

seeds for the parish

March-April 2009

Resource Paper for Leaders of ELCA Congregations

www.elca.org

This is not a fad

For David Rhoads, professor of New Testament, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC), the care of creation is an integral part of his calling.

Rhoads is a pioneer of an environmental ministry program at the seminary. Recently *Seeds* asked him about his work and his vision for congregations working toward the care of creation.



What does the Bible say about environmentalism?

The Bible does not say anything about environmentalism. The Bible says a great deal about care for creation, about the value of creation for its own sake, about the call for all creation to worship God and about the mandate for human beings to “serve and preserve” creation. We were created by God to be “earthkeepers.” For the Bible, care for creation is not one issue among many; rather, it is foundational to our human vocation as Christians.

What role can congregations play?

Congregations can play a crucial role in modeling care for creation in parish life and in the lives of their members. They can also cooperate with other congregations and agencies to promote earth care in their communities, and they can advocate for earth-friendly policies and laws in the larger public arena.

What advice do you give to congregational leaders who want to form a green team?

It only takes a few people to give leadership in a congregation. Work with the pastor and the congregation council to explain your purpose. Do not see your Green Team as the committee responsible to do all the care for creation for the congregation. Rather, serve as leaven to provide ideas, resources and support to other committees of the church in adopting creation care practices and programs.

What is the Green Seminary Initiative?

The purposes of the Green Seminary Initiative are threefold: 1) to equip graduates to lead congregations and communities in creation care. 2) to foster seminary life as a model for creation care. 3) to provide a clearinghouse to share ideas, programs, and course syllabi.

What was your inspiration for beginning the initiative?

I have worked at creation care for 20 years at LSTC. We call ourselves a Green Zone and seek to bring creation care into worship life, course offerings, lectures and workshops, the greening of buildings and grounds, and the commitment of students, faculty and staff to live an earth-friendly lifestyle. For example, we have a blessing of the animals, instructions for students to green their apartments, green stewardship workshops, greenery in the chapel and much more. It has been an exciting adventure. See our activities at www.lstc.edu under “LSTC as a Green Seminary.”

My inspiration in founding the Green Seminary Initiative was to encourage other seminaries to develop their own programs of creation care and leadership training.

What resources do you recommend for people new to eco-justice?

You might want to see the big picture about what is being done across religious communities nationwide. The National Religious Partnership for the Environment is a coalition of mainline Protestants, Evangelicals, Roman Catholics and Jewish organizations (www.nrpe.org). Check out the work of the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program (www.nccecojustice.org). They provide many resources and programs for church groups, including resources for celebrating Earth Sunday. See the links section at the Web of Creation site (www.webofcreation.org) for connections to other faith-based environmental groups.

Tell us a bit about the Web of Creation.

The Web of Creation site offers training manuals for congregational green teams and additional resources. The site is ecumenical and interfaith. We also host the site of the Lutheran Earthkeeping Network of the Synods (www.webofcreation.org/LENS/synods.html), which provides Lutheran resources for earth care. The Web of Creation also sponsors the Green Congregation Program, which offers regional training workshops for congregational green teams.

A final note from David Rhoads.

We Christians are in this for the long haul. This is not a fad. This is a way of life that fosters a sustainable earth for many generations to come. What will sustain us in this vocation? We do not think that fear or guilt or outrage or grief will be adequate motivation. What will nurture us is the grace of God, the very grace of God that continues to create and sustain life everywhere. God’s own love for creation will nourish us to take the steps and make the sacrifices we will all need to make in order to secure life for ourselves and for generations to come.



Ginger Vanderveer relates how a light bulb changed her life.

Page 3



Lutherans are caring for creation around the world.

Page 4



Generations can learn from one another that it is easy being green.

Page 5



The greening of *Seeds* begins with 30 percent recycled paper and ends in your recycle bin.

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Creative ideas for Creation Sunday

About five years ago, St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Springfield, Pa., began to celebrate Creation Sunday once a year on the Sunday after the Day of Pentecost. Centered in the new life in Christ at the time of the year when spring bursts forth in southeastern Pennsylvania, the celebration of Creation Sunday makes the connection between the highpoint in the cycle of the church year and the cycles of God's creation.

Prior to Creation Sunday, congregational members prepare and distribute a devotional booklet for the Easter season that celebrates the gift of new life—the resurrection of Jesus Christ—with an emphasis on living that new life in Christ rooted in the wonder of the work of God in creation. Each year, the devotional booklet includes reflections on scripture readings, reflections on the gifts of creation and practical hints about how to live more green as stewards of creation. On Creation Sunday the sanctuary is adorned with a variety of flowering plants rather than cut flowers, and the congregation gathers outdoors for food, fun and camaraderie after worship.

The regular cycle of lectionary readings provides ample opportunity for any congregation to celebrate God's creation and the trust God places in humanity to steward that creation.

In this year's lectionary cycle, the appointed texts for Sunday, June 21 (the first day of summer), includes Job 38:1-11 in which God speaks about creation, encouraging Job to marvel at its beauty. Additional prayers for creation (page 81, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*) may be added to the congregation's prayers of intercession during the regular worship services of the community.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship provides a set of propers for the "Stewardship of Creation." These propers include scripture readings from Job, 1 Timothy, and Luke, and two options for the prayer of the day (page 63, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*)

The hymns and songs of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* include a new section heading titled "Creation" (ELW #730-740). This section includes "God Created Heaven and Earth" (ELW #738), a Taiwanese traditional melody with words of praise for the richness of God's creation. The "Creation" section also includes "Touch the Earth Lightly" (ELW #739) whose text by Shirley Erena Murray is a prayer that we might be shaped by God in the care of all creation.

Going green can also be a regular commitment in the worshiping life of the congregation. Although an all-inclusive, fully printed worship



bulletin is hospitable to visitors and those who are not familiar with the congregation's worship book, the amount of paper used each week is a concern. Streamline the bulletin using a well-crafted and clearly formatted outline. Provide place-marker ribbons in each worship book. Let the scripture readings speak for themselves. Alternatively, provide pew Bibles and encourage the congregation to read the day's lectionary selections from the Bible itself. Encourage parents to involve children in locating the correct page in the worship book. Finally, teach all the members of the congregation to be mindful of visitors and assist them with finding pages, if needed.

Blessing seed, soil and animals on Rogation Sunday

In rural York County, Pa., Pastor Tom Shelley leads a Rogation Sunday worship service, on the Sixth Sunday of Easter, with the blessing of seed, soil and animals.

Traditionally Rogation Days were agricultural celebrations, where priests blessed land at the beginning of the planting season.

Rogation Days were celebrated during the 50 days of Easter on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday before Ascension Day. The word, rogation, has its roots in the Latin word which means to "ask" or "petition" and it comes from the ancient introit for the Sunday preceding the Ascension. In some places, the celebrations of Rogation Days were quite elaborate and included processions from the church to and around fields while asking for God's blessing.

Churches that have maintained the practice of celebrating Rogation Days no longer mark these days specifically before Ascension. Instead, Rogation Days are celebrated at times and places that meet local needs. With more emphasis placed on the need for the steward-

ship of creation, the themes of thanksgiving for the land and petitions for a fruitful earth may be referenced at any time of the year.

In the practice of Zion (Shaffers) United Lutheran Church in York, Pa., the blessing of the animals is part of the service. The congregation processes out of the church building and is met by children and parents who have assembled a host of young farm animals and household pets. These have included hedgehogs, chameleons, turtles, young rabbits and the obligatory cats and dogs. A tree farmer once brought a bucket of seedling evergreens.

Need ideas for your Rogation Sunday? Visit www.feautor.org and enter "rogation" into the search box.



Seeking God through worship

Dr. Craig A. Satterlee's latest book, *When God Speaks through Worship: Stories Congregations Live By* (ISBN 978-1-56699-383-8, paper, \$17.00), features eight stories from his pastoral ministry to inspire congregations to seek God through their worship. In his third in a series of "When God Speaks" books from The Alban Institute, Satterlee challenges congregations to consider the motives behind what happens in worship.

Satterlee addresses both the joys and challenges of worship and the specific vocations, planning and communication that support it. His book is meant for every congregation, to help its leaders and members think about how and why they worship and what impact worship has on the people in the congregation and the community around it.

Visit www.alban.org for more details on *When God Speaks through Worship* or to order the book.

Vocal Descants for the Church Year



This new resource in the Evangelical Lutheran Worship family of resources offers more than 250 descants and counter-melodies for *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* hymn tunes. It

includes 30 festive settings of hymns with the original keyboard setting and descant. The materials in this book are reproducible, comprehensive and arranged by hymn tune for easy use. To order go to www.augsburgfortress.org (\$75.00).

seeds for the parish

www.elca.org/seeds

Seeds for the Parish (ISSN 0897-5663) is published six times a year, bimonthly. It is distributed without charge to the professional staff and lay leaders of the congregations, synods and regions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

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Note: Not all the resources and program ideas listed in *Seeds for the Parish* have received official ELCA review or endorsement.

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It pays to think green

For Ginger Vanderveer, it all started with a light bulb.

“Some years back, we had a fundraiser selling energy-saving kits at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (Oak Park, Ill.,” Ginger remembers.

This was the first project for the congregation’s newly formed Green Team and, as a member, Ginger was happy to do her part. She had no idea how purchasing a kit would change her life.

Ginger began using the bulbs at home and says, “I was hooked on the immediate savings from the compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs in the kit.” So was Good Shepherd.

“We started adding bulbs in high-use areas at church and pre-programmed our thermostats. The savings in the first year (2001) were over \$1,000.”

That was how Ginger discovered that caring for the environment makes good business sense.

Excited by how effective and affordable the CFL bulbs were, Ginger shipped a boxful to her sister, who was maintaining Northside Valley, the family’s estate on the island of St. Croix in the United States Virgin Islands.

Northside was Ginger’s childhood home. Her sister rented the seven villas on the property to local business people.

“[Those bulbs were] our first eco-friendly endeavor at Northside,” says Ginger, but it wasn’t their last. By November 2007, she had transformed the estate into an eco-friendly resort with the help of her brother Philip.

The villas, built over 40 years ago by Ginger’s father, are tucked under the shade of luxuriant native trees. They benefit from the cooling Caribbean trade winds thanks to generously sized windows and high ceilings.

Guests compost, recycle, conserve water and help out with local beach cleanups, all while enjoying St. Croix’s tranquil beauty and Ginger’s green hospitality.

When she’s back in the States, Ginger remains an active and enthusiastic member of the Good Shepherd Green Team.

The Team’s verdant prairie garden in front of the church, lush with native plants and frequented by butterflies and hummingbirds in the summer, has become an Oak Park landmark.

Ginger believes that garden is the Team’s greatest success. She also feels that it’s “a symbol for all that we need to treasure in the environment” and a sign of God’s presence in the community.

“The generosity of the garden is like God’s love: always growing, always providing.”



Good Shepherd’s native garden

“It’s also an energy saver in ways that are not so obvious to the naked eye. The roots of the plants go as deep as five feet, thereby sinking carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into the earth. This helps keep our building cooler. The roots also filter and absorb water when it rains, saving energy for the water reclamation utility.”

Ginger’s advice for congregations on starting a Green Team is very practical and focused. “[Once you’ve started your group], meet with the council and tell them who you are and your mission. Announce [yourselves] at church services ... and invite others to join.”

“Pick a first project that is not controversial and is doable in a short time-span. Meet with local Green Teams for moral support and ideas. Pray over your decisions. Measure and celebrate your results.”

Also, don’t be discouraged by initial resistance to the project, Ginger insists. At Good Shepherd, “[in the beginning] the congregation didn’t always understand why we were doing this or that green thing,” she recalls.

“For instance, when we lowered the thermostats and had them programmed, we had trouble with special events that didn’t fit the programming. We had to educate members to ... change the setting a few hours before the event.”

She places the blame squarely on the Team. “We weren’t communicating well enough and we weren’t spending enough time with the right people to get buy-in. We do better with that now.”

Members are excited about saving money in challenging economic times and freeing up funds for other vital programs at Good Shepherd.

Ultimately, going green isn’t just about the money for Ginger. An eco-friendly philosophy is also a remarkable tool for evangelism and a way to make God’s love more tangible and concrete for visitors.

“[Newcomers] are intrigued by our devotion [to the prairie garden],” she says. “Many walk in to see what type of congregation would be so bold as to love a prairie garden.”

“When nonmembers see how much love we give to the environment without expecting anything in return, they realize we can give that same love to them. They become eager to be a part of that community.” Good Shepherd is eager to welcome them.

—Marianne Griebler
Associate Director for Marketing—
Member Communications and Storytelling
ELCA Communication Services

Start a native garden at your congregation

As the members of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church know, a native garden is an eco-friendly landscaping alternative that will save your congregation time and money. Explore these links to learn how you can get started.

U.S. Forest Service
www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/nativegardening/index.shtml

National Parks Conservation Association
www.npca.org/wildlife_protection/biodiversity/native_gardening.html

eNature
www.enature.com/native_invasive/

Can a pig teach your kids to share?

Find out on April 24, National Teach Your Kids to Share Day. This interactive event brings parents and children ages 6–10 together for fun and learning. Explore unique ways your kids can share, save and spend. Discuss the importance of being responsible with money. Build a financial foundation for your children that will last a lifetime.

Learn more at Thrivent.com/shareday or call 800-236-3736.

Save the date:
Friday, April 24, 2009.

April
24

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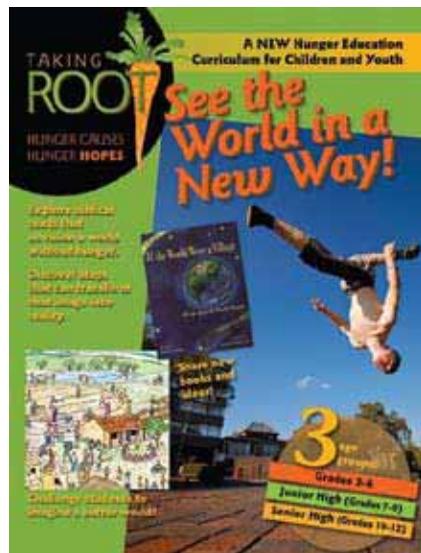
The effects of climate change on world hunger

Environmental stewardship is a need that calls this church to action. With changes in climate patterns come other environmental issues such as floods and droughts, more frequent and severe natural disasters, and rising sea levels.

The environmental issues that have been linked to climate change are especially devastating to those living in extreme poverty. In other words, climate change does not simply raise issues of stewardship and care for the earth; it is also fundamentally a justice issue.

There are many ways in which those who are most vulnerable suffer from the effects of global climate change:

Changes in the agricultural system disrupt a community's ability to provide food for their people. These changes may be because of unpredictable weather patterns, increased floods and droughts, and/or plant migration. People



who live in poverty have a hard time changing their agriculture infrastructure because of their economic circumstances.

Worldwide natural disasters occur with greater frequency and severity, displacing people from their homes.

Rising sea levels encroach on people's homes, forcing them to relocate.

This year, ELCA World Hunger will be making a concerted effort to raise awareness of the ways in which global climate change impacts those who are hungry and to mobilize this church to action. A new curriculum, *Taking Root: Hunger Causes, Hunger Hopes*, is a dynamic, interactive resource designed to educate children, youth and adults on the root causes of and solutions to global hunger and poverty. The biblically based curriculum contains lessons and activities that imagine a world without hunger and considers the steps necessary to make that image a reality. Go to www.elca.org/hunger/takingroot for more information.

Another new, Web-based resource specifically dealing with the intersections between climate change and hunger is the Climate Change and Hunger Toolkit (www.elca.org/hunger/toolkit). The Toolkit contains several highly engaging and interactive exercises that draw out the implications of climate change on the most vulnerable in the world. You can mix and match the activities of this "program in a box" to create an hour-long (or longer) session ideal for a Sunday morning forum, Sunday school class or youth group meeting.

Another climate change resource is the May 2008 edition of *Lutheran World Information* (www.lutheranworld.org). The issue is especially valuable as a resource for stories on how climate change is impacting Lutherans around the globe.

To see how the ELCA advocates around environmental issues and how you can help, visit www.elca.org/advocacy.

Eco-friendly Lutherans from around the world

Germany's Hanover Church has something to crow about

Since 2006 nearly 50 congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover (Germany) have signed on to use the Green Gockel (Green Rooster) environmental management system. The system, developed specifically for congregations, assists parishes to become validated by the European Union Eco-Management and Audit Scheme.

According to an article written by Michael Bruns-Kemph, the Green Rooster system begins with the formation of environmental teams made up of congregational members. The teams carry out assessments with a focus on electric energy, heating, water, material procurement and waste disposal. This assessment creates the basis for the congregation's environmental program. In turn, the environmental program continues with the identification of goals, operations and workflow necessary for a continuous improvement of environmental protection.

The greening of faith in India

As reported in *Lutheran World Information* May 2008 issue, Indian churches are promoting the greening of faith by encouraging their member churches to be proactive in eco-justice.

The United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India, through the National Council of Churches in India, calls its member churches to initiate a green parish program, plastic-free church campuses and biological farming. The church council urges its members to promote an effective greening of faith at the congregational level and to take steps to encourage and support sustainable farming.

Canadian Lutherans give congregations credit

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) offers a Greening Congregational Accreditation Program. Congregations that are accredited are given a greening certificate and are added to the ELCIC's Greening Congregation List.

The ELCIC Web site suggests the following steps for congregations interested in becoming green:

1. Appoint an Environmental Steward or Environmental Stewardship committee which will provide leadership for the congregation's greening work.
2. The congregation should commit to working towards more responsible environmental stewardship in at least five of the following areas:

- o energy conservation
- o reduce, reuse and recycle
- o ground care and maintenance
- o become involved in KAIROS's Energy Campaign [KAIROS is a church-based social justice movement]
- o religious education
- o worship and liturgy
- o environmental justice and advocacy

In Jordan and the Holy Land education is the key

The Environmental Education Center (EEC) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land began as an educational project meant to integrate themes of civic responsibility and environmental issues into an existing school curriculum.

In 1998, an acquisition of land led to the building of a botanical garden that featured local plants from both biblical and current times; a Palestine natural history museum, an interactive environmental exhibition; and a monitoring station for the study of bird migration trends. The EEC works to:

- Help the community—students, teachers, women and graduate students—understand the position and role of humans in and with



- their environment.
 - Increase awareness of the economic, scientific and cultural values of natural resources
 - Develop and form health values, attitudes and skills that are necessary to promote a positive relationship between humans and their environment.
- To learn more about the EEC, visit their Web site (www.eecp.org).

It's easy being green

Environmental education is a hot topic. Many children are becoming earthkeeping experts at school, in scouting groups, through parks and recreation activities, and especially through the media. They are already concerned about our planet. The church has an opportunity and responsibility to undergird all that children already know with solid biblical understanding and practice.

Consider hosting an **Intergenerational Earth Day Fair** to launch a 365-day emphasis on stewardship of creation. Bring children, youth and adults of all ages together to learn, experience and celebrate. Officially Earth Day is April 22 but any day and every day can be Earth Day.

The most valuable resource for planning a creative, inspirational and informative Earth Day Fair is in the congregation. Involve experts of all ages who are already modeling a sense of reverence and responsibility for the environment in practical ways in their homes and neighborhoods.

Contact your synod Resource Center for print and multimedia resources to help in planning and implementation of the event.

Consider a holistic approach by incorporating elements of the Fair in worship, Christian education and other congregational activities throughout the year.

Let your time frame, facility, volunteer leadership and even the weather shape Earth Day activities and options. One model to consider is the learning center approach—where individuals, families or even carefully planned intergenerational teams rotate through various activities facilitated by one or more leaders of any age.

Here are a few starter suggestions including some that may need to be done at other times:

Science and Experiments

Demonstrate how to turn a plastic storage tub into a “worm farm” for composting vegetable and starch table scraps. For this and other ideas check your local library for *Projects for a Healthy Planet: Simple Environmental Experiments for Kids*, by Shar Levine and Allison Grafton.

Arts

Capture the creativity of all ages through drawings, posters, banners, poetry, song, liturgical dance, prayers and rap. Post the offerings around the church facility or find ways to include them in church publications and worship.

An “Eye-spy” Audit

Send teams of adults and children on a tour of the church facilities. Give each team a clipboard and pencil and/or a digital camera. Their task is to identify where the 3 R's (recycle, reuse, reduce) are in place and where work is still needed. Guides for this activity ought to familiarize themselves and have a few prompters ready when needed. Then point participants to www.greenguideforkids.blogspot.com for more ideas.

Getting Dirty

Enlist your best gardeners to guide participants in planting groundcover or other plants, herbs, vegetables on the church property or other nearby location.

Nature Games and other Learning Activities

Creation for Kids Online Handbook is a free downloadable resource designed for camps but readily adaptable for other settings. On the www.elca.org homepage, search for “Creation for Kids.” To obtain a pdf copy of the handbook e-mail writer-Pastor Ben Leese at ben.leese@gmail.com

Advocacy Efforts

During the Fair or at another pre-announced time, use multimedia to educate and motivate those who live and work with children. *Creating Healthy Environments for Children: Easy Steps for Homes, Child Care Centers and Schools* is a 20-minute educational DVD packed with supplementary material on how to protect and advocate for children's environmental health at church, home and in the community. Visit www.healthychild.org/marketplace and click on “Resources.”

Especially for Youth

Sacred Food: Sunday School and Group Activities helps youth to explore and appreciate the miraculous interdependence of all God's creation. It's available from the National Council of Churches USA, www.ncccojustice.org.

For Older Youth and Adults

Awakening to God's Call to Earthkeeping is a four-session small group study which includes wonderful theological and biblical foundation materials as well as prayers and litanies for worship. Available from Augsburg Fortress at www.augsburgfortress.org or call 800-328-4648.

Q & A

How do you bring awareness of environmental stewardship into the life and mission of a congregation?

Here are a few examples of initiatives we are working on in our congregation. In many cases they not only help us be green but also cut operating expenses:

- Use mugs instead of paper for Sunday morning coffee.
- Consider starting a recycling program for paper, metals and plastics. Place recycling bins in gathering spaces and offices with labels to encourage people to use them.
- Print or copy as much as possible using the two-sided option.
- Keep thermostats under lock and key so they are maintained by a select number of people. Be sure to keep vents and air returns clear of obstructions so air circulation is optimized.
- Proper window coverings make quite a difference in heating and cooling; you save energy by not running your systems more than necessary.

—BethAnn Lynch, St. Luke Lutheran Church, Park Ridge, Ill.

I suggest reading these three books:

The Carbon Buster's Home Energy Handbook by Godo Stoyke (2007)

Go Green, Live Rich by David Bach (2008)

And, finally, a book of essays that provides the motivating mindset for us Christians to start really doing something about being green: *Earth & Word* edited by David Rhoads (2007).

All three are available from local booksellers.

—Lou Laux, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Springfield, Ohio

The *Green Bible* includes a creation concordance, essays on creation and Bible studies on earthkeeping, plus all the verses dealing with creation are in green. Available from Harper Collins (www.harpercollins.com).

—Pastor Mike Woods, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, La Crescent, Minn.

I recommend *Church on Earth: Grounding Your Ministry in a Sense of Place*. It's part of the Lutheran Voices series (www.augsburgfortress.org or call 800-328-4648). Good read. Nice resource. I particularly like the part about earth & garden ministries.

—Pastor Robert Driver-Bishop, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Mclean, Va.

I encourage reading the ELCA's social statement on the environment adopted in 1993 (www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements/Environment.aspx). It is a great resource for understanding our responsibility and place in caring for the environment from a Lutheran perspective.

—Adam Bost, synod communicator, Florida-Bahamas Synod, Tampa, Fla.

Social policy CD resource available

ELCA Social Policy Documents and Resources (Through 2007) are now available as a CD resource for congregations and other ministry settings. This CD includes all ELCA social statements, messages and social policy resolutions as well as ELCA studies on social issues, bulletin inserts and other resources for understanding and interpreting ELCA social policy. The CD features a self-narrated PowerPoint presentation describing the process the ELCA uses to develop its social policy statements.

Every ELCA congregation should have a copy of this resource; it's free for the asking. Complimentary copies are available by calling 800-638-3522, ext. 2996. (This CD also is available from synod offices and ELCA resource centers.) Ask for *ELCA Social Policy Documents and Resources (Through 2007)*.

Awakening to God's Call to Earthkeeping

A Lutheran resource for adult education forums and adult classes is Kim Winchell's *Awakening to God's Call to Earthkeeping*. It is available from Augsburg Fortress for multiple copies, but it is also online for free downloading. Go to www.elca.org and search for *Awakening to God's Call to Earthkeeping*.

This 50-page resource (pdf) includes both a Leader Guide and Participant materials for use in a faith-based small group context: adult or older youth Sunday school, Christian education classes, women's circles, men's groups, congregational green team, or a retreat setting. Members of any Christian denomination would be able to use it, with only slight modifications (if desired) to incorporate materials from their own faith traditions.

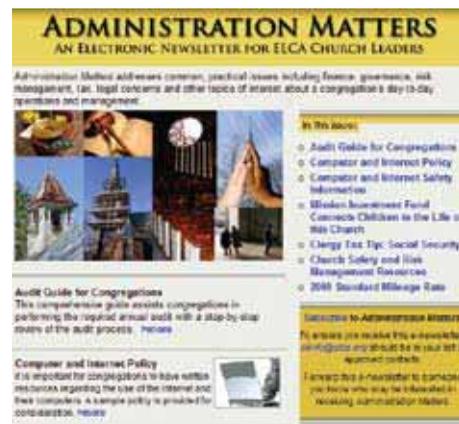
Engagement DVD available

The Golden Rules: A Modern Guide to Traditional Engagement features seven young couples who share their secrets and advice about maintaining a relationship as they date, become engaged and plan a wedding. Visit www.thegoldenrulesoflife.com for more information.

E-newsletter for administrators now available

Since its launch in mid-January, almost 1,000 people have signed up to receive *Administration Matters*, a new bimonthly resource e-letter for congregation and synod treasurers and other administration staff and volunteers. You may want to sign up, too, if you serve people involved in congregation or synod administration, or if you do this type of work in your own congregation.

To read the current issue, go to: www.elca.org/administrationmatters.



Select Multimedia offers tools to help you "join the conversation"

Select Multimedia Resources is a program of media-based continuing education from the ELCA Vocation and Education unit. It offers theological education designed for small groups.

The following Book of Faith Initiative resources are available from Select:

How Lutherans Interpret the Bible

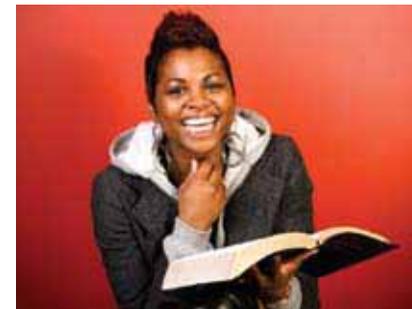
Dr. Mark Allen Powell is a Lutheran pastor and Bible professor at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio. In this seven-session video series Powell invites you to explore seven important questions about Lutherans and the Bible.

Introduction to the New Testament

In this course participants are introduced to key themes and issues in the New Testament, and learn basic skills to equip them to be faithful, creative interpreters of New Testament texts.

Introduction to the Old Testament

This ten-lesson course introduces students to



the high points of the Old Testament. The course is supported by an up-to-date textbook and a study guide, including Web resources. Lecturers are Dr. Ralph W. Klein, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and Dr. Kathryn Schifferdecker, Luther Seminary.

Teaching the Bible, Hosting the Conversation (coming soon).

For more information about Select and their other resources visit them on the Web at www.selectlearning.org.

Turning over a new leaf

Beginning with this issue, *Seeds for the Parish* has joined the movement for a more responsible approach to conservation. From now on, *Seeds* will use paper comprised of 30 percent recycled content. This publication will also proudly display the "SFI Certified" symbol in its masthead.

What is SFI Certified? SFI stands for Sustainable Forest Industry, and SFI Certified means that the paper has been inspected by an independent third-party to assure consumers that the wood products they purchase come from responsibly managed forests, where plant life is conserved.

This means that a market-based, non-regulatory forest conservation process has been applied to implement responsible forestry and thus maintain the sustainability of forest resources. The forest certification process involves the evaluation of land management planning and forestry practices by a third-party, according to an agreed-upon set of standards. Certification standards address social and economic welfare as well as environmental protection.

The inspection extends into the marketplace by tracking fiber content from cer-

tified lands through the production and manufacturing process to the end product. Consumers who buy products with the SFI "percent-content" label know they are buying a product originating in well-managed forests.

Using SFI Certified product, however, is only part of the equation. Recycling is just as important. Recycling one ton of paper saves 17 trees, two barrels of oil (enough to run the average car for 1,260 miles), 4,100 kilowatts of energy (enough power for the average home for six months), 3.2 cubic yards of landfill space and significantly reduces air pollution.

Finding different uses for *Seeds* after reading is another good way to recycle. Before you put this issue in the bin, consider using it in:

Your circle of friends. Share your copy with other leaders in your congregation.

Your garden. The paper can be used in your garden to discourage weed growth and helps keep moisture around plants. Shred it and spread it out. Then cover it with compost mixture.

Your crafts. With this paper you can easily make piñatas, wreaths, paper hats, kites, puppets and dolls.

Your pets. You can use newspaper to line the litter box or bottom of any cage making it easier to clean.

Packing and storing. Newspaper is a good way to protect your precious items whether you are moving or just storing things away. Stuff vases, glasses, or other fragile items with newspaper; then wrap them in newspaper.

Keeping neat. Whether you are painting, cooking or changing the oil in your car, you can use newspaper to make messes easier to clean up. Just place the newspaper where it is needed and go about your work without worrying about staining or messes.

Thank you for reading *Seeds* and for your commitment to God's creation.

Churchwide Assembly information

Registration open for congregation observers

Each ELCA congregation may register one congregation observer with the ELCA Office of the Secretary for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly. These observers will have reserved seating in the plenary hall and will receive a copy of the report of recommendations for assembly action as well as all materials distributed on the plenary floor. The observers will have neither voice nor vote in assembly plenary sessions.

There is a registration fee of \$150 to cover administrative costs and materials. Observers may purchase the same meals as are provided for voting members. Transportation, housing and other costs are the responsibility of the observer or the sending congregation.

Register before May 31.

For more information, contact the assembly registrar at CWARegistrar@elca.org or call 800-638-3522, ext. 2840.

Assembly nominations

Among the agenda items for this year's assembly are elections for positions on the Church Council, churchwide committees, boards of separately incorporated units and unit program committees.

The ELCA is looking for leaders to help guide its work. As a member of the ELCA, you have an opportunity to nominate qualified and interested people for these leadership positions.

To nominate simply send a name and contact information to karen.bockelman@elca.org or ask your nominee to fill out the form on the last two pages of the Nominations Workbook. This workbook is accessible at www.elca.org/nominations. If you do not have Internet access, please call 800-638-3522, ext. 2840, and a workbook will be mailed to you.

If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Karen Bockelman, 773-218-5305.

Young leaders to gather at assembly

A gathering for young pastors, associates in ministry, diaconal ministers and deaconesses is scheduled for August 17-20, 2009, in Minneapolis. About 100 of the 400 ELCA rostered young leaders, ages 31 and under, are expected to participate in this event. They will share ministry experiences with peers while renewing and developing collegial relationships.

The event spans the first four days of the churchwide assembly, so participants of this companion event will reflect on the work of the wider church and consider the vocational relationship between God's work and their own ministries.

Congregations who have called young rostered leaders should encourage their pastors or lay rostered leaders to attend this continuing education event. The cost for registration is \$100 and includes all meals and hotel but not transportation. For information, contact twincitiesgathering@elca.org or 800-638-3522, ext. 2874.

An offer you can't refuse

The acclaimed public television NOVA series installment, "Cracking the Code of Life," is now on DVD and available for use with the recently released ELCA study, "Genetics and Faith: Power, Choice and Responsibility." The ELCA study is part of this church's development of a genetics social statement. "Cracking the Code of Life" introduces the scientists and science behind genetic developments and provides a glimpse of the moral challenges posed by genetic technology.

According to the *Boston Globe*, "Cracking the Code" serves as a "lively and entertaining" launching point for considering genetics, including from the standpoint of faith. A complimentary copy of this DVD is available with any request for the ELCA study "Genetics and Faith." For single complimentary copies of both the study and DVD, call 800-628-3522, ext. 2996. For multiple copies, contact 800-328-4648 or www.augsburgfortress.org. The study is available for \$4 per copy.

A gathering for large congregations coming in June

"Let The River Flow II," a gathering for large congregations (or any congregation that feels they can benefit from the experience), will be held June 15-18, 2009, at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Burnsville, Minnesota. Much like "Let the River Flow I" held in 2007, this event is designed for pastors, ministry staff, support staff and key leaders in large congregations.

Keynote speakers for this event will include Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson, Rev. Stephen Bouman, Rev. Dr. Cynthia Hale, Dr. Diana Butler Bass and Rev. Mark Mittelberg.

Special presentations will be provided by musicians Ken Medema, Kim Fragodt and HeatherLyn Chronis. Comedian Bob Stromberg and sand artist Joe Castillo will also perform.

Worship, workshops, networking, new connections and sharing of good ideas all highlight this event.

Registration cost will be \$125 per person, or \$75 before the early bird registration deadline. Registration information is available at www.elca.org/largecongregations.

Registration now open for "Worship at the Center 2009"

Evangelical Lutheran Worship invites us to keep Ash Wednesday through Easter in a new-old way. At summer retreats, participants will worship using the services for Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Vigil of Easter. There will be opportunities for reflection, study and discussion of the cross and empty tomb, baptism and Bible.

"Worship at the Center" will be held:

Monday-Thursday, June 15-18, at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn.

Monday-Thursday, June 29-July 2, at Baldwin-Wallace College, Berea, Ohio

Tuesday-Friday, July 7-10, at California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, Calif.

Each event has its own registration Web site with information about the schedule, registration options, on-campus housing and local hotels, meal plan, travel and retreat leaders. To access the individual pages go to: www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/2009-Summer-Events.aspx and click on the location links.

The online feature allows individual and group registration at any time up until two weeks prior to the event. Register by April

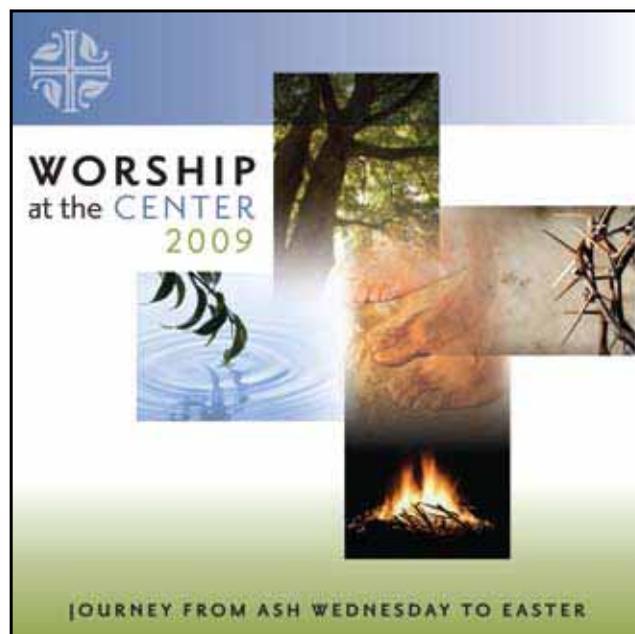
1 to receive a discount on registration fees. If you are not able to register online, call 800-638-3522, ext. 2590.

Who should attend?

Worship planners, pastors, liturgical artists, worship leaders, musicians, media teams and anyone interested in enriching their congregation's worship life by exploring the renewed, yet ancient, liturgies.

All participants can retreat from their usual leadership roles, worshipping at the liturgies for Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Vigil of Easter.

All sessions will help participants imagine ways to make these services come alive in their own unique contexts.





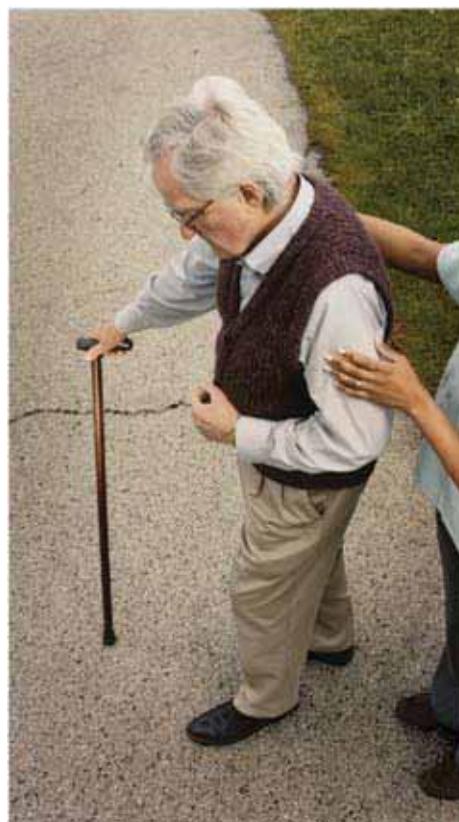
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Going green isn't going away.

Find out how your congregation can become responsible stewards of creation in this issue of *Seeds for the Parish*.



How much hope did your investments generate last year?

"Hope" may not be the first word that comes to mind when you think of nursing homes. But that's exactly what Lutheran Sunset Ministries in Clifton, Texas, gives its residents. Thanks to a Mission Investment Fund loan, this nursing home is expanding to provide even more care. When you or your congregation invests with the MIF, you don't just get a great rate of return, you also fund loans that make seniors' lives a whole lot brighter. To learn more, contact us at 877.886.3522 or elca.org/mif.



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

Energy-efficient systems result in more funds for ministry

In 2007, Unity Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, needed to replace its heating and cooling system and installed energy-efficient boilers and a new air-conditioning system. Since these were installed, the congregation has experienced "huge" savings in its monthly bills for natural gas and electricity, according to Jim Bjugstad, congregation president. "We reduced natural gas costs by \$6,000 last year—funds that can now support the congregation's ministry instead of heating our facilities," he said. Annual maintenance, start-up and repair costs have also been reduced. The congregation financed the new technology with a loan from the ELCA's Mission Investment Fund and an energy-efficiency grant from Milwaukee County.

Unity Lutheran also took advantage of a program for nonprofit organizations offered

by its electric utility to increase the efficiency of lighting throughout the church. The utility's Energy Steward program paid for 75 percent of the cost to install new lighting fixtures and replace low-efficiency incandescent light bulbs with more energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs.

Bjugstad and the Rev. Amy Becker, Unity's pastor, have this advice for congregations considering such projects: Start with prayer and pray often, involve as many congregation members as possible to learn about efficient and renewable energy technologies and have some fun. The congregation held a "blessing of the boilers" celebration and named its new boilers Shadrach and Meshach after the story of the fiery furnace in the Old Testament book of Daniel.