

seeds for the parish

Fall 2015

Resource Paper for Leaders of ELCA Congregations

www.ELCA.org



Music schools foster creativity and partnership opportunities.

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Celebrating the gifts and contributions of rostered women.

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Insights gained from volunteering in Rwanda

“What difference will it make that you have lived for a year in Rwanda?” This was one of the questions six Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) in Rwanda pondered at a retreat marking the end of their YAGM term in July.

Rwanda offers the challenging context of life in a nation reconciling and rebuilding after genocide. At the closing YAGM retreat, discussion focused on the lessons of the Rwandan genocide, wherein “Christians killed other Christians, often in the same churches where they had worshiped together.” African theologian Emmanuel Katongole in “Mirror to the Church” writes that the story of the Rwandan genocide “is not a story about something that happened to a strange people in a faraway place. It happened among the body of Christ, of which we are members. Rwanda is a lot closer to Washington, D.C., than most of us care to think.”

For the YAGMs who lived in Rwanda this past year, their experiences provided a mirror for seeing and understanding the American context and the American church with new eyes. YAGM Jacob Sprang noted he would “return to the U.S. with a renewed commitment to making a difference, to not accepting the inequities we see in America, and to understanding that accountability is essential to patriotism.”

As the Rwanda YAGM team met together for their closing retreat, news from the U.S. highlighted the enduring racism in America, and affirmed the sense in which “Rwanda is a lot closer to the U.S. than we care to think.” This led to conversations about racism, privilege and power, the mission of the church and what it means to be one in the body of Christ in a broken and divided world.

“Living in Rwanda taught me how much I want to engage cultural diversity in my

church and in my work, and also taught me how difficult this can be,” said YAGM Sarah Brock.

The Service of Repentance and Mourning provided by the ELCA in response to the Charleston, S.C., shootings, as well as Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton’s recent racial justice messages, were resources used to ground the YAGMs in prayerful preparation for their return to the U.S.

Young adults, part of the ELCA’s international program for people ages 21-29, returned with stories, questions and a commitment to living into identities transformed by their global mission experience.

Learn about the Young Adults in Global Mission program at www.ELCA.org/en/Our-Work/Global-Church/Global-Mission/Young-Adults-in-Global-Mission or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ELCAYAGM.



Exploring the history of Lutherans in Europe and America.

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Involving members in discussions about faith and theology.

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Church-affiliated music schools: rewarding partnership

By Kristen Forman

The dearth of excellent music education in public schools is a well-documented fact. ELCA congregations too, are constantly looking for ways to involve themselves more in their communities.

What if these two realities merged to form a new collaboration? What if parishes took up the time-honored mantle of being artistic leaders in their cities? What if this energy were focused on our young people? How could the gospel be heard anew if parishes extended their ministry to community music education?

These are questions we have been asking ourselves at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music.

Based on a hunch that there are numerous benefits for congregations, children and communities in programs that provide individual music lessons in parish settings, we decided to explore further by talking with leaders of existing programs.

Martin Jean, professor of organ and director of the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, and ELCA worship staff led us to Beverly Claflin, director of worship and music at Mount Olivet Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. This congregation of roughly 13,000 members worshipping on two campuses launched the Mount Olivet School of Music in 2003. Over the past 12 years it has grown to serve approximately 600 students with not just one-to-one lessons, but group music classes, summer camps, and band and orchestral ensembles as well.

“The school has enhanced the life of the church in so many ways, and the benefits to

the children and families who participate are equally numerous,” Claflin said.

The music school brings the community into the congregation’s facilities since about two-thirds of the students are not from families already affiliated with the parish.

Mount Olivet School of Music represents a relatively large example of a successful parish-based music program. We wanted to get a fuller picture of various program models, so we also met with smaller schools affiliated with churches in different parts of the country and from different denominations.

“As the individual program offerings were described, we realized that, while each school had its own challenges and opportunities, we also shared many commonalities, chief among them the goal of providing quality music instruction as part of a church outreach program,” said Joseph Ripka, organist and artistic director at Calvary School of Music, Stonington, Conn.

As might be expected, tuition fees and financial arrangements with the host church vary among the three schools, with 70 to 100 percent of the income going to teacher salaries. All schools provide some degree of scholarship assistance to qualified families.

Some churches provide significant in-kind assistance by way of artistic or administrative staff salaries and free use of facilities. In one case, the school operates independently and reimburses the church for specific expenses such as utilities and office assistance.



Operational differences aside, conversation with the schools’ directors circled back to their common objectives as a community outreach arm of the church.

“We feel certain that there is potential for real synergy here,” Jean said. “These few examples have shown us that when parishes extend themselves to new populations in their communities, such programs will pay for themselves or even form new revenue streams for the church.”

The first one-day workshop to train leaders will be on Saturday, Oct. 24, at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music facilities on the Yale campus in New Haven, Conn. Details available at www.ism.yale.edu/musicworkshop.

Forman is executive assistant to the director, Yale Institute of Sacred Music.

seeds for the parish

ELCA.org/seeds
LivingLutheran.com/seeds

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New reference tools for theological study

‘**Fortress Commentary on the Bible: The Old Testament and Apocrypha**,’ Gale A. Yee, Hugh R. Page Jr., Matthew J.M. Coomber, editors (October, 2014)

‘**Fortress Commentary on the Bible: The New Testament**,’ Margaret Aymer, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, David A. Sánchez, editors (October 2014)

Contexts matter in preaching. *The Fortress Commentary on the Bible* features the work of more than 75 top biblical scholars, presenting a balanced synthesis of current scholarship and enabling readers to interpret Scripture for the contexts of a complex and pluralistic world. The volumes balance attention to ancient biblical contexts with attention to contemporary

challenges and to the ethics of responsible interpretation. Pastors looking for the latest biblical scholarship will be eager to add the *Fortress Commentary on the Bible* to their shelves.

‘**The Annotated Luther, Volume 1: The Roots of Reform**,’ Timothy J. Wengert, editor (September 2015)

‘**The Annotated Luther, Volume 2: Word and Faith**,’ Kirsi I. Stjerna, editor (September 2015)

As congregations prepare for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, Fortress Press is excited to offer *The Annotated Luther*, a series of six volumes featuring 75 of Martin Luther’s most essential writings,

with new and updated translations based on *Luther’s Works: The American Edition*. Each selected writing is accompanied by a new introduction, annotations providing key contextual background, translation notes and references, and visual enhancements including maps, illustrations, timelines, art and photos.

This series, featuring the work of more than 40 leading scholars, will be an essential reference tool for pastors and congregations who want to explore Luther and his writings with greater depth and clarity. Volume 1 and Volume 2 now available.

Learn more and place orders at www.fortresspress.com.

Welcoming a new program director for Ministry with Children



Let me introduce myself. I'm Janelle Rozek Hooper, the new program director for ELCA Ministry with Children. My role is to advocate for children's ministry and support leaders working in children's ministry.

This part-time gig "rounds out" the churchwide staff working on First Third of Life Faith Formation. I work in partnership with ELCA Youth Ministry, Young Adult Ministry, Youth Gathering and Campus Ministry staff. Together we strive to support ELCA ministries in congregations, on campuses and in synods throughout the ELCA.

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton encourages all of us to remember "we are church together." And being church together integrates shared faith stories from the past and present that have the power to shape our future. Part of my faith story is my growing up as a Lutheran in Texas. My experience of having served as president of the Lutheran Youth Organization in the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod greatly shaped my faith and sense of call, as did my participation in ELCA Youth Gatherings. Who knew there were thousands of Lutheran youth? Attending my first Youth Gathering in

Dallas rocked my world; I felt like I belonged to a Christian movement much bigger than myself or my congregation.

When something shapes you at a young age like the church did for me, it becomes essential to give back. So for the past 12 years as a pastor serving congregations in the suburbs of Chicago and Houston, I've worked extensively with First Third of Life Faith Formation. I also have a 4- and 6-year-old at home, and my husband and I see the impact of our faith sharing and church life in their lives. Daily faith and life integration is essential to our family and to the church moving forward.

Being church together in the 21st century will continue to mean God's work being done through our hands and through our shared stories for the sake of the world. Needless to say, I'm excited about strengthening the ELCA's commitment to children's ministry through the life-changing work of ministry with folks in the First Third of Life. Please follow me on **Twitter at @ELCA4Kids**.

Pastor Janelle Rozek Hooper is program director for Ministry with Children **Janelle.Hooper@elca.org**



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An Eco-Justice Reformation for 2017 and beyond

What is your congregation doing to prepare for the 2017 observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation? There are many activities and resources being prepared across the church.

Included in these efforts is a group of ELCA pastors, teachers and laity that have formed the Eco-Justice Reformation 2017 Working Group. The group grew out of a conviction that the continuous reformation of the church leads its members to address the ecological crises facing humanity and the Earth.

In facing the changes to the Earth already taking place and looming threats, the church has the opportunity and ability—the responsibility—to renew its worship, theology, ethics and spirituality to embrace God’s deep and abiding love for creation and a human relationship with all life.

The seeds of the resources needed for such a reformation are rooted in our traditions and are already bearing fruit, according to the working group.

The group is urging a churchwide reformation within the ELCA and broader communities, encouraging synods, seminaries, colleges, outdoor ministries, social ministries, congregations, pastors and members

to embrace a holistic transformation.

We can experience new creation, just as the early Christians did, the group says: While indeed “the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains” (Romans 8:22), nevertheless, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

What your congregation can do

So what might your congregation do to prepare for an eco-justice reformation of the church? Bible study will show that Earth-keeping is the original vocation that seeks not to dominate and exploit Earth but “to till it and keep it.” (Genesis 2:15)

Every week your worship can celebrate God’s astounding love for creation and our commitment to preserve and restore it. A study of Martin Luther’s theology will reveal his sacramental understanding that all of life has been invested with the full presence of God, a basis for treating all of life with deep reverence.

A study of our Lutheran traditions and practices will show that we seek justice in solidarity with the poor, hungry, sick, elderly, orphans and the vulnerable in the midst of disaster; we consider rac-

ism, inequality and struggles for land and sovereignty as critical issues for us to address. Now we extend this to solidarity with our vulnerable fellow creatures—plants and animals endangered by changing climate and the pollution or depletion of the air, land and water we all share and depend on. We seek an “integrated justice” that sees justice for humans and all of the Earth community as interrelated.

It is a religious and theological issue

Issues of justice are always moral and political issues, but, more importantly and at the same time, they are religious issues that have to do with our relationship with God and our commitment to act with righteousness toward all of God’s creation, according to members of the working group. They have been preparing resources for congregations to embrace this challenge for the 2017 observance and beyond: worship materials, educational



and catechetical materials, preaching resources, a speakers’ bureau, theological reflections, fliers and bulletin inserts, devotional practices, guidelines to hold events, and steps to green congregational buildings and grounds.

To learn more about the working group, access resources, share ideas and suggestions, and to watch a brief video on why we need an Eco-Justice Reformation by Barbara Rossing, professor of New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, visit www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org/500th-anniversary-of-the-reformation.

Celebrating the ordination of women in the ELCA

This year marks the 45th anniversary of the ordination of women in the ELCA. Such an anniversary provides an opportunity to lift up and celebrate the many gifts and talents rostered women have brought and continue to bring to the ELCA.

To help synods, congregations and other groups celebrate the 45th anniversary, a celebratory worship resource is available at www.ELCA.org/en/Resources/Worship under the liturgy tab. This resource can be adapted for use in a variety of ways, such as in congregations, at synod events, and gatherings of lay and rostered leaders.

In the past, when the ELCA highlighted the anniversary of the ordination of women, data was collected by ELCA Research and Evaluation. This data was used to do intentional analysis of the experiences of rostered women in the ELCA, providing material for conversations around the experiences of rostered

women in our church. The collection and distribution of data for conversations will continue in celebration of the 45th anniversary of the ordination of women.

The new data will include an analysis of the current rostered leader database as well as survey data from a number of audiences, including rostered leaders, seminarians and members-at-large. During the time leading up to the 50th anniversary, the information gathered will be used to initiate specific conversations with people across the ELCA to continue the development of goals that foster equality and healthy ministry opportunities.

Information from the survey will be available by fall 2015 and sent to all synods. Direct questions or suggestions to Cherlyne Beck, program director for support of rostered leaders, at Cherlyne.Beck@elca.org.



Thank members, inspire giving with ‘Stories of Faith in Action’



Stories of Faith in Action is a free, annual publication that highlights how God is changing lives through mission support, the percentage of your congregational offering that is shared with your synod and your churchwide organization.

Each year ELCA congregations vote to set aside a percentage of their finances for mission support, but members may

wonder, especially when finances are challenging, how is our mission support offering used by our synod and churchwide organization?

This resource answers this question through stories and pictures that illustrate our shared ministry as the ELCA, and it is now available at www.ELCA.org/Resources/Stories-of-Faith-in-Action. (Congregations pay shipping.)

Here are a few ways you can use *Stories of Faith in Action* to thank and inspire your congregation:

- **Use it as part of your annual stewardship emphasis.** Distribute *Stories of Faith in Action* in stewardship packets and/or keep them near your congregation's bulletin board. Let your members know that their giving in 2014 helped make these stories possible. Download bulletin inserts for printing and find a printer-friendly, color poster to hang on a bulletin board at www.ELCA.org/Resources/Stories-of-Faith-in-Action.
- **Share it with new and homebound members.** Share the colorful, inviting features of *Stories of Faith in Action* at

new-member orientations and with those who have limited mobility to help them feel more connected to the work of the wider church.

- **Looking for creative ways to spark new ministries in your congregation?** Prior to an event, assign selected reading in *Stories of Faith in Action*. During breakout sessions, use the stories as a springboard for brainstorming.

Visit www.ELCA.org/Resources/Stories-of-Faith-in-Action now to:

- Order free copies of *Stories of Faith in Action* to be delivered to your congregation.
- Download bulletin inserts containing selected stories from this publication.
- Download a mission support FAQ sheet for council, finance or congregational meetings.
- Download a mission support poster template for printing at your congregation or at your local copy center.

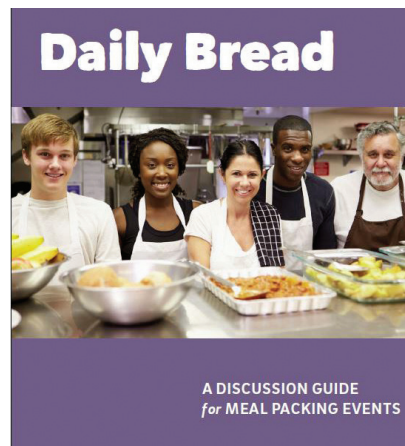
A guide for packing meals to fight hunger

Is your congregation planning an event to pack meals for people who are hungry? “Daily Bread: A Discussion Guide for Meal-Packing Events” is a new resource from ELCA World Hunger.

With fun activities, prayers and stories based on real-life situations, this guide will help your group have deep, meaningful conversations about hunger, service

and what it means to be church for the sake of the world.

“Daily Bread” will help guide your group along the way, from preparing to pack to celebrating and reflecting on the work you’ve done. Download it for free at www.ELCA.org/hunger/resources. (Click on the “Hunger Ed” tab.)



ELCA World Hunger featured as campaign’s 2016 theme

Next year, the *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA* will emphasize ELCA World Hunger.

Beginning Sunday, Feb. 7, congregations across the ELCA are encouraged to join ELCA World Hunger in a Lenten journey to support and engage in this life-changing work.

New resources for Lent, including an exclusive 40-day devotional, and special Super Bowl, Valentine’s Day, Leap Day and other initiatives, will be mailed to congregations later this fall. Resources will also be made available online at www.ELCA.org/Resources/Campaign-for-the-ELCA.



IGNITE Administrator & Pastor Conference in Chicago— Feb. 21-24



Once a year, administrators and pastors from the more than 1,500 ELCA congregation-based schools and early childhood centers gather to network and learn to achieve the highest quality programming possible. This opportunity to come together to network and learn is the best of its kind. For the fifth straight year, the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association will cohost its Administrator & Pastor Conference with the Association of Lutheran Development Executives. But you don’t have to be a member of either group to attend.

Find the resources you need to realize your mission with the associations’ renowned offerings of fellowship, worship, fun and professional development. Whether you are starting your fundraising climb or need a boost to reach the next level, there are sessions for you: from a keynote with author, editor, teacher and consultant John Roberto and plenary session with ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton to workshops on outdoor classrooms, fundraising, church/school relationships, technology, professional development and staffing.

The 2016 conference will be at the historic Palmer House Hotel in Chicago. This elegant hotel in the heart of the city’s theater and financial district is just steps from the Art Institute, Millennium Park, State Street shopping and Lake Michigan.

Learn more about the conference and register at www.aldeignite.com.

Our Lutheran roots and story in America

As we near the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and wonder what our mission as Lutherans is in our current culture, it is helpful to see how God has shaped the Lutheran church over time. Select Learning has two dynamic resources to help congregations understand where we have come from, in order to support our life of faith and service in the world today. Both resources feature Martin Marty, who developed the scope and sequence for this series.

“Reformation Roots”

Do you ever wonder why we have so many Christian denominations and if there is really much difference between them? The answers to these questions lie in the dramatic and turbulent times of the Reformation. This high definition series brings to life the stories and struggles that still impact us today. Each of the 12 sessions is 20-30 minutes long and is accompanied by a study guide designed for 50-60 minutes of class time. Available in electronic form at www.selectlearning.org/store/all/reformation-roots.

“We Must Plant the Church: The Story of Lutherans in America”

When Lutherans came to America, they brought with them Martin Luther’s belief that people of faith engage the big questions of the day.

This story is characterized by the tension between honoring the European roots of the church and adapting to the new realities of American life. The Lutheran church, from its earliest days, faced religious pluralism, intolerance, racism, war, lack of state support and diversity of languages and traditions. It wasn’t easy then, and it isn’t easy now. Understanding American Lutheran history can change the way we see ourselves and our future. This six-session resource has a study guide for a 50-60 minute adult forum. Available in electronic form at www.selectlearning.org/store/all/we-must-plant-church-story-lutherans-america.

These and other resources can be found at www.selectlearning.org.

New resources for your students

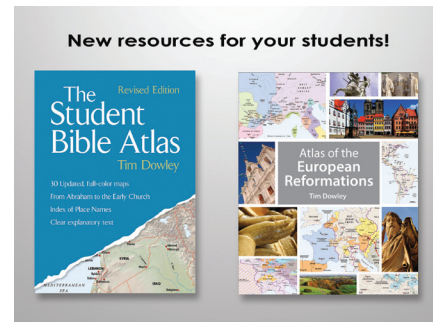
“The Student Bible Atlas” by Tim Dowley (October 2015)

Discover the Bible like you’ve never seen it before. For more than 25 years, *The Student Bible Atlas* has been a trusted companion for Bible students of all ages and interests, and now it’s updated in a new edition. *The Student Bible Atlas* contains 30 maps covering both Old and New Testaments, outlines of journeys, a helpful index of place names, and a guide to the major archaeology sites of the Middle East. For church groups and families alike.

“When Lightning Struck!: The Story of Martin Luther” by Danika Cooley (November 2015)

Explore the action-packed story of Martin Luther’s life with your students with Danika Cooley’s new book *When Lightning Struck!: The Story of Martin Luther*.

In this fast-paced novel of Luther’s life, teen readers (and more than a few adults) will be introduced to a fascinating time when princes ruled Europe and knights roamed the countryside. They’ll learn about a time when powerful forces lined up against each other, and believing the wrong thing could get you killed.



When Lightning Struck! is far more than just an adventure story, of course. It also tells a theological story. Drawing carefully from Luther’s words, this book introduces readers to a kindred spirit who struggled with what knowing God through Scripture means for daily life.

“Atlas of the European Reformations” by Tim Dowley (October 2015)

Students and readers can also delve deeper into the context of the Reformation with study of key locations and events through the new *Atlas of the European Reformations*, the only Reformation atlas available today. A resource for students ranging from the middle grades through adult continuing education.

Learn more and place orders at www.fortresspress.com.


a new lenten devotional FOR YOUR CONGREGATION



Bearing Fruit: Devotions for Lent 2016 is a full-color devotional that takes you through Lent with daily readings from Colossians. Each reading is accompanied by a photo, quote, reflection, and prayer.

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 AUGSBURG FORTRESS

The International Violence Against Women Act

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and there is an easy way to take action: Ask your congressional representative to support the reauthorization of the

International Violence Against Women Act, which was reintroduced in the House and Senate in March.

The act enhances efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence by increasing legal protections, victims’ access to health care and opportunities for women around the world. The ELCA, concerned with the life and dignity of God’s good creation, recognizes that violence against women is a prevalent and critical



problem in modern society. Nearly 1 in 3 women are expected to experience gender-based violence in their lifetime.

Your voice, as a person of faith and a leader in your community, can have a

positive effect. Learn more about this legislation from ELCA Advocacy (www.ELCA.org/advocacy) and urge your representatives to support the act through the ELCA Advocacy Action Center (www.capwiz.com/elca/issues).

Learn more about gender-based violence and discover October Domestic Violence Awareness Month worship resources at www.ELCA.org/justiceforwomen.

Doing our best to protect children and youth



Cherish All Children

Pray + Educate + Connect + Act

Is your heart moved by the stories of child sex trafficking in the news? Are you wondering what you can do about it? Not sure where to start?

Cherish All Children is an ELCA ministry that equips congregations to prevent child sexual exploitation. Its vision is that every ELCA congregation will do its best work so all children are cherished, not exploited.

Its resources and training are available for congregations to help members pray, educate, connect and act on behalf of children. Some resources are available through your email:

- **Wednesday Prayer**, a weekly reflection and prayer, is based upon one of the lectionary Bible readings. Get support and encouragement.
- **E-Quipped for Prevention**, a bimonthly newsletter filled with prevention ideas, stories from congregations, how-tos and links to more information.

Go to www.cherishallchildren.org and add your name to the Cherish All Children mailing list. While on the website, look for other resources you can download, including:

- **“Prayers for Cherishing Children”** (books I and II), booklets of prayers for children for each day of the month.
- **Mobilize Prayer—End Demand campaign** offers a sample prayer to engage yourself and your congregation in prayer to end the demand for the trafficking of children.

The “Congregation Manual” is a collection of how-tos and stories from congregations to help you get started or re-energize your prevention efforts. Contact the Cherish All Children office for a copy. Additional articles and information about preventing child sexual exploitation are available on the Cherish All Children website and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/cherishallchildren).

A critical part of protecting children in congregations and communities is training and equipping leaders and volunteers. Cherish All Children can help you with training through:

- **Encouragement Circle**, a gathering of leaders who help and encourage one another to engage their congregations in prevention. (Meets monthly by conference call.)
- **Monthly webinars** to provide tips and information for each area of emphasis: pray, educate, connect and act.
- **Individual consultation** for support, ideas and encouragement.

Visit www.cherishallchildren.org for the training schedule and registration information. Congregations interested in hosting a training will learn to raise awareness of trafficking and make a plan of action. Contact 612-280-1259 or access the Cherish All Children website or Facebook page.

Engage your congregation in discussions



Looking to engage your congregation in deeper discussions centered on understanding Scripture, discovering Jesus, understanding the foundations of the Christian tradition, exerting moral courage and appropriate godly anger? Check out the latest titles from Fortress Press designed to inform and inspire a deeper engagement in your congregation and to spark conversation around a variety of stimulating and diverse subjects:

- *51% Christian: Finding Faith after Certainty* by Mark Stenberg (coming November 2015).
- *Making Love with Scripture: Why the Bible Doesn't Mean How You Think It Means* by Jacob D. Myers (November 2015).
- *The Homebrewed Christianity Guide to Jesus: Lord, Liar, Lunatic ... Or Awesome?* by Tripp Fuller (November 2015).
- *Hoping Against Hope: Confessions of a Postmodern Pilgrim* by John D. Caputo (October, 2015).
- *Angry Like Jesus: Using His Example to Spark Your Moral Courage* by Sarah Sumner (November 2015).
- *Twenty Questions That Shaped World Christian History* by Derek Cooper (October 2015).

Learn more and place orders at www.fortresspress.com.

Connect church and home with Sparkhouse Family

Christian education directors and church leaders are passionate about helping families find ways to fit faith into the rhythm of their daily lives, but making this a reality can be a challenge. Sparkhouse Family, the new imprint of Sparkhouse, was born out of a desire to spread the gospel by creating resources designed to spark new life in Christian families as they move through their weekly routines outside of Sunday worship.

Sparkhouse Family strives to inspire Bible-based learning for kids through creativity and compelling storytelling. Even when families only have a few minutes for some quick faith time together, entertaining videos and picture books offer opportunities to laugh and talk about the silly and the serious. Imaginative illustrations,



clever retellings, and fun coloring and drawing activities engage children with the stories. Free, downloadable parent guides equip parents to have thoughtful conversations with their kids about faith during dinnertime, bedtime or car-time.

The first four Sparkhouse Family product lines spring from some of Sparkhouse's

most-loved children's ministry curricula that have now been customized for families to use at home. Holy Moly uses humor and childlike art to engage kids as they look, listen and read. Spark is designed to make it easy and fun for kids and parents to get to know the Bible together. Playful characters in Whirl videos model what it's like for kids to live out their faith. Quirky humor in the Connect video series captures preteens' attention as they learn how the Bible relates to their lives.

Each video and book is designed to make families laugh, discuss, and grow in their understanding of God's word and God's love. To learn more about Sparkhouse Family, visit www.sparkhouse.org.



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We are Lutheran. We are a church that proclaims the good news of Jesus Christ and believes that through this gospel we are justified by God's grace through faith. Our roots are in Christ, Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions and in our theology that continues to be shaped over time. Therefore, we are a church deeply rooted and always being made new. *Photo: Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton blessing ELCA Youth Gathering participants with the sign of the cross in Detroit.*



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