

seeds for the parish

January-February 2011

Resource Paper for Leaders of ELCA Congregations

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Grace under pressure: working together at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly

by By Erma Wolf

Gather 1,045 voting members from across the country into one large hall. Add several hundred more people in the form of organizational officials, volunteers, techies, security personnel, ecumenical guests and invited speakers. Add to the mix some 200 to 500 more observers and visitors (the numbers fluctuating greatly each day) who are very concerned about the issues and decisions being discussed and possibly voted on over the course of the week. Finally, stir in debate on the most contentious issues for any church body to deal with in nearly a century.

Then have all these folks together in a lockdown while tornado sirens wail outside the hall, and while many are praying and hoping for totally opposite outcomes on a matter to be voted on before the end of that day.

All these elements were present at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA in Minneapolis. In spite of the tension and strong disagreements among those present, there was

no “meltdown.” Many left the assembly at the end of the week elated over the turn of events, while many others left bitterly disappointed, and over the same thing: the decisions reached on the proposed social statement, Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust, and on the proposed ministry recommendations.

Yet the debate was civil and for the most part respectful. Even when the responses given to hotly disputed questions of procedure were not the hoped-for answers, the majority of the reactions showed maturity and care for others.

Why? Was it just because this was a “church” event, and “church” people just act well? Or were some specific things done and said that made it possible to disagree strongly before, during and after the assembly, and to do so with some measure of grace under pressure?

Being intentional about civility

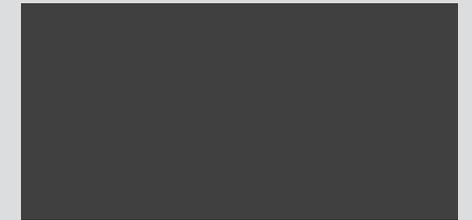
There were deliberate, purposeful attempts on the part of many at the churchwide assem-

bly to keep the proceedings as respectful and civil as possible. Whether it was the personnel from the churchwide organization, those attending as voting members, or the visitors—many of whom were members of or sympathetic to one of the many organizations hoping and working for a particular result—all appear to have worked to maintain a positive witness to how Christians express strong opinions and deep disagreement.

One voting member, upon reflection, said that there was awareness that the ELCA would change as a result of this assembly, no matter which way the voting went. “People were aware that we would not be the same. That awareness brought a certain respect because we would be a part of something historic—again no matter “which way the vote went.”

That awareness that history was in the making also seemed to be present among visitors and observers. Those attending gatherings of Lutheran CORE remember hearing the impor-

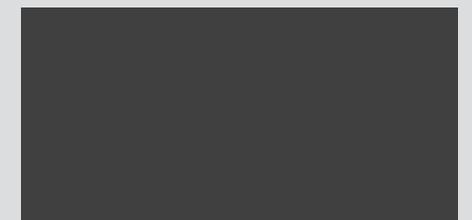
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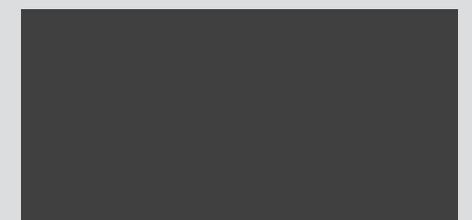
Worship or service? Make the connection between God’s actions and our reactions. **Page 2**



Global and local making the connection with mission events. **Page 4**



Q & A how ELCA Facebook fans serve their neighbors. **Page 5**



Intergenerational choir singing to the Lord. **Page 10**



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Owning our frailty as a church

by Paul Lutter

"I'm not going to serve on that church committee anymore. The other members aren't listening to one another—or to me."

"Pastor, we're leaving the congregation."

"Pastor, we've voted and decided it's time for you to leave our congregation."

"Bishop, we're withholding our benevolence this year. What has the synod done for us?"

"Bishop, we're leaving the denomination."

Maybe the conflict you've encountered in the church isn't so clear. Maybe the conflict is a little more difficult to pinpoint, even though you have a clear sense that something just isn't right in the congregation in which you are a member. And so your congregation reaches out for resources to help diagnose and address the conflict.

Yet, let's be honest: even with the very best tools for resolving conflict at our disposal, often it seems that the church's attempts at conflict resolution leave us with more conflict and very little resolution.

Why is this? I would argue that the problem lies, at least in part, on the idea that the church can resolve our conflicts. We can't resolve and reconcile conflict, no matter how much skill and training we might have at our disposal.

Some will get a little nervous about this: "But we have to try, don't we? Are we supposed to just give up and let things fall apart to the point of no return? What you're suggesting sounds so naïve and dangerous!"

Yes, it is dangerous. No, it is not naïve. For what I am arguing is that reconciliation and restoration in the church occurs through God's work and God's hands. There is nowhere that God is more at work than when everything falls apart. God's hands are never busier than in those situations in which we are most weak and vulnerable, our hands tied in knots or lying dormant at our sides because we don't know what else to do.

The thorn in our flesh

Saint Paul admits he is afflicted with what he calls a "thorn" in the flesh (2 Cor 12:7). While

there are many scholarly attempts to understand it, no one really knows what the thorn is in Paul's flesh. All we know from reading the text is that the thorn is a problem. Paul has done anything and everything he possibly can to alleviate the problem, but nothing seems to work. The thorn persists.

As a last resort, Paul appeals "three times ... to the Lord about this" (v. 8). And yet, the thorn does not go away. Instead, Paul hears from the Lord himself: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" (v. 9a).

God's power is made perfect in our weakness? It sounds like a nice sentiment, but what might it mean for the church in conflict?

It means everything, as it turns out.

Jesus' death on the cross looks to the outside world like complete and utter weakness. Yet Jesus is all about turning things upside down. The result is that everything is reversed. Everything and everyone is made new. In Jesus' death, the power of God is on full display. In weakness there is incredible strength, because the power is God's, not ours. In death there is life. In hopelessness there is hope. In brokenness there is healing.

This moves the church into a different space in relationship to conflict. Ours is neither to point fingers nor to defend ourselves. Our work—our true work—is to be vulnerable, warts and all, along with those with whom we are in conflict.

If the church is serious about resolving and reconciling conflict, then we need to realize that we are not the glue, or even the foundation upon which these things are built.

If the church wishes to bring healing and hope to the world, it begins with a strange word.

The church needs to confess its sin.

Making room for healing

This suggestion will no doubt be met with some hesitation. "Won't this leave the church open to lawsuits?" Given that we live in what Luther called the left-hand kingdom, such concerns are certainly understandable, and even

warranted. Research conducted through the John A. Ryan Institute for Catholic Social Thought at the University of

St. Thomas in Minnesota suggests just the opposite is the case, though. When institutions own up to their frailty, a stronger relationship is often built between the institution and those with whom they are in conflict.

In the weakness of confessing sin, the church makes room for God's work and God's hands to heal, reconcile and make new.

To be subject to the very absolution it offers others is perhaps not a comforting thought for the church. While we are not blind to our own sinfulness, inviting others in to view it as well is not something of which we are particularly fond. For that matter, even inviting God to take a closer look at the ways in which "we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves" (ELW, p. 95) may leave us with a bit of fear and trepidation.

The truth, however, is that God is well aware of our sinfulness. Before God we are always vulnerable to how God chooses to show mercy, forgiveness and healing to us in Christ Jesus. The underlying promise upon which we stand before God, though, sets the tone. "You are forgiven for Jesus' sake" is the key in which our lives are written and played out. This is a tune that will never go out of style!

Sinful and forgiven, we confess our sin, stating with Paul, "whenever I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10b).

Paul Lutter is working on a Ph.D. in theology at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., and is interim pastor of Fields of Grace Lutheran Parish in Lafayette, Minn., and visiting instructor of religion at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minn.



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Communication Services

Kristi Bangert – Executive Director
Scott Hendrickson – Associate Executive Director and Director for Marketing, Public Relations and Creative Services
Marianne Griebler – Associate Director for Marketing-Member Communicat

Editorial Staff

Jan Rizzo – Editor
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POSTMASTER, send address changes to:
Richard Millett
8765 West Higgins Road
Chicago, IL 60631
E-mail: Richard.Millett@elca.org

2011 Churchwide Assembly slated for August 15-19

Every two years, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America gathers for a churchwide assembly. Voting members, ecumenical and global guests, ministry partners, visitors and congregational observers from across this church will gather in Orlando, Florida, August 15–19, 2011, for the twelfth churchwide assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The opening service of worship will be

held on Monday, August 15, 2011, at 4:00 p.m. Hearings and workshops will take place on Monday prior to the first plenary session.

In a week grounded in daily worship and Bible study focused around "life in the community of the baptized," participants will consider the recommendations from "Living into the Future Together: Renewing the Ecology of the ELCA." Other items on the assembly's schedule

include consideration of a proposal for the ELCA Malaria Campaign, response to memorials received from synods and resolutions from the assembly, the budget for the 2012–2013 biennium, constitutional amendments related to Living into the Future Together as well as the redesign of the churchwide organization, and a social statement on genetics. The assembly also will hear greetings from many partners,

including full communion churches, social ministry agencies and more.

The 2011 Churchwide Assembly promises to be a lively mix of worship, fellowship, prayerful dialogue, business and Bible study. Visitors are welcome for the entire assembly or for individual days. Congregations may send an official observer. Visit www.elca.org/assembly/ for more details.

continued from page 1

tance of standing as witnesses in everything that was said and done, and that all behavior should reflect Christ-like values. Goodsoil and Lutherans Concerned/North America intentionally taught “graceful engagement,” a way of listening and sharing one’s own story in order to build relationships that help overcome the issues that divide people. Both Goodsoil and Lutheran CORE provided hospitality areas where their volunteers and guests could gather for prayer and devotions, as well as have a more relaxed setting in which to support one another. Additionally, members of each of these groups experienced expressions of concern from those in the other group, especially on the most stressful days of the assembly.

Staying centered in prayer and worship

Prayer and worship seemed to play a decisive role in maintaining the respectful atmosphere of the assembly. This began months earlier with the “Call to 50 Days of Prayer” by Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson and with the pairing of voting members as prayer partners. Some voluntarily became prayer partners with those in the coalitions on the opposite side of the issues.

During the assembly itself, devotion and prayer began and ended every plenary session, and worship was scheduled at the end of the morning session—in the center of—each day. The hope was that, in spite of the disagreements that might be expressed in the plenary, all could come together in prayer around the table of the Lord. The time dedicated to prayer and Bible study was also mentioned as helpful.

Providing time for small group discussion at tables and setting aside time for a “quasi committee of the whole” allowed for discussion outside of the constraints of parliamentary procedure. Voting members also were aware

that those speaking at the microphones—whether they were at the “red” or “green” stations [speaking against or for a particular topic of debate]—were doing so out of love for the church and for their church.

Not even all these measures ensured that all exchanges would be respectful, nor were all these efforts viewed in the same way. While



for some the regular pauses for prayer were good reminders that the assembly was seeking the will of God, others saw these prayers as manipulative. For those who found the worship services to be times of refreshment

and healing, there were others who experienced them as painful reminders of the divisions in the ELCA. Many knew that the conflicts present in the ELCA would not be resolved by any decisions reached at this assembly, but would only move on to another phase.

Nonetheless, the emphasis on prayer for the “other,” along with the high expectation that those at the assembly could treat one another as Christ would treat us—even though that would be difficult at times—worked to keep exchanges at the assembly grace-filled.

It is difficult, however, to maintain such a focus for the long term, outside of the controlled time and space of a churchwide assembly. Perhaps, though, as the ELCA continues to deal with ongoing conflict over the 2009 decisions, such a focus and emphasis on prayer for and prayerful listening to those who disagree with one another is more needed than ever. That is a challenge that the ELCA continues to face, and one, crucially, which needs more attention in this body’s life together in the years to come.

Erma Wolf is a rostered leader in the ELCA who is also a writer and adjunct faculty for the Institute of Lutheran Theology.

Editors note: For ideas on how your congregation can use these tools go to page 4.

New ELCA resource website now live

Shopping for the ELCA resources your congregation needs is now only a click away. Visit the new ELCA resource website at www.elca.org/resources.

The resource website and distribution center is managed by Northern Printing Network. You will see their name and logo (or the acronym “NPN”) on your invoices and correspondence related to your order.

Some things can wait. Insurance isn’t one of them.

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Special delivery for Jim Freeman

At about the same time each weekday, for the better part of the last decade, a volunteer from Mobile Meals can be seen walking up the stairs of Jim Freeman's porch with a special delivery—a warm meal.

The meals that Jim counts on are made possible by funding from ELCA World Hunger.

Sometimes the delivery is accompanied by a newspaper or by dog food to feed Freeman's trusty companion. On Christmas, there's a gift. On his birthday, cake. When he's not feeling well, a registered nurse will come to check on him. A chaplain will frequently stop by to pray.

At 88 years old, it has become increasingly difficult for Jim Freeman of Spartanburg, South Carolina, to get around. Visiting the doctor, going to church, even grocery shopping and cooking—everyday tasks—can be tough. Freeman's wife recently passed away after a 22-year-long battle with Parkinson's disease, and his two adult children have moved away. With no other income besides his monthly social security payments, Freeman lives below the poverty level.

Mobile Meals opened their doors on October 3, 1997. That day they served 25 meals with 15 volunteers. Today Mobile Meals has grown to serve nearly 2,000 residents with the help of approximately 150 volunteers. The work that they do is funded, in part, by ELCA World Hunger.

By 4 o'clock each morning, several volunteers are already huddled together in a large kitchen, preparing food, filling trays and packing coolers for the deliveries of the day. No one diet is perfect for everyone, so each individual meal is prepared carefully—with added vitamins, limited salt or whatever it takes to help each individual manage



chronic illnesses and stay healthy.

The majority of recipients are over the age of 60, many living on monthly incomes of less than \$800.

"Sometimes I get to feeling selfish," Freeman says. "I know, I know in my heart, there are a lot of people in this town who are worse off than I am. And sometimes I feel like I should not be

accepting this. But then I, as they say today, 'crunch the numbers,' and without help, I would not eat the way I do."

"When I started Mobile Meals, I understood the realities of hunger," said Jayne McQueen, the President and CEO, "But what I didn't under-

stand was the devastation of loneliness."

And that's where Mobile Meals really found its niche. In addition to providing healthy, nutritious meals for the elderly, they provide companionship. Visitors, registered nurses and chaplains all pitch in to help those in need. "Sometimes they look forward to the visit as much as they do the meal," says Ralph Gillespie, a local volunteer from Holy Communion Lutheran Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Freeman's story is just one of millions of stories about lives changed by your gifts to ELCA World Hunger. A new ELCA World Hunger video series helps bring these stories to life. Offering a unique glimpse of real people faced with hunger and poverty, these videos tell four different stories—including Freeman's—and viewers can learn about how ELCA World Hunger is making a difference. For more information, visit www.elca.org/hunger/resources.

Laury Rinker is a staff member at ELCA World Hunger.

Radical hospitality and bridge-building

There is nothing like a pilgrimage to the Holy Land to visit our companions, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), to experience radical welcome and bridge-building in a land in which our Lutheran companions' continued existence is not welcome.

Imagine living in a land the size of the metropolitan Chicago area with over 500 checkpoints, where you need a special permit to leave your suburb, and where it can take all day to get 10 miles away. A land where your 13-year-old sister can be abducted and held without charge under administrative detention by the occupying government without them even telling you. A land where many have labeled you as terrorists, and the power of the world is on the side of those who do not recognize your right to live on land owned by your family for generations.

And yet, in this land that fuels such powerful resentments, hatred and division, the ELCJHL is busy "breaking down the walls and turning them into tables of reconciliation," according to ELCJHL Bishop Munib Younan, who just this year was elected president of The Lutheran World Federation.

Bishop Younan was one of the founders of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, a group of top Christian, Muslim and Jewish leaders working together for peace with justice. Pastor Mitri Raheb of Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem and director of the Diyar Consortium—which offers health

awareness, culture education, leadership development and elder education—is busy "creating facts on the ground of hope." Their latest project, the only Lutheran college in the Middle East, recently moved to its new space and held a grand celebration.

In Amman, Jordan, the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd offers similar services to the community, including opportunities to engage in dialogue with Muslims and to create spaces of culture and hospitality. All ELCJHL churches are open to all Palestinians, regardless of religion or political affiliation. The Boys' Home in Beit Jala is home to Muslims and Christians alike, as are all the ELCJHL schools. The goals of ELCJHL educational programs are to promote mutual understanding, tolerance, peace education and women's rights. The Lutheran World Federation's Jerusalem program operates Augusta Victoria Hospital, which has served the poorest of the poor since 1948. Its village health clinics take the welcome to people who can't get to the hospital.

Laura Heinrich, a medical student in Chicago who went this summer on the ELCA/ELCJHL Holy Land Youth mission, has been radically changed by the hospitality she found and the friends she made in the Holy Land.

Laura writes, "A pilgrimage to the Holy Land is more than a religious tour, it is a homecoming. We were welcomed with open arms by the people of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL). Wheth-

er you stop into the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in the Old City of Jerusalem for a service, or stay for a night at the Lutheran Guest House in Bethlehem, you feel a sense of radical welcome and community with people you only met that day. I have had the privilege of making two such pilgrimages in the last two years, and I have come away with a better sense of my own faith and the struggles of the people in Israel and Palestine. Yet most powerful are the voices I hear, the voices of those I met calling me to return, to come home. The ELCJHL families who embraced me, the children who taught me how to count to ten in Arabic, the teens and university students who showed us great hospitality and shared their faith and lives will all live in my heart forever, and they urge me on to speak out and tell their stories: amazing hospitality in the midst of occupation and oppression." (see more at www.elca.org/hlyouth).

The youth—high school and college age—from Michigan, Chicago and Washington, D.C., connected so well they are working on next summer's venture: bringing ELCJHL youth here to continue to learn from each other about leadership development and peace-building.

In November, eight women of the ELCA also experienced a radical welcome on their pilgrimage, as five ELCJHL women spent the entire trip with them. A bond grew out of this experience that all women are excited to

continue. "The Women of the ELCA Women Building Global Community Immersion was a unique experience of radical welcome because women from ELCJHL shared eight days of their lives to make the journey with us. Lily Hanna and I became instant friends and were amazed at the many similarities in our lives. The hospitality was genuine and always present as we traveled together experiencing checkpoints with our sisters, talking over meals, praying and learning together. When I returned home, I visited Lily's daughter and her husband! We truly believe it was the work of the Holy Spirit that brought us together. The Israel/Palestine conflict is very real now to me, and not just a lead story on the six o'clock news. I am determined to find ways to let people know what is going on there. My circle of sisters is now expanded! Thanks be to God!" Gayle Hill, a food service director for a nursing facility in the Detroit area and a member of Gracious Saviour Lutheran Church in Detroit.

For those interested in visiting the Holy Land, please consult the many travel resources at the Peace Not Walls travel website (www.elca.org/peacenotwalls/travel) and make sure you visit your sisters and brothers in Christ in the ELCJHL to hear their stories and learn about their faith and lives (www.elcjhl.org). You will, indeed, feel their gracious welcome—as they say in Arabic, "Ahlan-Wa-sahlan"—and feel as if you have come to your second home.

Determined to do God's work

by Melissa Ramirez Cooper

Kathleen Elliott Chillison is an ELCA Lutheran by choice, although her Lutheran grandmother had much influence. Raised in the Baptist Church, Kathleen was confirmed at St. Mark Lutheran Church in Los Angeles, Calif., and has been an active member ever since.

Determined to do God's work, Kathleen became actively involved with New City Parish, an urban social ministry organization serving areas near Los Angeles, and served as a member of its board of directors.

She also serves on the board of directors for Baltimore-based Lutheran Services in America, is enrolled in the deacon program of the African American Lutheran

Association, and is taking lay leadership courses through the ELCA Southwest California Synod's Equipping Leaders for Mission program.

"I have never been a part of something that I did not believe in," says Kathleen. She realizes that the ELCA is Christ's church and that there is a place for her here.

"I believe in the mission of the ELCA. It is what I have in my life, and it is good."

That's why Kathleen is a member of the ELCA's "Living into the Future Together" task force.

Commissioned by the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, the task force is called to recommend options for the future of the ELCA in light of its call to God's mission. The task force is considering questions like, "What distinctive gifts does our theological, confessional and liturgical identity bring to this environment and to this time of change?"

"I was thrilled when Living into the Future Together came about, because it's about time we study and amend the direction of the church," says Kathleen. "It is inspiring to witness what faith can do when the object of that faith is Jesus the Christ, who never fails."

Something unique to offer

How this church moves into the future is also important to Erik Ullestad, who serves as youth and family life director at Windsor Heights Lu-

theran Church in Des Moines, Iowa.

"Research tells us that Millennials are not connecting with the good news of God's creative and redeeming presence in the world in the way their parents and grandparents did," he says.

"As someone with feet firmly planted in the Generation X and Millennial (generations of young adults), this is perplexing and disheartening," says Erik.

"I have seen the power of the Lutheran witness in my own life and in the lives of young people around the world. We have something uniquely profound to offer a generation that embraces dialectic tension and desires to reside in the messiness of human relationships," he says.

"We have the message. We need to renew our engagement with media, recast our medium and rethink our methods so that our neighbor can 'taste and see that the Lord is good,'" says Erik.

In the spring and summer of 2010, the LIFT task force's work was guided by two primary questions: "What is God calling this church to be and do in the future?" and "What changes are in order to help us respond most faithfully?"

The task force invited members and friends of the ELCA to consider these questions and share scenarios of what could be or should be in the church, based on experience and history, hopes and dreams.

The task force is using this input as it prepares a report with recommendations for presentation to the ELCA Church Council in April 2011. The council has the authority to transmit the report and recommendations to the 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly for consideration. The churchwide assembly is the ELCA's highest legislative authority.

"Change needs to happen. We need a place where God's grace can keep us," says Kathleen.

For more information on the LIFT task force, go to www.elca.org/lift.

Melissa Ramirez Cooper is a member of the ELCA News Team.



Q & A

The *Seeds for the Parish* editor recently asked members of the ELCA Facebook Page: How does your congregation handle conflict?

Check out [the program called] Healthy Congregations. It is a wonderful resource. An introductory video can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3Mq0rqO9MA and their website is www.healthycongregations.com. Bishop Hanson is featured in the video.

As a pastor and as a person it saved my life, helping me to see conflict and my own functioning within it in a whole new light. Also, get to know yourself ... become more self aware in your relationships and interactions. The Web site www.enneagraminstitute.com will introduce you to a wonderful resource, as will the book by Richard Rohr and Andreas Ebert, *The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective* (ISBN 978-0824519506).

—Jeff Erbskorn

I would say extremely well. We lost our long-time pastor, but thanks to our bishop, we spent that summer discerning in small groups. The call process lasted for almost a whole year. Some were not happy with our interim, some were. Our new pastor won the congregational vote by a very slim margin after everyone had their say in the meeting. We all left not as friends, but rather like family. Throughout the entire process, we only lost 2 members! I love my church family!

—Barbara Babbitt Bambrick

In the past, I am told, we allowed a small group to have their way to avoid conflict. Now we are learning to listen, forgive and be open to each other. It's still a steep learning curve, but the resolve is not to avoid conflict, but to deal kindly and lovingly in all our relationships.

—Dorothy Nielsen

Some people walk away. Some people refuse to seek peace or reconciliation. Some people avoid it. Some people shout their opinions in the parking lot but refuse to face off with anyone. Some people look for the pastor to absorb all the conflict. We used a mutual ministry process to address complainers straight on. Some of them have left. Now there is less open, negative conflict. Conflict can be healthy and lead to change. All conflict has friction and resistance. But is there a spirit of reconciling love that governs our thoughts and words and deeds?

—Matt Lenahan

With a lot of prayer and Christian love—for each other and for our community of faith! We just voted to change our 58-year-old church's name, a huge and positive step. While there was plenty of heated discussion in the months leading up to the vote, the exchange remained civil and productive, for the most part. And—knock on wood—none of our members have left yet because of the outcome.

—Doug Hernan

"Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive" (Colossians 3.13)

—R Don Wright

Editor's note: If you would like to join the ELCA Facebook Page you can find us at www.facebook.com/lutherans.

Introducing Washed and Welcome: a family of resources for baptismal preparation and formation

Introducing Washed and Welcome: a family of resources for baptismal preparation and formation.

In holy baptism the triune God delivers us from the forces of evil, puts our sinful self to death, gives us new birth, adopts us as children, and makes us members of the body of Christ, the church.

“Although a person is baptized once, the gift of baptism continues throughout a Christian’s life. Instruction in the faith for a life of discipleship is part of the preparation of those who are to be baptized or their parents and sponsors. The ongoing nurture of that faith is part of the congregation’s ministries of formation, education, service, and evangelical witness (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 225).

New resources from Augsburg Fortress (www.augsburgfortress.org) support your congregation’s baptismal ministry and the participation of God’s people in the lifelong gift of baptism. The development of these resources has been guided by the order for

Holy Baptism in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (pp. 225–231) and by these statements from *The Use of the Means of Grace* (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1997):

- “Baptism inaugurates a life of discipleship in the death and resurrection of Christ (Background 14A).
- “Baptism is for the sake of life in Christ and in the body of Christ, the Church. . . . Individuals are baptized, yet this Baptism forms a community. It is for children. It is for adults. It is done once, yet it is for all of our life (Application 14B).
- “The parish education of the congregation is part of its baptismal ministry. Indeed, all of the baptized require life-long learning, the daily re-appropriation of the wonderful gifts given in baptism (Application 19B).

Meet the family

Washed and Welcome: A Baptism Sourcebook (ISBN 9781451401301). In this 150-page sourcebook and its accompanying CD-ROM

you will find:

- five approaches to baptismal preparation with parents, caregivers, and sponsors of infants and young children;
- a library of helpful topics that explore both pastoral and practical considerations accompanying baptismal preparation and formation;
- advice, suggestions, inspiration and examples;
- reproducible pages for parents, sponsors, godparents, children, families and the whole congregation;
- encouragement and resources for strengthening your congregation’s total baptismal ministry.

Local congregational practices around baptismal ministry vary. For this reason, *Washed and Welcome* sourcebook resources are both flexible and customizable.

- The CD-ROM in the back contains all of the sourcebook pages in editable (RTF) text files, allowing the leader to create custom-

ized session plans and pages that reflect local traditions and practices. The pages are also provided as designed (PDF) files.

- All of the sourcebook content is reproducible.
- The sessions in the “Approaches to Baptismal Preparation” section suggest five different approaches to preparing for meetings with parents and sponsors of infants and young children. Leaders might choose to use just one of these approaches, part of one, or more than one, depending on a family’s background and interests and the congregation’s tradition of pre-baptismal preparation. Additionally, leaders might adapt, combine or modify content from several of the sessions for pre-baptism or adult education classes. Leaders are free to pick and choose elements from any session and order or otherwise modify them in whatever way is appropriate for their local context.

Teaching healthy responses to difficult behavior

No congregation is immune to the problems that can arise when parishioners behave in difficult ways. Responding to such situations with self-awareness and in a manner true to one’s faith tradition makes the difference between peace and disaster.

In his book, *Never Call Them Jerks*, author Arthur Paul Boers shows how a better understanding of difficult behavior can help congregational leaders to avoid the trap of labeling parishioners and to exercise self-care when the going gets rough.

Arthur Paul Boers is a Mennonite pastor in Waterloo, Ontario, who has served rural, urban and church-planting settings in the United States

and Canada. He is also a Benedictine Oblate. The author of three previous books—*On Earth as in Heaven; Justice that Heals; and Lord, Teach Us to Pray*—Boers has an M.A. in Peace Studies from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, an M.Div. from McCormick Theological Seminary, and an M.Th. in Pastoral Counseling from Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. For many years he served as columnist and editorial advisor for Christian Ministry and as a contributing editor to *The Other Side*.

Never Call Them Jerks is available from the Alban Institute (www.alban.org/bookstore.aspx, ISBN 1-56699-218-4, Alban No. AL209).

New ELCA World Hunger videos available

Your congregation can see their generous gifts to ELCA World Hunger at work in a beautiful new video series.

- Watch January and Telina Lingson, husband and wife living in Kaseleka, Malawi, who overcome hunger through agricultural training and the gifts of livestock—pigs and goats, to be exact.
- Learn how Virginia Quispe of La Paz, Bolivia, used a small microloan to improve her own small business and thrive in a community where more than half of the population lives below the poverty line.
- Be with the Kafley family moments after they

arrive at O’Hare International Airport in Chicago, Illinois, and begin a new life after spending 18 years as refugees in Nepal.

The videos average 6 minutes in length and are perfect for Sunday mornings, adult forums and youth group gatherings. Consider using these videos during Lent, or dedicating a month to celebrating the work being done through ELCA World Hunger and showing a video each week.

View and download the videos at www.elca.org/hunger/video. The ELCA World Hunger video series are also available on DVD and can be ordered by visiting www.elca.org/hunger/resources or by calling 800-638-3522, ext. 2580.



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Leadership development training for congregational leaders

The corporate world views training in emotional intelligence as essential for effective leadership development. Now the Center for Emotional Intelligence and Human Relations Skills is helping to make this kind of training available and affordable for congregations with a focus is on intrapersonal, interpersonal and group skills.

Prior to attending an Emotional Intelligence and Human Relations Skills workshop,

participants complete a survey on emotional intelligence and ask up to 20 other people complete the same survey about them. The result is a 25-page printout that begins the feedback process on the participant's emotional intelligence.

The format of an Emotional Intelligence and Human Relations Skills workshop is experiential, with most of the time being spent in small groups of 8–12 participants with

two trained facilitators for each small group. Learning emotional intelligence requires a process other than the lecture method.

The Center also has a professional development track for individuals who wish to pursue this type of work beyond being a participant.

For more information, visit the Web site www.eqhrcenter.org, send an e-mail to the Center's administrator, Barbara Holder at eq-hrctr@myactv.net or call 301-432-8933.

Emotional Intelligence and Human Relations Skills (EQ-HR) workshops scheduled for 2011 are as follows:

January 10–14, EQ-HR Workshop, Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center, Chicago, Illinois

January 10–14, EQ-HR Workshop, Vancouver School of Theology, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

January 24–28, EQ-HR Workshop, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota

February 7–9, EQ-HR Church Executives Workshop, Delray Beach, Florida

February 28–March 2, Introduction to EQ and Human Interactions Workshop, Camp McDowell, Nauvoo, Alabama

April 25–29, EQ-Group Development Workshop, Bishop Claggett Center, Buckeystown, Maryland (advanced workshop)

May 2–6, EQ-HR Workshop, Vallombrosa Center, Menlo Park, California

June 20–24, EQ-HR Workshop, DuPont House, Rehoboth Beach, Delaware

July 18–22, EQ-HR Workshop, St. Francis Retreat Center DeWitt, Michigan (this particular workshop may be taken for seminary course credit)

August 22–26, EQ-HR Workshop, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

October 17–21, EQ-HR Workshop, Seminary of the Southwest, Austin, Texas

October 24–28, EQ-HR Training of the Trainers Workshop, Metropolitan Washington, D.C., area (advanced workshop)

Good reads on reconciliation and conflict resolution

The Gift to Listen, the Courage to Hear interweaves listening techniques with spiritual principles that emphasize the importance of listening and thus provide a framework for more effective listening. Author Cari Jackson explores common causes of communication breakdowns and offers strategies for moving toward communication breakthroughs. This book will deepen the rewards of every type of human relationship. ISBN 9780806645520, \$12.99

Our Community begins by looking at what conflict is and who we are as people of God, then discusses ways that we deal with

conflict, the two kinds of conflict (healthy and unhealthy), life skills, the role of the pastor and lay leaders in conflict situations, and how to heal and rebuild community. Author Sue Lang looks at how our past affects the way we deal with conflict. She discusses how to prevent conflict as well as how to deal with it when it arises. This resource is a must for pastors and congregational leaders! ISBN 9780806644110, \$14.99

Spiritual Maturity: Preserving Congregational Health and Balance encourages congregations to attend to their own health or risk becoming ill. Renowned pastor, preacher and

teacher Frank Thomas believes that many congregations exhibit a number of dysfunctional habits in conducting business that lead to rifts, divides and even congregational splits. Often they are caused by leadership styles that are ineffective and controlling. Thomas examines how poor congregational leadership is often the result of personality conflicts among leaders and how many key leaders—both clergy and lay— participate in keeping unhealthy methods alive. ISBN 9780800630867, \$15

For more information and to order these books, visit www.augsburgfortress.org/ or call 800-328-4648.

A welcome to the faith

The catechumenate has been described as a “welcome for newcomers to the faith.” The catechumenal process is a journey of faith formation for those new (and not so new) to Christianity. It goes beyond the traditional study of “what Christians believe” and incorporates worship, prayer, small groups, reflective Bible reading, sponsors and ministry in daily life into a process that changes lives and makes disciples. This process can transform congregations as well.

For congregations interested in exploring the catechumenal process to new and existing members, the “Come to the Water” Ecumeni-

cal Catechumenal Process Training Event is an excellent resource. The next event will be held February 18–19, 2011, at St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Vancouver, Washington.

Speakers for the event are Bishop Rob Hofstad of the ELCA Southwestern Washington Synod, and Ann McElligott, author of *The Catechumenal Process: Adult Initiation and Formation for Christian Life and Ministry*. Other leadership will be provided by pastors and lay leaders from the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon and from the Oregon and Southwestern Washington synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

This training event is recommended for congregation teams of two or more and will provide participants with the background and resources they need to begin a catechumenal process in their congregation. The cost is \$30 per person and will include some meals. A pre-event will feature an opportunity to learn about and walk a prayer labyrinth. A brochure can be downloaded at <http://catechumenate.org/uploads/file/Water2011.pdf> or contact Pastor Martha Maier, maierm@comcast.net or 360-892-7160.

New ELCA World Hunger resource packet

Mailed to all congregations in January, the new ELCA World Hunger Resource Packet includes samples of the newest ELCA World Hunger resources that



are specially designed to help your congregation raise funds and awareness for ELCA World Hunger during Lent and Easter. The packet includes the ELCA World Hunger Video Series on DVD, a new coin box, reproducible stories and more. Have the packet delivered to your home or congregation by visiting www.elca.org/hunger/resources or calling 800-638-3522, ext. 2580.

Sell chicks and make a difference this Easter

This Easter, join congregations from across the nation by having a “Buck-a-Chick” sale. For one dollar, members can purchase and decorate a paper chick for themselves or in honor of a friend or loved one. Your gifts will provide families living in poverty with chicks, which will become a source of food and income. Send the donations to ELCA Good Gifts (ELCA, 39488 Treasury Center, Chicago, IL 60694-9400) with “Buck-a-Chick” in the memo line. Get the coloring page at www.elca.org/hunger/lent.

Plan a Lenten meal series

This year your congregation can host Wednesday night Lenten meals and fight hunger at the same time. Learn about different parts of the world, enjoy global cuisine and discover how your gifts to ELCA World Hunger are making a difference in the world. Instead of charging for the Lenten meal, collect donations to support ELCA World Hunger. Visit www.elca.org/hunger/lent for complete plans to hold six different meals. Each plan includes global recipes, printable table tents, placemats, table prayers, discussion starters and more.



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A Mission Investment Fund investment is so much more than just a great way to save for your own future. That's because MIF uses the money you invest to fund building and renovation loans for ELCA congregations like Hope Lutheran Church. Thanks to an MIF loan, Hope purchased its very first church building, located near the local college campus so it can reach out to more of the students who live there. A spiritual home away from home—that's exactly what your investments help provide. To learn more, contact us at 877.886.3522 or elca.org/mif.



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