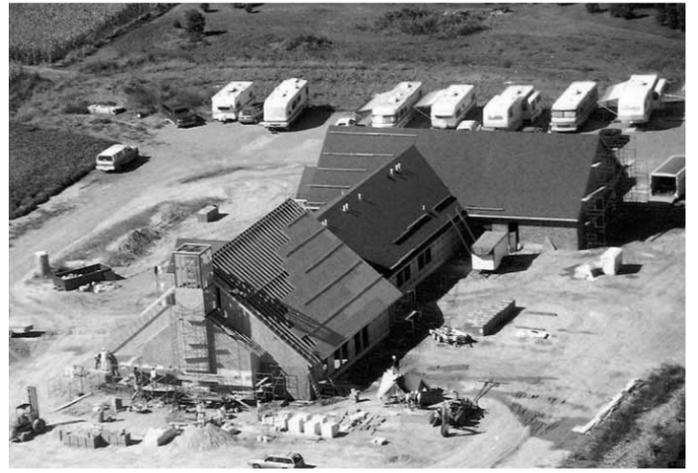
"For our immediate needs, our education committee is looking at a modular system," Pastor Sheryl said. "And our high school kids could meet off site—although we would much prefer to stay on site. The space shortage does hinder our growth, and it does get a bit chaotic sometimes. We're being as creative as possible with our existing education space, but it's not always easy to teach in this environment."

Messiah's relationship with the Stewardship Key Leader program began in the fall of 2006. Phyllis Wiederhoeft, associate in ministry, Verona, Wis., was their key leader. "This program worked out wonderfully," Phyllis said. "They're a great group of people to work with and all are very willing to do what it takes to make the program successful. They had a significant challenge and a goal that never faded them."

A massive blizzard cancelled the first planned commitment Sunday in January, and continued bad weather affected attendance at the rescheduled event in February, but the congregation still reached 85 percent of their goal. "Word got out about the program and it worked out great," Phyllis said. "The turnout was still good and the commitment was phenomenal."

"We didn't quite meet our goal, but we're still within the ballpark," Pastor Sheryl said. "Some don't pledge, but they still contribute. It was a good enough response to believe we'll be able to pay off the building debt within three years instead of seven. That will allow us to start planning for the addition. We'll put a committee together and create a plan with the hope of completing an addition within four to five years."

The components of the Stewardship Key Leader program were very compatible with Messiah's needs. "We liked the spiritual emphasis," Pastor Sheryl said, "particularly the prayer vigil piece and the daily devotions that members of the congregation participated in. It helped people see that it's not just about raising money. It's a faith issue, and the program gets that across in a very helpful way. All the resources and timelines are provided, and assistance is given as needed. Phyllis was



Messiah Lutheran Church, Aurora, Neb., - during construction

always available and a very good fit for us."

"I make myself available for any kind of follow-up assistance or advice," Phyllis said. "Basically, I help them prepare for the next three years."

For congregations considering the Stewardship Key Leader program, Phyllis offers this advice: "Give it enough time and make sure you're ready. If you're between pastors, that's probably not a good time. You really need two to three months of solid preparation and planning beforehand."

"Trust the key leader and the resources of the program," Pastor Sheryl added. "Above all, trust God. Stewardship Key Leader definitely helped us fulfill our goal, so I can't imagine we would go anywhere else for any future campaigns."

For more information about the ELCA's Stewardship Key Leader program, contact Pastor Charles Lane, Director for Stewardship Key Leader Program, P.O. Box 212, Wadena, MN 56482-0212, 800/638-3522, ext. 2606, or (cell) 218-639-3521, or [skl@elca.org](mailto:skl@elca.org).

## Teach us to Pray



Author Julie Sevig

Mealtime—usually the only time of the day when family members can take a breather from their busy routines, talk to each other—and to God—together.

Whether a formal occasion, such as Thanksgiving or Easter, a festival day in the church year or just a peanut-butter-and-jelly type of day, it's a vital and needful thing for Christian families to invite the presence

of God to that meal. festival days. The prayers here are based on the Revised Common Lectionary readings and can be used during the week. What a great way to introduce your kids to the church year and reinforce the readings from Sunday's worship service.

Younger kids will love saying the rhyming prayers for the special foods, "...thank you for this sandwich we eat, For peanut butter and sweet jelly, That find their way into our belly." Older children and adults will like the prayers for specific occasions, some of which have a blank to include a name or the reason the family is gathered, such as the beginning of fall: "God of bounty and goodness, You provide all that is needed for the earth's

harvest.

We thank you for pumpkins and squash, apples and peaches.

As the leaves turn colors and fall to the ground we rejoice in all that you have made, And that you bring new life out of death.

May our gratitude for all your blessings make us generous with all we have.

We are surrounded by change, but we know your love for us does not change. Amen."

*Peanut Butter and Jelly Prayers* is available from Morehouse Publishing, ISBN 978-8192-2275-6, \$18, [www.morehousepublishing.org](http://www.morehousepublishing.org).

of God to that meal.

For Julie Sevig, the author of *Peanut Butter and Jelly Prayers*, prayer is an integral part of family life. Sevig, a mother of three, knows that mealtime is a good time to talk to God as a family. It's at this time that five-year-old Peder can be an example to his two-year-old twin brother and sister (just now learning to fold their little hands) in conversation with God. And from the communal prayer, Mom can pick up on an idea to spark a table talk.

Of course these children pray at other times of the day, like bedtime. But Sevig points out that a book of prayers centered on that time of the day would be less of a "family" experience than at the dinner table.

*Peanut Butter and Jelly Prayers* is a resource to use at mealtime. It has prayers and table talk questions for any type of meal you and your family find yourselves sharing. Section One covers specific foods such as peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, macaroni & cheese, pizza and even Fast Food (with a special petition for those who cook and serve the fast food).

Section Two provides prayers for special occasions, such as when friends visit, birthdays, the changing of the seasons, vacation, moving or even celebrating a good report card. Those times are special and need to be set apart.

Section Three focuses on the church year and



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We help build the Lutheran church. That's what makes us the Mission Investment Fund. We also help build your portfolio. That's what makes us a premier investment fund. The money you invest helps to fund loans to build new congregations and renovate existing ones. And helps you save for goals such as retirement or college education. So you can feel good knowing your money is working hard to build a future for the Lutheran church – and for you. To find out how you can invest, call 877.886.3522 or visit us at [www.missioninvestmentfund.org](http://www.missioninvestmentfund.org).



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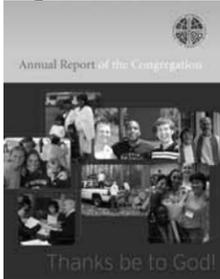
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# Ripe for Picking

## Cover Your Report

Enclose your annual report inside the new ELCA-produced *Annual Report Cover*. Order copies for your congregational annual meeting and extra copies for those unable to attend the meeting and for new members who join later in the year.



This colorful wraparound sheet provides:

- a message from ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson
- devotional materials
- brief explanations of ELCA churchwide ministries funded by your congregation's mission support
- ascored and offset spine for ease in inserting and stapling annual report materials
- space for congregation-specific contact information

Available through Augsburg Fortress (ISBN 978-6-0002-2007-5) at 800/328-4648, \$5.00/pk of 50. Augsburg Fortress accepts standing orders for *Annual Report Covers*.

## The Apostle Peter

Coming Dec. 3, don't miss the last installment of Mosaic Television, "The Life of Apostle Peter" with public television travel host and ELCA member, Rick Steves.

Each ELCA congregation will receive a free copy of "The Life of Apostle Peter" compliments of the Mission Investment Fund. Additional copies are available for \$19.95 each, including shipping, at [www.elca.org/mosaic](http://www.elca.org/mosaic).

Pair Peter with the Mosaic video, "The Life of Apostle Paul" for a great holiday gift!

## For Lay Leaders



Published in late July, *Leadership 101: A Handbook for Lay Leaders* is offered as a guide and source of help for congregations and communities who accept the challenge of continuing ministry. It offers help in planning worship, education, visitation ministry with considerable

information on pastoral care.

The handbook is a collaborative project of the Council of Native American Ministries, the ELCA and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It is available from Augsburg Fortress (ISBN 978-6-0002-1991-8) at a cost of \$7.00.

## An Advent Journey

Are you looking for a resource that will challenge your congregation in its ministry? *Troubling the Waters for Healing of the Church: A Journey from Advent to Pentecost, from Privilege to Partnership* is a resource designed to help white congregational members or groups embark on a journey of learning from one another as well as from people of color. The resource contains 18 sessions starting with the Advent season and ending with Pentecost. It is available from Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648 at a cost of \$35 (ISBN 978-6-0002-2031-0).

## New MIF Video Produced

The Mission Investment Fund (MIF) of the ELCA has produced a new video resource, *Investing in ELCA Ministries*, that tells the stories of three ministries that have renovated their facilities or built a new building with MIF loans.

The video includes interviews with pastors and lay leaders of two congregations and an outdoor ministry that received MIF loans to fund their building projects: Emanuel Lutheran, Dallas, Texas; St. Paul Lutheran, Decatur, Ga.; and Nebraska Outdoor Lutheran Ministries, Ashland, Neb. When other churches relocated to the suburbs in the 1960s, Emanuel Lutheran remained in the community and began to offer services to its neighbors, including a food pantry that outgrew the available space. An MIF loan helped to revitalize St. Paul's aging church building, and the congregation now has plans to build a family life center to better serve its neighbors. With an MIF loan, Nebraska Outdoor Lutheran Ministries built a retreat center for adults that generates income to support youth programs.

The video is for adult forums and other congregational gatherings. It also provides information for members of building and finance committees of congregations considering renovation or expansion projects.

The MIF's primary ministry is to provide loans to new mission congregations for purchases of land and construction of initial church buildings. MIF also makes loans for capital projects to established ELCA congregations and to ELCA-related ministries such as seminaries, outdoor ministries and social ministry organizations. Loans are funded through investments in MIF by congregations and their members, synods and ELCA-related institutions. More than 750 MIF loans, totaling nearly \$420 million, are currently at work assisting ELCA ministries throughout the U.S., in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

The 11-minute video is available free of charge in DVD and VHS formats. To order, or for information about MIF investment opportunities and loans, call 877/886-3522, e-mail [mif@elca.org](mailto:mif@elca.org).

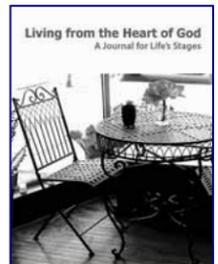
## New Women's Journal Available

*Living from the Heart of God* is a new journal for women of all ages that offers reflections and prayers on their many unique life stages and experiences. From puberty to menopause, getting a driver's license to getting married, parenting to caring for a parent, losing a job to retiring, this journal helps women of faith recognize the common threads they share as they grow and change throughout our lives.

The reflections on each life stage contemplate how God touches or has worked through those experiences. Each entry includes at least one biblical quotation and plenty of blank space to express your own ideas and reflections. Although your particular experience of a life event or stage may differ from that of the writer, through reflecting on your own emotions

and feelings and better understanding them, this book can be an enlightening influence on your life.

In keeping with Women of the ELCA's "Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls" initiative, the journal is oriented toward healing and wholeness in all areas of life. Healthy hearts are created when women work to attain a balance in physical, mental and spiritual health. *Living from the Heart of God* from Women of the ELCA offers the tools to do that. Available from Augsburg Fortress; ISBN 978-6-0002-1959-8, \$10.99.



## NBC Television to Air ELCA Production

NBC Television will air "Uganda: Ready to Forgive" beginning Sunday, December 2. Produced by the ELCA, this is an African story of God's amazing grace.

Northern Uganda is at war. Those most affected are the Acholi people. They endure rape, torture and child abduction. Thousands

have died. Two million are displaced.

But despite these atrocities, the Acholi are ready to forgive. To see their compelling story, check your local television listings for the exact date and time of the broadcast in your area. To order a DVD copy and find out more go to [www.elca.org/readytoforgive](http://www.elca.org/readytoforgive).

## Post-Katrina Long-Term Recovery

It has been two years since Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. Some areas are showing remarkable progress, but other parts are not. In these areas people are still in need of assistance. Here are some ways to further your support and involvement:

### Lutheran Volunteer BLITZ

It is not too late to plan a trip to the New Orleans area this year. There are more than 900 beds, cots and mattresses ready and waiting for volunteers at 11 Lutheran sites in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, some of which provide meals. Come, be part of the BLITZ in November/December 2007! Over 5,500 work orders for families in need are at the Lutheran sites ready for the volunteers.

The ELCA and The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod volunteer host sites are taking the lead in cooperatively planning this BLITZ. The local Lutheran community is committed to continuing efforts in long-term recovery by working with volunteers. For information visit [www.futurewithhope.org](http://www.futurewithhope.org).

### Create Your Own BLITZ

Organize a group of volunteers and create your own BLITZ trip to New Orleans or the Gulf Coast in 2008. For information on creating your own blitz visit [www.futurewithhope.org](http://www.futurewithhope.org) or [www.ldr.org](http://www.ldr.org).

### Self-Guided Prayer Pilgrimage

The New Orleans Area Prayer Pilgrimage is a self-guided prayer pilgrimage for those visiting New Orleans. The pilgrimage offers a driving tour of New Orleans and the surrounding area. Visits to neighborhoods and ELCA churches most dramatically impacted by Hurricane Katrina and the resulting floodwaters are included on the journey.

Participants may stop at various "prayer stations" to reflect and pray. Bidding prayers are available. For more information visit [www.futurewithhope.org](http://www.futurewithhope.org).

## Lutheran Woman Today for Christmas Gifts

**B**old, thoughtful women read *Lutheran Woman Today*. And now is the time to consider giving a Christmas gift subscription to a friend or relative (or even yourself).

Every issue offers articles that inform, challenge, comfort and encourage. The award-winning Bible study brings together women of all ages and ways of life to explore God's Word. Regular columns on prayer, health, the church calendar and useful resources supplement the Bible study and faith-in-action articles.

*Lutheran Woman Today's* nine-month Bible study, *Blessed to Follow: The Beatitudes as a Compass for Discipleship*, began with the September issue. But the magazine also offers on its Web site ([lutheranwomantoday.org](http://lutheranwomantoday.org)) a three-month, free study by Kelly Fryer, author of the best-selling *Reclaiming the "L" Word: Renewing the Church from Its Lutheran Core* and writer for the *No Experience Necessary* Bible study series (both from Augsburg Fortress).

Studying the Bible is an important aspect of the new ELCA five-year initiative, "Book of Faith," which invites all Lutherans to become more fluent in the language of faith, the language of Scripture.

The author of *Lutheran Woman Today's* September 2007–May 2008 Bible study is Martha E. Stortz, professor of historical theology and ethics at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, Calif. She talks about each session of the study in free online video introductions. The video introductions are available at the *Lutheran Woman Today* Web site ([www.lutheranwomantoday.org](http://www.lutheranwomantoday.org)) and the new *Blessed to Follow* blog ([www.lwtmagazine.blogspot.com](http://www.lwtmagazine.blogspot.com)).

To subscribe to the magazine, call 800/328-4648 or visit the Web site or the blog for a link to the online subscription center. Only \$12 per year (10 issues).

## STaR Ministry Gathering Planned

"This was my first 'STaR' gathering and it was a wonderful experience." "The workshops were most informative; the worship inspirational." "Speakers very hope-full ... good workshops—thought provoking."

**T**hese are a few comments from people who attended this past summer's "Celebrating Rural Life Event"—an annual gathering hosted by the ELCA Rural Ministry Office.

Plans are now under way for the fifth national gathering featuring worship, education and networking. The dates are July 16-19, 2008; the place: Midland Lutheran College in Fremont, Neb.

The annual gathering is the result of a new form of ministry devised by the Rural Ministry Desk—the ELCA Small Town and Rural (STaR) Ministry Alliance. Approximately 50 percent of the ELCA's congregations are in small town and rural settings. To better serve this large and diverse constituency an alliance model was implemented and "affinity groups" were born.

Through these groups, the ELCA STaR



Ministry Alliance shares information and resources about rural ministry. Affinity groups form around particular areas of interest. In this way, the STaR Ministry Alliance brings the gifts and resources of a wide variety of partners to bear on rural and small town life, as well as the rural and small town ministry of the ELCA. Criteria for forming an affinity group are available on the Web at [www.elca.org/rural/star/criteria.html](http://www.elca.org/rural/star/criteria.html).

The energy and synergy generated by the affinity groups resulted in a request for more personal interaction and opportunities for learning and sharing. This is one of the central reasons for the annual gathering—affinity group members who meet exclusively

by telephone can meet face to face. This format includes original, contextual worship, workshops on relevant topics and stirring presentations by keynoters.

For more information on becoming a STaR Ministry member or attending the July meeting, contact the ELCA Rural Ministry Desk at 800/638-3522, ext. 6556.

## AIDS Advent Calendar Keeping the Promise

**A**dvent is a season of hope and anticipation. But since AIDS was identified in the early 1980s, the expectation of Advent has contrasted sharply with the suffering of people living with or affected by HIV (the deaths of more 25 million people are attributed to AIDS related illnesses).

World AIDS Day is December 1. On this day congregations are encouraged to reflect on the human and societal costs of the disease, to commit to prevention education and to support people affected by AIDS. A new AIDS Advent Calendar called "Keep the Promise" will help

congregations do this. The multi-color calendar offers devotions each day between December 1 and January 6 (Epiphany). It has striking photographs, short reflections and a prayer by Christians from around the world. Produced by the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance with support from the ELCA World Hunger and Disaster Appeal, the calendar is available free of charge in quantities up to 20 per congregation. Request a single free copy by calling the ELCA Resource Information Service at 800/638-3522. For two to 20 copies, call Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648 (ISBN 978-6-0002-2016-7).

## Exploring and Addressing Poverty

**A** highly anticipated resource on poverty and wealth, *Lazarus at the Gate*, produced by the ELCA Church in Society unit, is available for congregations interested in issues regarding poverty in their communities. Written by the Rev. Michael Russell, Charlotte Williams and the Rev. David Billings, *Lazarus at the Gate* explores poverty in relation to class, race and

gender using Christian doctrine, empirical research and personal testimony. Copies may be ordered for \$12 through Augsburg Fortress (ISBN 978-6-0002-1949-9; 800/328-4648). For more information, contact Loretta Horton, director for Poverty Ministries Networking, at 800/638-3522, ext. 2404 or [Loretta.Horton@elca.org](mailto:Loretta.Horton@elca.org).

## How Will You Wait?

**D**uring four Advent Sundays in December, *Grace Matters*, the radio ministry of the ELCA, will focus on different kinds of waiting. Hear more from host Peter W. Marty about waiting with a goal in mind, expectancy and the politics of waiting. *Grace Matters'* 30-minute programs are the perfect devotion. Visit [www.gracematters.org](http://www.gracematters.org) to find a radio broadcast in your area, listen online or download a podcast. Call 800/638-3522, ext. 2967 to order a CD or transcript.



## New Online Course

**T**he new ELCA social statement, *Our Calling in Education*, will be studied in an online course offered by the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (LTSP).

Explore what public education means to people of faith and closely examine a pattern for faith formation to guide parish ministries of education, fellowship and service. This non-credit course is for growth and enrichment. A certificate is awarded to participants at the conclusion of each course.

Registration for the February and March 2008 online course is available during December 2007 and January 2008.

Resources for the course include *Our Calling in Education* and *The Church as Learning Community: A Comprehensive Guide to Christian Education*, by Norma Cook Everist (Abingdon, 2002).

The course tuition is \$130. Registrants may sign up beginning December 1 at [www.Ltsp.edu](http://www.Ltsp.edu). For information, contact Mark A. Staples, director of the seminary's Faith and Life Institute at 215/248-7352 or [Mstaples@Ltsp.edu](mailto:Mstaples@Ltsp.edu).

## Select Resources

Select Multimedia Resources offers online courses for continuing education, Associate in Ministry candidacy and a variety of certification processes. Courses offered this winter, beginning in February 2008 will be:

- Interpreting the Old Testament
- Lutheran Heritage
- Spirituality: Invitation to a Closer Relationship with God
- Sent to Preach/Evangelization and Lutheran Worship
- Systematic Theology: Fundamentals in Christian Theology

For more information about Select Multimedia Resources go to [www.elca.org/select](http://www.elca.org/select). For more details on the online courses go to [www.selectlearning.org](http://www.selectlearning.org).

## Bold Women's Day

**H**ave you been transformed by your faith in such a way that you feel called to speak and act boldly? If so, you—individually and collectively in your congregation—are invited to celebrate Bold Women's



Day on Feb. 24, 2008. Bold Women's Day was created to celebrate all Lutheran women everywhere, and showcase the many and diverse ways in which we act boldly on our faith in Jesus Christ. An array of ideas and promotional materials pertaining to Bold Women's Day 2008 are available now on the Women of the ELCA Web site. Please visit: [www.womenoftheelca.org](http://www.womenoftheelca.org).

# What's New on the World Wide Web

## 2008 Global Mission Events Web site

Early details on four 2008 ELCA Global Mission and Global Formation Events can be found at [www.elca.org/gme](http://www.elca.org/gme). Also learn here how the Global Formation Events can equip you for global ministry during the spring.

Three winter Global Formation Events will be held in synods surrounding La Crosse, Wis., site of the 2008 Summer Global Mission Event (GME). These smaller, two-day events will explore how changes in the world are transforming the way mostly northern churches like the ELCA proclaim and serve, as leaders in fast-growing southern hemisphere churches take responsibility for their local and global mission. The events will also energize and connect congregational teams with the worldwide Lutheran family.

## Regional Global Formation Events

**February 29-March 1, 2008**

Trinity Lutheran Church, Stevens Point, Wis.

**April 4-5, 2008**

McFarland Lutheran Church, McFarland, Wis.

**April 18-19, 2008**

St. John's Lutheran Church, Des Moines, Iowa

2008 Summer Global Mission Event

**July 17-20, 2008**

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

La Crosse, Wis.

## Download Global Mission bulletin

Are you looking for an easy way to lift up global mission in your congregation? A colorful new two-sided bulletin insert offers some basic facts about the ELCA's global mission work as it tells a story about Bobbi



Cyr, a young missionary in Japan. Download the insert from: [www.elca.org/globalmission/resource/print.html](http://www.elca.org/globalmission/resource/print.html).

## Web 2.0 - Using Flickr

There are many photo-sharing Web sites in the Web 2.0 world. Although a host of such sites have come and gone in Cyberspace over the past three years, *Flickr.com* has been around since Feb. 2004 and is still going strong. It's a great tool for photograph sharing, storing and organizing for quick and easy retrieval (even your most byte-hogging graphics). Relatively simple to use, this free service is available for your congregation, organization or personal use.

Some ELCA congregations have set up their own Flickr logins and have posted photos from their congregational events, worship

services and meetings. Other congregations have set up Flickr groups where individuals can log in to their own accounts and share photos as a community. For examples of how congregations are using this service go to *Flickr.com* and search tags such as "ELCA," "Lutheran," "churches" and "congregations."

A caveat—remember to use care when posting graphics and giving away publishing rights to your photographs. Recently, a 15-year-old girl had her picture snapped at a church-sponsored car wash. The picture, posted to Flickr by the youth director, ended up on billboards and in print advertising in Australia

for Virgin Mobile. The director used a license from Creative Commons, which allows the pictures to be used by anyone in any way—including commercial purposes. This happened even though the girl did not grant permission to use her likeness in an ad. She is now suing Virgin Mobile.

Use common sense when taking and posting pictures. Ask permission and make it known that you take and post photos from congregational-sponsored events. Develop permission slips requesting parental approval for taking children's photos.



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** Our congregation has recently experienced a great deal of loss. We would like to hold special rites or services for healing. What would you recommend?

**A** *Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)* provides a rich resource for healing rites within a Service of the Word or a celebration of the Holy Communion (pages 660ff. in the Leaders Desk Edition and pages 276ff. in the pew edition). Care should be taken to read and understand the Notes on the Services (Leaders Desk Edition, pages 42-43) as well as the introductory paragraphs in both the Leaders Desk Edition and the pew edition. As usual, the lectionary for the day provides the basis for such a service.

When the local assembly desires a service of healing in response to difficult times within the community, the rites in *ELW* are easily adaptable. Worship planners need to work with the Leaders Desk Edition, where the full texts of the rites and the options are provided. When the focus is not on the specific needs of individuals, but rather on the felt needs of a local assembly, the second set of intercessions (II, pages 662 and 663) may be more appropriate and helpful. The simple statement regarding the anointing ("Receive this oil..." on page 664) is likewise open and expansive; and the remaining prayers and actions on page 664 can be used.

Hymns from *ELW* specifically related to healing (numbers 610-617 and the wide selection noted in the index on page 1182 of the pew edition) are indicated. Likewise the selection of hymns of lament (numbers 697-704), grief and sorrow (listed on page 1182) and trust and guidance (listed on page 1188) could all be useful.

—The Rev. Robert A. Rimbo, pastor  
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
New York, N.Y.

**A** Take a look at *For Everything a Season: 75 Blessings for Daily Life*, the book of blessings by the Nilsen family ([www.zionpublishing.org](http://www.zionpublishing.org); 800/996-2777). There are several blessings there that could be adapted. Also, for losses of all kinds and for the gifts of healing, the work of Dennis, Sheila, and Matthew Linn is really exceptional. Their books are beautifully crafted and illustrated and cover a wide swath of loss and pain. Among the titles ([www.paulistpress.com](http://www.paulistpress.com); 800/218-1903) are: *Sleeping with Bread: Holding What Gives You Life*; *Good Goats: Healing Our Image of God*; *Understanding Difficult Scriptures in a Healing Way*; *Healing the Purpose of Your Life*; *Remembering Our Home: Healing Hurts and Receiving Gifts*; *Don't Forgive Too Soon: Extending the Two Hands that Heal* and *Simple Ways to Pray for Healing*. All convey the grace, healing and generosity of a loving God who walks with us in every loss.

A wonderful book first recommended here by our Reformed Church in America colleague, Jane Schuyler: *Healing Liturgies for the Seasons of Life* by Abigail Evans (Westminster John Knox Press). It's a must-have!

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

**A** I recommend Pastor Susan Langhauser's book, *Blessings and Rituals for the Journey of Life* ([www.abingdonpress.com](http://www.abingdonpress.com); 800/251-3320). She shares specific rituals for children, adults, daily living and pastoral care situations. In addition, guidelines are provided for helping worship leaders create unique blessings or rituals that are meaningful for their individual congregations. Susan serves Advent Lutheran Church in Olathe, Kan., with her husband, Pastor Roger Gustafson.

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

**A** There are "Litany after Suicide," "A Liturgy for Divorce," "A Rite for Pregnancy Loss or Stillbirth," "A Meditation on Untimely Death" and several other prayers and litanies for healing in *Women's Uncommon Prayers*. This gem of a book is published by Morehouse ([www.morehousepublishing.org](http://www.morehousepublishing.org); 800/877-0012).

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

**A** I find the book, *All Will Be Well: A Gathering of Healing Prayers*, to be a wonderful resource. Some of these prayers and readings could be incorporated into this kind of special service. It is published by Augsburg Fortress and edited by Lyn Klug.

—Carol Hughes, director  
Chambersburg Resource Center  
Lower Susquehanna Synod  
Harrisburg, Pa.

**A** Check out *Transforming Rituals: Daily Practices for Changing Lives* by Roy Oswald and Jean Morris Trumbauer ([www.alban.org](http://www.alban.org); 800/486-1318). It has several different things that could be adapted.

—Dolores Wright, director  
Sierra Pacific Synod Resource Center,  
Fresno, Calif.

**A** Samples of "Blue Christmas" or "Longest Night" worship services are available through many of our resource centers or online ([www.synodresourcecenter.org](http://www.synodresourcecenter.org)). These services are excellent ways for congregations to help individuals and families cope with their feelings of loss during the Christmas season.

—Karen Kaufman, director  
NE Ohio Synod Resource Center  
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

# On the Trail of Katharina von Bora at the ELCA Wittenberg Center



Earlier this year, 82 people visited Germany to learn about Luther's life and the Reformation that he began. This "Bold Women of the Reformation" tour was part of the celebration of the 20th anniversary of Women of the ELCA.

The pilgrims on this trip were from all over the United States and ranged in age from about 40 to more than 80. These included three mother-daughter pairs, a pair of mothers-in-law, several married couples and a group of six from the same congregation. Several pastors and one seminary professor were also among the travelers.

Women of the ELCA coordinated with the ELCA Wittenberg Center to facilitate this experience. The ELCA Wittenberg Center has many opportunities available for study and experiencing Luther's Germany. Learn more at [www.elca.org/wittenberg](http://www.elca.org/wittenberg)

## Katharina von Bora: What Do We Really Know about Her?

The ELCA Wittenberg Center arranged several learning opportunities with experts in Reformation history as part of the itinerary. One of the most fascinating was a lecture by Dr. Martin Treu on the life of Katharina von Bora.

His presentation focused on the question of just how much we can know with certainty about the wife of Martin Luther, given that in the 16th century women were seen but not heard. There are no written sources *from* women, only *about* them, and what was written down about Luther's wife gives us only the barest of facts.

From the outline of her life we can "paint in" a picture, he said, but pictures by artists typically reflect contemporary time and culture. In the 19th century, portraits of Katharina von Bora suggested that she was a good wife.

We do know that Frau von Bora came from a family of minor nobility. She was married to Luther from 1525 to 1546, and these are the years of events best documented.

Scholars are not sure whether she could write, given that nothing she might have written has survived. (An inscription attributed to her in a Bible has been shown to be written by Luther.) Because she had been a nun, she was able to read. In fact, Luther asked Katharina to read his translation of the Bible. She wasn't particularly interested, so Luther offered her 50 guilders to read it in the winter when there would be little to do in the fields. (Luther's annual salary as a professor would have been 250 guilders).

Typical of minor nobility—proud yet poor—it was easier for von Bora's father to send his daughter off to the convent than to provide a suitable dowry. This practice yielded two advantages for women given to the Church: they received an education and they lived healthier, longer lives. Katharina von Bora entered the convent as a student at age 6.

We don't know how Katharina von Bora became acquainted with Luther but we do know that at Easter 1523, 12 nuns left the convent in Nimbschen. Three went back to their families; nine could not, including von Bora (entering the convent was considered a permanent decision and one that effectively removed a woman from her family, so it is not surprising that none of the von Boras attended Katharina and Luther's wedding two years later).

In the 16th century, marriage was a business arrangement between families and couples (love was not a factor in the decision although it was hoped that it would come later). With no one to support them and virtually no opportunities available to them, once the Reformation took hold, most of the nuns who left the convent were soon married. In 1525, most Protestant pastors had married, and Luther followed suit the same year.

By 1527, Katharina had established a household in a former monastery. With that much space, she successfully ran a student hostel. Besides hosting 20 students, she farmed, raised cows and pigs and brewed her own beer. From all of this she earned almost as much as Luther earned as a professor.

In 1542, Luther recognized his wife's success and independence in his will in by appointing her sole heir and guardian of their children. This was not only unthinkable at the time but was, in fact, illegal. She needed to have a guardian appointed to her, and initially she selected a faraway relative. The authorities were not amused so she selected Philip Melancthon, who agreed but essentially left her to do as she pleased.

After Luther's death in 1546, Katharina von Bora fell back into the anonymity typical of women of that time. There are no written sources documenting her death—only a brief obituary by Melancthon that notes her "special life."

To read the blog and view photos go to: [www.20thanniversarytour.blogspot.com](http://www.20thanniversarytour.blogspot.com).

Deb Bogaert  
Director for Communications  
Women of the ELCA

## Men in Mission Celebrates New Status

The goal of Lutheran Men in Mission (LMM), the men's ministry of the ELCA, is for every man to have a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

Effective men's ministry is more than just having a group—it's about reaching men on the fringes and outside of the church.

To assist congregations, LMM now focuses on Bible ministry.

### Bible

The Bible is at the core of LMM's ministry. In 2002 LMM partnered with Serendipity House Publishers and produced the *Master Builders Bible for Men*. This Bible contains a 32-page section on developing an effective congregational men's ministry. The 20,000 study questions for small groups are posed in 60 different short courses. More recently LMM partnered with the International Bible Society in producing *El Nuevo Testamento* for congregations doing short-term missions in Spanish-speaking areas. LMM is also involved in the ELCA "Book of Faith" initiative.

### Young Men

LMM-sponsored research with young men conducted in 2003 has resulted in a book and a series of conferences for congregational leadership. *Coming of Age* (Augsburg Fortress, 2005), by David Anderson, Paul Hill and Roland Martinson, details the findings based on the impact of 11 factors on the spiritual journeys of young men age 18-34 interviewed in six regions of the U.S. The health and vitality of congregations was found to depend, in part, on keeping young men engaged in faith development and in connecting faith to life issues.

LMM showcases its teachings through its Young Men's Ministry Council. The council originated with 15 of the young men who had been interviewed by researchers. These leaders are a primary group working with the Coming of Age movement and a special "Road Trip" geared specifically to young men.



LMM Young Men's Ministry Council leaders Jim Greene and Sean Forde

### Events

The purpose of every LMM event is to connect men with Jesus Christ and assist leaders in developing effective ministry with men. LMM events take different shapes and forms, from retreats to leadership training to the triennial Lutheran Men's Gathering.

Men from throughout North America will gather for the Coming of Age 2008 Lutheran Men's Gathering that will take place in Omaha, Neb., Aug. 1-3, 2008. Featured speakers will include the authors of *Coming of Age*. Music and worship will be led by Dakota Road, a favorite at many youth and men's gatherings. Special music will be provided by Peter Mayer, a gifted musician who plays lead guitar for Jimmy Buffett and has become a popular part of the LMM team.

The 2008 event will be a historic one for LMM as the movement celebrates 20 years of men's ministry and takes a great step forward. Until recently, LMM has been partially supported by the ELCA. At the 2008 Lutheran Men's Gathering, LMM will celebrate becoming a separately incorporated ministry, with a close relationship to the ELCA, by capping off the \$1.5 million Building for the Future endowment fund campaign.

## Pray for David & Alicia Brondos

To most people, theological education doesn't sound very exciting. But to ELCA missionary the Rev. David Brondos, it's one of the church's most important activities.

He is professor at the Theological Community of Mexico, an ecumenical consortium of Lutheran, Anglican and Baptist seminaries in Mexico City. The Community serves Christians from more than 20 different church bodies.

"A church is only as strong as its pastors and leaders," says Brondos. "By helping to prepare new leaders for ministry in the churches in Mexico, we can have an enormous impact. It's a ministry that multiplies itself, in that every student we work with is enabled to carry out ministry to many other people."

Pastor Brondos has lived most of his life in Mexico since graduating from college, where he met his wife Alicia, originally from Mexico City. The Brondos family is active in Iglesia Luterana Buen Pastor—the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd—a bilingual congregation whose new pastor, the Rev. Enoc Ravizé, was Pastor Brondos' student.

Buen Pastor also provides ELCA seminary students an international internship, and Rev. Brondos serves as the site supervisor.

For Rev. Brondos, guiding students is all in a day's work. "Watching ministerial students grow is a source of tremendous satisfaction," he says.

On November 10, please pray for Alicia and David Brondos in *Prayer Ventures*, the guide to daily prayer for the ELCA's global and outreach ministries. *Prayer Ventures* may be downloaded from [www.elca.org/prayerventures](http://www.elca.org/prayerventures). A print version may be requested by calling 800/638-3522.

# In the Mix: The Church and the Sandwich Generation

*Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Psalm 90:1*

## What is the Sandwich Generation?

Today, more and more baby boomers are not only caring for their own children but for their elderly parents at the same time. Such a “book-end” scenario is so common that it has its own name—the *Sandwich Generation*. The term, coined in the 1980s, holds even more meaning in 2007 as people are living longer, young adults are delaying marriage or waiting longer to have children, and for the first time the senior generation has far fewer children to rely upon. Parents with children or youth in the house usually have frantic schedules involving sports and other enrichment opportunities.

According to the nonprofit Pew Research Center, two out of every eight American baby boomers (45-65 years of age) are raising a child while providing assistance to a parent. Other research suggests between half and two-thirds of adult women will care for elderly parents or in-laws at some time in their life.

## What does it look like?

Yet, in reality, this dual-demand image is too simplistic. While caring for children and parents simultaneously, many people in middle adulthood find themselves dealing with additional complexities such as:

- a spouse with failing health
- other obligations such as full-time careers of their own
- having to quit their jobs to be a full-time caregivers
- grown children who move back home with emotional or financial needs
- raising grandchildren or providing regular

- child care
- being an only child with full financial and care responsibilities for aging parents
- providing college tuition and nursing home costs at the same time

Family dynamics involving the constellation of the caregiver, parents, spouse, children, siblings and other family members run the emotional gamut as each part comes with a unique perspective and set of emotional needs.

On the positive side, the beauty of a family that spans several decades is a gift of love, as generations learn from one another and share a part of the same story. Cross-generational interaction enriches the lives of all those involved with joy and satisfaction. As families communicate and involve everyone in decision-making or share in household responsibilities, like mutual trust and encouragement, a sense of belonging is bolstered.

However, caregiving is rarely a temporary situation. Due to longer lifespans and medical advances, caregiving often goes on for several years. Emotional, financial and relational balance is stretched to the limit. Many in the Sandwich Generation face uncharted territory for which they are not prepared, as they seek to maneuver the best course for their particular situation. Stress, fatigue, burnout and demands mount up and conflicts often arise. Aging parents and caregivers alike may not handle this radical role-reversal with kindness and sensitivity. A spouse or child may feel neglected or resentful. Family disagreements or even



Stock Photo

estrangement with uncooperative siblings are not uncommon.

A profound sense of loss, guilt, shame, anxiety and even fear, are typical reactions, especially for those caregiving over long distances. It can be frustrating and discouraging to absorb information or make decisions with doctors, professional caregivers, financial experts and even siblings, without the benefit of face-to-face communication. Finding the time and money to make regular trips to care for aging parents often requires juggling complicated schedules, difficult choices and sacrifices, especially when relationships and activities back at home are tugging at the caregiver.

It's not unusual for those of the Sandwich Generation to speak of the “crisis moment.” They will tell how life is hectic, yet somehow manageable, given the complexities named above. Then something happens. Mom falls and breaks her hip or a serious motorcycle accident puts a teenage son in intensive care. A new kind of reckoning faces each family member. Physical, emotional and financial demands take on a new reality.

A common lament is, “I feel so isolated. I don't think anybody understands what we are going through.”

## How congregations can help

Include members of the Sandwich Generation by name in the prayers during worship. Add their names to the prayer team's list.

Offer learning opportunities for those approaching middle adulthood, helping them prepare for what may lie ahead. Ask those with personal experience, such as a financial advisor, professional caregiver or a youth, for advice or to comprise an advisory panel.

Form a “care team” specifically trained and mobilized to respond to the needs of Sandwich Generation families. Provide the occasional meal; offer to take the elderly parent out for lunch or to the zoo or community activity; mow their lawns; invite the children to activities with your family; or offer a few hours of time to provide companionship and attentive presence while caregivers take a much needed break.

Be sensitive to the needs of church staff, especially your pastor, who may be facing the challenges of the Sandwich Generation while also caring for the congregation.

Where possible arrange for someone from the local ELCA congregation to visit or call the elderly adult who is living in another city or state.

Encourage cross generational activities at church.

## Suggested Resources

*Caring for the Caregiver: A Guide for Congregational Support of Family Caregivers*, Lutheran Deaconess Association, [www.valpo.edu/lda/resources.html#caring](http://www.valpo.edu/lda/resources.html#caring).

Mosaic, Spring 2000; *The Sandwich Generation: In-between Caregivers*, [www.elca.org/mosaic](http://www.elca.org/mosaic).

*Caring for Yourself While Caring for Your Aging Parents: How to Help, How to Survive*, Claire Berman, Henry Holt and Co., ISBN 0-8050-7975-0.

*Diane Monroe*  
Director for Christian Education  
Evangelical Outreach and  
Congregational Mission

Analyzing increasing inflation rates and the impact on asset management to address one main concern:

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