



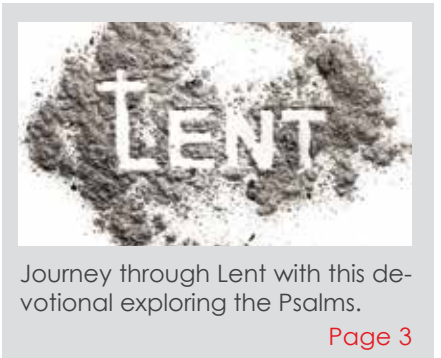
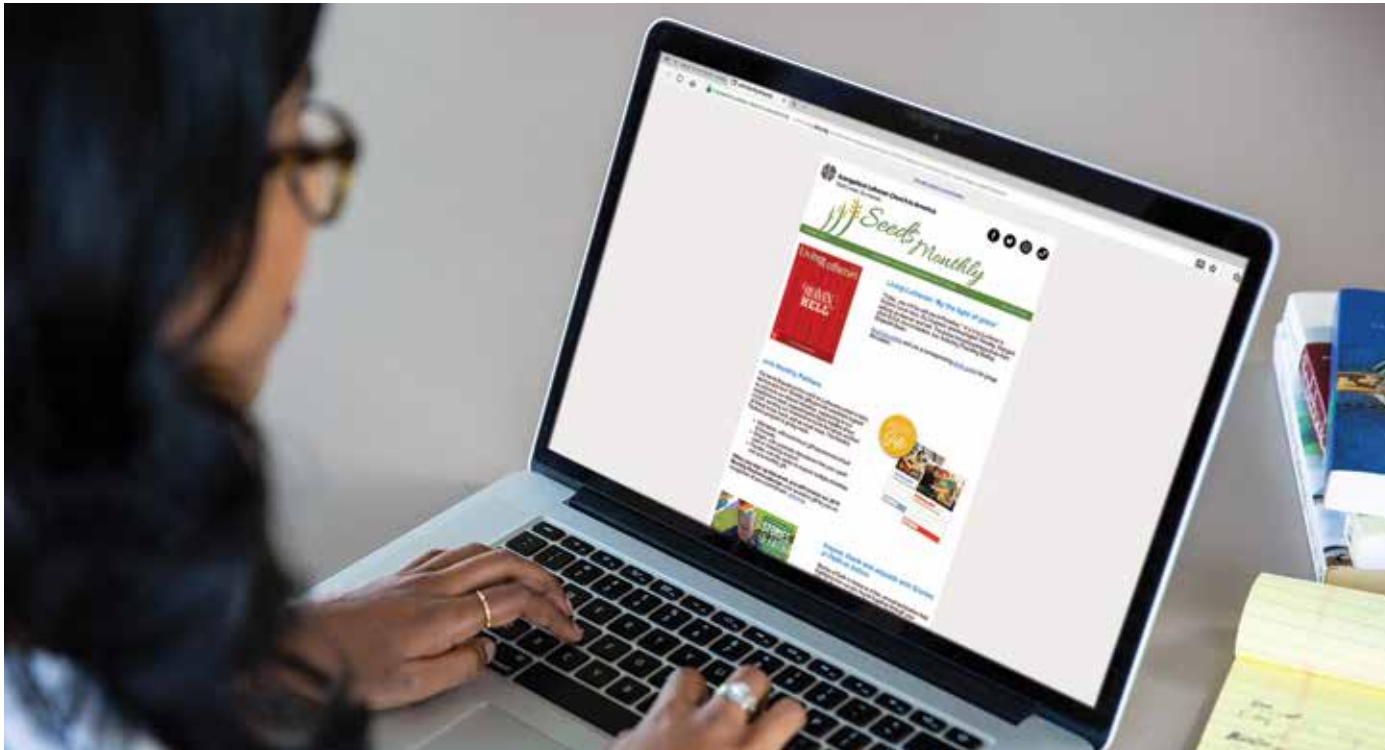
Seeds for the Parish

for the Parish

Winter 2019

Resource paper for leaders of ELCA congregations

ELCA.org



2019 a time of transition for “Seeds for the Parish”

“Seeds for the Parish” has been around for a long time! It’s been a well-read, widely used resource among congregations and synods — sort of like a community marketplace where one can wander through a few times a year and check out what’s new and available to help support and equip leaders, congregations and ministries of the ELCA.

So, it’s with mixed feelings that I share the news that this is the last issue of “Seeds for the Parish” being published in print form. It’s sad to say goodbye, but at the same time, exciting to envision the new potential and reach of transitioning to Seeds Monthly. The decision to discontinue printing and mailing “Seeds for the Parish”

was a difficult one made with concern for sustainability and a commitment to provide effective, timely ways of spreading the news about resources that support leaders and congregations.

Seeds Monthly is a monthly e-newsletter that has been met with great success and a growing reach in a digital format that highlights new and helpful resources, upcoming events, ideas for ministry and more.

In addition to Seeds Monthly, be sure to also subscribe to “Living Lutheran,” where you’ll find helpful articles and new resources highlighted.

Moving forward

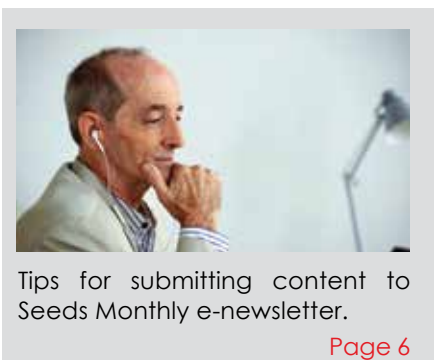
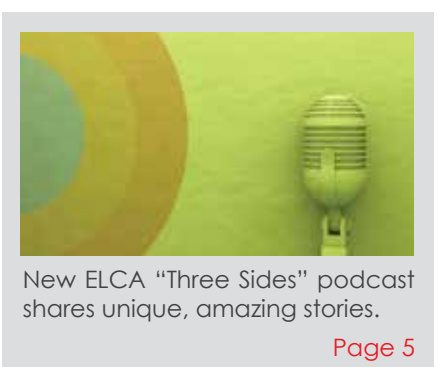
- If you are not already receiving Seeds

Monthly, please go to ELCA.org/ **subscribe** and select Seeds Monthly. It’s quick, easy and free!

- To submit content or ideas for Seeds Monthly, contact Megan Brandsrud at megan.brandsrud@elca.org by the first of each month.
- To submit ideas and resources for “Living Lutheran,” go to livinglutheran.org and use the link at the bottom of the page. You’ll also find a subscription link there.

Blessings on your ministries!

Rod Boriack, editor
“Seeds for the Parish”



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God’s work. Our hands.

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800-638-3522

“Generosity transformed!” ecumenical conference

Can your ministry be transformed by a spirit of generosity? ELCA leaders will be joining ecumenical partners at the “Generosity transformed!” conference from April 30 to May 2 in Indianapolis, Ind., to consider this question and learn how to energize and revitalize strategies for faithful generosity by connecting mission, ministry and resources. Participants will engage deeply in peer discussion groups and subject-based roundtables to develop practical implementation plans, leaving ready and able to help their churches thrive through practices of faithful generosity. Last year, more the 60 ELCA leaders attended the conference in Dallas.

Keynote speakers will include the Rev. Dr. Anthony Bailey, Parkdale United Church, Ottawa, Ontario, focusing on the connection between mission and faithful generosity; the Rev. Dr. Ginny Brown Daniel, Missouri Mid-South Conference of the United

Church of Christ, on ministry and faithful generosity; the Rev. Lee Hull Moses, First Christian Church,

GENEROSITY
your mission * your ministry * your money

Greensboro, N.C., on money and faithful generosity; and Bishop Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows, Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis, will connect the conference themes for practical application in congregations.

Studying congregations’ attitudes toward money

In addition to speakers and workshops, the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving will share early results and initial findings of the National Study of Congregations’ Economic Practices. This study of more than 1,000 congregations in the U.S. across a broad theological spectrum is examining the theological,



cultural and practical orientations of congregations toward money. The research will provide fresh understandings of how congregations receive, manage and spend their financial resources.

For conference information, go to stewardshipresources.org. Registration is \$275 per person and includes lunch on all three days. The ELCA is offering a limited number of registration scholarships. Contact Keith Mundy at Keith.Mundy@elca.org for information on scholarships and the conference.

This event is organized by the Ecumenical Stewardship Center, Lake Institute for Faith & Giving and six denominations: Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church in Canada and the United Church of Christ.

Conference on liturgical renewal and how the eucharist changes us

The 71st session of the Institute of Liturgical Studies will be held from April 29 to May 1 on the campus of Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Ind., and will gather around the theme “Table of Thanksgiving: How Eucharist Forms Us.” How are we being made one by this table of thanksgiving we call the eucharist in spite of diverse administration and intention? When so much is broken in the world, how does the mutual recognition of the promise of Christ’s presence at the table



promote healing? When food security and scarcity seem to overwhelm many people, how might the mystery and meaning in the meal assuage our common needs? These and other questions will guide the time of participants at the institute in plenary sessions, workshops and seminars.

Guided by leading practitioners, thoughtful scholars and skilled musicians and artists,

participants are invited to join others in interrogating assumptions about the

eucharist by engaging in inquiry with history, theology, fine arts and practice. As everyone considers what it means to give thanks at the table, they will also examine how this means of grace changes communities of faith.

Plenary session presenters include Charles Arand, Paul Bradshaw, M. Shawn Copeland and Cynthia Moe-Lobeda; pre-institute seminars offered on Monday, April 29, will be led by Kristin Gilje, Brian Johnson, Barbara Rossing, Pamela Ruiters-Feenstra and Samuel Torvend. A number of workshops related to theology, music, arts and practice will be offered.

Visit valpo.edu/ils for information and to register.

Seeds for the Parish

ELCA.org/seeds
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.

Contact us

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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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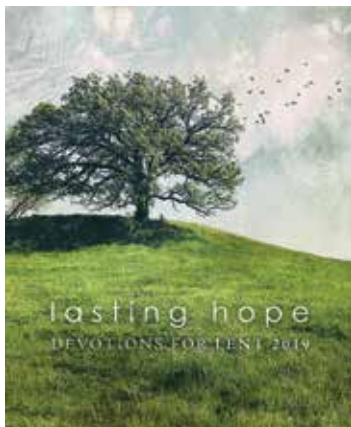
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Email: info@elca.org

“For the Sacrament of Holy Communion has no blessing and significance unless love grows daily and so changes a person that they are made one with all others.” — Martin Luther, 1519

Explore the Psalms during Lent with “Lasting Hope”

Augsburg Fortress has created a beautiful, full-color Lenten devotional for the season of Lent. This year, “Lasting Hope: Devotions for Lent 2019” explores the Psalms texts in year C of the Revised Common Lectionary with 40 entries, one for each day in Lent. Each reading is accompanied by a photo, a quote to ponder, a reflection and a prayer. This accessible and colorful format makes it easy to incorporate a simple Christian observance into your Lenten journey.

The book of Psalms gives us a realistic look at the journey of faith for individuals and their community. From “crying for help” to “singing songs of praise and thanksgiving” — and every-



thing in between — the Psalms show faith with all its ups and downs and winding pathways. More importantly, the book of Psalms points us toward God. During times of celebration as well as suffering, loss and lament, the psalm writers turn to God and remember God’s promises — promises

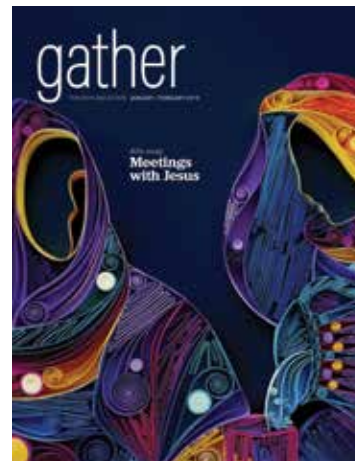
kept and promises still unfolding. God’s faithfulness to these promises creates a durable, lasting hope in the psalmists and in the community of God’s people. “Lasting Hope” explores psalms assigned to Ash Wednesday, Sundays in Lent and Holy Week.

Available in pocket and large-print versions at augzburgfortress.org/lasting-hope.

Study the Bible in 2019 with “Gather” magazine!

Start 2019 off right with “Gather’s” four-session (January through April) Bible study, “The Gospel of John: Meetings with Jesus,” written by the Rev. Julie A. Kanarr.

Kanarr, pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Belfair, Wash., helps us understand Jesus’ message through his interactions with the people we meet in John’s Gospel. Together, we’ll explore the way Jesus engages people in honest, sometimes difficult conversations that lead to faith, renewal and transformation.



The four sessions are:

1. Come and see: Seeking and finding faith (John 1-2)
2. By night and day: Coming to faith in Jesus (John 3-6)
3. Friends for life in Christ (John 8-9; 11-13; 17)
4. Seeing the risen Christ (John 20-12)

Learn more about “Gather’s” Winter 2019 Bible study and other studies at gathermagazine.org/bible-study. Visit gathermagazine.org/subscribe to order today!

Celebrate Lutheran Schools Week in March

Over 1,400 schools and early childhood education centers operated by congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will celebrate Lutheran Schools Week from March 3 to 9. More than 18,000 staff work with over 150,000 students who attend ELCA-affiliated schools and early childhood education centers. The Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA), serving ELCA schools and learning centers across the country, is excited to announce the 2019 theme for the week, “This Changes Everything.” Building on the success of the ELCA Youth Gathering, each day of Lutheran Schools Week will follow the same devotionals:

- Monday: God’s CALL Changes Everything (Exodus 3:1-12)
- Tuesday: God’s LOVE Changes Everything (John 4:4-30)
- Wednesday: God’s GRACE Changes Everything (Acts 8:26-39)
- Thursday: God’s HOPE Changes Everything (Luke 24:13-35)
- Friday: JESUS Changes Everything (Matthew 9:18-26)



Lutheran Schools Week celebrates the largest weekday ministry of our church, one that brings families from diverse backgrounds through our doors each weekday. It is an opportunity to lift up ELEA staff, students and families in your congregation. Suggestions for celebrations include special worship and chapel services and all-school activities to reach into surrounding communities with love.

Information on how your congregation can celebrate Lutheran Schools Week can be found at eleanational.org. Email ELEACommunications@gmail.com to learn more about ELEA and how it can support your existing school or early childhood ministry or assist with starting a new program.

ELEA extends a special thanks to the ELCA Youth Gathering for granting permission to use the “This Changes Everything” logo, devotions and music.

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Living Lutheran is your complete source for news, reflection and stories from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and its local and global companions.

Visit LivingLutheran.org/subscribe or call **800-328-4648**.

Deaconess Community mission support grants



Volunteers with Rescue, Release and Restore, a Deaconess Community Mission Grant recipient, at Shekinah Chapel's Produce Mobile in the Riverdale neighborhood of Chicago. Photo: Michael Watson

Mission Grants and the partnerships that they represent are at the core of the Deaconess Community's identity (deaconesscommunity.org).

Established in 2004, Mission Grants are available for any nonprofit organization. Grants are awarded to organizations that are finding innovative ways to help marginalized people and build partnerships in their communities.

"One of our core values," says Sister Noreen Stevens, directing deaconess, "is creating cooperative partnerships with those on the frontiers of the church's outreach. Mission Grants allow us to invite partnerships, and through our partners, we are welcomed into their mission."

Apply for a Mission Grant right now

Applying for a 2019 Mission Grant is simple: Applicants must submit a letter

of intent by **Jan. 15**. The Deaconess Community reviews the letters and requests full proposals from selected organizations. Proposals are due March 15; grant awards are announced May 1; and funds are distributed June 1.

Two recent grant recipients exemplify the Deaconess Community's commitment to funding innovative solutions that build partnerships.

Grace in Action Collectives in Detroit is in the third-most polluted ZIP code in Michigan. They received a grant to teach students how to create a network of sensors and mobile apps to track illegal pollution.

Meghan Sobocienski, program director at Grace in Action Collectives, describes the multiethnic partnerships they formed through this program: "We are in a mostly Latino neighborhood. We partnered with residents from South Dearborn, mostly Arab American and Muslim American,

and from adjoining neighborhoods who are mostly African American."

Hunger Network in Ohio is a grant recipient that focuses on alleviating hunger and poverty. Director Nick Bates says that Mission Grants are structured to build partnerships. "Mission Grants have helped us to support advocacy days [with ecumenical and political partners] at the Ohio Statehouse, congregational education about systemic issues that cause hunger, and the creation of resources for the faith community to do advocacy."

"Through Mission Grants," says Sister Stevens, "we can do more of God's work together."

For information on Mission Grants or how to write a letter of intent, please visit deaconesscommunity.org/mission-grants. Remember, letters of intent must be received by **Jan. 15**.

"Journal of Lutheran Ethics" explores today's issues through lens of faith



Many voices online today express sentiments on current events and moral issues, but it's hard to find sources you can trust. One of the most dependable, according to many church leaders, is the "Journal of Lutheran Ethics," now in its 17th year as a ministry of publishing.

The "Journal of Lutheran Ethics" is a free, online, bimonthly source for people who want to probe social and moral questions in church and society from a perspective of faith. The articles are written

by scholars, pastors and experts in their fields with a broad spectrum of readers in mind. Each issue includes articles on a particular theme and reviews of recently published books related to theology or social issues. Recent issues have focused on theological education, interreligious dialogue, economics and racism.

Check out the "Journal of Lutheran Ethics" at ELCA.org/jle and sign up to receive emails alerting you to each new issue.

Apply now for Mental Health Ministry grants

By Rev. Brian Krause, member of the ELCA Disability Ministries Team

I have a mental illness. This is not easy to admit in our nation, even today. When you confide in others that you have a mental illness, it often triggers certain words in their minds — many of them having negative connotations. Some believe that being mentally ill means you are crazy, a lunatic or unstable. Once, after a hospitalization, a member of my own family said I was "weak." Is it any wonder, then, that myself and many individuals with mental illness don't publicly admit or address our mental illness?

According to data from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), roughly one in five Americans has a mental illness. At the same time, nearly 60 percent of people with a diagnosable mental illness received no treatment for it in the previous year, and mental health crises can occur even with treatment. The data also show that mental illness plays a factor in drug and alcohol abuse, due to a desire for symptom alleviation through self-medication.

Equipping the church to help

We often look to the church for help when we are struggling because medical assistance can be delayed or unavailable, but the church can be overwhelmed or



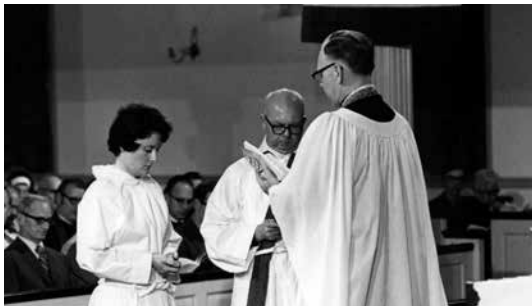
not equipped to support individuals with mental illness. The need for support is great, and the church often finds itself on the front lines of this struggle while having to make do with minimal training and resources.

To address this great need, the ELCA Disability Ministries Team will make a positive impact in collaboration with partner mental health ministries by making grants available up to \$10,000 for congregations, organizations and synods to start new mental health ministries or enhance existing ministries to assist individuals with mental illness.

Visit ELCA.org/disability for details about submitting a proposal for grant funding. Collaboration is encouraged with partners like NAMI, Pathways to Promise, Lutheran Suicide Prevention Ministry or a Lutheran Services in America ministry.

The deadline for proposals is **Jan. 31**, so the time to act is now.

“Getting Women Ordained”



Ordination of Elizabeth Platz, University of Maryland chapel, College Park, Md., Nov. 22, 1970. Presiding at the ordination are the Rev. Theodore R. Caspar (center), campus pastor, and the Rev. Paul M. Orso, president of the Maryland Synod of the Lutheran Church in America.

“Although the late 1960s were years of unprecedented social upheaval, Lutherans studied and debated women’s ordination on the grounds of the confessions and

Scripture,” says Gracia Grindal in the beginning of her analysis and evaluation of the studies, debates, documents and official actions resulting in the 1969/1970

decisions about the ordination of women in her essay, “Getting Women Ordained,” published in “Lutheran Quarterly,” volume 32 (2018).

In the “Afterword” of her essay, Grindal, professor emerita of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., offers her personal reflection from a vantage point of the church today, trends and movements in the ELCA, other Lutheran churches and ecumenical partners, and her study of historic documents and decisions related to the ordination of women.

Available at lutheranquarterly.com.

Grace Institute’s two-year spiritual formation program



Grace Institute for Spiritual Formation, a community practicing contemplation, compassion and courage, will launch its ninth two-year spiritual formation program this August. The institute’s alumni list includes more than 260 pastors and laypersons from around the country.

Grace Institute is a program of renewal and transformation for individuals and congregational groups, laypersons, deacons and pastors. The institute is centered on contemplative practices, building trust and companionship in small groups and learning through an action/reflection model.

The eight quarterly retreats from August 2019 to May 2021 meet at Shalom Spirituality Center in Dubuque, Iowa. Presenters and musicians for Grace Institute’s ninth program include the Rev. Amy Zalk Larson, the Rev. Lenny Duncan, Professor Craig Nesson, Greg Berg, Hans Peterson, Richard Bruxvoort Colligan, Mary Preus and Tom Witt.

A rich, personal experience

Past participants have spoken of Grace Institute as a “community of transformation and healing,” “a place of trust” and “a time of deep renewal.” One graduate recounted the experience of Grace Institute with a poetic touch: “After two years, many hours of reading and study, much laughter, some tears and more transcendent moments than I could have imagined, I am covered in the dust of Grace. Thank you.”

Visit luther.edu/grace-institute for program and registration details.

ELCA podcast “Three Sides” launched



Hosts of the new ELCA podcast, “Three Sides”: Andrew Steele, Shanna Crawford and Phil LaDeur.

There are two sides to every story, the saying goes. But what about when an unexpected third side is revealed, giving the story even more dimensionality? The ELCA’s new monthly podcast, “Three Sides,” offers a fresh way to tell the unique, compelling and sometimes surprising stories of this church.

“Three Sides” presents diverse voices

from across all expressions of the ELCA. The podcast is hosted by Shanna Crawford, director for accounting with the ELCA Mission Investment Fund; Phil LaDeur, program assistant for hunger education with ELCA World Hunger; and Andrew Steele, director of ELCA Global Church Sponsorship.

Episode topics so far have included women who lead, church in community, and how congregations can best serve children and families.

Good news: something we can use more of today

Even the hosts have found themselves learning about ELCA initiatives and experiences through the stories “Three Sides” explores. “I had no idea that the church was at work in so many different places and in so many ways,” LaDeur said.

Crawford agreed: “I’ve been able to take a deep dive into all things Lutheran

and hear the stories of some amazing people.” She enjoys “being part of lifting up these stories and issues and adding a bit of commentary along the way.”

Steele hopes “Three Sides” “becomes a platform for good news — something I think we all could use a bit more of. Positive stories are happening throughout our congregations, synods and churchwide ministries.”

When “Three Sides” made the iTunes top 100 in the Religion & Spirituality podcast category in its first week of launching, the hosts were especially encouraged. “It’s amazing how much God is doing through us, and I see the podcast as being a great tool to get these stories out to the rest of the church and the world,” Steele said.

“Three Sides” is available at livinglutheran.org/podcast and via iTunes, Spotify and Stitcher. Have an idea for a podcast topic? Send them to threesides@elca.org.

ELCA Federal Credit Union introduces new products for congregations and ministries

As the ELCA Federal Credit Union grows, so do its offerings to ELCA congregations and related ministries.

Congregations and ministries are eligible to join the ELCA’s financial cooperative, and benefit from more competitive interest rates on savings accounts and Certificates of Deposit.

Small ministry loans

The ELCA Federal Credit Union is pleased to introduce several new product offerings specially designed for

congregations and ministries, including small ministry loans. Now, ELCA congregations and related ministries can borrow up to \$50,000 for small projects, such as a building repair or purchases, including ministry furnishings or vehicles. Congregations with financing needs greater than \$50,000 are invited to apply for a loan from the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA.

Also, for the first time, the ELCA Federal Credit Union is offering a ministry credit card program.

Congregations and ministries can apply for a World Mastercard from the credit union. This credit card comes with no annual fee and a spending limit secured by a deposit. Multiple credit cards can be issued to designated individuals at a congregation.

For more information, visit the credit union at elcafcu.org and the Mission Investment Fund at mif.elca.org.

Prayer Ventures: suggestions for prayers every day, all year long

When it comes to prayer, there is no shortage of people and situations to include in our prayerful conversations with God. Sometimes it helps to have a little prompting though — reminders of special concerns of the church and world, ELCA programs and ministries, special occasions in the church calendar or ideas for ministries to remember in prayer that might otherwise slip by us. ELCA Prayer Ventures offers such



prayer suggestions for every day of the year.

Prayer Ventures can be used for personal prayer, adapted for use in worship, posted online or shared with members. They are posted for download a month in advance at ELCA.org/en/Resources/Prayer-Ventures and featured daily at livinglutheran.org. It's free and fresh each month!

New Bible study curriculum from Lutheran Outdoor Ministries

“Transformed Community: God’s Agent of C.H.A.N.G.E.”

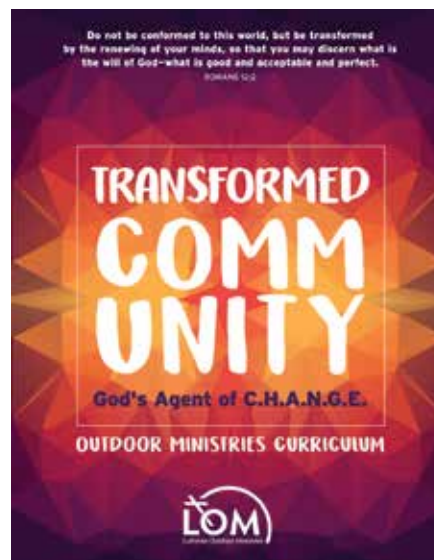
“God’s Agent of C.H.A.N.G.E.” conjures up images of a mighty band of superheroes with secret missions. When we take on the mission of being God’s agent of change in the world, we must be ready to be transformed — individually and together — and to discover that our not-so-secret identities will probably not conform to the world’s expectations. It’s not always easy to say yes to this mission, but when the mission is pursued together and in community, we discover that we are aligned with God’s will, powered by God’s spirit, and that there is purpose and joy in being Christ’s life-giving and love-giving presence in the world as God’s hands and feet.

Included in the full curriculum package are five days of Bible study sessions for preschool, elementary, junior high and senior high youth, and adults. In addition

to Bible studies, the curriculum provides games, crafts, environmental activities and team-building activities for each age group. “Transformed Community” is also available in small bundles designed for youth ministry and vacation Bible school (VBS) settings.

VBS bundles from previous curriculums are available for only \$25 to all ELCA congregations. Each year, the Lutheran Outdoor Ministries curriculum provides a quality alternative for VBS curriculum at an affordable price. The VBS bundle includes Bible study activities, crafts and games for preschool children and upper and lower elementary youth. Planning documents in each bundle include biblical and theme background information.

“Transformed Community” and other Bible study resources are available for purchase and download at lomnetwork.org/curriculum/.



Lutheran Outdoor Ministries is an association of outdoor ministry organizations dedicated to encouraging, equipping, educating and empowering bold and faithful outdoor ministry leaders for service in the church and in the world. Learn more at lomnetwork.org.

“Say What? A Fresh Look at Old Sayings”

We hear them all the time — familiar sayings and expressions like “Everything happens for a reason.” We use them as a form of shorthand to express big ideas: “Let go and let God.”

We use them as punctuation to end conversations: “She’s in a better place.” They may be peculiar to your family or tribe: “Too much rain ain’t good either.”

They are ancient, and they are contemporary — they are familiar expressions.

The benefit and gift of familiar expressions is that they capture, in a few words, a bit or byte of wisdom. The Bible contains a whole book of these sayings in Proverbs. Benjamin Franklin compiled many of these expressions in “Poor Richard’s Almanac.” Repeated over and over again, they are passed from generation to generation.

The problem with familiar expressions is they are just that — familiar. Frederick Buechner once said, “They are so familiar that we don’t hear them.” We often don’t bother to critique familiar sayings and expressions to see if they are helpful, true or still relevant and meaningful.

“Say What?” is a little book that takes a fresh look at familiar expressions and sayings, and most importantly, helps readers hear them once again and decide if they contain a measure of wisdom for their daily life. “Say What?” is available at Amazon.com in print and Kindle formats.

The author, David Ellingson, is a retired ELCA pastor and professor, and author of “Biblical Wisdom for a Digital Age” and three “Paddle Pilgrim” books about his kayak adventures down the Mississippi River, Erie Canal, Hudson River and the fjords of Norway.



Submitting ideas and content to Seeds Monthly



Seeds Monthly provides leaders with feature stories, calendar items, helpful resources, bulletin blurb suggestions and updates from *Always Being Made New*:

The Campaign for the ELCA. To subscribe, go to the link at ELCA.org/seeds or email constituent.care@elca.org to sign up.

To submit ideas or content for con-

sideration in Seeds Monthly, please send materials to Megan Brandsrud at megan.brandsrud@elca.org by the first of each month. Seeds Monthly content consists of short blurbs or introductions that link to more information on ELCA.org and related sites, so all submitted content must be housed online to link to. For feature stories and bulletin blurbs, please keep content to 100 words or less; for resources, please send a headline and a short, one-sentence description.

New Worship Matters handbooks: funeral planning and marriage planning

The Worship Matters series by Augsburg Fortress expands to include two new handbooks designed for congregations to use as they assist in the preparations for funerals and marriages. Both handbooks offer notes and commentary on the respective services in Evangelical Lutheran Worship and available supplemental resources. These handbooks include options for quantity discounts.

They are great resources to keep on hand as an occasion arises or to use in adult forums or small groups. Each book is accompanied by a free downloadable pastor's guide to assist facilitation with couples, families and adult forums on the topics contained in the handbooks.

"Remembering God's Promise: A Funeral Planning Handbook" follows the path established by "In Sure and Certain Hope: A Funeral Sourcebook," but is more

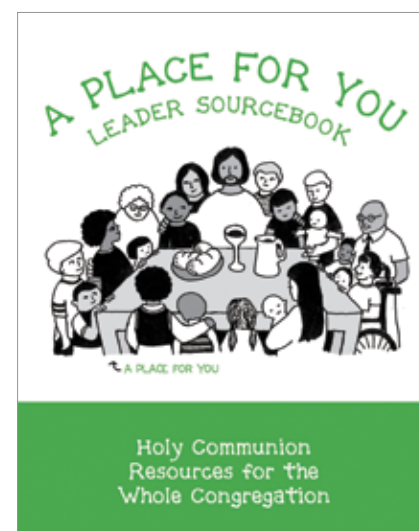
directly for the family and the bereaved. "Remembering God's Promises" includes lists of suggested Scripture readings and hymns and provides information on other options for the family. The handbook includes a funeral planning worksheet designed to be used when the family and friends meet with the pastor, so they can record information and keep track of decisions that need to be made. Use this practical guide to encourage the planning of funerals in advance or to provide comfort of the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to those affected by death. Order at augsburgfortress.org/funeral-handbook.

"Love and Faithfulness: A Marriage Planning Handbook" includes 12 reflections to encourage couples in the planning of the marriage service and to prepare for married life together. This resource is invaluable for facilitating marriage prepa-



ration, as it encourages couples to have conversations about the marriage service, their faith and their daily life within the context of worship and the church. There are also practical ideas for Scripture, hymns and an overview of the marriage service. Order at augsburgfortress.org/marriage-handbook.

A comprehensive leader guide for Erlander's "A Place for You"



Generations of Lutherans can tell vivid stories about the ways Daniel Erlander's books have helped them better understand what it means to embrace their Christian faith. "A Place for You" invites people of all ages to explore the special meal of Jesus. As a complement to Erlander's book, Augsburg Fortress has developed "A Place for You" Leader Sourcebook. This reproducible resource will help leaders guide their congregations into a deeper understanding of Holy Communion. The Leader Sourcebook is packed with innovative content for all the generations:

- An early childhood session using the new board book, "A Place for You, Little One"
- Three sessions for elementary-age children and their parents using the expanded "A Place for You" Interactive Edition, plus children's bulletins and family devotions
- Adult/youth sessions, self-study resources and mini Bible studies using "A Place for You" Interactive Original Edition

"A Place for You" Leader Sourcebook is available at augsburgfortress.org/aplaceforyoursourcebook.

Youth pledge to care for creation

As thousands of youth streamed through the Interactive Learning Center of the ELCA Youth Gathering this past summer in Houston, a few hundred of them made specific pledges to be better stewards of God's gifts. Lutherans Restoring Creation (LRC), a grassroots movement of ELCA members passionate about earth-keeping,

hosted a five-minute "tour" of a typical day-in-the-life of an American teen. As groups walked through the various parts of their day — working, eating, playing, praying and resting — the impacts of their daily choices were illustrated on a global scale.

For instance, every time we scrape food off our plates and it ends up in landfills,



we contribute to one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions. For every set of possible negative impacts, there were specific solutions suggested that individuals could pledge to act on. While travelers through this journey were told that no commitment was required, the number of respondents choosing

to take specific action upon their return home was inspiring: over 60 percent committed to "turn their electronic devices off for two hours on a regular basis and explore all other options," and almost 90 percent committed "to take only what they will eat" during meals!

The entire presentation and pledge form can be downloaded for free at

LutheransRestoringCreation.org. Any size youth group can utilize it to discuss their lives, actions, decisions and relationship with their global neighbors. This short process empowers youth with simple, daily alterations that can lead to treading lightly upon the earth, treating others with compassion and expanding their awareness of how simple and impactful being a disciple can be. It's an effective tool for youth to use in surveying the rest of the congregation and seeing what personal discipleship practices people are willing to try at home.

The results of the ongoing pledge initiative will be shared with regional church networks to help encourage and offer opportunities for collaboration.

Children and youth lead the way for creation justice

Each year, thousands of congregations set aside a day to pray, learn and act on or near the observance of Earth Day, which falls on April 22 this year — close to Easter. Earth Day Sunday can be celebrated April 28 or another day convenient for your faith community.

Creation Justice Ministries' (creationjustice.org) Earth Day Sunday resources will focus on children and

youth leading the way for creation justice. Christian education and action resources will feature stories of young people of all ages celebrating, working for justice and protecting God's creation — a gift entrusted to our care and responsible use. Earth Day Sunday resources will be available for download at earthdaysunday.org beginning in January.





Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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We are a church that values and practices accompaniment.

Accompaniment is *walking together in a solidarity that practices interdependence and mutuality*. Through long-term, mutual relationships close to home and worldwide, we participate in God's mission together, share joys and sorrows, pray together, share our strengths and collaborate on mutually beneficial ministries. Together — with our global companions, partners and neighbors — we accomplish more than we can as individuals. *Photo: Will Nunnally*

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.



What makes MIF Term Investments notable? Even non-investors see a return.

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