

# Sharing a bountiful harvest



When Harold McMillin learned about the plight of Texas farmers and ranchers in that drought-stricken state, he rolled up his sleeves and figured out how he could be part of a solution.

Harold, pastor of St. John Lutheran in Luana, Iowa, learned about the drought at the 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

Unlike Texas, farmers and ranchers in Harold's area had produced an abundant hay crop. So he put two-and-two together and began to talk to others at the assembly about his plan.

By the close of the assembly, the three ELCA synod bishops from Iowa, the

three synod bishops from Texas and a group of pastors from both states were on board for an innovative hay lift.

ELCA Disaster Response kicked in \$25,000 and farmers in Harold's congregation immediately donated truckloads of hay.

Duane Davis, a member of St. John and a Luana-area farmer, donated one semi-load of square-bale hay.

"Our pastor told us how dry it's been in Texas, and I had hay to spare," Duane says. "Farmers help each other out, especially in times of drought, floods or when someone gets hurt." Word about the need continued to spread, and offers for contributions of hay came from across the Upper Midwest.

"The response has blown me away," says Harold. "It says something about the ELCA, particularly about the heart of ELCA members who respond very generously."

While churchwide assemblies are held to conduct the business of the ELCA, they also provide opportunities for relationship building and problem solving that extend beyond synods and across this church.

"[The hay lift is] a marvelous connection among members of our church," says Steven L. Ullestad, bishop of the ELCA Northeastern Iowa Synod and "a very spontaneous and spirit-filled project."

When all is said and done, Harold believes that ELCA members contributed \$100,000 worth of hay and transportation assistance to the aid of Texas farmers.

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