

# seeds for the parish

Summer 2015

Resource Paper for Leaders of ELCA Congregations

www.ELCA.org



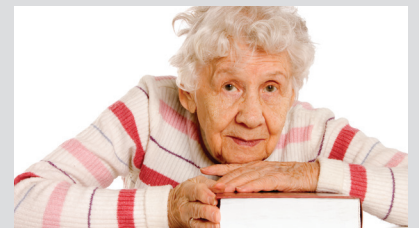
Find creative ideas for supporting ELCA World Hunger's Walk for Water at [www.ELCA.org/walk4water](http://www.ELCA.org/walk4water).

*Lee and Phyllis Meyer, owners and movers of the outhouse on the prairie.*



New Sunday school curriculum makes lectionary kid-friendly.

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Study guide explores biblical interpretation, women and justice.

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## Little outhouse on the prairie

By Jo Ann Dollard

There's an odd little structure that's been showing up on people's front lawns around the western Minnesota town of Kerkhoven.

It has many names: "The Blue Thing," the "Spiffy Biffy" or "Little Blue Outhouse on the Prairie." Whatever you call it, it's Kerkhoven Lutheran Church's creative and fun way of raising money for Walk for Water, ELCA World Hunger's yearlong campaign to raise \$500,000 for lifesaving and life-changing water projects around the world.

Kerkhoven, a rural ELCA congregation with 400 members, has proven it's possible – even desirable – to have a sense of humor while raising awareness about a life-and-death subject: the global water crisis, which affects the lives of one out of four people every year, or 1.8 billion people.

Ann Hanson, chair of Kerkhoven's evangelism and outreach committee, got the idea for a "traveling toilet" from the ELCA's Walk for Water brochure. Despite initial concerns that it might appear that the congregation was making light of a very serious problem, the idea of a traveling toilet resonated.

"Rural people understand the need for water," Hanson says. While the congregation's youth had only known indoor plumbing, "[for] some of us who remembered using an outhouse, [this] brought us back to our roots."

The blue "biffy" debuted during Lent when the idea was introduced to the congregation, with the goal of raising \$5,000. Hanson began selling "traveling toilet policies" for members who wanted to avoid having the water closet show up on

their front lawns. Members who didn't buy insurance risked seeing their lawns graced by the outhouse.

To date, the outhouse, which has made 31 stops and raised \$5,157, has got the town of 750 talking. People monitor "The Blue Thing's" whereabouts on its Walk for Water Facebook page, where they also post information about the water crisis.

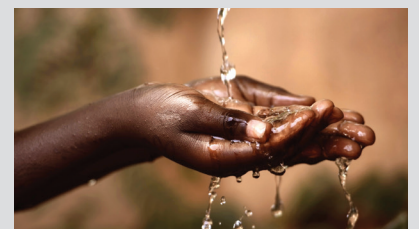
"We're having so much fun with this. It's pulled the congregation together and the community has gotten involved," Hanson says, adding, "We find we do better if we add a little humor."

Bill Miller, the congregation's pastor, says, "We've learned people are caring and giving. We're just one church making a difference in our way, and we know that the church at large is doing the same thing in all kinds of exciting and different ways."



Federal chaplains serve in hospitals, prisons and military.

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Walk for Water partners with ELCA Youth Gathering.

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

### CONTACT US

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## 'Sundays and Seasons' celebrates 20 years of worship planning

The 2015 edition of "Sundays and Seasons: Guide to Worship Planning" (Augsburg Fortress) marked its 20th year of publication. In these past 20 years, the mission of "Sunday and Seasons" has remained constant, even as its form and content have adapted to meet the changing needs of worship planners.

"Sunday and Seasons" was introduced at a time when the ecumenical Revised Common Lectionary (1992) was being newly adopted by congregations and denominations, and the "Lutheran Book of Worship" (1978) was nearing its 20th anniversary. More than 20 years later the church's worship continues to be enriched by this lectionary, and the ELCA and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada have a new principal worship resource, "Evangelical Lutheran Worship" (2006).

"Sundays and Seasons" has expanded beyond a single print volume into a family of resources that includes a robust online planning tool, [www.sundaysandseasons.com](http://www.sundaysandseasons.com). Additional resources in the "Sundays and Seasons" family include Worship Planning Calendar, Calendar of Word and Season, Church Year Calendar, "Bread for the Day: Daily Bible Readings and Prayers" and Words for Worship. In this 20th anniversary year, Augsburg Fortress introduced "Sundays and Seasons: Preaching," an annual print resource that encourages and provides help for lectionary preaching, taking into account all the readings for the day in addition to



the rest of the service and the day itself in the church year.

The online worship planner, [www.sundaysandseasons.com](http://www.sundaysandseasons.com), has served as a rich and reliable resource for worship planning since 2005. In July 2015, the online planning tool will undergo some changes while retaining its trusted features and content breadth. Subscribers can look forward to a fresh new look throughout, along with the ability to browse lectionary content more easily right from the home page. Deluxe subscribers will also have the option for two new content modules: Preaching, featuring content from "Sundays and Seasons: Preaching" and Visuals, featuring worship videos by The Work of the People.

The preaching module is an all-new area available as an add-on for deluxe subscribers and includes all content from the new "Sundays and Seasons: Preaching" resource, along with content from the "New Proclamation" series. Also included are selected "Day Resources," written by Gail Ramshaw, for easy use in combination with the other preaching content.

Clip art will now be accessed through the new visuals module, including – for the first time – art from the Evangelical Lutheran Worship Graphics CD-ROM. Worship videos, designed around the lectionary by The Work of the People, will be available as an add-on for deluxe subscribers.

Augsburg Fortress is committed to creating innovative, secure online resources along with a dedication to helping subscribers use [www.sundaysandseasons.com](http://www.sundaysandseasons.com) effectively.

Subscribers can rest assured that all users, plans, templates and preferences will carry over seamlessly during the new system changeover.

As it has from the beginning, the "Sundays and Seasons" family of resources continues to support week-by-week planning for Lutherans with content and ideas shaped by the Revised Common Lectionary, the church year and the assembly gathered around word and sacrament. Or, to say it the way its first editor, Samuel Torvend, said it, "Sundays and Seasons" points us to that merciful place of encounter where God comes to abide among us in the holy gospel and the sacraments of grace: the worshiping assembly."

To learn more about "Sundays and Seasons" print resources, visit [www.augsburgfortress.org/sundaysandseasons](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/sundaysandseasons). To learn more about Sundays and Seasons online worship planner, visit [www.sundaysandseasons.com](http://www.sundaysandseasons.com).

seeds for the parish

ELCA.org/seeds  
LivingLutheran.com/seeds

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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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## A prayer for every day, all year long

When it comes to prayer, there is no shortage of things, people and situations to include in prayerful conversations with God. Sometimes it helps to have a little prompting, a



reminder of special concerns or causes for thanksgiving that might otherwise slip by us. The ELCA's Prayer Ventures offers such prayer prompts for every day.

Prayer Ventures are daily suggestions for prayer that can be used for personal prayer time,

adapted for use in worship or shared with members. They are posted for download a month in advance at [www.ELCA.org/en/Resources/Prayer-Ventures](http://www.ELCA.org/en/Resources/Prayer-Ventures) and include concerns of the church and world, prompts related to the church calendar, and ministries to remember in prayer.

It's free and fresh each month.

that can be used for personal prayer time,

## Walking with others – an invitation to serve God

What do you enjoy most about being in community with your congregation, on your job or in your neighborhood? Think about the gifts you bring and how you are planning to use them to serve God through others. Now add an exciting element – a global experience.

The ELCA Global Mission unit extends an invitation to you to walk in accompaniment\* with one of our companion churches or institutions in one of 49 countries. Individuals from 21 years of age to retirement have the opportunity to engage in a wide range of international experiences. Various patterns of service (different time frames, volunteers/stipend) are available depending on the request of our companions and your skill set.

- If you are graduating from college and would like to add a global experiential year to your résumé or you are a young adult who would like to expand your life experience, then the **ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission** program may be for you.
- The ELCA's global volunteer program manages the matching of short-term, skilled and self-supported volunteers with opportunities to provide assistance to education, health and other ministry programs of companion churches and institutions.
- Are you a health care professional who has limited time and great passion for collaborating with global partners? Then the **Lutheran Global Health Volunteers** would be a great opportunity for you. Volunteers are deployed for short periods of time up to a year.
- The **Horizon International Internship** program provides ELCA master of divinity students with an opportunity to have their ministry shaped by the witness of the world. It is an intensive and transformational opportunity, which aims to enrich the talents and skills of future rostered leaders for the ministry and mission of the ELCA.

If any of these opportunities are interesting to you, visit and review the job board, [www.ELCA.org/Our-Work/Global Church/Global-Mission/Global-Service](http://www.ELCA.org/Our-Work/Global-Church/Global-Mission/Global-Service).

You can also participate by taking the Global Service questionnaire: <https://surveys.elca.org/scripts/rws5.pl?FORM=gmservice> or in Spanish at [https://surveys.elca.org/scripts/rws5.pl?FORM=GMServ\\_Es](https://surveys.elca.org/scripts/rws5.pl?FORM=GMServ_Es).



The world is ready to receive you as you do God's work with your hands, heart and mind.

### Accompaniment

is a theology that describes how we journey with our partners. The values include: mutuality, inclusivity, vulnerability, empowerment and sustainability.



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Thrivent Financial and its representatives and employees cannot provide legal, accounting, or tax advice or services. Work with your Thrivent Financial representative and, as appropriate, your attorney and tax professional for additional information.

Insurance products issued or offered by Thrivent Financial, the marketing name for Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, Appleton, WI. Not all products are available in all states. Thrivent Financial representatives are licensed insurance agents/producers of Thrivent. For additional important information, visit [Thrivent.com/disclosures](http://Thrivent.com/disclosures).

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## A kid-friendly approach to the Revised Common Lectionary

The Revised Common Lectionary unifies congregations around the world and between Christian denominations. It helps orient the people of God around a narrative arc that begins in Advent, takes us through Christmas to the cross and resurrection, and sends us out into the world on the Day of Pentecost. On any given Sunday, Christians around the world are reading the same set of Scripture passages. There is beauty in the circular passage through the liturgical years.

At first glance, the lectionary may not seem very kid-friendly with its complex structure and adult-driven text selection. But look again. There are vibrant colors connected to each season of the church year. There are memorable images, such as candles for Advent, a star for Epiphany and a flame for Pentecost. There are opportunities to count 1, 2, 3, 4 weeks of Advent, 12 days of Christmas and 50 days of Easter. And the themes that emerge from

the lectionary readings and the seasons themselves can be relevant to the daily lives of kids.

Parents, caregivers and church leaders yearn for the children in their congregations to be active participants in worship and the life of their church but making this a reality can be a challenge.

Enter Whirl Lectionary Sunday School. This lively new curriculum from sparkhouse connects the strength and unity of the Revised Common Lection-



ary with the playful energy of children to bring a holistic experience of faith formation to congregations. Through Whirl, kids can learn about their biblical faith ancestors, be introduced to the gospel message and grow up with an appreciation for liturgical colors, symbols and faith practices. Whirl also helps connect what kids are learning in Sunday school to what they are hearing and seeing in worship. Parents are then better equipped

to engage with their kids after worship because both adults and children entered into the same Scripture readings for the day in age-appropriate ways.

Whirl makes the lectionary fun too. Hilarious animated videos help kids make a connection between the biblical theme of the day and real life. The characters model both faithfulness and failure in a way that children can both relate to and learn from. Every lesson in Whirl gives kids hands-on opportunities to interact with the selected reading of the day, the theme, and the church year seasons' colors and symbols.

The Revised Common Lectionary may have been created with adults in mind, but Whirl Lectionary Sunday School was created specifically for kids. Discover more about this revolutionary Sunday school curriculum at [www.wearesparkhouse.org/kids/whirl](http://www.wearesparkhouse.org/kids/whirl).

## 'God's work. Our hands.' Sunday



The 2015 dedicated day of service known as "God's work. Our hands." Sunday is Sept. 13. It's not too late for your congregation to plan participation.

Visit [www.ELCA.org/dayofservice](http://www.ELCA.org/dayofservice) to download helpful resources and order your congregation's personalized T-shirts. New for 2015 is "Baptized Servants: Suggestions for Study and Discussion" to explore what it means to serve with a joyful heart.

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

In speaking about his congregation's 2014 experience, Nolan Rosario, 10, a member from St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Whittier, Calif., put it best: "It feels good to give."

"From the formation of a planning team to donations of school supplies and monetary gifts – and finally the weekend of assembling, packing, cutting, tying and delivering – I witnessed our congrega-

tion serve together in ways I have not seen before. Through it all, we grew closer to one another," said Terri Roberston, youth and family minister at St. Andrew.

Whether it's gathering food items for a local food pantry or cleaning up a public park, your service activities offer an opportunity to explore a basic conviction as Lutherans: That all of life in Jesus Christ – every act of service, in every daily calling, in every corner of life – flows freely from a living, daring confidence in God's grace.

Can't participate Sept. 13? Please consider another day.

## Who lives in your neighborhood or community?

If your congregation is considering strategic planning for mission, consider learning more about your neighborhood by finding demographic data for your ZIP code through the Research and Evaluation resources at [www.ELCA.org](http://www.ELCA.org).

Demographics are useful because you can learn about the makeup of the population in your area. The ZIP code report provides the rate of population change in addition to income, age, household structure and race/ethnicity statistics.

Growing areas may indicate the potential for reaching more people and expanding your congregation's membership. Household structure and race/ethnicity may show the potential for programs or services your congregation can offer in serving your neighborhoods and community.



To obtain a demographic report of your congregation's ZIP code, or neighboring ZIP code areas, visit [www.ELCA.org/research](http://www.ELCA.org/research) and look for the "Demographic Reports" box on the right side. Make sure you have your synod code and congregation ID number close at hand to enter.

## 'Seeking Understanding: Some Issues in Biblical Interpretation Regarding Women and Justice'

To help encourage broad discussion as part of the process of developing a social statement, the Women and Justice: One in Christ task force has approved a study resource about women and the Bible. Use it to start conversations in your congregations, classes or Bible study groups. It can help your group think about how scriptural interpretation shapes our understanding and calling around the topic of women and justice.

The study resource, "Seeking Understanding: Some Issues in Biblical Interpretation Regarding Women and Justice," is divided into three sessions that build upon each other. Relying on materials from the ELCA's Book of Faith initiative, the first session introduces participants to four different approaches to interpreting Scripture that are applied in the other sessions. The second explores the origin, history and continuation of some of the most problematic and damaging scrip-



tural interpretations for women. And the third session has participants apply approaches that can be more productive when informing the study of women and justice.

This resource takes participants into the biblical texts and explores how Scripture has been used and interpreted. It invites members to consider their own experiences and to probe questions like, how did Jesus invert the unjust social

structures of his day, and what does that mean for us today in the struggle against inequality and oppression? The resource includes a comprehensive leader's guide, a single page handout for each session and a background paper by Erik Heen, professor at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

"Seeking Understanding" will help you lead discussion and encourage others to think about our call to advocate for justice for everyone.

The resource is available for download at [www.ELCA.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Current-Social-Writing-Projects/Women-and-Justice/resources.aspx](http://www.ELCA.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Current-Social-Writing-Projects/Women-and-Justice/resources.aspx). It is the third study resource the task force has made available. The others, on human trafficking and how women are portrayed in the media, are also available at this link.

If you have questions or would like to contact the task force, email [womenandjustice@elca.org](mailto:womenandjustice@elca.org).

## Nominations open for 2017 Women of the ELCA gathering promoters



Women of the ELCA is seeking a few women who are passionate about the work of the organization to become Triennial Gathering Promoters (TGPs) for the 2017 event. Work would begin in 2016 for the Tenth Triennial Gathering, July 13-16, 2017, in Minneapolis.

Requirements include having attended at least one gathering (preferably in 2014) and being an active participant in a unit. Candidates should also be comfortable speaking in public, enthusiastic about travel, have hands-on knowledge of social media and be able to tell a story about why they love Women of the ELCA. Experience with marketing is a bonus.

Candidates must also be computer literate and reachable by email on a daily basis. Any woman considered will be asked to submit a two-minute video about why she would like the opportunity to promote the next triennial gathering.

This volunteer job comes with no pay, but plenty of perks.

A small group of TGPs – perhaps nine to 15 – will serve the whole organization. Individual synodical women's organizations will not have their own appointed TGP.

Submit your own name or someone you know to [women.elca@elca.org](mailto:women.elca@elca.org) with TGP in the subject line. Include name, address, email address, phone number and church membership of the candidate.

The deadline for receiving nominations is **July 31, 2015**.

## The Campaign for the ELCA celebrates completion of first year

We embarked on a courageous and unprecedented journey February 2014 as members of the ELCA. Through *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*, we committed ourselves to investing in the future of this church, deepening relationships and expanding ministries that serve our neighbors and communities in the United States and around the world. We made the promise to do more, together.

With the first year of this five-year campaign complete, we are celebrating nearly \$45 million raised, representing 23 percent of the \$198 million goal. In addition, the campaign has received another \$3.4 million in current gift commitments and \$10.8 million in planned gift commitments to the priorities of the campaign.

With this progress, we are already off to a strong start to achieving all that

we set out to accomplish. In addition to placing 21 percent more young adults this year than last, ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission launched a new country program in Rwanda and will begin the Cambodia program in August. Twenty new-start ministries were approved to start already in 2015 with a goal of 50 additional new-start ministries for the remainder of this year. The ELCA Malaria Campaign is nearing its financial goal of \$15 million, and the first class of International Leaders – Women will be starting at six ELCA colleges, universities and seminaries this fall. We couldn't have done all of this without your support.



For more information on *The Campaign for the ELCA*, including a 2014 Campaign Report, please visit [www.ELCA.org/campaign](http://www.ELCA.org/campaign). You may also contact the campaign team at 800-638-3522, ext. 2612, or [campaignforELCA@elca.org](mailto:campaignforELCA@elca.org).

## Chaplains stretch familiar boundaries

The ELCA Federal Chaplaincy is a special calling in which ordained leaders minister beyond the walls of the congregation to those in federal prisons, Veterans Affairs hospitals and to men and women serving in the United States armed forces. This “call within a call” extends the boundaries of traditional expressions of church, so that all may know Christ’s saving grace and love.

The ELCA wants to help congregations connect with chaplains for support of all who serve in federal institutions. Please visit <http://elcachaps.com/> for assistance. This new website provides resources for congregations to connect with ELCA chaplains to support their ministries, discover ideas and projects, and to invite and empower all across the ELCA to support people working in and being served by ELCA Federal Chaplaincies. Additional ELCA-related sites with information are:

- [www.ELCA.org/en.Our-Work/Leadership/Federal-Chaplaincy-Ministries/](http://www.ELCA.org/en.Our-Work/Leadership/Federal-Chaplaincy-Ministries/)
- [www.facebook.com/ELCAFederalChaplaincyMinistryUpdates](https://www.facebook.com/ELCAFederalChaplaincyMinistryUpdates)

- [www.ELCA.org/Resources/Federal-Chaplains](http://www.ELCA.org/Resources/Federal-Chaplains)

Two additional initiatives are the ELCA Federal Chaplaincy Scholarships Endowment and the “Prayer Book for the Armed Services.” The scholarship, part of the ELCA Fund for Leaders initiative, supports those who feel called to bring the hope of Jesus Christ to service members, veterans and the imprisoned. The Prayer Book is an excellent resource for both service members and pastors alike. It assists in nourishing the faith of those deployed overseas, and to pastors wishing to include specific ritual and prayer in their congregations. To order the Prayer Book from Augsburg



Pastor Aaron Fuller being sworn in to serve a “call within a call” as a Navy chaplain.

Fortress, visit [www.augsburgfortress.org](http://www.augsburgfortress.org) or call 800-328-4648.

Through you, God’s work of redemption and grace is being made known to this special group of people served by ELCA federal chaplains and all ELCA congregations.

## Call for an end to childhood hunger in the United States



In a nation of great wealth and resources, no child should ever go hungry. However, 15.8 million children in the United States live in households that struggle with hunger. For too many children, a meal served at school is the only food they can count on each day.

Childhood hunger has negative impact on a child’s development and growth stretching all the way into adulthood. Access to consistent and nutritious meals gives children the fundamental and necessary elements needed to grow, learn, love and play.

This year, Congress has the opportunity to improve access to quality, nutritious meals for millions of children – many of whom live in rural or marginalized communities. A series of national nutrition programs help combat childhood hunger by supporting healthy meals and snacks for children of all ages, both in and out of school. These programs include the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), as well as the National School Lunch Program and the Summer Food Service Program. Funding for these programs must be renewed September 2015 by Congress.

As Lutherans, we have a role to ensure that our children and our neighbors have access to adequate nutritious food. Join ELCA Advocacy as we urge Congress to renew and strengthen our nation’s critical child nutrition programs.

Take action now to help end childhood hunger in the United States. Visit [www.ELCA.org/advocacy](http://www.ELCA.org/advocacy) today.

## Youth Ministry Links

By Paul Amlin

I’ve been involved in ministry with children, youth and families for 25 years and, throughout that journey, there has been one consistent need – good resources. By “good” I mean quality, usability and how well resources sync up with our Lutheran theology and identity. There has always been a degree of “give and take” with finding and using youth ministry resources, and a savvy youth ministry leader entrusted with this ministry can usually adapt and adjust materials to a Lutheran context.

Since the development of the Internet, there have been websites filled with content. Not just puppies and kittens content (though it’s easy to get lost there), but content for those engaged in ministry



with those navigating the “first third of life.” Much of this content is what I would call “good,” but how do you begin to choose which resource to use or even review? How does being a Lutheran mesh with the message of the content? For that matter, how do

you begin to find topic-specific content and measure its quality for your application and setting?

### A new place to start your search

These questions were the catalyst for the work being done on the Youth Ministry Links website, Facebook page and Twitter. The concept is a simple one: crowdsourcing the best links and resources for ministry with children, youth and

families into a curated and organized listing that you can access via the Internet. You can even search for topics or content on each page.

I think you will find the site useful, as it has been curated with a Lutheran eye. You can check it out by visiting [www.youthministrylinks.org](http://www.youthministrylinks.org), and you will find it linked to the ELCA Youth Ministry Network resource page at [www.elcaymnet.org](http://www.elcaymnet.org).

You still need to think about how you will adapt the content for use in your context, but this is a great starting point. If you have resources to share, you can submit them via the website for consideration. Please tell your friends and colleagues and, as always, thank you for your ministry.

*Paul Amlin serves as program director for ELCA Youth Ministry.*

## Share the precious gift of water



ELCA youth are joining together for ELCA World Hunger's Walk for Water. The goal is to raise \$500,000 for ELCA World Hunger-supported water projects around the world.

Through these gifts, local communities will be equipped to provide water

for drinking and growing crops, sanitation and hygiene, as well as ongoing health education, training and maintenance. And, thanks to a generous family in the ELCA, all gifts toward this goal will be matched – dollar for dollar – up until a grand total of \$1 million is reached. Together we make a difference – creating healthier

families, stronger economies and a future filled with hope.

### Participating in the ELCA Youth Gathering this summer?

The 2015 ELCA Youth Gathering in Detroit will be the primary offering col-

lection point and learning center for the Walk for Water challenge. Bring your offerings and walking shoes to the Interactive Learning space at the Cobo center for a chance to participate in an unforgettable walk designed to simulate the experience of collecting water miles away from home, while raising questions about access to water in the United States too.

Bring offerings to the Gathering or mail them in advance to Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, ELCA Gift Processing Center, P.O. Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009. Be sure to write "Walk for Water" in the memo line of your check.

Follow the links and learn more at [www.ELCA.org/walk4water](http://www.ELCA.org/walk4water) or [www.ELCA.org/YouthGathering/GatheringDetails/GivingOpportunities](http://www.ELCA.org/YouthGathering/GatheringDetails/GivingOpportunities).

## New study guide to ELCA social statement on criminal justice

"Called to Hear" is the new study guide to the ELCA social statement on criminal justice. Available in August, the three-format guide is designed to spark interest in ministry around criminal justice concerns and introduce participants to "The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries," the 2013 ELCA social statement. Links to the online version and information about how to order the USB flash drive or printed versions from the ELCA's E-store can be found at [www.ELCA.org/socialstatements](http://www.ELCA.org/socialstatements). Click on "Criminal Justice" on the left hand navigation bar.

The USB digital binder and the online version contain a five-session study guide, a 45-minute bird's eye introduction and supplemental resources. The five study guide sessions introduce the key points of the entire statement. It acknowledges both the strengths and problems in the criminal justice system, as well as presenting a call to action as people of faith to care and respond.

Through stories and selected facts, the sessions introduce the wide range of people who have been impacted by the system, including victims and their families, prisoners, lawyers and officers. 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 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 eight-minute video presentation by members of the ELCA Task Force on Criminal Justice, who tell their story and share key ideas. Leadership is straightforward because the leader's guide and handout includes easy-to-use quizzes, Bible study suggestions and group activities.

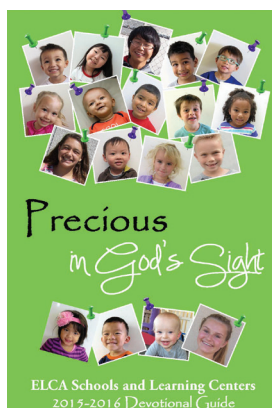
The 45-minute "bird's eye" view can be used as an invitation to join the study or a quick overview of the statement. For congregations unable to rely on the Internet or USB technology, the five-session study guide and corresponding handouts are offered in a "no frills" printed version with DVD at minimal cost.

## 2015-16 devotion guide for educators

All children are precious in God's sight, and the children in the more than 1,500 early learning centers and schools sponsored by ELCA congregations are especially precious.

Every year the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA), which provides services for all ELCA weekday schools and learning centers, publishes

a devotional guide for educators. This is an easy-to-use publication with devotions



written by pastors, school and center administrators, and other educators. Print copies are mailed to current subscribing members of the association and downloadable copies are available at [www.elcaschools.org](http://www.elcaschools.org) for anyone.

The theme for this year's guide is "Precious in God's Sight," containing one devotion for each week of the year following

the lectionary, as well as several special holiday devotions. Congregational staff,

Christian education staff and volunteers, as well as weekday school staff and volunteers will find this guide a great template for leading devotions at staff and committee meetings.

Download your free copy under "QuickLinks" from the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association home page at [www.elcaschools.org](http://www.elcaschools.org).

Does your congregation have a weekday school or early childhood program? Become a subscribing member of ELEA. Call 800-500-7644 or visit [www.elcaschools.org](http://www.elcaschools.org) for more information on the association and membership benefits.

## New ELCA World Hunger resources

### "Act 2Day 4 Tomorrow" – New edition for 2015

ELCA World Hunger has released the second edition of "Act 2 Day 4 Tomorrow," an overnight program for youth groups of all sizes. As the group takes part in the spiritual practice of fasting, participants will be led through four themed sessions. Each themed session has three activities for youth group leaders to choose from and can be adapted to fit a variety of schedules and settings. Bring youth together for prayer, service, activities and more as they Act 2Day 4 Tomorrow.

Order for free at [www.ELCA.org/hunger/resources](http://www.ELCA.org/hunger/resources). Click on the "Hunger Ed" tab.

### "Daily Bread: A Discussion Guide for Meal-Packing Events"

Is your congregation planning an event to pack meals together? This easy-to-use discussion guide can help your group dig deeper into questions of relief, sustainability and faith. This guide has activities and stories for every step of an event, from preparation to celebration, and is great for youth, adults and everyone in between. Download for free

at [www.ELCA.org/hunger/resources](http://www.ELCA.org/hunger/resources). Click on the "Hunger Ed" tab.

### Sermon Starters and Children's Sermon Starters

Looking for ideas to incorporate themes of hunger, justice and faith in sermons or educational forums? ELCA World Hunger can help. Each week, World Hunger provides brief prompts based on the lectionary readings for both sermons and children's sermons. Sign up for this weekly email at [hunger@ELCA.org](mailto:hunger@ELCA.org).



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