

seeds for the parish

November-December 2009

Resource Paper for Leaders of ELCA Congregations

www.elca.org



Step out of the box and into a Lenten series

Life was not easy for the woman we now know as Julian of Norwich. Born in 1342 England, her childhood memories included the Black Death and peasant revolts.

Yet the writings of Julian are extremely optimistic. Her best-known quote, “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well,” exemplifies the hopefulness that characterizes this woman. And hope was not universally embodied in the popular theology of the time. In that bleak period we now call the Dark Ages, the church portrayed a God that was vengeful, who readily punished wicked sinners.

Julian of Norwich spoke of God’s love in terms of joy and compassion. Aside from her writings, notably her major work, *Revelations of Divine Love*, which is believed to be the first book written by a woman in the English language, little is known of Julian. Even her real name is not known to us. As was customary in those days, she adopted the name of her church, The Church of St. Julian in Norwich, where she lived a life of contemplative prayer.

Julian of Norwich was the topic of discussion for a Lenten series at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Los Alamos, New Mexico. Cynthia Biddlecomp, associate in ministry, led the dis-

cussion during “Lessons and Lentils,” a Lenten soup and study series offered during the lunch hour by the city congregation.

Bethlehem has offered the luncheon series, a departure from the traditional mid-week evening service, for over 15 years. Three people from the congregation bring soup and another donates bread. A group of 20 to 25 people, made up of retirees and office workers from the area, gather from 12:10 to 12:50 to eat and study such topics as Julian of Norwich. Last year the pastor led a discussion on Brother Lawrence.

Who would you like to reach or teach this Lenten season? If few working people are interested in Sunday morning adult forums, how about offering a luncheon series? If seniors do not want to venture out to a Wednesday evening service, why not offer a breakfast Bible study?

The congregation at Bethlehem has also taken part in an ecumenical series for more than 20 years. On Wednesday evenings one of the partner churches—a different denomination per week—hosts a simple Lenten supper followed by an evening of study and prayer. This series offers classes for all ages on four or five topics. Area congregations offer one class, per church, a week, from 6:40 to 7:20.

At 7:30 the entire group meets and concludes the service with a Holden evening prayer.

Here are a few ideas from other congregations that have added to their Lenten ministry:

First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Upper Sandusky, Ohio, serves a weekly men’s Lenten luncheon that features a different speaker each week, beginning on Ash Wednesday.

St. Paul Lutheran, Upper Sandusky, Ohio, hosts an ecumenical women’s luncheon. Congregations of diverse denominations provide the meal and a speaker every week.

Good Shepherd, Florham Park, N.J. hosts brown bag lunches. Those attending noon services are invited to bring a bag lunch. The congregation also hosts soup and bread dinners in the evening.

Zumbro Lutheran Congregation, Rochester, Minn. has hosted Lenten breakfasts for many years, with members giving talks about their personal faith journeys. These 20-minute talks have been compiled into books.

St. John’s Lutheran Church, Highland, Pa. offers three meals each Wednesday in Lent: a Bible-study breakfast, a luncheon after Lenten early service and a dinner with small group study prior to evening services.



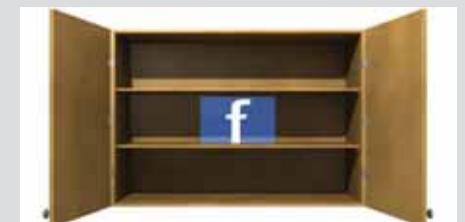
Why do we impose ashes?
Find out more about Ash Wednesday and worship resources. [Page 2](#)



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African harvest offering. Learn how missionaries in the Central African Republic spend Thanksgiving. [Page 4](#)



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A journey from death to life



As a team gathered by the ELCA worship unit considered how to renew this church's worship forms for Lent and the Three Days (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Vigil), they came to realize that it really was nothing less than a journey from death to life. This time of the church's year is laden with meaning for the Christian life and calls for worship services that can bear that weight.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW) provides such services based on patterns that have dramatically revealed the presence of God shown to Christian worshipers for centuries in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But how do you get to know these riches? How do you use these worship forms while taking into consideration the rich diversity, unique contexts and varied worship gifts of your congregation? How do you introduce them to your congregation? How do you *do* them?

That's the focus of a pair of new resources from Augsburg Fortress: *Worship Guidebook for Lent and the Three Days* (ISBN 978-0-8066-7041-6) and *Music Sourcebook for Lent and the*

Three Days (ISBN 978-0-8066-7040-9). The *Guidebook* was written by Ben Stewart, Gail Ramshaw, Mark Mummert, Liv Larson Andrews and Susan Briehl. Their work focuses on Ash Wednesday, the Sundays in Lent, Passion/Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Vigil of Easter. For each of these days or seasons, they provide:

- an invitation to the day;
- "Understanding the Day"—insights and history that help provide the "why" of the service;
- "Unfolding the Day"—the core of the resource, this surrounds the actual service texts from *ELW* with commentary, musical suggestions, practical how-to hints, visual and poetic enrichments;
- "The Stuff of Worship"—continuing in the practical vein, these are real hands-on aspects of making the services work in real-life situations.

The companion volume, *Music Sourcebook*, helps fill in the gaps in the places where *ELW* says something like, "Assembly song or other music may accompany . . ." While such openness can be inviting and invigorating, it can also be troubling: What sort of music is appropriate here? Where do I find it? The *Sourcebook*

can help. It provides acclamations and other assembly-based songs for the same services as the *Guidebook*. The composers include both well-known musicians in the Lutheran church and composers with new musical perspectives, including Marty Haugen, Anne Krentz Organ, Mark Mummert, Carolyn Jennings, Ike Sturm, Robert Buckley Farlee, Jay Fluellen, and many more. Also included are some established pieces that have proven to be useful in the life of the church.

The music itself is practical, intended for use in your assembly. All of it is based on assembly participation, sometimes with the help of a modest choir or a cantor, sometimes just with simple instrumental accompaniment. The collection is comprised of short acclamations, Taizé-like refrains for use during the imposition of ashes or footwashing, and a few longer pieces such as a beautiful new setting of the Easter Proclamation for the Vigil. With reproducible assembly parts included on a CD-ROM, this is indeed a valuable source for enriching your worship in this time.

Finally, don't forget the insights and suggestions provided in the *Using Evangelical Lutheran Worship* series, particularly *Keeping Time: The Church's Years*. (ISBN 978-0-8066-7016-4).

Lenten worship resources

Looking for resources for midweek Lenten worship? *Holden Evening Prayer* (published by GIA) is a popular choice. Many congregations are making good and creative use of the evening services in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Evening Prayer (p. 309) and Night Prayer (p. 320). The melodies are beautiful and the orders are adaptable to a wide range of circumstances.

The print edition of *Sundays and Seasons, Year C 2010*, contains suggestions for a flexible order of evening prayer for Lent including potential readings, psalms, song and sermon series based on Luther's Catechisms. Further

information about adapting an order of daily prayer for midweek Lenten services or other occasions can be found at www.elca.org/worship in the sidebar under "Resources, then Daily Prayer."

A new set of additional resources to consider is the volume *Holden Prayer Around the Cross* by Susan Briehl and Tom Witt (Augsburg Fortress ISBN 978-0-8066-9681-2) and its companion *Singing Our Prayer* resources (full music songbook, 978-0-8066-9683-6; assembly songbook, 978-0-8066-9682-9; audio CD, 978-0-8066-9684-3). While the basic handbook has been around a while, published by Holden

Village, this is a new, enlarged edition with 14 liturgies and many suggestions for conducting the services. The music options feature a wealth of short, simple pieces useful for these services as well as many other occasions.

For more information about the season of Lent, Palm/Passion Sunday, the Three Days and services of daily prayer, consult the third volume in the *Using Evangelical Lutheran Worship* series, *Keeping Time: The Church's Years*, which contains a wealth of information about the church year and daily prayer.

Worship planning resources for the new church year

Sundays and Seasons 2010, follows the readings from the Revised Common Lectionary to enrich worship preparation with a variety of seasonal and weekly reflections, prayers of intercessions music suggestions, and more. The *Sundays and Seasons 2010, Year C* print resource offers a brief summary of Lukan motifs as an introduction to planning for the new lectionary year.

The *Worship Planning Calendar, Year C, 2010* serves as a planning guide, appointment

calendar and guide to daily prayer. (ISBN 978-0-8066-7131-4, \$20)

Words for Worship 2010, Year C, CD-ROM edition, contains texts and graphical files with content from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. It also includes week-to-week elements from *Lectionary for Worship, Year C, Revised Common Lectionary*; *Sundays and Seasons 2010* and the *Psalter for Worship Year C*.

Occasional services

Evangelical Lutheran Worship Occasional Services for the Assembly, the second volume of occasional services, readings and prayers, will be available November 2009. New resources in this volume include a Blessing and Sending for Mission appropriately used for either members of the assembly or collections gathered by the congregation for use in mission and a combined Holy Baptism and Affirmation of Baptism service. (\$65, Available from Augsburg Fortress, www.augsburgfortress.org)

A word about ashes

Why does the church impose ashes on Ash Wednesday when Jesus clearly said, "But when you fast, put oil on your head, and wash your face" (Matthew 6:17)?

Ashes are a paradoxical symbol in the church. They represent our two co-existing realities. We are dust and we will die. At the same time, we are saints, redeemed by the grace shown to us in our baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. An ash cross is traced on our forehead in the same location as the cross of Christ is traced in baptism, sometimes with oil. Therefore, we mark the beginning of Lent with the recognition that we are mortal sinners who need the grace of God we receive in baptism.

seeds for the **parish**

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Celtic worship service



Bishop Elizabeth Eaton

People gather for worship on a Sunday evening. There aren't as many present as there were earlier in the day, when the sanctuary was full with members going about the hustle and bustle of Sunday morning.

Tonight there is a different feel to the gathering. It's more sedate, contemplative. Twilight has given way to evening; candles are lit to stave off the encroaching shadows.

A welcome is given, a prayer is said, scripture is read, someone recites poetry, the note of a flute hangs in the air, and then silence.

"When I was still in the parish we offered Celtic Christian worship on Sunday evenings once a month," recalls the Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, bishop of the Northeastern Ohio Synod. "I got the idea from a story I read in *Seeds for the Parish* about a congregation in Pennsylvania that used Celtic worship."

Bishop Eaton, who is of Irish and Romanian descent, was attracted to the idea of a Celtic service. "It is a service of the ancient church. Nothing 'new,' it is worship people practiced long ago." For Eaton it was "another kind of worship service, for those who like prayer."

Celtic Christianity developed in Ireland after St. Patrick introduced Christianity there in 432 A.D. The Celts, a nature-loving people, preferred the oral tradition to the written and they delighted in stories that engaged their imaginations and their senses. They embraced Christianity with its parables, stories, poetry, songs, visual symbols and community.

They considered nature and creation sacred and recognized as equal the giftedness of women and men, whether lay or clerical.

The Celtic service is contemplative, without a sermon. Worshipers commune with God through prayers, poetry, litanies, scripture readings, music and silence.

"I found the Celtic service to be a good addition to our worship schedule," said Eaton. "It wasn't a substitution, taking the place of another service, but an addition. This type of service is not for everyone. Not all members of the congregation will come to this service, but for those who want a break from all the business of life, it gives them time to spend in worship, to be a part of the mystery."

A Celtic service can be used during Lent. According to Eaton, "In a society that says 'indulge yourself now and all the time,' the simple service makes room for God." It can be a time of renewal, study, prayer and self-examination.

"There are a lot of resources available for

those interested in this type of worship," said Eaton. For the services at her congregation she used:

- prayers and blessings from *Carmina Gadelica*, collected and translated by folklorist Alexander Carmichael;
- the writings of C.S. Lewis, the Irish-born writer, academic and lay theologian;
- settings and music from *With One Voice*. There is also a wealth of material in the new *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*;
- *A Celtic Primer: The Complete Celtic Worship Resource and Collection* by Brendan O'Malley; and
- contemporary poetry readings.



Prayer at Rising

Bless to me, O God,
Each thing mine eye sees;
Bless to me, O God,
Each sound mine ear hears;
Bless to me, O God,
Each odour that goes to my nostrils,
Bless to me, O God,
Each taste that goes to my lips,
Each note that goes to my song,
Each ray that guides my way,
Each thing that I pursue.
Each lure that tempts my will,
The zeal that seeks my living soul.
The Three that seek my heart,
The zeal that seeks my living soul,
The Three that seek my heart.

— from *Carmina Gadelica*

Tell us your story

Stories captivate our hearts and awaken our imaginations. They take us into the lives of others, here and around the world, and show us things we've never seen before. They express our feelings, our joys and our sorrows. We relate to each other with stories.

There's a reason we go to the movies: to see stories in action. There's a reason we tell stories to our children at bedtime. Since the dawn of history, children have been thrilled, taught, inspired, warned and entertained by stories. We are changed by their message and moved by their insights.

Jesus taught with stories. In fact, the entire Bible tells us the story of God. The Bible also tells us about special individuals and their unique stories. Have you ever noticed

that no two people experience God in the same way, no two stories are the same?

We are interested in your story. Make no mistake, you are a storyteller, whether you're a pastor, teacher, writer, artist, administrator, health care worker. You have a story and we would like to hear it.

The feature stories printed in this section of *Seeds for the Parish* report on an individual's work, achievements and contributions to this church. E-mail your story ideas to stories@elca.org.



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Thanksgiving in the Central African Republic

ELCA missionary, Pastor Deborah Troester, writes the following account about Thanksgiving in Africa on her blog at <http://africanwaterlog.blogspot.com>

“Osoko, Jesu, Osoko!” (Thank you, Jesus, thank you!) sings the choir of young people as they march into the sanctuary, swaying to the beat of their thanksgiving song.

In Baboua, Central African Republic (CAR), it is the time of the Don de Récolte, the Harvest Offering. Like our Thanksgiving celebrations, it is a harvest festival, when congregations bring in the best of their harvest, plus a special offering, to thank God for the blessings of the past year, especially for good crops and food on their tables. Women wearing colorful floor-length African dresses come bearing dishes full of manioc or a large bunch of bananas to place before the altar. Men dressed in long robes, or in their best T-shirts and jeans, bring their envelopes containing a special monetary gift

for the Thanksgiving Offering. Little children, led by their Sunday school teachers, file down the aisle, clutching their few francs to deposit in the plastic offering basket. One little girl, about three years old, has to be persuaded to let go of her money and drop it in!

At the Tongo Lutheran Church in Baboua, the entire congregation waits as the money is being counted. As a choir sings to the accompaniment of drums and rhythm instruments, deaconesses serve coffee and bananas. This church stops and to take a coffee break during the service. Not a bad idea because this service lasted three hours. At last the good news is announced: the total offer-



ing comes to over \$300. “What an offering!” exclaims the president of the congregation. Everyone cheers. This will ensure that the work of the church can continue for another year.

The lay pastor will receive his small salary and perhaps the congregation will even be able to afford to buy communion wine. Offerings are taken every Sunday, of course, but the Thanksgiving offering helps to carry the church through the dry season (November through May), when times are leaner and food is not as plentiful.

As you celebrate Thanksgiving this year, remember your brothers and sisters in the Central African Republic, and rejoice with them that the God of the harvest is good.

Pastor Troester teaches Greek and English

at the Theological School in Baboua, where she lives with her husband Joe and daughter Christa.

Joe is the technical advisor for a water management project, PASE (the French acronym for Project for Water Resource Management). This project is a program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in CAR and is sponsored in part by the ELCA. PASE seeks to provide safe drinking water through construction and maintenance of wells, spring boxes and slow-sand filters, while also teaching good hygiene practices that can lessen water-borne illnesses.

Again, to read more about the Troesters and their ministry visit their blog <http://africanwaterlog.blogspot.com>.

To learn more about ELCA missionaries—who they are and where they work—visit www.elca.org/globalmission.

Study Bibles go to Lutherans in Guyana

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana (ELCG) was founded in 1743 and is the second oldest Lutheran church in South America. Located on the northeast coast of South America, Guyana is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the north, Venezuela to the west, Brazil to the south and west and Suriname (formerly Dutch Guiana) to the east.

The Guyana Mission Network (GMN) is one of several North American groups who assist the ELCG in various ways. They focus, among other things, on providing Bibles and study materials for the church. Upon the publication of the new *Lutheran Study Bible (LSB)*, the GMN promptly sent 40 copies this summer for the pastors, deacons/deaconesses and lay leaders-in-training for the diaconate. In April, copies of the study Bible were presented on behalf of Wartburg Theological Seminary to President Errol Inshanally and Samuel J. Goolsarran, during their visit to St. Paul, Minn..

An interesting connection with the *Lutheran Study Bible* is that the Rev. Dr. Winston D. Persaud, born, baptized, confirmed and ordained in Guyana and now an ELCA pastor and professor of systematic theology at Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, wrote the article in the *LSB* (pp. 1547ff) titled “The Bible and God’s Mission.” Dr. Persaud, who is co-director of the GMN along with the Rev. Paul A. Tidemann, begins the article with, “God’s Word in the Bible has come to us shaped by and bearing the marks of a diversity of cultures, competing religious worldviews

and tribal and ethnic distinctiveness and intermixing.”

Since the 1920s, the ELCG has partnered with North American missionaries who have come for terms of various lengths to serve the church there. Currently, the Rev. Dr. Richard Young, M.D., a pastor and medical doctor, is the only ELCA missionary serving in Guyana.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana began a new program in 2006 called the Lutheran Lay Academy to meet its needs for effective ministry and mission. The church does not have as many ordained pastors as in the past, so it has begun a training program to enable the laity to serve in a diaconate for the church and, after a period of training, some of those certified as members of the diaconate will be authorized by the church to provide word and sacrament ministry under the supervision of a pastor. In 2008, 20 lay leaders completed the first set of courses.

The GMN has been providing not only *Lutheran Study Bibles* for those in training, but also other theological and biblical study books, including copies of *Everyone Bible Study* by N. T. Wright.

In addition to providing *Lutheran Study Bibles* in 2009, during the last several years the GMN has provided about 100 *Good News Bibles* for the use of ELCG congregation members. The church’s Christian education department has distributed these Bibles to those who need them.

The GMN began in 1990 as an effort by several people, including Dr. Persaud and Pastor Tidemann, with roots and missionary service in Guyana. Pastor Persaud served an ELCG parish for some years after completing a Ph.D. degree in theology at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. He returns to Guyana every year to visit family members and the churches of the ELCG. Pastor Tidemann, an Lutheran Church in America missionary in Guyana, 1974–78, returned for visits to Guyana while he served St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minn. until his retirement in 2006. For more information go to www.guyanamissionnetwork.com

In the intervening years, the GMN has served alongside with and in support of the efforts of the ELCA Global Mission unit to provide support and resources for the ELCG, including the editing and publication of a revised and expanded *Lutheran Service Book and Hymnal* for the church in Guyana, which was made available in 1993 when the ELCG celebrated its 250th anniversary.

Now, the *Lutheran Study Bible* is a most welcome resource for God’s mission in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana.

Engagement in Israel and Palestine

In August, the ELCA churchwide assembly lifted up Israeli–Palestinian peace as a priority, voting 690-125 to reaffirm several tasks related to the churchwide strategy for engagement in Israel and Palestine.

The assembly highlighted the ELCA’s commitment to awareness-building, accompaniment and advocacy, as well as the need to:

- demonstrate balanced care for all;
- learn about the experiences of both sides in the conflict;
- dispel stereotypes;
- support non-violent action;
- address humanitarian concerns, especially in Gaza;
- support U.S. funding that promotes peace; and
- continue to pray for the people of the region.

Comments about how the ELCA can best fulfill these tasks, especially by working with synods and congregations, are welcome at peacenotwallsinfo@elca.org.

ELCA members are urged to contact elected officials with a message of support for bold U.S. leadership to achieve Israeli–Palestinian peace. To stay informed, sign up at www.elca.org/peacenotwalls for the Middle East Network newsletter.

Seasons of Life

by Joy Newcom

Not long after moving to Texas in 1986, I discovered that the rhythm of my life followed a steady four-season beat. As the southern summer moved into a time I came to think of as “not summer,” I began to grieve for what I now understand I missed: the distinct crispness of an Iowa autumn with its burnt umber farm fields and dark, frosty mornings.

My life, I realized, relied on the dependability of changing seasons for an intrinsic wake-up call. “Hey, life doesn’t wait for anyone,” the shorter days of the year seemed to say. “The earth needs time to focus on basics, and you probably do too.”

What I discovered as a personal truth then, remains true today. I rely on a divinely ordered changing of seasons as a way to renew and reconnect.

Those of us who have matured to the pace of both a seasonal and a liturgical calendar may take for granted the well-ordered-yet-never-the-same way that our lives intersect with the Divine. Whether it’s nature reminding us to focus on being alive, or Scripture calling us to focus on living, the steady push and pull of life calls us to give ourselves over to what might come next.

Because my lineage is full of farmers, I have sense enough not to speak about unfamiliar agricultural things. However, I’ve been told a lot happens deep in the soil during the coldest parts of a year—things necessary for a robust growing season once the sun begins to rise high above the earth again. One of the most helpful things is the rotting of organic material like leaves and fallen fruit. The decomposing vegetation enriches fields and flowerbeds that lie beneath winter snows. We can’t easily see this mostly hidden process, but we can see evidence of its good work each spring.

The soil waits for its time to sprout new life once more just as I wait for divine rebirth during dark and seemingly dormant days when I feel as if faith has faded.

Perhaps my most fascinating discovery is that Lent often finds me outside the bounds of the liturgical calendar. I’ve learned that the process of moving from dormancy and decay to recovery and renewal isn’t restricted to the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. Lenten-like awakenings have come during the heady days of college life, in every stage of married life, by the hospital bed

of my oldest son, at a performance of my youngest son’s choir, around our dining room table, behind the steering wheel of my car, next to a person I once thought of as strange and in countless other places where the longings of my heart have overtaken the hope that does not disappoint.

During my life’s Lenten encounters, I’ve benefitted from times of deep, internal decay—seasons of time where I relinquish ill-fitting dreams and philosophies to a natural death that enriches new fruit for new seasons.

The wonder of this opportunity for regular rebirth is a prospect I both welcome and fear. Yet there’s no escaping its divine pervasiveness. I now understand that just as summer fades into fall, and winter melts into spring, the seasons of my life move with a distinct ebb and flow that says, “Don’t waste time. Each day is filled with moments that ripen then decay—so celebrate now, even as you anticipate what’s yet to come.”

It’s been two decades since we moved back to Iowa—back to landscapes that showcase each month of the year better than any calendar can. This autumn finds me wrestling with the frustrations that accompany big life transitions. My 18-year-old son graduated high school and now needs to find a job compatible with his physical and intellectual disabilities; my 14-year-old son began high school, dating and driving all within the span of two months; my husband teaches at a college that’s being acquired by another educational institution; and a risky major career change I made six months ago is now drawing to a close.

Everywhere I look, life seems to be saying, “Let go of the past. Its seeds can bring forth new fruit in a new season.” And so I wait with Lenten wonder, feeling the promise of new life just under the soil of refreshed faith.

May autumn moments in your life lead to Lenten encounters that bring forth new fruit in God’s time—no matter what date your calendar shows.

Q&A

The “Seeds for the Parish” editor recently asked ELCA Facebook members: Do you fast during Lent? If so, what do you “give up” and why?



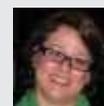
This past Lent I gave up sweets of any kind: desserts, candy and particularly ice cream—my greatest weakness.

—Richard Shelton



“Change your heart, not your waist!” A wise priest once told me that, and ever since, I started to do something during Lent rather than give up food. Volunteer at a local food pantry, daily devotions during Lent, help a neighbor ...

—Becca Curran



Last year I gave up GOSSIP for Lent: an eye-opening experience. We are not always present with our words; we often speak and think about it later. When I did this, I had to think about everything before I spoke to determine whether it was considered gossip or not, and because my co-workers knew I was doing this, it became a collective experience.

—Kelly Kulp



Not anymore. I have turned it around and made Lent a time of “adding” to my routine—healthy choices. I add exercise, Bible reading, prayer time and healthier foods.

—Chris Hale



I encourage people to “give up” time and do service projects—new ones that they have never done before. Our youth group did “honey do” projects for people around the community and they LOVED doing it! We met each Saturday from 9:00 to noon. It was quite an inspirational experience.

—Pastor Patsy Perkins Koeneke



I do give up a few things, like anger and negativity towards others. I also have begun taking part in the Daniel fast [eating only fruits and vegetables] as a way to show myself how fortunate I am because I can survive on much less. Additionally, I take on some project, usually for children or the elderly.

—Stephanie V. Ammons

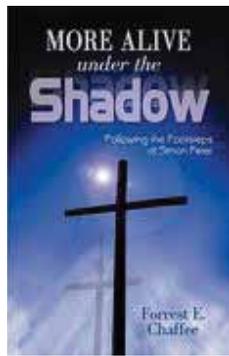


I do a Scripture needlework project and add reading during Lent.

—Susie Jordan

Editor’s note: if you would like to join in on the ELCA Facebook Fan Page you can find us at www.facebook.com/lutherans.

A Lenten Bible study



More Alive under the Shadow: Following the Footsteps of Simon Peter, by Forrest E. Chaffee, examines Peter's life as recorded in the New Testament. This book deals with forgiveness, boldness, loyalty and acceptance. With

study questions included, this is a resource for small group study, sermon preparation or personal reflection.

Author Forrest Chaffee served as a parish pastor in congregations in Minnesota and Iowa for over 40 years and retired in 1996. He was then an interim pastor in five other ELCA congregations. He helped establish a new mission in Adel, Iowa, and also taught Old Testament, New Testament and church history at Gustavus Adolphus College.

More Alive under the Shadow is available from CSS Publishing Company (www.csspub.com), 517 S. Main Street, Lima, Ohio 45804, 800-241-4056, ext. 138. ISBN: 0788026119, \$12.95.

ELCA Good Gifts for the holidays

The search for the perfect gift ends here. The new, 20-page *ELCA Good Gifts Catalog* offers many different ways to honor friends and loved ones with gifts in their names.



With more than 65 different giving options, there is a perfect ELCA Good Gift for everyone. A gift of \$10 could provide a family living in poverty with 10 chicks to start an egg business. Or a gift of \$125 could support a future leader of this church by providing a week of seminary tuition.

The *ELCA Good Gifts Catalog* is great for birthdays, anniversaries and Christmas. It's also a great resource for your congregation, Sunday school classes and youth groups. Adults can use the catalog for special fundraisers, events and projects.

Order a copy of the catalog at www.augsburgfortress.org/elcahunger or 800-638-3522. Shop the online catalog at www.elca.org/goodgifts.

Super Bowl of Caring is February 7, 2010

On Sunday, February 7, 2010, nearly 100 million Americans are expected to tune in to watch the Super Bowl. Many of them will be hosting or attending parties with abundant food, friendship and fellowship. At the same time, nearly 1 billion people around the world will be hungry—some worrying about staying warm, finding shelter and securing the next meal.

This Super Bowl Sunday, Lutheran youth are doing something to change all of that.

The “Souper Bowl of Caring” is a youth-led ecumenical and grassroots movement that unites youth under a single cause: to end hunger. Collectively, this movement raised \$10.2 million for hunger-related charities in 2009. But that's not all. These youth also collected more than 4.5 million pounds of food and provided countless hours of service.

ELCA congregations are encouraged to join more than 2,000 Lutheran youth groups that annually participate in the Souper Bowl of Caring. It's easy to get involved—congregational efforts may include raising funds, collecting canned goods or organizing a service event.

One hundred percent of the money raised

is donated to the hunger-related charity of your choice. This Super Bowl, consider sending financial gifts to support ELCA World Hunger. Your gifts support the projects of this church that respond to the root causes of hunger and poverty in over 50 countries—including hundreds of food pantries and soup kitchens right here in the United States. What an incredible way to make a worldwide impact.

Getting started is easy.

1) **REGISTER** online at www.souperbowl.org or by calling 1-800-358-SOUP(7687) to receive a free starter kit and begin your Souper Bowl of Caring preparations.

2) **COLLECT** donations on, or near, Super Bowl Sunday (February 7, 2010).

3) **REPORT** your results to be included in the national total.

4) **DONATE** your collection to ELCA World Hunger (P.O. Box 71764, Chicago, IL 60694-1764) or the hunger-related charity of your choice.

Ideas for your Congregation

Fund-raising

- Prepare and serve a soup and sandwich luncheon after worship on Super Bowl Sunday and take a free-will offering.
- Collect a “noisy offering” by collecting change, bills and checks in metal soup pots.
- Invite members to tithe (offer 10 percent) of the amount they will spend on Super Bowl festivities.
- Challenge members to give a gift in the amount of their favorite NFL player's number. For example, if their favorite football player is Brian Urlacher (#54) of the Chicago Bears, their gift should equal \$54.
- Label two soup pots for the two football teams playing in the Super Bowl. Allow members of the congregation to place donations in the pot that represents the team they're cheering for. The pot with the most donations “wins.”

First call DVD

Becoming a Vital First Call Congregation, a new DVD resource and discussion guide, is now available. This resource is especially relevant for congregations that are in pastoral transitions and that might consider calling seminary graduates to their first call in public ministry.

Through a grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc., researchers from ELCA Vocation and Education program unit spent time in 14 “exemplary” first call congregations nomi-

nated by their synods. From the resulting case studies, we now have useful information about congregational practices and perspectives that lead to healthy and life-giving first calls. Several lay leaders speak honestly and articulately about their experiences with a first call congregation.

These congregational leaders' comments are organized around key themes that emerged across the case studies: nurturing, connecting, flexibility, partner relationships

and spirituality. Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson provides encouraging remarks to introduce this resource.

A packet with the DVD and accompanying discussion guide is available for \$10 to cover material and mailing costs. To order this packet, please call 800-638-3522, ext. 2700, or borrow a loaner copy from your local Resource Center.

Welcome Them Home, Help Them Heal

“War is hell,” and many of the veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq have been to the abyss and are now returning with wounds and scars that cannot be seen.

Physical, psychological and spiritual wounds affect people in different ways. Just as no two veterans have the same war experience, they do not all have the same experience dealing with coming home.

Churches are in a position to help. With coaching and support, pastors, parish nurses,

congregational members, family and friends can be invaluable to returning veterans.

The intent of a new handbook, *Welcome Them Home, Help Them Heal: Pastoral Care and Ministry with Service Members Returning from War*, is to help church leaders and members:

- identify common post-deployment-related symptoms and reactions;
- develop skills for helping veterans and their families;

- make referrals and advocate for soldiers within current military systems; and
- take positive action steps (e.g., promote a congregational climate for healing or provide assistance to veterans during and after the referral process).

Welcome Them Home is a publication of the pastoral ministry of Elim Lutheran Church of Blackhoof, Barnum, Minn. For more information visit www.welcomethemhomebook.com.

Get involved, advocate hospitality

Jesus had no place to lay his head. He said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9:58).

Millions of migrants, refugees and displaced people also have no real home. Ecumenical Advocacy Days offer the chance to join hundreds of faith-based advocates in supporting legislation that will welcome immigrants, protect refugees and prevent displacement. This gathering includes worship, study, dialogue with other people of faith and advocacy to members of Congress to address these global injustices. The 2010 Ecumenical Advocacy Days conference will be held March 19–22 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Crystal City, Va., outside Washington, D.C. For more information about Ecumenical Advocacy Days and scholarship opportunities, visit www.elca.org/advocacy and select the "Get Involved" tab.

New Select classes

Select Multimedia Resources offers online courses for continuing education, associate in ministry candidacy and a variety of certification processes. *Taking the course online is also a great way to prepare for using the course in the congregation.* Here are the courses for winter 2010.

Beginning in February 2010:

- Introduction to the Old Testament
- Lutheran Heritage
- 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.

Use *Stories of Faith in Action* for Mission Sundays

Congregations across the country are using inspiring examples from *Stories of Faith in Action* in bulletin inserts, temple talks and as weekly devotional guides.

Stories of Faith in Action tells readers where their weekly donations go. Using stories about actual ELCA members and congregations.

Stories from this free publication may also be used during worship on Mission Sundays, Jan. 17, 2010, April 18, 2010 and Oct. 10, 2010.

For more information visit www.elca.org/stories.

To order free copies (plus shipping) of *Stories of Faith in Action* phone 800-328-4648 and request Item 001403.

Holy Land youth mission

The ELCA Southeast Michigan Synod, ELCA Global Mission unit and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land invite young people ages 15 (entering sophomore year in high school) through age 22 to participate in a new Holy Land initiative.

The initiative grew out of Southeast Michigan Synod's tradition of Holy Land trips for youth. The synod is inviting other ELCA synods to send youth and have them join in a leadership and peace-building in the Holy Land July 8–22, 2010. Ecumenical and interfaith participation is also encouraged.

For more information call the Rev. Julie Rowe 800-638-3522, ext. 2720.

Mountaintop mining

During Lent, it is important to remind members of the connection between our human bondage to



sin and the creation's bondage to decay—and of God's liberating work in Christ. Creation's bondage may be readily seen in the practice of mountaintop removal coal mining. In Appalachia, such mining provides jobs in one of our country's poorest regions, but does so at the expense of the land, water and community. In 1999, the ELCA churchwide assembly adopted a social policy resolution expressing great concern about the destructive practice of mountaintop mining. It urged advocacy to end this practice and the development of alternative energy sources to spur job growth and to boost the economy in the Appalachian region and beyond.

What can you do?

Contact your Congressional representative and senators, asking them to cosponsor bills limiting the practice of mountaintop removal mining. Urge your senators to support climate and energy legislation that invests in clean, renewable sources of energy and creates new "green" jobs for coal miners and others.

More information is available at www.elca.org/advocacy.

Teaching children about Lent

Here are several suggestions to help congregations and families involve children in Lent. Each activity is easily adaptable for Sunday school classes, congregational events, mid-week ministry and for use in the home.

Lent is a time to teach about discipleship in the ministry of Jesus. *Here Comes Jesus!* is an **intergenerational learning** model that can be used as a Lenten congregational event. Consider picking one activity to use each week leading up to Easter Sunday. Visit www.elca.org/ce/programplanner_2002.

Involve children in preparing "**sackcloth**" **Lenten reminders**. Cut bookmark-shaped pieces of burlap, and paint "Psalm 51" on each one (or attach small pieces of paper or ribbon with the scripture reference written on them). Invite children to greet each Ash Wednesday worshiper with this daily reminder of the Lenten journey.

On Ash Wednesday, **bury the Alleluia** with children using the "Witness Rock" recipe found in conjunction with *My Word! The Bible for Everyone*, the 2009 Christian Education planner. Make enough rocks to share with everyone in worship on Easter Sunday. Find the directions at www.elca.org/ce/programplanner_2009.

Traditionally Christians use Lent as a time to "give up" something. Before Lent begins, invite children to help create a list of 40 creative **Daily Lenten Living** giving opportunities for individuals or families.



Here's a starter list of ideas:

- For every pair of socks in your bedroom, contribute a nickel.
- Contribute a dime for each year of your age.
- For each meal and snack you eat, contribute a penny.
- As you begin the evening meal, contribute a nickel for each lamp turned on in your house.

Distribute (or post on the congregation's Web site or in your newsletter) a calendar listing one idea for each day in Lent beginning with Ash Wednesday. Consider ordering ELCA World Hunger Coin Boxes for each household. Packages of 25 are free, except for shipping, from www.augsburgfortress.org/elcahunger.

On Palm Sunday or Easter Sunday, gather in the collective contributions and send to

ELCA World Hunger, P.O. Box 71764, Chicago, IL 60694. Children may be especially pleased to see their Lenten offerings go to God's Global Barnyard. Visit www.elca.org/goodgifts for more information.

Create a **Lenten tableau**. Assign Sunday school classes or families one aspect of the passion story from Palm Sunday to the Resurrection. Provide poster board, banner materials or another creative medium. Vary this idea by using only one object such as a palm branch, basin and towel, etc. accompanied by a small paragraph of explanation and Scripture reference. Each Sunday in Lent, add one poster or item to the tableau placed in the narthex, sanctuary or other prominent location in your facility.

Use the **Discipleship calendar** to help families engage in faith practices, or let Sunday school classes and families use it as a guide to create their own Lenten calendar. Download the calendar or order packs of 25 at www.elca.org/ce/programplanner_2007.

Before and After Easter, by Debbie Trafton O'Neal, offers **40 wonderful activities and ideas** involving children in the home and congregation during Lent. It's available from Augsburg Fortress Publishers at www.augsburgfortress.org.

Visit Creative Communications for the Parish at www.creativecommunications.com for additional devotional ideas and resources to help you involve children in Lent.



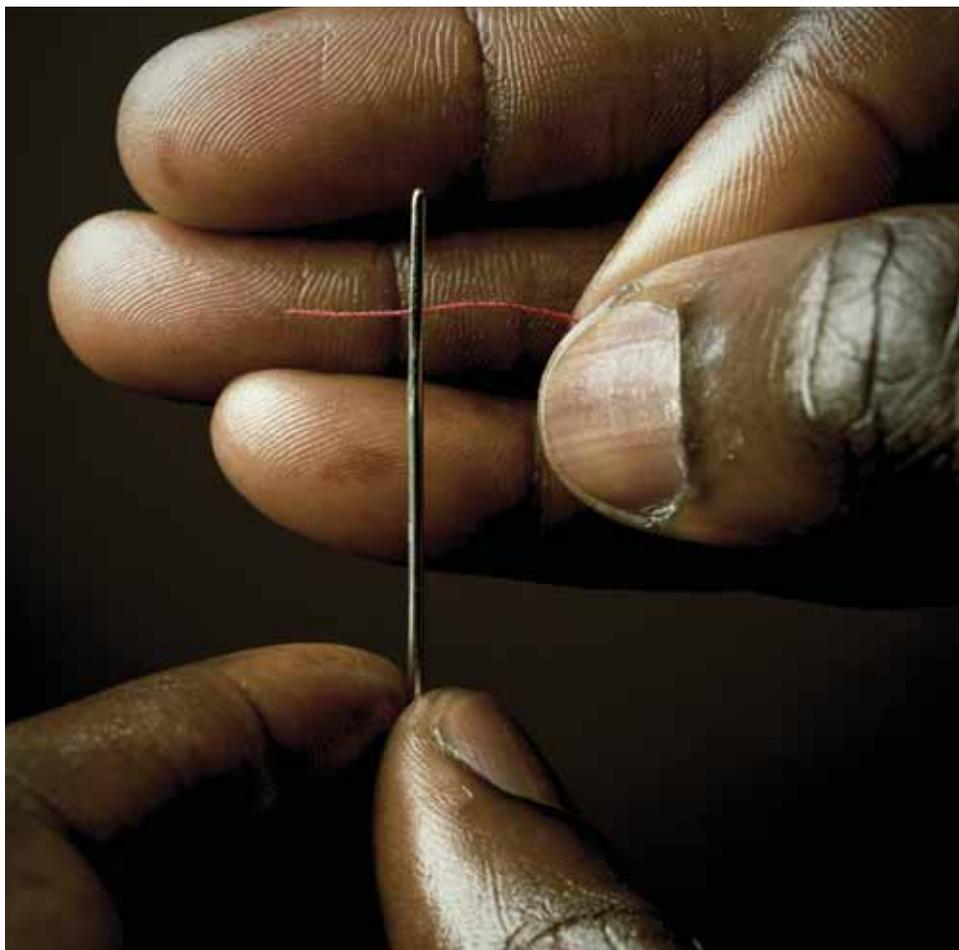
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Take the first step of your Lenten
journey with this issue of
Seeds for the Parish.



Our loans help blanket the world in love.

Since we gave New Promise Lutheran Church a loan to build its first building in 2008, this fledgling Utah congregation has given Lutheran World Relief 300 handmade quilts for refugees and disaster victims. That's why the Mission Investment Fund exists: to help build the church — and share God's love — by making building and renovation loans to ELCA congregations and related ministries. Doing this isn't just our business. It's our calling. And that makes all the difference. **To learn more, contact us at 877.886.3522 or elca.org/mif.**



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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.