

Seeds for the Parish

Summer 2017

Resource paper for leaders of ELCA congregations

ELCA.org



Co-creators and collaborators of "Luther: The Rock Opera" play around on stage during dress rehearsal. (From the left) George Baum, Rich Melheim, Jonathan Koelsch and Michael Bridges.

Artistic endeavors honor Luther and Reformation anniversary

Art has long been a vehicle to carry Reformation messages. From Martin Luther's printed writings to Renaissance and Gothic artists, creative talents conveyed teachings from Scripture and that originated from Luther's act at the church door in Wittenberg.

Five hundred years later, art honors Luther in the Reformation anniversary year. Although much has changed in five centuries, the artists have something in common—the long, tedious and research-heavy process by which a final work of art emerges.

Handcrafted arts draw from theology

For Linda Henke, a former ELCA pastor turned artist, it was creative inspiration, not Lutheran theology, that stumped her. For her "Formed, Re-

Formed, Transformed" design, a four-month process drew out her creativity, eventually culminating in a design lending itself to use in a variety of forms and artistic mediums.

"It was laborious, with too many digital art files to count," she said of the process. Starting with German imagery and moving to Luther's "Solas," it didn't really come together until a stroke of inspiration led her to the Holy Trinity as a concept for conveying God's reforming power.

While Henke relied on her Lutheran education, Robbin Isenhour Stewart's development of coloring pages for the North Carolina Synod's Reformation curriculum allowed her to learn more about the Lutheran faith.

"I didn't have the ELCA background of Luther, so it was neat to come up with the

sketch concepts for each of the lessons." A Presbyterian by upbringing and married to a Lutheran, she read the curriculum and referred to sources like Evangelical Lutheran Worship for inspiration.

A week after the synod's committee had all but abandoned the idea of adding coloring pages, she completed the thumbnail drawings. Stewart then spent six weeks creating the final drawings.

Performance pieces span the globe

A month and a half was only the midpoint for development of "You Were There: Reformation," playwright and retired periodontist Michael Clark's 1940s-style old-time radio show. Writing part time, the piece took him four months to complete.

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Opportunities to comment on two social messages in development.

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“The writing of the Reformation play took the longest to write and required additional research to fill in the gaps, mostly my knowledge, of the overall Luther story,” said Clark. In writing the show, he used Martin Marty’s book “Martin Luther” for research.

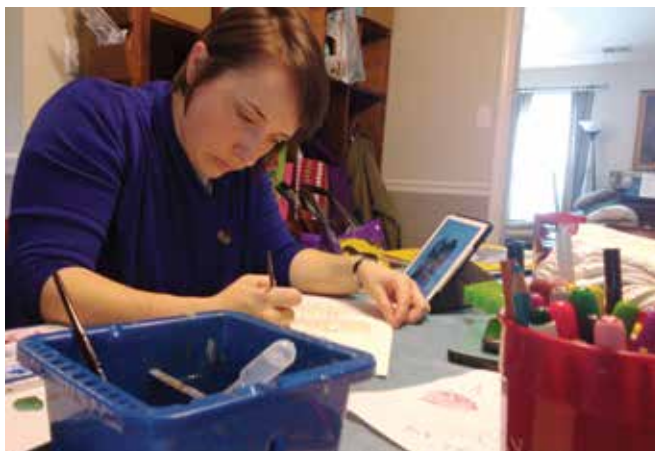
Hosting a public performance wasn’t on the list for music teacher Andy Pokel when he began composing his “HERE I STAND” hip-hop/musical theater album. Initially a collaborative effort with his wife, Elise, the album was intended for sharing with their family and friends, but it turned into a fully funded Kickstarter campaign that premiered at the Luther500 Festival in Wittenberg, Germany, in June.

Pokel spent six months researching, writing and recording the album, finding inspiration in Lin-Manuel Miranda’s Broadway musical “Hamilton” and musician Kanye West. He relied on “Luther the Reformer” by James M. Kittelson as his main resource, pulling quotes and paraphrasing some to fit the lyrical patterns of hip-hop.

“It was challenging to pack in a lot of information while still maintaining the right catchiness and style,” said Pokel. “Just like a song is typically condensed into its refrain, I had to decide what the essential message or emotion was behind each song.”

Musical productions of different forms and genres

For their show “The Luther Musical,” father and son, Peter and Mark Krey,



Artist Robbin Isenhour Stewart works on the coloring pages for the North Carolina Synod’s Reformation curriculum.

collaborated for several years, twice. Originally a play Peter wrote for Luther’s 500th birth celebration, the duo wrote music prior to and following Mark’s graduation from UCLA’s theater program.

“We started working on it nonstop in the last three years,” said Peter. “We underestimated how hard it would be to get the sheet music for piano accompaniment, since I play trumpet by ear. Thankfully, Mark plays guitar and knew about chords and harmony.”

The show previewed on Reformation Sunday 2015 in a half-hour performance. Now, it is two acts and had its first full dramatic reading in June at St. Paulus Lutheran Church in San Francisco.

Taking artistic creation to a global stage is “Luther: The Rock Opera,” a musical production that also debuted at the Luther500 Festival. The show is based on the graphic novel “Luther” released in 2016 and is available in more than 40 languages.

“It’s ‘Jesus Christ Superstar’ meets ‘Hamilton’ meets ‘Monty Python,’” said Rich Melheim of Faith Inkubators, the graphic novel’s author and show’s producer. Melheim spent time two decades ago researching in a seminary library to complete the storyline.

With half of the book illustrated, it was postponed for 10 years. Melheim resurrected it for the anniversary and worked with Jonathan Koelsch, who illustrated the final 43 pages in less than three months.

Simultaneously, in 2015, the musical version came to life when Melheim re-connected with friends and former Lost and Found band members Michael Bridges and George Baum. The pair came out of retirement to write the music and lyrics for the show. The musical features a full cast, costumes and sets with “Marvel-style” props and characters, plus digitally displayed animations. The show’s process continues as Melheim works with New York contacts to hopefully bring it to Broadway by 2020.

Read more about these and other artistic endeavors and learn how to access creative Reformation resources and performances for your congregation by visiting livinglutheran.org/reformation.

The arts projects in this story are only a sample of creative things happening around the country. If you have a Reformation arts project you would like featured, please submit your information to 500@elca.org.

Seeds for the Parish

ELCA.org/seeds
LivingLutheran.com/seeds

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Current and past issues of Seeds for the Parish are available for download at 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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Reformation Festival at Luther Seminary

Celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation Oct. 27-28 at Luther Seminary. This two-day event will include workshops, presentations and performances for church leaders as well as the general public. All are welcome to attend this event.

Experience a performance on Friday evening at the Ted Mann Concert Hall in Minneapolis by the National Lutheran Choir of “Holy Spirit Mass,” a new choral work commissioned for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Norwegian composer Kim André Arnesen

was commissioned to write this significant work.

On Saturday afternoon, the festival will conclude with a worship service at Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis with Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton preaching and massed choirs from area congregations.

Find all the details and register at luthersem.edu/reformation. Please plan to join this historic celebration hosted by Luther Seminary and the National Lutheran



Choir and sponsored by Central Lutheran Church.



Not too late to register for Rostered Ministers Gathering in Atlanta

If you are a pastor or a deacon in the ELCA, this event is for you! During this first ELCA Rostered Ministers Gathering, participants will come together under the theme of “On the Way—Together,” using the road to Emmaus story found in Luke 24:13-25 to guide the time together.

What you can look forward to:

- Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, Dr. James Forbes and Ms. Rachel Held Evans speaking to the entire assembly.
- An interaction center and exhibit and vendor areas will provide a place for information, fun and creativity.
- Service learning (preregistration required) and service projects (sign up at check in) opportunities.
- 49 unique workshop topics.
- Affinity and small group conversations.
- An opening reception featuring music by The Tams, a celebration banquet, a pre-event for young rostered ministers, and Beer & Hymns.
- Worship.



Go to ELCA.org/RMG to learn more about this event for rostered ministers. Registration remains open until July 24.

Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA completes third year with \$113 million raised

We have much to celebrate as we complete the third year of *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*. Through the generosity of ELCA members and congregations, we reached \$113 million—57 percent—of our \$198 million five-year goal, allowing us to strengthen and expand ministries across this church and around the world. Thank you for being part of this exciting progress!

Through several featured priorities, *The Campaign for the ELCA* seeks to:

- increase this church's capacity to support congregational renewal and planting new congregations;
- form and support new lay, ordained and global leaders for mission;
- encourage and form lay youth and young adult leaders;
- support the ELCA's disability ministry;
- bolster our commitment to walk with global companion churches in shared witness; and
- expand our efforts to address poverty and hunger.

This year, as we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we are reaffirming our commitment to restoring and reconciling communities in Jesus' name throughout the world through the campaign's Global Church priority, including Missionaries and Young Adults in Global Mission, International Women Leaders and Global Ministries. Through these programs, we are building up Christ's church by sending missionaries and volunteers, training leaders, planting new churches and growing existing ones. Please join us by supporting this work and sharing the impact of these programs.

For information on *The Campaign for the ELCA*, including the 2016 Campaign Report and ideas to lift up the Global Church priority, visit ELCA.org/campaign. You can also contact the campaign team at 800-638-3522 or campaignforELCA@elca.org.

ELCA Federal Credit Union celebrates one year of socially responsible banking

This summer marks a year since the ELCA Federal Credit Union opened its doors to members and employees of the ELCA.

Now this new financial ministry is inviting ELCA congregations and ELCA-related ministries to join as members.

As a member or employee of the ELCA, and now as a congregation or ministry, you are eligible to join this financial cooperative and take advantage of better rates, fewer fees and enhanced services. Your family members are eligible to join as well.

Credit unions are able to offer special benefits because, as not-for-profit financial organizations, credit unions

return profits directly to members. In addition, the ELCA Federal Credit Union promotes wise stewardship of members' financial resources.

You and your family members can become members of the ELCA Federal Credit Union by opening a savings account with a minimum \$25 deposit. In addition to savings accounts, the credit union also offers individual members checking accounts, certificates of deposit, auto loans, personal loans, lines of credit, credit and debit cards, free ATM access through a worldwide network, online banking with bill pay, a mobile app and more. The credit union is now offering ELCA congregations and ministries sav-

ings accounts and certificates of deposit.

“We're delighted that we have been able to save our individual members an average of over \$1,300 in finance charges per loan when they come to us to consolidate and refinance existing debt,” said Luis Reyes, the credit union's chief operations officer. “We hope more ELCA members and employees, and now congregations and ministries, will take advantage of the benefits that our credit union has to offer.”

To apply for membership, learn more about the ELCA Federal Credit Union or view a new video explaining how credit unions operate, visit elcafcu.org or call 877-715-1111 toll free.

2018 ELCA Youth Gathering: ‘This Changes Everything’

The ELCA Youth Gathering will be happening in Houston June 27-July 1, 2018. The Gathering theme, “This Changes Everything,” is centered in 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.”

Together, youth and adults will discuss grace and how this gift changes lives and perspectives.

The primary focus of the Gathering is faith formation of young people. Through days spent together in interactive learning, Bible study, worship, service and fellowship, young people grow in faith—challenged and inspired

to live their faith in daily life.

As young people desire and struggle to find someone to become, somewhere to belong and something to do, the Gathering seeks to be a ministry that helps define some of that or at least open pathways of discovery. Ultimately, the vision is for youth to understand the fierce love that God has for them, just as they are, and that by grace, through faith, they have been saved. When a young



person—or anyone—claims this reality, it changes everything.

Congregational registration opens Sept. 15, 2017, and will close on May 15, 2018. For more information on the Gathering, visit ELCA.org/gathering.

For all questions or concerns, please contact the Gathering office at Gathering@elca.org. See you in Houston!

The Centurion Connection

The ELCA Centurion Connection program is gaining momentum! Centurion Connection is a voluntary network in ELCA synods that strengthens ministries with men and women serving in the military, veterans and their families. The name refers to examples of how Jesus and the early church related to people in military service as recorded in the New Testament (Mark 15:39, Matthew 8:8, Acts 10:1-8).



Chaplain Capt. Karl Redelsheimer leading a communion service with soldiers in Afghanistan.

the Centurion contact is the Rev. John Sippola, co-author of “Welcome Them Home—Help Them Heal” (available at amazon.com). Sippola and a network of volunteers have conducted four retreats called “Vets and

Friends” for military veterans, their family members and friends. The retreats have involved partnerships with ELCA outdoor ministries.

Another example of creative ministry is Oakwood Packers in Wisconsin. They live in a retirement community and meet monthly to pack and ship personal-support items to deployed military personnel. The packages include copies of the “Prayer Book for the Armed Services” and are also sent to military chaplains. The Oakwood Packers have shipped more than 1,000 packages to men and women deployed, overseas or afloat.

Congregations and synods engaged in creative ways

Currently, 28 synods have a volunteer or a small team of volunteers. These Centurion contacts serve as important links for congregations and their synod to help foster ministry with military members, veterans, chaplains and family members. In the Northeastern Minnesota Synod,

Continuing education opportunities at Luther Seminary

Never stop learning—try a continuing education class through Luther Seminary’s Center for Lifelong Learning. Learn new skills, network with other church leaders, gather new ideas and just take a break from the day-to-day demands of leading a congregation to refresh yourself. Luther Seminary offers a variety of opportunities to fit your interests, needs and schedule.

KAIROS

KAIROS courses offer a wealth of learning opportunities designed for clergy and church leaders. Courses are available in ministry areas of preaching, Bible, theology, leadership, vocation and congregational care. Browse the courses and register at luthersem.edu/lifelonglearning.

School for Lay Ministry

Luther Seminary’s School for Lay Ministry is open to all people interested in training to more fully serve in a variety

of ministry roles in their congregations and communities. Nov. 27-29 topics:

SafeTalk: SafeTalk prepares participants to recognize signs and help connect a person who has thoughts of suicide to intervention resources.

The Next 500 Years: From Conflict to Communion: Launching the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, The Lutheran World Federation along with Pope Francis gave thanks for the gifts of the Reformation and lamented the divisions that followed. Hear an update on the progress made in ecumenical dialogue, its significance and what lies ahead.

Myths and Realities of Rural Ministry: Stories from Small Town and Rural (STaR) communities and congregations often resound with themes of challenge, decline and despair. Consider how the Holy Spirit might be moving among STaR communities and

And some congregations present copies of the “Prayer Book for the Armed Services” to those entering a service academy, ROTC or enlisting for military service.

Ministries are part of larger commitment and concern

These programs and activities align with the 2016 Churchwide Assembly memorial adopted in support of ministries relating to military personnel, veterans, family members and military chaplains. For Veterans Day last year, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton issued a “call to prayer and action” for individuals and congregations to support ELCA chaplains and engage in local efforts to recognize the service and needs of those in military service, veterans, people who are incarcerated, and their families.

For examples of what congregations can do and to find local contacts, visit Centurion Connection at elcachaps.com. To learn more about the “Prayer Book for the Armed Services,” contact the Rev. Eric Wester, assistant to the presiding bishop and director, federal chaplaincies at eric.wester@elca.org. The prayer book can be purchased at augsburgfortress.org.

Final call for responses to Faith, Sexism, Justice: Conversations toward a Social Statement

As the Women and Justice: One in Christ Task Force prepares to release the draft of the upcoming social statement on gender justice this fall, they want to hear from you. If you haven’t had a chance to go through the modules of the study as a group, or by yourself, now is the time! Share what was useful, what was not useful and what the ELCA needs to be saying that might not be covered in the study. It is also available in Spanish. To download or order a copy, go to ELCA.org/womenandjustice. Responses to the study are due by Aug. 31.



Human rights social message—join the discernment!

Don’t miss your chance this summer to contribute to the development of an ELCA



social message on human rights. The public comment period for the Draft of a Social Message on Human Rights runs through Aug. 15. Go to ELCA.org/socialmessages, read the draft and use the online questions to share your suggestions and concerns. Your input is valued and helpful. Public comment during this process provides multiple perspectives that bring clarity and discernment to the message’s development. This draft is available in the online format only.

The ELCA Church Council authorized this work and will receive the proposed message for consideration at its November 2017 meeting.



congregations and our response as people of faith and hope through Jesus Christ.

Ruth, Esther and Song of Songs: Ruth, Esther and Song of Songs are small Old Testament books, often overlooked in Christian preaching and teaching. Explore these gems of the biblical narrative and reacquaint yourself with the themes found in them: love, loyalty, beauty, courage and faith.

See a complete list of offerings at luthersem.edu/lifelonglearning.

Ministry Practices resource helps guide challenging conversations

A new conversation resource series is now available, “A Guide for Talking Together about Shared Ministry with Same-Sex Couples and Their Families.”

This series and leader’s guide responds to requests seeking conversation guidance and resource sharing about the practice of ministry in light of changing family configurations.



This four-part series helps participants talk

It is not intended to revisit personal convictions about same-sex relationships, and it is not intended to change peoples’ minds on these issues. It does not focus on the ELCA’s decision to permit a range of perspectives or practices—other resources exist for those conversations, and the ELCA social statement frames such discussions. Rather,

about practical ministry questions that can be challenging. It assumes a diversity of perspectives present in many congregations and helps individuals talk together.

This series is for the many congregations that have a diversity of perspectives and have growing numbers of same-gender couples and their families. It is a resource for congregations that are asking: How can conversations lead us into doing ministry that is life-giving for all?

Download this resource at ELCA.org/en/Resources/Ministry-Practices#TalkingTogether.

‘By Heart: Conversations with Martin Luther’s Small Catechism’

As congregations look for ways to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, many have heard Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton’s invitation to open, rediscover and be renewed by Martin Luther’s Small Catechism. To facilitate this churchwide journey, Augsburg Fortress is releasing a new adult study on the Small Catechism. “By Heart: Conversations with Martin Luther’s Small Catechism” is an in-depth exploration of this treasured summary of the Christian faith, designed for group discussion and for personal enrichment in this Reformation anniversary year, and for years to come.

The centerpiece of this new resource is a richly illustrated book written to inspire conversation and reflection. For those who wish to engage in a guided study, the book is complemented by a facilitator guide and short, interest-piquing videos to jump-start group discussions. Regardless of one’s

experience with the Small Catechism, this course is written to ignite—and reignite—the spark that Luther’s poetic and resonant words still inspire today.

Contributors to this resource include R. Guy Erwin, Mary Jane Haemig, Ken Sundet Jones, Martin Lohrmann, Derek Nelson, Kirsi Stjerna, Timothy Wengert and Hans Wiersma. Each contributor brings a unique perspective to the major sections of the catechism, making connections between Luther’s story and life today. By addressing the reader in the second person, the writers echo the everyday language Luther uses and embody the declarative nature of the gospel featured in the Small Catechism.



“By Heart: Conversations with Martin Luther’s Small Catechism” is available for pre-order at augsburgfortress.org/byheart. Orders will ship in August, assisting congregations in an up-to-date study of Luther’s timeless Small Catechism in this 500th anniversary year.

A new tool for growing generous, faithful stewards

Striving for a spirit of gratitude and generosity is wonderfully described in 2 Corinthians 8:1-7. This spirit of gratitude can be nurtured in your congregation through participation in a new survey offered by the ELCA at no cost to congregations. This tool can help you understand how people in your faith community relate to discipleship, gratitude,

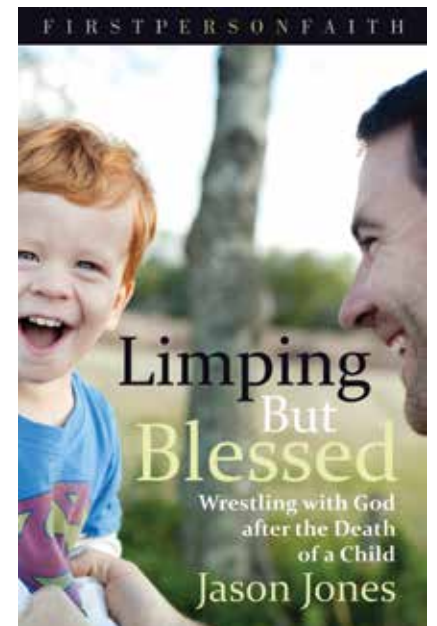
generosity and sharing stories. It can help provide insight into how to grow generous, faithful and mature stewards in your congregation.

The early churches of Macedonia experienced what the Apostle Paul calls abundant joy and a wealth of generosity through their faith and love for Christ. This same spirit can grow in your con-

gregation through a variety of resources and learning experiences for all ages. The survey is a window into discovering perspectives, practices and skills to implement strategies to create a culture of generosity in your congregation.

For more information, call Neil Bullock at 800-638-3522, ext. 2884, or email neil.bullock@elca.org.

Wrestling with God after the death of a child



After the accidental death of his 3-year-old son, Jason Jones went on a long, painful journey to make sense of how God could have let this happen to his son and best friend, Jacob, and to their family. He struggled intensely with his faith after everything he thought about God disintegrated on June 12, 2011.

At some point in each of our lives, something goes terribly wrong, and our faith is shaken to the core. “Limping But Blessed: Wrestling with God after the Death of a Child,” is the story of one man’s journey through the darkest time of life searching for answers and his grueling attempt to find a sliver of hope to hold onto.

“Limping But Blessed” is available at augsburgfortress.org/limping-butblessed.

“A beautiful tapestry of tragedy, loss, redemption. This is a must-read for any parent, or human being, who has gone through significant loss.”

— Mike Berry, author of “Confessions of an Adoptive Parent”

Welcoming Congregations engage with migrant communities



From hosting “Know Your Rights” seminars to accompanying people with their U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) check-ins to visiting detained migrants, Welcoming Congregations are helping members of their local migrant communities spiritually and in other ways face the growing fear and uncertainty they are experiencing in our country.

To date, 52 ELCA congregations have committed to serve as a Welcoming Congregation to provide spiritual community through pastoral and emotional support, accompany migrants for local and institutional services as needed, pray and advocate for justice.

What are Welcoming Congregations doing? The examples are as diverse as the communities they serve. With a large Honduran migrant population among its members, Parroquia Luterana Sagrado Corazón in Waukegan, Ill., has made a strong connection with a local lawyer who is a member of the American Immigrant Lawyer Association. Together with a representative from the local Honduran consul’s office, members of the congregation have participated in “Know Your Rights”

seminars after worship services and get questions answered about situations they are facing. Private consultations are also offered on a regular basis.

Iglesia Luterana Cristo Rey in El Paso, Texas, has opened its building three days each week to provide temporary shelter for families. It is an overflow site for Resurrection House that shelters families recently released from immigration detention facilities and are in the process of arranging transportation to join family members in other states.

Trinity Lutheran Church in Long Lake, Minn., is providing spiritual support from afar for a young woman detained in Texas during her legal process. Because of the sister parish relationship between Trinity and the young woman’s Iglesia Luterana Salvadorena home congregation in El Salvador, members of Trinity know her, her family and her community and have been able to assist with her case by providing letters of support.

Misión Mesa Abierta in Kenner, La., has been participating with others in a new interfaith sanctuary coalition accompanying migrant communities in a variety of ways. Its pastor recently visited a

young man from El Salvador detained in Jena, La., at the request of his home congregation. The visit came right after he experienced a devastating court hearing and was despondent over the results—it was the first time anyone

had visited him, and through Scripture and prayer, his resolve to not lose hope was strengthened.

Pastors in many parts of the country are regularly visiting migrants in prison and jail. Congregations are participating in 16 detention visitation programs organized by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and its affiliates. And across the country, ELCA congregations and their members are accompanying people to their ICE check-ins so that if they are detained, their families will know what happened to them.

These are only a few of the many activities Welcoming Congregations are engaging in. Is your congregation interested in making a commitment to join the AMMPARO network—Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities? If so, or if you’d like to learn more and find AMMPARO resources, go to ELCA.org/AMMPARO. For the latest news, visit the AMMPARO Facebook page at [Facebook.com/ELCAammparo](https://www.facebook.com/ELCAammparo).

Please join us in accompanying vulnerable migrant children and families.

Renewal, education, connection and a chance to prep for the ELCA Youth Gathering

The ELCA Youth Ministry Network’s annual conference, the Extravaganza, will be at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Houston, Jan.

26-29, 2018 (with optional Intensive Care Courses Jan. 25-26).

The Extravaganza will gather around the theme “Finding Forward” and center in the belief that the cross, and the love and grace of God, changes everything for all of God’s people. Living and serving in a rapidly shifting culture, how do we as leaders in the church find our way forward from the cross to enter deeply into God’s mission for the world? Together, in general sessions and workshops, participants will explore this and other important questions.

This annual conference is the ELCA’s premier conference focusing on faith formation, with an emphasis on lay and rostered leaders and volunteers working with children, youth and families in congregations. The event features:

- General sessions with dynamic speakers and musicians.
- Workshops led by people from diverse ministry settings.
- An exhibit hall showcasing new resources.
- Opportunities for networking with people working in similar ministry settings.

Being in Houston in 2018 will also give participants opportunities to preview the city hosting the ELCA Youth Gathering the following summer. There will be an Intensive Care Course as well as workshops focusing on how to have a successful Gathering experience, as well as optional tours of important Gathering sites around Houston.

More information on Extravaganza 2018 can be found at ext18.org. Learn more about the benefits of being a member of the ELCA Youth Ministry Network at elcaymnet.org.



Greg Boyd’s long-awaited “The Crucifixion of the Warrior God” is finally here!

“**The Crucifixion of the Warrior God: Interpreting the Old Testament’s Violent Portraits of God in Light of the Cross**” (Volumes 1 and 2), by Gregory A. Boyd

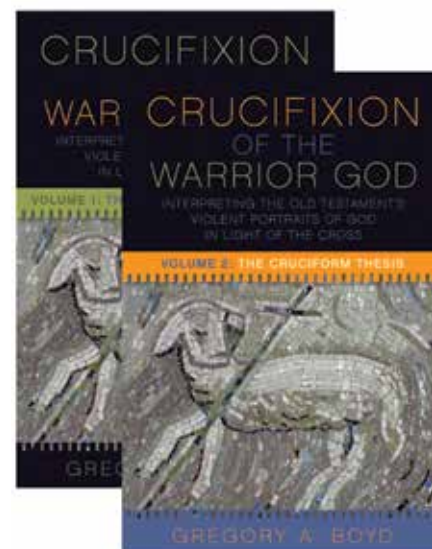
Renowned pastor-theologian Gregory A. Boyd proposes a revolutionary way to read the Bible in this epic but accessible study. His “cruciform hermeneutic” stands as a challenge to the field of biblical studies and to all thoughtful Christians.

Throughout Christian history, various answers have been proposed, ranging from the long-rejected explanation that these contrasting depictions are of two entirely different “gods” to recent social, cultural

and literary theories that attempt to dispel the conflict.

Developing a theological interpretation of Scripture that he labels a “cruciform hermeneutic,” Boyd demonstrates how the Bible’s violent images of God are reframed and their violence subverted when interpreted through the lens of the cross and resurrection. When read in this way, Boyd argues that these violent depictions bear witness to the same self-sacrificial nature of God that was ultimately revealed on the cross.

“The Crucifixion of the Warrior God” is available at augsbu.org/CrucifixionoftheWarriorGod.



The Mission Investment Fund can help you enhance and expand your ministry



The new trio of crosses at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Mankato, Minn., is part of a renovation project funded with the help of MIF.

Envisioning a new future for your congregation? Planning a building project?

Are you hoping to revitalize your ministry work—and require an enhanced space to make that happen?

Consider the Mission Investment Fund (MIF), a financial ministry of the ELCA, as your lending partner. MIF offers loans to ELCA congregations and ministries for capital projects, and we offer expertise in church building and fundraising campaigns. MIF also offers investment opportunities to ELCA members, congregations and ministries.

Members of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Mankato, Minn., for example, turned to MIF to finance a church

renovation. “We found MIF compelling,” explained the congregation’s pastor, the Rev. Jay Dahlvang, “because the money we borrowed and the interest we paid would be used for building Christ’s kingdom.”

With MIF’s loan, the congregation brightened up its building by replacing much of the brick exterior with windows and opening up a gathering space. The congregation added a trio of soaring crosses at the front entrance.

“The renewal of the building has really given a sense of renewal to the whole congregation,” Dahlvang said. This has led to a strengthening of ministry work.

In one of its most compelling outreach efforts, the congregation houses a min-

istry called The REACH—a program of Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota that assists homeless teens with food, clothes, social services and medical resources. Bethlehem provides space and meals for 15 to 25 REACH youth each day. Fresh produce comes from the congregation’s community garden.

Dahlvang said, “Thanks to the improvements we made with the MIF loan, the building has given us a sense of viability—we’re committed to serving the community and spreading the gospel.”

To learn more about how a Mission Investment Fund loan can help revitalize your ministry, visit mif.elca.org or call 877-886-3522.

Study of Apostles’ Creed take us through doubt, joy and sorrow

This fall, take part in a three-session Gather Bible study on the Apostles’ Creed and what we together say we believe. Gather is the magazine of Women of the ELCA.

In “The Apostles’ Creed,” Bible study author Julia Seymour, pastor at Lutheran Church of Hope in Anchorage, Alaska, wrote: “For our life of faith together, creeds are more than just words. They are vessels for carrying one another through doubt, joy and sorrow.”

Bible study sessions

Session 1: I believe in God

The Apostles’ Creed is one of the oldest unifying symbols of Christianity. Groups of early Christians needed a tool for teaching and evangelism that

explained the basics of the faith. The Apostles’ Creed shaped their baptismal training, blessing in dying and how communities of faith defined themselves in faithful union.

The first article of the creed talks about God, the Holy Creator and Parent of all things. Explore what the Apostles’ Creed says about God—and what it leaves undefined—as well as how this stirs our holy imagination.

Session 2: I believe in Jesus Christ

In Scripture, Jesus is called the Messiah, the Son of God, a teacher, a healer, the pioneer of our faith, the rock of our salvation, Son of Man and other titles. In the Apostles’ Creed, Jesus’ life and ministry is briefly summed up. Jesus is described as God’s only Son and our Lord—one who

was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born by the Virgin Mary, who suffered under Pilate, who was crucified, died and was buried.

The creed is a definition of the work of the Father, Son and Spirit, yet there is also a fullness to being followers in the way of Christ that is not described in the creed. How does the creed encompass faithful living in imitation of Christ? What does it mean to believe even more about Jesus and following Jesus than we say in the words of the creed?

Session 3: I believe in the Holy Spirit

In the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is revealed not through characterization but through the power of the Spirit in action. How do we understand the communion of saints, forgiveness, resurrection, the



church and all that will be, as the revelatory work of the Holy Spirit? As part of the Trinity, the Spirit carries the same weight as the Father and the Son, yet many of us are drawn to one part of the Trinity more than others. How can we use the creed to perceive and honor the Spirit and the Spirit’s work?

Learn more about Gather Bible studies and subscribe at gathermagazine.org.

‘From Surviving to Thriving: A Practical Guide to Revitalize Your Church’

With some experts predicting that as many as one-third of congregations will close in the next 10 years, work at renewing and revitalizing congregations cannot be timelier. In his latest book, “From Surviving to Thriving,” the Rev. Dr. John H. Krahn shares his experience of nearly 50 years in helping congregations turn around and grow again.



Krahn emphasizes that congregations need not fail. He states, “Stop making excuses and start doing something.” He feels that the God behind the church is stronger than the problems before it, encourages congregations to actively witness to those who are not experiencing the saving love of Christ, and urges congregations to

remember that Christ did not just invite his disciples but all Christians to join him in fishing for others.

“From Surviving to Thriving” provides practical suggestions for both cutting expenses and increasing giving. It discusses how to increase attendance by reaching out to inactive members as well as to unchurched people in the community and how to recognize and remove roadblocks to growth. Ways of invigorating a congregation’s worship life are shared as well as examples of a God of miracles still

at work in the church. And each chapter is followed up with suggested action items for renewal work in the reader’s congregation.

This book offers valuable suggestions benefiting congregations hanging on by their fingernails as well as those that are flourishing.

“From Surviving to Thriving” can be purchased from csspub.com and amazon.com.

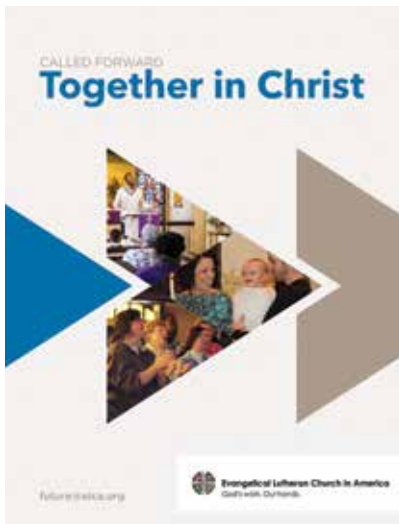


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The **ELCA Future Directions 2025** is the result of Called Forward Together in Christ, a yearlong process of conversation, listening and prayerful discernment concerning what God is calling this church to be and do today and into the future. We believe that the Future Directions provides a road map toward this church's participation in God's mission for the life of the world. **ELCA.org/future.**

LUTHERAN CHURCH OF CHRIST THE REDEEMER IN MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, used an MIF loan to remodel the low-income apartments the church rents to Togolese refugees, thus making their new homes a whole lot homier.



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