

seeds for the parish

March-April 2010

Resource Paper for Leaders of ELCA Congregations

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Revelation 21:5: And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.'

Phyllis Tickle on the emerging church

Change is inevitable and there is nothing anyone can do to stop it. "It would be like telling the sun not to rise," says Phyllis Tickle, author of *The Great Emergence*.

Tickle believes that a change similar to, and as monumental as, the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, has already begun. "I'm Anglican, and six years of labor brought forth Called to Common Mission, which allows Lutherans and Anglicans to swap parishes, with credentials being shared."

According to the ELCA Web site, "Called to Common Mission" is the name of the agreement adopted by the 1999 Churchwide Assembly to establish a relationship of full communion between the ELCA and The Episcopal Church (USA). The agreement opened the way for cooperative mission efforts.

"You see," explains Tickle, "the great emergence is a construct. It is made up of many things—social, economic, environmental, intellectual, political, religion" She further believes that this type of change happens every 500 years. No one knows why, but it does.

For example, 500 years ago there was the Protestant Reformation. Five hundred years before that, the Great Schism that divided the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Five hundred years before that saw the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, and 500 years before that, the birth, death and resurrection of Christ.

There are many new places of worship that identify themselves as emergent—there are home churches much like those begun by the early church. St. Gregory's Episcopal in San Francisco is alive with singing and dancing. The House for All Sinners and Saints, an ELCA congregation in Denver, describes itself as "the ancient-future church with a progressive but deeply rooted theology." Congregations with large worship spaces accommodate stages, dramatic lighting and live bands. Those with limited facilities might meet in places reminiscent of cafes rather than cathedrals.

So what will the church look like after the dust settles? Tickle says that it is too early to tell—the changes we are seeing now may not

last into the final form of the emerging church. Emergents borrow from many denominations, while resurrecting ancient traditions and customs. These typically emphasize spirituality and community outreach.

When asked if this means the waning of denominations, Tickle replies, "Protestantism isn't going to cease to be, it will give way to something new. Local congregations may go away," not because of something members did or didn't do because, "You didn't cause emergents," says Tickle, "and you're not going to stop it. Is it perfect? No. Neither was Martin Luther."

Phyllis Tickle is the founding editor of the religion department at Publisher's Weekly. She has written more than two dozen books, most recently, The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why. She is also the author of Divine Hours series, which includes The Divine Hours: a Complete Guide to the Ancient Practice of Fixed-hour Prayer. Both titles are available from booksellers near you.



Worship is ever-emerging. Read about four areas for congregations to explore. **Page 2**



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Ever-emerging worship

As the emerging church, we are called to proclaim the unchanging gospel of Jesus Christ to an ever-changing world. Discussions about the emerging church reveal a certain tension between the gospel and worldly culture and inevitably turn to conversations about worship.

Worship in the emerging church is the purview of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)*. *ELW* resources support the core principle of grace in word and sacrament. They support an ever-growing understanding of worship leadership as a shared task in the community. And the resources find more ways to affirm that God is at work in the world, not merely in the church.

Reflection on worship in the emerging church offers four areas for a congregation to explore:

- **Worship is the action of God.** The pattern for Holy Communion in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* describes what God is doing in worship in four sentences:
 - ☐ The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.
 - ☐ God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching and song.
 - ☐ God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.
 - ☐ God blesses and sends us in mission to the world.

Focusing on the action of God in worship turns us away from personal preferences. Worship planning turns away from what we do, or what “they” want, and moves toward how we participate in the greater story of God at work in our lives and the world. We focus on God in Christ with the Holy Spirit,

rather than drawing attention to ourselves.

- **Worship includes all members of the body of Christ.** Worship is the mission of God for the sake of the world. To this end, all God’s children called by God to worship have a place and purpose in the assembly’s worship. Congregations should reflect on their worship practices and ask how the children of God of different ages, abilities, cultures, personality types, pieties and experience are welcomed in the worshiping assembly. Beyond hospitality, we are challenged to see how the disruptive toddler, the worshiper who is quieter or louder than ourselves, or the person with a disability are essential participants in worship.
- **Worship engages all of our human senses.** Lutheran worship has long celebrated the verbal proclamation of the word of God and has a rich musical treasury. However, our bodies are blessed with a variety of senses with which we engage the world. Congregations are encouraged to explore how all the senses are engaged in worship. From the aroma and texture of fresh bread used in the meal to rich fabrics and art that point to the central locations of word and sacrament in the worship space, worship engages all the senses. Our bodies also engage worship through movement when we gesture, move around the worship space or greet one another. As a reflective exercise, worship planners might make a list of which senses are engaged in a typical worship service of the congregation. In so doing, less-engaged senses will become evident, and planners might seek ways to address them.



All God’s children called by God to worship have a place and purpose in the assembly’s worship.

- **Worship stands in a line that is connected to the past and leans forward to the future.** The body of Christ has been alive for centuries and continues to live in the gathered church in worship. Thus our worship maintains a tension between elements handed down through the history of the church and the contextualization of worship to a particular community in time and place. Today we can look to practices of worship employed by previous generations of Christians and employ those practices in a new time and place. Chant, candle-lighting, incense, ancient symbols and more can support and enliven today’s worshiping communities, and help them locate their lives of faith in an ongoing reality of Christ’s incarnation through the ages. We move into the future church, daring to change current practice and to explore new and renewed ways to worship.

Welcoming adults

Since 1988, there have been more than 160,000 baptisms of people age 16 and older in the ELCA. That’s an average of over 7,500 per year. Plus, over 1.2 million people have been received into congregations by “Affirmation of Baptism”—affirmation of the baptized life.

Our culture increasingly has more in common with the time of the early church when Christianity was not central to communities. Families do not automatically baptize children, Sunday is no longer reserved for religious observations, and more and more people indicate that they are not affiliated with the Christian church.

The whole Christian community has the privilege and responsibility to celebrate and

support God’s gift of baptism in a number of ways. The congregation’s ministries—which support the formation, education, service and evangelical witness of the faithful—deepen and enliven the community’s participation in God’s mission in Jesus Christ for the sake of the world.

One process, widely called the catechuminate, is based on ancient practices of forming disciples and preparing adults for baptism over several months. Catechumenal origins are found in the second century, when the vast majority of Christians were “made and not born.”

For more information about the catechuminate today and to participate in the conversation visit www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Catechuminate.aspx.

“Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture”

If your congregation or study group would like to further explore the intersection between worship and culture, The Lutheran World Federation’s “Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture” (1996) offers a framework for discussion. This brief statement uses four categories to examine the connections between worship and culture: transcultural, contextual, counter-cultural and cross-cultural. Study groups or worship planning teams can easily use these categories to examine and renew their own worship. The statement is available at www.elca.org/nairobistatement.

Global Mission Events and worship

In 2009, at the Global Mission Formation Events, a worship track enabled numerous people from teams sent by local congregations to consider the ways culture and worship intersect in their congregation. An engaging curriculum with video clips of worship from diverse communities sparked the conversation. Ten events in 2010 will provide rich venues to learn and inspire important approaches to worship, culture, accompaniment and the use of worship resources such as *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. For more information visit www.elca.org/globalworship.

seeds for the parish

www.elca.org/seeds

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The emerging church takes to the streets



Getting out of the boat and following Jesus is never easy. In fact, getting out of the boat, going on waterfront shore and setting up a tent for mission in the most unlikely places for church is even more difficult. Add to that

a gated community of high-rise apartment and condo dwellers who are cynical and cautious of anyone who lifts up the word in public. We are called out into the wider world to gather God's people for renewal, reconciliation and refreshment.

Waterfront Community Church (WCC), an emergent church within the ELCA in Jersey City, N.J., is doing just that—setting up tent in places where people gather for socializing—in the marketplace, parks, town squares, laundries, coffee shops and even subway stations. Here they share the gospel in unique ways.

Worship gatherings can also occur over a dinner table in a local restaurant or on the outdoor patio of a local sandwich shop. They happen right in the middle of people living their lives.

According to Don Egan, a mission developer for WCC, "Our worship celebration this past December was titled 'Happy Birthday, Jesus,' and it was held in a busy local restaurant. Children sang 'Happy Birthday Jesus' over a make-shift manger, which provoked smiles throughout the restaurant. Adults exchanged gifts of comfort and joy. We gathered over an agape meal where gatherers ate and shared stories of Christmas. We sang 'Joy to the World.' We offered dessert—birthday cake—and goodwill to each other and all the patrons. Bringing our idea of worship and prayer into the marketplace allows the public to see that God is not contained in a building on Sunday morning only. It invites the public to see a strong witness for Jesus. Our gatherings are a convergence of hospitality, welcome, worship, community and evangelism in the midst of folks living their lives."

What's life like without a church building to work from? Waterfront's gatherers will be the first to emphatically tell you as they point to their heart, "Church is in here," says Peggy Brockmann, co-mission developer. "You don't necessarily need a building to find Jesus. You gotta have heart for Jesus! Jesus can change your life. Jesus doesn't reside in a building. We take to the streets to bring the message of Christ to the world."

They have created a ritual called a Prayer

Action, in which church gatherers go out to the streets and invite people to pray with them. During Advent, gatherers approached people on the street and offered them a gift "wrapped in a pretty blue box with a blue grosgrain ribbon" (very similar to Tiffany's blue box), while explaining that the message inside it may change their lives. In the box was a Good News lapel pin. The gatherers then shared information about Waterfront Community Church and invited them to worship. What they learned from their Actions is that people are hungry for prayer, love and companionship.

The center of their ministry is focused on prayer. Prayer changes lives. Brockmann explains, "We encountered a homeless woman carrying her life's belongings in a shopping cart. We gave her a present, and when she opened it she started to weep uncontrollably. We stayed and held her and prayed with her. She told us that our offering to her saved her life. She was contemplating suicide. As a community, we started to understand truly what it means to get out of your boat and follow Jesus for the sake of the world."

Waterfront keeps a foot in Lutheran tradition but also a foot in the modern world. Egan explains, "During Ash Wednesday we journey to the local subways and distribute ashes. We have found this to be a wonderful way for people to reconnect with their faith heritage, be a witness to the beginning of Lent and ... meet Jesus again for a few short minutes through prayer as they run into their complex daily lives."

The streets, docks and boardwalk become their gathering and worship space. "We have created the worship walk as an alternative to the traditional service held in churches," says Egan. "We are God's people on the move. A people moving through this wonderful and complex journey called life. Why not create a moving experience built around word and sacrament where the people are? We literally move a service from place to place throughout the Waterfront community. We become part of God's awesome creation and witnesses, not ashamed to share the gospel message. We incorporate music, dance, song, prayer, testimony communion and physical fitness into our service. Lay your burdens down and drop some calories in the process. Worshiping God becomes a healthy, spiritual and vibrant experience."

WCC is committed to hunger relief efforts. Since they do not have a building from which to distribute food, they partner with local Lutheran churches that have food pantries and drop off collected food. "This works well for us," says Brockmann. "We give plastic bags to anyone we come in contact with and ask them

to share their resources with their neighbors. We collect their bags, organize the food and drop it off. We have delivered hundreds and hundreds of pounds of food to churches."

The streets at night in Jersey City have become their pathway to doing God's work in the community. Egan says, "We have begun an initiative to collect and distribute food and clothing to the homeless in our community during the evening through a mobile unit. Our gatherers will become like night butterflies. Dropping food and love into the lives of men and women for a moment in time when they are in need. God meets people where they are. We assist. We are graced to be able

to humble ourselves and be of service as we rehearse for the reign of God."

Waterfront Community is a fledgling church start supported by mission resources from the ELCA New Jersey Synod and the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission program unit.

To learn more about Waterfront Community Church visit www.waterfrontcommunitychurch.com.

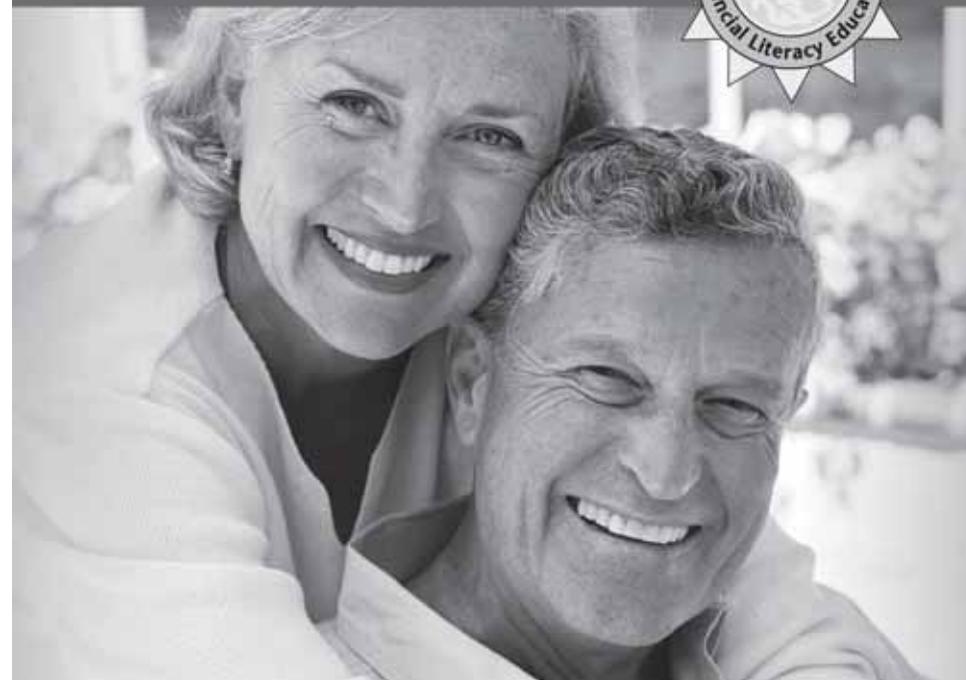
Values have their rewards

Our Charitable Giving workshop recently received an Excellence in Financial Literacy Education award from the Institute for Financial Literacy.

The workshop provides real examples of people who used different financial tools to make charitable gifts.

We're proud of this award-winning workshop. It's another reflection of the quality, values-based financial education we provide.

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The emergent church in Africa

Missionary Andrew Hinderlie tells us of the emerging church in Africa and how the Ethiopian Evangelical Church, Mekane Yesus (EECMY), is preparing mission personnel:

On the weekend of January 15–17, 2010, it was my privilege to be present with my Area Program Director, Benyam Kassahun, at an exciting event, one that began some three years ago in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It was a dream of sending missionaries from the Mekane Yesus Church to other countries, culminating in the commissioning of three families to follow Jesus' command in Matthew 28 to "go and make disciples of all nations."

Joyous members of the church and guests, some 15,000, walked from the Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary campus center to the field where this event was held. A special weekend of worship had been going on since Friday, with special guests, preachers and celebratory music. As the worshipers made their way to the field, there followed the robed pastors of the church, processing behind the President of the EECMY, the Rev. Dr. Waksayeum Idossa, and the General Secretary, the Rev. Dr. Berhanu Ofgaa.

Many of the honored guests, including missionaries, General Secretaries of Mission Societies and officials, were seated in front of the altar, where the commissioning would take place. When all had taken their places, the worship service began with songs, prayers and preaching, followed by the commissioning that involved many church leaders coming forward to the altar. Then each family was called, invited to approach and be recognized by the whole community present, and asked the questions of commitment as were the congregation. Then followed the laying on of hands by those leaders present. In the air, the sense of magnitude and solemnity of this occasion could be felt as well as the excitement and joy by those who were being sent and those who were sending. With flags representing the countries that had sent missionaries, and those of other African countries flapping behind the altar at the other end of the field, one sensed both the vitality of the global church and the presence of the Holy Spirit. At the end, thanks were expressed for the work of the ELCA and other mission bodies for their contributions.

I felt a tingling as I recalled my own ordination, when my mother, along with Dr.

Duane Olson and others, laid their hands on me. I also heard my Grandfather Aasgaard's voice in the back of my head saying to the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America's National Assemblies, "These are *your* pastors, *your* missionaries!" Here in Addis, when the whole community spoke those words of commitment, I felt that they were truly and deeply believed. As Pastor Yonas Yigezu, director of mission and theology, explained to me, "Mission is our faithful response to what God has done for us." A good thought for us all.

It was a young Eritrean, Onesimos Nesib, sent by the Church of Sweden, who first brought the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Oromo region of Ethiopia, a mission continued by Lutheran and Presbyterian missionaries. Now the EECMY is picking up the challenge once more to send their own to serve as missionaries, in order to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the unreached. It is also a response to all those missionaries who came from foreign lands and shared the gospel in both bad and good times.

But one must also understand that even before the EECMY began considering sending missionaries outside, they began doing so



Ethiopian drummer during Epiphany service

within their own country, in their own home towns. Even during the Marxist regime they were well prepared to go wherever Jesus called them to serve. They see evangelism not just as a call but the purpose for life, as a response to God's faithfulness. In 1959 the EECMY had about 20,000 members, and now there are over 5 million baptized members. And this is just one of many churches that we in the ELCA have had the honor and experience to accompany through global mission.

Emerging in the big city



Nagoya, Japan, is a busy place. With over 2.2 million residents, the city is abuzz with activity.

Located in central Japan, Nagoya is one of the nation's major cities. It is an economic powerhouse that is considered an important industrial and cultural center. The city has everything you would expect in a major metropolis—thriving businesses (local as well as international), museums, a university, plenty of night clubs and opportunities for socializing.

It is the home of many shrines and temples. The Nitta Temple houses relics of the Buddha, presented to Japan by Thailand. The Togan Temple features a seated Buddha and has ties

to the Hindu religion, with a temple honoring the Goddess Saraswati. Kosho Temple hosts the annual 1,000 Lantern Festival at the harvest moon.

Nagoya has also been home for Pastor Charles Fredrickson for over 3 ½ years. He is an ELCA missionary serving the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church. Fredrickson works part-time as pastor of Meito Christ International Church (MCIC) and part-time for a local Japanese congregation, Nagoya-Kibo Lutheran Church.

"As a missionary I experience an 'emerging church' in Japan. Change has nothing to do with 'emerging;' rather it is doing ministry with people who are jaded by materialism and 'paganism' and are looking for authenticity."

For example, one of the members of MCIC grew up in a conservative Christian denomination in the U.S. When she first came to Japan, to teach English, she was struck by the overt paganism in the Japanese culture. According to Frederickson, "She found Japan and its religious expressions novel and refreshing, but increasingly became disenchanted." She was drawn to the congregation because "we provided a Christian worship experience where questions were welcome, yet we did not demand a com-

mitment. Our worship is casual, authentic, global, multisensory and thoughtful."

Fredrickson tells us about another regular attendee who also grew up Christian. "She has explored and chosen various religious views and synthesized them into her faith. On one hand she is 'born again' and charismatic in her Christian faith but very liberal in many of her views. She had increasingly found the materialism of society troubling. Giving, serving and volunteering are very important in her life." This woman was struck by the congregation's commitment to giving. Frederickson quotes her as saying, "We are not afraid of talking about Jesus' words to the rich and what they mean."

When asked what their worship service looks like, Fredrickson reports that it is liturgical, following the seasons of the church year, and they follow the worship pattern of Gathering, Word, Meal and Sending. The sermon tends to be 15 to 20 minutes, with comments and questions asked during the sermon. They usually have a band of four to five volunteer musicians that use a mix of Baptist and Lutheran hymns and songs as those are the hymnals the congregation owns. Everything in worship is projected on a screen, and personal Bibles are encouraged and used.

Congregation members are active givers. However, non-Japanese are dissuaded from participating in distributing food because of issues of shame in the Japanese culture. The Japanese Evangelical Lutheran Church considers and supports this ministry as a ministry of hospitality.

For more information on the Japanese Evangelical Lutheran Church go to www.elca.org/japan.

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Answering the call



For Pastor Mark Minnick, it was a delayed response to the called ministry—20 years in fact.

When he first entered Concordia Senior College in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, he fully intended to continue his studies and enter seminary. But as Minnick recalls, “After graduating I decided to pursue other options, as The Missouri-Synod was in crisis at that time. I followed my entrepreneurial tendencies and purchased my first business at age 25.”

From 1978 until he entered the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago in 1996, he was the owner-operator of a pre-cast concrete company, which is currently operated by his wife and son.

Even while running his own business, Minnick felt a call to serve the church. He held a number of council and teaching positions, but did not accept his call to ministry. Encouraged by his wife, Alice, and his pastor and spiritual mentor (who was relentless in informing him of his obligation to reopen the call window), he reconsidered.

He finally cleared the “call hurdle” after “a very inspiring Via de Cristo weekend.” According to their Web site, “Via Cristo is a highly structured three-day weekend designed to strengthen and renew the faith of Christian people and bring them to a new awareness of living in God’s grace.” Via de Cristo is “the Lutheran expression” of the “Cursillo” movement that originated in the Spanish Catholic church in the late 1940s.

Once he accepted his call to ministry he knew he was meant to be a mission developer. According to Minnick, “The one thing that my seminary experience revealed was that the ELCA was lacking relevance with young adults. I visited a number of emergent style churches/communities throughout seminary.”

After his June 2000 graduation, he took two years to develop the plan and find the right location for his “come2go” (C2G) congregation. The space he found for C2G is a large warehouse, which he describes as “a pretty special place. Spirit-filled.”

Minnick says that the worship space now has “a large stage, a great sound system, professional lighting and excellent projection.” It is also the home for an inter-generational congregation that is “drawn to C2G by their love of music and by a community that shares that love. We are very diverse.”

Community outreach is a big part of the C2G ministry. Minnick relates, “Our community outreach is formed around our GoTeams. GoTeams are groups of people who serve in areas of mutual giftedness and passion. One team leads weekly worship at the area Juvenile Justice Center, other teams perform in nursing homes, while others mentor in middle schools.”

The C2G Music Hall, as Minnick puts it, is “the best small (400 seat) concert venue in northeast Indiana.” It produced more than 80 concerts in 2009. Many volunteers work in teams that focus on sound, lighting, staging, production, hospitality, recording and editing. They produce two television shows per week, one on public access and one on NBC, following *Saturday Night Live*.

Regarding the volunteers and outreach Minnick says, “Our mission of outreach is the foundation on which C2G was built. C2Gers ask themselves how they can reciprocate to their gift of salvation and God’s grace in their lives. They respond by serving others.”

As to the name of the ministries—come2go—it’s actually “come2” (to the second power), and then “go.” Pastor Minnick explains it this way: “In John 1, two curious men want to know more about Jesus (vs. 37). The first response of Jesus is the invitation to ‘come and see.’ Like Philip (v. 43), we invite others to see what a community of Christ-followers feels like. The second invitation of Jesus is to ‘come and follow’ (v. 43). Peter did and was changed. The ‘go’ is the rest. Invite people into a community of Christians with purpose, teach them to follow Jesus, and encourage them to ‘go’ according to their gifts. Pretty simple.”

Q & A

What is your experience with the emerging church?

My experience with emerging church (and its various labels) is that each congregation/community is finding their own path—some theologically liberal and some theologically conservative, some ritually orthodox (rediscovering our catholic heritage) while others are ritually creative (giving new meaning to secular actions and importing the same into Christian worship). There is room for all of this at Christ’s table—and Christianity must be supportive of each other as we remain faithful to Christ as revealed to us in Scripture.

—Ronald Weber
Milwaukee, Wis.

Our church council is currently reading Nathan Frambach’s *Emerging Ministry: Being Church Today*. It is interesting! This book is available from Augsburg Fortress; call toll-free 800-328-4648 or visit them on the Web at www.augsburgfortress.com.

—Tiffany Brown Wimberly
Fayetteville, Ark.

Based on what I read about the “emerging church” here, www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Journal-of-Lutheran-Ethics/Issues/October-2009/New-Wine-4.aspx, it seems to be a movement with potential for good, but also fraught with peril of drifting into heterodoxy. I fear it will continue the trend of turning congregations into little more than chapters of the Kiwanis, only with Kyries. I pray that my fears do not come to pass.

—George Erdner
Duluth, Ga.

I admire the way that Spirit Garage (<http://spiritgarage.org>), Mercy Seat (www.nemercy.org) and House of Mercy (www.houseofmercy.org) in Minnesota have kept with the Lutheran traditions and incorporated ways of worship that touch lives and souls for Christ. Looking forward to visiting Humble Walk (<http://humblewalkchurch.org/>) in St. Paul. Pastor Jodi Hogue does great things.

—Hope Lotowicz Moran
Indianapolis, Ind.

The “Boomers” I know tend to think that the answer to lower church attendance is changing liturgy. Actually, most people my age and younger enjoy traditional liturgy, because it’s hard to find tradition in our lives any more, and these traditions are very rooting for us.

I feel like younger generations are looking to serve, but unfortunately, are waiting to be asked. Where there are service opportunities available, and where the clergy/lay staff are willing to ask, people jump at the opportunity to serve.

—Elizabeth Mechem
Lawrence, Kan.

For further reading on the emerging church

Here is a partial list of available resources on the emerging church available from online or local booksellers or your public library:

- *The Practicing Congregation: Imaging a New Old Church*, by Diana Butler Bass, Alban Institute.
- *Signs of Emergence*, by Kester Brewin, Baker Book House.
- *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier*, by Tony Jones.
- *New Monasticism: What It Has to Say to Today's Church*, by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, Brazos Press.
- *The Once and Future Pastor: The Changing Role of Religious Leaders*, by William C. Hobgood, Alban Institute.
- *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*, by Eddie Gibbs and Bryan K. Bolger, Baker Book House.

A comic book that's serious about faith

Hope at Work: First Steps in Congregation-based Community Organizing is a new comic book that's serious about drawing people of faith into deeper engagement with their neighborhoods and broader communities. This whimsical resource follows the lives of two Hope Church lay leaders and their pastor, as they listen to the joys and concerns of church members and neighbors and then explore ways to respond with public action. Along the way, the characters join forces with a fictional interfaith community organizing group. Through these characters' courage—as well as their clumsiness—readers are compelled to consider their own congregation's opportunities for more effective community ministry and public witness. Single, complimentary copies are available through the ELCA's Church in Society unit by contacting susan.engh@elca.org. Multiple copies of the 32-page, full-color booklet are available for \$3 per copy from www.augsburgfortress.org search ITEM001419. The resource is supported by an online user's guide at www.elca.org/comicbook.

Hot town summer camp in the city

Reflecting on her experience last summer as a camp counselor, Katie Mulcaire-Jones asked, "What do the dock at Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp and the rooftop of an urban church in downtown Seattle have in common, besides serving as an ideal spot to court a summer suntan?" Katie answered her own question with a clarity of mission and a passion to serve. "Both create a literal and metaphorical place for campers to learn the stories of their faith and, more importantly, what those stories mean to their way of living."

For more information about servant events and ELCA outdoor ministries, go to www.elca.org/camps

Katie was one of several counselors who led high school students from Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp in the mountains of Western Montana to the Lutheran Compass Center in the urban wilderness of downtown Seattle, Wash. Each summer, these youth and their college-age leaders serve in soup kitchens, lunch lines, homeless shelters and other ministries while learning to walk

alongside those neighbors who are in need. For most of these youth, this is their first exposure to urban poverty.

During rooftop conversations and Bible study with their counselors, young people shared the realization that there was little separating them from those living on the streets. Katie remembers that "they talked about the clear intelligence, sense of humor, and depth of experience of some of the shelters' clients, and the stereotypes about the homeless that never included these traits." In the week they spent in Seattle, they questioned whether it is enough to learn about the stories of the friendships that Jesus had with the marginalized without seeking similar relationships themselves.

At Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp and other ELCA camps across the country, young people are shown the generous, abundant and accepting love of Jesus Christ. Just as each camper is treated with dignity and respect, they are sent out on Servant Trips to give this same dignity to others. Walking alongside others and hearing their stories proves to be a lasting lesson in what it means to serve one another.



Michael Crosson, another camp counselor who served with this program, remembers sitting by the train tracks next to a man who slept on the concrete around the corner and listening to his story. Michael reflects that "we all learned about the importance of looking into the eyes of another when we desperately want to look down. I believe we learned humility as we started to grasp the complexities of poverty and our inability to cure all of its far-reaching and devastating effects on human beings. What I also believe we learned was that a lack of an easy fix was no reason not to work for improvement, and that sometimes sitting next to someone by the train tracks really is important work."

New spirituality resource invites journey into reality

In the newly released *Journey into Reality: Through Prayer and God-Centeredness* spiritual leader Joann Nesser teaches that a relationship with God in prayer is not an escape from reality but a journey into reality.

The book was originally a series of talks given by the author at a retreat whose theme was designed to help people deepen their prayer and love relationship with God and to find ways to do so in the midst of everyday life.

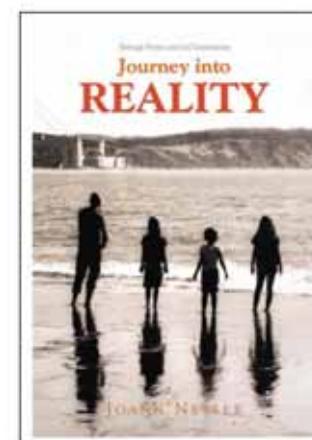
Being involved with a variety of groups that were seeking deeper spiritual life, Nesser began to notice that often people began to withdraw from what was considered "the world" and even from other Christians they considered to be on the wrong path.

There was a tendency to stay away from people who were different from themselves. Believing that this wasn't the way of Jesus, Nesser offered this retreat to help people meet God in the events and people they encountered in everyday life where the majority

of people live.

In a rapidly changing world we can become afraid of what we don't know. Loving and being loved by God helps us live fully into the unknown future of our lives. A journey into reality is an experiential awareness of God's lavish, unconditional love that gives us the courage to be our best and most real selves. This courage and love leads us to love others, even those who are different from ourselves.

Joann Nesser, founder and retired director of Christos Center for Spiritual Formation, is a graduate of Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation and has an MA in pastoral theology and ministry and a DMin in spiritual direction. She has taught prayer and spiritual formation in the U.S., Europe and Africa. She is author of *Prayer: Journey from Self to God*; *Prayer: Journey into Reality* (first edition) and *Contemplative Prayer: Praying When the Well Runs Dry*.



Journey into Reality: Through Prayer and God-Centeredness
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Immigration reform

On November 14, 2009, the ELCA Church Council adopted the social policy resolution “Toward Compassionate, Just, and Wise Immigration Reform.” This resolution responded to synod requests for greater clarity and direction, given the current immigration-related challenges facing our society. It was developed in consultation with many individuals as well as with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service. It builds on the 1998 ELCA message on “Immigration.”

The text lists important implications of this church’s understanding that all people are created in the image of God, and that government should be just and serve the common good. In relation to the problems of our current immigration system, the document examines its impact on workers, families and communities; the consequences of the “new security paradigm” and enforcement-only approaches; and the concerns of

refugees struggling to rebuild their lives in the United States. The text presents resolutions in the following areas:

- reuniting families and integrating the marginalized;
- protecting the rights of people at work;
- establishing just and humane enforcement;
- revitalizing refugee protection and integration; and
- addressing the root causes of forced migration.

The social policy resolution “Toward Compassionate, Just, and Wise Immigration Reform” is available at www.elca.org/policyresolutions.

The 1998 message on “Immigration” can be found at www.elca.org/messages/immigration. To request a single, complimentary printed copy of either document, call 800-638-3522.

Salud! Toasting 100 years

Are you looking for ideas for the anniversary of your congregation? The people of Trinity Lutheran Church, Kent, Ohio, suggest hosting a toast.

In celebration of 100 years of their church’s building on the congregation held a luncheon where a toastmaster led attendees in lifting up the many blessings they had received throughout the years.

Members were asked for a word or phrase that signified the Trinity community to them, such as “To faith, to learning, to insight, to stability.” Each word, accompanied by a PowerPoint slide, was punctuated by attendees affirming the toast.

On grief, grace and glory

Author Marie Sundet’s latest book, *Grief, Grace, and Glory* is an account of her niece Patrice’s journey with glioblastoma multiforme, a deadly brain cancer.

In the foreword to this book Sundet tells readers, “I write this account of the life of one exceptional person’s experience with brain cancer. It conveys grace and glory as well as grief. Patrice was a shining example of how to live and how to die.”

Sundet has written many devotional items for Augsburg Fortress. She is the author of two books for young children on the sacraments. Sundet worked as a teacher in public schools, in private preschools and in Head Start. You can read her blog at <http://griefgraceglory.blogspot.com/>

To order your copy of *Grief, Grace, and Glory* for \$13.00 plus 2.95 shipping and handling, e-mail wsundet@gmail.com or call 319-393-6971.



New hunger and climate change resources are available

The ELCA Washington Office has released two new congregational resources on the relationship between hunger and climate change.

The first resource, *Poverty and Hunger in a Changing Climate*, is an informational piece. It was printed with zero net greenhouse gas emissions and 100 percent powered by renewable wind energy. The printing company also used eco-ink and paper that is 100 percent postconsumer waste recycled fiber and process chlorine free. A hard copy of the resource is available through Augsburg Fortress at 800-328-4648; ask for “ITEM001529.”

The other resource is a combination DVD and study guide. In January 2009 a delegation of ELCA Lutherans journeyed to Nicaragua to learn about the relationship between climate change and hunger. The trip was sponsored by the ELCA Washington Office and ELCA World Hunger, and planned with the help of ELCA Global Mission. A DVD and accompanying study guide were created based on their experiences. “Climate Change and Hunger in Nicaragua” shows the devastating effects of climate change to the livelihoods of Nicaraguans.

An accompanying discussion guide, “As long as the earth endures,” was created to facilitate group reflection of the DVD. Both resources are available from the ELCA. To order your free copies, call 800-638-3522 or e-mail RIS@elca.org. The resources are also downloadable on the ELCA Web site at www.elca.org/caringforcreation.

The study guide was also a carbon-neutral printing, using eco-ink and 100 percent recycled paper. The DVD disc is closed-captioned and includes a downloadable pdf of the study guide. It is also created on a flex DVD made with 50 percent fewer materials and is 100 percent recyclable.



You are what you eat

“Be What You Eat: A Resource for Campus/Young Adult Ministries” was written by the Rev. Jana Schofield and Michael Isense.

Living in a fast-food nation, many of us may not have time to reflect on or learn about where our food comes from originally or what process it goes through before it becomes available behind a fast-food counter or on supermarket shelves. Schofield and Isense reflect upon the clear connection of the communion-table centering of Christ’s spiritual act of eating, saying “Take my body, given for you,” and the present world we live in, with a wide gap of wealth and poverty. They also give some practical suggestions on how to live not only an ethical life but that of someone who has truly “tasted the goodness of God.” This resource is part of The Lutheran World Federation North American project to raise awareness on Food Security and Food Sovereignty and is an accompanying resource to the *Food for Life: Recipes and Stories on the Right to Food*, available from Augsburg Fortress. Other resources for congregations, pastors, women’s groups and global mission enthusiasts are included in this project. You may download all the materials at www.elca.org/food-for-life.

The Lutheran World Federation will gather for its Eleventh Assembly in July 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany, around a related and relevant theme, “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread.” Join in reflection that leads us to action for the sake of the hungry world.

Bible study together in Lutheran communion

The Lutheran World Federation gathers every six to seven years to envision the collective work we will do in the future and to deepen our relationship. The Eleventh Assembly will be gathering around the theme “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread” in July 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany. We invite you to Bible Study gatherings now happening around the world in the 140 member churches present in 79 countries.

Please download the Bible Study which is available in four different languages—English, Spanish, German and French—from <http://www.lwf-assembly.org/>. For more North American regional news resources, visit www.elca.org/lwf.



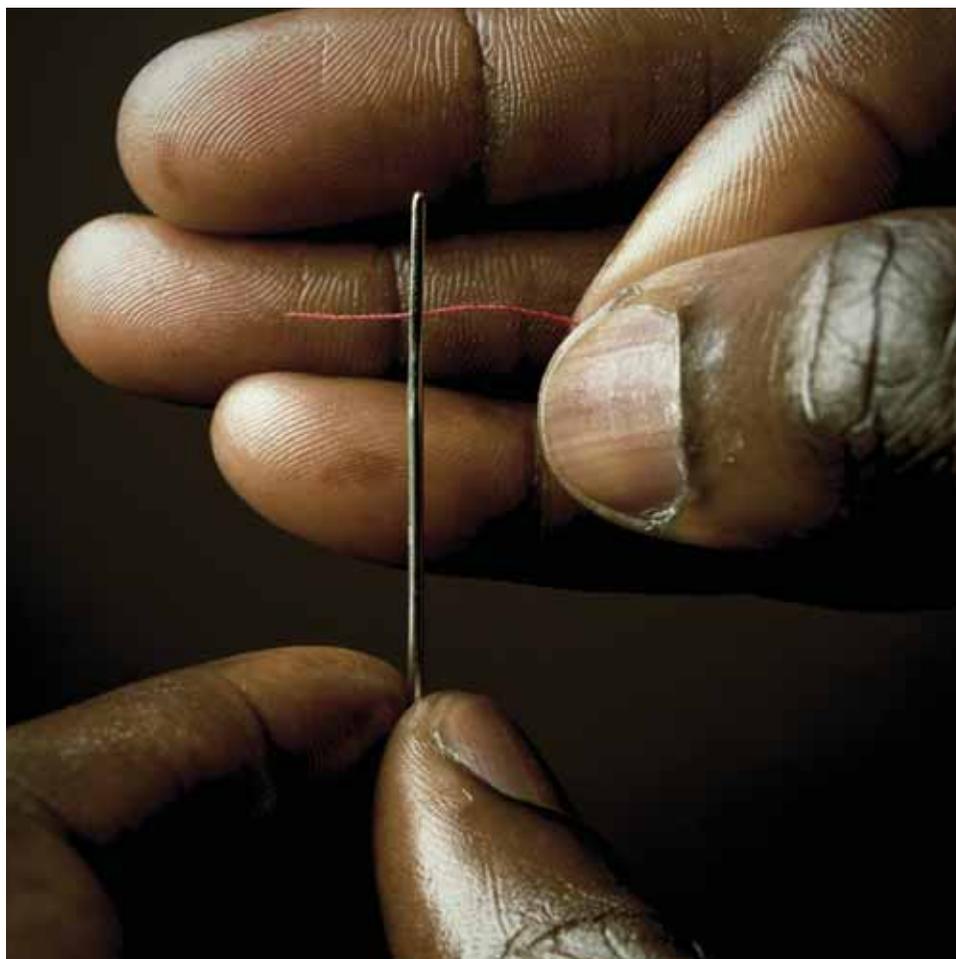
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Learn more about it in this issue of
Seeds for the Parish.



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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