



# Seeds for the Parish

Spring 2018

Resource paper for leaders of ELCA congregations

ELCA.org



"God's work. Our hands." Sunday is an opportunity to celebrate and proclaim who we are as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – one church, freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor.

## Save the date: Sept. 9 is "God's work. Our hands." Sunday.

Since 2013, ELCA members nationwide have gathered together for "God's work. Our hands." Sunday, sharing their gifts and faith through serving their neighbors and communities.

They have helped build and repair homes, assembled health-care kits and backpacks, distributed cookies to first responders, spent time in conversation with people in homeless shelters, prepared meals for those who are food insecure, and written letters to veterans and those currently in the military.

The Rev. Jim Culver, interim pastor of Emanuel Lutheran Church, Evansville, Ind., reflected on his experience: "I went with a group to the house of the lady with the most lawn problems. She told us, 'The Lord sent you. I don't know what I would

have done if you hadn't come to help. I grew up in another denomination and had been a member of that church all my life, but I haven't seen them lined up at my door to help me.'"

Emanuel was one of six congregations partnering with Fresh Air Community of Faith, a nondenominational church in Evansville, to work on two service projects in the community.

One group assembled more than 300 bags with toiletries, socks and snacks, which were distributed to participating congregations to hand out to homeless people. The second group worked through a neighborhood association that identified residents needing help with lawn care and home repair.

"It was a wonderful experience for us.

Some of our members now have a better understanding of our neighborhood and a vision for ministry possibilities nearby. It was also a good fellowship opportunity for our congregations to work together in a service project. I think all of us who participated are glad that we had the opportunity to work together to show the love of Jesus to people in our community," Culver said.

"God's work. Our hands." Sunday – no matter when, where or how it happens – is a rich experience of mutual care, service, learning and witness for everyone.

Keep an eye on [ELCA.org/dayofservice](http://ELCA.org/dayofservice) for details and resources.



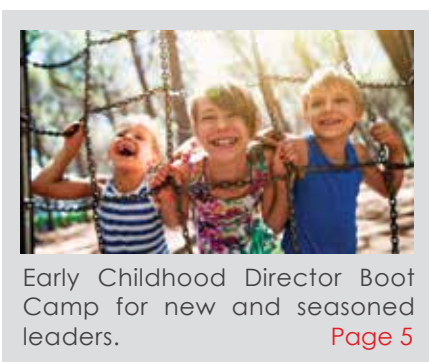
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**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

### CONTACT US

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 Delivery questions... 800-638-3522  
 Subscriptions..... 800-638-3522

## Join us for *The Campaign for the ELCA's leadership theme year*



During the 2017-18 academic year, the ELCA Fund for Leaders is supporting 251 seminary students with scholarships.

Four years ago, we launched *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA* to invest in the future of this church, deepen our relationships, and

expand ministries that serve our neighbors and communities here and around the globe. Together, through the generosity of ELCA members and congregations, like yours, we have accomplished amazing things. Thank you for your continued support.

Now, in the campaign's final year, we are looking to the future of this church by highlighting the leadership priority, including the ELCA

Fund for Leaders and Youth and Young Adults. We'd like you to join us!

Earlier this year, your congregation received a kickoff packet, including a bul-

letin insert and poster, that you can use to share the work of the campaign and these programs. A new Fund for Leaders video is also available to show the impact of leadership ministries. Access these resources at [ELCA.org/Resources/Campaign-for-the-ELCA](http://ELCA.org/Resources/Campaign-for-the-ELCA), under the "Annual Themes" tab.

In addition, later this spring your congregation will receive information on an initiative launching in September to help us celebrate our congregations' leaders while supporting the next generation through the ELCA Fund for Leaders and Youth and Young Adults ministry.

Thank you for partnering with us during *The Campaign for the ELCA's leadership theme year*. For more information, contact the campaign at 800-638-3522, ext. 2612, or [campaignforELCA@elca.org](mailto:campaignforELCA@elca.org).

## Mission-minded construction volunteers needed

Mission Builders is an outreach ministry of the ELCA. It provides individuals the opportunity to further the church's mission, travel, meet people, have fun, and construct buildings for camps and congregations. The volunteers do much more than swing a hammer or roll out insulation; they get involved in the site's ministry and staff, community outreach, Bible studies and local Christian service groups. They share their faith stories and invite people to get involved in the congregations and outdoor ministries where they are working.

Without Mission Builders and its volunteers, several ELCA church structures might not be constructed in the future. In 2019, Mission Builders has three times more work than it can commit to without faithful volunteers and new recruits stepping forward. In 2020, even more opportunities exist. With help from you, your men's and women's ministries, senior adult group or even your

youth group (age 14 and older, with adult supervision), new ministry spaces will be built where people can serve others in their communities, where the faith of youth and adults – of all ages and abilities – is stirred for lives of service.

The work can be physically demanding, but it is very rewarding.

This summer's construction projects that need volunteers are listed below. In some cases, lodging and meals may be available.

- Bread of Life Lutheran Church, Minot, N.D. (June 15 - Sept. 1)
- Christ Lutheran Church, Ferndale, Wash. (June 15 - Sept. 1)
- Lutherdale Bible Camp, Elkhorn, Wis. (June 15 - July 15)
- Mission start church, Columbia, S.C. (winter 2018/2019)

For individuals who have a recreational vehicle, opportunities exist for short- and long-term work commit-



ments. In a short-term stay situation, the individual receives no monetary remuneration but receives a full RV hookup while working. Longer-term commitments may involve minimum wage. Both short- and long-term workers and volunteers are covered by workers' compensation insurance.

Want to join the fun and use your construction skills? To learn more or schedule a visit to a job site, visit [elcamissionbuilders.org](http://elcamissionbuilders.org) or contact Bill Graves at [msnbuilder1@gmail.com](mailto:msnbuilder1@gmail.com).

*Seeds for the Parish*

[ELCA.org/seeds](http://ELCA.org/seeds)  
[LivingLutheran.com/seeds](http://LivingLutheran.com/seeds)

**Seeds for the Parish** (ISSN 0897-5663) is published four times a year (January, April, July and October). It is distributed without charge to congregations, rostered ministers, retired rostered ministers, synod offices and resource centers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Current and past issues of *Seeds for the Parish* are available for download at [ELCA.org/Resources/Seeds-for-the-Parish](http://ELCA.org/Resources/Seeds-for-the-Parish).

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**Note:** Not all resources and program ideas listed in **Seeds for the Parish** have received official ELCA review or endorsement.

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## Big changes for the 2018 ELCA yearbook

The 2018 ELCA yearbook is now online and known as the ELCA Directory. Just as the printing press changed the world during Martin Luther's time, so the digitization of data and the internet are changing the way we publish and

access information. This directory is the beginning of that process for the ELCA. This digital online solution provides the same content as the ELCA yearbook did, with the added features of being able to access the information from any

computer (including mobile devices), filtering and annual reporting. This resource is free and can be accessed (with login) at [directory.elca.org](http://directory.elca.org).



## Practical skill-building opportunities for church musicians in 2018

The role of the church musician is varied and deep – paid or volunteer, full time or part time, band leader, choir director or organist, there are many aspects to leading music ministry. The Association of Lutheran Church Musicians (ALCM) is sponsoring workshops throughout 2018 that emphasize the central roles of the church musician and offer educational experiences on a range of topics. Most are one day. See below for the growing list of cities hosting workshops.

The ELCA and Lutheran Summer Music are partnering with ALCM to offer a longer event at Valparaiso (Ind.) University, July 23-26. This gathering will provide a rich variety of access points to effective music ministry with emphases on practical skills and the convergent, multidisciplinary concerns of the cantor's life. Presenters will share their viewpoints and experiences during short, concentrated plenary talks throughout the event. These talks will surround four blocks of two-hour group sessions in which faculty members will address the everyday concerns of ministry and give their perspectives through hands-on activities, teaching and conversation.

This extended event is designed

around the participant's needs for growing as a leader of the church's song. Sessions will cover conducting, choral leadership, keyboard leadership, handbells and hand chimes, worship-band leadership, musical styles from around the world, composition and arranging for worship, assembly song, integrating instruments, worship planning, understanding and using core worship resources and more. During the registration process, participants will be asked to evaluate their skills and identify potential areas for growth.

Valparaiso will host the event during the final week of the Lutheran Summer Music Academy and Festival, providing opportunities to learn, worship and make music together with young musicians (eighth- through 12th grades). Early registration (**before April 15**) is \$255; \$295 after that date. Registration includes several meals. Housing options include affordable on-campus, air-conditioned residence halls or hotels near the campus. Details and registration are available at [alcm.org](http://alcm.org) or [ELCA.org/worship](http://ELCA.org/worship).

### Hearts · Hands · Voices

Local workshops for church musicians

sponsored by the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians

#### Musician workshop locations

April 14	Gettysburg, Pa.	July 21	Sioux Falls, S.D.
April 28	North Hollywood, Calif.	July 23-26	Valparaiso, Ind.
May 5	Amherst, Mass.	July 27-28	Minneapolis
June 2	Morton, Ill.	July 28	Knoxville, Tenn.
June 2	Richmond, Va.	Aug. 1	Park Ridge, Ill.
June 6, Sept. 10	Newark, Del.	Aug. 25	Vero Beach, Fla.
June 9	Carmel, Ind.	Sept. 8	Honolulu
June 16	Lorain, Ohio	Sept. 15	Fairfield, Conn.
June 16	Allentown, Pa.	Sept. 15	Mission, Kan.
June 16	Glendive, Mo.	Sept. 22	Schaumburg, Ill.
June 22-23	Fremont, Neb.	Sept. 22	Willmar, Minn.
June 23	Dubuque, Iowa	Sept. 29	Perrysburg, Ohio
June 23	Minot, N.D.	Sept. 29	Lindsborg, Kan.
June 29-30	Columbus, Ohio	Sept. 29	Baltimore
June 30	Hibbing, Minn.	Sept. 29	Seward, Neb.
July 7, 14	Des Moines, Iowa	Sept. 29	New York

## Invitation to participate: Draft ELCA interreligious policy statement

You are invited to participate in responding to the draft ELCA policy statement, "A Declaration of our Inter-Religious Commitment." From now until the end of June 2018, feedback from individuals and groups across the ELCA will be received by the task force as part of their final drafting process.

Download the draft and find the link to the online survey at [ELCA.org/draftpolicystatement](http://ELCA.org/draftpolicystatement).

Page 5 of the statement offers tips and ideas for participating. Please consider how you might share this invitation with others and convene people to participate in the process in your networks and ministry settings.

#### Background of interreligious policy statement work

The 1991 ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted "A Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment: A Policy Statement of the ELCA." This document provided

a common, theological basis and framework for our ecumenical relations. Acknowledging the distinction between seeking unity among Christians and "the responsibility of the church to enter into conversations and reach greater understanding with people of other faiths," the declaration called for a "separate, official statement to describe [the ELCA's] commitments and aspirations" for interreligious relations.

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton appointed a task force in 2016 to develop a complementary draft interreligious policy statement. The task force is chaired by Saint Paul Area Synod Bishop Patricia Lull and includes 10 members.

The draft seeks to present a common, theological basis and practical framework for this church's interreligious relations, taking into consideration our varied ministry contexts, challenges and opportunities. It is organized according to our context, vision, calling and

commitments and includes a second part that provides a robust theological foundation.

The task force will receive the feedback and input from this comment period to revise the draft before it goes to the ELCA Church Council for possible recommendation to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. To date, the draft has been reviewed by various full communion, ecumenical and interreligious partners, as well as the Conference of Bishops' Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Liaison Committee and the board of the Lutheran Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Representatives Network.



The Inter-Religious Task Force was called to work on a common, theological basis and framework for the ELCA's interreligious relations.

Hearings will be taking place, including at some synod gatherings and listening events sponsored by other ELCA institutions. For more information, including task force bios, visit [ELCA.org/ecumenical](http://ELCA.org/ecumenical).

## Mission Investment Fund loan helps congregation accommodate growing ministries

Ministry has been so active at Bethlehem Lutheran in Aberdeen, S.D., that the congregation outgrew its space years ago.

“It was not uncommon for people to be sitting on the floor for our Wednesday Night Suppers – and that was with 10 to 12 extra tables set up in the narthex for overflow,” said the Rev. Jeff Whillock, Bethlehem’s pastor.

Their youth ministry was also operating out of a less-than-desirable space in a stand-alone building.

The congregation needed to expand. “Leadership planted the seed for a building addition 10 years ago,” Whillock said. Then, in the winter of 2012-13, the congregation drafted a formal plan, “Creating Room at the Table,” calling for additions radiating out from a central reception hall. The congregation went to work raising funds and chose the Mission Investment Fund (MIF), an ELCA financial ministry, as its lending partner.

MIF provides loans to ELCA congregations and ministries for building projects as well as refinancing existing debt. As a ministry of the church, MIF understands the needs and goals of congregations and ministries and helps create plans that focus on mission and



vision for the future. Its church building consultants can guide ministries through the building process. Bethlehem’s members credit MIF with being a steady partner throughout the lending and construction process.

### New space opens new ministry opportunities

Bethlehem completed its expansion project in 2016. Now its fellowship hall and kitchen have sufficient space for the popular Wednesday Night Supper, which is open to the congregation and community. The expansion created a flexible fellowship space that can be divided according to needs and to host simultaneous events. The space also includes a new chapel, with sound and projection equipment, designed for baptisms, small weddings and funerals as

well as Saturday evening workshops and adult education.

The congregation also expanded its existing classroom wing for more youth ministry and lifelong learning opportunities. The new youth center has its own kitchenette and projection system, and the comfortable fireside room hosts adult ministries. These new spaces have created a more inviting place for congregation and community members to gather and grow.

Finally, Bethlehem’s expansion established the new Re-Creation Center, a large multipurpose room often used as a gym – a vital all-weather asset for all ages during South Dakota’s long and harsh winters. This large space also serves as an alternate worship space, especially for the more “creative, out-of-the-box worship services,” as Whillock calls them.

Whillock and his congregation are thrilled with their refreshed ability to respond to their growing ministries. “We have been serving this community for 133 years,” he said, “and now we can continue our work even more effectively into the future.”

Learn about Mission Investment Fund loans, specialty services and investments at [mif.elca.org](http://mif.elca.org) or call 877-886-3522.

## Exploring the stories of ELCA women of color



Expressing stories of joy and pain, thankfulness and celebration, “God’s Faithfulness on the Journey” explores the stories of more than 40 women of color. The essay-style collection of stories, poems, music and imagery gives voice to the women of color who serve faithfully throughout the ELCA.

Written in observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation – and more than 25 years after the first gathering for women of color – the resource joins the chorus of voices commemorating the Reformation call for liberty among God’s people. The narratives chronicle a shared experience through the church’s call process while honoring the families, mentors and supporters who journeyed with them and gives praise to an always faithful God.

All are invited to learn and share in the experiences of how God has called and continues to call women of color as leaders for God’s work. Download the resource at [ELCA.org/RWOC](http://ELCA.org/RWOC) and engage with others in small groups, family gatherings and other settings.

## Digital course on Paul reaches beyond Montana Synod

The Northern Rockies Institute of Theology (NRIT) has offered continuing education in the Montana Synod for over 35 years. Many of these classes are conducted in-person, but NRIT also offers online courses accessible to leaders everywhere, especially for rostered ministers serving in rural areas.



Dr. James Aageson, online course instructor.

“St. Paul: From Saul of Tarsus to the Apostle of the Lutheran Reformation,” with Dr. James Aageson, Pauline scholar and professor emeritus at Concordia College, Moorhead, Minn., is the latest NRIT online course.

Apart from Jesus, Paul is arguably the most important figure in the history of Christianity. Paul and his legacy have shaped, fed and challenged the church from the first century to the present. His letters form the theological heart of much of the New Testament and, along with the memory of his ministry, they have continued to be read, preached, theologically interpreted and applied to contemporary ethical issues.

As we continue to observe the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, it is fitting that we revisit Paul and how he has been

interpreted and reinterpreted over the centuries and in recent times.

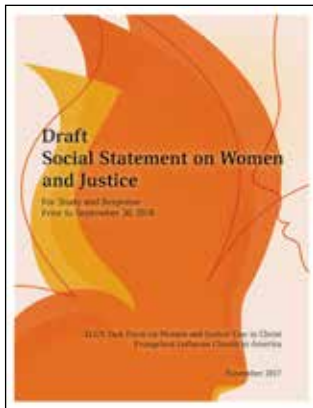
You can purchase this class now and watch it at your convenience. The flexible format allows you to watch in any time increment you choose, return to sections you’ve already watched or go back and forth between sessions.

The course offers four contact hours of continuing education at a cost of \$75 for rostered ministers and \$50 for pastors new to ministry (in their first three years), lay leaders and retired pastors.

Go to [montanasynod.org](http://montanasynod.org) and look under the “Resources” tab to purchase the course. A link and instructions will be emailed to you.

## Discussion and feedback on the women and justice social statement draft

“I hope that this statement reignites the Lutheran hearth fire of reformation,” said Sister Clare Josef-Maier about the upcoming social statement on women and justice. Josef-Maier is a member of the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ, which is requesting public feedback on the draft



social statement released last fall. The draft is “vibrant and living, daring in its hope to engage us in speaking honestly and directly about our own jagged, raw places. ... I hope all members of the ELCA engage their process here fully,

with passion and hope and openness to one another and our world,” she said.

This spring will be a season of hearings as ELCA members study the draft – individually or in groups – and share their feedback through a response form or in person at hearings, commonly held at synod assemblies. Brad

Wendel, task force co-chair, said the group wants to know, “Did we address the most important issues? Is there anything we left out? Is the [draft] faithful to our Lutheran tradition? Does [it] equip ELCA ministries?”

Feedback is due Sept. 30. The task force will then revise the draft, taking the public input into consideration, and prepare it for a vote at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. “These discussions are an opportunity to be the body of Christ, working together to create a social statement that will share the good news not only with the ELCA but with the world,” said Katrina Buchanan, a Lutheran Volunteer Corps member who works with the task force.

The draft, list of scheduled hearings and resources for hearings and discussion groups can be found at [ELCA.org/womenandjustice](http://ELCA.org/womenandjustice). Order single complimentary copies of the draft by calling 800-638-3522 or multiple copies at [resources.ELCA.org](http://resources.ELCA.org). Send questions to [womenandjustice@ELCA.org](mailto:womenandjustice@ELCA.org).

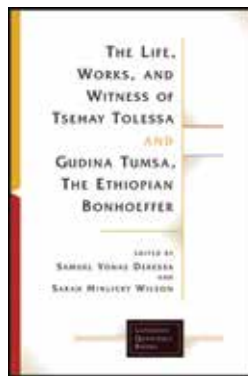
## The life, witness and influence of the “Ethiopian Bonhoeffer” – Gudina Tumsa

Last fall, *Lutheran Quarterly* ([lutheranquarterly.com](http://lutheranquarterly.com)) announced a new publishing partnership with Fortress Press. Under the editorial guidance of Paul Rorem, the Benjamin B. Warfield Professor of Medieval Church History at Princeton (N.J.) Theological Seminary, *Lutheran Quarterly* will continue to provide historical and theological scholarship to Lutheran teachers, rostered ministers, missionaries and students.

*The Life, Works, and Witness of Tsehay Tolessa and Gudina Tumsa, the Ethiopian Bonhoeffer*, edited by Samuel Yonas Deressa and Sarah Hinlicky Wilson, and the latest *Lutheran Quarterly* book, opens a window into the extraordinary witness of a Christian couple whose faithful life of service

earned Gudina the moniker of “Ethiopia’s Bonhoeffer.” It collects, for the first time, all of Gudina’s extant papers on holistic ministry and civil resistance, along with Tsehay’s narrative of their lives, from their childhood in Italian-occupied Ethiopia through the fall of the imperial government to the tyranny of the Derg regime. Interpretive essays frame the dramatic story, inviting Christians everywhere to reimagine what it means to carry the cross today.

“Gudina and Tsehay’s story, though largely unknown to the Western church, speaks of the power of faith, the cost



of discipleship and the extraordinary grace of God in the midst of unspeakable suffering. Their story is a model of what it means to heed Christ’s call: ‘Take up your cross and follow me,’” said Kathryn M. Schifferdecker, associate professor of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

*The Life, Works, and Witness of Tsehay Tolessa and Gudina Tumsa*, and other *Lutheran Quarterly* books, are available at [fortresspress.com](http://fortresspress.com).

## Follow the ELCA Youth Gathering this summer

In just a few months, 30,000 high school youth and their adult leaders from across the ELCA will gather in Houston for a week of faith formation – the ELCA Youth Gathering. They’ll engage in the theme “This Changes Everything” guided by Ephesians 2:8: “For by grace you have been saved

through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” The days will be filled with interactive learning, worship, Bible study, service and fellowship, with the goal that every young person will grow in faith and be challenged and inspired to live their faith in daily life.

Explore all the aspects of the ELCA Youth Gathering program at [ELCA.org/Gathering](http://ELCA.org/Gathering), and experience the Gathering with participants in Houston this summer by following the stories on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter using #ELCAYG2018.

## Early Childhood Director Boot Camp grows skills and networks



The Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA) is hosting its sixth Early Childhood Director Boot Camp at the Gaylord Texan Resort and Convention Center in Grapevine, Texas, June 24-26. This two-part professional development program will culminate on Jan. 31, 2019, at the same location as part of the IGNITE conference.

The boot camp combines training in leadership, business management, curriculum development and human resources with a mentoring and coaching program using experienced facilitators. Past participants have benefited from the program and have developed relationships with peers who continue to provide a supportive professional network. The curriculum emphasizes facilitating and implementing change, staffing and observations, retention, recruiting and marketing.

The program serves both new and seasoned leaders by providing dynamic and diverse workshops and networking opportunities. It involves spending time in large and small groups to focus on participants’ specific school or center dynamics. For more information or to register, go to [eleanational.org](http://eleanational.org) or contact Cory Newman at [elcaschools@gmail.com](mailto:elcaschools@gmail.com).



## Tools for turning “Caring for Creation” social statement into action

Twenty-five years ago, the ELCA adopted the “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice” social statement ([ELCA.org/SocialStatements](http://ELCA.org/SocialStatements)).

How has your congregation been discussing, affirming and putting into practice this timeless statement? Can you pledge to protect and steward the life-giving resources God has entrusted to us? Our observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation continues to acknowledge that we are a church always in renewal, always learning and growing – including how the church cares for creation, the world we live in and humanity.

How are the biblical, theological and ethical foundations of caring for God’s gift of creation and our vocation to love our neighbor reflected and acted on in your

congregation and community? Lutherans Restoring Creation has developed and gathered resources for putting these convictions and teachings into action. A good place to begin is downloading – for free – “Our Congregation’s Covenant to Care for Creation” and “Becoming a Creation-Care Congregation: A Self-Organizing Kit.”

These and other resources focus on different aspects of congregational life, including worship, education, facilities and property, public witness and personal discipleship. Customize your creation-care action plan according to the needs, pre-



paredness and passions of your congregation council and members. Turn visions into plans with timelines; celebrate God’s abundance reflected in creation through joyous worship; and offer hope and healing through meaningful, Scripture-driven conversations respectful of participants and di-

verse perspectives.

Lutherans Restoring Creation is a grass-roots movement promoting care for creation in the ELCA. Learn more, explore resources and events, and join the network at [LutheransRestoringCreation.org](http://LutheransRestoringCreation.org).

## Global Mission 2018 Map Brochure



Worshippers at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Goroka, Papua New Guinea, join together in the Lord’s Prayer, knowing they are accompanying Christians throughout the world in this common prayer.

Enhance your connection with the witness of the ELCA’s companions around the world with this beautiful new foldout map brochure.

This educational resource provides highlights of the ELCA’s global engagement and partnerships in 2018. It showcases a variety of ways in which we and our global companions walk alongside one another in Christ. You can unfold this colorful brochure into a world map for display in your congregation’s foyer, narthex and literature racks.

As an excellent conversation starter and educational resource, this brochure tells the stories of ELCA relationships with Lutheran companions in more than 120 countries through companion synod relationships, your offerings and prayers. Deepen your knowledge about how the ELCA’s global engagement has changed in the 21st century, dream of new ways to connect to the global church and learn how your congregation’s gifts are put into action.

Download the brochure as a PDF at [ELCA.org/Resources/Global-Mission](http://ELCA.org/Resources/Global-Mission); order free copies at [resources.ELCA.org/Global\\_Mission-ELCA\\_Global\\_Mission\\_Map\\_Brochure\\_2018.html](http://resources.ELCA.org/Global_Mission-ELCA_Global_Mission_Map_Brochure_2018.html).

## Hospitality and prayer featured in Gather Bible studies

*Gather*, the magazine of Women of the ELCA, is featuring two thought-provoking Bible studies in its spring and summer 2018 issues.

Each May, *Gather* takes a break from multi-session Bible studies to offer a one-session devotional on an intergenerational theme. This year, the Rev. Julie A. Kanarr writes



the devotional “All are welcome.” Kanarr, pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Belfair, Wash., helps *Gather* readers consider how groups and congregations can open their ministry to diverse newcomers. Through

examples of biblical welcome and hospitality, she also leads readers to discover ways to define themselves beyond ideas about age that can often be damaging to women. Kanarr encourages readers to define themselves as God does – through love.

The June and July/August Bible study is on prayer. Theologian Anna

Madsen of the OMG: Center for Theological Conversation ([omgcenter.com](http://omgcenter.com)) shares three sessions focused on the practice of prayer. All three can be downloaded for free.

- **Session one: The paradoxes of prayer**

(1 Samuel 12:16-23)

Readers investigate the paradoxical truths of this spiritual practice.

- **Session two: The practices of prayer** (Psalm 19:14)

Participants look at different ways to pray, what each might offer and how knowing an array of prayer styles can enrich one’s devotional life.

- **Session three: The products of prayer** (Romans 8:26-28)

Readers investigate the effects prayer can have personally, communally and on the church’s mission.

By late spring, the three-session summer study will be available for free download at [gathermagazine.org/bible-study](http://gathermagazine.org/bible-study).

## 6 reasons to host a Sparkhouse Family Book Fair

1. It’s free. For real! You receive a box of free books, and you get to keep them – no strings attached.
2. It’s easy. You receive customizable marketing pieces to help you spread the word about your book fair. From beginning to end, hosting is simple. It’s more fun that way.
3. It helps you connect with your community. Get to know the families and children in your area.
4. It’s a fundraiser. You get to keep 20 percent of what you sell.

5. The prices are right. Shoppers at your book fair receive special discounts (up to 40 percent off) and free shipping on award-winning books.
6. You choose the dates that work for your congregation. You can host a Sparkhouse Family Book Fair anytime – during vacation Bible school, at your annual church bazaar, Christmas, Easter, whenever!

Learn more and get started at [SparkhouseFamilyBookFairs.com/learn](http://SparkhouseFamilyBookFairs.com/learn).



## Girl power, Bible style!

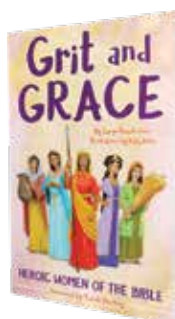
*Grit and Grace: Heroic Women of the Bible*

By Caryn Rivadeneira

Experience the grit and grace of 17 women of the Bible through creative first-person retellings. This book

connects preteen girls with the women of the Bible, showing them that they are created in God's image to do mighty things in this world.

Download a free group discussion guide for your study



group, mother-daughter discussion group, family dinnertime conversation or book club.

Order at [augzburgfortress.org](http://augzburgfortress.org).

## Faith formation starts at birth ... no, really!



After baptism, preschool often is the next checkpoint for congregations to engage with families and start ministry programs with little ones. However, faith formation truly starts at birth, and Sparkhouse has a new early childhood ministry program to support this development.

Frolic, developed by early childhood experts, focuses on building faith among little ones – starting at birth – and leverages how physical, social and emotional development in the first years of life can help shape faith formation.

As a comprehensive early childhood system, Frolic features three lines that extend learning from birth through age 5:

- **Frolic Nursery** turns your congregation's nursery into a place of ministry with resources designed for infants, toddlers and their nursery caregivers.
- **Frolic Preschool** offers a play-based curriculum to engage and teach children ages 3 to 5.
- **Frolic Family** connects parents with church through parent-child classes and offers at-home resources like newsletters to extend faith formation from congregation to home.

In addition, **Frolic Online** offers a digital platform to access all resources, including parent engagement tools and additional reproducibles for classrooms.

Visit [wearesparkhouse.org](http://wearesparkhouse.org) for more information.

## Building leadership opportunities for your Sunday school kids



For congregations with smaller Sunday school programs, a one-room classroom model often works best, but it can be challenging for kids of different

ages to engage and learn at their level. With the new All Kids model from Sparkhouse, you can create an exciting multiage classroom that focuses on “kids teaching kids,” giving older children leadership and mentorship opportunities while younger ones learn from them.

Whirl All Kids features the Whirl animated characters that children know and love, modeling what it's like for kids to go through the questions and challenges of living their faith. It is designed for children from kindergarten to fifth grade and features an at-home

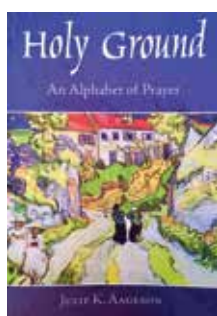
piece for families to put faith to action throughout the week.

Spark All Kids allows your Sunday school to experience the salvation story arc each year in this two-year curriculum, featuring Old Testament stories each fall, New Testament stories in the winter and spring, and a combination of Old and New Testaments in the summer. It's designed for children from kindergarten to fifth grade.

Spark All Kids and Whirl All Kids are now available for preorder at [wearesparkhouse.org](http://wearesparkhouse.org).

## Discovering prayer beyond words

Too often we turn prayer into well-intentioned patterns of our own making. Too often we assume prayer is primarily about words. Sometimes there's an almost magical understanding that if we get the words right, if we trust enough or believe enough, God will answer. But most of us know that God is not a divine magician or our personal valet and that prayer is much more than our feeble attempts



to make God pay attention to what God already knows.

Using the alphabet as a template of descriptive words and actions, *Holy Ground: An Alphabet of Prayer* (Cascade Books, 2018), by Julie K. Aageson, invites reflection about prayer as paying Attention, looking for Beauty,

showing Compassion, practicing Devotion, celebrating Enthusiasm – all the way to the end of the alphabet and

discovering Wonder, X as mystery and Z as Zeal.

These reflections help readers experience prayer as a place, an action, attitude or stance for recognizing and acknowledging God's presence amid ordinary life. Prayer is so much more than words.

Aageson has served as a resource specialist and writer for the ELCA, and for a decade, wrote a monthly column for *Gather* magazine. She is also the author of *Benedictions: 26 Reflections*.

## Exploring the future of Christianity

*Future Faith: Ten Challenges Reshaping Christianity in the 21st Century*

By Wesley Granberg-Michaelson  
(April 2018)

Global Christianity can help save the church in North America from itself. Here's how.

In *Future Faith: Ten Challenges Reshaping Christianity in the 21st Century*, Wesley Granberg-Michaelson provides

a lucid view of how the top 10 winds of change blowing through global Christian faith are reshaping the practice of Christianity today.

Drawing on stories, examples and personalities of pastors and congregations throughout the United States, as well as those from Africa, Asia and Latin America,



*Future Faith* helps Jesus' followers seek new ways of becoming the face of Christ in a rapidly changing world.

Leaders and practitioners in church growth, renewal and planting are a primary audience for this book. Students of religion from Catholic, evangelical, Pentecostal and historic Protestant

denominations will find this book an informative and stimulating resource for pondering together the future of their faith and churches. Small groups engaged in congregational nurture and growth will find in the author a welcome companion for guiding them through the multicultural landscape of contemporary faith.

Preorder at [augzburgfortress.org/futurefaith](http://augzburgfortress.org/futurefaith).



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