

seeds for the parish

September-October 2008

Resource Paper for Leaders of ELCA Congregations

www.elca.org



Stock photo

Petting zoos are a great way for children of all ages to come face to face with animals. Remember, if you host an exhibit with live animals, to provide hand washing stations and encourage handwashing after petting an animal. Keep food and drinks out of the animal area.

Great fun with good gifts

Looking for a way to give alternative gifts? When you grab your shopping list this year, you won't need to leave your conscience at home. Alternative giving fairs and programs are great ways to embrace stewardship opportunities and to support fair trade products and the ministries of this church, all while shopping with a purpose.

The perfect match

Many fairs provide gift ideas, such as those featured in the ELCA *Good Gifts* catalog, as well as fair trade items, making it easy to give a gift of love or a gift to a loved one. A pound of fair trade coffee works well with a donation of fruit-tree seedlings, through the ELCA World Hunger agriculture program. A fairly traded bar of soap made of pure goat's milk pairs well

with a gift of a goat from God's Global Barnyard. These gifts help to sustain communities and break the cycle of poverty. With more and more congregations hosting their own fairs and programs, this idea seems to be catching on.

Big or small

Trinity English Lutheran Church, Ft. Wayne, Ind., hosted its 7th annual alternative Christmas market last November. "We had a goat, two hens and a rabbit in attendance—they were all very well behaved," says Linda Hasecke. In addition to the live animals, children were costumed like creatures of the Christmas story. This was no small event; in all, 88 volunteers lent their helping hands.

But your congregation doesn't need to start big to make a meaningful impact.

St. Barnabas Lutheran Church, Plymouth, Minn., has experienced continuous growth in attendance and interest over the past four years. Lois Troemel says, "Our philosophy is that the more people get involved with preparing displays, the more interest we will create in our mission projects." Last year, more than \$5,000 was donated to ELCA ministries featured in the ELCA *Good Gifts* giving catalog and \$4,800 of fair trade merchandise was sold.

No fair necessary

Sometimes a one-day event isn't the best solution.

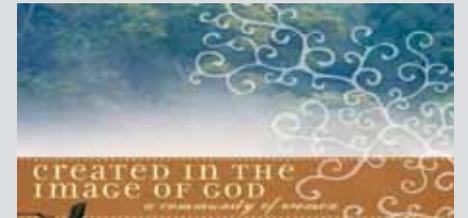
Faith Lutheran Church, Hamilton, Mont., chose Lenten season as a time for Sunday school students of all ages to focus on giving. The project "far exceeded our wildest expectations," says Karla West, a Sunday school teacher. "We wanted to do a giving project that would be more tangible and meaningful for the children."

"We decided to support the ELCA God's Global Barnyard project as an engaging way for children to buy animals and see that their money really makes a difference in the livelihood of others," says West. As an educational component of the project, they "read stories from the ELCA barnyard booklet so the children could grasp the idea of how supplying an animal not only feeds a family, but is a way for them to break the cycle of poverty."

From bake sales to dunk tanks, each class found creative ways to raise funds for ELCA World Hunger. "We just had so much fun with it, and everyone felt so good about their giving," continues West. (See story in May-June 2008 *Seeds for the Parish*).

Getting started

To help you and your congregation get started, ELCA World Hunger has developed a handy resource. Find 10 helpful hints to make your ELCA Good Gifts fair or program a great success at www.elca.org/hunger. And don't forget to order a stack of ELCA *Good Gifts* catalogs. Call 800/328-4648 and reference ISBN 978-6-0002-1950-5.



Women of the ELCA offers a DVD that tells the stories of women in the ELCA. **Page 3**



A week at camp begins for Palestinian students - Makram, Milad, Andre, Raja and Abdallah. **Page 4**



The poor may be sitting silently next to you. **Page 5**



Bible Study helps you to become fluent in the first language of faith. **Page 6**

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New worship formation events for you to use



Staff photo

Gospel reading at 2007 Churchwide Assembly.

Over 40,000 people attended events introducing *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* in their synod. As a result of the input received, new worship formation events have been developed and are now available to be led by you in your synod, conference, cluster or congregation. These modules are designed to help guide the ongoing conversation about worship throughout the ELCA.

Three worship formation modules are now available:

Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Freedom and Flexibility

We share a common pattern for worship, and yet each worshiping assembly is unique. Reflect on our common patterns for worship and explore the possibilities for creatively shaping worship in a specific context, such as contemporary worship.

The Bible shapes our patterns and actions in worship and draws us into God's saving story.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Scripture Shapes the Assembly

The Bible shapes our patterns and actions in worship and draws us into God's saving story. The Book of Faith initiative sets the stage to explore the biblical grounding of worship and to explore how the public proclamation of

Scripture brings the book of faith alive in the assembly.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship: A Deeper Look

Worship is never static and the exploration of new worship resources can continue for many years. Examine some of the deep issues that helped shape the liturgical patterns and texts in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

Coming soon:

Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Leading Assembly Song

If you are interested in leading one of these modules in your synod, conference, cluster or congregation, contact the worship office for more information at worship@elca.org or call Jennifer Ollikainen, associate for worship resources, at 800/638-3522, ext. 2577. The worship staff will send you the module, including a script and leaders' guide, and follow up with suggestions about how to adapt and present the module in your unique setting.

New worship resource available

Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW): Pastoral Care, the first of two volumes of *Occasional Services for Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, contains 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. Some of this new material was developed originally for the *Renewing Worship 4: Life Passages* volume, set to be released in October, 2008 from www.augsburgfortress.org (ISBN 978-0-8066-5392-1, \$40.00).

seeds for the parish

www.elca.org/seeds

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Celebrate LWF Sunday in honor of the Creator

The theme of this year's Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Sunday—celebrated in the U.S. on Oct. 5—is: "Climate Change: Vulnerability, Lament and Promise." The Rev. Mark S. Hanson, ELCA presiding bishop and LWF president, invites all to join with Lutherans on this day, "in renewed repentance, commitment and hope."

The Maasai, who live in Tanzania and Kenya, named the western summit of Mount Kilimanjaro *Nga je Nga*, the house of God. According to Ramadhan Kupoza, an environment and development consultant from Tanzania, the name not only describes the surrounding landscape but it was also given in honor of the Creator. Kupoza adds that elders in the Kilimanjaro area are afraid that the summit will no longer deserve its name because of the effect of climate change.

The Rev. Alfred Chana of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Zambia comments on this issue saying: "climate change or environmental crisis is a sign of cultural failures. It is a failure to submit human power to grace and humanity to work toward the habitation of the places in which we live on terms that respect both human limits and the rest of nature. This stretches from being an environmental crisis to being

an immoral and unethical injustice practice on the land."

Worship resources for LWF Sunday are available from the Lutheran World Federation at www.elca.org/lwf. Here you will find suggested hymns, adult and children's lesson plans, bulletin inserts for downloading, stories for newsletters or sermons, and prayers.

LWF is a communion of 140 churches in 79 countries, with 68.3 million members.

LWF Stories

Here is a sampling of stories used in bulletins, newsletters and in sermons for the 2007 LWF Sunday:

Bangladesh – Feeding and teaching

It is 1 p.m. at Kathalbari Primary School and there is a buzz of excitement as the children wait for their lunch. Today, as every day, there are tasty and nutritious biscuits provided by the LWF. Illiteracy rates are very high in Bangladesh. The government encourages education but it will take a long time to change the rates. Children arrive at school very hungry. The LWF provides mid-day meals for over 600,000 primary school children every day. The children come to school to eat and to learn!



Stock photo

Nga je Nga - the house of God (Mt. Kilimanjaro) with plains zebra

Malawi – Fish farming

Timbiri village is succeeding in fish farming. The three ponds that the LWF helped them start have increased to 14. The training that LWF offered improved the knowledge in feeding and management of fish. One club member said, "We are now getting money from the sale of the fish. We now are getting protein and have even opened a bank account. We are teaching other villages how to construct and stock the ponds and how to feed and manage the fish. Thank you, LWF!"

68.3 million Lutherans make a difference!

The beginning of a relationship

You didn't need to be a weatherman to know which way the wind was blowing in the 1960s and early 1970s (to paraphrase Bob Dylan). Change was in the air and the people were taking their causes to the streets. It was a time of protest, civil unrest and social transformation. It was also a time when Lutherans in America met with a cross section of American Indians—from militant protesters to very conservative Indian people—and formed a national board to help with the organizing needs of Native Americans.

Before the 1960s, Indian activism was confined to tribal reservations and involved such issues as trespassing on Indian land or treaty violations. But on November 20, 1969, the American Indian protest and activist movement came into prominence with the 19-month occupation of Alcatraz, a small island located in the middle of San Francisco Bay and a federal prison until 1963.

The goal of the Alcatraz protest was to raise American public awareness of the plight of the American Indian. It was hoped that more attention would be paid to the suffering caused by the federal government's broken treaties and broken promises, and to the plea for Indian "self-determination" (sovereignty of the American Indian tribes).

The Alcatraz movement was followed by other protests, many peaceful, others violent. In 1972 American Indian protesters occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs headquarters in Washington; in Feb. 1973 the American Indian Movement (AIM) seized control of the town of Wounded Knee, S.D.

Changes were also happening within the large body of Lutherans in the Plains States (Lutherans were and still are the largest religious population in the area). Two new church bodies were formed: The American Lutheran Church, in 1960 and The Lutheran Church in America, in 1962. The roles of Lutheran colleges were redefined and in 1969, Augustana College in Sioux Falls, S.D. established the Center for Community Organization and Area Development.

Thinking that all American Indians needed to work together for the common good, AIM leaders looked to Lutheran churches for organization, funding and bringing together a diverse group of Indian people reflecting the full spectrum of political views, from radical to conservative. At a meeting at Augustana College, AIM members challenged Lutherans to create a national staff position for Indian issues and to supply funding for Indian organizing throughout the country.

The Lutheran Church in America stepped

up to the challenge and supported the establishment of an office for Indian Ministry in the Lutheran Council. In 1970 Eugene Crawford was named the executive director of the National Indian Lutheran Board (NILB), a position he held until his death in 1986. He was the first American Indian to hold such a position. In the early years NILB used much of its budget to fund community development, and advocacy efforts on behalf of American Indian sovereignty and treaty rights.

The NILB's responsibilities included testifying on legislation affecting American Indians; facilitating awareness of American Indian issues on the part of non-Indians; working with ecumenical organizations to reach a wider Christian audience; and administering funds granted for Indian projects and special requests.

"Change has been slow in coming," says Marilyn Sorenson, director for ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries, and an enrolled member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton tribe of the Sioux Nation. "We still have a long way to go, but progress has been made." When she was a child in the 1930s and 1940s she endured taunting epithets, hurtful insults and rude looks that came with growing up an American Indian in a tiny all-white town on the edge of Lake Traverse Reservation in northeastern South Dakota. She was a member of Zion Lutheran Church and a Sunday school teacher. But the town really didn't accept her and she and her husband moved on to Florida to raise their family.

Then in 2001, people from her hometown invited her to speak at an event. She recalls: "All of a sudden I am accepted. When I was a child it was a different story. It was painful but through it all I always had God. God never left my side, I may have left him but God is faithful." For Marilyn, times have indeed changed but there is still work to be done.

Marilyn is eager for the airing of the upcoming documentary *Native Nations* that tells the story of the creation of the National Indian Lutheran Board and its stand for sovereignty, justice and civil rights. "Syd Beane (the first president of NILB) and I wanted to get this story to the public ... We are also talking about the possibility of writing a book."

Native Nations: Standing Together for Civil Rights will air on ABC television network affiliate stations between Oct. 12 and Dec. 4. It is presented by the National Council of Churches USA and produced by the ELCA. DVDs of the program are available by calling 800/638-3522. Visit www.elca.org/nativenations for promotional materials for your congregation.

Video tells the story of women in the ELCA

Narrated as a letter to Katie Luther, the video: "Created in the Image of God: a Community of Women" tells the stories of groups of women from throughout the ELCA.

Produced by the Women of the ELCA the documentary shows women responding to their commitment to: grow in faith, affirm their gifts, support one another in their callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.

A variety of women's groups are highlighted including: the intergenerational group of women—grandmothers, granddaughters and mothers—who make quilts and put together health kits to give to Lutheran World Relief

for distribution; the courageous women who advocate for safe streets for the children of their congregation and community; and the women who regularly participate in Bible study.

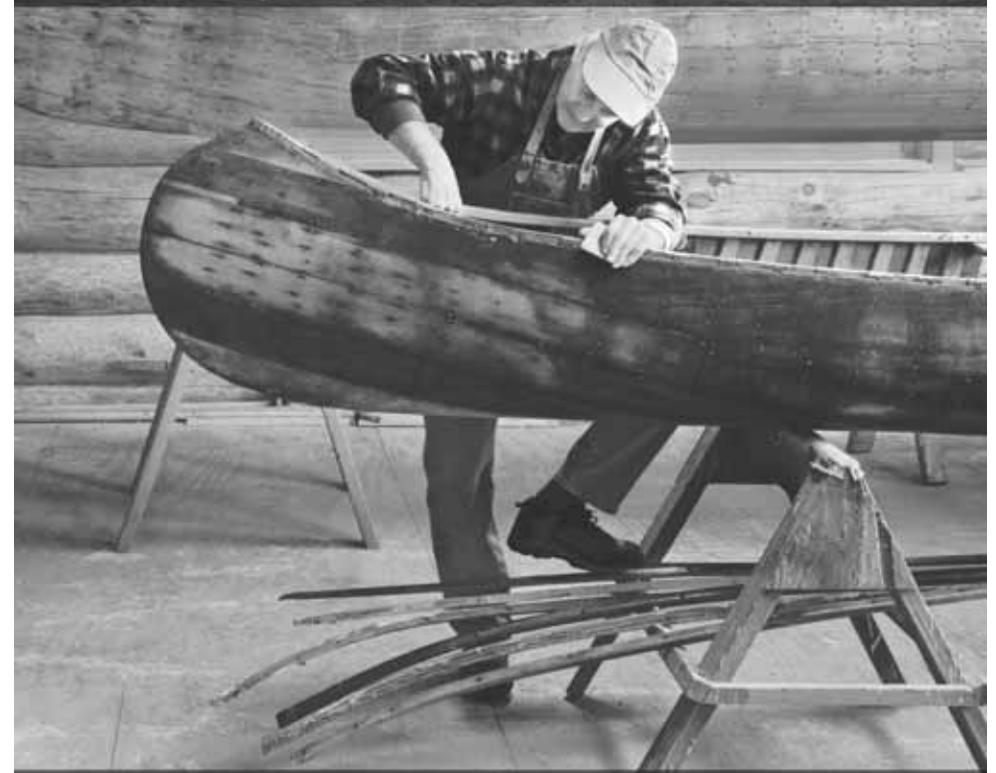
You are invited to screen this DVD in your congregations and communities. You are also encouraged to use the discussion guide included on the DVD to help fuel discussion, prayer, reflection and action.

The DVD is available by calling: 800/638-3522, ext. 2737.



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Lutheran youth in the Middle East

Imagine preparing to shepherd a youth group on an international companion visit only to have half of the young people sent home at the city limits and most of the remaining youth told they must fly out of an airport in another country, at additional expense.

According to retired pastor John Setterlund, that is what happened when Israeli authorities denied five young men from the Lutheran Boys' Home in Beit Jala access beyond the separation barrier to apply for travel permits in Jerusalem. Four more were forbidden to depart from Tel Aviv to travel to the ELCA's New England Synod. West Bank residents cannot use Israel's Ben Gurion airport without a permit. They were eventually able to travel through Amman, Jordan, and to the United States. In New York the boys were delayed for security processing that caused them to miss their flight to Boston.

Finally the group (ages 13-17) was welcomed by New England congregations and escorted everywhere by teens, including their week at Camp Calumet in New Hampshire. They have shared e-mail and Facebook information with ELCA young people throughout their visit, excited about staying connected. Setterlund, who helped plan the visit while volunteering in Beit Jala, said the boys were "amazed by the freedom to travel without restriction in the United States and overwhelmed by the variety and availability of things to buy in our stores."

The boys' boarding home is a core mission of Reformation Lutheran Church in Beit Jala, serving 45 boys, Christian and Muslim, from low-income families and troubled homes. House father Pastor Jadallah Shihadeh says, "They grow up in the spirit of Abraham, living

in a big brotherhood. We teach them to live in a way of life to create peace." A full-time social worker employed by the congregation works across denominational lines to improve the lives of local families.

Despite hardships youth and their leaders persevere in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL).

What have more than 90 young people have been up to at Hope Lutheran Church in Ramallah? Pretty much what Lutheran youth do anywhere: Bible studies, guest speakers, retreats, exchange visits with kids at neighboring churches and volunteer activities.

Like teens everywhere, Palestinian youth love to get together. Gathering was their theme last summer. Young people from the church's six congregations gathered for adventures with friends nearby and globally. Even a local trip is often difficult or impossible for Palestinians, but within Israel youth under age 16 do not need a permit. That made it a bit easier for Pastor Sani Ibrahim Azar of Jerusalem's Redeemer Lutheran Church to bring about 50 youth to Nazareth for an ELCJHL Youth Retreat in June.

Pastor Azar also led a group of youth on a trip to their partner church in Bad Toelz, Germany.

In 2006 ELCA members met the young *debke* dancers from Ramallah. This year Finland was the destination for youth from the Lutheran school choir and *debke* dancing team of Beit Sahour, very near Bethlehem. In Finland they performed and got acquainted with new friends in their partner church.

Next year's ELCA Youth Gathering will provide another opportunity for Palestinian young people to visit the United States and

share their gifts through the international companion Program. In addition to New England, the Southeast Michigan Synod is a companion of the ELCJHL.

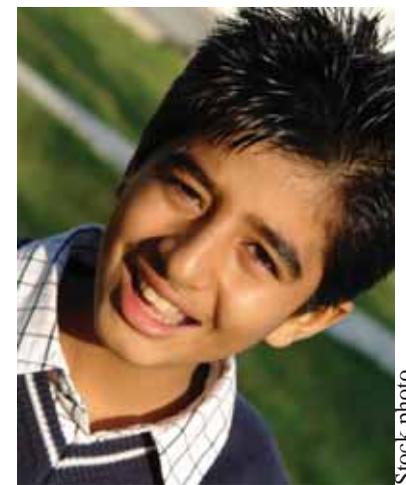
Contact with youth overseas (mostly in Germany, Scandinavia and the United States) is important to congregational youth groups of the ELCJHL. Their correspondence and visits encourage all the youth involved to be active in the life of their churches.

ELCA Global Mission is expanding that contact by posting Young Adults in Global Mission for the first time in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Six young people arrived in late summer to work with youth in the congregations and schools of the ELCJHL.

At home, the success of youth activities hinges on the current situation in Palestine and Israel. Checkpoints, curfews and closures imposed by Israel's military present barriers that often make it difficult, even impossible for young Lutherans to get together.

For example, youth of Redeemer Lutheran often meet at a church center, a remodeled house in Beit Hanina a few miles north of the church's location in Old City Jerusalem. Their meeting might be delayed because of a traffic jam when a military checkpoint located 100 yards away is suddenly closed, stopping all traffic to and from the major Kalandia checkpoint. Just reaching the church center becomes almost impossible.

Against these odds—or because of them—the ELCJHL churchwide youth program seeks to strengthen relationships among the youth of all six congregations. Activities include two summer camps, youth leader training, Sunday school teacher training, and a special occa-



Stock photo

sion, Jubilate Sunday, when the youth from all the ELCJHL congregations gather together for study and socializing.

Across the border in Amman, the Good Shepherd Lutheran Musical Team brings 15 young people and their families together with bagpipes, cymbals and drums. The Musical Team plays for special occasions like Christmas Eve and Easter Sunday.

Sixty per cent of the Jordanian population is under 30 years of age, a large number between the ages of 15 and 25 years, so Pastor Samer Azar puts a real emphasis on attracting young people to worship, study and summer camp. The Holyland Club in the church's community hall offers computers, table tennis and a cafeteria.

The ELCJHL thanks all the international friends "who are sharing these opportunities to enable our young people to learn from one another and build bridges between nations and churches."

Wittenberg Center 10 years old—celebrations are in order



Photo taken by Ben McDonald Colivet

Statue of Martin Luther in town hall square, Wittenberg Germany

On May 9, 1999, at a special worship service at the Castle Church in Lutherstadt Wittenberg, the ELCA Wittenberg Center was officially inaugurated. On May 9, 2009, there will be another celebration in the Castle Church celebrating the 10th birthday of the center.

The idea of the Center was born in the 1990s as interest grew among Lutherans in the United States to visit the "Luther Lands" of Germany. There was a reciprocal interest in Wittenberg and the State of Saxony-Anhalt to promote their historic and spiritual treasures. At the invitation of the Evangelical Church of the Church Province of Saxony, the ELCA Wittenberg Center was established with Dean Bard, formerly

pastor at the American Church in Berlin, as its first director.

Through the vision and perseverance of individuals such as Dr. Timothy Lull and the Rev. Richard Bruesehoff, the Center has grown and thrived. A typical Center year now offers 25-30 study programs of various lengths for congregations, universities and colleges, seminaries, students and faculty, youth groups and other church institutions.

Center programs explore the Church's journey of faith through years of conflicts in pulpits, lecture halls, government halls and battlefields, as well as more recent struggles with national socialist and communist ideologies.

For the anniversary year, the Center is offering a special **10th Anniversary Program**. Directors Jean and Steve Godsall-Myers will lead the program, which will be accompanied by **Religion Professor Kathryn 'Kit' Kleinhans**, from Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa. Professor Kleinhans is the author of *Lutheranism 101: It's All About Grace - The 95 Theses Today*, and *Lutheranism 202*. The program will take advantage of her expertise and interest as she provides background information to stimulate discussion of travel experiences. She will also lead the group in daily devotions.

Contact: ELCAWittenbergCenter@t-online.de or www.elca.org/Wittenberg for information.

Ministering to the poor we do not see—our neighbors, ourselves

“Families are forced to make unconscionable choices on a daily basis: housing for food; transportation for utilities; a job instead of school; gasoline instead of healthcare,” says Steven McCullough, President and CEO of Bethel New Life, based in Chicago.

While our image of those who are poor might be the homeless people we see in the streets or at meal programs, there are many more people struggling in silence, their pain invisible. They may be sitting next to you in Sunday worship or waiting behind you in the grocery checkout line. They may be standing at a bus stop because they can no longer afford the fuel or repair costs for their car. In short, they could be any one.



Stock photo

The hidden poor might be sitting just beside you, struggling in silence.

Economic pressures are showing at programs such as The Sharing Place, a food and clothing ministry of Lutheran Child & Family Services in Indianapolis, where requests are up and donations have been down “... as gasoline prices have risen and food prices have been increasing, many families have been forced to make challenging choices, resulting in an inadequate supply of food,” according to Monique Busch, Senior Director of Community Operations.

Lisa Carr, senior director of public policy for Lutheran Services in America, noted recently that “There are at least 10 seniors waiting for every unit of Section 202 affordable housing for the elderly.” While the senior population is expected to double by 2030, the President’s budget proposal for fiscal year 2009 cuts Section 202 senior housing funds by one quarter.

Many LSA member organizations are, nonetheless, forging ahead to build af-

fordable housing. In July, Spokane Urban Ministries broke ground for an affordable housing development in Spokane, Wash., a city whose growth has left many residents behind. Four congregations—Grace, Emmanuel, St. Paul and Salem Lutheran—formed Spokane Urban Ministries to build its first project. Several units will be reserved for people making 30 percent or less of the area median income. Eighteen units will house residents with chronic mental illness.

According to a coalition of national organizations concerned about the effects of our faltering economy, inflation-adjusted weekly wages have risen only 1.4 percent in the last seven years, while food prices have increased 21.6 percent and fuel and utility costs have jumped 36.3 percent. Many families, people with disabilities, seniors and others with low incomes and fixed incomes spend up to 17 percent of their income on home energy bills.

LSA member organizations and congregations work together to help families struggling with such basic costs. Christ Lutheran Church in Blaine, Minn., partners with a program that houses up to 12 children by providing items like school supplies, Valentine gifts and haircuts. Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey runs an annual Back-to-School Backpack Program, which donors fill with school supplies and other necessities.

Congregation members can increase their awareness of those in their communities who might be in need in these ways:

- Invite your local Lutheran social ministry organization to give a talk on needs in the community.
- Help a neighbor find services. LSA has a database searchable by location and service on its Web site, www.luthेरanservices.org.
- Host a neighbor exchange where people can offer and find a range of things from consumables to household items, services, and volunteer time. Invite your local Lutheran social ministry organization to co-host the event.

“These stressful times offer us an opportunity to realize that we are all connected, and that safety and freedom can come from knowing that neighbors will care for us, just as we care for our neighbors,” says Jill Schumann, president and CEO of Lutheran Services in America.

Q&A

What resources are available to help in planning and hosting a fair trade fair?

I like the slide shows on the ELCA World Hunger “Go and Do Likewise” CD, (800/328-4648, www.augsburgfortress.org/elcahunger or find the presentations online at www.elca.org/hunger/basics). Including these images on a looping PowerPoint is a meaningful addition to any fair trade fair. “Senior Gleaners - Domestic Hunger,” “Peru: Let justice roll down like waters, and Go and Do Likewise” — well done pieces that are sure to generate interest and promote awareness!

—Karen Harthan, director, The Resource Center, Clear Lake, Iowa

I love the postcards/giftcards, the samples of which are in the hunger packet! I encourage people to offer those as an option for gift giving/celebration times. The hunger packet may be ordered online at: www.augsburgfortress.org/elcahunger. To receive hunger packets as well as a subscription to the hunger newsletter, *Lifelines* call 800/638-3522, ext. 2764, or visit www.elca.org/hunger/contact.

—Catherine Fink, director, Heilig Resource Center, Salisbury, N.C.

I know of a congregation who successfully combines their alternative/ELCA Good Gifts fair with a global luncheon. With the Lutheran World Federation’s new cookbook, *Food for Life* slated to be available by mid-September, how about selling the cookbook or hosting a luncheon or bake sale using recipes from the book? To order *Food for Life* go to www.augsburgfortress.org/elcahunger or call 800/328-4648.

—Sue Edison-Swift, communication director, ELCA World Hunger and Disaster Appeal, Chicago

Congregations wanting to tie their alternative giving fair with a mission emphasis should be sure to check out the resources available through Global Mission (www.elca.org/globalmission).

—Jan Rizzo, editor, *Seeds for the Parish*, Chicago

Many groups combine ELCA Good Gifts donations with the sale of Lutheran World Relief’s (LWR) Handcraft Project items—including Fair Trade coffee and chocolate. The LWR Handcraft Project catalog, “A Greater Gift,” is a great source for display baskets. Visit www.lwr.org/fairtrade or call 800/LWR-LWR2 for more information.

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

We keep a stack of *Good Gifts* catalogs available together with the gift cards, coin holders, and 40-day calendars. Every one of these ELCA Hunger Appeal resources is top-notch and they make me proud of our church! Congregational fairs are excellent opportunities for sharing these resources and helping all of us to be better stewards. To request a *Good Gifts* catalog call 800/328-4648 or go to www.augsburgfortress.org/elcahunger.

—Julie K. Aageson, director, Eastern North Dakota Synod Resource Center

Talk with children about giving

Why do we give to others? How do we take care of God's gifts? Does God like to hear 'Thank you,' too?

In the form of a colorful picture book, the November 2008 issue of *The Little Lutheran* helps congregations, family members and godparents talk with children aged 6 and younger about giving.

To subscribe, visit www.thelittlelutheran.org, or call 800/328-4648. Order processing takes 6 to 8 weeks, so subscribe before Sept. 12 to receive the November issue. If you miss this deadline, don't worry—you'll still receive 10 issues a year on a variety of themes, from the true meanings of Christmas and Easter to what God tells us about friends, rules, grace and more. Individual subscriptions are \$24.95 a year; subscriptions for groups of six or more are only \$12.95.

(Answers to the questions at top: 1. Because God gives so much to us; 2. By caring for the world and our neighbor; and 3. Yes, God is tickled pink.)

International Day of Prayer for Peace

ELCA congregations, institutions and organizations are invited to join others from around the world in praying for peace, Sunday, Sept. 21, 2008. The World Council of Churches' International Day of Prayer for Peace offers an opportunity for congregations in all places to pray and act together to nurture lasting peace in the hearts of people, their families, communities and societies.

The ELCA Task Force for a Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence encourages participation, and offers a service of prayer for peace for churchwide staff and others at the ELCA Lutheran Center on Friday, Sept. 19.

The Day of Prayer for Peace is one of the initiatives of the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence. It also coincides with the United Nations International Day of Peace. *Witnessing to God's Peace* is the 2008 International theme and the annual focus highlights the Pacific Islands.

For more information, visit the World Council of Churches Decade to Overcome Violence Web site www.overcomingviolence.org/en/about-dov/international-day-of-prayer-for-peace.html. Additional prayer resources are posted at the ELCA's Decade Web page at www.elca.org/nonviolence.

Call process tools being developed

Congregations and church-related organizations periodically enter into the challenging work of the call process—searching for a new pastor or lay rostered minister who fits with their ministry needs and opportunities. This can be daunting work. Fortunately the ELCA provides useful forms for assessing and promoting the ministry, and synods provide helpful people and procedures for doing the work.

Last summer the Vocation and Education unit launched an ambitious project to develop new tools that support the call process. The project has three specific objectives:

1. to develop new mobility forms
2. to develop the capacity to do online searches of ministry opportunities across this church
3. to develop a Web site that offers help-

ful resources and links for all those engaged in call process work. Additional tools and resources are also under development, specifically for synod staff, including applications to search the mobility database of rostered leaders and to integrate the mobility database with other databases maintained by the ELCA.

The new *Rostered Leader Profile* (for leaders from all four rosters, as well as candidates for these rosters) and the *Ministry Site Profile* (for all congregations, agencies and organizations that are searching for rostered persons) are in the final stages of development and testing. The database that will house the submitted forms will be online by the end of this summer. Training in the use of the system will begin immediately and con-

tinue into the fall. The new system will be fully functional by the end of this calendar year, and will continue to be developed into 2009.

It is hoped that the project will yield an environment conducive to a productive partnership among ministry settings, synods and rostered leaders. This should result in an improved level of transparency that respects the role and function of each party, and a common language and perspective about the call process.

The current work on improving the call process environment began in 2004, when a Task Force was convened to study relevant issues and possibilities. In 2007 work began on developing a mobility database with Pastor Stanley J. Meyer serving as project director.

Become fluent in Scripture — study the Bible

The annual nine-month Bible study in *Lutheran Woman Today*, the magazine of Women of the ELCA, starts with the September issue. If you are late in subscribing, call the editorial office (800/638-3522, ext. 2743) and they'll send you a copy. Or visit www.lutheranwomantoday.org to download the first session.

This year's study, "The Hidden Hand of God: Wisdom Stories from Ruth, Daniel, and Esther," is written by the Rev. Ann Fritschel and the Rev. Gwen Sayler, both professors of Bible at Wartburg Seminary. Readers will find the study warm, welcoming and gently challenging.

Free resources to help leaders promote



Lutheran Woman Today offers the first language of faith with Bible study.

and prepare for the study are available on the magazine's Web site, www.lutheranwomantoday.org. In addition to the first session, video clips with the authors introducing each

session are posted. Watch the introductory video to get an overview of the entire study and to see what readers are saying about it. The magazine also has a blog (<http://lwtmagazine.blogspot.com>) where readers and leaders can join the conversation!

Call 800/328-4648 or visit www.augsburgfortress.org to subscribe to the magazine (\$12 per year) and order the Leader Guide (item 978-6-0002-2093-8, \$6.95), Companion Bible (item 978-6-0002-2094-5, \$3.95) and Bookmarks (item 978-6-0002-2092-1, \$3.75).

Now's the time to get ready for the *Lutheran Woman Today* Bible study and become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture.

Justice for Women to host conference

The Justice for Women Program of the ELCA Church in Society unit is hosting the conference: "Transformative Lutheran Theologies: Feminist, Womanist and Mujerista Perspectives," in Chicago on January 23-24, 2009.

The conference is intended for current and future church leaders to engage with euro-feminist, womanist, *mujerista*, Asian and other feminist theologies as part of examining this church's work of justice for women. Registration is open to all interested parties, but the conference intentionally provides the

opportunity for seminary, college students and rostered leaders to engage with academic theologians from across the ELCA.

The Justice for Women Program provides partial and full scholarships to selected seminary and college students and ELCA rostered leaders. To apply for a scholarship, go to: www.elca.org/justiceforwomen/conference.

To register for the conference, go to www.elca.org/justiceforwomen/conference. Priority registration is open until Nov. 15, 2008, and late registration will close Dec. 15, 2008. Questions? Contact Juli.Bey@elca.org.

Interfaith week

This fall, the ELCA joins almost 20 other national faith groups to make the week of September 10-16, 2008, a week of faith and action against domestic poverty.

"**Fighting Poverty with Faith: A Week of Action**" consists of a variety of local and national activities, designed to build the political and public will to reduce poverty.

To learn more and find out how you and your congregation can participate, contact Bob Francis, director for domestic policy ELCA Washington Office, Robert.Francis@elca.org.

Past and future Preacher's retreat

A two-day retreat near Valparaiso University provided preachers the opportunity to focus on a primary aspect of their pastoral ministry, the sermon. The participants, who came from across the country, ranged from recent seminary graduates to seasoned, mature pastors in the ELCA and the United Methodist Church.

The most unique aspect of this retreat was the content of the small-group workshops. In preparation for the retreat, each participant submitted a video of himself or herself preaching. As part of their preparation, trained facilitators reviewed these videos, paying particular attention to the unique strengths of each retreat participant. Clips from these recorded sermons provided material for discussion and study in the small group sessions. Walter Wangerin, Jr., Jochum University Professor at Valparaiso University, trained the facilitators—Fred Niedner, Department of Theology, Valparaiso University, and Robert Rimbo, pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in New York.

Worship was conducted each morning and evening. The scripture focused on Paul's

relationships with his colleagues, and included readings from Colossians, Philemon, and the Gospel of John. Mary Shore, professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., served as chaplain and preacher for the retreat, while Paul Westermeyer, professor of worship at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., served as cantor.

The Preacher's Retreat was sponsored by the Institute of Liturgical Studies at Valparaiso University. Additional funding was provided by the Lilly Project on the Education and Formation of Faith at Valparaiso University, and by Martin E. Marty. Rev. James Honig, pastor at Faith Lutheran Church, Glen Ellyn, Ill. and Rev. Robert Rimbo, both members of the Advisory Council of the Institute of Liturgical Studies, served as planners and coordinators of the event. Liv Larson Andrews, Valparaiso University, served as administrator.

Next year's Preachers' Retreat will be held June 7-9, 2009. Information is available at www.valpo.edu/ils or www.preachersretreat.com.

Sunday Scientists Symposium V

Food & Faith: Making the Connection, the ELCA Alliance for Faith, Science and Technology's **Sunday Scientists Symposium V**, will be held at Faith Lutheran Church in Des Moines, Iowa, the weekend of **Oct. 31-Nov. 2**.

The event explores the relationships between science, food and spirituality. Speakers and participants will discuss a variety of food-related issues including availability, cost, and safety; how our faith intersects with the need for nutritious food; and what congregations can do about this science/faith issue.

The Rev. Duane Larson, president of Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, will lead the symposium, which will also feature a concert by Peter Mayer, a singer/songwriter from Minnesota. Registration and program information can be downloaded from <http://archive.elca.org/faithandscience/sundayscientist>. For more information, please contact The Rev. Diana Sickles at dsickles@mindspring.com.

Study on genetics coming soon



Watch for the release of *Faith and Responsibility in the Era of Genetics: A Christian Study* on Nov. 3. This study will be published both in print and electronically. Order information for print copies will be available soon. The study is a part of a four-year process to develop an ELCA social statement on genetics. Congregations may participate in the study and respond, which will assist the task force in developing the social statement. More information about the social statement process can be found at www.elca.org/genetics.

All hands on deck!

When members of Trinity Lutheran Church in Mason City, Iowa participated in a disaster preparedness workshop last year, they did not expect that the opportunity to practice their training would come along so soon. But when Mason City and the surrounding towns were flooded last month, the congregation's Disaster Emergency Response Team (DERT) acted quickly to serve its members and its community. Now, Lutheran congregations from around the country are being called upon to financially support and serve as volunteers to the long-term recovery effort.

Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) has designed a preparedness manual for congregations interested in doing similar training for themselves. To download the materials, visit www.ldr.org/prepare.

To learn more about the work of LDR, order the newly revised LDR brochure at: www.augsburgfortress.org

Education across the miles: Select online courses

During the last two years Select Multimedia Resources offered online courses for continuing education, certificate work and preparation for the Associate in Ministry roster. These courses combine recorded lectures from seminary and college professors of the ELCA, reading assignments and online interactions with fellow students and a class facilitator. Have you been looking for a way to go 'a little deeper' in study, or to brush up on scripture to be a leader in the Book of Faith Initiative, or to prepare for the Associate in Ministry roster? Consider what these two participants have to say:

"Select classes have been no less than a miracle in my life. Select classes have allowed me to 'grow in knowledge of God' (Colossians 1:10b) that I might be equipped to serve God and God's people. Select classes provide freedom to enroll in challenging, quality courses that bring a student in touch with a classroom as big as the world without leaving your own home. Being on the 'online campus' provides wonderful opportunities to learn and study in the familiar environment of home, and at the same time brings varied resources of fellow students and professors from around

the world right to your doorstep. Select has helped me to move forward in my education. I have not had to move to a different community to take courses. I have not had to sacrifice family time and commitment by being separated to take these classes. I have not had to be absent from my work which would be a financial burden on my family if I were to take a leave of absence. I am able to respond to the call that is within me in a positive way and it is all because of Select classes. They are a gift to me and I am forever grateful." Vicki Marthaler, Detroit Lakes, Minn.

"Select courses have provided me with an avenue of study to meet the requirements for my AIM program without traveling great distances. This has been a wonderful opportunity to study with other students from all across the country and Canada. I have met students from huge churches as well as small country parishes. By sharing our common experiences we also learn what is going on in other parts of the ELCA as well as in other denominations. Living in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, this has been a stimulating and exciting way to learn. Thanks to Select I am almost finished with my required

studies," said Janet West, McAllen, Texas. Select is offering the following courses:

Beginning September 22, 2008:

- (New!) Introducing the New Testament
- (New!) Getting Down to Basics: Studying the Augsburg Confession and Small Catechism
- From Jesus to Luther
- Money Leadership: Your Life with Money

Beginning in February, 2009:

- Systematic Theology: Fundamentals of Christian Thought
- (New!) Introducing the Old Testament
- Lutheran Heritage
- Spirituality: Invitation to a Closer Relationship with God
- Sent to Preach/Evangelization and Lutheran Worship
- Money Leadership: Your Life with Money

For more information go to www.selectlearning.org or contact Jodi Hanson, Director of Online Courses at jhanson@augie.edu.

Study guide online

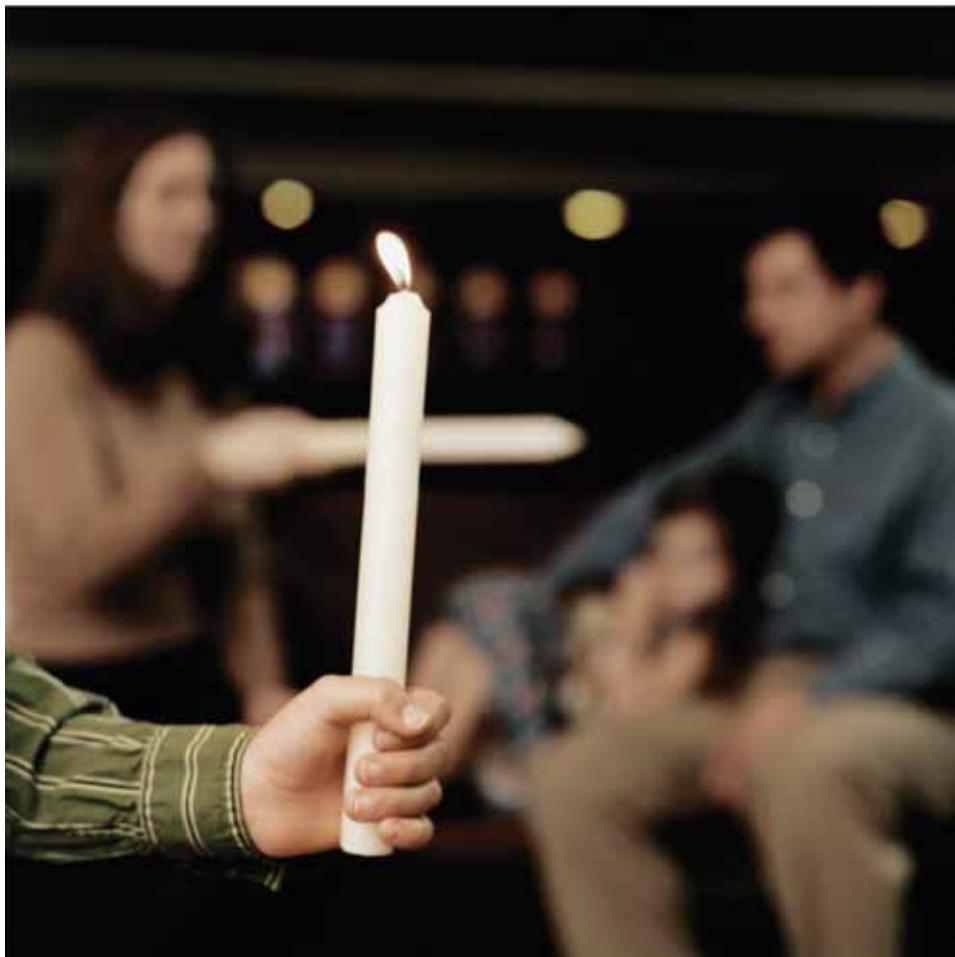
A study guide for group discussion of the Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality is now available to assist congregations. This study guide, made available by the ELCA Church in Society program unit, offers leaders a quick-start tool for getting into the draft. It outlines either a two- or three-session format that includes gathering and closing prayer, Bible readings, reference to key passages in the draft and questions to initiate discussions. The six-page study is online at www.elca.org/faithfuljourney.



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