



## Stepping out of the boat? Reach for Jesus!

based on Matthew 14:23–33

There is faith in theory, and there is faith in practice.

This summer, during the training for the new ELCA missionaries serving as ESL teachers, each of them shared their faith stories. Hearing their accounts of God's work in their lives moved all of us. Afterward, in our devotional time together, we talked about Matthew 14:23–33, in which Peter walks to Jesus on the water. This text becomes a special encouragement in times when life feels risky, such as beginning new mission service, in a new place, among new people, with new responsibilities and an awe-inspiring new title: missionary teacher.



Pr. Jeff and Mary Johnson

Peter's experience shows us what happens when we focus on challenges with human eyes: down we go, into the drink! The same story also illustrates what we need to do to keep from sinking—reach for Jesus. Sometimes, Christians have lives of such comfort that they reside on the theory side of faith with little need to try out that faith in robust, challenging practice. ELCA missionary teachers, and all our mission personnel, have Peter's opportunity to step out of the boat, trusting that Jesus will keep them from sinking. Our ELCA teachers, like Peter, will find struggles out on that ocean, and they will be blest to discover in practical ways that their Lord is reliable.

Impulsive Peter stepped out first and got worried later; we may worry first and then step out. Either way, Jesus waits to uphold us as we move from faith-in-theory to faith-in-practice.

*ELCA missionaries Mary K. Johnson and her husband, the Rev. Jeff Johnson, are based in Guam. Mary serves as the Asia Pacific regional resource person for ELCA English teachers and Jeff is pastor of the Lutheran Church of Guam.*

## Teaching hope in the Holy Land

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) considers hope a Christian imperative and a national survival skill. Through teacher training and development, ELCJHL Schools invest in a hopeful future. Here are recent examples:

- Eighteen teachers and others from around the ELCJHL began a three-year leadership training program.
- Nine ELCJHL math and science teachers are working on a master's degree in pedagogy and teaching methods.
- Two administrators and five teachers from the Lutheran School of Hope in Ramallah participate in the Model School Network project.
- The International Center at Bethlehem (part of Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem) hosted an intensive workshop for social studies staff on teaching democratic issues and voting practices.
- Many ELCJHL teachers participated in targeted in-service training sessions; topics included teaching English as a Second Language and special education.



*Leadership development is key to the academic excellence of ELCJHL Schools.*

Leadership development is key to the academic excellence of ELCJHL Schools and academic excellence is key to fostering hope. Learn more about the eight schools and educational programs of the ELCJHL by visiting [www.elca.org/peacenotwalls](http://www.elca.org/peacenotwalls) and clicking on "Our Companions." To give an ELCA Good Gift donation supporting Lutheran Schools in the Holy Land, see pages 18–19 in the new *ELCA Good Gifts* catalog or visit the e-catalog at [www.elca.org/goodgifts](http://www.elca.org/goodgifts).

### 3 ANSWERS

1. 88
2. 2,000
- 3a. 55 3b. 50

Find the questions on the reverse side.

*As an ELCA missionary, Sr. Sylvia Countess served for four years as the assistant to the ELCJHL director of education. She is now the director of vocation and education for the ELCA deaconess community. Allison K. Schmitt is an ELCA missionary serving as communication assistant for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.*

### A USEFUL URL

Visit the *ELCA Good Gifts* online catalog at [www.elca.org/goodgifts](http://www.elca.org/goodgifts). Open the "inspire" box to find ELCA Good Gifts for Missionary Sponsorship.



## “And be thankful” (Colossians 3:15).

I remember it well. Thanksgiving 1994: the year I baked pumpkin pie with a can opener.

Three months into my 13-year trek as a missionary, I was struggling with integration and culture shock. And, because my oven’s thermostat didn’t work, even baking a Thanksgiving pie seemed daunting.

I solved the pie problem by turning a can opener into an oven-door wedge and thermostat. I could control (more or less) the oven’s temperature by adjusting the width of the can opener.

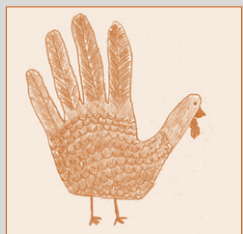
Yes, I was homesick, but I was also thankful. I was thankful for the Lutheran Field Service (military chaplains) in Germany who drove across Europe with turkeys, pumpkin pie filling, and cranberry sauce so that the missionaries in Slovakia could “have Thanksgiving.” I was thankful for the Field Service couple who sponsored me as a missionary that year and for the years to come. I was thankful for my family, friends, and sponsors who reached out to encourage me.

It turns out that I was in good company that Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving time is often a low-point for new mission personnel, especially teachers. I invite you to participate in “Operation Thanksgiving Card” (see below) and offer prayerful thanks for ELCA missionaries.

Hand in Hand with you,

*The Rev. Twila Schock is director for ELCA Global Mission Support.*

Combine “Hand in Hand” with Thanksgiving cards and you get “a handy idea” for supporting ELCA missionaries!



*A turkey pattern is always close at hand.*

1. Hold an “**Operation Thanksgiving Card**” intergenerational event. Have the supplies available to make Thanksgiving cards: construction paper, scissors, markers, etc.
2. Each participant or family group should make at least three cards: one to send the congregation’s sponsored missionaries, members of the military, and other service personnel; one to “sell” as a fundraiser for ELCA Missionary Sponsorship; and one to take home.
3. You are invited to send one or more “I’m thankful for you” cards to Global Mission Support. We’ll happily send them on to ELCA missionaries, starting with those who began service in 2009.

### HOW TO GIVE

1. Give through your congregation. Write “ELCA Missionary Sponsorship” on the check’s memo line.
2. With a credit card, give online ([www.elca.org/giving](http://www.elca.org/giving)) or call 800-638-3522.
3. Make your check out to “ELCA Missionary Sponsorship” and mail to:  
ELCA Global Mission Support  
8765 W. Higgins Road  
Chicago, IL 60631-4101

### 3 QUESTIONS

1. How many new ELCA missionaries began service this past summer (2009)?
2. How many students are served each year by Lutheran schools and educational programs in the Holy Land?
3. Hand in Hand blog digest readers have visited from (a) how many countries and (b) how many U.S. states? Check out <http://blogs.elca.org/handinhand>.

*Find the answers on the reverse side.*

### CONTACT

**Global Mission Support**  
800-638-3522, ext. 2657  
[globalmissionsupport@elca.org](mailto:globalmissionsupport@elca.org)

Don’t miss “Ordinary Saints” in the November 2009 issue of *Lutheran Woman Today*. It’s the touching story of how Barbara Lemond, an ELCA missionary serving in Hong Kong, cares for her mother, Oriet.

