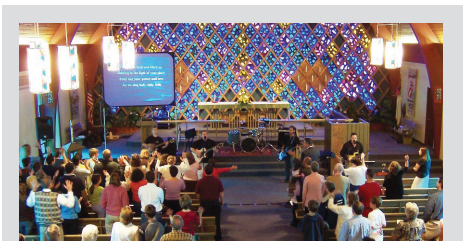


seeds for the parish

Fall 2012

Resource Paper for Leaders of ELCA Congregations

www.ELCA.org



Explore ideas for marking special anniversaries in your worship services. [Page 2](#)



Read about April Larson, the first female synod bishop of the ELCA. [Page 3](#)

Reflections on a 25-year journey

By Jack Damien

They thrived through it all. Laughter and weeping, jubilant growth and frustrating decline, courageous stances and gnawing anxiety. Members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are part of the ELCA's quarter-century journey, and they have the stories to prove it.

"I was a real mess. Recently divorced, drinking too much, kind of lost, and really down," Richard Stasenکو, 70, said of his life before the formation of the ELCA in 1988. "Then I came to know people who were so loving, generous and good by being part of the Lutheran church," Stasenکو said of Shishmaref Lutheran Church in Shishmaref, Alaska, which has over 600 baptized members. "I thank the Lord for this church, and the Holy Spirit's work. He took me along the narrow path and made my life so blessed."

In the warmer climate of the classic New England village of Westborough, Mass., lies Good Shepherd, a congregation of over 700 members in a state renowned for its liberal and revolutionary spirit. Associate pastor Jeffrey Goodrich sees a spirited ferment in the ELCA's 25-year presence in New England. "I greatly value (Presiding) Bishop Mark Hanson's leadership in calling the church to work on behalf of the poor, needy, oppressed and powerless in our culture," said Pastor Goodrich, who was four when the ELCA was born. "That's incredibly important as the next generation comes up and as people in their 20s, like me, are looking for places that are committed to social justice."

Far west of the Mississippi, three charter families of the 90-member Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Casper, Wyo., sliced

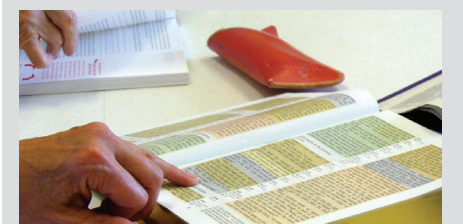
roast beef sandwiches during lunch as they dissected 25 years of their ELCA history. Three years before the birth of the denomination, Good Shepherd was losing members, after major energy companies pulled out of the region, according to Larry Erdman, council vice president. The congregation fought hard for years to retain members and solvency.

Today the congregation is growing with a renewed focus on cordiality and the Lord, according to Bill Clark, 65. "Are we supposed to be arguing and bickering, or talking about (the Lord's) way and his word?" Clark counseled. The three charter families also seek a renewed focus with the synod and its newly-elected bishop, the Rev. James Gonia.

continued on page 11



Norma Cook Everist remembers the 25th anniversary of the Constituting Convention of the ELCA. [Page 4](#)



Do you want to dig deeper into the Bible? Check out what Delmer Chilton has to offer. [Page 10](#)



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Celebrating anniversaries through worship

Since creation, humanity has noted the passing of time as the earth completed revolutions around the sun — even when we didn't fully understand what was happening in terms of planets and stars. In the dance of the seasons, we mark time as we live through the lengthening and shortening of days, cycles of planting and harvest, and dry and wet seasons.

Annual celebrations remind us of the larger cycles of life beyond days and seasons and the larger reality of God the creator who made the earth, its cycles and seasons, and us. These celebrations give us pause for reassurance that the ongoing cycle of life beyond our control continues to dance through our lives eliciting our response of grateful thanksgiving and reminding us of God's promise of hope. Thanks be to God that we've made it through another year, and God be with us as we lean into the next!

It is no wonder the church lived into an annual cycle of worship seasons — moving from Advent anticipation to Christmas incarnation, to Lenten fasts and Easter celebration — that mirrors the marking of the year. And it is no wonder that we mark the dates of significant events in the life of the congregation and in our lives, as we personalize and make meaningful the passing of each year.

The congregation marks annual observances: the founding date of the congregation; ordination, consecration, commissioning and installation dates of church staff; and anniversary of ministries within the congregation. Each one of us has a yearly calendar of observations that weaves into the life of the congregation: birthdays, anniversaries of baptisms, anniversaries of the death dates of loved ones, anniversaries of relationship commitments, marking the time free from addiction, the anniversary of moving into a home, and much more.

Congregational anniversaries and significant personal anniversaries may be recognized easily in the weekly worship of the congregation. The congregation may also provide resources for more personal



and family celebrations of anniversaries that will help people give voice to their thanksgiving to God, to recognize God's presence in our lives and to pray continued blessing on the person or relationship.

In whatever way your congregation chooses to recognize and celebrate anniversaries and annual observances of our shared lives, care should be taken not to clutter the primary worship services of the congregation with too many observances. The anniversary of congregational baptisms, wedding anniversaries, and anniversaries of death may be honored once during the year publicly, but individually through prayers and blessings shared through cards, phone calls, emails, visits or other means.

Congregational anniversaries

Significant congregational anniversaries are often celebrated in a special worship service that brings together the current congregation and leaders, past congregational leaders, and founding members. The "Anniversary of a Congregation" section in "Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Occasional Services for the Assembly" begins on page 122 and includes prayers, Scripture options, hymn suggestions and a blessing that are especially appropriate for such an occasion.

Anniversaries of tragedy or disaster

In some communities, the anniversary of a tragedy warrants recognition in worship as a way to honor the continuing prayers and cry for the grace of God in the wake of loss. Historian and theologian of Christian liturgy, Gail Ramshaw provides six laments that may be used in the gathering time of worship. They provide voice to our cry and remind the community of God's presence. Find them at www.ELCA.org/worship.

Vocational anniversaries

Congregations may recognize the milestone anniversaries of their leaders. "Anniversary of a Ministry" in "ELW: Occasional Services" provides a unique prayer to be used after Holy Communion for pastors, deaconesses, diaconal ministers, associates in ministry and other lay

professionals. Each prayer gives thanks for the service of the individual and prays for their continued ministries.

A congregation may also bless and pray for on-going ministries within the congregation on the anniversary of their start date by using the "Continuing Service" options within the rite for "Recognition of Ministries" in "ELW: Occasional Services," page 93.

Anniversary of baptism

At home, families or individuals may choose to celebrate the date of baptism each year. "ELW: Pastoral Care" provides an easy-to-follow, child-friendly service for the "Anniversary of Baptism" on page 128. The congregation may choose to send this service to the children on their rolls who are celebrating anniversaries. The congregation may choose to celebrate all baptisms for the year on an appropriate baptism festival such as the Naming of Jesus or the Baptism of Our Lord, both in January.

Anniversary of death

"Remembering Those Who Have Died" in "ELW: Pastoral Care" (page 267) and "ELW: Occasional Services" (page 344) provide gathering words, Scripture and prayers especially appropriate for marking the anniversary of a death. These resources may be used at home, in pastoral care situations or in the public worship service. The congregation may recognize all who have died with these resources on All Saints Sunday, observed the first Sunday in November each year.

Other annual celebrations

Wedding anniversaries are often celebrated in the midst of the congregational community which vowed to support a couple in a service of marriage. "Affirmation of a Marriage" ("ELW: Pastoral Care" page 318, "ELW: Occasional Services" page 378) provides prayers, the renewal of vows and blessings appropriate to anniversary celebrations.

The "Blessing of a Home" ("ELW: Pastoral Care," page 337) may be observed annually on a move-in date or in the season after Epiphany according to church tradition. This service blesses the people and everyday care-taking activities in the home and may be used as an annual reminder of God's activity in our everyday lives.

"ELW: Pastoral Care" provides readings and prayers for birthdays (page 380) and the anniversary of sobriety (page 191).

seeds for the parish

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

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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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First female synod bishop

In the 25-year history of the ELCA, women have served as teachers, missionaries and deaconesses. But in 1992, one female pastor brought church leadership to a new level.

The Rev. April Larson was elected bishop of the ELCA La Cross Area Synod. She became the first female synod bishop in the ELCA, and the second female Lutheran bishop in the world. She went on to serve three six-year terms.



top three pastors receiving the most votes on that ballot continue on to the fourth ballot.

Sixty percent of the votes cast are necessary for election on the fourth ballot. The ballots continue until one nominee has received 60 percent of the votes from the assembly.

Leadership and accomplishments

Prior to her role as the ELCA La Crosse Area Synod bishop, Pastor Larson held leadership roles in various churches and schools.

Born in Decorah, Iowa, she graduated from the University of Iowa with a degree in vocal performance.

After graduation, she taught kindergarten through 12th grade at a Catholic school in Cresco, Iowa. While there, she was called into ministry.

In 1972, Pastor Larson enrolled at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, and she was ordained in 1978. She was a part of the first group of 10 women to graduate from the seminary.

“The first time I heard a woman preach was the sound of my own voice,” she said.

Her preaching must have made an impact on many lives. Following ordination, she served three Iowa congregations with her husband, the Rev. Judd Larson, as a co-pastor.

In 1989, she accepted a position as assistant to the bishop of the ELCA Southeastern Minnesota Synod, where she gained experience in church leadership.

After retiring from her position as synod bishop, Pastor Larson became senior pastor at First Lutheran Church in Duluth, Minn., in 2008.

Family and personal story

The Larsons were married two years before attending Wartburg Theological Seminary together in the 1970s. After ordination, the couple served as pastors in the same three congregations. The two worked as a team until their youngest son, Ben, was in high school. Pastor Judd Larson then became a part-time pastor. They have three children: twin daughters, Amy and Katie, and a son, Ben.

Amy and Katie are both pediatricians and married with children.

continued on page 6

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25th anniversary of the ELCA Constituting Convention

By Norma Cook Everist

On April 30, 25 years ago, my husband, Burton, and I were in Columbus, Ohio, attending the ELCA's Constituting Convention. We drove from Dubuque, Iowa. I was teaching at Wartburg then and Burton was just beginning what would become his 15-year

pastorate at Grace Lutheran Church in East Dubuque, Iowa. I had been on three task forces over five years in preparation for the formation of the ELCA. And, perhaps more significantly, Burton and I had been part of all three of the Lutheran church bodies that were coming together.

We were at that time pastors in the American Lutheran Church. Each of us had entered the Lutheran church(es), as teenagers, hearing the gospel in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. We had been part of the schism in that church body in the 1970s, like hundreds of others, finding ourselves outside of the church when it excluded those who had a more open and inclusive view of theology, mission and ministry. That exile produced the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches.

When living in New England we were in Lutheran Church in America-land, and I served for a year in a Lutheran Church in America congregation. So we wanted to be present those days 25 years ago when the people in those three church bodies, of which we had been a part during the three decades of our adult lives, were coming together to form a new Lutheran church. Coincidentally, while looking in my file cabinet for something else, I discovered a file folder which had the program



Opening service, April 30. Lighting candle at plenary hall worship.

and prayers from that service. Here's the handout I provided our student body, many of whom were not even born when the ELCA began:

Three Lutheran church bodies — the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches — came together April 30-May 3, 1987, in Columbus, to officially “convene” the ELCA. Beginning in 1982, hundreds of people worked for five years on The Commission for a New Lutheran Church and its many committees and task forces to prepare, not for a “merger,” but for something new.

The convention would make decisions that would enable the church to begin Jan. 1, 1988. May 2 was the Festival Eucharist. The announcement read: “The Evangelical

Lutheran Church in America is now in place; the Holy Spirit has been continuing the effort to bring unity to the Body of Christ ... we are now part of a larger communion and are being given new opportunities for usefulness in God's holy Church. We have gathered in

this place to give praise to God for grace and salvation. We have assembled here to offer thanks for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and to renew those vows which bind us together as the Ser-

vant of God. Dear friends in Christ: Lift up your hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.”

At the Constituting Convention, the three church bodies brought water in three vessels to the one font. The new church received the Presentation of the current Roster of Congregations, and the Presentation of the current Roster of Clergy. Not having been able to come to agreement on the report on the task force on Specific Ministries on the various lay rosters of the three church bodies, those rosters were frozen for six years and a “Study on the Nature of Ministry” was authorized.

The ELCA elected its first bishop. By the third ballot the top four names were: David Preus, William Lazareth, Barbara Lundblad and Herbert Chilstrom; Chilstrom would be elected. Previous to the convention it had been decided that the ELCA would be less hierarchical, more diverse and open to all voices. Representation principles would provide for more equal numbers of women and men on boards, committees and at assemblies, broader representation of laity and of people of color. This would provide a substantial change. The structure of the church would be broad and interactive; there were “expressions” of the church: congregation, conference, synod, region and churchwide (rather than “national”).

The convention made a final decision on the site for the churchwide offices — not Milwaukee, but Chicago.

Other significant business included election of the vice president, secretary, editor of



Choir at the plenary hall during the ELCA Constituting Convention.

of the ELCA. The announcement read: “The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is now in place; the Holy Spirit has been continuing the effort to bring unity to the Body of Christ ... we are now part of a larger communion and are being given new opportunities for usefulness in God's holy Church. We have gathered in

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Resources on the history of the ELCA

For further reading on the history of the ELCA you may be interested in the following:

- Huber, Donald L. “World Lutheranism: A Select Bibliography for English Readers.” Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2000.
- Lagerquist, L. DeAne. “The Lutherans.” Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1999.
- Knudsen, Johannes. “The Formation of the Lutheran Church in America.” Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978.
- Nichol, Todd W. “All These Lutherans: Three Paths toward a New Lutheran Church.” Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986.
- Trexler, Edgar. “Anatomy of a Merger: People, Dynamics and Decisions that Shaped the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.” Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1991.



ELCA Constituting Convention, Columbus, Ohio, April 30-May 3, 1987. Voting yes. L-R: Rev. David Almleaf, Joan Alley, Rev. Beverly Allert.

Other significant business included election of the vice president, secretary, editor of

Hope and Gratitude: Reflections on the 25th Anniversary of the ELCA

By Julie Aageson

What does it mean to be celebrating the 25th anniversary of the ELCA? Does it matter? What are some distinguishing marks of this changing church? Where have we been and where are we going? For ELCA members who understand the Reformation as an ongoing call to renewal and reform, these questions are especially important.

As part of a transformational movement across this church, we are privileged to help shape a church that has greater authenticity, integrity and depth. This major cultural and religious shift — some even call it a new kind of Christianity — includes a renewed exploration of the teachings and actions of Jesus. What did Jesus have in mind, and what does it mean to live the message of Jesus today? How does the church interpret and embody Christ's sacrificial love and overwhelming grace to a world longing for hope and transformation?

It also includes renewed commitments about what it means to be Christian, to be Christ's presence in the world. It's a call to servant leadership, to church as a verb. It's a movement filled with hope and with room for exploring the mysteries of a gracious and loving God. It's a church bold enough to leave its walls and go into the world. These first 25 years have been marked by new ecumenical partnerships, honest struggling with the complexities of sexuality, new discoveries in genetics, commitments to justice and peacemaking — all issues of faith and life!

Theologians, scholars and ordinary people of faith are helping us rethink and re-imagine the church. Being Christ's presence in the world has never been easy, never entirely clear, never without controversy. But the good news of Jesus always has been radical and controversial. And our fear of the radical grace and mercy of God has too often prompted us to tame it, make it acceptable, more palatable, less challenging.

So I come to this anniversary of the ELCA filled with hope and gratitude. I'm grateful for a church bold enough to proclaim radical Christianity. I'm hopeful about a church that celebrates sacramental life and liturgical formation and continues to interpret the multiple meanings of word, water, wine and bread. I'm grateful for a generous orthodoxy that incorporates ancient, modern and postmodern practices into worship and community ritual. I am hopeful about a church open

to questions of faith, transformational practices, ecumenical dialogue, and the inclusion of all God's people.

I am grateful for an emphasis on tradition rather than traditionalism, on faithfulness rather than fundamentalism. I am hopeful about a church that is intent on helping eradicate hunger and diseases like malaria. I am grateful for a prophetic church willing to make difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions for the sake of justice and God's unfathomable grace. I am hopeful about a church driven by hope and love rather than fear and isolation.

Worshipping with a variety of ELCA congregations over these past months, I have been nourished and fed by liturgies from "Evangelical Lutheran Worship," the worship book created from a decade-long focus on renewing worship and sacramental formation in the ELCA. Working with congregational leaders and pastors, I often recommend sacramental resources like "Fed and Forgiven" and "Washed and Welcome." They convey the riches of the means of grace, of a God who welcomes us to the feast of life! Both resources are available from Augsburg Fortress.

Unlike resources of the last century, we're now privileged to share the love and steadfast grace of a life-giving, generous God through electronic media, social networks, and communities of faith and learning different from traditional churches. Resources for faith formation come in experiences like ELCA Youth Gatherings where diversity and servant leadership are lenses for Christian life. They come in cutting-edge materials like "re:form," "The Greatest Story," "Animate," "Spark," "Holy Moly" and biblical material created for the Book of Faith Initiative, all from Augsburg Fortress. They come in daily encounters online: Christians communicating with one another on congregational websites, blogs, and in interactive meetings. They come on sites like www.thethoughtfulchristian.com and www.livingthequestions.com.

Making sense of all these connections and choices is sometimes overwhelming. Years ago, we depended on basic biblical and catechetical resources. Perhaps we were more interested in a kind of rule-based Christianity focused on answers and

Q & A

For this issue of *Seeds for the Parish*, we asked ELCA Resource Center staff and others to pull together a Q & A on ideas for congregations to use to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ELCA in 2013. We received the following ideas.

A suggestion for a 25th anniversary seminar and/or adult forum series: discuss the ELCA's past and future via content from the four articles in the Winter 2008 issue of *Dialog*: "A Reflection on 20 Years of the ELCA," which I contributed to along with Gettysburg Seminary President Michael Cooper-White, Lutheran theologian Carl Braaten and former synod bishop Charles Maahs.

As a sample here's the abstract for my piece, titled, "Bowling Alone but Working and Worshiping Together." "The following article reviews both the strengths and weaknesses of the ELCA on the anniversary of 20 years of existence. The article emphasizes the increased diversity in the denomination, particularly the increased participation of women both in scholarship and leadership in the church. It also lifts up the importance of the strong ecumenical work that continues to take place, both nationally and internationally, which is evidenced in the ELCA's full communion agreements. Commitments to social justice, global connectedness and economic stewardship are also discussed."

It is sobering and humbling to see how optimistic some of us were five years ago.

—Carol Lahurd

I recently returned for an anniversary at my first parish; they invited all of the previous pastors to come to the worship. One of those pastors preached, others served Communion. I believe all of the previous salaried staff were invited — since the secretary and preschool director were also there (and they had retired since my time in that congregation).

They had treats between services and a catered meal after the final worship service of the morning.

They also had a special "historic booklet" made that included milestones of the congregation. These were sold for the cost of the printing.

They made sure everyone had name tags — so those of us who were coming back after some time away could connect with folks who joined after we left.

The prayers included special petitions for the spread of the gospel — from this place, celebrating the past, continuing in the present, and looking with hope to the future. There was a lot of special music, too — as all of the various choirs and bands shared their gifts with the congregation and were celebrated for the ministry they do from week to week.

I would say, be sure to celebrate Holy Communion — a reminder of the gathering of saints, past, present, future, from all places and those who are scattered from this place ... and be sure to welcome all guests to the table, so that it is truly a celebration of the whole community of Christ.

—Kay Richter

continued on page 9

Behind the scenes of pictorial church directories

Every year ELCA congregations use pictorial directories to capture memories, promote the vision and mission of a congregation, and to act as a resource for potential and new members.

Planning, promoting and distributing a pictorial directory is not always easy but, with the right directory company and by following some simple steps, your directory is sure to be a success.

First, find a company that would serve as a right fit for your congregation's needs. There are many companies that provide fast and easy online directories.



Companies normally offer several options for creating a directory, striving to create a personal relationship with a congregation. Also look for step-by-step advice in planning your photography sessions.

Once a company is chosen, begin to promote the project in your congregation. Create publicity posters and bulletin inserts to inform your congregation about the benefits of signing

up for a portrait session. Make members aware that they must sign up for a time slot for a session most accessible to them. It is important to have scheduling done

beforehand, so that photography sessions run efficiently.

You may also create an outreach event to go along with your photography sessions. The event can benefit a charity or an outreach your congregation supports. For instance, if your congregation partners with a local food pantry, you may ask each family to bring an item to donate to the pantry. An outreach event such as this helps promote your congregation's mission, as well as other programs in the area.

The next step is to design the cover and pages of the directory. Each directory generally includes a cover page, activity pages for staff and group photos, photos of the families of the congregation and individual contact information to conclude in the directory. Feel free to make each of these pages unique to your congregation's vision and mission.

After the directory has been designed, arrange for the photography sessions. Ask

your company representative to outline any special guidelines regarding personal appearance and behavior on the day of your photography session.

Be sure to find a few volunteer greeters for the photography days to provide hospitality and assistance for individuals and families before and after their session. They can provide refreshments, activities for children and a comfortable atmosphere. These volunteers also play a vital role in the members staying on schedule to their time slot.

The final step is to have the company produce the directory and provide resources for easy distribution. The company will deliver the directories for the church with ideas for a delivery method easiest for your congregation.

These steps serve as an outline for a successful pictorial directory. Although every ELCA congregation has a different approach, finding the right company to suit your congregation's needs is essential.

Congregations living and working within the community

Is your town celebrating an important anniversary? As a center of mission, this would be a great opportunity for your congregation to plan missions to your community.

Hosting an event during a town celebration is a great time for outreach and fellowship with the community for your congregation calls home. Here are some ways for your congregation to share its mission plans or think about how the congregation can re-evaluate its engagement with its community:

- Think about ways your congregation can give back to the community. Invite community members to join you as you volunteer at a local charity.
- Invite a professor from a local high school or college to present a lecture on a topic important to your commu-

nity. Use your church building as a venue and provide hospitality and fellowship.

- Host a 5K walk or run to benefit your congregation or a local charity. Sporting events bring together a unique group of individuals from your congregation and community.
- If your congregation has a strong music program, consider hosting a concert. Hold the concert in a venue that is accessible to all members of the community, so that all feel welcome.



- If your town is creating a time capsule, prepare an item to be placed in the capsule. Items could include black and white photographs of your congregation's history, glass, pottery and ceramics, or textiles. Be sure to think about what most characterizes your congregation.

All of these events and activities are great ways for your congregation to show their involvement and inclusion in the community, as well as creating opportunities for outreach. So don't miss this opportunity for mission planning beyond your congregation's front doors!

Resources

Mission planning is a component of the work done by the Living into the Future Together Task Force. For more information on this task force and their findings check out these resources:

- The LIFT report (<http://bit.ly/OGHEPi>)
- Implementation of the ELCA 2011 Churchwide Assembly actions (<http://bit.ly/PiF660>)
- What synods are doing (LIFT Guide for Synods) (<http://bit.ly/NGbJQw>)
- What congregations are doing (e.g., Northwest Synod of Wisconsin) (<http://bit.ly/Oin73K>)

continued from page 3

Their son, Ben, was following in the footsteps of his parents. He attended Wartburg Theological Seminary, where he met his wife, Renee. Ben and Renee, along with Ben's cousin Jon, served in Haiti, teaching Lutheran theology in the Lutheran Church of Haiti. In January 2010, they were residing in Port-au-Prince,

the epicenter of the massive earthquake that year.

Renee and Jon were able to escape when the roof of the building they were in collapsed. Ben was trapped underneath three layers of concrete. When Renee called out to Ben, she heard him singing a hymn. His final words were, "God's peace to us we pray."

With help from the ELCA, Ben's body was recovered and brought back to the United States, where his family and friends offered a reflection and celebration of his life.

Renee is now a pastor at Heart River Lutheran Church in Mandan, N.D. She delivered the sermon at the closing worship of the 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

Throughout the Larson family's sadness, they have never stopped believing in God's plan and call to minister to others. Pastor April Larson is still serving First Lutheran Church in Duluth, Minn., with her husband at her side.

Celebrating your congregation's anniversary

Whether your congregation is 2 or 102 years old, congregational anniversary celebrations are a time to gather together, celebrate memories and the history of your congregation. Many activities and events can be planned to celebrate your congregation.

To begin appoint a committee to oversee all planning and details to ensure a successful celebration. This committee should include the pastor, a few elder and younger members of the congregation. The committee should meet and discuss a possible theme, determine time line and venue for your celebration.

Plan a special Service of Holy Communion. The word and sacraments are the foundation of your congregation both spiritually and physically.

The service can include a sermon preached by your synod bishop, as well as greetings from past clergy. The liturgy,

prayers and hymns can be arranged by the congregation. The offering from this service can be given to an ELCA ministry or program in honor of the anniversary.

While planning, encourage congregational involvement.

In the weekly bulletin, spotlight some congregational history. Also invite members to share pictures or photo albums of congregational activities and events.

Invite your youth group and Sunday school children to get involved, sharing memories by interviewing the older members of your congregation for a video or written story. A scrapbook or slide show can be made from the pictures shared.



These can also be used as entertainment for the day.

Once the service and entertainment are arranged, plan an anniversary dinner and invite past lay leaders, members, friends of the congregation

and community members.

To save money, ask your members to bring their own dish, complete with recipe cards. These recipes can be compiled to create an anniversary cookbook, a great keepsake.

All celebratory events will provide your congregation with an opportunity to reflect on the past, celebrate the present and move toward the future.

'Reformation Then and Now'



Celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ELCA by visiting the land of Luther. Join Dr. Kit Kleinhans for a three-week Wartburg College travel seminar April 29-May 21, 2013. Stand where Luther said "Here I stand" in Worms. Visit the places where Martin Luther lived and worked, including his birthplace in Eisleben, the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt, the Wartburg Castle, and Wittenberg. Guided by the theme Reformation Then and Now, the seminar will move from the Luther sites in Germany to Prague, in the Czech Republic, where Jan Hus was an active reformer 100 years before Luther, and then on to Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, where participants will meet with Lutherans who continue the work of reformation in the aftermath of communism.

The seminar engages the 2013 Luther Decade theme, "Reformation and Tolerance." Participants will hear the personal reflections of a Leipzig pastor about the Peaceful Revolution of 1989. They will visit two concentration camps, Flossenbürg, where Dietrich Bonhoeffer was executed, and Buchenwald, with its striking memorial to the common humanity of all people. In addition the participants will visit Halle and Neuendettelsau, where Lutheran pastors combined world mission with social service. They will meet with members of the Lutheran Deaconess Community and the Bohemian Brotherhood to talk about their life and work in community.

Cost is \$3,700.00 per person (not including airfare), double (or triple) occupancy, based on 20 people; \$3,400 per person based on 25 people. Single room supplement is \$620.00.

Please contact Dr. Kleinhans at: kathryn.kleinhans@wartburg.edu for details, including possibilities for continuing education and/or graduate credit.

Celebrating the ordination of your pastor

Pastors are teachers, listeners, supporters, preachers and friends. Taking time to celebrate and thank them for all they do is something we should do frequently.

The ordination of a pastor is life changing and marks the beginning of a journey with a congregation. An ordination anniversary marks the success of a pastor.

Here are some tips for celebrating your pastor's ordination anniversary:

- Create a memory book including pictures, letters and sermons from



the past and present. This memory book can be given to the pastor as a token of your congregation's gratitude.

- Ask members to write letters to the pastor. These can include first impressions, memories shared

together, unforgettable sermons and so on. Keep these letters secret by having them sent to a council member's home. You'll want your pastor to be pleasantly surprised.

- Ask the Sunday school children to color pictures and talk about their favorite

More tips on celebrating the ELCA's 25th anniversary

A number of ELCA college and seminary faculty are leading tours to Germany next summer. One simple way to celebrate is to advertise all of them and encourage congregational members to sign up for one of these pilgrimages.

What better way to celebrate our 25th than to look more deeply at our

own Lutheran identity? Several great Select Learning resources will help your congregation do that. "Down and Out" is one, and "Luther's Legacy for Laity" is the other. Both of them zero in on the heart of Reformation Theology, and offer very practical ways to live that out in your daily life.

"God's work. Our hands." is the ELCA's tagline. To celebrate, meet with your community leaders and invite them to work together to identify one area that needs attention but is currently falling between the cracks. Use the incredible power of a whole congregation to address that need.

Standing on the shoulders of the saints

By Ken Wheeler

As an African American Lutheran pastor, I think of the Black Lutheran saints on whose shoulders I stand.

They were pioneers in a church that at times did not know what to do with its members of African descent.

I began my Lutheran journey in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and I recall meeting the Rev. Peter Hunt, who was a giant within Black Lutheranism.

The Rev. I. Carl Cameron was the first African American pastor to serve my home congregation in Jackson, Miss. He was the epitome of grace and humility.

When I came into the American Lutheran Church, one of the ELCA's predecessor church bodies, I met the Rev. Nelson Trout, who was instrumental in encouraging me to attend Trinity Lutheran Seminary.

I sat, as did many of us, as one of his students, but he became more than just a teacher. He was mentor, friend and father for so many of us African Americans.

As I write this, I'm looking at a picture of Pastor Trout, who eventually was elected as one of the first African American

bishops in the Lutheran church.

He would sometimes speak of the slights and pain that he suffered.

He exhibited a pride in so many that he had touched, either through his ministry or his teaching and preaching, but there was a special pride for pastors of color.

On one occasion I remember him saying to us, "I wish that I had had the courage that you guys have when I was your age." My personal reflection and reaction then, as it is now, is that he was a man of immense courage. He walked with dignity and grace, and he had an awesome intellectual capacity.

The gospel is central

He challenged his students and he challenged the church to embrace a gospel that held the doing of justice as a necessary thing — not an option, but central to the understanding and the living out of the faith.

Why is it essential that we use a particular time to reflect on this history? Because it reminds us that the fullness and the completeness of any history is

inadequate if it leaves out any people, or if it paints the picture of a people who have been the victims of racism only as one dimensional or if what we choose to write is only the bad and the negative.

These African American Lutheran giants —

- Nelson Trout, the first African American bishop in the Lutheran church and an ELCA pastor;
- Will Herzfeld, presiding bishop of the former Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, civil rights activist, ecumenist and an ELCA pastor; and,
- Rudolph Featherstone, the first African American graduate of Gettysburg College and an ELCA pastor — and so many others walked tall, because they were amazingly powerful servants who made me better and who made this church better.

Even now, as I mention their names, my heart becomes filled with thanksgiving. I hope that you will find some time to learn about these incredible people of God.

Nelson W. Trout

The Rev. Nelson W. Trout became the first African American U.S. Lutheran bishop and was a men-



tor, teacher and preacher to many in the African American community.

Pastor Trout was born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1921. He was a graduate of Capital University and Trinity Lutheran Seminary both in Columbus, Ohio. He was also awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree from Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa.

Following Pastor Trout's years of education he served several congregations in Wisconsin, Alabama, and California. Trout was a very inspiring and powerful preacher. While serving in Montgomery, Ala., he became friends with Martin Luther King Jr. with whom he used to joke about being a Lutheran.

Following his years serving congregations, he became the associate youth director for the American Lutheran Church in 1960 and served until 1967, when he became the director for urban evangelism. He held other roles in his career such as the executive director of Lutheran Social Services in Ohio and professor and director for minority ministry studies at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus. Pastor Trout played a large role in creating an identity for African Americans and other minorities through all of his roles in the church.

On June 17, 1983, Pastor Trout was elected bishop of the South Pacific District of the American Lutheran Church. He served in this role until 1987 when the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches merged together to become one church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Following the merger he was named bishop emeritus of the ELCA Southern California Synod.

Pastor Trout is a very important figure in the ELCA as he was the first African American bishop of the church. He was passionate, intelligent and powerful in his preaching and teaching and in 1991, Trinity Seminary established the Nelson W. Trout Lectureship in Preaching in honor of him.

Pastor Trout, 75, passed away Sept. 20, 1996, in Inglewood, Calif.

Will Herzfeld

The Rev. Will Herzfeld held many roles in the Lutheran church and played a large role in creating the international presence the Lutheran church has today.

Born in 1937 in Mobile, Ala., Pastor Herzfeld received an Associate of Arts degree from Immanuel Lutheran College, Greensboro, N.C., in 1958, and a Master of Divinity degree from Immanuel Lutheran Seminary in 1960.

In 1961, Pastor Herzfeld was ordained by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and became pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Tuscaloosa, Ala., where he served until 1965. While there, he was involved in organizing a chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and served as its first president. Through that endeavor, Pastor Herzfeld became a close associate of Martin Luther King Jr.

From 1965 to 1970, Pastor Herzfeld was an urban minister for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in California, and he then went on to become an urban planning consultant for Lutheran Council in the USA.

Subsequently, he became pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Oakland, Calif., from 1973 to 1992. During those years Pastor Herzfeld held many other roles in the community, including vice

president of the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, vice president of Lutheran World Relief, adjunct professor of urban ministry at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkley, Calif., and the first African American bishop in the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches.

Pastor Herzfeld played a large role in the formation of the ELCA as a member of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church in 1987. In the newly-formed ELCA, he became associate executive director of



ELCA Global Mission. In this role, he established international relationships and partnerships that included 70 church bodies and 25 other institutions.

He was also responsible for placing about 300 missionaries and volunteers in overseas work through the ELCA.

Pastor Herzfeld passed away May 9, 2002, at a Chicago hospital at the age of 64, having contracted cerebral malaria following trip to Cameroon and the Central African Republic.

Pastor Herzfeld's accomplishments live on through the global mission work of the ELCA and the work being done by missionaries and congregations throughout the ELCA.

Rudolph Featherstone

The Rev. Dr. Rudolph Featherstone, who describes himself as “a janitor for Jesus,” has followed his life calling and led the African American Lutheran community.

Pastor Featherstone was born and raised in Washington, D.C., and attended Gettysburg College in the 1950s. He was the first African American to graduate from Gettysburg College and the only African American on campus for his first two years there. He is a 1960 graduate of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg and a 1972 graduate of Harvard Divinity School.

Following his graduation from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, he served as a pastor for 10 years at St. John’s Lutheran Church in the Bronx, N.Y.; Incarnation Lutheran in Jamaica, N.Y. and Good Shepard Lutheran in Detroit, Mich. His work as a pastor strengthened the relationship African Americans had with the Lutheran church and local congregations.

Pastor Featherstone was a powerful preacher and teacher. He also served in campus ministry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a mentor to students of color.

His presence on campus led him to a position as professor at Trinity Lutheran Seminary. There he taught cross-cultural theological studies and mission. Throughout his career, Pastor Featherstone was dedicated to advocating for African American Lutherans.

Pastor Featherstone was also involved in the Conference of International Black Lutherans and spoke at commencements, presentations and convocations including a Founder’s Day Convocation at California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks, Calif. His publications and presentations include, “The Legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.,” and “A Tri-dimensional Reality and Symbol” and “Human Dignity in the Thought of Martin Luther King Jr.”

Pastor Featherstone is now retired from the ministry and teaching. In 2008 he was given an honorary Doctor of Theology degree from Gettysburg College.

First African American woman to hold ELCA office

“Go Girl!” was the exclamation Addie Butler received from the standing crowd when she was elected vice president of the ELCA in 1997. Butler was the first African American woman to be elected as an ELCA church executive, succeeded by two other women who led the ELCA in the early years of the church.

The process for electing a new vice president in the ELCA is an “ecclesiastical ballot.” With this voting system, the first ballot cast by voting members of the church is used as a nomination ballot unless one nominee receives 75 percent of the ballots cast. The ballots will then continue until the nominees are narrowed down and an individual wins by a 60 percent vote. The vice president must be a lay person. This is the highest volunteer position in the church.

Butler was elected vice president on the fifth ballot at the 1997 ELCA Church-wide Assembly with 670 votes. At the assembly, she announced that she was looking forward to a “long and beneficial relationship between the vice president and members of this church.” Butler fulfilled that promise as vice president for six years.

Prior to her election, she served as vice president of the ELCA Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod from 1987 to 1995.



Given her various leadership positions, Butler was prepared for her new role, which includes chairing meetings of the ELCA Church Council.

Butler held positions as an assistant dean at the Community College of Philadelphia, and a member of the board of trustees at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. She also served as the president of the Philadelphia chapter

of the African American Lutheran Association, and secretary of the ELCA’s Council for Mission Development.

Born in 1946, Butler grew up in Philadelphia, and was baptized in a Baptist church. At 8 years old, she decided to join an African American Lutheran congregation.

She earned her bachelor’s degree from Howard University in 1969, a master’s degree from Pennsylvania State University in 1970, and a doctorate in education from Teachers College at Columbia University in 1976.

Butler has also received three honorary degrees: a Doctor of Divinity from Muhlenberg College, a Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Susquehanna University, and a Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Wagner College.

Addie Butler retired in 2007 following a career of leadership and achievement.

Resources on Herzfeld, Trout and Featherstone

Find audio recordings of Pastor Herzfeld in the Holden Village Audio Archives, <http://audio.holdenvillage.org/node/1630>. Listen to Pastor Herzfeld in five recordings made in 1972 and 1978: “Institutionalized Racism” (1972), “Black Like You: The Black Church” (1978), “Not So Random Thoughts on the Black Condition” (1978), “South Africa: A People in Travail” (1978), “South Africa: A Time of Travail” (1978).

In “A Memory from the Past” author Alan Gregson Comery writes about Pastor Featherstone for the periodical *Gettysburg: a Magazine for Gettysburg College Alumni, Parents, and Friends* (<http://magazine.gettysburg.edu/fall-2009/last-word/>). Comery refers to Pastor Featherstone as the Jackie

Robinson of Gettysburg College. He was the first African American to study at that college.

Read a blog about Pastor Trout at <http://hopeinrhodes.blogspot.com/2010/09/saints-alive-nelson-wesley-trout.html>. Blogger Ellen Polzien writes about the life of the first African American Lutheran bishop who broke the “ethnic” faith tradition.

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“getting it right.” The world was smaller and our corner of Lutheranism may have seemed simpler.

But I have no longing to go back. Yes, I remember packed churches, overflowing balconies, potlucks and family nights. Yes, I memorized the catechism and recited Bible verses by heart, and I remember good preaching and proclamation. But on this occasion of the 25th anniversary of the ELCA, I am grateful for a God who is both challenge and invitation — God’s work done with our hands — and for a church that isn’t always popular.

Most of all, I am grateful for the ELCA as we continue to wrestle with the mysteries

of God, the life of Jesus, and the complex world we live in. I hope we have moved beyond God as a divine hero who rescues us. I hope we will continue to be a church that doesn’t have everything nailed down and figured out. I am grateful for a church that evokes responsible action in the world and for a God who turns the church inside out for the sake of the world.

May we continue to look for ever more meaningful ways to be the body of Christ — sharing, living and proclaiming the radical news of Jesus Christ and God’s overwhelming love and mercy — with hope and gratitude!

The homecoming

By Delmer Chilton

I was recently invited to preach for a “Homecoming” at a former parish, Friedens Lutheran Church in Gibsonville, N.C. I have to confess that I said yes partly out of ego and partly out of a desire for some good North Carolina home cooking at the after service “covered dish dinner” (what Midwestern Lutherans call a “hot dish”). When it comes to congregational dinners, rural and small-town Lutherans in North and South Carolina are much more southern than they are Lutheran.

We’re talking about fried chicken and country ham biscuits and pork barbecue and fresh boiled corn and creamed potatoes and field peas and cornbread and greens and squash and thick tomatoes the color of blood and sliced as thick as a hockey puck. And cakes and pies and fruit cobblers and ... oh my; my cholesterol just went up a few points writing that Faulknerian sentence. (Oh yeah, the iced tea — thick and brown and cold and sweet enough to rot your teeth.)

There is something about a good church dinner that reminds us of what the kingdom of God is supposed to be like. Everybody’s there, even the ones who aren’t there very often, or who don’t like the pastor, or who are at odds with others in the congregation about this, that or the other thing that is of vital importance right at this moment, but which will be forgotten in a year or two.

In the face of the “Fellowship Meal” in the “Fellowship Hall,” all of that seems to fade away and there we are together, sampling each other’s food and admiring each other’s children and asking after each other’s health and listening to each other’s stories and enjoying each other’s company.

In the southern evangelical churches of my youth, we didn’t really have Feasts or Festivals in the liturgical calendar sense, just Christmas and Easter really. But we had “Feast Days” anyway. We found many opportunities to celebrate with a feast. Homecoming with “dinner on the grounds;” numerous family reunions, held at the church after the service, with everyone invited (and would have come anyway, since we were all related by marriage or something); the first Sunday night of a revival; the last night of vacation Bible school, etc., etc.

We knew instinctively that eating together in that way was something the congregation was supposed to do. And



we knew that it was about more than food, it was about more than camaraderie and community spirit. Deep in an unarticulated part of our souls, we knew it was about God, and about growing in God’s grace and about growing as the body of Christ, and about remembering that we were more than just some folk who liked to get together to sing hymns and listen to sermons; we were God’s children gathered around God’s table. We are a people of the feast.

This connection between God and community and feasting is reflected in Scripture. In Second Kings we read a story about Elisha and the feeding of a hundred men with a limited amount of food. It is a parallel story to the feeding of the 5,000, even down to there being a collection of leftovers.

Psalm 145:15-16 reminds us that, “The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.”

There are many things going on in John 6, but one of the important ones is a reminder that God is a god of abundance and blessing, a god who calls upon God’s people to be a community of abundance and blessing as well.

For a few years I traveled the country as a church consultant, working with congregations from Seattle to Savannah, from Northern New England to Southern California. They were also across the board denominationally, from high-church

Episcopalians to low-church Quakers. There was one thing all those congregations had in common; they liked to eat together. The real differences between them were not matters of geography or liturgy or theology. Their differences had to do with who was invited to eat with them. The congregations who vigorously pursued opening the feast to everyone, especially those who took the feast outside the walls into the community, were healthy congregations. The congregations who were mostly interested in eating with each other, and who only grudgingly allowed others a seat at the table, were dying a slow death.

Our calling is to open our hearts, open our doors, open our tables. Invite one and all to join the feast of God’s goodness. And when we are afraid that what we have is too little, we must remember the little boy and offer up what we have, trusting God’s abundance and blessing to make it enough.

Resources

The Rev. Delmer Chilton is a frequent contributor of lectionary blogs to LivingLutheran.com. These blogs are commentaries on the lectionary texts for Sundays throughout the year. The blogs are a great way to gain insight on the texts as well as for sermon starters for pastors.

Pastors may also be interested in www.workingpreacher.org for sermon ideas.

Celebrating a child's baptismal anniversary

Here are ideas for parents and godparents to celebrate a child’s baptismal anniversary.

Preschool:

- Consider making or buying a “church bag” which contains quiet items such as books of saints or great Christians, lacing, paper and markers, or other items with religious themes. This bag then will be brought only to church on Sunday (so the child doesn’t get bored with it).
- Another idea is to give a toy that is to be played with only on Sunday. This way, the idea of setting aside a day that is special will make the toy more attractive to play with and will be remembered years later as their “Sunday” toy.

Grade School through Junior High:

- Ideas for presents are the following: candles, anything with the child’s name on it, Christian books, videos, or music.
- Light their baptismal candle and look at pictures for their baptismal day. Share a prayer and make the sign of the cross on each other’s forehead saying, “Remember your baptism. You are a child of God.” Or “You are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”
- If possible, attend your godchild’s first communion. Let them know that as a member of the family of God through the works of baptism, they receive forgiveness through the bread and the wine of the Lord’s Supper.
- Draw or paint together, send letters back and forth or email or telephone each other if you can’t be with one another. But, remind them continually that they are part of the family of God and are cared for and thought of specially year round.
- Some families, at the time of Confirmation, burn their children’s baptismal candle down. This signifies that the child has now started down the road of Christian responsibility and it will be up to them to continue their own growth and learning supported by their parents and godparents.

The power of an invitation

By Fern Lee Hagedorn

Last year, I returned to my Christian roots to be part of a church anniversary celebration. This was the place where, as a teenager, I was baptized and confirmed.

Mrs. Yee, a vibrant woman from our neighborhood, brought me to Jesus. We first met Mrs. Yee when she knocked on our apartment door to invite us children to the Lutheran church.

At our Chinese American congregation, generations looked out for one another. Our youth made annual visits to the chronically ill where we sang Christmas carols. I attended Chinese language classes every afternoon here. I played the fife in the marching band and participated in our thriving youth and young adult groups. The band marched in the freezing cold amid exploding firecrackers in the annual Lunar New Year parade. Members of the youth group taught Sunday school and vacation Bible school. We attended weekly Bible study. In preparation for Christmas and Easter, many of our hands waxed

the pews and scrubbed the floors.

This was a time and place where seeds of faith were planted, the earth was cultivated, and seedlings burst forth. At this congregation I felt accepted, nurtured, challenged and needed. Young people were appreciated. This multigenerational church was a center of activity both inside the building and out in the neighborhood.

Mrs. Yee is my role model of being a Lutheran.

After being out of touch for decades, I contacted Mrs. Yee, asking her to visit my mother who was living in a nursing home. Mrs. Yee faithfully visited my mother.



She shared the love of God in the language my parents could understand — Hoisan, a dialect of Cantonese. She provided baptismal instruction for my mother and father. After a few months, my

parents were baptized. Two years later, Mrs. Yee participated in Mom's funeral.

Over 20 "sons and daughters" of my childhood congregation made the church a "career choice," becoming pastors, deaconesses and lay professionals. And many continue to be faithful members of congregations across the country.

I continue to treasure my years in the congregation Mrs. Yee invited me into, and ask that, as we pray for each other, we

remember with gratitude our past, and yet move on, knowing that there is One who gives us the courage to travel the road ahead.

Resources

You can find more information, strategies and resources on the five Ethnic Ministries of the ELCA by going to:

- African Descent Ministries: www.ELCA.org/africandescent
- American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries: www.ELCA.org/american-indian-alaskanative
- Arab and Middle Eastern Ministries: www.ELCA.org/arab-middleeastern
- Asian and Pacific Islander Ministries: www.ELCA.org/asian-pacificislander
- Latino Ministries: www.ELCA.org/latino

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"We would love to meet and greet Jim soon, as well as introduce him to Good Shepherd and our beautiful city of Casper," said Maxine Anderson, 75. "We look forward to a fruitful and enjoyable partnership in the years to come."



In the vast prairielands to the north, Jessica Arneson, president of the 740-member Martin's Lutheran Church in Casselton, N.D., has a striking personal recollection from her congregation's journey with the ELCA.

"Our congregation is inclusive, accepting, forgiving and unconditionally loving," said Arneson, 34. "It's a second home that keeps members involved and connected beyond Sunday services." Arneson was sledding with church members one of those "beyond Sunday" afternoons when she

missed a curve. Six broken ribs later, she regained consciousness and felt "crackling" whenever she breathed. "My pastor, Paula Mehmel, was praying for me," Arneson said, "and for three weeks after that,

families from the congregation brought blessings and hot, homemade meals to our family every night for supper. It was a very humbling experience, and a strong showing of God's love through others."

Some final advice on showing "strong love" during our landmark anniversary came from 12-year-old Hayden Erdman of Las Vegas, Nev. "We should throw a big party!" Erdman said, smiling. "Let's invite everyone to come, donate a lot of money to the church, talk about the troubles we've been having, and then talk about our happy times."

The Rev. Jack Damien has a diverse religious background but found home in the ELCA. His father was a staunch Catholic, and his mother a dyed-in-the-wool Lutheran. In high school, his best friend attended the local synagogue. In college, he witnessed on the streets with charismatic Episcopalians and Methodists.

"The spirit and fervor of my friends fanned embers inside me, and I decided to learn more about Jesus," said Pastor Damien, who is now at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Casper, Wyo. He enrolled at Zion Bible College in Haverhill, Mass., a Pentecostal school, and excelled in his studies. Upon graduation, he could have applied for "credentials" in the Assemblies of God church, but something much deeper and more ancient was stirring inside him.

"I read again my old confirmation books and many of Luther's works," he said. "But what made those embers burst into flames was reading Luther's life story. I thought, 'I'm a lot like this guy.'" Pastor Damien enrolled in the ELCA's Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, plunged into his studies

and became the most requested student-preacher for area congregations. After ordination, he served as a pastor and interim minister in the Midwest and New England, and on a Sioux reservation in North Dakota.

"Jesus took a first-born, skinny little kid growing up in the desert region of southern California, opened doors of friendship and learning, and sent him across America to preach and live out the love of Christ," Pastor Damien said. "The ELCA gave me a home I never had, taught me the deeper truths of faith and word, and brought me to people and places I never imagined.

"In the past quarter century, I watched our denomination bridge the vast chasm between insular pockets of formalized Lutheran faith communities and a new era of multi-ethnic cultures, dizzying arrays of religious views, expanding social turmoil, and astounding advances in technology. In the next quarter century, the ELCA will be set to fan the flames of even more transforming social engagement, and our fire will be felt throughout the earth."



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Let's celebrate!

Find resources for making that "special event" even more special in this issue of Seeds for the Parish.



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