

seeds for the parish

Winter 2012

Resource Paper for Leaders of ELCA Congregations

www.elca.org



Renewing faith and building community

“Whose house is this?” asks the Rev. Chris Mietlowski.

“This is God’s house!” shout back the children at Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church in New York City.

This joyful exchange during the children’s message every Sunday morning is a ritual that symbolizes the congregation’s rebirth.

When Chris Mietlowski, pastor of Gustavus Adolphus, first arrived four years ago, attendance at worship was very low. John Ogren, a member since 2001, recalls years when “on a summer Sunday there were only five or six people in church.”

Now all of that is changing.

Church attendance has increased

dramatically. There are now 80 – 100 people at worship at Gustavus Adolphus on Sunday mornings. Many families and young adults regularly attend and it isn’t unusual to see 15 children running up the aisle to hear a message from Pastor Mietlowski.

“There has been an amazing sense of renewal over the past couple years,”

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Worship in Lent invites us into a time of intentional reflection.

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ELCA young adults can explore a year of ministry and service.

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ELCA missionaries share stories to inspire your congregation.

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Support ELCA World Hunger in this year’s Souper Bowl of Caring.

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Lenten colors

Like the seasons of our lives, the seasons of the church year come and go with a rhythm of celebration and reflection, sorrow and joy, exuberance and restraint. These seasons invite us deeper into the life of faith as Christ meets us in all these times. Rather than a monochromatic year, the church proclaims the vivid colors that span the entirety of human experience and the cycles of our lives.

Lent is traditionally a time of discipline in the church, a time to focus on almsgiving, prayer and fasting. While we continue to proclaim the grace of Christ's death and resurrection every Sunday of the church year, this season we do so with emphasis on the disciplines that heighten our awareness of Christ's sacrifice and the needs of the whole world that still hungers for good news. The feeling of the season is intentionally reflective and pensive.

How might your worship practice highlight this feeling?

Consider teaching your congregation the discipline of silent prayer and meditation in the time of confession, during prayer or after the sermon. Ringing a bell to mark the beginning and end of a time of silence could give worshippers an external focus to ease into the discipline.

Consider highlighting the gifts given for mission during worship. Offer a specific collection for local, domestic or international mission work. Use the Blessing and Sending for Mission ("Evangelical Lutheran Worship Occasional Services for the Assembly," page 159) at the end of worship to send the assembly out into the world with prayer.

Consider giving families in your congregation copies of Martin Luther's Small Catechism with information on how to begin and sustain a prayer discipline in the home. Develop and provide a simple resource that might suggest exploring one petition of the Lord's Prayer each week during the weeks of the season of Lent.

For more ideas and resources for observing the season of Lent, see these resources:

"Worship Guidebook for Lent and the Three Days" (Augsburg Fortress, ISBN 978-0-8066-7041-6, \$29) This resource includes reflective commentary on the Lenten and Holy Week services from "Evangelical Lutheran Worship"; images and ideas for preaching and preparing worship; suggestions for engaging all the senses in worship through art and environment; and helps for using music in the worship services. <http://store.augsburgfortress.org/store/product/8120/Worship-Guidebook-for-Lent-and-the-Three-Days>.



"Music Sourcebook for Lent and the Three Days" (Augsburg Fortress, ISBN 978-0-8066-7040-9, \$59.95) This collection expands the repertoire of resources for the song of the assembly and its leaders during the days from Ash Wednesday to Easter. Most materials are newly composed in a broad range of styles. Time-tested musical selections from a variety of other sources and publishers are also included. Most selections are reproducible; an enclosed CD-ROM includes assembly and instrumental parts. <http://store.augsburgfortress.org/store/product/8119/Music-Sourcebook-for-Lent-and-the-Three-Days>.

seeds for the parish

www.elca.org/seeds
www.livinglutheran.com/seeds

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Rediscovering the spirit of gratitude and generosity

For the next two years and beyond, a pilot group of ELCA synods and congregations will work to rediscover the spirit of gratitude and generosity the Apostle Paul described in 2 Corinthians 8. The project is funded by Mission Support and a grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

The initial 18 synods are challenged with four project goals:

1. Strengthen their member's faith in Jesus Christ;
2. Gain a new understanding of how God is changing peoples' lives through Mission Support;
3. Discover new ways to grow as steward leaders; and
4. Become more aware of how our offerings are used to make Christ known for the sake of the world.

More synods and resources will be added in 2012. For additional information about the ELCA Macedonia Project, please contact keith.mundy@elca.org.

International service opportunities for ELCA members



The ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission program invites young adults between the ages of 19-29 to step out of their comfort zone and take the challenge of a one-year international mission service and learning opportunity.

Congregational youth directors and pastors as well as camp or campus ministry coordinators are encouraged to identify and engage youth and young adults in their congregations to consider this life-changing opportunity.

The Rev. Heidi Torgerson-Martinez, the ELCA churchwide staff person who directs young adult volunteers working in other countries, shares, "Participants will gain new perspectives on life and work and build relationships across culture, race, language and faith. Through their experiences, they will witness to their faith by the demonstration of the love of Jesus Christ in all relationships, a faith active in love, learning and service."

To find more information about the programs, opportunities and locations, visit www.elca.yagm. Priority applications are due no later than Feb. 15, 2012. All applications must be received by March 1 for service

in the same year. These deadlines allow for an initial screening and interview process before approximately 50 applications are selected for a more formal discernment, interview and placement event that is hosted by ELCA Global Mission in Chicago in April.

More ELCA global service opportunities

Know someone in your congregation who's not a young adult but feels called to service on behalf of the ELCA? There are many opportunities to serve in global mission work. There are three other general categories of service that vary in length and support provisions:

- ELCA long-term global mission service is a four-year or longer commitment, with possibility to continue service after review and consultation. These opportunities typically are primary staff positions that provide a fundamental resource within the mission strategy of the companion church or organization.
- ELCA two-year global mission program is a 24-month commitment designed for single individuals, often recent college graduates or early retirees.
- ELCA global mission volunteers make a commitment for two months to two years (depending upon assignment, availability and other conditions).

Detailed information about service opportunities, discernment questions and locations may be found by going to www.elca.org/globalserve.

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Welcome to the ELCA e-store and resource catalog

The ELCA has a wealth of resources for your congregation at our one-stop shopping site: www.elca.org/resources. You can easily find resources for everything from fundraising to congregational life and stewardship, including print and electronic materials. Many of the resources are free and some are ready for immediate download.

In order to provide efficient processing, a free account must be created, making it easier each time you return to the store to order materials. You'll receive alerts when an order is shipped, tracking information and a saved order history for your reference. Please note, if you had an account profile from the previous resource catalog site, this information did not carry over to our new store.

There are three types of resources on this site:

1. Sale items where the price is listed and shipping costs are

based on the weight of your order. A \$1 handling fee is charged for each resource and a \$3 order fee is also added.

2. Free items where you pay the shipping, handling and order fees.
3. Free items where a church-wide ministry pays the shipping, handling and order fees.

Some resource highlights:

The 2012 Annual Report Covers are now available — you can find them under the Congregational Life tab. Eliza Alvarez, who leads the

100 older adults and the choir is up and running again. It's an amazing testament to the strength and "fire in the belly faith" of a congregation that only a few years ago didn't have enough people to keep its doors open.

John says that one of the gifts that Pastor Mietlowski brought to Gustavus Adolphus was his belief in the importance of lay leadership. "Pastor Chris eagerly shares the ministry with members of the congregation and that has really helped the church to grow again."

Pastor Mietlowski is proud that both the staff and lay leaders at Gustavus Adolphus have "a desire to serve with their unique talents" and "understand what it means to be in mission, how to express their faith in daily

resource information group at the church-wide organization, explains, "Because of the change to the new site, past standing orders for report covers do not exist. Please visit our site and place this year's order now. Next year, your order history will provide you the information you need for the 2013 covers."

2011-2013 ELCA Good Gifts catalog and other items (such as a Global Barnyard bank, bulletin inserts, envelopes and reproducible story sheets) are also available.

The ELCA Malaria Campaign also has materials for you to help

raise awareness with your members and start a fundraising program in your congregation.

Stories of Faith in Action 2012 is a free resource full of dynamic stories of how God is changing lives through the mission and ministry of this church. You will also find information on Mission Support, including budget numbers, and more. To order your free copy (plus shipping) of *Stories of Faith in Action*, call 800-638-3522 or order online at www.elca.org/resources. Ask for ELCAMA1008.

If you can't find the resource you need by searching or browsing the catalog by category, you may be able to find it as a free download by searching other sites at www.elca.org.

As always, if you have a question about any resource order or do not have Internet access, you can contact the ELCA resource line at 800-638-3522, ext. 2580.

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remarks Pastor Mietlowski. "We're committed to growing stronger with Jesus as our center, to having worship that is relevant and dynamic, and to showing hospitality to the stranger in our midst."

Neil Harrison, who directs the ELCA congregational renewal program, agrees, saying, "Gustavus Adolphus is an ark of hope focusing on spiritual depth and lay leadership development, re-rooting in its community as a center for evangelical mission in this church."

A tangible excitement

The congregation now offers education classes again for members of all ages, along with a Eucharistic ministry program. The Senior Center prepares daily lunch for an average of

life, and how to work together and build relationships." He believes the congregation is blessed to have such a strong leadership team working.

So now there's a wonderful new energy, a tangible excitement, in the sanctuary on Sunday mornings. Pastor Mietlowski and John say you can't help but notice it during the sharing of the peace.

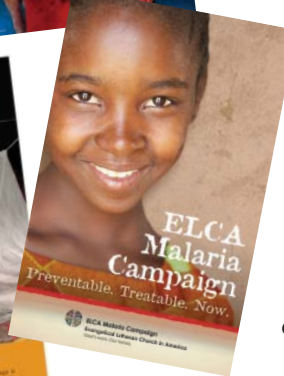
"It's a very active exchange during the worship service," says Pastor Mietlowski. "There's a joyful buzz at that time," shares John. "We move around a lot because we want to shake hands and greet everyone. We're especially aware of visitors."

Lulu Paolini, deacon at Gustavus Adolphus, adds that the sharing of the peace embodies the congrega-

tion's commitment to "love and pay attention to every person who walks through the door."

You might even say that the desire to welcome newcomers is in this congregation's blood. Founded by Swedish immigrants in 1865, Gustavus Adolphus has a rich history of reaching out to people looking for a community of faith. It seems very fitting that in this time of renewal, they are upholding this tradition.

It's one of the things John says he loves most about Gustavus Adolphus. "Years later, we continue to carry on the message that this is a home away from home."



Come to the living waters of Lent and encounter the world

Life-giving waters are often taken for granted in American society where we have full access to clean drinking water and an ample supply for bathing. Yet, in other parts of the world, clean water is a rare and precious gift.



Cindy and Sam Wolf work with the church in Kenya.

ELCA missionary Joe Troester, a water management specialist in the Central African Republic, reflects, “Spring boxes are one of the most cost-effective ways to increase access to potable water. Now, instead of muddy, parasite- and bacteria-infested water, villagers can collect clean spring water, piped directly from the source.”

This year during Lent, consider lifting up the witness of Joe and the Rev. Deborah Troester, alongside other ELCA missionaries, in the life of your congregation.

The Hand in Hand Blog Digest provides a wealth of stories received directly from our church’s 250 missionaries. These stories can be used as devotional readings, sermon starters, the basis for a daily Lenten devotional booklet and Sunday school resources. Consider using the following stories, which draw a parallel with the Sunday readings:

1st Sunday in Lent

Psalm 25:1-10

“A new sister in Christ” by Phillip and June Nelson, missionaries in Cameroon

“I heard her tell Pastor Abdulahi that she had seen a difference in

her husband after he was baptized. ... She wanted to be a part of what she had heard about Jesus.”

2nd Sunday in Lent

Mark 8:34-37

“Community” and the church in Japan” by Dana Dutch-

er, missionary in Japan

“For us being a Christian is easy. ... My family didn’t disown me; my friends didn’t leave me. ... But, for a Japanese Christian, these are some of the issues they face.”

3rd Sunday in Lent

Exodus 20:1-17 (verse 12)

“Respect for the elderly in Japan” by Patrick and Jacqueline Bencke, missionaries in Japan

“One thing I appreciate about Japan is how every day is sort of Respect for the Aged Day. ... It is heartening to see this, despite an ever changing society that seems to be drifting from its traditional values.”

4th Sunday in Lent

Psalm 107:1-3

“Haiti needs more than charity” by the Rev. Paula Stecker, missionary in Haiti

“While Haitians are very appreciative of the help they have received, they would also like to do more of the reconstruction themselves. Haitian carpenters, painters, welders, farmers, doctors and nurses would like to work for a fair wage and be able to pay their food, rent

and school fee. ... All of us have a voice. Our voices can bear witness before governments. ...”

5th Sunday in Lent

Jeremiah 31:31-34

“Old ways persist in Liberia” by the Rev. Brian and Christine Palmer, missionaries in Liberia

“Liberia is said to be a predominantly Christian nation. Yet the longer we live here the more we are discovering how blended Christianity is with traditional African religion. Is Christ the true Savior for Liberians or do the traditional witch doctors have additional messages?”

Palm Sunday

Philippians 2:5-11

“Little stars of Jesus in Peru” by the Rev. Dana Nelson and Thomas Ososki, missionaries in Peru

“Adriana feels very called by God to accompany the young girls in our church (ages 8-15) and has started a dance group, called ‘Estelitas de Jesus’ (Little stars of Jesus). She explains that it is much more than choreography. It is also time for them to get together and pray, sing, build their self-esteem and glorify God with dance.”

The complete blog entries can be found at <http://blogs.elca.org/handinhand>. Sign up to receive weekly stories in your email inbox.

Here are other ways to use the ELCA’s resources on global mission to enhance your Lenten worship:

- **Hand in Hand bulletin inserts.** The downloadable samples include “A Light in Linguere,” the story of Fatimata, a Fulani woman who made her way to the baptismal waters through the witness of the Lutheran Church

of Senegal and ELCA missionary, Dirk Stadlander. Find them at www.elca.org/handinhand.

- **Prayers for missionaries.** Consider praying for missionaries in a different region of the world each week: Africa, Asia/Pacific, Latin America/Caribbean, Europe and the Middle East. Find a list of the missionaries in the Hand in Hand Missionary Sponsorship Annual. Order your copy from missionarysponsorship@elca.org.
- **Lenten dinners.** Use ELCA Missionary Sponsorship placeMaps at your dinners and provide crayons for God’s children— young and old—to color them. Request placeMAPS at missionarysponsorship@elca.org. You could also serve foods from your missionary’s country of service. Find recipes at www.elca.org/globalmission/where. Use this time to learn about Lenten and Easter traditions and crafts in your missionary’s country of service.
- **A special offering.** Consider using Lent to make an “over and above” offering in support of the work of all ELCA missionaries or the missionary of your choice. Order special ELCA Missionary Sponsorship pew envelopes at www.elca.org/resources.
- **Support a missionary.** Would you like your congregation to join ELCA missionaries as you come to the living waters this Lent? Write to missionarysponsor@elca.org or call 800-638-3522, ext. 2641, for more information.

Souper Bowl of Caring is February 5, 2012

The Super Bowl takes place on Sunday, February 5, and approximately 100 million Americans are expected to tune in to watch. While many are enjoying abundant food and friendship while hosting or attending parties, nearly 1 billion people will spend the day hungry.

The Souper Bowl of Caring is an ecumenical, youth-led movement, with more than 2,000 ELCA youth groups raising money for hunger-related charities each year. The money you raise can be



donated to the hunger-related charity of your choice.

This year, please consider making a difference locally and globally. Select a local organization to receive half of what you raise, and send the other half to ELCA World Hunger. Gifts to ELCA World Hunger support the projects of this church that respond to hunger and poverty in over 50 countries — including hundreds of soup kitchens

and food pantries right here in the United States. What an incredible way to make a worldwide impact!

Getting started is easy.

1. Register online at www.souperbowl.org or call 800-358-SOUP (7687) to register and receive a free starter kit.
2. Collect donations on, or near, Super Bowl Sunday (Feb. 5).
3. Report your results to be included in the national total.
4. Donate all or a portion of your collection to ELCA World Hunger (P.O. Box 71764, Chicago, IL 60694-1764).

Youth begin 100 Wells Challenge

Each day, millions of women and children around the world walk several hours to collect water for their families to drink. Sadly, the water they find is often contaminated. One in eight people still do not have access to safe drinking water, and unclean water causes millions of people, especially young children, to contract preventable deadly diseases every year.

ELCA youth have the opportunity to make a difference by raising

funds for the “100 Wells Challenge” in conjunction with the 2012 ELCA Youth Gathering, to take place in New Orleans, July 18-22.

Start fundraising now! Hold a silent auction. Plan a dunk-tank fundraiser and soak a youth director in exchange for donations. Or dare your pastor to shave her or his head or get a crazy haircut if a fundraising goal is met. Just \$2,500 builds a well that can bring clean water to as many as 500 families at

once. The goal of the challenge: to raise \$250,000 to build 100 wells or support water projects where they are needed most.

Youth groups can give at collection receptacles at the Gathering, or can send a check anytime to ELCA World Hunger, P.O. Box 71764, Chicago, IL 60694-1764. Be sure to write “100 Wells Challenge” in the memo line.

2012 National Advocacy Priorities survey

We live in a country that seems to have forgotten how to make meaningful decisions. Are you tired of politics “as-is” in both major parties? Do you want to share what issues are important to you as a person of faith for 2012? Your opinion matters and we’d like to hear from you. Please take 10 minutes and tell us

about the advocacy priorities you think are important for the ELCA this year.

Jesus calls the Holy Spirit “Advocate.” Advocacy is living our Lutheran belief that good government is a gift. It’s pushing aside toxic politics to make space for others unheard. It’s talking about your

volunteering, projects and ministries to your public officials. Advocacy is adding your voice.

Let’s stand together with hope and purpose this year. You’ll find the survey here: www2.elca.org/cgi-bin/rws/rws5.pl?FORM=nap2011. Thank you!

Regional ELCA global mission events for 2012

ELCA “Glocal” Mission Gatherings for 2012 are designed to bring together congregational leaders for a day and a half of worship, workshops and sharing around global and local mission. Workshops range from Mission 101 to Music and Mission; from Radical Hospitality to Stewardship: Embracing the Gifts of Diversity; and global music and are designed to get participants off their feet and energized to take mission in to their congregations and out to the world. Full descriptions of the events and workshops may be found at www.elca.org/glocal.

Questions about the events? Email globalmissioninfo@elca.org or call 800-638-3522.

Jan. 27–28: Cary, N.C.
Christ the King Lutheran Church

March 3: Boston
Location - TBA

April 27–29: Irving, Texas
Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Mission Assembly

May 8–11: Canadian Forum
Location - TBA

June 6–7: Cincinnati, Ohio
Location - TBA

June 22–23: Sioux Falls, S.D.
Our Savior’s Lutheran Church

July 1–31
International Companion Program to the 2012 Youth Gathering

Sept. 14–15: Chicago
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Sept. 21–22: Portland, Ore.
Location - TBA

Oct. 5–6: Baton Rouge, La.
St. Paul Lutheran Church

Nov. 2–3: Clive, Iowa
Faith Lutheran Church

Try these Lenten meals and help fight hunger

Does your congregation host a meal before Lenten services? If so, why not gather for a meal and help fight hunger at the same time? Enjoy global cuisine while learning about the world and how gifts to ELCA World Hunger are making a difference. Instead of charging for the meal, collect donations



to support ELCA World Hunger. Visit www.elca.org/hunger/lent for complete instructions on 12 different global meals — complete with global recipes, printable placemats and table tents, table prayers, dramas, discussion starters and more.

global recipes, printable placemats and table tents, table prayers, dramas, discussion starters and more.

It's time for Buck-a-Chick

This Easter, join congregations from across the country by having a Buck-a-Chick sale. Members can purchase and decorate a paper chick for themselves or in honor of a loved one for one dollar — the cost of providing a chick to a family experiencing hunger.

Your gifts will help provide families living in poverty with chicks for a source of eggs, food and income. Hang colorful chicks in a prominent spot and announce the fundraising total on Easter Sunday. To date, congregations have raised more than \$80,000 to support this effort, allowing ELCA World Hunger to connect families to the resources



they need to escape hunger and poverty for good. Get the coloring page at www.elca.org/hunger/lent. Send donations to ELCA Good Gifts (P.O. Box 71764, Chicago, IL 60694-1764) with “Buck-a-Chick” in the memo line.

Stories of Faith in Action

Stories of Faith in Action is a free resource full of dynamic stories of how God is changing lives through the mission and ministry of the ELCA. You will also find information on Mission Support, including budget numbers and

more. To order your free copy of Stories of Faith in Action, call 800-638-3522 or order online at www.elca.org/resources. Ask for ELCAMA1008. The resource is free; you only pay for shipping.

A new look!

The homepage of ELCA.org has a new look! Take a tour and discover how ELCA members together are doing God's work in the world.

A welcoming invitation from this church is front and center for those who are also looking to know us better.

Here's a list of what's new:

- **Top navigation menu:** A guide designed to offer a one-click command for the most-used links on ELCA.org.
- **Main navigation:** Four main content areas relating to the ELCA that will appear here and on every page of the website. They are Who We Are, What We Believe, Our Faith in Action and Growing in Faith.
- **Explore now:** See how ELCA members engage in life-changing ministries around the world.
- **Slide show:** These rotating stories, updated weekly, offer glimpses into just how we as the ELCA do God's work with our hands.
- **Updates:** Find links to news stories and blog entries about the work of this church.
- **Conversation:** Read what ELCA members are saying at LivingLutheran.com, a multi-author blog site.
- **Resources:** Shop for resources that support ELCA congregations and members in their work.
- **Giving:** See how your financial gifts support lifesaving, life-changing ministries.



- **Social media icons:** Use this quick media reference guide to help you “like” the ELCA Facebook page, follow us on Twitter and more.

Some adjustments have been made to the **Footer**, which offers quick links to the most requested features of ELCA.org. These changes reflect this church's new organizational design and we've included site tools for easy navigation. A direct link to finding a churchwide ministry is also available. So if you're looking for a specific ministry, start here.

Have a question? Be sure to check out Frequently Asked Questions. To help you get started, click on Help for a diagram of the new homepage.

The redevelopment of ELCA.org will continue in 2012 with improvements throughout the site as part of this church's commitment to engage and inspire our 10,000 daily visitors.

Time-sensitive announcement about a class action settlement

Your congregation may be eligible for a payment in a class action settlement related to insurance brokerage anti-trust litigation.

Go to www.elca.org/legal to learn more. Feb. 20, 2012, is the last date to submit a claim.



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Make a New Year's resolution to join these young adults in working to alleviate hunger and poverty. Find out how in this issue of Seeds.



IT TAKES A SPECIAL INVESTMENT
TO TURN A BOWLING ALLEY

INTO A SANCTUARY.

March 18, 2009. Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church, Orlando, Florida.

When you invest your savings with the Mission Investment Fund you get more than a great financial return. That's because we use the money you invest to fund building and renovation loans for ELCA congregations like Spirit of Joy. Thanks to an MIF loan, this congregation transformed a bowling alley into a one-of-a-kind worship space where it provides shelter for the homeless, adult literacy tutoring and meals for hungry families. "Do unto others." How's that for an investment strategy? To learn more, contact us at 877-886-3522 or elca.org/mif.



Mission Investment Fund
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God's work. Our hands.