

Seeds for the Parish

Spring 2016

Resource paper for leaders of ELCA congregations

www.ELCA.org



Jazz, worship and Lutheran liturgy play well together in the city

If you're in New York City and feel a little overwhelmed by all the people, noise, skyscrapers, cars and trains, head for Midtown Manhattan and seek out Saint Peter's Lutheran Church.

Here you'll find a minimalist-looking granite, wood and glass building, in stark contrast to its surroundings. But walk through the sanctuary doors of Saint Peter's and you're in a special space for prayer, worship and music—especially great jazz.

"We have to think about how we welcome people and bring light and warmth into our space—and music is a huge part of it," explained Ike Sturm, music director for the jazz ministry at Saint Peter's.

Saint Peter's jazz ministry has a dynamic 50-year history. "We're near what was once an epicenter of jazz. A lot of jazz musicians

lived and played right in the neighborhood where the church is located," Sturm said.

It started with a pastor, John Gensel, "responding to people's needs and getting involved in the lives of jazz musicians who needed spiritual support," Sturm reflected. They were also invited to share their music in a different context—church. That special relationship with musicians became a lasting aspect of Saint Peter's ministry and presence.

"The musicians offer up the gifts and music that they love, and we offer a chance for their voices to be heard. At the same time, it gives us a unique take on our worship, liturgy and language of the church," reflected Sturm. "With the imagination of the musicians that come in, the word and all the parts of our Lutheran

liturgy, it's dynamic—literally different every single time we worship."

Recently, Sturm has been working on complementing the wealth of world-class jazz musicians playing at Saint Peter's with more volunteer musicians of varying abilities and interests. A new monthly program, Jazz for All, is doing just that by drawing together people of different ages, abilities and experience levels—including teenagers, retirees and homeless people.

They gather for music, learning, prayer and fellowship and also find spiritual nourishment and support. Sturm describes it as "a wildly, beautifully diverse group of people."

"It's exciting. We have a lot of great, beautiful music happening at a really high level here, and this gives us a nice

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Grace Gathering prepares ELCA for anniversary of Reformation.

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Is your congregation prepared for severe weather or an emergency?

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"God's work. Our hands." Sunday set for Sept. 11.

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Re-examining evil, the devil and demons in today's world.

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

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All invited to Grace Gathering this summer

The 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 provides an opportunity to rejoice in the life-giving, liberating power of the gospel and to be renewed in its service.

This summer the ELCA is hosting Grace Gathering, a new event held in conjunction with the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in New Orleans Aug. 10-13. Grace Gathering participants will experience the ELCA's vitality when it is gathered in assembly and have the opportunity to plan and prepare for local and synodical activities that bring the witness of the Reformation into the 21st century.

Grace Gathering participants will worship with assembly voting members, engage in experiential learning during the God's Grace in Action Afternoon and attend workshops that will equip congregations and synods with tools to prepare for 500th anniversary observances.

In addition to a Bible study, celebratory banquet and program, there will be presentations by Presiding Bishop Elizabeth

Eaton and a keynote address by Leymah Gbowee, Nobel Peace Prize winner.

Workshops will focus on the Reformation's history and relevance, planning local observances as well as Lutheranism today. There will be more than 20 workshops, including:

- From Conflict to Communion: Common History: Common Prayer, Common Hope.
- What Does It Mean to Be Lutheran in a Multi-Religious World?
- The 95 Theses and Other Key Reformation Documents.
- The "Noble Art" of Music
- 500 Years Later: Lutheran Women Today.

The partnership of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly and Grace Gathering will give members an opportunity to connect with one another, reflect on the Reformation and the Lutheran witness as well as discover ways to observe this milestone anniversary with our sisters and brothers.



August 10-13

New Orleans

ELCA.org/GraceGathering

#ELCAGG

Eaton notes, "As a synod bishop I was always delighted by the wonder and excitement of first-time synod assembly attendees. People were happily surprised by the scope of the work we do as the ELCA. They found the worship inspiring and were energized by being around so many other Lutherans. So I thought, why not make it possible for people to have that same kind of experience at a churchwide assembly." Thus the idea of the Grace Gathering was born.

To learn more about Grace Gathering and register, visit ELCA.org/Grace-Gathering.

Seeds for the Parish

ELCA.org/seeds

LivingLutheran.com/seeds

Seeds for the Parish (ISSN 0897-5663) is published four times a year (January, April, August and October). It is distributed without charge to congregations, rostered clergy and lay leaders, retired rostered leaders, synod offices and resource centers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Current and past issues of *Seeds for the Parish* are available for download at ELCA.org/Resources/Seeds-for-the-Parish.

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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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Called Forward Together in Christ: A process to discern the ELCA's future

As we anticipate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, many people are asking what kind of church do we believe God is calling the ELCA to become? How do we become an inclusive, diverse church that is inspiring and relevant in different communities?

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton is leading a process endorsed by the ELCA Church Council and in collaboration with the Conference of Bishops and other leaders from across this church that will guide us as a church together to discern in faith the future of the ELCA.

Through an initiative titled Called Forward Together in Christ, we'll be assessing where we are as God's people and working to understand what God has in store for us. We are going to do a lot of listening—to God and to one another.

Together, we will create a vision for the future ELCA, a church with solid founda-

tions that shares the good news of Jesus Christ and makes a difference in the world.

What is the Called Forward Together in Christ process?

In the three main stages of Called Forward Together in Christ we will:

- Have a **conversation across this church** about the future.
- Consult on **directions and priorities** that emerge.
- Reach **decisions as a church** about the directions in which we will head.

Between now and May, people in ELCA congregations, synods, social ministries, educational institutions and the churchwide office will be invited to take part in the conversations by providing ideas and feedback—hearing from as many people as possible.

In July, a consultation paper on the

future directions of the ELCA (based on these conversations) will be released. It will present themes and ideas for the future that will be tested in August and September.

At its November meeting, the ELCA Church Council will consider and approve a statement to articulate the future directions and priorities for our church. The goal is to launch this statement in 2017 as part of the ELCA's Reformation anniversary observance and begin to move in the direction in which God has called us.

Look for information about this initiative at upcoming meetings, including the Conference of Bishops gatherings, ELCA Church Council meetings, synod assemblies, the ELCA Multicultural Summit and the Churchwide Assembly, and Grace Gathering event this August. For more information, visit ELCA.org/future.

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balance of community-driven music with a different focus," he said.

Sturm believes congregations can find "strong" resources for nontraditional music and worship in partnerships

formed with musicians and music programs in their communities. "There are great musicians everywhere—at colleges, high schools, middle schools, folk festivals, wherever musicians play."

"We really need to learn how to make these things a vibrant part of what we are doing in church ... looking for intersections and partnerships everywhere, and being creative," suggested Sturm.

Five tips to prepare your congregation for storm season

When the skies clear, flooding subsides, tremors stop and the world is no longer watching, Lutheran Disaster Response stays to provide ongoing assistance to those in need. In lieu of this, being prepared—having a written plan—can reduce the impact of disasters and expedite recovery from damage that may occur.

The Lutheran Disaster Response has prepared a “Congregational Disaster Preparedness Guidebook” to assist congregations and communities in their planning. To quote the guidebook, it “outlines a step-by-step process for congregations to create their unique preparedness plan.” It also provides information on the long-term recovery process, worship during disaster, emotional and spiritual care, and links to other resources.

For those looking to start the conversation about preparedness in their congregation, here are five tips Lutheran Disaster Response offers:

1. Communication strategy

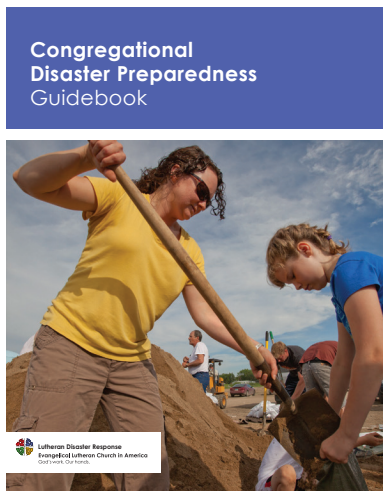
Communication is essential in times of disaster, however, it may not always be as simple as a phone call. Power, telephone and cable lines may be damaged and disrupt communications. It is important that your congregation discusses how to communicate through alternative means.

2. Decision-making process

Developing a procedure for making decisions in an emergency is essential to being prepared. It can assist the congregation to adjust more smoothly and continue to function. Under normal circumstances, most decisions are deferred to the pastor, church staff or congregation council. In a disaster situation, the pastor may not be available or be equipped to handle the immediate situation, and may be needed to provide critical spiritual and emotional care for people.

3. Inventory and insurance

It's important to be aware of the congregation's assets, important documents and insurance coverage. Consider where to store



important documents and how computer files are backed up in case something happens to the building, files and computers. A conversation about the congregation's vulnerabilities to loss, even if they can't be immediately addressed, will aid the recovery if disaster strikes.

4. Emergency operation

Any number of emergencies or disasters can happen when the church is in use by the congregation or others. It is important that plans be in place for things such as;

- Evacuations.
- Lockdowns with people indoors.
- Shelter.

Basic emergency plans and instructions should be posted prominently near light switches or doorways so anyone can access the information without searching for someone in charge. All staff, volunteers and council members should be familiar with emergency procedures.

5. Congregational relationships and involvement

When a disaster occurs, a community must come together to care for each other. If the congregation is not directly affected by a disaster in the area, consider joining community efforts to provide temporary relief and long-term recovery to those impacted by the disaster.

Such opportunities may surface as you become aware of needs and requests from outside organizations, first responders, neighbors and members of the congregation. Building relationships with disaster-response agencies and faith-based organizations in your region will help you provide efficient and effective responses that address the critical short- and long-term needs of your community.

Order “Congregational Disaster Preparedness Guidebook” today and begin your planning and preparations now. Go to ELCA.org/en/Resources/Lutheran-Disaster-Response and click on the “General” tab to download the guidebook and other resources for emergency and disaster planning.



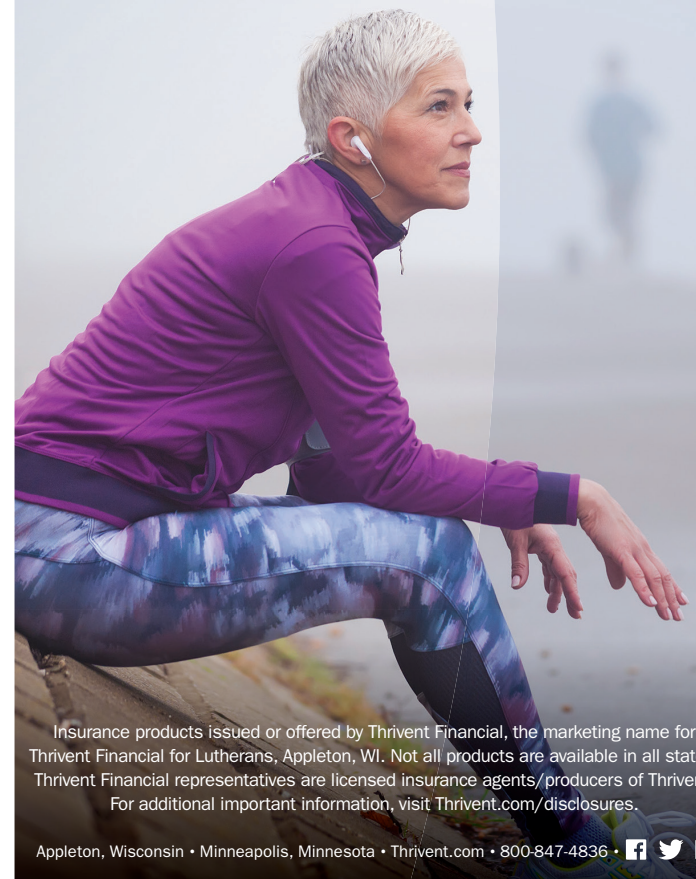
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On the way to greater unity: Lutherans and Catholics prepare declaration



Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the ELCA, and Denis Madden, auxiliary bishop of Baltimore and Roman Catholic co-chair of the task force that produced the ecumenical document, “Declaration on the Way.”

Preparing for the 500th Reformation anniversary in 2017, Lutherans and Roman Catholics in the U.S. have prepared an ecumenical text, “Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist.” At its heart are 32 “State-

ments of Agreement,” existing points of convergence whose cumulative impact has surprised even many of those who have closely followed the 50 years of dialogue between the two traditions. The document also indicates differ-

ences that remain and suggests some possible ways forward.

In its conclusion, the “Declaration” calls for reception at all levels—from international bodies to local settings, for which it offers concrete suggestions. It encourages Catholics and Lutherans locally to connect in “a deeper commitment to Christ and greater engagement and collaboration with one another.” It also suggests that the expansion of opportunities for Lutherans and Catholics to receive Holy Communion together would be a sign of the agreements already reached.

In August, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly will consider the “Statement of Agreements.” It already has been unanimously affirmed by the Church Council and by the Conference of Bishops, as well as by the Bishops Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The text of the “Declaration on the Way” and more information are available at ELCA.org/Declaration-on-the-Way.

Freed in Christ to serve: The 2016 dedicated day of service

The ELCA’s dedicated day of service—known as “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday—will be Sunday, Sept. 11. The day offers an opportunity for Lutherans to extend the work they do in their communities every day, from preparing and delivering meals to people rendered homeless to thanking emergency responders. This year’s day of service will also mark the 15-year anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States.

“The world can be a dangerous place. But there are some who, when disaster strikes, run toward the danger. These are first responders, firefighters, police and EMTs, who live out their baptismal vocation in service to their communities in times of intense need. They do God’s work with their hands,” said Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton.

She added, “The Rev. Stephen Bouman, executive director for ELCA Congregational and Synodical Mission and

former bishop of the ELCA Metropolitan New York Synod at the time of Sept. 11, recounts this story: “He had a pastor in his synod who was a chaplain to the fire department. When the first plane hit the first tower, the chaplain rushed to the site where firefighters were mustering. He prayed with them and then took oil and marked their foreheads with the cross. Then the firefighters rushed into the building. The people who survived said they could see the crosses shining on the foreheads of the firefighters.

“In baptism we have been marked with the cross. We are the ones who go into the broken places of the world. We are the ones who, by showing up on



‘God’s work. Our hands.’ Sunday, shine the light of the cross in our communities.”

Since 2013, thousands of ELCA congregations have dedicated a day to serve communities in ways that share the love of

God with all people. Congregations are encouraged to select another day if Sept. 11 is not feasible.

Resources designed to help congregations prepare for their day will be available soon at ELCA.org/dayofservice. A video highlighting the 2015 dedicated day of service is available at <https://vimeo.com/elca/review/145542901/25f0d2a585>.

ELCA’s flagship publication to become Living Lutheran

Beginning with its April issue, The Lutheran magazine will be called Living Lutheran. A new accompanying website, LivingLutheran.org, will also make its debut in April.

Living Lutheran—the flagship publication of the ELCA—will include a cover story and features that lift up the mission and ministries of our church through congregations, synods and the church-wide organization.

You can expect to receive inspiring stories, news and information, theological insights and more. The magazine’s departments will continue the “Deeper understanding” series, reflections, the presiding bishop’s column. New departments will include a youth and family page, and a page devoted to social media and resources.

The accompanying Living Lutheran website will offer content original to it, such as blogs from various voices across this church and breaking news. A special thanks goes out to ELCA members and leaders who took part in research and offered feedback that influenced changes in print and online publications.

Visit Livinglutheran.org and subscribe to the print publication by calling 800-328-4648.

Youth ministry, faith formation site relaunched

The ELCA Youth Ministry Network has rebuilt and relaunched MartinsList.org, its congregational resource sharing site for faith formation. Network members can upload resources they have created—Bible studies, curriculum, retreats, games and more. Or, they can share URLs of online resources they’ve found to be helpful in their ministries. Visit MartinsList.org for more information.

Learn more about, and join, the ELCA Youth Ministry Network at elcaymnet.org.

'Engaging Others, Knowing Ourselves: A Lutheran Calling in a Multi-Religious World'

We live and work in an increasingly multiethnic and interreligious context. In our daily encounter with diversity, what are the theological and practical challenges we face? What from our Lutheran tradition is instructive for understanding our inter-religious calling and living out our commitments? In short, what does it mean to be Lutheran in a multi-religious world?

In late 2012, the ELCA Consultative Panels on Lutheran-Jewish and Lutheran-Muslim Relations undertook an interreligious case studies project to explore these questions. A call for submissions of real-life cases of interreligious engagement in ELCA ministry contexts went out. More than 50 case studies were received and woven together with historical analysis, practical tips and theological reflection. The culminating book, "Engaging Others, Knowing Ourselves: A Lutheran Calling in a Multi-Religious World," will be published by Lutheran University Press in March.

This book is a contribution toward the 500th observance of the Reformation and



Participants at the first Interfaith Understanding Conference at Augustana College, Rock Island, Ill., June 2014. The mural, "Cadence of Diversity," was painted by more than 50 Augustana students in 2009-10, led by art professor Peter Xiao. Photograph by Sarah Bromberger, Augustana class of 2016.

a resource for study, dialogue and reflection. An appendix includes links to helpful resources and interreligious organizations, as well as detailed guidance for group study and discussion.

"Engaging Others" can be ordered at lutheranupress.org/Books/Engaging_Oth-

[ers_Knowing_Ourselves](http://lutheranupress.org/Books/Engaging_Others_Knowing_Ourselves). Further information about the book and teaching templates are available at ELCA.org/en/Faith/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Inter-Religious-Relations/Case-Studies.

Gender-based violence: What steps should the church take?

During synod listening sessions hosted by the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ, many Lutherans shared their concerns about gender-based violence. Based on a recommendation from that task force, the ELCA Church Council authorized development and, last November, adopted a social message on gender-based violence. That message and accompanying foundational documentation are now available for download at ELCA.org/socialmessages or in print from resources.ELCA.org/Products-Social_Issues.html.

Gender-based violence is a global tragedy that affects millions. Yes, the discussion of gender-based violence—physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or other personal harm inflicted on someone for gender-based reasons—is challenging, but with this message, the ELCA encourages congregations to prayerfully have a dialogue and offer healing ministry to the wider community.

Developed independently but in consultation with ELCA churchwide staff, a three-session study resource, "Gender-based Violence: What Steps Should the Church

Take?", is now available for congregational use. Using techniques from the deliberative dialogue approach, this resource emphasizes a civil and respectful process in which people listen to different ideas speak from the heart and weigh the merits and consequences of potential actions to solve problems.

Designed for use in small groups

Designed for groups of 12 to 20 people to sort through a series of distinctive, action-oriented approaches with the assistance of a moderator, the process begins with the moderator inviting people to briefly share their concerns about the issue, their "personal stake." For example, "Why did you come to this forum?" "What makes this issue real for you?"

The dialogue continues by giving equal discussion time to three problem-solving approaches: education, action and advocacy. The first approach speaks to exploring gender-based violence educational opportunities. The second approach challenges participants to discuss what concrete actions or ministries the congregation might

consider. And the third approach focuses on advocacy beyond the congregation, perhaps speaking to elected officials regarding pending legislation or working with other organizations to serve survivors.

After discussing the three approaches, the moderator assists the participants to seek common ground or agreement and then consider the congregation's next steps.

The deliberative dialogue method helps people share personal opinions, listen carefully to others, agree and disagree in a civil manner, and make choices about how the congregation can respond to the tragedy of gender-based violence. In this way, congregations can identify and implement actions that not only benefit their members but also the communities they serve.

The issue guide and moderator guidelines are available for free by visiting The Deliberative Voice website at thedeliberativevoice.com/religion. The "Gender-based Violence: What Steps Should the Church Take?" guide also includes a post-forum, online survey, which will reveal what congregations hope to do about the issue and provide feedback about the dialogue process.

Congregational guide for new poverty book has Lutheran ties

Is it possible that there is a level of poverty in the United States so deep that no one even knew it existed—until now?

In a new book, "\$2 A

Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America," sociologists Kathryn Edin (Johns Hopkins University) and H. Luke Shaefer (University of Michigan) tell the stories of families—in Chicago, Cleveland, eastern Tennessee and Mississippi—living on less than \$2 per person per day, a measure of deprivation usually associated with the developing world.

Far from an isolated phenomenon, Edin and Shaefer show that this level of subsistence is actually growing and now touches 1.5 million American households, including about 3 million children.

The book follows a handful of families living this meager existence, speculates as to why this phenomenon is growing and suggests principles to guide the search for a solution. This book is a must-read for anyone interested in the current reality of poverty in America.

The congregational study guide written to accompany the book has ELCA roots. The guide is authored by Yvette Schock, associate pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Arlington, Va., and her husband, Robert Francis, formerly a policy staff person in Washington, D.C., for both the ELCA Washington Office and Lutheran Services in America.

The free congregational guide is available at the book's website, twodollarsaday.com, or by emailing rfranc15@jhu.edu.



Study on women and justice is in the works

Is your congregation or ministry looking for an educational program for 2016 or 2017? You're in luck.

The Women and Justice: One in Christ ELCA Task Force is creating a study titled (tentatively) "Women and Men: Proclaiming God's Favor for All" that will be available at the end of June.

With seven sessions that address a wide range of topics, you can mix and



match sessions to create a program that meets your group's needs. Through this study process, individuals and groups can have input into the important work of the task force on the issues of justice facing the church and society.

The study will be available and the task force will be accepting feedback through October 2017.

'Called to Hear': A study guide to the social statement on criminal justice



While available online since August, the study guide "Called to Hear" is now available in print and DVD format. All you need is a copier and a DVD player.

The five study guide sessions introduce key points from "The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries," the 2013 ELCA social statement. Links to the online version and information about how to order print versions from the ELCA's e-store are at ELCA.org/socialstatements. Click on "Criminal Justice" on the left navigation bar.

Through stories and selected facts, the sessions introduce the wide range of people who have been impacted by the criminal justice system, including victims, prisoners, lawyers, officers and family members. It confronts openly and thoughtfully the problem of racism and bias in the system leading straight to God's messages regarding justice.

The final two sessions of the study guide put all the pieces together by inviting participants to think about and determine what individual or congregational actions can share God's vision of love and justice.

Each session is anchored with an 8-minute video presentation by members of the ELCA Task Force on Criminal Justice telling their stories and sharing ideas. The leader's guide and handout include easy-to-use quizzes, Bible study suggestions and group activities.

Fortress Press releases new books

'Reviving Old Scratch: Demons and the Devil for Doubters and the Disenchanted'

By Richard Beck
(May 2016)

Christians need to reclaim spiritual warfare but not in the way you think.

The devil has fallen on hard times. Surveys say that even the majority of Christians doubt Satan's existence. Burdened by doubts, skeptical believers find themselves divorced from Jesus' dramatic confrontation with Satan in the Gospels and from the struggle that galvanized the early church.

In "Reviving Old Scratch," popular blogger and theologian Richard Beck reintroduces the devil to the modern world with a

biblical, bold and urgent vision of spiritual warfare: We must resist the devil by joining the kingdom of God's subversive campaign to interrupt the world with love.

Beck argues that conservative Christians too often over-spiritualize the devil and demons, and progressive Christians reduce these forces to social justice is-

ssues. By understanding evil as a real force in the world, we are better able to name it for what it is and thus combat it as Jesus did, says Beck. And because if Jesus took Satan seriously, says Beck, so should we.

Learn more and place orders at fortresspress.com.

'Beyond Church Walls: Cultivating a Culture of Care'

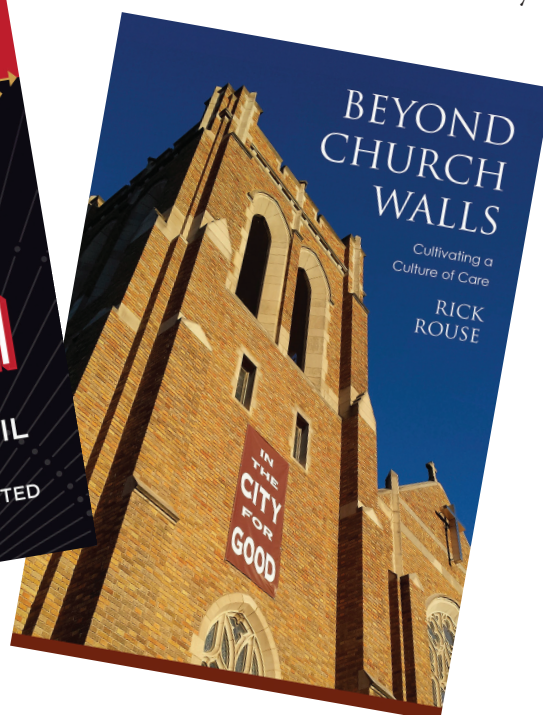
By Richard "Rick" Rouse

Pastoral care has been traditionally understood as pastoral acts administered to individuals or small groups by an ordained or lay religious practitioner. As congregations in the

21st century begin to reclaim the missional nature of church, this view must be broadened to include care and concern for the needs of the larger community. A missional perspective of pastoral care embraces the notion that all of God's people—not just trained professionals—are called to partner in the healing and redemption of the world.

In "Beyond Church Walls," Rick Rouse sets out to articulate precisely what such an approach to pastoral care looks like—and the substantial impact it can have on congregations and communities. A skilled teacher and pastor with deep experience in real communities, Rouse leads readers through the changing realities of the 21st century and to new ways for congregations to succeed in offering pastoral care for the whole community.

Learn more and place orders at fortresspress.com.



Frolic resources help children take their first steps of faith

At our earliest stages of life, we take little steps forward. But those first steps, be they on our feet or in our faith, are the building blocks for everything yet to come.

Little steps, big faith—that's the idea behind Frolic, Sparkhouse's new family of early childhood resources. Frolic enables congregations to connect with and support young families as their children take their first steps of faith.

Frolic Online provides tools for congregations to create an active and lively ministry right in their nurseries. There are leader guides for parent-child classes focused on



childhood development. There are nursery guides for caregivers containing reproducible articles on how to transform a nursery into an innovative ministry center. There is even an e-newsletter that can be customized and sent to a busy parent's phone that provides monthly information on child development, early faith formation and parental support.

Exploring the Bible and faith

Frolic also offers a series of books for the home, where parents and their children can begin to explore spiritual concepts and faith-forming stories.

The Frolic First Bible contains 20 Bible stories, from the creation to the resurrection, retold with simple and direct language accompanied by artwork. Through these age-appropriate and biblically accurate retellings of the key stories, children will begin to understand faith concepts that will aid them throughout their life.

In addition to the Bible, the Frolic board and picture books introduce children to an array of developmentally appropriate stories. The books feature a story world inhabited by animal characters and set against a biblically reminiscent backdrop.

Frolic's stories and characters provide relatable challenges and developmental milestones that connect with the daily lives of children. Each book introduces spiritual concepts that explain how our faith is formed in the little moments of our lives.

Find out more at frolicfirstfaith.org.

Discussion guide available for 'A Path Appears'

A new ELCA discussion guide to help faith-based groups explore the stories in the documentary film "A Path Appears" is now available.

The film helps viewers see and connect problems of systemic poverty and gender-based oppression in faraway communities and in our own neighborhoods. The discussion guide provides a framework for people of faith to prayerfully consider God's calling around the topic of gender-based inequality.

The film follows Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn as they seek out and learn from grassroots activists working on solutions and change in their communities. They illuminate the stories of dozens of women, both domestic and international.

These women are victims and survivors of human trafficking, poverty, and intimate partner and sexual violence. Even as problems of poverty and oppression sometimes seem insurmountable, Kristof and WuDunn tell stories of those who are creating paths in the wilderness—using innovative strategies to bring about change and to nurture hope.

The discussion guide to the film includes discussion questions that will help your congregation, classes or study groups engage more deeply with the film. It calls on our faith as a lens to shape the way we think about and respond to gender-based oppression here and around the world.

The guide can be downloaded at ELCA.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Current-Social-Writing-Projects/Women-and-Justice/resources or accessed through the "resource" link from the ELCA.org/womenandjustice page.

The film is available for purchase from PBS, Amazon and iTunes. For financial assistance in purchasing a copy for your synod, or for general questions, contact womenandjustice@elca.org.

Please note: *This documentary and the discussion guide contain information and references to sexual assault and violence that may be difficult for survivors.*

Ecumenical conference explores the mystery of faith

"Sing a New Song: Unpacking the Mystery of Faith" is the theme of the 2016 Annual Ecumenical Gathering hosted by the North American Association for the Catechumenate in Albuquerque, N.M., June 28-30.

Keynote speakers Lizette Larson-Miller, Dan Benedict and Marty Haugen will lead participants on a journey reflecting on our rich sacramental and liturgical heritage, rediscovering the ancient faith formation process known as the catechumenate, and exploring contemporary worship resources.

Pastors, seminarians, worship lead-

ers and educators will benefit from this program that seeks to bring new vitality to communities of faith with a focus on discipleship and baptismal living. The event, which also features practical workshops and inspiring worship, will be at the Albuquerque Bosque Center, a conference center run by the Episcopal



Diocese of the Rio Grande.

Scholarships are available for seminarians and first-call pastors. Register by May 15 and receive a \$50 early bird discount. For more information, contact reg-

istrar Devra Betts at devrabetts@gmail.com, and check out the association's website at catechumenate.org.

Gather magazine says: Change is good

Gather, the award-winning magazine of Women of the ELCA, has announced a change in its subscription services that will benefit new and existing subscribers.

A new fulfillment company has been hired to handle subscriptions and provide customer service.

"Over the course of the past year, the customer service offered to you, our subscribers, has not been what you or what staff has come to expect," Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director

of Women of the ELCA, wrote in her March column in Gather. "We're thankful that many of you took the time to let us know of your frustrating experiences. The phone calls and emails made the problems come alive for staff. We've heard your complaints. We apologize."

The change also comes with some new features, including the option to "go green" with a digital-only subscription, discounts for group subscribers (groups of 11 or more) and the ability

to update personal information online.

Current subscribers should have received a "Change is good" postcard that provides new contact information. To purchase a new or gift subscription, contact the new fulfillment center at 844-409-0576, write to Gather Subscription Order Center, P.O. Box 336, Congers, N.Y. 10920-0336 or email gather@campwest.com. Visit gathermagazine.org to learn more.



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