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## Report of the Publishing House of the ELCA

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### Statement of Purpose

Augsburg Fortress Publishers, (AF) is the ministry of publishing for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The constitutional description of this unit appears in continuing resolution 16.31.A05., printed in Section X of this volume.

### Stewardship and the Ministry of Publishing

It is important for leaders throughout the ELCA to understand the dual nature of Augsburg Fortress as both ministry and business. As a self-funded program unit of the ELCA and not a for-profit company, AF encourages leaders throughout this church to make “stewardship” decisions with every purchase of curricula, books, church supplies, and worship and music resources.

All profits made by AF are reinvested into the development of new ministry resources for this church and the larger Christian community. When AF is competitive in terms of quality, service, and price, we request that ELCA congregations, synods, colleges, seminaries, and units of the churchwide office make the intentional choice of selecting Augsburg Fortress resources over

those of our competitors. Our slogan that expresses this partnership in ministry is “One mission. One future. Together.”

### Report of Work for 2007–2009

Augsburg Fortress is focused on growing the publishing ministry in two core areas:

- supporting congregations by creating relevant and innovative resources for faith formation and worship, and
- supporting academic scholarship by creating textbooks, monographs, and reference materials for higher-education institutions teaching religion and theology.

We create resources using traditional print and a variety of Internet-based and other digital media. AF is noted among denominational publishers as the clear leader in the delivery of ministry resources using digital delivery systems. For example, AF is the number-one publisher of religious content for Amazon’s Kindle digital reader, with more than 800 titles available and another 1,000 in process. In addition, AF publications are available via Google Reader and Amazon Book Surge, and for Sony eBooks.

Augsburg Fortress launched “Seminary Hub” in Fall 2007, offering to students and faculty at the eight ELCA seminaries free access for educational use to all of our Web-based subscription resources, among them [NewProclamation.org](http://NewProclamation.org), [SundaysandSeasons.com](http://SundaysandSeasons.com), [HereWeStandConfirmation.org](http://HereWeStandConfirmation.org), and [Akaloo.org](http://Akaloo.org).

In November 2008 AF announced the closing of its eight independent stores in the United States. A small space in the Luther Seminary store will continue to be leased to sell group-use resources to congregations. As a result of market research and analysis of the needs of core customers, it became very clear that more people prefer to purchase books and other resources via the Web than at local bookstores. In fact, the U.S. Census Bureau recently reported that in the past five years Amazon’s sales have increased by 104 percent while sales at “brick and mortar” bookstores (including large chains like Borders and Barnes & Noble) have increased by less than three percent. The AF stores were subject to this same declining trend.

We believe the renewal of our focus on the ministry of publishing rather than trying to be “all things to all Lutherans” will allow us to align our resources, both human and financial, on continuing to create the most innovative, helpful faith-formation and worship resources on the market.

## Alignment with Strategic Directions

During the past two years, Augsburg Fortress has worked hard at supporting the various expressions of the ELCA and has published many resources that assist this church in moving forward along the lines indicated by the five strategic directions. The following are recently published resources in support of each strategic direction.

### 1) **Support congregations in their call to be faithful, welcoming, and generous, sharing the mind of Christ.**

- A family of resources in support of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* published in partnership with the Worship and Liturgical Resources section of the Office of the Presiding Bishop, including *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pastoral Care*; *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pocket Edition*; *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Accompaniment Edition for Guitar*; *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Accompaniment Edition for Simplified Keyboard*, and many more;
- A collection of resources in support of the ELCA's Book of Faith Initiative published in partnership with the Vocation and Education Unit, including *Opening the Book of Faith*; *Rediscovering the Book of Faith*; *Lutheran Study Bible*; *Book of Faith Lenten Journey*; and a number of other resources for adult Bible study;
- *SPARK*, a new Web-based and print, Bible-centered Sunday school curriculum for children age two through sixth grade. It provides congregations with the choice of content for classic, lectionary, or rotation teaching formats. An beautifully illustrated *Story Bible* and engaging NRSV *Bible* for older children were developed as core resources;
- *Fed and Forgiven* uses print and video to update and modernize resources for sacramental education. Age-specific communion instruction for pre-kindergarten, first communion, and adults launched in the early summer of 2009 and will be followed by baptism resources in 2010;
- *Rainforest Adventure* (2008 Vacation Bible School curriculum);
- *Discovery Canyon* (2009 Vacation Bible School curriculum);
- Five titles in the new *Elements of Preaching* book series; and
- Martin Marty's *Baptism: A User's Guide*.

### 2) **Assist members, congregations, synods, and institutions and agencies of this church to grow in evangelical outreach.**

- A number of free social networking Web sites that encourage people within the ELCA as well as other Christians to share their insights concerning faith formation and worship, including [BookofFaith.ning.com](http://BookofFaith.ning.com), [CreativeWorshipTour.com](http://CreativeWorshipTour.com), and [DiscoveryCanyonVBS.com](http://DiscoveryCanyonVBS.com).
- Ten new volumes in the *Conozca su Biblia* series (Spanish-language Bible commentary series) have been published in this biennium;
- Several books in the *Lutheran Voices* series that encourage evangelical outreach, including Kelly Fryer's *Reclaiming*

*The E Word: Waking Up to Our Evangelical Identity* and Kay Bender Braun's *On Earth as in Heaven: Praying at the Crossroads*;

- *The Peoples' Bible*, an NRSV study Bible with specially commissioned essays and notes that reveal the Bible as the product of many peoples and cultures and the exclusive property of none of them; and
  - the 2009 Vacation Bible School curriculum, *Discovery Canyon*, which urges VBS congregations to collect offerings to share in service to the children at the Navajo Lutheran Mission School in Rock Point, Ariz., a ministry of the ELCA's Grand Canyon Synod.
- ### 3) **Step forward as a public church that witnesses boldly to God's love for all that God has created.**
- Stephen Bouman's and Ralston Deffenbaugh's *They Are Us: Lutherans and Immigration*;
  - Foster McCurley's *Social Ministry in the Lutheran Tradition*;
  - Sharon Welch's *Real Peace, Real Security: The Challenges of Global Citizenship*; and
  - Peter Bakken's and Jeff Wild's *Church on Earth: Grounding Your Ministry in a Sense of Place*.
- ### 4) **Deepen and extend our global, ecumenical, and interfaith relationships for the sake of God's mission.**
- Joseph Barndt's *Understanding and Dismantling Racism: The Twenty-First Century Challenge to White America*;
  - *The People's History of Christianity*, a seven-volume series of books exploring the Christian life of "ordinary" people across the 2,000 years of Christian history;
  - AF continues to sign partnership agreements with other publishers on variations of *The Lutheran Handbook*, most recently with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church; and
  - partnerships with other denominational publishers on variations of AF's faith-formation resources, including a licensing agreement with Harcourt Religion Publishers for the infrastructure of [HereWeStandConfirmation.com](http://HereWeStandConfirmation.com) and [Akaloo.org](http://Akaloo.org) for the Roman Catholic market; and
  - a distribution agreement for the 2008 and 2009 Vacation Bible School curricula with Church Publishing, Inc., for the Episcopalian market.
- ### 5) **Assist this church to bring forth and support faithful, wise, and courageous leaders whose vocations serve God's mission in a pluralistic world.**
- Norma Cook-Everist's and Craig Nesson's *Transforming Leadership: New Vision for a Church in Mission*;
  - Richard Rouse's and Craig Van Gelder's *A Field Guide for the Missional Congregation: Embarking on a Journey of Transformation*;
  - Michael Cooper-White's *The Comeback God: Theological Primer for a Life of Faith*; and
  - Peter Marty's *The Anatomy of Grace*.

## Major Directions for 2009–2011

In the next biennium, the Augsburg Fortress strategic plan focuses on growing our publishing ministry in core areas:

- supporting congregations by creating relevant and innovative resources for faith formation and worship, and
- supporting academic scholarship by creating textbooks, monographs, and reference materials for higher education institutions teaching religion and theology.

AF will support these core customers and build a financially stable ministry/business by:

- creating clearly superior products to shape the market and deliver unmatched value;
- moving toward a 90+ percent proprietary product mix to drive higher financial margins;
- leading the market in branding and “Web marketing” to engage our customers deeply;
- utilizing low-cost, high-impact channels to efficiently and effectively reach core constituents;
- putting technology at the center of all AF does in order to drive efficiency and develop insights into the needs of congregations and of higher-education customers; and
- remaining agile to move quickly to optimize the business and the ministry.

Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, expresses appreciation to the many talented authors, writers, editors, composers, arrangers, and artists with whom we work. In addition, we thank the leaders of congregations and institutions of higher education for their support and use of the resources provided by the ministry of publishing of the ELCA.

Michael D. Bash, *board chair*

Beth A. Lewis, *president and chief executive officer*

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