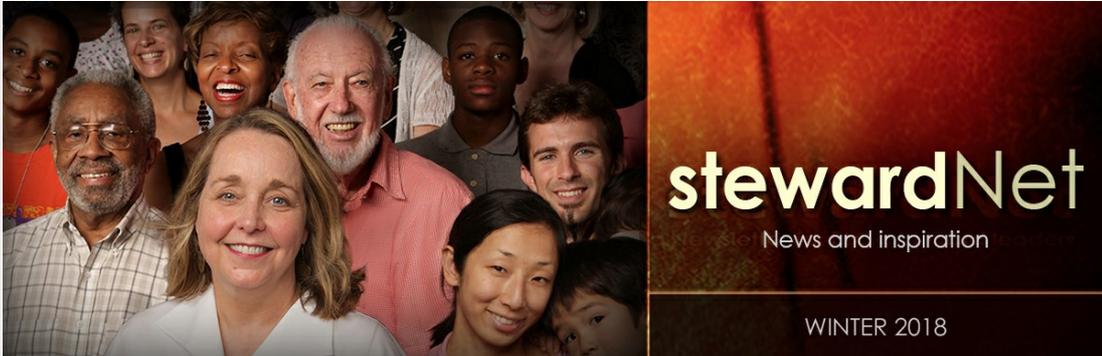




Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



Dear friend in Christ,

Have you thought about the difference between a nutritionist, a cook and a restaurateur? All have something to do with food, but the focus of each is distinct. A person educated in nutrition would know the science behind why we can't live on bread alone, while a cook might be thinking about not just what is nutritious but also how to make food that is appealing to the eyes and the palate. A restaurateur, on the other hand, is concerned not only with making meals that people want to eat but also with operational aspects – like location, marketing, staffing, inventory and finances – needed to keep the business thriving and feeding people week in and week out.

I bring this up because, across the board, denominations are struggling to keep their restaurants open and their onsite staff fully employed, even though there isn't a shortage of starving people. The world has changed, and the days are over when people were socialized by their families to become loyal customers of denominational "chains" that resulted in weekly visits to our establishments. We are anxiously aware of the consequences.

For those of us that think about stewardship, our temptation might be to label our challenges as a nutritional struggle – that if only people better understood what feeds the soul, they would connect the dots and realize that our congregations are ready to serve up exactly what they need. More and more though, I think we are acknowledging there are other issues. For example, the ELCA's [Future Directions](#) initiative has identified leadership and vital congregations as critical emphases, suggesting that if we are interested in running viable and sustainable restaurants, we need to move the sweet spot of what we deem significant from nutrition toward restaurateering. This issue of stewardNet takes a look at that shift.

We are a church that is energized by lively engagement in our faith and life. Thank you for doing God's work with a faithful, generous heart!

Faithfully,

Steve Oelschlager
Stewardship Program Coordinator
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

I'm interested in hearing your thoughts. [Let me know](#) what you are thinking.

Taking care of business The art of staying open

Here are a few statistics worth considering. Depending on the source and methodology, estimates on new business closures in their first five years runs from 30-50 percent.



According to the Economic Innovation Group, in most metro areas, there are more businesses closing than opening. Looking just at retail, it turns out that 2017 set a record as 8,600 stores closed. Is it safe to say that keeping any enterprise or organization resilient enough to weather the ups and downs of a changing world is a remarkable feat? Why would it be any different for the church?



It's interesting to me how the rest of the world embraces this reality by elevating the disciplines of marketing, finance, human resources, leadership, and entrepreneurship as critical to the long-term success of organizations. Church consultant Russell Crabtree makes this point in his book, "[Owl Sight](#)": Your local coffee shop, library and hospital probably know more about their customers than your congregation understands about its members. He offers this not as a criticism but a reflection on how the world has changed. [Here is an example](#) of the kind of organizational intelligence that congregations might have access to through "Holy Cow! Consulting's Congregational Assessment Tool." You might also want to consider the ELCA's congregational vitality [survey](#).

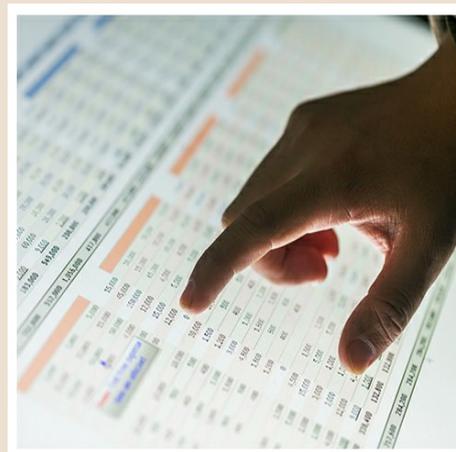
As you are undoubtedly aware, there's a lot that goes into keeping our congregations sustainable and thriving. Along those lines, check out this [thought leadership piece](#) by longtime Lutheran lay leader Roger Bloomfield titled "Taking Care of Business: Good Stewardship or Spiritual Bankruptcy." Also, take a look at the [congregational certificate program](#) that is part of the Resourceful Servants initiative funded by the Lilly Endowment.

Learning that leads to vitality

Seeing more of creation as sacred so we might learn from it

As a college freshman in mechanical engineering, I was directed by guidance counselors to fulfill my humanities requirements by finding the least demanding courses. The spoken bias was to stay focused on what mattered: math, science, engineering.

I wonder if we do something similar in the church? Even though we profess an incarnate God that fuses all matter with spirit, we have our biases that some pursuits are more sacred than others. In other words, we perceive a hierarchy between nutrition, cooking and restaurantering.

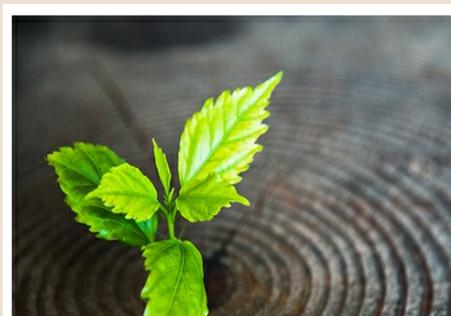


That seems to be changing. At a Lilly Endowment meeting in Indianapolis last November (National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders), it was noticeable the number of organizations, including colleges and universities, that are creating classes to teach finance, marketing communications and fundraising to church and non-profit leaders. Here are three such programs represented at that event: [Villanova](#), [North Park](#) and the [Lake Institute](#). What opportunities are available in your area or through online channels, and how might you connect more church leaders to this content?

Birthing something new

Conversations about change and leadership

James Hazelwood is the bishop of the New England Synod. He has been having an ongoing conversation with his synod about a changing church, including what he labels as the four pain points: spiritual vitality, congregational finances, changing demographics and turbulent social times. He also raises three hopeful options including pastors and deacons as entrepreneurs. You can



[read version 11](#) of this conversation here, or you can listen to his [related podcast here](#).



Terri Stagner-Collier is pastor at Cross of Life Lutheran Church in Roswell, Ga. She recently completed a sabbatical during which she investigated growing ELCA congregations. Specifically, she was interested in the leadership of these congregations by their senior pastors, and whether there were any common themes and attributes. Pastor Stagner-Collier writes:

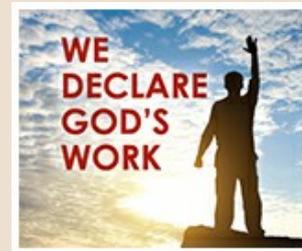
These pastors do not shy away from resources developed by and used in corporate America. While the bottom line is different between a church and a business, many of the same leadership skills are required. A number of these pastors engage in leadership coaching by both sacred and secular resources. Why not learn from the world so we can be more effective in transforming the world?

Pastor Stagner-Collier's paper was completed in cooperation with and distributed by ELCA Research and Evaluation. [You can read it here](#).

Vitality through telling stories

The ministry of mission interpretation

Why is it an episode of our favorite TV show is easier to recall than some corporate speech or classroom lecture or a perhaps even a pastor's sermon? It seems it's another example of mind versus heart. Facts speak to our minds and stories speak to our hearts. Stories engage our brains in a deeper way than facts alone do. Stories touch people in a variety of ways and can be a powerful tool.



When we tell a story, people slow down and listen because stories engage, teach and illustrate. Stories persuade and move people to action, and their emotional elements make them memorable. Stories help people feel more connected and compassionate.

For any organization to be vital, essential and alive, we must tell our stories about why we do what we do and how we make a difference in the world. By using stories, we can be more influential and effective in advancing our objectives. Mission interpreters in congregations do exactly that! Through stories, ELCA missions and ministries are lifted up on a regular basis making congregational members more connected to the work we do together as the church. For more information on this important ministry, please contact [Denise Ballou](#).

Other items of interest

Resources, learning opportunities and more

- StewardTalk is an interview series from the ELCA with authors and thought leaders on stewardship related topics. [You can listen to past recordings here](#). Join us on Thursday, Feb. 15, at 3 p.m. Central time to hear a conversation with Dean Sweetman and Andrew Dalamba of Tithe.ly talking about their electronic giving app and engagement software. Email [Neil Bullock](#) in advance, and then dial in at 877-820-7831 using code 6314685#.
- StewardCast is a free webcast on Saturday, March 3, from 10:30 a.m. to noon Central time to thank, inform, teach, inspire and connect current and new steward leaders with fresh perspectives, practices and skills that address the challenges and issues faced in stewarding our congregational and community contexts. The intended audience includes individual rostered and lay leaders, congregational stewardship committees and teams, and synodical mission support and stewardship tables. Watch [ELCA.org/stewardship](#) for connection information, or [register here](#) to receive future details.
- For periodic ideas and inspiration on stewardship delivered to your inbox, check out [Voices on Stewardship](#) from Vanco Financial Services and [Stewardship](#) from Luther Seminary's Center for Stewardship Leaders.

Alan Jones

"All organizations are perfectly designed to get the results they get."

Biblical foundations

Isaiah 55:2

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

Upcoming events (watch the [calendar file](#) for details)

Feb. 15

stewardTalk

3 p.m. Central at 877-820-7831 and participant code 6314685#

March 3

stewardCast

10:30 a.m. Central [watch ELCA.org/stewardship for connection instructions]

April 3-5, 2018

Dallas, Texas

Generosity Now: [Pathways to Generosity: Signs of Hope](#)

[Full calendar](#) | Subscribe to [Our Calendar File](#)

Find ELCA stewardship resources online



We'd love to hear from you! Have a link or idea you want to share in our next issue? Email stewardnet@elca.org.

You're receiving this email because you or your congregation indicated you are a stewardship leader in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

[PRIVACY POLICY](#) | ELCA.org | [SUBSCRIBE](#) | [UNSUBSCRIBE](#)

x