seeds for the parish

January–February 2010 | Resource Paper for Leaders of ELCA Congregations | www.elca.org

Good health strengthens ministry

Health is on the tip of the nation's tongue these days. Health insurance reform, influenza, depression, childhood obesity, the plight of the uninsured … these top a long list of challenging, health-related topics. But there's a bright spot.

Each of us is a steward of gifts given. As a new creation in Christ, we can take steps, today, to change our lifestyle. As individuals, family members, neighbors and congregational leaders, we can work—to the best of our ability—to be healthier in mind, body and spirit.

This attention to health has a positive impact, not just on our own lives, but on the lives of those around us. There's a reason why we at the ELCA Board of Pensions are always saying "Healthy leaders enhance lives." Good health enables each of us, as leaders, to minister more effectively for the sake of the world.

And that's not a message reserved just for rostered leaders and others in leadership positions. ELCA congregations and their pastors shape ministry together—which makes their collective health so important. A pastor will find it difficult to be healthy in an unhealthy congregation and vice versa.

What can congregational leaders do to begin work on their collective health? Try these no-cost first steps.

VISIT "LIVE WELL," *www.elcabop.org/livewell.*

Take a Web tour of the ELCA's conversation about living well as whole people in Christ. Grow your understanding of what wellness in the ELCA is all about.

- Find the list of 10 reasons to live well in the ELCA.
- Learn about the Wholeness Wheel, an assessment tool and representation of whole-person health.
- Consider Live Well's five powerful questions starting with "Who is your wellness hero?"
- Explore what members of the ELCA community are saying about wellness. In addition to the sizable collection of Wellness Voices, read articles, book reviews, small steps and ministry tools shared by members of the ELCA community. Pass on what you like to your congregation via Web link or reprint.

Highlights:

- Parish Nurse Becky Elsbernd's Wellness Voice, "Walking the planet together," describes the many benefits her Mason City, Iowa, congregation realized by using a walking tool during Lent.
- The article "Congregation pieces together wholeness," submitted by Pastor Elizabeth Liggett and Vicar Bob Hoffman, describes how they introduced the Wholeness Wheel to their congregation during Lent. Under Wellness resources, then Ministry tools, find the sermons they delivered as part of this series.
- Check out the "Small Steps" contributions. Working on your health doesn't have to be complicated.

SUBSCRIBE TO "HEALTHY LEADERS" e-newsletter.

Working to encourage wellness in your community or congregation can be an uphill process. It's easy to begin to wonder, "Are my efforts making a difference?" This free monthly e-newsletter published by the Board of Pensions lets you know you're not alone. You get a heads-up whenever a new wellness tool or resource is available on Live Well. Subscribe while on the Live Well site (*www.elcabop.org/livewell*).

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Healing in the worshiping assembly

In worship, we celebrate and experience the gift of salvation from God in Jesus Christ. Although it is tempting to think of that salvation solely in terms of forgiveness of sin and eternal life in heaven, the salvation we receive as a gift is also for the sake of our abundant life every day.

But how do we encounter that gift of abundant life in times of sickness? The Latin root of salvation is *salus* which means "health" or "wholeness." That is, the gift of salvation is a gift of healing and wholeness, comfort in times of suffering and love embodied in the community of faith. These are gifts that we encounter in worship and in which we experience the presence of God in word and sacrament, and hear the promise of salvation.

In this time when we fear the possibility of an influenza pandemic, it may seem practical to avoid the risk of contagion inherent in any gathering of people, including worship. However, the gift of salvation—of wholeness and healing—urges us to come together to experience the body of Christ wherein there is healing and wholeness. Paradoxically we search for wholeness and healing in a place of community where many would point to the risk of contamination and the spread of pathogens. Rather than seeing one another as carriers of sickness that may infect our individual bodies, we are boldly gathered together as the body of Christ for the sake of the salvation of the world.

Yet our lives are full of the paradox of living fully in the presence of God while also living fully in the world, with its dangers and risks. In times of public health dangers, local worshiping communities need to make decisions about worship practice that reflect both the nature and meaning of the assembly at worship and make sense in their communal reality.

How should congregations make decisions about their worship life in times of public health concerns? Here is some guidance:

Common sense

Common sense should prevail as the community gathers for worship in order to avoid the unnecessary exposure of others to pathogens while maintaining the integrity of the meaning, gestures and actions of the body of Christ assembled for worship.

Most importantly, encourage those who are ill with the flu—clergy or laity—to stay home. In a leader's absence, the community will be adaptable to changes in leadership.

Passing the peace

The passing of the peace is an integral way that the assembly recognizes the presence of Christ in their midst. It is a powerful moment that should not be overwhelmed by fear and eliminated from the worship service. The presider can suggest how the assembly could greet one another in ways that capture the significance of the gesture while minimizing the risk of sharing disease. The verbal greeting paired with a reverent bow or another appropriate gesture may be suggested. Alternatively, congregations may offer hand sanitizers for use by the assembly after the passing of the peace by placing sanitizer bottles at the ends of pews, in pew racks or under chairs.

Holy Communion

Formed into a single body of Christ around the table, we taste the promises of sustenance, healing and forgiveness as a community. We are joined to the body of Christ to be the body of Christ for the sake of the world—a mission that involves responding to the needs of the hurting and broken community. When we gather for the meal, we do so publicly with a confident faith, not cowering in fear.

But the actions of sharing communion in worship are at the center of our concerns about sickness. Again, common sense precautions that honor the sacrament and minimize unnecessary risk of infection should be considered by each worshiping community. Ensure that:

- servers of the meal wash their hands before distributing the elements;
- all communion vessels are washed in hot water with disinfectant soap following each use;
- the options for serving bread and wine are considered in order to balance both the significance of communion and health concerns; and
- if individuals are particularly hesitant about the communion elements for health reasons, assure them that the crucified and risen Christ is fully present in the one element of the body (wafer). (See *The Use of the Means of Grace*, Application 44C *www.elca.org/worship*, then Learning Center.)

Fellowship

During times of heightened public health concern, worship leaders should avoid the practice of shaking hands with every member of the assembly after the service. As in the sharing of the peace during worship, encourage gestures of greeting that avoid shaking hands. Teach about and practice hospitality. If the congregation suspends the practice of leaders greeting worshipers at the door, be sure to create other avenues for communication that are easily accessible for members of the community. (Those who stand at the door of the church and attempt to keep track of everything shared after worship will thank you!) When serving food, find ways to limit the number of hands that touch serving utensils. Respect those who avoid close-quarter gatherings of people in times of sickness.

Read more online

The ELCA Worship and Liturgical Resources section has provided a short statement for use by congregations titled "Worship in Times of Public Health Crisis." This statement, along with the resource, "Prayers for Times of Public Health Crisis," are available as pdf documents at *www.elca.org/worship.* Additional readings and prayers related to ministry in sickness and health can be found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pastoral Care* beginning on page 169 (available from Augsburg Fortress, ISBN 978-0-8066-5392-1, $40.)

A service of healing

Congregations may celebrate and recall God's gifts of his presence with strength and comfort in times of suffering, God's promise of wholeness and peace and God's love with a service of healing within the regular Sunday worship service or at a separate time.

In the Healing service of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (p. 276 ff.) are instructions for these significant gestures of healing. The laying on of hands is a sign, first given in baptism, that reminds us that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ, who is health and salvation for the whole world. Anointing the sick is attested to in James 5:14: "Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord" (NRSV).

seeds for the parish

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SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE

Parish nurses are winners

"It was fun to have an outlet to share this special ministry," said Linnea Jackson, winner of ELCA's 2009 video contest. "It would be such a great thing if every church had a parish nurse program."

Jackson is one of two parish nurses at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, La Crescent, Minn. The congregation won a $5,000 ministry grant as the first place winner in the congregational category.

Winning has meant garnering thousands of views of the video on the Internet—and promoting its parish nurse program.

The video illustrated the tagline of the ELCA, "God's work. Our hands." Jackson and Bev Nelson, the congregation's second parish nurse, were shown performing a number of their duties, including taking a member's blood pressure, leading a fitness program and visiting a new mother and her infant.

"People may be surprised to learn about the wide range of things we do," Jackson said. "We seek to provide ministry to all ages, from newborn babies to those who are on their deathbed."

Jackson and Nelson's ministry includes mentoring high school girls, referring members to medical professionals, leading wellness programs, visiting the sick and accompanying seniors to doctor appointments. "It's never ending," Jackson said. "There is always something to do."

You may view this video at *www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFSJO0RF83Y*. The following is a frame-by-frame explanation of *Parish Nursing: God's work. Our hands.*

Parish Nursing strives to connect our stories to God's story. The following scenes make use of story, symbol and ritual to share the ways parish nursing can be life enhancing.

Lift Hearts in Prayer—points to the parish nurse's role in coordinating how we talk and listen to God through prayer chains, prayer workshops and individual prayer. These hands come together around the waters of baptism where we find our unity and our connection to one another.

Communicate the Truth—The scene is Ash Wednesday. "You are dust and to dust you shall return." Some of our deepest needs are to touch and be touched, to heal and be healed, to forgive and to be forgiven.

Grasp Health—features wellness programs enjoyed by small groups such as the women in the Faithfully Fit Forever class. Sometimes the whole congregation supports one another in exercise through walking and wellness programs called "Thirty Good Minutes," "Soul Steps," "Journey to Bethlehem" and the "Sabbath Experiment: Living Life 24/6."

Gently Caress the Fragile—This scene shows the ministries of prayer shawls. Parish nurses and members of the congregation bring the caress of the church to the ill, the dying and the recovering. Gentle caresses are found in the infant loss blankets made for area hospitals and in grief support groups held at church, which are open to all in the community.

Set Things Right—Making sure things are in order is a good practice—be it blood pressure screenings, diabetes screenings, counseling or planning for end-of-life issues. Parish nurses guide people in putting their life in order.

Connect Playfully—Parish nurses organize the annual middle school girls' sleepover, teaching teens and preteens about the changes going on with their bodies. Parish nurses also teach our pre-schoolers about germs and dental care, they sing and dance with young people at vacation Bible school and provide bandages for the inevitable scrapes and bruises that occur.

Weave Community—We see the window washers who are part of "Neighbors in Action," a state grant–funded program made up mostly of volunteers in the community to care for our elderly and disabled. The volunteers help them live in their homes as long as possible, safely and with an enhanced quality of life. This community program originated with the volunteer program that nurses began at Prince of Peace.

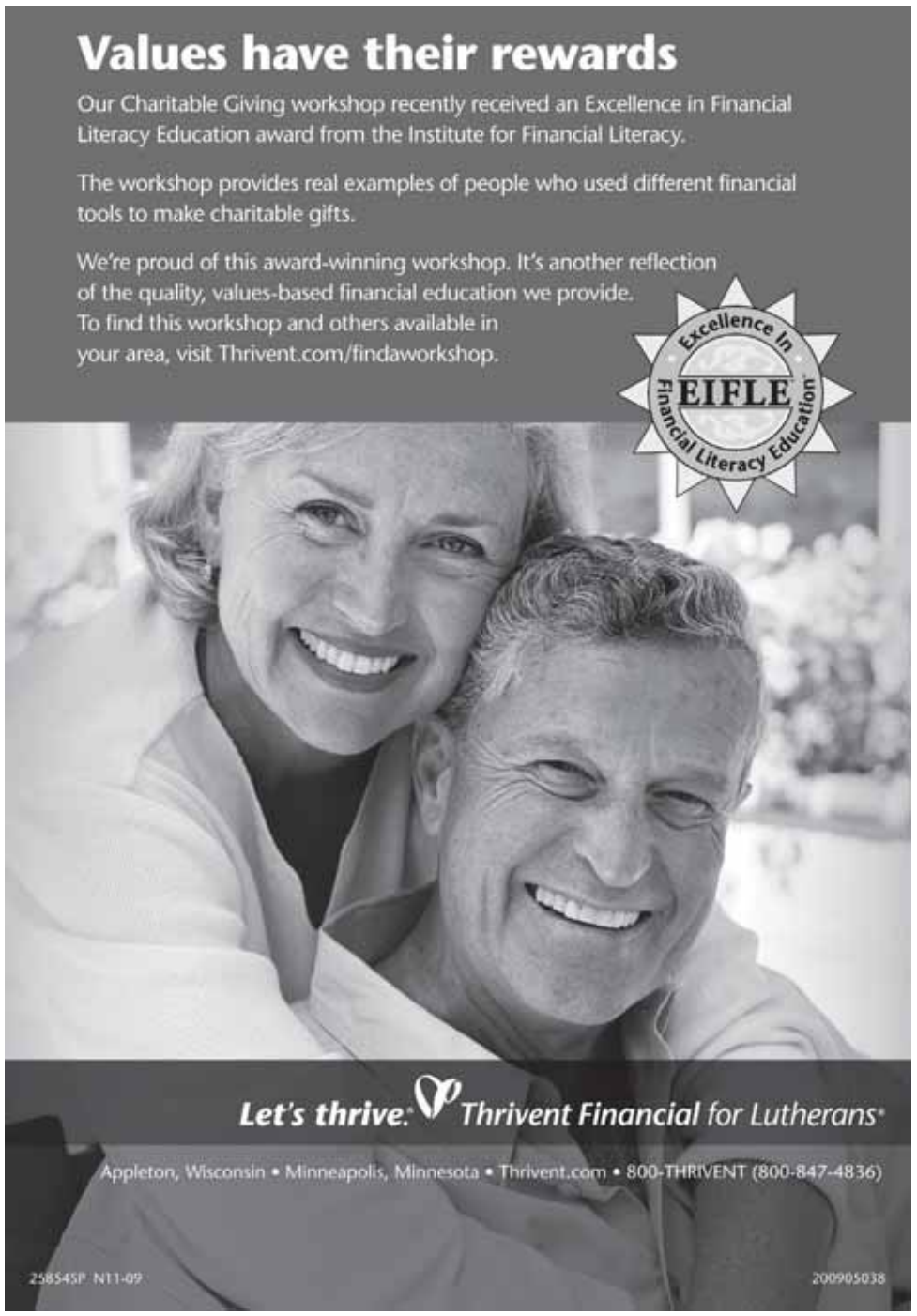
Nursing with Faith—Parish nurses are experienced, professional registered nurses practicing nursing in a faith-based setting, helping others to see the interdependency of the body, mind and spirit. Participating in a spirituality book club, bedside prayer, healing services, prayer workshops and funerals are examples of nursing with faith.

Welcoming New Life—Home visits to our newest members are favorite activities for parish nurses. Nurses provide a point of contact while distributing new parent resources and inviting baptismal planning.

Touch the Holy—Acknowledging that everyone is holy and honored and loved, no matter what his or her situation, parish nurses set up meals for people in recovery from a hospital stay. This ensures that people are fed with good food and with the gift of community.

Fit Our Neighbor's Hand—The group handshake is made up of members of the La Crescent Area Healthy Community Partnership, a partnership with local businesses, churches, schools, health facilities and community members.

Honoring Our Fathers and Mothers—Parish nurse ministries look toward the elderly and ask: How are they doing? Are their children serving them? When people are old and lying down, do their children come and sing them songs? Parish nurse ministries include accompanying elderly or disabled members of our community when the individual has displaced family or is alone, and facilitating transition to an assisted-living or nursing-home facility.



Tender loving care in Mozambique

Virginia, pictured at left, was deathly ill and alone until she met Beatrice, a nurse working with The Lutheran World Federation.

When Virginia arrived in Maputo, Mozambique, it was the most difficult time of her life. And she was all alone.

She had just learned that she was HIV-positive. At the first sign of symptoms, she was ostracized from her home and left to fend for herself. The stigma of HIV and AIDS was enough that even her closest friends and family members were afraid to care for her.

Weak and frail, Virginia could barely walk. She traveled outside of the city, looking for a place to stay. As she walked along dusty gravel roads, she found a place in the urban slums of Maputo. Nearly everyone living there is infected with HIV or AIDS.

It was in Maputo where she first met Beatrice.

Beatrice is a community nurse working with a program of The Lutheran World Federation, which is supported by gifts to ELCA World Hunger. When people arrive in Maputo without any means for care and treatment, she is there to help. And when Virginia arrived, Beatrice immediately started caring for her at home.

Beatrice helped Virginia acquire antiretroviral medications and begin a treatment plan. Because the medications are most effective when taken with protein-rich foods, Beatrice often brought a basket filled with nutritious foods, such as chicken, on her home visits with Virginia. Each week, volunteer community activists regularly visited Virginia at home to lend a listening ear and offer a word of prayer.

Over the course of a year, Virginia slowly regained her strength and her health. Today, she can walk, cook and take part in other activities that are signs of hope and strength.

Virginia isn't the only person whose life has been changed by this program. The same volunteer activists who offer prayer and support are trained to visit neighboring communities and educate others. They talk about the spread of the disease and help reduce stigma. Over time, communities are better equipped to care for the sick and reduce the spread of the disease.

ELCA World Hunger supports hospitals, clinics and home-based care programs such as these in dozens of countries throughout the world. Your gifts ensure that this important work continues. And with the new ELCA Good Gifts catalog, you can directly support the areas of work that respond faithfully to the AIDS pandemic. A gift of just $100 can provide a year of home visits and medications for a person living with HIV and AIDS. Or a gift of $1,800 could provide comprehensive HIV and AIDS training in a rural village. Shop the online catalog at *www.elca.org/goodgifts* or call 800-638-3522 to order a copy.

To learn more about the work of ELCA World Hunger, visit *www.elca.org/hunger*. Give online at *www.elca.org/hungerdonate*.

Health and wellness in the Middle East

Whether it is from a hospital bed on the Mount of Olives, the Peace Center for the Blind in Jerusalem or a youth-empowerment program for Sudanese refugees in Cairo, the ELCA is helping the blind to see, the broken to heal and the oppressed to become empowered and free from violence in the Middle East. ELCA mission personnel work hand-in-hand with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL, *www.elcjhl.org*) The Lutheran World Federation (LWF, *www.lwfjerusalem.org*) in Jerusalem and St. Andrew's Refugee Services in Cairo.

LWF Jerusalem

Since 1950 LWF has administered the Augusta Victoria Hospital, Jerusalem (pictured above), providing health care for Palestinians. The hospital offers the only cancer radiation treatment and the only juvenile dialysis center in the West Bank.

"This is the only place that offers the treatments these people need," said William Hadweh, in a recent interview with the *Jerusalem Post.* Hadweh, the hospital's director of nursing continued by saying, "Many of these people are suffering from kidney failure, and there is no hospital in the West Bank that has dialysis machines. Others are suffering from cancer, and we're the only place for Palestinians—from both the West Bank and Gaza—that offers radiation therapy."

Accessibility to health care is a major barrier in the West Bank because of movement restrictions. Augusta Victoria works hard to break these barriers through its village health clinics and a busing program that enables patients and staff living in the West Bank to reach the hospital despite numerous checkpoints and restrictions.

The Peace Center for the Blind

The Peace Center for the Blind, funded in part by the ELCA, is an academic and vocational training center for blind Palestinian women. All of the students at the center come from Jerusalem and West Bank families who are at or below poverty level. The women are provided training in basic academic subjects; in life skills such as Braille reading, housekeeping and personal care; and in marketable vocational skills such as hand and machine knitting, crochet, weaving and crafts.

The Helen Keller School for the Visually Impaired

Mary Margaret Powers, a member of the ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission, serves at the Helen Keller School for the Visually Impaired in Beit Hanina, Jerusalem. This school serves about 60 Palestinian students with visual impairment from kindergarten through 7th grade.

Mary writes of her experience on her blog at *http://mminpalestine.blogspot.com*.

St. Andrew's Refugee Services, Cairo

St. Andrew's Refugee Services (*www.standrewsrefugeeservices.org*) provides programming to refugees from southern Sudan and Darfur, Somalia, Eritrea, Iraq and other countries. Services are delivered to refugees based on need and without discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, national origin, tribe or religion. The refugees themselves are involved in the administration and staffing of the program whenever possible.

Young refugees are particularly at risk due to the severe trauma of flight, war and persecution without adequate support structures. As a result, these young men and women face psychological and emotional problems that normal youth can only begin to imagine, while also being denied access to opportunities for work, education and social support because of their age and status as refugees.

St. Andrew's has developed the Youth LEAD Project to create positive and safe environments from which to connect young people to skills and opportunities to help them avoid violence, crime, and to make positive life choices and become knowledgeable leaders in their communities.

St. Andrew's seeks to achieve this by:

- developing safe spaces for youth;
- providing access to education and skill-building programs;
- developing communication and conflict resolution skills through sports and hip-hop;
- offering psycho-social services and education tailored to youth; and
- providing leadership education.

The sabbatical—a passport to good health

A sabbatical is a period of rest with a purpose.

The idea of a sabbatical has biblical origins. The very root of the word is the same as that of "Sabbath." Throughout the Old Testament God instructs people to work six days and rest on the seventh. In Leviticus, God instructs people to allow the land to rest every seventh year—meaning no farming, no planting, no harvesting.

To help instructors renew their passion for their academic specialties, medieval colleges and universities began to grant professors a leave of absence every seven years. Most colleges and universities continue this practice today—giving teachers the opportunity to rest, expand their knowledge, write, travel to places relevant to their area of study and to teach at other institutions.

Pastors find sabbaticals to be transformative experiences that strengthen and develop their ability to serve the congregation. The results of a well-planned "re-creation" may include the following:

- spiritual renewal;
- rest;
- education; and
- gaining a new perspective.

What do pastors do on a sabbatical?

Pastors may pursue their special interests and feel refreshed by:

- visiting the Holy Land;
- visiting companion congregations throughout the world, while meeting and working with mission personnel;
- resting and achieving renewal of the body, mind and spirit; and
- writing. The sabbatical can be used as a time to finish a dissertation or compose articles for publication.

Who pays for the sabbatical?

A sabbatical isn't cheap, but because a sabbatical helps your pastor to be more healthy, effective and knowledgeable—and therefore more valuable—it is well worth it for the congregation to pick up the tab. And don't forget, the congregation needs to pay guest preachers while the pastor is away. Here are some ideas to help with the bottom line:

- Plan well in advance (several years), and put the sabbatical into the annual budget.
- Apply for a Lilly National Clergy Renewal Program Endowment, which distributes grants to churches to help them with pastor sabbaticals. For more information go to *www.clergyrenewal.org.*
- After educating the congregation on the need and purpose of the pastor's sabbatical, take special offerings.

When should the pastor take a sabbatical?

Timing is everything. The length and timing of your pastor's sabbatical are important issues to take into consideration.

In planning the time of a sabbatical, the seven-year tradition is a good place to start.

As to the length of the sabbatical, a good rule of thumb is to provide one month of sabbatical for every two years of service.

And don't forget to plan for a period of re-entry. It will take the pastor a few weeks to get back into the routine.

How are the children?

In the May–June 2009 issue of *Seeds for the Parish,* St. Paul Lutheran Church of Orion, Ill., challenged congregations to create an active, faith-based program to promote healthy eating and physical activity to prevent childhood obesity. Has your congregation met this challenge?

One idea to get children moving toward better health is to build a pyramid, just like the ancient Egyptians in the Bible. This game may be used to communicate the basics of healthy foods and would fit well into a vacation Bible school session or an after-school program.

Have the children draw or build a pyramid (building blocks work well) making sure to emphasize the strong foundation of the pyramid. Point out that the top will have to be lighter than the foundation for good balance.

Talk about or gather ideas from the children about the kinds of foods that would fit in the different levels. For one level you may want to talk about the cereals and grains the Egyptians ate during the time of Moses.

Q&A

What are healthy options that congregations can introduce to their banquets, dinners or after-service coffee hours?

After our pastor's near-fatal heart attack, congregation members became very excited about becoming heart-healthy and pledged to serve only low-fat, low-salt treats and potluck offerings. At first we saw nice veggie plates and fruit, but that lasted only a few months. The doughnuts started creeping back in, and then came the bags of chips. It's surprising to me that it's mainly the parents of young children who want pizza, soda and chips whenever lunch is to be offered. Pizza is also a staple of the confirmation group, though one girl brings her own salad whenever pizza is served. So in spite of our earlier efforts to eat healthy food at church, sweets and junk win out. This question has inspired me to start the campaign again. It takes someone or a group that are really dedicated to bringing the fruit and low-salt snacks; you can't count on others to do it.

—Ann Hafften

For coffee hours, we try to provide sugar-free options, like cheese, hummus, cream cheese and bagels, pita chips or crackers, as well as fruit, along side the typical sweets offered. We could do better with the gluten-free options.

—Kathy Kephart Weinberg

My own congregation is committed to simplicity. We try to keep church meals simple and serve "just enough." We'll do a healthy soup and whole-grain bread or salad. We use fair-trade products. After studying books such as 'Food and Faith," by Michael Schut and "Animal, Vegetable, Miracle," by Barbara Kingsolver (both available from booksellers in your area), we've tried to be much more conscious of locally grown products as well. It's a continuing commitment.

—Jane Schuyler

There are always vegetarian options, no peanut options and gluten-free options, even at the coffee hour (e.g., gluten-free pumpkin bread).

— Megan Higle

Most of our meals are "potluck," so what shows up is what we have. But honestly, I think some people should lighten up a bit. If you have special dietary needs you can bring something that's appropriate for you, if necessay. If you are just a health nut, eat a small portion or just allow yourself to indulge once in a while. All things in moderation, you know?

— Len Lesslie

Calvary Lutheran Church, Two Rivers, Wis., has a First Place 4 Health group meeting weekly. When we had a potluck meal planned for the congregation, the members of that group challenged one another to bring healthy options for the potluck. We had fresh fruit, a veggie tray, white chicken chili and whole wheat rolls for that meal.

—The Rev. Kay S. Richter

Take the GO! Challenge

This January your congregation is invited to take the Board of Pensions' brand-new, four-week GO! Challenge. This wellness campaign is founded on the Wholeness Wheel–concept of whole-person health. It invites participants to log their activity related to a list of healthy behaviors (exercise, nutrition, sociability, learning, centeredness and rest), and enables them to earn stars along the way.

Each participant does four important things: takes stock of their current healthy activities, identifies one or two "stretch" activities they'd like to work on, tracks their activity for four weeks, and considers which new behavior they'll continue.

Adapt the challenge to work for your congregation. A few suggestions: Put a big poster on the wall and invite participants to write in their stretch activities. Run weekly competitions focusing on a particular category, recognizing those who earn the most stars. At the end of four weeks, recognize your well-rounded folks who earned the most stars across all categories.

Download the GO! Challenge at *www.elcabop.org/livewell.* Encourage your ELCA primary health plan members to participate: it will help them earn their 2010 personal wellness dollars. And don't forget to share your GO! experiences. Send photos, videos and stories to the Board of Pensions at *livewell@elcabop.org* so we can include them in the Healthy Leaders e-newsletter.

The Wholeness Wheel is a guide to balancing all aspects of health and depicts the interconnectedness of the individual aspects of wellness. It is the picture of a process—dynamic, centered, in balance, contained, interrelated, vital and colorful.

The world's second-largest illegal trade—and how we can stop it

Each year more than 1 million children are trafficked for sex around the world.

Some of them are just 5 years old. And many are right in your backyard—all throughout the U.S.

Human trafficking is the second-highest grossing illegal industry on the planet. Children trapped in the lucrative sex industry endure abuse, torture and horrific conditions. As unbelievable as it sounds, they are raped for profit 20 to 40 times a night—night after night.

This happens not just in far-away countries, but right here in every part of the U.S., in large metropolitan areas and small towns.

Is there anything we can do to stop this nightmare? Yes, there is.

"Most kids get lured into trafficking because they don't know the ploys that traffickers use," says Diana Scimone, director of The Born2Fly Project to stop child trafficking. "They really believe they're going to be models or nannies. And their parents believe traffickers who promise to educate their daughters."

Sadly, most of these children are never seen again.

"What if we could reach these kids before the traffickers do?" Scimone asks. "What if we could educate them and their parents about the ploys that traffickers use?"

The rate of trafficking would plummet.

A journalist who has traveled to more than 40 countries including Sudan, Zimbabwe, Thailand, China and India, Scimone founded Born2Fly International in 2003 to respond to some of the many needs she saw.

Today B2F's sole focus is stopping child trafficking. The organization is about to launch a two-part child-trafficking prevention program called The Born2Fly Project. The centerpiece is a wordless book that teaches kids to make wise choices.

"It's wordless," Scimone explains, "so we don't have to translate it into thousands of languages. Any child anywhere on the planet can 'read' it."

A companion curriculum will help educators teach the important concepts in the book.

The wordless book is complete, and an educator is now writing the curriculum. Scimone hopes to go to print in early 2010 and begin distributing the materials to a waitlist of groups all over the world that have found out what B2F is doing and have requested the materials. She's in the process of raising the $400,000 it will take to do that.

"Each year a million additional kids get lured into trafficking," Scimone says. "We want to print literally hundreds of thousands of these books and curriculum and get them into the hands of people who can keep more kids from enduring this nightmare."

Scimone says she constantly tells people there is hope. "We can do something to stop the traffic," she says. "We can cut off the pipeline by reaching kids before the traffickers do. All it takes is a simple children's book."

If you'd like to help, go to *www.born2fly.org.* Scimone also writes a regular blog with updates on the fight to stop child trafficking abroad and in the U.S.: *www.dianascimone.com.*

The ELCA and human trafficking awareness

Churches, nongovernmental organizations, communities, governments and world leaders are taking notice of the problem of human trafficking, and people are mobilizing to fight this destructive and pervasive criminal industry.

January 11, 2010, is National Human Trafficking Day. To learn more and join the movement to end human trafficking, visit *www.elca.org/justiceforwomen* where you can download tips on how to emphasize the problem of human trafficking to your congregation and how to acquire resources created specifically for youth and young people.

By raising awareness, engaging in thoughtful dialogue and learning through these resources, you can help promote justice, advocate change and lead into the future.

Please send questions and comments to *Mikka.McCracken@elca.org* or call 800-638-3522, ext. 2028.

Feminist theology video and study guide

At its best, Lutheran theology illuminates God's transformative work in the world. Luther himself struggled with social issues in light of the gospel and assisted in clarifying the centrality of justification by grace through faith as God's promise to the world.

For many decades, Lutheran women theologians in the United States have creatively and constructively contributed to the ongoing development of the Lutheran theological tradition, in part by offering perspectives that explain what central theological themes mean when understood and lived from a variety of perspectives, including Asian, Latina, womanist and feminist.

A new video on the ELCA Justice for Women Web site (*www.elca.org/justiceforwomen*) features some of these contemporary Lutheran theologians who gathered in January 2009 with over 150 participants to celebrate the transformative gifts for the church that womanist, mujerista and feminist theologies are. Shot on location at the conference, the introductory 15-minute video is appropriate for adult educational use, college or seminary classes, or older youth and young adult study. Accompanying the video are a brief study guide and Spanish and English transcripts, also available by going to the Web site. For more information, contact *Juli.Bey@elca.org* or 800-638-3522, ext. 2710.

New resources for Peace Not Walls campaign

At the newly designed Web page *www.elca.org/peacenotwalls/resources* you can find:

- a new flier describing ideas for congregations to engage in the Holy Land;
- downloadable fliers from the ELCJHL
- user guides that suggest a format for educational sessions for:
  - -a single adult forum;
  - -a three-part adult forum;
  - -a single youth forum;
  - -a single young adult forum;
  - -a single forum for women;
  - -a single forum on Holy Land travel resources; and
  - -a single forum on theological issues.

Other organizations and denominations have produced resources that are helpful but that may not completely reflect ELCA positions:

- The DVD "New Hope for Peace: What America Must Do to End the Israel-Palestine Conflict" tells the story of four American statesmen: Jimmy Carter, James Baker, Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski. You can preview the video at YouTube.
- "Steadfast Hope: The Palestinian Quest for Just Peace," produced by the Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), is a 44-page booklet containing an 80-minute DVD in eight chapters.

Congregation offers low-impact fitness program

Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church, Cedar Falls, Iowa, offers Body Recall, a physical activity program that benefits men and women of all ages with a higher quality of life through pain-free movement.

Linnea Graen is Nazareth's certified Body Recall instructor. Graen leads classes at the church in the spring and fall, each 10-week session meeting three times a week.

Body Recall uses more than 200 exercises that are appropriate for anyone of any age looking for a low-impact fitness program. It is also used for heart patients and for those recovering from surgery, illness or injury.

The benefits of Body Recall include expanded range of motion, improved mobility and circulation, increased coordination and strength, and greater agility.

For more information about Body Recall, visit *www.bodyrecallinc.org*.

Assembly calls for social statement

Females in the United States have the right to vote or run for elected office, inherit land and other wealth, drive cars, get an education, and decide when and if to have children. Females in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America can go to seminary, be ordained, serve as synod bishops, teach theology and serve as council vice-president. So why would the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly call for a social statement on justice for women?

Lay, ordained and theologically trained women and men are beginning to realize the connections that Lutherans need to make between theology and certain social problems that preponderantly affect women and girls. With the 2009 vote, the ELCA is poised to be a global religious leader that takes seriously the deep roots of privilege and oppression that affect not only females across the globe, but also males.

An example of the cultural acceptance of the devaluation of women stands out in the case of a professional football player, Michael Vick, who was charged in 2007 with animal abuse in the treatment of dogs for illegal dog fights. When the news broke, there was public furor over the heinous nature of the abuse of dogs. Sports commentators were certain that his career might be over. One sports commentator from the *Chicago Tribune* noted the relative public silence when professional athletes kill, rape and abuse women. He wrote, "Let's be clear: It's not that the response to Vick's alleged crimes is overboard; it's that the response to athletes' crimes against women is underwhelming. We might want to ask ourselves why that is."

A social statement on justice for women reaches exactly for this answer in a deep-seated analysis that outlines what the best of Lutheran theology has to offer to church and society to protest and transform the forces that prevent females from being held in the image of God.

Near the end of 2010, an ELCA task force for the social statement on justice for women will be formed, and a proposed social statement will be offered to the 2015 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. If you are interested in nominating someone or yourself for the task force, please contact the Rev. Kaari Reierson for a nomination form (*Kaari.Reierson@elca.org* or 800-638-3522, ext. 2894).

Lutheran Services in America offers guidelines on HIPAA and pastoral care

HIPAA stands for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. The privacy regulations section of HIPAA required health-care providers to increase the protection of patient health information. As of 2003, health-care providers were required to give consumers greater control over who received their personal health information. This meant major changes for health care providers, and for patients/residents and the clergy who provide pastoral care to them.

What information will the hospital or nursing home give your pastor?

Prior to HIPAA, clergy were often given generous amounts of informal information about patients in hospitals and other health care facilities. Pastors could often view admissions lists or receive updates on members of their congregations. Under HIPAA, information is much more restricted.

If a patient does not object, most health-care facilities will list the patient's name in the facility directory. HIPAA regulations generally allow pastors to receive limited information based on this directory, including the location, religious affiliation and general health condition of the individual. For additional information, a signed authorization must be completed or the patient must share the information directly with the pastor.

How can you be sure that your family, friends and pastor can find you in the hospital?

Because of the implementation of HIPAA privacy regulations, hospitals may not freely provide information about your admission or care. Patients must take a more active role in making sure their families, friends and pastors can find them. Make sure that someone calls the pastor to let them know of your admission. The more information that you provide directly to the pastor, the more readily pastoral care can be provided.

Hospitals and other health-care facilities are permitted to utilize a patient directory. By including your name in the facility directory, you are giving permission for this question to be answered: "In what room is Mrs. Hendrickson?" If you object to being listed in the directory, the health-care facility cannot confirm or deny that you are at that facility.

Is it a HIPAA violation to offer prayers of intercession for hospitalized individuals?

Whether naming someone in intercessory prayers is a violation of HIPAA depends on who is doing the praying and how the health information was obtained. For example, if an employee of the hospital learns of a hospitalization during work and shares this information with a pastor or other congregation

members, the hospital employee has violated HIPAA. If a parish pastor visits a congregation member and adds that individual to the worship service prayers, there has been no HIPAA violation.

Know your individual hospital's policies and procedures.

Each hospital has specific policies and procedures specifying what a visiting clergy person may be told without a signed authorization for release of information. These procedures differ from facility to facility. For example, some permit the pastor to see a denomination list. If you decline to put your name in the patient directory or decide not to identify your religious affiliation, it is likely your pastor may not be able to find you.

For questions and answers on HIPAA and pastoral care, and for a downloadable bulletin insert of this information, visit *www.lutheranservices.org/pastoral_care_and_hipaa.*

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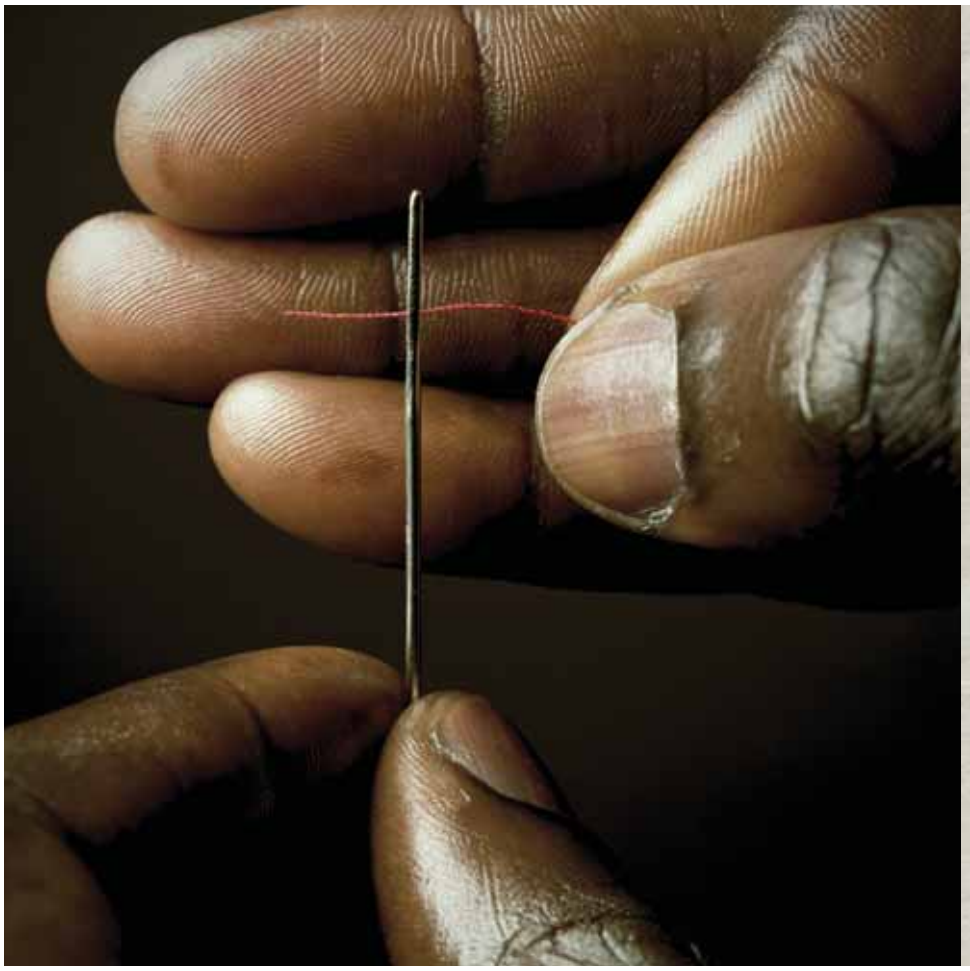

Our loans help blanket the world in love.

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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