

Seeds for the Parish

Summer 2018

Resource paper for leaders of ELCA congregations

ELCA.org



Nebraska Synod campus ministry leaders share assumptions about generations, fears about the church and experiences of faith. (From left) Linda Montag, Vicar Ashlin Marchese, the Rev. Sean Koos and the Rev. Jim Holthus.

Video resource helps congregations bridge generations

Campus ministers in the Nebraska Synod and members of the Nebraska Lutheran Campus Ministry board jumped with both feet into conversation at their spring meeting in Lincoln. The spark for their lively talk was a new video resource, “Generation: Together.”

“Generation: Together” videos feature 10 interviewees representing five generations from three congregations, each sharing their perspectives on the church, faith and community. At the spring meeting, campus ministry partners watched three of the four videos and afterward discussed in small and large groups the ways people of different ages experience and talk about their faith lives.

“The helpful thing about these videos,” said Nebraska Synod Bishop Brian Maas,

one of the participants, “is that viewers can see and hear other people saying the kinds of things they themselves might be thinking. That can make it easier in conversation later when you can point to someone else’s words instead of having to bring it up on your own.”

No silver bullets

In early 2016, a group of mostly young-adult church leaders in Nebraska started working together, tasked with the goal of helping congregations better connect with young adults – a goal of the Nebraska Synod Strategic Mission Vision Plan.

“We all knew that young adults are falling away from the church more and more, or never walk through our doors in the first place,” explained the Rev. Beth Ann Lechtenberger Stone, co-facilitator of

the working group. “The challenge was how to help people who think of themselves as church ‘insiders’ understand that many people not connected with the church also have faith, but they might talk about it differently or value different aspects when it comes to a faith community.”

Short on magic formulas or silver bullets, the group sought a grant to fund a video-based resource that congregations could use to start meaningful conversations and build relationships. “While the purpose of most videos is to communicate content, we created these videos to begin conversations,” said the Rev. Cara Jensen, the group’s other co-facilitator.

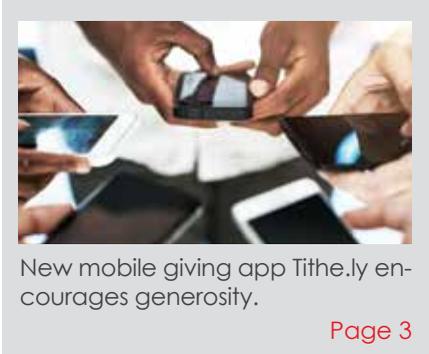
The videos have many potential uses. “You could show a video in a council or annual meeting, or bring together youth

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Time to apply for 2019 Domestic Hunger Grants.

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New mobile giving app Tithe.ly encourages generosity.

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Find service and wilderness experiences with “Journeys for Youth.”

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Online ideas and resources for ministry with children.

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ELCA World Hunger Domestic Hunger Grant application now open

ELCA World Hunger Domestic Hunger Grants accompany congregations and partners throughout the United States as they draw on the strengths of communities to address issues such as food security, housing, job readiness, clean water, human rights, policy change, leadership development and more. Together, these ministries are part of a comprehensive approach to hunger and poverty. ELCA World Hunger is pleased to announce the Domestic Hunger Grant application for 2019 awards is now open!

The ELCA World Hunger team has been revising the grant application and the webpage to make both accessible and helpful to ministry partners. There have also been changes to the grant process, including a longer award cycle allowing ministries to seek funding for three years through one application and a shorter

timeline from application to award decision.

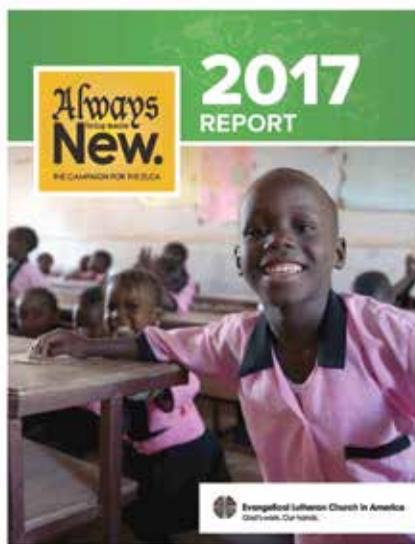
Friends and partners are important assets for getting the word out about Domestic Hunger Grants to groups that are working through and with ELCA congregations to address the root causes of poverty and hunger. For more information, you are invited to join a webinar that will review the granting priorities and cover the basics of applying. The webinar is July 19 at 7 p.m., CDT. If you are interested in attending, please send an email to Hunger@ELCA.org.



Participants take part in a food preservation and English skills workshop hosted by Iskashitaa Refugee Network, a Tucson organization that has been supported in part by an ELCA World Hunger Domestic Hunger Grant.

Learn more about Domestic Hunger Grants at ELCA.org/domestichungergrants. Applications are due Aug. 13.

The Campaign for the ELCA enters final year with \$144 million raised



Four years ago, this church set the bold and daring goal of raising \$198 million in a five-year span – a significant increase in support for existing and new ministries. Through this first-ever effort, *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*,

we made a commitment to invest in the future of this church, deepen our relationships and expand ministries that serve our neighbors and communities here at home and around the globe.

As of Jan. 31, ELCA members, congregations and synods have contributed \$144 million (73 percent of the five-year goal), as well as \$30.5 million in planned gifts, to the ministries of the campaign. With this support, we have accomplished so much together, including:

- grown the Young Adults in Global Mission program by 48 percent, providing 93 young adults the opportunity to participate in a year of service during the 2017-18;
- reached the ELCA Fund for Leaders \$15 million goal within the campaign, empowering more than 520 students with seminary scholarships and continuing work toward the long-term goal of providing full-tuition support for every candidate

at an ELCA seminary;

- increased annual giving to ELCA World Hunger by 15 percent, with 2017 marking the largest year of direct giving in the program's history, allowing the ELCA to support 518 projects that help fight hunger in 62 countries; and
- contributed \$1 million for the campaign's Renewing Congregations initiative, implementing 26 grants to revitalize congregations across the ELCA.

In the 2017 Campaign Report, you will see how your generosity is making a difference in the lives of our neighbors around the world. Please share this important work with your synod and congregation! Download a copy at ELCA.org/campaign or contact the campaign team at 800-638-3522 or campaignforELCA@elca.org.

Thank you for your support in this final year of the campaign and as we continue to grow and transform these ministries for years to come.

Seeds for the Parish

ELCA.org/seeds
LivingLutheran.com/seeds

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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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and quilters’ groups to watch and talk together,” said Stone adding, “You could even invite nonmembers in your local community to meet with members as a

focus group. Just be sure to feed them and thank them afterward!”

Thanks to a grant from Immanuel Vision Foundation, the free “Generation:

Together” videos and user’s guide are available at the Nebraska Synod website, nebraskasynod.org/learn/generation-together.html.



New ELCA digital giving tools now available

Have you ever wished that giving to your congregation was an easier process? Even if your congregation has imple-

mented online giving, you may have found yourself wanting to be able to give at any time, from anywhere.

Thanks to the ELCA's new vendor partnership, you can. ELCA members can now give in seconds using a suite of online, mobile and text tools from Tithe.ly.

Innovative giving

With Tithe.ly's free mobile giving app, members can donate with a simple tap. You can designate a gift to one or more funds in a single transaction or schedule regular automated giving (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly, monthly). With text giving, users can give directly to their congregations through a dedicated number.

Tithe.ly can work with every ELCA congregation. Its donation forms are integrated into congregations' websites instead of sending donors to third-party sites. Donors have the option to make one-time or recurring gifts and to give with or without an



account. Giving forms can also be customized to collect contact information to send an email confirmation for every gift.

If you are your congregation's administrator, detailed reporting makes it easy to verify transactions. You'll receive weekly (or monthly) summary reports, and you'll have access to analytical tools that help you monitor giving trends.

You can also turn any laptop or tablet with an internet browser and Wi-Fi into a kiosk that allows for quick and easy giving that can be set up anywhere. Donors can immediately receive a gift receipt via email.

Special pricing

The ELCA has negotiated special pricing for congregations that sign up to use Tithe.ly – more than 25 percent off its regular processing fees. A bonus rebate for gifts made through ELCA Federal Credit Union credit and debit cards is also available.

Learn more and sign up at get.tithe.ly/elca.



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“God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday celebrates the work you do every day!



Together in Jesus Christ we are freed by grace to live faithfully, witness boldly and serve joyfully.

Make plans now for “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday, Sept. 9. Information and

new resources are available at ELCA.org/dayofservice to help your congregation organize and prepare.

Since 2013, thousands of ELCA congregations have participated in this

dedicated day of service, gathering to serve communities in ways that share the love of God with all of God’s people. The event has quickly become an anticipated way to be “church together” and “church for the sake of the world.”

“God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday is an opportunity to deepen your experience in the community, offering a way for congregations to play a critical part in addressing community needs. Consider partnering with other congregations and organizations in your region or synod or inviting other congregations and religious groups to join in the day of service. These partnerships can broaden the scope of your service activities and provide ways to nurture lasting connections beyond your congregation.

Visit ELCA.org/dayofservice to register your congregation. You’ll also find new resources to help you plan

activities and worship, invite your neighbors and promote “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday in your community. Resources include the 2018 version of the toolkit, postcards, door hangers and social memes. New this year are Spanish-language postcards, door hangers and social memes.

You can also order yellow “God’s work. Our hands.” T-shirts. Many congregations wear their T-shirts during service projects throughout the year in addition to the designated day of service.

If your congregation cannot participate on Sept. 9, please consider planning for another time that works best.

“God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday celebrates the work you do every day – serving communities in ways that share the love of God with all people. We look forward to doing this work together again this year.

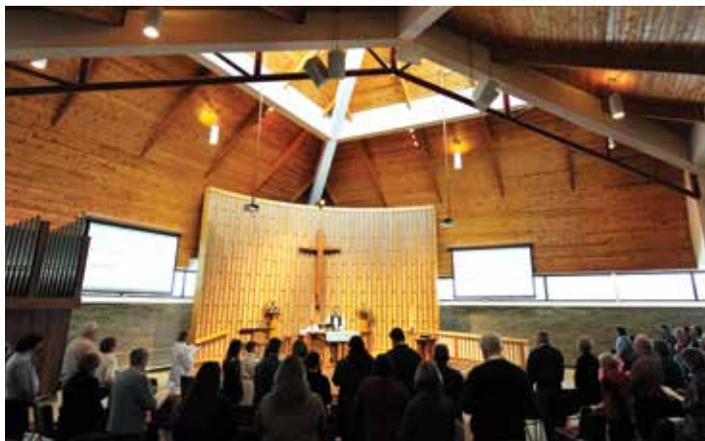
Consolidating congregation in Detroit renovates building with help of a Mission Investment Fund loan

In 2013, following much thought, discussion and prayer, three ELCA congregations in west-suburban Detroit completed a consolidation into one, new, vibrant congregation. “Celebration” became the chosen name for this joyous congregation.

“As a newly consolidated congregation, we all wanted a new, neutral site for worship – not my building or *your* building but *our* building,” recalls the pastor, the Rev. Jim Fogle. The congregation reviewed nearly 100 locations

– churches, schools, banquet halls, empty lots – before deciding on a new home: a Catholic church slated for closure.

Divine Savior Parish in Westland, Mich., proved to be an optimal site for Celebration Lutheran Church (celebrationlc.com), and congregation members voted overwhelmingly to purchase the church building. The site is at the juncture of four suburbs – three of which did not have an ELCA congregation. The Catholic parishioners, meanwhile, were ecstatic that another



Worshippers gather in the renovated, updated sanctuary of Celebration Lutheran Church, a consolidated congregation in Westland, Mich.

church would buy its property, and the sale to Celebration was completed in August 2016.

The Mission Investment Fund (MIF), the lending ministry of the ELCA, provided a loan for necessary renovations to the sanctuary. MIF provides loans to ELCA congregations and ministries for building projects as well as for refinancing existing debt. As a ministry of the church, MIF understands the needs and goals of congregations and ministries and helps create plans that focus on mission and

vision for the future. Its church building consultants can help guide ministries through the building process.

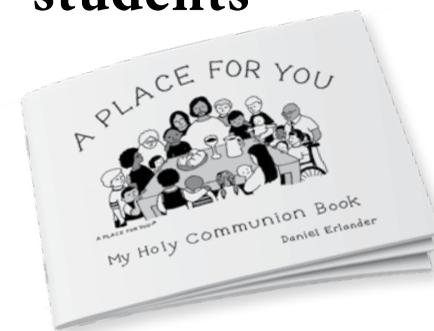
With MIF’s loan, Celebration doubled the altar and pulpit area, added a large, specially designed hanging cross and installed a ramp for ease of access. Celebration also added glass panels to separate the sanctuary from the fellowship area, now outfitted with state-of-the-art sound and two 70-inch video monitors for

watching worship services. Finally, the congregation built out offices in a large, available space and refurbished its Sunday school area.

The consolidated congregation held its first worship service in the newly refurbished church in January 2017, and Celebration has been welcoming new members ever since.

Learn more about Mission Investment Fund loans, specialty services and investments at mif.elca.org or call 877-886-3522.

Daniel Erlander’s books continue to influence readers and students



The books written and illustrated by Daniel Erlander have resonated with readers for decades. Their visual appeal, accessible theological content and welcoming yet subtly provocative tone invite us into moments of delight, discovery and the underlying assurance of God’s deep and everlasting love for all people. Generations of Christians from around the world can point to these books and tell stories about how Erlander’s voice helped them better understand what it means to embrace and live out their faith.

Augsburg Fortress is now taking on a primary role in stewarding what Erlander created. Beginning in May, Augsburg Fortress became the sole distributor for his publications. Additionally, Augsburg Fortress will expand on these works in innovative ways, starting with a curriculum based on *A Place for You: My Holy Communion Book*. To ensure a close alignment with Erlander’s mission and visual aesthetic, the development team is working with a four-member advisory panel whose connections to Erlander run deep. Currently this panel includes Anne Basye, the Rev. Susan R. Briehl, the Rev. Mary C. Lindberg and the Rev. Michael Poellet.

You can order the original editions of Erlander’s books at augsburgfortress.org. On Oct. 15, an expanding collection of new resources will begin that continues the stories and themes established in these beloved books.

To learn about new Erlander resources developed by Augsburg Fortress, sign up for the mailing list at augsburgfortress.org/aplaceforyou.

Connect to stewardship resources through stewardNet e-newsletter



If you Google the word “stewardship,” you will get about 10.5 million results, making it difficult to know where to start and what’s worth your time. StewardNet is an e-newsletter published quarterly by the ELCA to solve this problem and better connect congregations and leaders with stewardship resources that will make a difference.

Each issue of stewardNet has a central theme, perspectives on mission

interpretation and links to books, videos, articles and a calendar of upcoming events. Each issue strives to distill ideas that surface through conversations, presentations and research from across the ELCA and other denominations and organizations. The orientation of stewardNet is less about technical stewardship fixes and more about adaptive change.

Most recently, stewardNet asked about the big picture of stewardship and what

our highest aspirations are for emerging and experienced stewards in our midst. The previous theme distinguished between nutritionists, chefs and restaurateurs and explored the focus we need in the church to be able to nourish people sustainably.

StewardNet regularly promotes internet-accessible talks given at Luther Seminary’s Rethinking Stewardship, Ecumenical Stewardship Center events, the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University, as well as the ELCA’s stewardTalk and stewardCast. Links are provided to download new issues of *Giving Magazine*, *Stories of Faith in Action*, *Where Does My Offering Go* and more.

Go to bit.ly/SEEstewardNet to download past issues of stewardNet. To subscribe, please complete the form at bit.ly/GETstewardNet or send your name and email address to stewardnet@elca.org.

Playing in the Sandbox involves exploring lively, relevant topics



The Sandbox crew meets with Chris King, founder of We Are Marcus, a virtual character development program for nurturing students of all backgrounds. (From left) Chris Roberts, Chris King, Dave Berg and Carsten Earl.

In an often contentious, fractured society, Sandbox Cooperative seeks to build a community of listeners knocking down walls of division with curiosity and conversation. Twice a month, cohosts Dave Berg and Chris Roberts explore topics people are talking about, considering them through a lens of

spirituality, humor and discovery. Based out of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Rochester, Minn., Sandbox Cooperative offers conversations with thoughtful leaders, authors and ruckus makers.

Over the past several years they've covered topics like food insecurity, racism, human trafficking, immigration and addiction. There have been fascinating conversations with nationally known guests like New York Times Best Sellers author Rob Bell, leading podcaster and author Mike McHargue and 2016 CNN Hero of the Year finalist Becca Stevens and jumped into politics and religion with former U.S. Rep. Tim Penny and interfaith dialogue with teacher and activist Regina Mustafa, who shared about her Muslim faith.

A place to explore the world and new ideas

In addition to the podcast, Sandbox Cooperative has done 10 livestreamed events. The video of each event is posted at sandboxcooperative.com. There's a

discussion guide for each event that's ideal for small groups, youth groups and adult forums.

Sandbox Cooperative has formed a community of people who are on a journey of discovery and understanding. Listeners are a diverse group including those who identify as spiritual but not religious, and others who are curious onlookers and learners. To participate in the Sandbox, you can listen and subscribe to the podcast, sign up for the email list or visit a live event – in person or online. Participants at the ELCA Youth Gathering this summer were invited to stop by the Sandbox Cooperative booth and learn more. You'll discover a permission giving platform to explore new ideas with an ever-growing perspective of our world. As the hosts regularly say, "There is always more room in the Sandbox."

The podcast is available wherever podcasts are found – iTunes, Google Play Music and more. You can also find them at SandboxCooperative.com or connect through Facebook and Twitter.

Join ELCA World Hunger's Global Farm Challenge



ELCA World Hunger's Global Farm Challenge is a yearlong, youth-driven fundraising challenge to support the agriculture-related programs of our church's ministry to end hunger and poverty. Many youth and youth groups raised funds for the challenge ahead of this summer's ELCA Youth Gathering.

The goal of ELCA World Hunger's Global Farm Challenge is to raise \$500,000 or more in 2018 to equip communities around the world and in the United States with livestock, seeds, tools, training and other agriculture-related resources to turn a hungry season into a hopeful season.

Now, thanks to generous friends of the ELCA, gifts will go even further: All gifts toward the Global Farm Challenge will be matched – dollar for dollar – up to \$515,000! Together, with this gift match, we can raise more than \$1 million this year to create healthier families, stronger economies and a future filled with hope. To learn more, participate or find helpful resources to get your congregation involved, visit ELCA.org/globalfarmchallenge.

Servant events and wilderness adventures for youth

Early one morning near Sky Ranch Lutheran Camp in Colorado, Ben and several campers hiked on a mountain ridge when a storm hit. As the rain pounded, lightning flashed and thunder crashed around them, Ben thought, "This must be just like Martin Luther crossing that field before he became a monk." The group spread out, pushed around a peak and started down. As Ben and his fellow campers watched the storm pass, a bright rainbow appeared from the sanctuary of the trees, reminding them of God's love. Ben remarked, "We saw both the power and the quiet grandeur of God that day and learned to pray a little more fervently."

Your youth can have a faith enriching experience like Ben and his companion

hikers, and Lutheran Outdoor Ministries has an online resource, "Journeys for Youth," that will help you find a wilderness adventure or servant event experience for your group. The challenges of wilderness adventures can be an important aspect of faith formation, and servant events help empower young people to serve in the mind and manner of Christ and include experiential learning in social ministry, hunger and justice.

As you plan for your youth, please check out "Journeys for Youth" at journeys.lomnetwork.org and consider joining an adventure trip or servant event – programs led by trained staff. About 35 camps have already listed programs for 2019. "Journeys for



Youth" is free and helps congregations find experiences that complement congregational programs and strengthen relationships between outdoor ministries and congregations.

Learn more about the 128 outdoor ministry organizations affiliated with the ELCA at lomnetwork.org.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

With gender-based violence showing up in the news more frequently, how can we as a church make sure we show up for those affected by it? October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month – a great opportunity to think about how we're

called to respond.

Check out ELCA.org/Resources/Justice-for-Women#GenderbasedViolence for resources in English and Spanish, including posters and bulletin inserts. Consider studying the ELCA's "Gender-

Based Violence" social message (ELCA.org/socialmessages) as a congregation to learn how we can think theologically about domestic violence and discern how we serve our members and community.

If you're interested in collaborating with

other faith groups, faithtrustinstitute.org has resources from a multifaith perspective, as well as preaching and liturgy guides.

Amazing benefits for members of the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association

Does your congregation have a week-day school or early childhood center? If it does and it is not a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA), you are missing out on a wealth of benefits and opportunities to help your school, center, congregation and employees thrive.

ELEA has been the leading source of support, advocacy and connections for ELCA and other faith-based schools and early learning centers since 1988. Learn about ELEA at eleanational.org. The following are some of the benefits members of ELEA have at their fingertips:

Communications

- monthly e-newsletters with information on programs, events and resources
- notifications of webinars, grant programs and discount programs
- Yahoo chat groups – separate forums for administrators, pastors and principals

Insurance programs

- free \$3,000 accidental death and dismemberment policy for every employee working 20 hours per week or more in a school or congregation
- deeply discounted life insurance for employees, spouses and their children
- deeply discounted disability insurance for employees
- student accident insurance (available in Western states)

School business and organizational resource discounts

- free access to HR360.com, a \$900 per year value offering resources and guidance on employment laws and human resources best practices

- ELEA group pricing for Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and Children's Progress Academic Assessment (CPAA) testing tools
- free subscription to *Exchange* magazine and 20 percent discount on staff development materials
- print resources developed by ELEA: staff evaluation tools, When I Play I Learn posters, School Marketing Materials Kit and more
- discount pricing on promotional marketing products from Spartan Promotional Group

School supply vendor discounts

- Lakeshore Learning, Kaplan Learning, Discount School Supply and School Specialty Companies
- Tuition collection and administrative software discounts
- SMART Tuition, ProCare and KangarooTime

Conferences and training

- IGNITE, an annual national school administrator and pastor conference
- Early Childhood Director Boot Camp, an intensive training for new directors and those needing a boost
- ELEA regional teacher and administrator conferences in many areas of the country
- webinars and online training sponsored by ELEA and partner organizations

School improvement and wellness programs

- Centers of Wellness Program for schools and early childhood centers



Support and advocacy

- ELEA staff and volunteers available to offer advice, resources and a listening ear to help administrators, pastors and school leaders when challenges arise
- representation through ELCA Schools' membership in the Council for American Private Education (CAPE), the voice of private education in the United States
- representation and advocacy at the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Non-Public Education
- Representation at the National Center for Educational Statistics, National Assessment of Education Progress and other national and regional educational institutions

All the above benefits, except for insurance programs, are available to individual members. Individual membership is not available to individuals employed by an ELCA school, center or congregation with a school or center; in these cases, the congregation and its school ministry must join as an institutional member.

As a perk to Seeds for the Parish readers, ELEA is offering **\$50 off new memberships**. Just send an email with the subject "Seeds for the Parish Discount" to ELEA's membership coordinator, Erin Savoca, at eleamembership@gmail.com.

New Guardian Angel programs established in Omaha and Denver

2018 has been a banner year for AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities) with the launch of two Guardian Angel programs with 47 trained volunteers in Omaha and 19 in Denver.

Volunteers in the Omaha program represent the collaborative efforts and organization of the Nebraska and Western Iowa synods. In addition to the training, a general session on AMMPARO was open to people from both synods to encourage congregations to become welcoming congregations.

The Omaha program got off the ground quickly with volunteers scheduled to attend court hearings the following week to accompany two young people for their father's bond hearing, together with people from his congregation in northeastern Iowa.

Become a volunteer – a Guardian Angel for others

Anyone can be a Guardian Angel volunteer. There are no prerequisites other than a willingness to offer your time, voice and support for children and families facing immigration proceedings.

For information on the Omaha program and to sign up for the next training, contact the program coordinator, the Rev. Rebecca Sheridan, at rebecca@nebraskasynod.org.

The coordinator for the Denver program is the Rev. Alena Lamirato. Contact Lamirato at pastoralena@yahoo.com to learn how to become a Guardian Angel volunteer in the Rocky Mountain Synod.

If you live near Atlanta, the Southeastern Synod is seeking volunteers to sign up for its Guardian Angel program in Atlanta. Contact Barbara Tedlow at nanbarbarasnead@icloud.com for information.

Are you curious about the Guardian Angel program, want to know more about our church's AMMPARO strategy or are interested in starting a program in your area? Contact the program director for AMMPARO, Mary Campbell, at mary.campbell@elca.org.

Gather magazine's fall Bible study focuses on repentance

Repentance is one of the most powerful acts of a person or a church, making possible not only forgiveness but also reconciliation. This fall, *Gather* magazine (gathermagazine.org) will explore what repentance means for Lutheran Christians in a three-part Bible study. Written by the Rev. Meghan Johnston Aelabouni,

this Bible study focuses on the role of repentance in our faith, our relationships and the church. Subscribe now to get all three sessions of the study. Call *Gather* subscriptions at 844-409-0576 or visit gathermagazine.org.



A must-have book for every Sunday school class

The World Jesus Knew: A Curious Kid's Guide to Life in the First Century
By Marc Olson

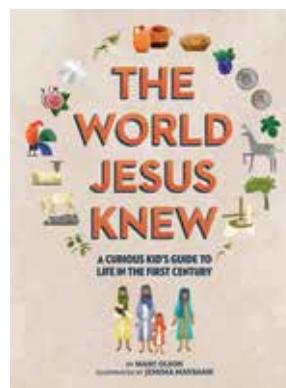
This captivating book helps children – and adults – discover the world Jesus lived in through maps, charts and infographics. They'll learn about the culture Jesus lived in – his Jewish religion, the power of the ruling Roman Empire and the role of fishermen, carpenters and shepherds. It's an invitation to explore the stories of Jesus in their context, bringing new life

to Bible stories.

Quantity discounts available at augstburgfortress.org.

“This is a complete package that will have wide appeal and puts a clear focus on biblical times.”

– Booklist, starred review



Addressing difficult conversations in adult small groups



There are many adult small groups that gather to discuss the Bible – which is amazing!

But why isn't it as common to gather and talk about world issues such as racism and the refugee crisis? Maybe it's because of the potential political disagreements or maybe leaders feel ill-equipped to lead such discussions. In response to these challenges, Sparkhouse is releasing an adult small group series, “Dialogues On.”

“Dialogues On” encourages honest talk about difficult topics. In a time when so many conversations end in conflict, this series equips people to share their ideas, listen well, learn from other viewpoints and develop action plans to bring hope and healing out of the church and into the world.

The first unit, “Dialogues On: The Refugee Crisis,” will be available July 17 and includes resources such as:

- a “Learner Book” filled with experiences and well-researched information for increasing awareness and knowledge of the issue;
- a “Facilitator Guide” packed with tips and leader skills that help shape conversations; and
- a DVD that includes interviews with the “Learner Book” authors that can be the basis for more in-depth discussions.

Visit wearesparkhouse.org for more information. Plus, order now and receive **25 percent off** your first “Dialogues On” purchase! Use **DIALOGUES25** at checkout.

How to engage all students with the Bible in a multiage classroom

If your congregation has a single, multiage classroom for Sunday school, you know it



can come with its challenges. One challenge can be making sure each student is able to hear, read and understand the Bible story in an age-appropriate way. A traditional Bible translation is too advanced for a 5-year-old, but a story Bible may not engage a 10-year-old. As the Bible is the heart of every Sunday school lesson, all students should have access to it.

Here's how you can help bridge the gap in your multiage Sunday school classroom to make sure all young people have access to the Bible:

You can use different Bibles

It's OK if all the children in your class are not using the same Bible! Provide

students with the appropriate Bible for their age and reading level. Younger elementary stu-

dents and pre-readers can use a story Bible. Older elementary students can use a traditional translation, such as the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Reading Scripture out loud to the entire class from the NRSV while younger children look at the pictures of the corresponding story in their Bible can help them better understand what they are hearing.

Pair older and younger students

When it comes time to read the day's Bible story, pair up an older student with a younger one. They can look at the two Bibles together. The older one can read the full translation to the younger one,

or they can help the younger child read the story from a story Bible. It offers a fun experience for everyone.

Use a curriculum designed for all ages

If you're looking for multiage Sunday school options that incorporate age-appropriate Bible use into every lesson, check out “Spark All Kids,” a comprehensive Bible-based Sunday school where students experience the salvation story arc, and “Whirl All Kids,” a Sunday school curriculum that's relatable to children and relevant to life. Both feature age-appropriate Bibles designed for the curriculum and integrate the Bibles and buddy activities in every lesson. Learn more at wearesparkhouse.org.

Whatever you choose, open yourself up to working within the structure of your multiage classroom. Embrace your students' differences, and you will see growth, learning and fun for everyone.

Online help for ministry with children

Can't keep up with the kids? You are not alone! If you have young children or work with them, it doesn't hurt to remember that they may be sprinting but we're in it for the marathon. Ministry with children requires a long view because they are spiritual beings in the early part of a lifelong journey of faith formation.

It's hard enough to physically keep up with children much less take the time to research insightful books, can-do crafts or the latest app to help tell sacred stories. That's why the ELCA has **ministrylinks.online**, a website full of books, suggested

websites, curriculum, intergenerational events and worship ideas for ministry with children – so you can spend less time searching the internet and more time with your kids. The website is updated regularly, so check it often for new resources and ideas.

Thank you for ministering with children who need your commitment to their ongoing faith formation! Feel free to con-



MINISTERING WITH
(CHILDREN)
THROUGHOUT THE ELCA

tact Janelle Hooper at janelle.hooper@elca.org with any questions. Hooper serves as program director for ELCA Ministry with Children, is married to an elementary school administrator, has two small children and is also in it for the marathon.



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As a church energized by lively engagement in our faith and life, the ELCA offers opportunities for youth to grow in and explore their faith. One of the most powerful experiences, the ELCA Youth Gathering, immerses 30,000 youth and adult leaders in learning, worship, Bible study, service and fellowship, inspiring and equipping young people to live their faith and baptismal calling throughout life. ELCA.org/Gathering

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