

# seeds for the parish

January-February 2009

Resource Paper for Leaders of ELCA Congregations

www.elca.org



In Malawi, tradition breaks down as a man performs the handwashing ritual. Typically, a woman pours water over another's hands before a meal, making sure her head is not higher than any man's present.

## God's work in Malawi

Malawi, a landlocked country in southeastern Africa, is among the world's least developed and most densely populated countries. Extreme poverty, hunger and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS make life difficult there. But with help from the ELCA Hunger Appeal the people of Malawi are improving their quality of life. They experience God's work with the helping hands of others and they continue God's work with their own hands.

In October, speaking from the pulpit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi Cathedral Parish in Lilongwe (the nation's capital), Pastor Philip Knutson cited Matthew 14:13-21 (feeding of the 5,000) as the Gospel text to preach on the new ELCA tagline, "God's

work. Our hands."

In the Gospel story, Jesus' disciples wanted to send the people away. There were just too many to feed with only five loaves of bread and two fish. But Jesus performed a miracle and fed all the people with just what the disciples had.

Knutson stressed that God's work is found in everyday life with just what the people have.

The sermon came at the end of an eventful week. Christopher Carpenter and Sue Edison-Swift (ELCA World Hunger), accompanied by Knutson, revisited two communities in Malawi. They saw the positive effects of ELCA World Hunger Appeal gifts.

They saw many people doing God's work with their hands — baking, irrigating, planting seedlings, taking the pulse of a patient and giving medical care.

In Samuel/Chakwela Village they found God's work in the hands of a woman who pumps clear water from a borehole.

In the village of Kambuzi the travelers saw chickens, pigs, goats, seed banks and a shallow well; the results of gifts well tended by the hands of the people of Kambuzi.

For more information on ELCA World Hunger visit [www.elca.org/hunger/resources](http://www.elca.org/hunger/resources), [www.elca.org/hunger/basics](http://www.elca.org/hunger/basics), [www.elca.org/hunger/stories](http://www.elca.org/hunger/stories) and [www.imageevent.com/elca-hunger/SeedsJan09Malawi](http://www.imageevent.com/elca-hunger/SeedsJan09Malawi)



Special occasions in the life of the congregation require special orders of service. [Page 2](#)



Tell us your congregation's story; share your experiences with "Seeds" readers. [Page 3](#)



Living Word Lutheran Church, Katy, Texas, hosts a global festival with over 1,000 people attending. [Page 4](#)



E-advocacy: make a difference by using your hands to do God's work. [Page 5](#)

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## Young musicians — one congregation's story

On the first day of his internship at Grace Lutheran Church, Lincoln, Neb., Pastor Paul E. Hoffman learned that his office was next door to the office of the Lutheran Summer Music Program Feasibility Study. At the time Hoffman could not imagine that 28 years later his congregation at Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church, Seattle, Wash., would send four students to the Lutheran Summer Music Academy & Festival (LSM) in the summer of 2009.

The connections to LSM over the years have been significant says Hoffman, "My own children have been students; I've served as chaplain during two summers; each congregation I've served since the academy began has sent students."

The Phinney Ridge congregation encourages each child to be a part of the choral music heritage of the Lutheran church beginning at age four. As children move through elementary and middle school, they also move through the congregation's choral activities. The youth of the congregation aspire to join the ranks of musical high school students from Lutheran congregations across the country. This summer four students (a tenor, harpist, soprano and clarinetist) will make the June trek to St. Peter, Minn.

Over the years in parish life, Pastor Hoffman considers it a wonderful gift to share all

that LSM has to offer. A more wonderful gift is that those returning from LSM share their gifts of music with the life and ministry of the parish. They return to the parish with a love of Evening Prayer and competent leadership of it and other liturgie. They have an increased skill and confidence with their voices or instruments and a passion for the church's music and liturgy.

Since 1982 LSM has been the pinnacle program of the Lutheran Music Program. More than 150 young people from across the United States come together each summer for rigorous musical study and performance. LSM seeks to foster musical excellence in a caring community for high school band, orchestra, choral and keyboard students from all faith backgrounds.

The audition-based program convenes for a four-week, residential program on a Lutheran college campus. Past LSM academies have taken place in Indiana, Minnesota, Iowa, South Dakota, Ohio and Illinois.

All students receive individual lessons; play in a coached chamber ensemble; participate in the symphony orchestra, band or choir; study musicianship; take electives such as jazz, conducting, church music or beginning voice; and attend recitals featuring professional faculty. Nearly every evening at LSM concludes with a



faculty or student recital. All LSM's recitals and concerts are free and open to the public.

Visit [www.lutheransummermusic.org](http://www.lutheransummermusic.org) for more information on the Lutheran Music Program, the Lutheran Summer Music Academy & Festival or the Young Musicians Partnership. Or contact the organization's national offices in Minneapolis by e-mail at [lsm@lutheransummermusic.org](mailto:lsm@lutheransummermusic.org) or at 888-635-6583.

## Occasional Services resources available

Provisional resources for *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Occasional Services for the Assembly* are now available ([www.elca.org/worship](http://www.elca.org/worship)) for review and response. This generation of occasional services includes more resources for use in the regular worshiping assembly than the previous *Occasional Services* companion to the *Lutheran Book of Worship*.

These new provisional materials include renewed and reworked resources for events in the life of a congregation, including the dedication of church buildings and furnishings and the installation of congregational leaders. New in these provisional resources are guidance for sacramental preparation, resources for celebrating an anniversary of a congregation, suggestions for welcoming new people into the congregation, guides for sending resources and people into mission and more!

Each section of the provisional resources for *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Occasional Services for the Assembly* contains new materials



for a variety of circumstances in the congregation. Go to [www.elca.org/worship](http://www.elca.org/worship) to read the table of contents of the electronic versions. Feedback received before February 1, 2009 will help shape the final volume that is set to be released this fall.

You are an important element in the development of worship resources for this church. Download, review and test these materials in your congregation. Address your feedback to the worship staff using the forms provided online or send an e-mail to [worship@elca.org](mailto:worship@elca.org).

## ALCM conference to explore pastor-musician relationship

The Association of Lutheran Church Musicians (ALCM) has a 25-year history of encouraging vibrant worship as it provides professional resources for musicians, clergy and others interested in the church's worship life.

In August, ALCM's biennial conference explores the separate but related vocations of pastors, musicians and the whole people of God. Over three days three dimensions of the pastor-musician relationship will be explored: 1) How do musicians and pastors understand their call rooted in common baptism? 2) What are the challenges to this working relationship in congregations? 3) What are the blessings of a healthy shared ministry for the whole people of God? Musicians and pastors serving together in the same congregation are strongly encouraged to attend as a team.

Visit [www.alcm2009.com](http://www.alcm2009.com) for more information about this event.

seeds for the parish

[www.elca.org/seeds](http://www.elca.org/seeds)

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## Global Lenten series ready

Looking for Lenten midweek or Sunday services with a global focus? The ELCA Global Mission Web site ([www.elca.org/globalmission/lent](http://www.elca.org/globalmission/lent)) offers eight Lenten services (Ash Wednesday through Good Friday). Ideas include worship outlines and liturgies, sermons, bulletin covers, PowerPoint-ready images and recipes for global suppers. The Easter service includes a sermon by an ELCA missionary teaching at the Coptic Evangelical Theological Seminary of Cairo, the largest Christian Arabic-language theological training institute in the world.

Stories and sermons highlight the work of ELCA missionaries in Senegal, South Africa, Egypt, Mexico, India, Germany, Brazil, Hong Kong and Japan.

## How to tell your congregation's story

People think in stories, talk to their friends in stories, even dream in stories. Jesus taught in stories.

If you want to understand what is going on in a congregation you need to listen to the stories. If you want seekers to be attracted to your congregation you need to tell your stories.

### We can turn to the secular world for lessons in storytelling.

"All you can do is relate the successful experiences you've had within the company," says Jim Sinegal, co-founder, president and CEO of Costco Wholesale. "What else have we got besides stories? That's what really hits home with people; it's what brings meaning to the work we do . . . when you have real examples, that's what resonates."

"A picture is worth a thousand words, and a story told appropriately is priceless," Sinegal adds. "Telling one of our own stories speaks volumes about our philosophy and our values."

Stories have been helping professional communicators achieve countless communication goals. Because they touch us deeply, they stay with us. Each time a story is shared, connections with family, friends, organizations and communities expand and deepen.

### You can use this knowledge in your congregation's communication efforts.

Tell a story when writing for your newsletter. For instance, as a newsletter editor you may be tempted to publish a picture of 100-year-old Mildred with a birthday hat perched on her head. The accompanying short story reads: "We thank God for Mildred Goodman, who celebrates her 100th birthday but is still young at heart. Here is Mildred at her birthday party. She really did a great job of blowing out all those candles. God bless you, Mildred."

Don't do it. Mildred will be thankful.

Instead of running that compelling squib, go and talk to Mildred and listen to her story. You may be surprised to find that her parents were missionaries and that she grew up in Africa. Her faith journey began as a mountaintop experience on the slope of Mt. Kilimanjaro. Your newsletter readers will be interested in that story.

### Tell your congregation's story to your unchurched friends and neighbors.

Churchwide staff member Wendy Blanck is

a hardworking volunteer for her Presbyterian congregation in Arlington Heights, Ill. (she's on loan to us Lutherans). She tells great faith stories about her many mission trips to the Dominican Republic. As a former director of Christian education for her congregation, many of her program ideas have found their way into the pages of "Seeds for the Parish." Wendy also helps out at her congregation's homeless shelter, taking the night shift after a long day at the office.

But Wendy wasn't raised by a church-going family. She wasn't encouraged to attend Sunday school. "I didn't hear about church from my parents," Wendy reveals. "I was invited to go to church by friends, girls I respected and trusted. They had such wonderful stories." Because of those stories the Presbyterian church gained a valuable member.

### Tell your faith story to the youth of your congregation.

Be prepared to share your faith stories with the young people of your congregation when the door of opportunity opens for you. Take some time to think about the faith stories you can talk to them about, such as:

- when you were challenged by a spiritual concern
- when you realized that you experienced God's grace, forgiveness and love
- when you were in a difficult situation or had problems making a decision and somehow you were guided by your faith
- the time or times when God was most real to you

A word of caution: refrain from telling a young person what he or she should believe. God has a way of doing that.

Storytelling can be a wondrous thing. Isn't it how the apostles spread the Good News all those years ago?

## Tell us your story!

Do you have a story to share with other congregational leaders? Drop us a line at: [janice.rizzo@elca.org](mailto:janice.rizzo@elca.org). Let us know what you're doing and what's working for your congregation.

## Telling your congregation's story electronically


### Save mailing costs in the new year.

Effective e-mail communication has the potential to reduce postage and copying costs in your congregation while strengthening the community bonds among your members. An e-mail delivery service helps you communicate effectively by improving the "deliverability" of your messages, making it easy for members to opt-in to just the types of communication they want to receive and by making it easy to produce engaging, professional-looking e-mails.

The ELCA Advantage program ([www.elca.org/elcadvantage](http://www.elca.org/elcadvantage)) has a business partner relationship with the Constant Contact e-mail marketing service. This arrangement allows

the churchwide organization to provide a folder of "ELCA Templates" among the more than 300 other e-communication templates you can choose from. An "ELCA-branded" e-newsletter template is available now. More templates will be offered in the future, some with monthly content feeds of prayers, news and information from around the ELCA.

If you already use Constant Contact you can switch to the ELCA plan without any other changes to your account. Make the switch by filling out the form at [www.elca.org/ccconvert](http://www.elca.org/ccconvert). New customers may sign up for a free 60-day trial at [www.elca.org/constantcontact](http://www.elca.org/constantcontact).

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## One congregation's Global Mission Festival

This year's fifth annual Global Mission Festival was a "mountaintop experience at Living Word," said Senior Pastor Mike Aus. There were more than 900 people who worshipped inside, hundreds more on the church lawn and another hundred in a large Gathering Place room just outside the church offices who watched the service via closed circuit television that afternoon. It was not a typical fall afternoon in Texas. It was warm and sunny with temperatures hitting 80 degrees.

More important than the perfect weather, this was October 19, 2008, a day that will go down in Living Word's history. It was the first festival of its type that not only drew in over 1,000 people, but one that included special guest and featured speaker, Dr. Tony Campolo, pastor, author and social activist. His passion for those living in poverty has taken him to people in need all over the world.

The service began with uplifting music from the Sunday Night Band. The Katy Christian Community Church choir offered songs in Chinese during the offering. The offering, totalling \$15,000, was collected after Campolo's message on the necessity of mission work. Campolo spoke for 30 minutes, but his message was delivered succinctly. "All missions begin with a deep intimacy with God. If we center in on Jesus, drive everything else out of your mind, and have the spirit come into you. Mission begins with Christ coming into us."

After worship hundreds of people spilled out of the church and were greeted by local restaurants that served up their unique specialties. Empanadas, Indian curries and Mexican enchiladas were just some of the ethnic foods that were sampled.

Arts and crafts were sold with the proceeds going directly to artisans around the globe. African dancers performed, and there was all kinds of music, including that of a world rhythm artist, Dan Egger-Belandria, who taught the children how to play the drums.

Addressing the main focus of the Festival were the numerous information tables on mission opportunities set up in the Gathering Place. At least 20 different organizations were represented. It was a crucial part of the Festival that presented both visitors and Living Word members with ways to serve people in need.

Living Word member and coordinator of the mission ministries room, Jen Grove, said, "I believe the Holy Spirit was at work in each of us with ideas and a vision that we brought to the planning meetings as well as experiences brought by those who contributed to the Global Mission Festival in the past. We let the Spirit move through us, and it all came together beautifully."

Chris Hicks, one of the Global Mission Festival's leaders, agreed that the Holy Spirit was at work in how the day was filled with many blessings. "It was a wonderful, spirit-filled afternoon of fun and celebration. It took the whole congregation to make this happen."

After the festival, Judy Mach, a Living Word member, said she was "still reeling from the power of Tony Campolo's message." This message also "rocked" Joel Breedlove, a 2008 high school graduate, who proclaimed, "That guy's a rock star!"

Along with the energy and dynamism that a person like Tony Campolo can bring, Pastor Aus stressed that, "This was a great celebration of the diversity of God's kingdom and a



**Living Word Lutheran Church's** Global Mission Festival attracted over 1,000 people. The mission and purpose of the event is to educate the community about global mission work, raise money for ministries, and to support fair trade sales of goods such as crafts, coffee, and chocolate.

reminder to us that it's not hard to make a really big impact in parts of the world that are especially suffering and hurting."

"For us as a church, the Global Mission Festival energizes us throughout the year," he continued. "As we plan for each festival, we are helped as a congregation to maintain a global focus throughout the year."

When darkness fell on that warm, sunny Texas day in mid-October, after the crowds dissipated and tables, tents and other goods were packed away, Living Word members knew

that there was still much to do.

Interested in hosting your own congregation's Global Mission Festival? ELCA Global Mission can suggest stewardship projects, help you contact and invite missionaries, and provide global worship materials. You may also request a copy of the booklet "Celebrating Global Mission," a guide that offers instruction and a time line for planning and hosting a Global Mission Festival. For information contact Mia Cortez at 800-638-3522, ext. 2642.

## A "real" facebook of ELCA missionaries is now available



**Lindsey Gibbon, Carol Becker, Miyazawa-Sensei, Christie Hanson, and Charity Hall, pictured at left.**

Charity Hall and Christie Hanson are "J3s" or ELCA missionaries teaching English in Japan and serving the Japanese Evangelical Lutheran Church.

During their first six months in Japan they studied Japanese and attended various other orientation programs.

In Tanzania, ELCA missionaries teach or serve in health care and advocate governmental delivery of oral morphine and other critical medicines to AIDS patients in rural areas.

In Japan a missionary calms hospice patients by playing her harp. In Suriname, a missionary is developing a lay training center with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Suriname. And in international congregations four ELCA seminary students are serving their internships.

Where do ELCA missionaries work? What do they do? There are two ways to find out. Look in the *2009 Global Mission Annual*, which showcases ELCA global mission work around the world, or visit the ELCA Global Mission

Web site at [www.elca.org/globalmission](http://www.elca.org/globalmission) and learn:

- how ELCA funds support international service
- about the mission model of accompaniment
- ELCA strategies for each continent
- about companion churches like the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania
- how you can serve as a missionary
- how to connect to ELCA Global Mission and Companion Synods

To order your free copy, e-mail [marie.cortez@elca.org](mailto:marie.cortez@elca.org) or call 800-638-3522, ext. 2642.

## Make an e-difference

As a baptized member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Jodi Deike hears God's call to do God's work as the Director for Grassroots Advocacy and Communication, at the ELCA Washington Office.

"I feel called to be a voice with and for others who are marginalized," says Deike. "Every day on my chilly walk to work I see homeless people trying to survive, children without coats, garbage littering the streets. I read in the commuter newspaper about the killing of people in the Middle East and the starving of children around the world," she continues. All around her, sisters and brothers in Christ are in need of some of the most basic human rights — food, clothes, peace, and a welcome smile. For Deike there is a lot of work that God is asking us to do in this world. She believes that God's "ask" is an honor and a privilege to answer humbly.

One of the ways we can fulfill God's work with our hands is through advocacy. In our Affirmation of Baptism rite we publicly profess our intention "to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth." Because of our discipleship we speak out on matters of justice for the sake of the community and we attempt to reframe the political discussion so that justice and righteousness are possible.

Here are some startling facts:

- Thirty-seven million Americans — one in eight — live below the official poverty line, including nearly 13 million children.
- More than 1 billion people in the world live on less than a dollar a day.

Deike believes that now is a crucial time to advocate about stark realities with a new incoming administration and Congress. In doing advocacy, the ELCA seeks to be sensitive to the needs of people locally, nationally and internationally. Its advocacy is rooted in Scripture and guided by ELCA social statements. The advocacy staff works diligently to research, consult and inform others regarding specific legislative interests. Often we collaborate with other Lutheran partners or ecumenical organizations on issues of common interest within public policy to strengthen the overall effort.

Some of the issues the grassroots advocacy office addresses on behalf of the

ELCA include environment and energy, hunger and poverty, health policy and global disease, peace and conflict, human dignity and human rights. We must continue to be good stewards of God's creation in all areas.

As the director for grassroots advocacy and communication, Deike recognizes that one of her privileges is to provide you with vital advocacy resources to energize and empower you to go out into your community to do God's work. She communicates with ELCA members frequently through the e-advocacy network to inform them of key issues and opportunities to contact their elected officials. You can make a difference, and you do make a difference, when you speak with and for others who are hungry, homeless, sick, conflicted or lost.

For example, in Illinois this fall, state budget cuts had already forced Lutheran Social Services of Illinois to cut several programs. The governor refused to sign a senate bill that would keep funding alive for substance abuse treatment services and a host of other important human services. Through a series of e-mail notices to members of the state public policy e-advocacy network, members were encouraged to call the governor's office to urge him to sign. Later, they were asked to call their house representative about an Access to Religious Ministry Act for immigrants. Thanks to the intervention of individuals throughout the state, both issues were resolved in favor of the people who needed the services.

The e-advocacy network empowers Lutherans to learn about, reflect upon and advocate on behalf of their Christian values. E-advocacy makes it easy for each and every member of the ELCA to advocate for peace, for care of creation, and for people living in poverty and struggling with hunger. By signing up for e-advocacy you'll receive timely updates from the ELCA on a wide variety of issues, including hunger, poverty and the environment. You can be confident knowing you are being asked to call or e-mail your elected officials only at the moments when your voice will make the most difference. Advocacy allows you to fulfill God's work by using your hands to meet legislators and your voice to speak out with and on behalf of the marginalized.

Visit [www.elca.org/advocacy](http://www.elca.org/advocacy) to join the churchwide network today and check out your state's advocacy office as well.

## Q&A

### What resources are available to enrich relationships in missionary sponsorship?

**Visit, visit, visit!** For a week last June, 12 of us from St. Paul Church in Villa Park, Ill., lived with medical missionaries Steve and Bethany Friberg in Tanzania. All of us had admired the Fribergs before our visit, but after a week observing and working side by side (painting a health clinic near Arusha) with them, each of us insisted on being president of their "admiration society." We are excited and proud to tell neighbors and friends about the exceptional, faithful, inspirational work of OUR missionaries. My advice: find time to visit missionaries you support, and you will return changed and so very pleased, thankful to God and proud of our missionaries and of the ELCA's Global Mission unit.

—Stephen H. Swanson, pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Villa Park, Ill.

Electronic communication has changed how communication with missionaries occurs. The congregations that sponsored my family when we served as missionaries found our blog to be a great resource. They would log in to learn about our work as well as download photos from our ministry. Other congregations have found it possible to Skype [software that allows users to make telephone calls over the Internet] and use a Webcam to visit with their missionaries.

—Louis Dorvillier, former missionary to West Africa

Our congregation has a large endowment, and we took great delight this past year in supporting missionaries Kristin and Brian Konkol in South Africa with a gift. Because we use most of our endowment's earnings for mission, we hosted a mission festival in the fall, invited a speaker from ELCA Global Mission to present the sermon and invited all of our endowment gift recipients to be present and set up exhibits. It was great!

—Mike Scheiding, Endowment Committee, Zion Lutheran Church, Waterville, Ohio

For the last three years we have found the *Global Mission Lenten Sermon Series* to be a powerful way to expand the mission awareness of people in a small, rural congregation. Members who participate have become excited about what ELCA missionaries are doing globally to share our faith. We are taking the next step in the coming year and are planning to use the accompanying recipes for our Lenten dinners. (<http://archive.elca.org/globalmission/lent/>)

—Michel Clark, pastor, Grace Lutheran Church, Knoxville, Ill.

"A Day in the Life of a Missionary," featuring six missionary families, is a wonderful six-minute DVD available to help adults and children alike to "get a feel" for what the missionary's daily experiences are like. Favorite missionary foods, favorite pastimes and daily occurrences — both poignant and funny — are shared. And, it's free for the asking. (800-638-3522, ext. 2641).

—Twila Schock, director, global mission support, Chicago

## Subscribe to 2009 Lenten devotionals

A new version of the e-mail series, *Living Earth: A 40-Day Reflection on Our Relationship with God's Creation*, has been readied for the 2009 Lenten season. This 40-day ELCA Lenten reflection series offers a holistic approach to how we live as earthly companions, combining God's caring relationship with creation to our journey in the physical universe. Each e-mail emphasizes individual and communal solutions, resources for further learning and suggestions for how to act or become more educated.

New this year, *Creation Waits with Eager Longing!* is a worship resource for Wednesdays in Lent that includes texts, hymn suggestions, sermon starters and action ideas. This Lenten journey of "reflection, rediscovery, remembrance, repentance, and recommitment" emphasizes faithful stewardship of God's creation.

This is a limited subscription; the first e-mail will arrive on Ash Wednesday 2009, and the last e-mail will arrive on Easter. Subscribe today by going to [www.elca.org/advocacy](http://www.elca.org/advocacy).

## Restoring sacred practices to congregational leadership

The Sacred Practices Leadership Series (SPLS), a joint venture of the Center for Renewal at Grand View College and the Alban Institute, is designed for those who lead congregations, both in ordained and lay roles. In fact, congregations that send both ordained and lay leaders to the series will enhance the effectiveness of the series in their settings. Six renewal events at the Sinsinawa Mound Center in Wisconsin from April 2009 through November 2010 will feature 12 prominent authors and theologians who will speak on sacred practices like prayer, discernment and service. By applying what is learned to their contexts, participants will grow in their ability to use sacred practices as a means of shaping their congregations' lives and ministries. In short, participants will learn how to allow God to be a more active player in the life of the congregation. For more information, visit [www.sacredpracticeseries.org](http://www.sacredpracticeseries.org) or call 515-263-6021.

## Lutheran humor is not an oxymoron



Lutherans laugh? Yes, indeed they do. And for many years Lutherans have sent funny stories to the "Light side" page of *The Lutheran* magazine. To celebrate 20 years of the magazine and the ELCA, Julie B. Sevig, editor of the "Light Side," has culled the best from the page that has delighted readers since 1988.

*Laughing with Lutherans* (2008, Skandisk, Inc.) includes 11 chapters, such as "Kids Say the Wisest Things," and all new cartoons from some of the favorite cartoonists of *The Lutheran*. A study guide at the back of the book can be used in small groups or adult

education settings.

"The great thing about this book and the 'Light side' page is that these are true stories from our congregations and homes," Sevig said. "These days there is plenty to worry about in the world and argue about in the church, but on this one little page each month Lutherans find both unity and levity."

*Laughing with Lutherans* (ISBN 1-57534-075-5) is available for \$8.95 from [www.skandisk.com](http://www.skandisk.com) or at book stores near you.

## Celebrate Bold Women's Day

The Women of the ELCA invite you to celebrate Bold Women's Day on February 22, 2009. Celebrate all Lutheran women and the many ways they act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

*Interchange*, the newsletter of the Women of the ELCA, offers the following suggestions for celebrating the day:

- Download the Litany for Bold Women's Day from [www.womenoftheelca.org](http://www.womenoftheelca.org)
- Encourage legislators to support the HEART for Women Act.
- Invite congregational members to list and describe bold women of your congregation in a prayer journal.
- Host a fundraiser. Plan a noon tea, bake sale, dollar drive or used book sale, and contribute the proceeds to Women of

the ELCA grants or scholarships.

- Give family, friends, or other women in your congregation an individual partnership to the Women of the ELCA. For \$20 per year, an individual partner receives subscriptions to *Lutheran Woman Today*, *Café*, and a bi-annual newsletter. For more information call 800-638-3522, ext. 2737, or e-mail [women.ELCA@elca.org](mailto:women.ELCA@elca.org)
- Visit a local nursing home; invite women there to tell you their bold stories of faith.

*Interchange* is sent monthly to Women of the ELCA leaders in congregational units, synodical organizations and clusters and conferences. It contains organizational news, new resource information, programmatic updates and devotions that can



be shared with all Women of the ELCA participants. It is also available by subscription for \$7 per year. To subscribe, call 800-328-4648.

## Fifth spiritual formation program begins in August 2009

Grace Institute's Spiritual Formation Program V will begin August 7-9, 2009, at Shalom Retreat Center in Dubuque, Iowa. This in-depth spiritual formation program is essentially Lutheran with ecumenical dimensions.

Over the course of two years rostered leaders and laity come together for eight sessions. Each session includes presentations, worship, silent reflection and discussion. Participants meet in small groups that stay together for the whole program.

### The eight session themes are:

- grace-centered spirituality
- attending to the Word
- symbols and sacraments
- worship
- contemplative prayer
- discernment
- spirituality and service in the world
- spirituality and evangelism

Presenters include Marty Haugen, The Rev. Susan Briehl, Fr. Simeon (Orthodox monk), The Rev. Ginger Anderson-Larson, Mary Preus, Tom Witt, Laura Gentry, Sr. Helen Cahill and Brad Hanson. Over 90 percent of those who start this program complete it.

For information, visit <http://ministry.luther.edu/grace> or contact Lori Ostlie at [ostlielo@luther.edu](mailto:ostlielo@luther.edu) or 563-387-1271.

## Kick your welcome up a notch

How do we grow our \_\_\_\_\_?

Fill in the blank with “women’s group,” “congregation” or another ministry and you will have one of the most frequently asked questions of the day. What steps do organizations take when their membership goals are not fulfilled as well as they might be? How do we offer a full welcome and not just invitation? Where can we look for help?

From January through May 2009, these questions are addressed in a new online book discussion sponsored by Women of the ELCA. Participants read and discuss one or two chapters per month of *Radical Welcome: Embracing God, the Other, and the Spirit of Transformation* by the Rev. Stephanie Spellers.

The online sessions consist of three components (participants may join in one or more of these): a blog, discussion board and chat. The blog features a panel, including the author, who share their reflections and insights on the assigned chapters. Those visiting the blog may comment or ask questions of the panel.

Based on the chapters read that month, the discussion board allows participants to ask questions or to share information about their group or congregation — what worked and what didn’t.

On the second Tuesday of each month a live chat, with the author and panel, is open for discussion on the chapters read.

If online discussion is not your cup of tea, join a local face-to-face group discussion. Consider e-mail as one way to discuss the book within your small group if you can’t find a mutually agreeable meeting time.

This discussion also may be used for congregation councils or visioning teams, clergy groups and for Sunday forums. If you can’t start in January, consider the Lenten or Pentecostal seasons.

Pastors who want supportive materials to use for preaching and Bible study will find them at [www.womenoftheelca.org](http://www.womenoftheelca.org)

For more information on the book discussion, visit [www.womenoftheelca.org](http://www.womenoftheelca.org) or call Bonnie Belasic at 800-638-3522, ext. 2733.

## Open the discussion on sexism with new Bible study

Now you have the opportunity to join the ELCA Church Council and other leaders of this church in education on and study of sexism and justice for women. *Bible Studies on Sexism* is a three-part look at Old and New Testament passages designed for men and women to use together. It is now available online for group or individual use at [www.elca.org/justiceforwomen](http://www.elca.org/justiceforwomen).

This triad of Bible studies is the first in an ongoing series, based upon the texts and themes that the ELCA Church Council used as part of its commitment to education on sexism in 2007-2008.

Look for future Bible studies — a second set is anticipated in September 2009 — that will be authored by a variety of theologians. For additional resources and assistance, contact Mary Streufert, director for Justice for Women at [mary.streufert@elca.org](mailto:mary.streufert@elca.org).

## Domestic violence resources receive funds

With a grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans the ELCA Justice for Women program is re-issuing ELCA-specific resources that deal with domestic violence.

The funds will in part be used to expand work already under way by the Lutheran Community Foundation (LCF), Minneapolis. LCF with the Faith Trust Institute (a nonprofit organization) helps communities of faith to assist clergy and lay members in the prevention of and intervention in domestic violence.

The Justice for Women program is collaborating with LCF to identify congregations interested in learning about domestic violence from the Lutheran perspective. For more information, contact Juli Bey at [juli.bey@elca.org](mailto:juli.bey@elca.org) or call 800-638-3522, ext. 2710.

## Study on education available in February

The DVD *Our Calling in Education: A Guide for Conversation and Study* (ISBN 978-6-0002-2249-9) will be available in February. This resource is a companion to the latest ELCA social statement, “Our Calling in Education.” Also available are both print and video resources for use by leaders.

The guide may be ordered from Augsburg Fortress at 800-328-4648. The cost of the guide is \$1.00 plus shipping. When ordering, also request copies of the social statement, “Our Calling in Education” (ISBN 978-6-0002-2060-0) or its Spanish translation, “Nuestro llamado en la educación” (ISBN 978-6-0002-2171-3). Both are available in packs of 10.

## Looking for Book of Faith tools?

Select Multimedia Resources offers *How Lutherans Interpret the Bible* (DVD course). This course is a visual means for helping congregations enter into the Book of Faith Initiative. The Rev. Mark Allen Powell, one of the authors of *Opening the Book of Faith*, presents these seven sessions with care and humor. Included is a study guide with three different formats for making use of the material with adult study groups or committees. To order this resource go to: [www.selectlearning.org](http://www.selectlearning.org).

Also, don’t forget the Select online courses being offered this winter (Feb. 2009). These courses may be used for continuing education, staff development, and in preparation for associate in ministry candidacy and other certification programs:

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

## A user’s guide to Baptism — something for everyone

Martin Marty’s latest book, *Baptism: A User’s Guide* is now available. This book is for those already baptized as well as those who are considering Baptism.

According to Marty, to see Baptism as merely a ceremony greatly limits the meanings of Christian Baptism. Martin Luther recommended that believers should begin and end their day reminding themselves of their Baptism and then go to work or to sleep cheerfully.

Baptism is at the heart of the everyday, life-long spiritual journey, Marty asserts, as he explores such questions as:

How did early Christians understand and practice Baptism?

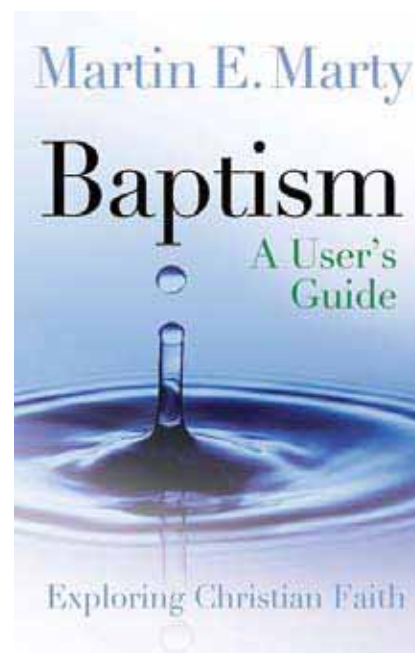
What difference does Baptism make in our daily life?

How does Baptism manifest itself in our relationships, our choices, our faith?

Marty brings us the history of Baptism and a guide to its application for everyday life. The book, available for \$14.99, includes questions for reflection and discussion.

Order online at [www.augsburgfortress.org](http://www.augsburgfortress.org),

\$14.99, Item No: 9780806680491.



## Two titles, same magazine

The ELCA’s newest magazine, *The Little Lutheran*, is now available under the title: *The Little Christian*. Now you can get the same magazine at the same price but with a different title for non-Lutheran children. These magazines, for children six and younger, remind readers of God’s love and teach that Jesus is their Savior and friend.

For more information visit, [www.thelittlelutheran.org](http://www.thelittlelutheran.org) (or [www.thelittlechristian.org](http://www.thelittlechristian.org)). A year subscription is \$24.95; six or more are \$12.95 each. Call 800-328-4648 to subscribe.



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## Who knew saving for retirement could light up a new church?

In 11 short years, the members of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Rockport, Texas, have gone from meeting in rented storefronts to breaking ground on their own church building – thanks to a loan from the Mission Investment Fund. Invest with the MIF and you don't just earn a competitive rate of return, you help fund loans so new congregations like Holy Cross find homes of their own. **To learn more, contact us at 877.886.3522 or [elca.org/mif](http://elca.org/mif).**



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