

seeds for the parish

Fall 2014

Resource Paper for Leaders of ELCA Congregations

www.ELCA.org



A life of service begins early

By Jessie Aukes

Fall is well underway and summer seems like the distant past, but many ELCA congregations are still pondering what they learned this past summer and making notes for next summer's program planning.

Nativity Lutheran Church, a new congregation in Bethlehem, Ga., was faced with a dilemma: Summer is the time for Vacation Bible School for young children and mission trips for youth, but what about the young people who fall somewhere in between? There are few summer options for those who have outgrown VBS and are not yet ready for mission trips. To meet the challenge, Nativity set to work developing a new opportunity and stepping stone — Servant Camp.

Patti Axel, pastor of Nativity explained, "As we grow in our faith life we move through the continuum from receiving

to serving. We are always receiving God's grace and gifts, but as we grow up we learn how to turn those gifts into blessings for others." This is what Servant Camp is all about. Starting at age 12, young people take the lessons they learned as children in VBS and apply them in service with others in the community.

The first year of Servant Camp in 2013 spanned three days. Youth and adult volunteers made key racks, welcome signs, bird houses and other small projects for new residents of Bethlehem's Habitat for Humanity homes.

This year, Nativity's Servant Camp grew to a full week. Youth made mobile flowerboxes for a local nursing home and rehab facility where they will be used as part of the residents' occupational therapy. They prepared sandwiches for Faith in

Serving Humanity, an organization that distributes 2,100 lunches daily to hungry children, and participated in the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia's Mobile Pantry, a food distribution program serving about 400 families a month in Barrow County.

Practical skills in construction and handling tools were learned as they cut and pieced together wood for the planters, but youth also learned about their neighbors and community, as well as how to cooperate and be patient with each other as they worked together. They discovered that a life of faith and service, doing God's work in the world, is rich with learning and blessings — for everyone.

Jessie Aukes serves as the council president for Nativity Lutheran Church.



There's help for preventing the tragedy of suicide.

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The importance of advocacy work

The public policies our U.S. elected officials write, amend and ultimately adopt can have ongoing effects on our

neighbors who are struggling with hunger and living with poverty, as well as God's creation. Through advocacy, ELCA members have the opportunity to work with lawmakers to help create opportunities to overcome poverty, promote peace and dignity and defend God's creation.

Why is advocacy part of our mission?

We are a church that is energized by lively engagement in our faith and public life. We serve in response to God's love to meet human needs and protect creation. When we, as ELCA members, lift our voices together to influence policies that advance the common good, we further God's work in our world.

We are also a church that thinks of governments as helpful ways God is active in our world. This is clear from the very first generation of Lutheran reformers and their actions. When you write your public official, you are uniting with a community of Lutherans concerned with how public policies work for our neighbors as a matter of faith.

In its very first social statement, "The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective," from 1991, our church committed to "work with and on behalf of the poor, the powerless and those who suffer, using its power and influence with political and economic decision-making bodies to develop and advocate policies that seek to advance

Advocacy



justice, peace and the care of creation."

Get involved now

ELCA advocacy is most effective when Lutherans across the country are involved and active. The ELCA has professional policy staff that help facilitate

Lutheran advocacy efforts, but members of Congress want to hear from you — your stories and experiences can influence and impact their decisions.

Here are steps you can take right now:

- **Join the ELCA e-Advocacy Network.** By signing up for the ELCA e-Advocacy Network, you will receive legislative updates and key advocacy opportunities in your inbox. You can also share these action alerts with your personal network on social media.
- **Reach out to your members of Congress by email, letter or phone.** Encourage your congregation to do the same. Each of us has a unique story, and we are part of a larger story that makes up the ELCA. Share how issues affect you, your neighbors, your community and our world.
- **Invite your officials to visit your congregation's ministry or project.** Lawmakers are more likely to support helpful legislation when they see firsthand the needs of a community. By reminding our officials of what Lutherans do to serve alongside people in their communities and around the

world, we establish a voice of compassion, credibility and concern.

- **Build a relationship with staff in your Congressional state or district office.** Invite this regional staff to your congregation's events and visit their offices regularly; let them know what positions you'd like your representative to take on crucial issues.
- **Register to vote and vote.** Voting is an important means of expressing your concern and accomplishing or influencing change locally and nationally.
- **Write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper, lifting up an issue of concern.** Mention your elected officials by name and you will not only reach your fellow constituents, but you will also get the attention of your officials' offices. Remember the most powerful voice is your own.
- **If you have a Lutheran State Public Policy office in your state, get involved in this ministry.** The ELCA has offices strategically located in several state capitals with the purpose of engaging ELCA members in advocacy for hunger-related issues in the state legislature.
- **Is your youth group, adult Sunday school class or other group from your congregation coming to Washington, D.C.?** Connect with the ELCA advocacy staff by sending an email.

Learn more about ELCA advocacy and how you can get involved at ELCA.org/advocacy.

seeds for the parish

ELCA.org/seeds

LivingLutheran.com/seeds

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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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POSTMASTER, send address changes to:
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Public comments invited for Gender-Based Violence Message

Are you concerned about the epidemic of gender-based violence in the United States and around the world? The ELCA churchwide organization is seeking your input.

The draft of an ELCA Social Message on Gender-based Violence, written in consultation with experts in the field, is now posted at ELCA.org/socialmessages. At the same address you will find an online survey form inviting your comment and response.

Social messages are documents adopted by the ELCA Church Council on behalf of the ELCA that draw attention

to particular pressing matters of social concern.

Your participation in responding to the draft message on gender-based violence is strongly encouraged and welcomed. An online form is available on ELCA.org Sept. 15 – Nov. 15, 2014.

This social message was requested by the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ and authorized by ELCA Church Council in October 2013. The proposed message, revised in light of received public comments, will be submit-



ted to the Church Council for their approval in the spring of 2015.

It is possible to share questions and concerns about this work at any time.

Emails can be addressed to womenandjustice@elca.org and regular mail to "Gender-

Based Violence Writing Team" c/o Office of the Presiding Bishop, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631. All communications will be kept, read and considered. Find more information online at ELCA.org/socialmessages.

Help for suicide prevention and awareness

Mental Health Ministries at www.mentalhealthministries.net states that more than 36,000 people in the United States die by suicide every year and that it is the country's 10th leading cause of death. Among youth aged 15-24, suicide is the third



leading cause of death. Older men (60+) die by suicide at a rate that is more than seven times higher than that of older women; the rate for white males aged 85+ is over four times higher than the nation's overall rate of suicide.

While suicide may affect some age groups and racial/ethnic groups disproportionately, it is a devastating mental health issue that cuts across all ages, socioeconomic statuses and cultures in every community. The tragedy and impact spreads beyond the victim to their families, friends, school, surrounding communities and further.

In addition to the many resources that Mental Health Ministries provides, Lutheran Suicide Prevention Ministry directs people to resources at www.elcasp.org that can help the church to lift up this important ministry. Through the initiatives of this independent Lutheran organization, the hope is to help ELCA congregations talk about suicide and mental illness, cre-

ate synod task forces that build awareness and reduce stigma, encourage and help establish seminary-based educational programs on mental illness and suicide prevention, develop sources of help for rostered leaders, and provide documentation on suicide. Jerry and Elsie Weyrauch,

members of Lutheran Church of the Resurrection in Marietta, Ga., founded this ministry after losing their daughter to suicide.

Lutheran Suicide Prevention Ministry's overall purpose is to call attention to and take action on the goals of the ELCA messages "Suicide Prevention" and "The Body of Christ and Mental Illness," both available as free downloads at ELCA.org. They also encourage people to download and use the congregational study guide for the ELCA message on mental illness. This study guide helps leaders to move congregations into discussions on the messages and ultimately take action.

"The most important thing the church can do is to live out its call as the body of Christ," states the ELCA message on mental illness. That is what we do together as the church when we lift up suicide prevention, talk openly with one another and care for people at risk of committing suicide or survivors of suicide victims.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Braille Edition

The new Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Braille Edition can now be ordered from Augsburg Fortress.

The new Braille Edition provides the complete texts for all 743 service music items and hymns from the Pew Edition, as well as some new features compared with its predecessor, Lutheran Book of Worship Braille Edition. Evangelical Lutheran Worship Braille Edition is published in 8 to 9 volumes and includes page breaks between the hymns, which helps facilitate ease of use for the visually impaired reader.

Pages are loose-leaf and produced on sturdy letter size (8.5 x 11) paper, punched to fit a three-ring binder, and packaged in multiple re-closable corrugated storage boxes, each labeled with page range included in that box.

Congregations are invited to provide a copy for each braille-using worshiper's use. To learn more or to order today, visit the Augsburg Fortress online store at augsburgfortress.org or call Sales & Service at 800-328-4648.



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Do you love children, youth and family ministry?

The ELCA Youth Ministry Network is holding its annual conference, the Extravaganza, Jan. 30 – Feb. 2, 2015 in Detroit. More than 700 ELCA members will gather under the theme **Story:**

God's • Ours • Yours • Mine. And if you love children, youth and family ministry, you're going to want to be there.

The Extravaganza is for all who share in the adventure of children, youth and family ministry. It is for the professional and the volunteer; the old and the young; the rookie and the veteran; the rostered and the layperson; the young, the urban and the suburban. The Extravaganza is the premier renewal, education and networking event in the ELCA featuring inspiring speakers, excellent music, engaging workshops and a huge exhibit area — to name a



few highlights.

An added bonus of the Extravaganza is that it takes place in the host city for the 2015 ELCA Youth Gathering. This is a great opportunity for adults

to explore event venues, scope out hotels and restaurants, and talk with Detroit residents before the ELCA Youth Gathering in July.

Early bird registration for the Extravaganza is \$250, plus food and lodging. Register and learn more at elcaymnet.org/E2015.

Discover all the ways that membership in the ELCA Youth Ministry Network can support and strengthen the children, youth and family ministry leaders and volunteers in your congregation — go to elcaymnet.org.

New resources to accompany *The Campaign for the ELCA*

Approved by the 2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly and officially launched Feb. 1, *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA* seeks to raise \$198 million over the next five years to help sustain and grow the ministries of this church. The additional resources will provide the ELCA with opportunities to deepen relationships and expand ministries that serve communities in the United States and around the world.

To fully equip congregations in their involvement, a Campaign Planning Packet arrived at each ELCA congregation in mid-September. The Campaign Planning Packet provides an overview of the campaign, its priorities and ways congregations can get involved, includ-



ing forming a campaign team, setting goals, adopting an annual themes approach and more. Download an electronic version of this resource for free at www.ELCA.org/Campaign-for-the-ELCA/Resources.

Campaign pew offering envelopes featuring giving

options for all 10 Campaign priorities for the ELCA ministries are now available for use by congregations and individuals. Order these envelopes at www.ELCA.org/Campaign-for-the-ELCA/Resources.

As you plan your involvement in *The Campaign for the ELCA*, please visit www.ELCA.org/campaign, contact the campaign team at 1-800-638-3522, ext. 2612 or email at campaignforELCA@elca.org.

Subscribe to the ELCA World Hunger blog

Want to learn more about hunger, poverty and the ELCA's response? Subscribe to the ELCA World Hunger blog at www.ELCA.org/blogs/worldhunger. Recent posts include:

- "Milwaukee Ministries" — a visit to Cross Lutheran Church and Alice's Garden.
- "'Tis the Season for Fresh Produce" — a reflection on the importance of farmers markets and community gardens.



- "Myths and Realities about Water Shutoffs in Detroit" — an analysis of the water department's decision to cut off water to more than 30,000 households.

You can also find book reviews, Bible reflections and conversations about the ways that our Lutheran faith calls us to respond to need in our communities. Sign up today!

Living Lutheran: A place to witness and share everyday living faith

At Living Lutheran, there's something new for you every day. Well, almost every day. How about something new posted five days a week, all year long? Martin Luther said, "Our faith is a living, busy, mighty, active thing." Living Lutheran invites you to share in the sense of purpose and call to action that our faith brings to our lives.

As an online publication of the ELCA, Living Lutheran's goal is to provide a place for members and friends alike to find lively engagement in faith and life. At Living Lutheran you'll find the voices of ELCA members, as well as what's happen-



ing in communities, congregations, synods and ELCA-related organizations across the country and around the world.

Something new is posted each weekday:

feature blogs, stories, photo blogs, an "Ask a Pastor" column, videos or new Seeds resources and programs for congregations.

Living Lutheran offers a place for ELCA members to share their diverse experiences of what it means to live Lutheran. Visit Living Lutheran every day throughout the year at www.ELCA.org/Living-Lutheran.

New from ELCA World Hunger: 'Action Guide for Congregations'

You've been asking for ideas to tackle hunger in your communities and around the world — and here they are, all in one place! This brand-new, 24-page guide features 35 different ideas to inspire your congregation to action against hunger and poverty.

Special sections include ideas for addressing hunger in worship and Sunday school, ideas for programs that will engage youth groups and inter-generational groups, and ideas that will enrich your congregation's experiences



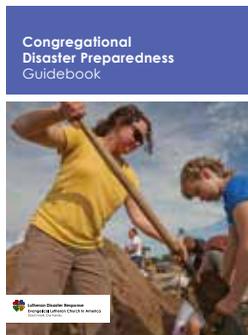
of Advent and Lent.

From litanies to offerings, lock-ins to coloring sheets, this guide includes exciting ideas you can use in planning meaningful and effective events and programs that will make a life-changing difference among our brothers and sisters around the world — and your congregation.

Order your free copy of the "ELCA World Hunger Action Guide for Congregations" at resources.ELCA.org or by calling 1-800-638-3522.

Congregational Disaster Preparedness Guidebook

Are you or your congregation prepared if a disaster strikes within your community? A "Congregational Disaster Preparedness Guidebook" is now available and designed to help you and your congregation create a comprehensive plan in case of an emergency or disaster. Created



by Lutheran Disaster Response, this resource will help your congregation take basic and important steps to serve your members and local communities. Download this free resource at www.ELCA.org/disaster/resources.

Let your light shine

"How are you going to let your light shine?" This is the question posed in the short (1:37 minute) video produced by the Mission Investment Fund, a financial ministry of the ELCA.



A single match is struck. That match lights a candle. More candles are lit as individuals go about their daily routines — shining their lights along the way.

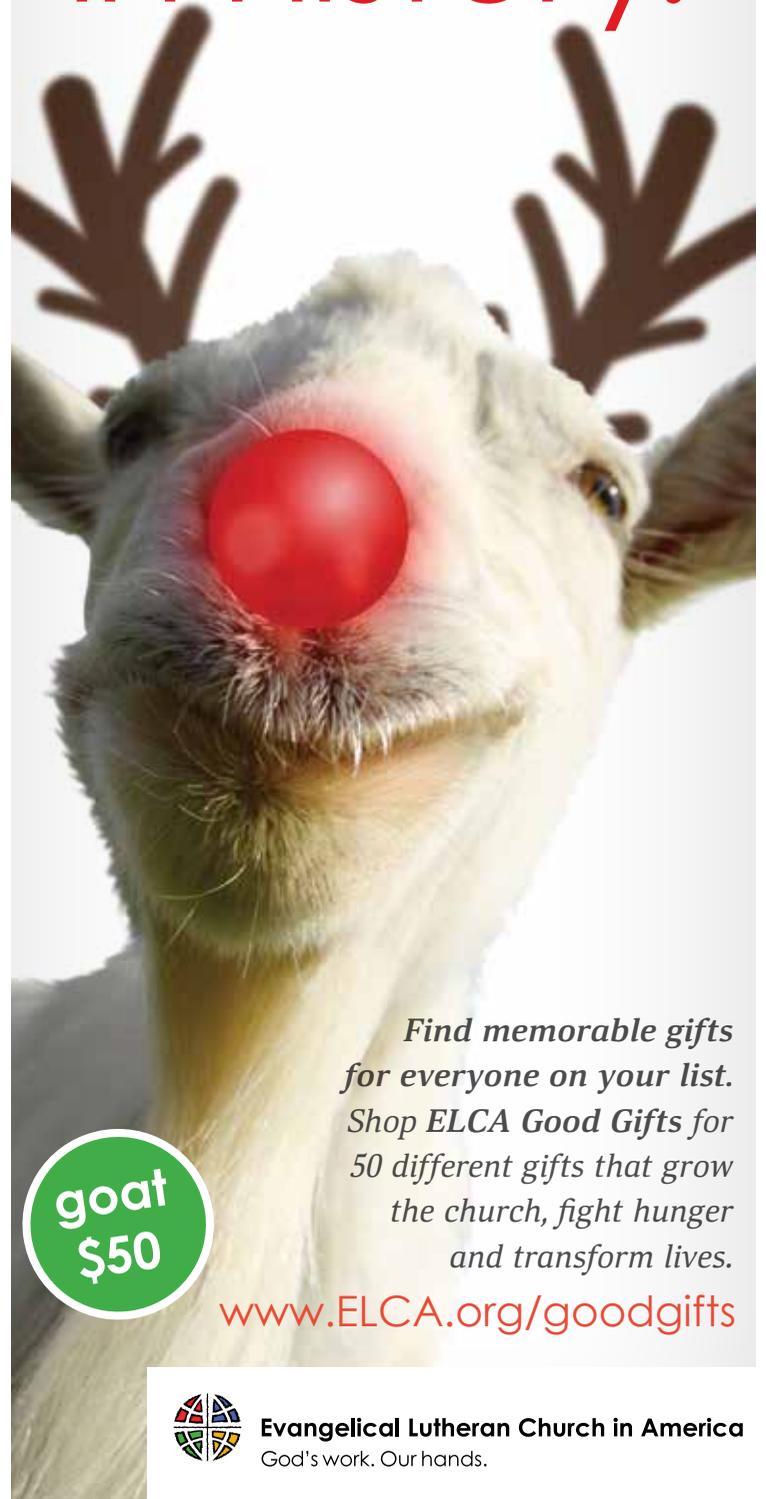
The voice-over message is direct:

"When you invest your savings in the Mission Investment Fund, everyone's light shines brighter."

You can preview the video on MIF's website, mif.ELCA.org/aboutmif. To order free copies for your congregation to use, email Daisy Lopez of the Mission Investment Fund at Daisy.Lopez@elca.org.

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

A new, revised edition of the ‘Altar Guild and Sacristy Handbook’

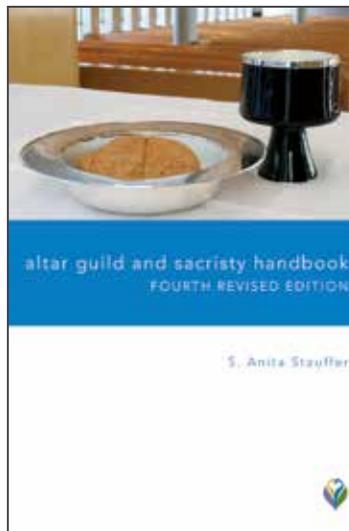
S. Anita Stauffer’s original work for altar guilds has been a fixture in congregations everywhere since it appeared in pamphlet form in the 1970s. This fourth, revised edition of her classic reflects on recent developments in liturgical practice and gives attention to the Evangelical Lutheran Worship family of resources.

Altar guild members and sacristans will appreciate the practical and expanded information on caring for the worship space, furnishings, appointments, vestments and linens; the nuts and bolts of preparing for the sacraments and for funerals, weddings and other occasional services; and a thorough overview of the church year. Also included are suggestions for organizing the altar guild’s work and a helpful glossary. “Altar Guild and Sacristy Handbook” (Augsburg Fortress, 2014) invites you to approach this role not just as a task, but as a ministry to the whole assembly in God’s service.

Resources which paved the way for the publication of Evangelical Lutheran Worship in 2006, as well as resources that were published by Augsburg Fortress to assist in its use and interpretation, have provided much of the updated

content in this edition of “Altar Guild and Sacristy Handbook.” Chief among these are “The Use of the Means of Grace,” a statement on the practice of word and sacrament adopted for guidance and practice by the Fifth Biennial Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA (1997); “Principles for Worship,” volume 2 of “Renewing Worship” (2002); and the Using Evangelical Lutheran Worship volumes, which include “The Sunday Assembly” (Lorraine S. Brugh and Gordon W. Lathrop, 2008), “The Christian Life: Baptism and Life Passages” (Dennis L. Bushkofsky and Craig A. Satterlee, 2008), and “Keeping Time: The Church’s Years” (Gail Ramshaw and Mons Teig, 2009).

Other sources of inspiration and expanded content for this revised edition include books in the Worship Matters series (2004–2011), “Evangelical Lutheran Worship Leaders Edition” (2006), and “Leading Worship Matters:



A Sourcebook for Preparing Worship Leaders” (2013).

Throughout this new edition, references to Lutheran Book of Worship have been updated to reference Evangelical Lutheran Worship and its ancillary resources.

S. Anita Stauffer (1947–2007) served on the worship staffs of The Lutheran World Federation, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the former Lutheran Church in America. She is author of several books on worship and served as the general editor of a series of worship and culture studies of The Lutheran World Federation.

More than 18,000 copies of the third edition have sold since its publication in 2000. Order the fourth, revised edition today at augsburgfortress.org/worshipmatters or call Augsburg Fortress Sales & Service at 1-800-328-4648.

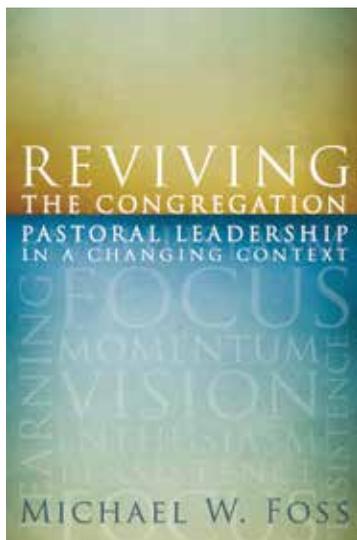
What is the altar guild?

Whether called altar guild, sacristans, worship support team or something else, the volunteers who set the table for worship and tidy up after services are not merely housekeepers; they are ministers to the worshipping community they serve, stewards responsible for the valuable and treasured items used in worship, and hosts providing welcome and hospitality to members and guests of the congregation.

‘Reviving the Congregation’

Pastoral leadership has always been challenging, but clergy and congregational leaders today face unprecedented challenges many of which simply didn’t exist a generation ago. The questions of ministry and leadership in the church today range broadly across the financial and the managerial, the spiritual and the interpersonal.

In such a time a wise mentor who can articulate a way forward for others is an immeasurable help. In “Reviv-



ing the Congregation: Pastoral Leadership in a Changing Context,” Michael W. Foss, best-selling author of “Power Surge,” steps forward as such a mentor.

Bringing decades of experience in congregational life and leadership and a winsome style to the work, Foss offers a compelling introduction to the new context in which we lead, and the personal and congregational strategies that will offer

a way forward. “Reviving the Congregation” is rooted in Foss’s own experience,

but it is open to all through questions for reflection, space for notes and journaling, and an extended bibliography for further reading.

Michael Foss is senior pastor of St. Mark Lutheran Church in West Des Moines, Iowa, and author of the bestselling book, “Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship for a Changing Church.”

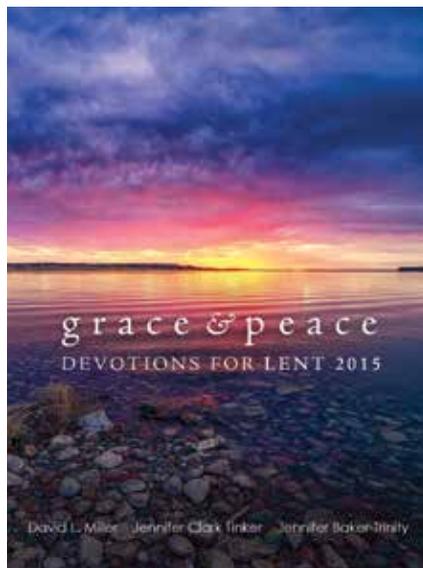
To see videos of Foss discussing his new book, visit www.fortresspress.com/foss. Order your copy of “Reviving the Congregation” at fortresspress.com or call Sales & Service at 1-800-328-4648.

“An important book for pastors and lay leaders alike! In a post-Christendom world, Foss focuses on first-century faith practices to transform lukewarm ‘members’ into passionate ‘disciples.’ In the process, he provides a helpful blueprint for the ministry of the local parish in the twenty-first century. In Foss, we meet an enthusiastic follower of Jesus sharing out of his abundant experience. The church will do well to listen.”

— Wolfgang D. Herz-Lane, bishop of the ELCA Delaware-Maryland Synod

Plan ahead for Lent

'Grace and Peace' for Lent



More than 27,000 ELCA members used "Too Deep for Words: Devotions for Lent 2014," a new pocket-sized, group-use devotional based on the letter to the Romans. Next year's devotional, "Grace and Peace: Devotions for Lent 2015," takes readers through Lent with daily readings from Ephesians.

In Ephesians grace and peace are words of greeting, words of blessing and, most of all, words to ponder. They are boundless gifts given to us by God through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These gifts empower us to live in the light of Christ and share

God's grace and peace with each other and the world.

For each day in Lent 2015, "Grace and Peace" offers an evocative image, a reading from the letter to the Ephesians, a quotation to ponder, a reflection and a prayer. Ephesians is the New Testament letter read most frequently in worship during Year B of the Revised Common Lectionary.

Written by David L. Miller, Jennifer Clark Tinker and Jennifer Baker-Trinity, each writer brings their unique voice and pastoral wisdom to these texts, while offering the voices of other witnesses in the quotations they have chosen in the "To ponder" section for each day. Images also provide another way into these texts. Readers are encouraged to take time to wonder about the images, asking, "What do they say that words cannot?"

"Grace and Peace" is available in regular, large print and eBook formats, with a quantity discount available for the regular, pocket-sized edition. To ensure you have copies for your congregation in time for the Lenten season, order today while supplies last. Visit augsbu.org/graceandpeace or call Augsburg Fortress Sales & Service at 1-800-328-4648 to learn more and to order.

Grace and peace to you as you journey through the days of Lent toward the Easter feast.

An ELCA-wide conversation for Lent

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton has been encouraging leaders and members of this church to consider four emphases as an understanding of this church: "We are church, we are Lutheran, we are church together and we are



church for the sake of the world." You and your congregation will be invited to explore "what does this mean?" during the upcoming season of Lent as part of an ELCA-wide conversation. A five-part discussion resource is being prepared to assist this discussion with an emphasis

on what it means to be Lutheran together in the 21st century.

This new Lenten resource will work well for a Wednesday evening discussion group or a Sunday adult education forum. Join Bishop

Eaton and congregations throughout the ELCA in thinking about "What does it mean to you to be Lutheran?" and "What does being church for the sake of the world mean in your community?" Look for more information in the coming months on ELCA.org.

Phone apps for stewardship

Some research suggests that we see as many 5,000 ads per day, while other studies think the number is closer to 300-500. The reality is that we see and hear so many messages that we don't even pay attention or have an awareness of them.



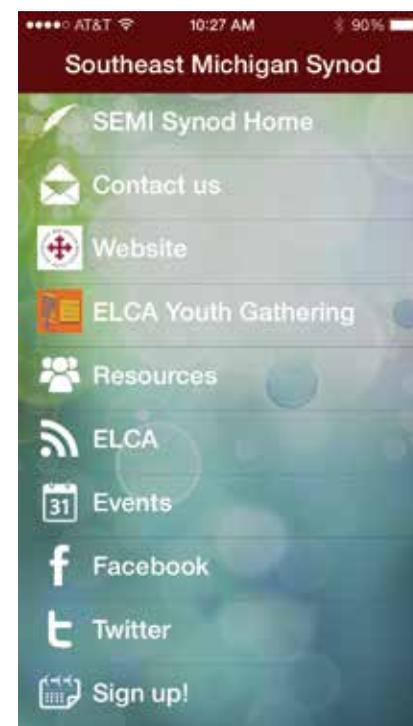
Compare that to the number of daily reminders of our life of faith, and what that number might be. Is there anything we hear outside of Sunday morning or the programs and small groups we participate in among our congregations? Whatever number you arrive at, it pales in comparison to the residue of our brand-driven culture.

Smartphones are an opportunity for the church to have a daily presence in people's lives. In North America, it is thought that smartphones represent 70 percent of the cell phones in service, with younger demographics having even higher percentages. What would it mean for your synod or congregation to have a smartphone app as a daily hub of faith? How might that help people to grow in their discipleship and stewardship?

It turns out that creating apps is almost as simple as drag and drop using websites. For a nominal fee, you can easily create an app that will connect people to your calendar of events, sermons, Facebook page, online giv-

ing and volunteering. How about giving your members a connection to an online Bible tool? Likewise the ELCA offers RSS feeds (ELCA.org/feeds) that will supply your app with daily Bible passages, and coming soon, weekly snippets on living generously and caring for creation.

To download and see free working examples, go to the Google play or iTunes app stores and search for "Southeast Michigan Synod" or "Holy Cross Lutheran Church" (Libertyville, Ill.). If you would like help to consider these possibilities or for more information, please contact us at stewardship@elca.org.



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We are a church that rolls up our sleeves and gets to work. We do God's work in the world — restoring and reconciling communities. We pursue justice and seek peace no matter how long the journey or wide the chasm. *Photo: Members of Trinity Lutheran Church in Lebanon, Ind., participate in service work during the 2014 "God's work. Our hands." Sunday.*



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To learn more about the competitive interest rates and flexible terms we offer on a wide range of investments for individuals and congregations as well as ministry loans, contact our financial services center at mif.elca.org or 877.886.3522.



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