



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Stewardship Award winner is a good scout

When Joy Johnson began dating her husband Michael, she knew he was a good scout. A typical date was Family Fun Night at the Boy Scout camp, complete with scouting skits and Order of the Arrow tap outs. After 35 years

of marriage her husband, the Rev. Michael C. Johnson, is still a good scout AND a good steward.

Earlier this year Pastor Johnson won the Scout's Silver Beaver Award for distinguished

service to youth. More recently he was awarded the Dr. Richard L. Peterman Good Steward Award, given annually to a pastor who demonstrates leadership in stewardship ministry.

Pastor Johnson is a graduate of Miami University in Ohio, where he majored in Pulp and Paper Science. After graduation, he was employed by Procter and Gamble (P&G) in manufacturing management. He considers his six years at P&G as an integral part of his



Paster Mike Johnson, winner of the 2008 good steward award

he has served as pastor of St. John Lutheran Church since June 2005.

Married nearly 35 years, the Johnsons have three children—Thaddeus, a naval aviator; Craig, a carpenter; and Larissa, who works in the real estate industry.

Pastor Johnson has served in various capacities as a Boy Scout Leader, on the board of Interfaith Hospitality Network of Springfield, as a national instructor of the LOGOS Ministry (a ministry of congregations among children and youth), as a member of the United Way Speakers Bureau and, currently, on a nominating committee for the Riverton Police Foundation.

A good scout and a good steward. Well done, good and faithful servant.

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The Dr. Richard L. Peterman Good Steward Award is given annually to a pastor who demonstrates leadership in stewardship ministry.

education for pastoral ministry. This is particularly true in the area of stewardship where his experience in budgeting, forecasting and long-range planning have been valuable assets in congregational life.

A graduate of Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Pastor Johnson was ordained in 1987, serving congregations in Cuyahoga Falls and Springfield, Ohio and Riverton, Wyoming, where

seeds for the parish

May-June 2008

Resource Paper for Leaders of ELCA Congregations

www.elca.org



Vincenzo Aguilera and Lucia Sanchez read Spanish-English Catechism at the bilingual resource center.

Everything old has been made new again

In recent years the West Side of Joliet, Ill. has undergone many changes. The old Sears and Roebuck store is now a government office building, the Rialto movie palace and vaudeville theatre is now the Rialto Square Theatre complex and Silver Cross hospital, a 33-bed facility when it opened its doors in 1895, is now a major trauma center. Change has also impacted the spiritual life of Joliet as six neighborhood churches have closed their doors permanently.

Beginning in the 1840s and well into the 20th century, significant numbers of German immigrants came to the city of Joliet, Ill. bringing their Lutheran heritage with them. Every neighborhood in the fast-growing community had at least one Lutheran congregation and the catechism their children studied was written in both English and German. In the 21st century, reflecting a new wave of immigration,

children and adults at Santa Cruz Lutheran Church study *El Catecismo Menor de Lutero/Luther's Small Catechism* in Spanish and English (available from Augsburg Fortress at www.augsburgfortress.org).

The Rev. Keith L. Forni is at the crossroad where languages and cultures meet. He is the director of Iglesia Luterana Bilingual Resource Center. The center is housed in the same building as the two congregations Pastor Forni serves—he is called pastor of the Spanish-speaking Santa Cruz Lutheran Church and the interim pastor at First Lutheran Church. The pastor explains, “We are under one roof and under one cross.”

When membership numbers began to drop, the First Lutheran congregation didn't close their church doors, they opened them wider. In 2006 they invited their Spanish-speaking neighbors to share their facility and gave the

bilingual resource center a new home.

Now the resource center is opening its doors to all Lutheran congregations and has a three-fold purpose, to be:

1. A repository for a large collection of Spanish language resources available for reference or loan
2. A place for consultation and networking, where pastors as well as members from other congregations can come to experience a multicultural urban ministry
3. A partnership that gathers congregational leaders in an association

Whenever you are in Northern Illinois you are invited to worship with the congregations of Santa Cruz and First Lutheran Churches. You can also pay a visit to the bilingual resource center. Contact Pastor Forni at 815/722-4800 or kforni@aol.com for more information.



Connecting with the love, care and compassion of God with the laying on of hands. **Page 2**



Pilot program striving to build new models of in-home service for the aging population. **Page 3**



Bob Kasworm led a comfortable life in Omaha until he took a companion synod trip to Tanzania. **Page 4**



E-I-E-I-O youth at Faith Lutheran Church, Hamilton MT, watched their barnyard grow. **Page 7**

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Laying on of hands: a sign of healing, absolving and blessing

In worship, laying hands on the head of a worshiper is a gesture that has come to be connected with the ministries of healing, absolving and blessing. Human beings instinctively lay a gentle hand on one another to convey love, care and compassion. This gesture of touch is evident in Gospel healing stories. We read of Jesus reaching out his hand, gently touching those in need as he healed them. Jesus blessed the children by the laying on of hands (Matthew 19:15). Within the worship service, the physical gesture of the laying on of hands can be a powerful moment of connection with the love, care and compassion of God.

The laying on of hands is a significant physi-

cal gesture of blessing that recalls the promises of Baptism. In the baptismal rite, the prayer for the gifts of the Holy Spirit is accompanied by the pastor laying both hands on the head of the newly baptized and is an acknowledgment and expression of the bestowing of the

“And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.”

Matthew 19:15 (NRSV)

Holy Spirit through Baptism in water with the word of God. This action is recalled in the rites of Affirmation of Baptism and Ordination. Worshipers who receive the laying on of hands

during absolution in the order of confession or during prayers for healing are also tangibly reminded of these baptismal promises.

The laying on of hands is not restricted to the worshiping assembly. In pastoral care situations, the laying on of a hand with prayer may be part of a visit to someone who is sick, or it may be included when the Sacrament of Holy Communion is brought from the assembly to one who is ailing. An order of healing can be found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* on page 276 or in the Healing and Health section of the provisional *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Pastoral Care*. Resources are available at www.elca.org/worship/

The laying on of hands is a powerful gesture of blessing that may be appropriate in a variety of circumstances. Groups or individuals may be blessed by touch when sent out into the world in mission work. A community of faith may surround a person in need of support with prayer and a touch to the head or shoulder. In this action, God's love and the prayers are embodied by the community of faith.

Worship leaders must use care in any ministry that involves touch, including the laying on of hands. Be mindful of personal boundaries and an individual's comfort level. Make sure that the physical gesture is appropriate, has a clear intent and is welcomed.



Bishop April Ullring Larson, LaCrosse Area Synod blesses a participant at a worship service during the 2003 Churchwide Assembly, where people were offered opportunities to meditate in many ways. Individual forgiveness and the laying on of hands was one option.

We're Listening

Over 40,000 people attended the introduction of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* in their synods. From the resulting feedback, new worship formation events on topics such as leading the assembly's song, scripture in worship, exploring the flexibility of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and delving deeper into its contents will be available to synods, conferences, clusters and congregations. These events will help guide the ongoing conversation about worship in the ELCA. Watch the worship Web site (www.elca.org/worship/) and sign up for the electronic *WorshipNews* newsletter for more information.

WorshipNews is a monthly e-newsletter from

the Worship and Liturgical Resources staff of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. *WorshipNews* is a way to share important and timely information on what's happening in worship around the ELCA, including new resources, conferences, helpful topics, and more.

The Worship staff urges you to let them know what information would be most interesting and helpful to you, especially information that would be of benefit for the whole church. Write them at worship@elca.org with your ideas and comments.



seeds for the parish

www.elca.org/seeds

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The tools you need to raise your voice for human needs

In February members of congregations throughout Iowa had an opportunity to journey into poverty and experience the struggles poor children and families face every day. "In Their Shoes," a seminar sponsored by Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI), simulated the challenge of providing for basic necessities on a limited budget. Playing the role of struggling families, participants interacted with LSI staff members who acted as social workers, pawnbrokers, bill collectors, employers and police officers.

Activities like "In Their Shoes" give congregation members a first-person experience of why public policy advocacy is important. Is your congregation council, social concerns committee or social justice committee interested in advocacy? Are your congregation members not sure where to start, how to be effective or what the dos and don'ts of public policy advocacy are? *The Public Policy Advocacy Toolkit* from Lutheran Services in America (LSA) provides definitions, theological roots of advocacy and tips on relationship building and working with the media. The tool kit includes a current Congressional Directory and a publication titled *Lutheran Voices in Health and Social Services Public Policy Advocacy*.

The tools and resources, which can be duplicated, include 10 reasons why one should participate in advocacy, the ABCs of meeting with lawmakers, an "idea-a-month" for public policy advocacy, tips on telling your story, a sample public policy advocacy presentation and other resources.

The Congressional Directory, printed in conjunction with the ELCA Washington Office, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, Lutheran World Relief and Lutheran Services in America, provides contact information for elected officials in Washington, D.C., key Web sites, state legislature information, tips on communicating with Congress, a description of how a bill becomes a law, a legislative glossary and a map of Capitol Hill.

The tool kit is available for \$40 plus shipping and handling. To order a copy please contact Evia Cozart at ecoart@lutheranservices.org or call 800/664-3848.



In-home care for the body, mind and spirit is the aim of the "Aging in Community Initiative"

Congregations, social ministry organizations partner to make life better for seniors and care givers

More than 100 congregations are partnering with 14 Lutheran social ministry organizations, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation and Lutheran Services in America (LSA) in an innovative one-year pilot project to address aging issues. Called the "Aging in Community Initiative," the project is fostering collaboration among social ministry organizations to build new hybrid models of in-home services for aging individuals and support services for family caregivers. The overarching goals of this project are to help people to age well at home, to avoid unwanted out-of-home placements for as long as possible, and to reduce the burden for family and friends in care-giving roles. While the aging boomer population is stimulating a burgeoning of new services across the

country, many are unaffordable to those who need them most. One of the unique features of the Aging in Community Initiative is its focus on partnership between social ministry organizations and congregations to develop benevolent care ministries that are accessible and affordable.

The 14 Lutheran social ministry organizations participating in the initiative span the country from coast to coast. Liberty Lutheran Services in Ambler, Pa., is collaborating with Lincoln Lutheran of Racine, Wis., and Lyngblomsten in St. Paul, Minn. They aim to develop a congregation-based day-program that provides social stimulation and therapeutic activities for aging individuals while simultaneously easing the burden on

family caregivers. Liberty will partner with Reformation Church in Media, Pa., to pilot the new program, which will then be rolled out in several congregations. Another feature of the new service will be "caregiver circles"—support groups at the beginning or end of the day-programs.

In another project, Lutheran Community Services Northwest of SeaTac, Wash., is developing congregation-based "Caregiver Universities" in which pastors, parish nurses and lay members of congregations establish ministries to provide education and training in all aspects of care giving. The new caregiver universities will make courses, lectures, and practical training available to all categories of caregivers.

"This initiative represents an exciting new approach to creating successful, affordable, and sustainable programs that benefit the lives of the elderly and their caregivers," said Jill Schumann, president and CEO, Lutheran Services in America. "The Aging in Community Initiative will place Lutherans at the very center of dependable, compassionate care for an aging American population."

The Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation provided \$560,000 in grants to the 14 participating social ministry organizations. The funding will enable the social ministry organizations to develop and test new hybrid programs. The organizations were selected, in part, because their outreach included strong components of community, congregational, and volunteer involvement.

The organizations that were awarded grants include: Bethany Lutheran Home, Sioux Falls, S.D.; Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, Allentown, Pa.; Ecumen, Shoreview, Minn.; Liberty Lutheran Services, Ambler, Pa.; Lincoln Lutheran, Racine, Wis.; Linking Employment, Abilities and Potential (LEAP), Cleveland, Ohio; Lutheran Community Services Northwest, SeaTac, Wash.; Lutheran Family Services of Colorado, Denver; Lutheran Life Communities, Arlington Heights, Ill.; Lutheran Homes Society, Toledo, Ohio; Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota, Moorhead; Lutheran Social Services of New England, Wellesley, Mass.; Lyngblomsten, St. Paul, Minn.; Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Retirement Services, Austintown, Ohio.

"All of us will at some point experience aging issues, whether caring for elderly loved ones or as we grow older ourselves. The Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation believes that by working together Lutherans will have a positive impact on many, many lives," said Karen Coonen, executive director of the Foundation. "It is our hope that the care models developed through this initiative will greatly improve the quality of life for the elderly and those who care for them."

Women of the ELCA



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Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water." John 7:37b, 38

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Kasworm, Alegent Health deliver in Tanzania

When Bob Kasworm was approached by his employer at Alegent Health to investigate whether it made sense for their hospital system to get involved in Tanzania, he thought it would be a three-week investigation, easily summed up in a tidy report. Now Kasworm lives in the village of Machame, high up on the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro, where he has been since 2004.

Kasworm, a member of Lord of Love Lutheran Church, Omaha, first traveled to Tanzania on a Companion Synod trip hosted by the Nebraska Synod in 2001. “We (Alegent Health) had been approached by the Rev. Martin Russell, assistant to Bishop De Freese of the Nebraska Synod. They were developing a sister church/companion synod relationship with the Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania. The Tanzanians

It took several years of building, planning, collecting equipment and innumerable meetings before the center was dedicated

had asked for assistance from an American partner to work with their three hospitals, 24 dispensaries, public health program and more,” explains Kasworm. With a background in both medical technology and business, Kasworm was a logical choice to evaluate the possibilities.

After the three-week trip, Kasworm did return to the U.S. and wrote his report, but then he went one step further and spearheaded the



Bob Kasworm with Tumsifer, Immanuel, and Gloria. These three children with their mother are the first recipients of a dry safe home in Alegent Health's Houses for Health Program

Alegent health efforts in Tanzania. Between 2001 and 2004 he returned to Africa for more than a dozen short visits, while coordinating the building of the relationship and taking on various health-related projects. When greater support and resources became available from Alegent, he reversed the situation by relocating to Tanzania, returning home two or three times a year for brief visits.

Alegent Health is a faith-based health system based in Omaha, Neb. It was formed more than ten years ago and is an equal partnership of two sponsors — Catholic Health initiatives and Immanuel Health systems (which is sponsored by the Nebraska Synod of the ELCA).

One project Kasworm worked on recently was the new Orthopedic Surgery Center at Ma-

chame Lutheran Hospital. It took several years of building, planning, collecting equipment and innumerable meetings before the center was dedicated in August 2007. The guest of honor was the President of Tanzania, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete.

This orthopedic center was created to increase surgical capacity for the area, with modern equipment and techniques. There are many health needs in Tanzania, but Alegent-Health-Tanzania found this project attractive because orthopedic surgery can often reduce or eliminate pain, enable productive activity and remove social stigma.

Another project Kasworm developed through a partnership with the Nebraska Synod and Alegent Health is “Face of UKIMWI

(AIDS).” Many people in the U.S. have heard stories of AIDS in Africa. This video helps to put a face on the statistics by introducing the viewer to people who struggle daily with HIV/AIDS.

Single copies of the “Face of UKIMWI” are available by contacting Karen Pickering in the Nebraska Synod office at 402/896-5311, ext. 1000.

You can keep up with the life of Bob Kasworm by visiting the Lord of Love Lutheran Church Web site at www.lord-of-love.org and click on the “Bob in Tanzania” link under the “Mission and Outreach” tab. There you can find a series of postings and pictures from the last three years. Kasworm claims that, “It might help you figure me out a bit.”

It's all in the relationship

“We have learned that our brothers and sisters in Christ in Tanzania have an experience of God that we cannot live without,” states The Rev. Martin J. Russell, assistant to the bishop, Nebraska Synod.

Russell has led vision trips for almost eight years, and first traveled to Tanzania 10 years ago as part of a pastor exchange between the Nebraska Synod and Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. The Nebraska Synod and the Northern Diocese share a connection through the ELCA Companion Synod Program, which establishes relationships among the 65 synods of this church and its international companion churches around the world. In 1999 the Northern Diocese challenged the Nebraska Synod to bring people

together through vision trips.

“Every trip is highlighted by joy centered in the incredible hospitality showered upon us,” states Russell. Hospitality, deeply rooted in African culture, “is given profound meaning and expression in their Christian faith.” On his most recent trip in January, Russell found that he was blessed to spend time with Aloys Ndayirukiye, whom the pastor described as a “remarkable man of faith.”

As the two men spent “grace-filled” time together, Ndayirukiye revealed the story of his life and his call to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. A Hutu who was born in Burundi, Ndayirukiye fled his country in 1988 after being shot twice and left for dead. Burundi is a country in the Great Lakes region of Africa,

recognized for acute political crisis. In 1993 the Tanzanian Ministry of Home Affairs determined that all Burundians in Tanzania qualified for prima facie refugee status on the basis of their nationality because of the unrest in Burundi. For the past 20 years Ndayirukiye has lived at the Mishamo Settlement Camp in Tanzania—an urban refugee camp.

Because of the generous support of St. John Lutheran Church, Beatrice, Neb., Ndayirukiye is able to attend Makumira University College and Seminary in Tanzania, which he entered in the fall of 2007. Ndayirukiye is studying to be a pastor. Russell says that “the witness of his faith profoundly impacted me.”

When asked what steps he takes in setting up a trip, Russell responded, “It is important to remember that we are invited guests of the Northern Diocese. All our planning—itinerary building, scheduling, reservations, etc.—is co-

ordinated very closely with the Diocese and, in doing so, we strive to make sure we honor each other's hopes and goals.”

For those interested in leading a companion synod trip or a sister congregation trip, Pr. Russell recommends the following resources:

- “Companion Synod Handbook” www.elca.org/companionsynod/cspresources.html
- “Welcome Forward” www.elca.org/companionsynod/cspresources.html
- Country Packets www.elca.org/country-packets/select.html
- ELCA Global Mission video on accompaniment
- Travel guide books, such as the Lonely Planet series

The Nebraska Synod has also produced a travel manual that they are happy to share with others.

ELCA endorses new insurance company

On behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Office of the Secretary in consultation with the Office of the Treasurer has selected Church Mutual Insurance Company as the underwriter of the ELCA-Endorsed Property and Liability Insurance Program for Congregations and Synods and Hilb, Rogal & Hobbs (HRH) as its brokerage representative.

The decision to move the program to Church Mutual, which is effective immediately, was based on the goal to provide ELCA congregations and synods with quality insurance protection and enhanced customer service. It also allows ELCA to take advantage of the more than 111 years of experience Church Mutual has in the religious marketplace.

Today, Church Mutual insures more than 97,000 religious organizations nationwide—more than twice as many as any other insurance company. Church Mutual currently insures the ELCA churchwide office, nine ELCA regional offices, various synod offices and approximately 3,300 ELCA congregations.

ELCA's Secretary, David Swartling, noted that Church Mutual has provided coverage to many ELCA congregations and has an excellent reputation for service. The availability of coverage and effective claims handling and service are pivotal

considerations in selecting a property and casualty insurance partner.

Gerald Whitburn, Church Mutual's chairman and chief executive officer said, "We welcome the opportunity to broaden our relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As a mutual insurance company, we are dedicated to serving our customers—who are our owners—and we look forward to a long and mutually beneficial relationship with the ELCA in this program."

A noted benefit to Church Mutual's policyholders is their National Customer Service Center. Each customer service representative is a licensed insurance professional who can answer coverage questions, provide certificates of insurance and initiate policy changes. The typical caller waits an average of just 15 seconds for a live response. These dedicated professionals support more than 200 Church Mutual field representatives nationwide who are available to locally serve customer needs.

You may find additional information regarding the ELCA-Endorsed Church Mutual Property and Liability Insurance Program for Congregations and Synods on www.elca.org/insurance and at www.churchmutual.com/elca in the near future.

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Q&A

What Book of Faith initiative resources do you suggest for congregations?

If you are meeting regularly with a group to implement the Book of Faith initiative in your congregation, the reflection on page 69 of *Steadfast in Your Word: Daily Reflections from Martin Luther* is an excellent devotional. It is based on the text from John 15:7, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you..." This book is available through Augsburg Fortress at www.augsburgfortress.org.

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

A resource I think might be helpful to people introducing Bible study in their congregations is Krister Stendahl's *Why I Love the Bible*. See www.hds.harvard.edu/news/bulletin_mag/articles/35-1_stendahl.html

— Miriam L. Woolbert
ELCA Communication Service
Chicago

I just got my copy of *Opening the Book of Faith*. It really looks good! According to the Augsburg Fortress announcement: "Opening the Book of Faith is an invitation to experience the Bible as a book of faith. It provides an introduction to the Bible and Lutheran perspectives that guide understanding of Scripture. This book explores four methods of Bible study, then applies each method to four Scripture texts. Two assessment tools also aid reflection and discussion about Bible usage, needs, and hopes." This resource is available at www.augsburgfortress.org

— Sara Johnson, director
SW Minnesota Synod
Resource Service Center
Redwood Falls, Minn.

Mark Allen Powell's *How Lutherans Interpret the Bible*, a Select video, is an important resource for the Book of Faith initiative. This video can be ordered from Select at www.selectlearning.org or phone 877/675-6275.

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

During Lent we had Bible jigsaw puzzles set up in the Fellowship Hall. "Great Events of the Bible" (available from www.amazon.com) is complete. People are now working on "Parables" (available from a variety of online stores such as www.unclesgames.com). It is great watching adults, teens and children finding pieces and reviewing their Bible knowledge with how the pieces may fit together. A great tactile experience for another part of the brain.

— Marlane Druckenmiller
Douglassville, Pa.



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God's work. Our hands.

Free Bible studies from *Lutheran Woman Today*

Lutheran Woman Today magazine is offering its three-session summer Bible study online. In mid-May, you can visit www.lutheranwomantoday.org and download "Come to the Waters," a study about Baptism by the Rev. Karen Bockelman, assistant to the bishop in the Northeastern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA. A leader guide and ideas for holding a summer retreat are also available.

The study draws on Scripture, the baptismal service, Martin Luther and the ELCA's statement on sacramental practices. "Water and Baptism are bound together, not only in the use of water for the rite, but in powerful images of birth and death, renewal and cleansing," said Bockelman, who is leading the study at Women of the ELCA's Triennial Convention and Gathering, July 8-13 in Salt Lake City.

Previous three-session summer studies, "Act Boldly for Mission" and "Act Boldly for Health," are also available online for free.

Lutheran Woman Today subscribers will begin studying biblical wisdom stories in September. The nine-month study, "The Hidden Hand of God: Wisdom Stories from Ruth, Daniel, and Esther" is written by the Revs. Gwen Sayler and Ann Fritschel, both professors of Hebrew Bible at Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. The study raises interesting questions about living out our faith in today's culture.

You can still order *Lutheran Woman Today* before the September study begins (\$12 for 10 issues). Call 800/328-4648 or order online. To receive a free brochure with the magazine's 2008-2009 issue themes, call 800/638-3522, ext. 2737.

Join the cause ... Bring help and hope!

Lutheran Disaster Response is now on Facebook, raising awareness and donations for long-term recovery in disaster-affected areas. Are you a Facebook-er? If so, recruit your friends, make a gift and join the cause at http://apps.facebook.com/causes/view_cause/59523. The needs of disaster-affected communities should not be forgotten, even after the news cameras have gone home. Join the cause today, and start spreading the word!

Healthy meeting tips from the ELCA Board of Pensions

Make your next meeting a healthy one—consider the following tips from the ELCA Board of Pensions when planning your event:

- Include a variety of food choices throughout the day. Ask that food be prepared with low-fat ingredients. Include fresh fruits and vegetables with each meal and snack.
- Ask for smaller portion sizes of foods like bagels, cookies and muffins. Serve sauces, dressings and condiments on the side.
- Provide water or 100 percent juice rather than soda.
- Encourage participants to stretch and walk between sessions.
- Provide stress-reduction activities, such as deep breathing or Bishop Murray Finck's Stretch & Pray exercises.
- Provide ample time for rest and relaxation.
- Encourage participants to seek out new conversations and social interactions.
- Provide time for prayer, thanksgiving and listening to God.

More information about living well can be found at www.elcabop.org/livewell.aspx

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Let's thrive.  Thrivent Financial for Lutherans[®]

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Association welcomes volunteer Christian educators

The Lutheran Association of Christian Educators (LACE) encourages and supports professional and volunteer Christian educators. As an independent Lutheran organization recognized by the ELCA, LACE invites you to consider joining this growing community of energized and inspired leaders. Benefits and opportunities of LACE membership include:

- Subscription to *Tips in Education*, a "new and improved" quarterly newsletter addressing current Christian education concerns and news of the latest resources, while providing a forum for exchange of ideas.
- Monthly e-newsletters, including updates in national/regional happenings.
- LACE-sponsored events, including area chapter activities, where educators discuss ideas and common interests in ministry.

- Access to www.elca.org/lace, which includes a link to a members discussion group on LutherLink.

A tradition in the LACE community is the selection of the Educator of the Year award, given to an individual with outstanding commitment, passion and leadership in educational ministry. The current recipient of this honor is Cindy Greenwood, director of family ministries at St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Charleston, S.C.

Recently the LACE Board, consisting of the officers, nine regional representatives and liaisons from Augsburg Fortress Publishers and ELCA Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission, met to evaluate the ministry and set future goals. A major emphasis for this year will be to increase membership. Please contact LACEoffice@davtv.com or visit the Web site for a membership application or more information.

Immersion in Israel and Jordan

Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary offers cross-cultural immersion in Israel and Jordan January 7-25, 2009: *The People of the Holy Land: Then and Now*. Participants will visit biblical sites from Mount Hermon to the Red Sea and meet with Dr. Mitri Raheb of the Lutheran church in Bethlehem, staff members of Augusta Victoria Hospital, the pastors of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Jerusalem and Archbishop Elias Chacour (author of *Blood Brothers*) in the Galilee. They will also encounter Druze villagers in the Golan Heights, Jewish settlers and kibbutzniks.

Pastors and lay professionals are encouraged to join the immersion for continuing education credit. A Jordan pre-tour is optional, leaving three days earlier. Please note that this course is physically rigorous and intellectually demanding.

Three hours academic credit are possible at the M.A.R., M.Div., S.T.M. and D.Min. levels. Contact Dr. Monte Luker for details at LLuker@mac.com or 803/787-0864.

Called to Create bears fruit

As a result of “Called to Create: A Lutheran Festival of Writing,” a writers conference held last November at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, the Lutheran Writers Project and the Lutheran Writers Book Club were born (www.lutheranwriters.org).

The Lutheran Writers Project will provide resources and event planning for writers, readers, congregations, schools and church-wide organizations. This project will list Lu-

theran authors, with information about their Web sites, upcoming and recent publications, tour schedules and events. The Project will provide space for participants to share their poems, advancing the “Poetry Pole” of poet Jim Bodeen.

The Lutheran Writers Book Club will recommend a new book to readers every other month. It will include readers’ guides, interviews with authors, reviews and recom-

mendations. Initial selections include *The Book of the Dun Cow* by Walt Wangerin, *The Madhouse Nudes* by Robert Schultz and *A Song for Nettie Johnson* by Gloria Sawai.

Paul Shepherd, director and founder of the Lutheran Writers Project, is developing a mailing list of interested readers and writers. Send an e-mail to pshepherd@fsu.edu with “subscribe” in the subject line if you want to be added to the mailing list.

You’ve been oinked!

The Sunday school teachers at Faith Lutheran Church, Hamilton, Mont. wanted to offer a tangible and meaningful Lenten project for their children this year. They were looking for something intense yet fun, a task with a definite beginning and end—a way for the children to really make a difference and to be aware of that difference.

The teachers settled on raising funds for the ELCA’s God’s Global Barnyard project, viewing it is an engaging way for children to buy animals and watch their money actually make a difference in the livelihoods of needy families around the world.

To kick off the project, they set up an “E-I-E-I-O Let’s Watch our Barnyard Grow” bulletin board in the church building. In a barnyard scene, pictures of animals sported prices. When an animal was purchased by the

children or a class, the image of the animal would be moved into a corral.

To help children grasp how an animal not only feeds a family, but also offers a way for its members to make a living, stories were read from: *Stand With Africa in God’s Global Barnyard*, a children’s story book (available free from Augsburg Fortress, 800/328-4648 ISBN 978-6-0001-6480-5).

Each class brainstormed with their teacher to find ways of earning money to buy the animals. These included:

- A “Brownie Sale for the Barnyard.” Baked and packaged on Saturday in the church kitchen, dozens of brownies were sold between services the following Sunday morning.
- A “Barnyard Dip.” In return for pledges from family and friends, volunteer

students courageously agreed to be drenched in a dunking tank in the church parking lot on a cold blustery day in March.

- A bake sale including selling plastic eggs stuffed with chocolate eggs to their friends and families.
- The high school class came up with a unique idea. They made signs to put in the yards of congregation members, printed with sayings such as: “You have been Clucked,” “You have been Gobbled,” and “You have been Oinked.” The signs were placed in the yards of congregation members who had not given to the project. The signs came with a note of explanation, with instructions for sign removal. Simply stated, they needed to donate to the project and the sign would disappear. Many members found this very amusing and gladly gave to have the rather obtrusive signs removed from their yards.

In addition to group giving projects, many children raised money by shoveling snow and doing extra chores. Some brought their piggy banks and emptied all they had for the project. A total of \$2,000 was raised during the 40 days of Lent for God’s Global Barnyard.

Congregation members were encouraged to match their children’s giving—they could add their names on an animal already purchased with a promise to buy another one.

“We just had so much fun with it and everyone felt so good about their giving,” said Karla West, youth minister. “All the animals that were bought were put in the barnyard on the bulletin board. It was overwhelming and satisfying to them to see how many animals they had purchased.”

Read the Bible in a year

Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Canfield, Ohio, hosts a “Bible Books of the Month Club,” where participants read specific books of the Bible during a given month. By the end of 12 months, reading approximately 100 pages per month, the entire Bible can be read. A monthly newsletter gives a brief summary of the books to be read for that month with two questions for readers to consider as they go through each book.

“Bible Books Club” members were encouraged to join on “Bible Sunday,” traditionally a day designated by congregations for distribution of Bibles to children. Readers were also given information on the various Bible translations and a reading guide. Laminated bookmarks, listing the assigned readings for each month, help the readers keep track of what they should be reading each month.

To whip up interest in this reading program, print and verbal announcements were used and a skit was presented to encourage people to commit to this reading program.

Another “Read Through the Bible in One Year” program can be found at: www.elca.org/bible/oneyear

New Select online courses available

Select Multimedia Resources offers online courses for continuing education, associate in ministry candidacy and a variety of certification processes. Courses offered beginning in September 2008 include:

- Interpreting the New Testament (New!)
- Getting Down to Basics: Studying the Augsburg Confession and Small Catechism (New!)
- From Jesus to Luther

Beginning in February 2009:

- Interpreting the Old Testament (New!)
- Lutheran Heritage (New!)
- Systematic Theology
- Spirituality: Invitation to a Closer Relationship With God
- Evangelization and Lutheran Worship/ Sent to Preach

For more information about Select Multimedia Resources visit www.elca.org/select For more details on the online courses visit www.selectlearning.org



Andrew Shook, Tyler Exner, Seth Mason with motivational signs