

Seeds for the Parish

Summer 2016

Resource paper for leaders of ELCA congregations

www.ELCA.org



Drawing on the Thrivent Action Team program and resources from “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday and Lutherans Restoring Creation, members of House of Prayer Lutheran Church in Hingham, Mass.—young and old alike—created ways to serve their community and care for the environment.



Schools and congregations working toward wellness and health.

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Abundant resources for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation!

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Everything comes together for a day of service

Members of House of Prayer Lutheran Church in Hingham, Mass., were beginning to worry when available spring days were getting slim for fitting in both a Care for Creation Worship and a Sunday of service. But then they realized there was a faithful, complimentary relationship between the two endeavors.

So House of Prayer set to plan its “God’s work. Our hands.” day of service to consider their neighbors—both human and in nature.

After a brief sending service on a Sunday in April, members went into the community to help clean up yards for elderly residents in partnership with the town’s Elder Services Office. Some were sent in their bright yellow T-shirts to do cleanup work, while inter-generational teams remained at church turning recycled materials into May baskets to be delivered to people who were homebound.

The baskets contained handmade books and boxes made from old calendars, egg-carton floral arrangements and a pansy in a compostable pot. Sunday school teacher June Fontaine brought in her garden compost, complete with decomposers—microbes, insects and worms.

“It’s important for us to remember the smallest of creatures doing God’s work to recycle the food we don’t use,” Fontaine explained as children waited in line to examine with magnifying glasses the living things in the compost and then pot the flowers.

Many thank-yous were heard that day from elders for the caring, yellow-shirted strangers helping them with yard work. And echoes of gratitude were heard long after the Sunday of service from elders whose lives were brightened.

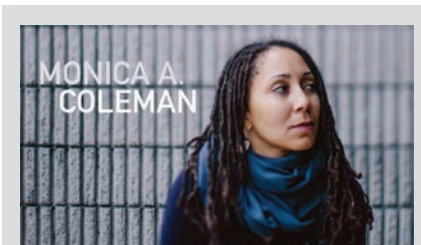
One message read, “The children from the Lutheran church sent me a beautiful

gift! It was a plant, a notebook, candy and a pretty cardboard flower arrangement, painted and everything. It was such a kind thing to do.”

Susan Henry, pastor of House of Prayer, was struck by the “relevance of the reading for the day, Revelation 21:1-6, in which what is revealed is ‘the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven ...’ A voice says, ‘See, the home of God is among mortals.’”

“The Word always comes down, and we are invited to hold tight to God’s promises, envision what God already sees and use our hands in the service of God’s making all things new,” Henry said.

House of Prayer found planning, worship and activity resources for their “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday at ELCA.org/dayofservice and LutheransRestoringCreation.org.



Read one woman’s story of faith and mental illness.

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Online Faith Lens Bible study connects faith and current events.

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

CONTACT US

Submit a story..... 800-638-3522
 Delivery questions... 773-380-2950
 Subscriptions..... 773-380-2950

Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Celebrating 10 years

“Through liturgy and song the people of God participate in that mission, for here God comes with good news to save. And through liturgy and song, God nourishes us for that mission and goes with us to bear the creative and redeeming Word of God, Jesus Christ, to the whole world.”

This quote, from the introduction to our church’s primary worship resource, Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW), sums up what we do together in worship. It’s about being an active part of God’s mission.

Ten years ago this summer, at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Orlando, Fla., ELW was commended for use. The red book is now 10 years old and is used by more than two-thirds of ELCA congregations.

The Churchwide Assembly affirmed not only the publication of a new book, it encouraged the ongoing renewal of worship. Renewing worship is never for its own sake or because we crave something shiny and fresh, said Martin Seltz, publisher for worship resources at Augsburg Fortress. The Holy Spirit who “renews the face of the earth” (Psalm 104:30) is the same Spirit we invoke to work in us and to renew the face of worship for the life of the world, he added.

ELW is distinct in its expanded repertoire of song, including significant numbers from various ethnic and global traditions. Some congregations have embraced this repertoire and are already

looking for more, while others struggle to find even basic music leadership to help them keep their small but beloved core of song alive.

Just as a broad diversity of song is included, ELW embraces a range of liturgical texts and ritual options. Rubrics such as “The presiding minister may address the assembly in these or similar words” or “The assembly may sing the following or another suitable song” offer worship planners and leaders the possibility of crafting texts and choosing songs that are connected to the whole church yet adapted for their particular context. These diverse options are a joy for many and a challenge for others.

Since the Churchwide Assembly action was primarily about the ongoing renewal of worship, many resources have been made available and continue to be created: evangelicallutheranworship.org.

However, the task of renewing worship together as a church isn’t only about print or electronic resources. Gathering

Strong Center
Open Door
Engaging Lutheran worship today

together for worship, conversation, learning and imagining possibilities is a vital part of the venture. What was begun at last summer’s Worship Jubilee in Atlanta will continue this coming fall at three events across the church:

- Oct. 7-8 Bethany Lutheran Church, Englewood, Colo.
- Oct. 14-15 Zumbro Lutheran Church, Rochester, Minn.
- Nov. 4-5 Trinity Lutheran Church, Lansdale, Pa.

Pastors, musicians, lay leaders and worship committees—whether well experienced with ELW, exploring it for the first time or using other materials for worship—will find a place at these gatherings: ELCA.org/worship and click on the link below “Strong Center—Open Door.”

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, July 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.

Contact Us

Subscriptions – 773-380-2950
Content – rod.boriack@elca.org

Mission Advancement

Christina Jackson-Skelton – Executive Director
Julie B. Sevig – Managing Editor, Publications

Editorial Staff

Rod Boriack – Editor
Karen Dersnah – Designer

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

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Richard Millett
8765 West Higgins Road
Chicago, IL 60631
Email: richard.millett@elca.org

Gather for the sake of children’s lives, safety and well-being

Are you concerned about child-sex trafficking? Ever wonder what you or your congregation can do about it? Interested in meeting other people involved in this ministry focused on the lives and safety of children? If so, attend the fifth National Gathering of Cherish All Children.

You’ll be equipped and inspired to engage your congregation and commu-



Cherish All Children
Pray + Educate + Connect + Act

nity in preventing child-sex trafficking.

The Gathering will be Oct. 20-23 at Christ the King Seminary in East Aurora, N.Y., just outside of Buffalo.

For more information: cherishallchildren.org/2016-national-gathering or call Amy Hartman, national director for Cherish All Children, at 612-280-1259.



The Campaign for the ELCA celebrates completing two years

From Madagascar to Cambodia, South Sudan to North Dakota, the support of synods, congregations and members is making a difference in the lives of people around the world, according to *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*.

With the second year of this five-year campaign complete, the ELCA's first comprehensive campaign is celebrating \$80 million raised, representing 40 percent of the \$198 million goal. In addition, the campaign has received another \$17 million in planned gifts commitments to the priorities of the campaign.

Together, in 2015, we broke ground alongside local church leaders on a new Lutheran center and health clinic in South Sudan; sent seven young adults to the new Young Adults in Global Mission Cambodia country program, with a total of 73 young-adult volunteers in 10 country programs. We also surpassed the \$10 million goal for the ELCA Malaria Campaign, which allowed work to continue in 14 African countries and enabled a new program to open in Madagascar.



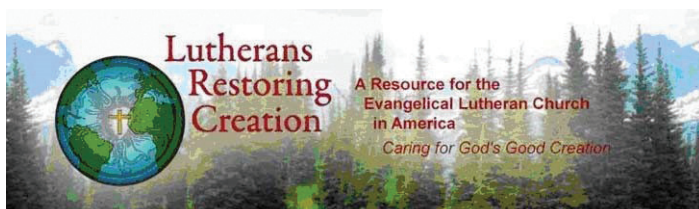
Here at home, your gifts helped distribute 17 grants to assist synods and congregations across the ELCA in their renewal efforts, awarded 235 seminary students with scholarships from the ELCA Fund for Leaders and welcomed 62 new-start ministries into the ELCA.

For more information on *The Campaign for the ELCA*, including a 2015 Campaign Report: ELCA.org/campaign. Contact the campaign team at 800-638-3522, ext. 2612, or campaignforELCA@elca.org.

Lutheran study guide addresses climate change

A four-week study guide designed for adult Christian education, college or seminary students is now a free download at

LutheransRestoringCreation.org. The study guide takes up the theme of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 and provides ways for communities and congregations to start thinking about how they will mark the occasion, particularly with respect to a shared responsibility to care for creation.



The study guide's author, Terra Rowe, a doctoral candidate in theological and philosophical studies at Drew University, Madison, N.J., integrates care for creation ministry with faith formation. Rowe is currently writing a dissertation on ecology, economy and the Protestant tradition, focusing on theological constructions of grace and the self.



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Get life insurance—for the way you live. Contact a local Thrivent Financial representative or visit Thrivent.com/readyornot today.



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MIF Capital Campaign Services strengthens ministry through prayerful fundraising

St. John's Lutheran Church, the oldest Lutheran congregation in Atlanta, was showing its age. The congregation's stately but aging buildings required repair. St. John's turned to the Mission Investment Fund's Capital Campaign Services to consult on the project.

MIF Capital Campaign Services is a new addition to the fund's roster of services. Capital Campaign Services works to strengthen congregations by assisting them in raising funds for building projects as well as debt reduction. Previously known as Stewardship Key Leader, this fundraising service has assisted ELCA congregations for some 40 years.

At St. John's in Atlanta, the fundraising venture was a fruitful one. Pledges poured in on Commitment Sunday, and the congregation surpassed its fundraising goal. "This has been a tremendous outpouring of generosity by the congregation. It was above and beyond what we expected," Nancy Christensen, a pastor of St. John's, said.

Work already is underway in the congregation's main building to shore up the buckling grand staircase, refurbish the tall foyer windows and repair plaster.

"This capital campaign has allowed us to make repairs to provide a safe place to do ministry," Christensen

said. "Our cold-weather shelter is on the second floor. Now, with repairs made to our staircase, we can offer a safe place to the community to gather."

Capital Campaign Services consultants are pastors and professionals who have long-term experience in stewardship and work with the church.

"We focus on the mission and ministry of the congregation and how a capital campaign can ultimately enhance that ministry work," said Paula Kitt, director of MIF Capital Campaign Services, which employs a five-step approach:

- **Initial work:** The consultant works with the congregation's pastor and leadership team to define the congregation's mission and ministry goals, campaign roles and timelines, and financial goals.
- **Planning weekend:** The consultant works onsite to train the team of congregational leaders who will direct the capital campaign.
- **Running the campaign:** For the next five to six weeks, the congregation's leadership team directs the campaign while the consultant provides coaching from afar.
- **Commitment weekend:** With the consultant onsite, congregation members are asked to pledge an amount.
- **Follow-up:** The congregational team follows up with church members, and contributions continue.



Members of the capital campaign team at St. John's Lutheran Church in Atlanta (left to right): John Ballew, congregational vice president; Nancy Christensen, pastor; Steve Kinchen, president of the congregation; and Ellen Yates and John Yates, campaign co-chairs.

Getting ready for 'God's work. Our hands.' Sunday

On Sunday, Sept. 11, congregations will again have the opportunity to gather together for "God's work. Our hands." Sunday. Whether helping repair and clean up



public spaces, visiting the elderly and homebound or baking cookies and writing thank-you notes for first responders, this dedicated day of service celebrates who we are as the ELCA—one church, freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor.

The 2016 "God's work. Our hands." Sunday also marks the 15-year anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Reflecting on the 2015 dedicated day of service, Elayne Werges, diaconal minister for Cross Roads Lutheran Parish, a four-congregation cooperative in the ELCA Northeastern Iowa Synod, said, "The impact of 'God's work. Our hands' Sunday on Cross Roads Lutheran parishes has been to remind us that we are connected to a community outside of the four walls of the church building."

She emphasized that the day of service "reminds us as the priesthood of believers that our call is to serve God and God's people, especially those on the fringes, the hungry and the lost."

Visit ELCA.org/dayofservice for resources that include the 2016 version of the toolkit, bulletin inserts, posters and a new worship resource. There is also an updated study guide designed for congregations to discuss what it means to serve with a joyful heart.

Congregations can register their day of service activities at <https://surveys.elca.org/scripts/rws5.pl?FORM=GWOH16SU>. If Sept. 11 is not feasible, congregations are encouraged to select another date.

A video highlighting the 2015 day of service at St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Whittier, Calif., is available at vimeo.com/148545185.

Help for reaching your potential as a school, early childhood center or congregation

ELEA ADMINISTRATOR & PASTOR CONFERENCE

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NORFOLK 2017

Your school or early childhood center and congregation *can* reach its potential, realize growth and share the Word with

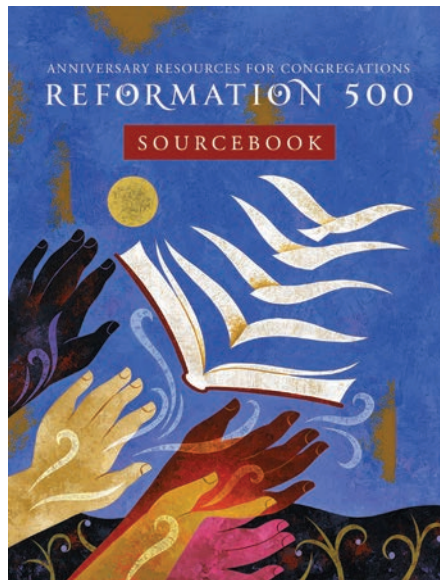
its message of love and hope. Leadership and building strong relationships are not an easy path, but that's where the Evan-

gelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA) helps. Save Feb. 14-16 to attend the ELEA IGNITE Conference: Norfolk 2017. Learn how to ensure your hard work and precious resources are focused in the right direction for efficient leadership and growth.

ELEA connects, develops and inspires early childhood directors, school administrators and pastors of ELCA congregations with schools and early learning centers. IGNITE is that spark. It will be held at the Marriott Waterfront in Norfolk, Va.

Registration will open early this fall. Find out more at eleanational.org or ignitespark.org.

Reformation 500 anniversary resources available from the ELCA and Augsburg Fortress



'Reformation 500 Sourcebook'

As congregations plan the ways they will mark the Reformation's 500 anniversary, the "Sourcebook" is an essential guide. The "Sourcebook" contains three main sections that focus on the areas of worship, education and service.

It gathers together a variety of ideas for planning worship services, education events, music festivals, service projects and connections with other Christians. A CD-ROM of reproducible, customizable content is also included. To order the "Sourcebook" and download a free sampler, visit augsburgfortress.org/ref500.

Adult education resource

"Together by Grace" is an adult education resource that will serve as a resource book for getting to know who Lutherans are, what they teach, where they come from and where they are today. The resource is edited by Kathryn Kleinhans of Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa, and includes sections on Lutheran basics, Lutheran history and practice, and a wide range of stories from the global Lutheran family. More than 30 contributors—teachers, pastors, bishops, activists and global Lutherans—are writing for this resource.

Children's graphic novel

"Papa Luther" is a 96-page, full-color graphic novel—or comic book—for children ages 8 to 12, and is also suitable for older youth (and adults). "Papa Luther"

tells the story of Martin Luther and the Reformation as seen through the eyes of his children.

Luther's Small Catechism

At the Churchwide Assembly and Grace Gathering this August, the ELCA will launch an initiative inviting ELCA members and congregations to engage Martin Luther's catechisms in renewed study and conversation during the 14 months leading up to Oct. 31, 2017.

In support of the anniversary and this churchwide initiative, Augsburg Fortress is developing new print, e-book and mobile app editions of Luther's Small Catechism. For handheld mobile devices, the "Anniversary Study Edition" will also be available as an e-book, and two digital mobile apps are also in development. The English Small Catechism and Spanish "El Catecismo Menor de Lutero" are both included in the free, basic mobile app version. Content from the "Study Edition" will be available as an in-app purchase.

How can I learn more?

Keep up to date with the latest news on the forthcoming Reformation 500 anniversary resources by signing up for Reformation 500 e-newsletters at reformation500.instagram.com.

How will Lutherans observe this anniversary in ways that are forward-looking, outward-directed and focused on the amazing mercy of God in Jesus Christ?

Keeping schools and congregations healthy



ELCA Schools and Learning Centers offers an excellent way to keep both congregations and schools as healthy as possible.

The Wellness Program focuses on seven areas of wellness: financial well-being, social well-being, physical well-being, spiritual well-being, intellectual well-being, vocational well-being and emotional well-being.

Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA) member school Holy Comforter in Kingwood, Texas, has been certified as a Center of Wellness and recently shared one of the results of the self-study program. As part of its continuing Wellness Center growth, it recently implemented The Secret Service Club.

One day each week after school, pre-schoolers, with help from school staff and one of the pastors, Amy Oehlschlaeger, secretly learn how to serve others. They have participated in janitor appreciation, made cards for the ill and made treats for animals. The club is focused on serving others, and the children wear dark glasses to remain "undercover."

Director Colleen Engle is proud of her students and staff: "This program brings together the children of the school and the members of the church staff and congregation. We are learning about how blessed we are to be a part of this church and how we can help serve others in this space."

Is your school or early childhood center a Center of Wellness for children, families and staff members? Find out more about the program and how to become certified as a Center of Wellness at the ELCA Schools and Learning Centers: ELCAschools.org or contact Cory Newman at elcaschools@gmail.com.

Women's 10th Triennial Gathering registration opens Sept. 6

Women of the ELCA's triennial gatherings bring Lutheran women together from across the church with life-changing workshops, worship, Bible study and more.

Women will gather in Minneapolis under the theme "All Anew" at the 10th Triennial Gathering, July 13-16, 2017. Registration opens on Sept. 6. Early-bird registration, through Dec. 31, is \$310; after that, registration is \$350. Day registrations are \$175. Register at welcatg.org or send an email to women.elca@elca.org for a registration packet.

Featured speakers, preachers and workshop leaders will bring

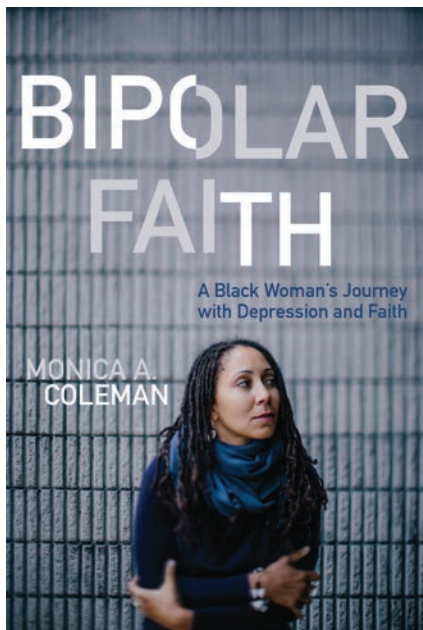
the gathering theme to life, exploring the theme verse Psalm 104:30: "Lord, send forth your spirit...and renew the face of the earth." The verse calls on God to send the Holy Spirit to renew not just God's people, not just God's church, but all God's earth—the creation that God called good.

Because the gathering falls during the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in 2017, the theme resonates with reformation and transformation images. Participants will explore ways in which the Holy Spirit



changes us, acknowledging that reformation and transformation have happened and continue to happen within the community of Women of the ELCA: womenoftheelca.org.

New releases from Fortress Press



'Bipolar Faith: A Black Woman's Journey with Depression and Faith'
by Monica A. Coleman

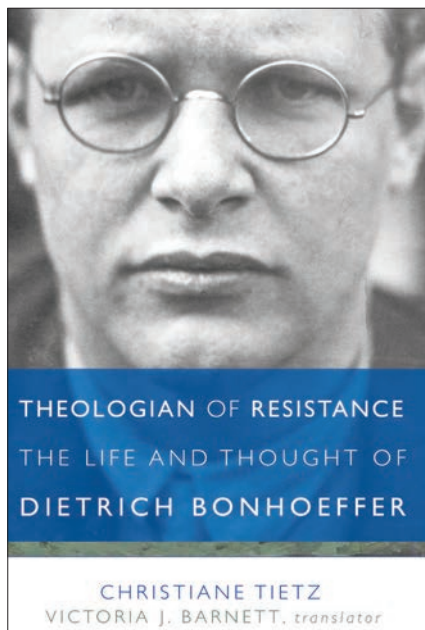
Monica A. Coleman's great-grandfather asked his two young sons to lift him up and pull out the chair when he hanged himself, and that noose stayed in the family shed for years. The noose was the violent instrument, but it was undiagnosed depression that killed him.

Now, in a gripping fashion, Coleman examines the ways that the legacies of slavery, war, sharecropping, poverty and alcoholism mask a family history of mental illness. Those same forces pushed her into the black religious traditions and Christian ministry, but also left her afflicted with bipolar disorder.

At once a spiritual autobiography and a memoir of mental illness, "Bipolar Faith" shares how trauma and depression engage in a life-long dance with the threat of death. Citing serendipitous encounters with black intellectuals like Henry Louis Gates Jr., Angela Davis and Renita Weems, Coleman offers a rare account of how the modulated highs of bipolar II can lead to professional success, while hiding a depression that even doctors rarely discover.

Only as she was able to face her illness was she able to live faithfully with bipolar. And in the process, she discovered a new and liberating vision of God.

Available at fortresspress.com/bipolarfaith.



'Theologian of Resistance: The Life and Thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer'
by Christiane Tietz
(Available September 2016)

Since Dietrich Bonhoeffer's death in 1945, he has continued to fascinate and compel readers as a theologian, witness and martyr.

In this powerful new biography, author Christiane Tietz masterfully portrays the interconnectedness of Bonhoeffer's life and thought, theology and politics, discipleship, witness and resistance, tracing his path from childhood to his imprisonment and execution in Germany.

"Theologian of Resistance: The Life and Thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer" is brief, lucid and accessible, a new biography with previously unseen pictures brings Bonhoeffer's story and work to life. Available at fortresspress.com/theologianofresistance.

Host a book fair, get free books for your congregation

Looking for ways to connect with families of young children in your congregation and community? Sparkhouse Family is offering congregations the opportunity to host a book fair, geared for families with children ages 10 and under, this fall.

Hosting a book fair is one way to invite new families into your congregation and equip the families who are currently part of your congregation to continue faith-filled conversations throughout the week. Plus, your congregation will get to keep the 10 books featured in this fall's book fair.

Sparkhouse Family features a wide variety of new resources based on the popular "Spark Story Bible," including a family devotional, a collection of prayers for kids based on the Psalms, a picture

BOOK FAIR

book about Noah's ark, the first animated Spark video (starring Squiggles the caterpillar) and a new line of Spark Play and Learn Books to help make family faith formation easy and fun.

Other noteworthy titles included in the upcoming book fair are a new Christmas picture book from the Frolic series and an Advent pop-up book.

Each video and book is designed to help parents instill an open-hearted, transformational, lifelong Christian faith in their children at every age and stage.

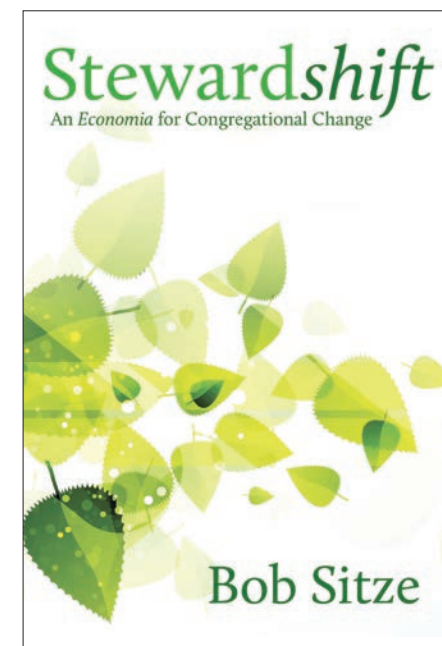
Visit http://info.sparkhouse.org/bookfair_seeds.

Shifting stewardship

Prolific author, congregational consultant and retired ELCA churchwide staff member Bob Sitze has taken yet another provocative look at congregational vitality. This time, Sitze examines the theology and practice of stewardship in his new "Stewardshift: An Economia for Congregational Change."

Released earlier this year under the Morehouse Publishing imprint, "Stewardshift" invites readers to shift their understanding and practice of stewardship toward more insistent biblical interpretations of familiar texts. The book also details the variety of stewardship wisdom available in God's revelation in the outside world. Sitze gathers biblical scholarship and current developments in secular fields—such as financial planning, wisdom research, natural history, philanthropy, neuroscience, community organizing, positive psychology and simple lifestyles—to bolster his contention that congregations can find identity and purpose in newer understandings of stewardship.

One feature scattered throughout each chapter are the suggestions that answer an important question that may be on the minds of leaders looking for avenues to congregational renewal: "So



what?" In "Stewardshift," the answers are clear and compelling: Stewardship gives congregations hope and courage to seek and serve God's "economia," God's will.

For further information, including ordering details, author's video clip, and an online version of the book's first chapter, a short history of stewardship theology and practice, visit churchpublishing.org/stewardshift.

The Annotated Luther Series

This new resource from Fortress Press comes at a key time in the life of the church, as we commemorate the 500th anniversary of Luther's posting of the 95 Theses. The goal of a new six-volume series is to make the writings of Luther accessible for a new generation of readers.

To accomplish this goal, more than 40 top scholars of Luther and the Reformation make dozens of key Luther texts come alive through updated translations, new introductions, insightful annotations and numerous images.

The pages of the volumes are designed for maximal visual interest and to help readers navigate Luther's writings more easily. With both hardcover complete volumes and paperback study editions of key treatises available, there is a wealth of content for individual research and group study.

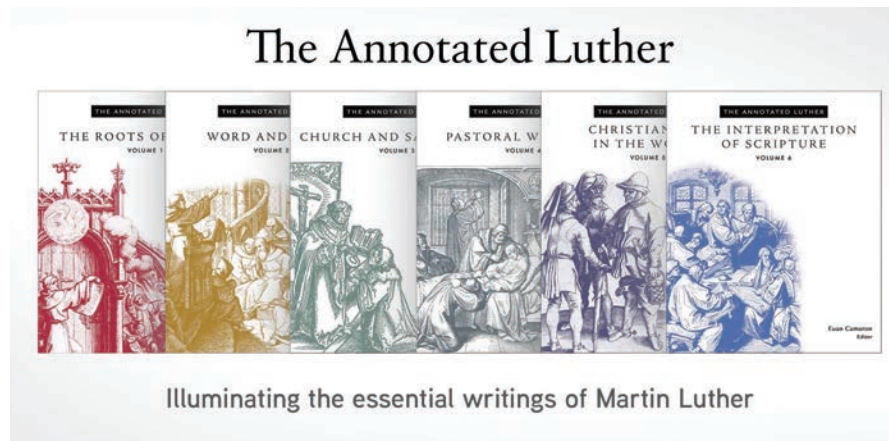
Volumes in the series

"Volume 1: The Roots of Reform" (Timothy J. Wengert, volume editor)

Contains writings that defined the roots of reform set in motion by Martin Luther, beginning with the "Ninety-Five Theses" (1517) through "The Freedom of a Christian" (1520).

"Volume 2: Word and Faith" (Kirsi I. Stjerna, volume editor)

Introduces Luther's understanding of Scripture and theology as he contin-



ues his growth as teaching theologian, pastor, biblical exegete and apologist for the faith.

"Volume 3: Church and Sacraments" (Paul W. Robinson, volume editor)

Explores Luther's focus on the church, worship and his understanding of the meaning of the sacraments. Available August 2016.

"Volume 4: Pastoral Writings" (Mary Jane Haemig, volume editor)

Introduces Luther the pastor and his writings on prayer, human suffering and death, and the importance of knowing the basics of faith. Includes selected letters, sermons, hymns and his popular Small Catechism. Available August 2016.

"Volume 5: Christian Life in the World" (Hans J. Hillerbrand, volume editor)

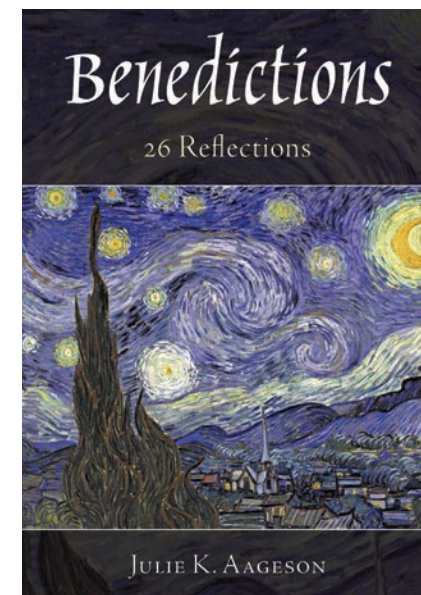
Explores Luther's understandings of church and state and life lived as a faithful follower of Christ in the world. Volume 5 includes his insights on marriage, business, public education, the role of secular authority and his controversial reflections on "Jews" and "Turks." Available 2017.

"Volume 6: The Interpretation of Scripture" (Euan K. Cameron, volume editor)

The writings of Luther the exegete, Bible translator and Bible teacher are featured in this volume. Includes several key examples from his biblical commentaries and introductions. Available 2017.

Learn more about this series and the study editions at fortresspress.com/annotatedluther.

'Benedictions' helps discover God's presence in everyday life



Looking for a resource that invites conversation, interaction and questions? Something for small group reflection, visits with neighbors and family, men's and women's groups, staff meetings or individual mulling? "Benedictions: 26 Reflections," written by Julie K. Aageson, may prove to be just the right resource.

"Benedictions" invites readers to consider God's presence in ordinary things: the ground beneath our feet, the ways we bless each other, loss and grief, the making of our homes, even doubt and darkness. Readers are asked to ponder where we find meaning, shelter, comfort, company, hope, beauty, resurrection, purpose and God's face in the journey that is life.

Both personal and universal, "Benedictions" reminds us to live life with feeling and passion and art, paying attention to the holiness of the commonplace—paper scraps, sticks and rags and soups, sunrises and compost piles, the stuff of which we spin an atmosphere for family, neighbors and friends, without which there is no taste of God.

Aageson has served as a resource specialist and writer for the ELCA. She writes a regular column for Gather magazine and is a co-author of "One Hope: Re-Membering the Body of Christ," honoring the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

"Benedictions: 26 Reflections," is available at Amazon.com or <http://wipfandstock.com/Benedictions.html>.

Faith Lens gets young people talking



Faith Lens—like the teenage audience it's designed for—has been around for more than 17 years. Yet it remains one of the best kept secrets in the ELCA. It's written by youth workers, pastors, campus ministry folks and the like across the church.

Faith Lens is a free, weekly online resource for Sunday school or any other Bible study setting for high school age youth. It connects headlines and current events of the world to the weekly lectionary texts used in worship.

Congregational leaders and teachers have been using Faith Lens with middle school youth, young adults and even as a tool for cross-generational conversations. The key to its effectiveness and popularity is that Faith Lens gets people talking, and the dialog that ensues leads

to a deeper conversation of faith and how faith meets daily life so that what happens in church on Sunday (or pick any day) can carry into the rest of the week—into life.

Subscribe to Faith Lens and receive it in your email inbox each week during the school year by visiting the blog site of the ELCA at <http://blogs.ELCA.org/faithlens/>. Or get Faith Lens via the ELCA Youth Ministry Network app on your smartphone or tablet.



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Seeds for the Parish



We are freed and renewed in Christ. This year's Churchwide Assembly in New Orleans will observe the 500th anniversary of the Reformation under the theme "Freed and Renewed in Christ: 500 years of God's Grace in Action." The 500th anniversary of the Reformation is an opportunity to rejoice in the life-giving, liberating power of the gospel that drives our faith and church. *Photo: Cross Lutheran Church, Milwaukee.*



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