

Seeds for the Parish

Winter 2017

Resource paper for leaders of ELCA congregations

ELCA.org



Once homeless, Noah Mejstrik now works at Table Grace Cafe rebuilding his life, developing business skills and serving grateful customers. Photo: David Joel

At the table by grace, where everyone is welcome and nourished

In downtown Omaha, Neb., Table Grace Cafe is a place where lasting connections are made and the needs for healthy food and job opportunities are met. The cafe is an extension of Table Grace Ministries and the dream of managers Matt and Simone Weber. This ministry is one of more than 300 programs in the United States supported by your gifts to ELCA World Hunger.

At this pay-what-you-can restaurant, anyone who walks through the door is served a nutritious meal regardless of their ability to pay. In place of a bill, patrons are asked to pay what they are able through monetary donations or through the giving of their time. "This is a give-give relationship," Matt says. "What you give is

free-will. Donate or volunteer—our goal is 100 percent participation."

It's more than a meal

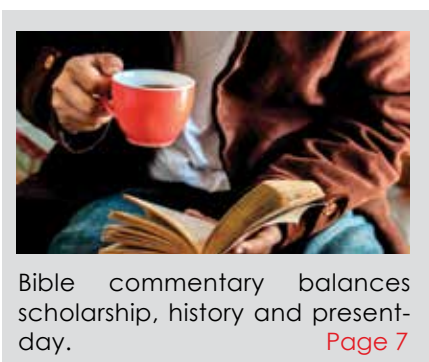
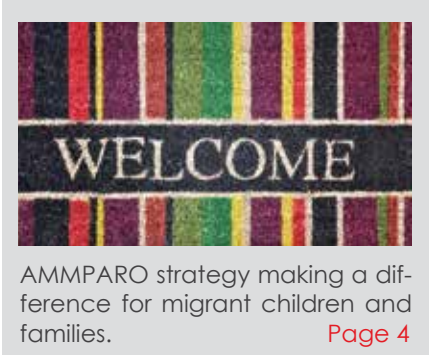
The cafe's connection with its patrons often goes beyond food. A 10-day training program is available to community members who are experiencing homelessness or are seeking to re-enter the workforce but lack the job skills or training. "We help them build their résumés and coach them so they can find culinary and restaurant jobs," shares Simone. And, sometimes the job is at Table Grace Cafe.

Noah Mejstrik was without a home when he first arrived at the cafe. Today, Noah has an apartment and is one of seven

paid staff members. He holds a certificate in food safety and oversees the cafe when Matt is not there.

Matt and Simone continue to dream. They are planning to do even more—provide more healthy meals and serve even more people through their job-training program. Your gifts to ELCA World Hunger are helping the Webers do just that—more of the work that God has called us to do together.

Go to ELCA.org/hunger to learn more about the work of ELCA World Hunger, hunger resources and publications, and how to get involved. To read more about what's happening at Table Grace Cafe go to tablegracecafe.com.



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Vibrant worship at heart of 2017 worship events

Worship at the Center events provide opportunities to deeply explore topics and rites of the worship of the church. These events include worship, presentations and workshops geared for pastors, musicians, worship teams and anyone interested in vibrant worship in their communities. Registration costs \$40 for individuals with a maximum of \$100 per congregation. Visit ELCA.org/worship for more information and to register.

Worship at the Center: “Engaging Worship and Culture”

Feb. 19-21

Santa Monica, Calif.

When we come to worship, we come as a part of many cultures: congregational and church cultures, the cultures of our family, towns or cities, cultures of country and many more. Worship both transcends

culture and embraces the diversity of cultures. Communal worship also challenges cultures and highlights sharing between cultures. It is these many intersections that make thinking about worship and culture both exciting and challenging.

What questions do you have about how culture and worship intersect in your place? “Engaging Worship and Culture” will give you opportunities to address these questions. Presenters include musician Jennifer Baker-Trinity, pastors Joseph Donella and Felix Malpica, and Dr. Ben Stewart.

Worship at the Center: “Exploring the Occasional Services”

April 30-May 2

New Haven, Conn.

The worship of the Christian assembly extends beyond primary gatherings



around word and sacrament, at certain times, to gather to mark occasions in human life and the life of the church. Come to explore major occasions such as weddings, funerals and healing, as well as other rites around assembly worship. The dimensions of pastoral care and assembly song will be included as we unpack these important rites in the life of the church.

Presenters for “Exploring the Occasional Services” include pastors Susan Briehl, Delmer Chilton, Mark Hanson, Margaret Payne and Craig Mueller.

To keep up-to-date to with this and other worship events, sign up to receive the monthly Worship e-newsletter (see the box at the bottom of ELCA.org/worship).

2018 ELCA Youth Gathering theme: ‘This Changes Everything’

It is with excitement that the theme for the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering is announced—“This Changes Everything.” The primary Scripture for the Gathering is Ephesians 2:8 “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.”

Grace is a foundational and distinctive piece of Lutheran Christian theology. This gift, undeserved and freely given, changes lives and perspectives as we realize we are enough because of what Christ has done and are called into the world to serve our neighbor and share the good news.

The Gathering logo is a visual representation of the theme and the 2018 Gathering experience. It incorporates the coming together of a mosaic to reflect the diverse host city of Houston, as well as the idea that we are a church where all are

imperfect and incomplete, yet we each belong in God’s masterpiece. The cross at the center of the logo is the focus—it is God’s grace, through Christ’s life, death and resurrection, that changes everything for all people.

In Morgan Schmidt’s book, “Woo: Awakening Teenagers’ Desire to Follow in the Way of Jesus,” Schmidt identifies the central desires of teens. All youth desire:

- Someone to become
- Somewhere to belong
- Something to do (that changes the world)

Young people echoed these desires throughout the 2015 Gathering. The Gathering seeks to be a ministry that helps define some of these desires or at least open pathways of discovery. Ultimately, the vi-



sion is for youth to understand the fierce love that God has for them, just as they are, and that by grace, through faith, they have been saved. When young people—or any person of any age—claim this reality, it changes everything.

You can find downloadable promotional resources for the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering in English and Spanish at ELCA.org/Resources/ELCA-Youth-Gathering under the “Promotional Items” tab. See you in Houston!

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.

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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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Grace Institute for Spiritual Formation to take a sabbatical year

Grace Institute for Spiritual Formation is a two-year continuing education program on spiritual formation and contemplative practices for individual and congregational renewal. Grace Institute has been an ELCA Lifelong Learning Partner since 2002. The eighth program

of Grace Institute will conclude in May 2017 at Shalom Spirituality Center in Dubuque, Iowa.

Grace Institute will take a year for prayer, discernment and re-visioning the program from fall 2017 to spring 2018 before beginning its ninth two-year program

in August 2018. Grace Institute is hosted through the Office for College Ministries at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa. More information about Grace Institute is available at luther.edu/grace-institute.



Celebrate International Women's Day with *The Campaign for the ELCA* and Global Church Sponsorship



The inaugural class of International Women Leaders scholarship recipients.

Every year on March 8, people around the world commemorate International Women's Day, a day dedicated to celebrating women's achievements throughout history and across nations. On this day, members of the ELCA celebrate by supporting and lifting up the International Women Leaders initiative—one of the 10 priorities of *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*—and we hope you will join us!

Launched in 2014, the International Women Leaders initiative grows out of the ELCA's well-established International Women Leaders program to provide opportunities specifically for women from our global companion churches. With a goal of raising \$4 million by Jan. 31, 2019, the initiative seeks to provide education and training opportunities, including scholarships to ELCA institutions, for more than 200 women.

Get your congregation involved in celebrating International Women's Day and supporting the International Women Leaders initiative, whether through a special offering or worship service, a social media campaign or a virtual "book drive." Download the International Women's Day toolkit and other materials, including a bulletin insert, video, posters and more at ELCA.org/Resources/Campaign-for-the-ELCA under the "Annual Themes" tab. A hard copy of the toolkit will also be mailed to your congregation in early January.

This year's International Women's Day celebrations are part of the Global Church annual theme year within *The Campaign for the ELCA*. For other ways to get involved, visit ELCA.org/campaign, or contact the Global Church Sponsorship team at 800-638-3522, ext. 2820, or globalchurch@elca.org.

1K Churches Initiative explores faith and economics

Are you interested in participating in a conversation around faith and economic justice? Join ELCA World Hunger and our partner, Criterion Institute, in exploring this topic of faith and economics in the 1K Churches Initiative. Congregations can engage in a five-session



session explores a different path to making microloans to small, local businesses; these enterprises are one source of economic opportunity for many in our communities.

You can download the 1K Churches welcome letter and learn more about how your congregation

can get involved at ELCA.org/Hunger/Resources under the "General" tab.



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Raising the conversation of lifelong faith formation



Over the past two years, leaders and churchwide staff representing the ELCA's Children's, Youth, Young Adult, Campus and Youth Gathering ministries, Lay Schools for Ministry and the Book of Faith initiative have been having conversations about faith formation in the church—lifelong faith formation. Other partners, practitioners and leaders engaged in faith formation working across the church have also contributed to the conversations and creative deliberation.

The first goal has been to wrestle with what it means to talk about lifelong faith formation and what it looks like when we see it happening in the church and

daily life, from birth to death. The hope is that ELCA congregations, synods and churchwide staff will view faith formation as crucial for the development of active, lifelong followers of Christ and share the conversation of this work with each other.

What will it look like?

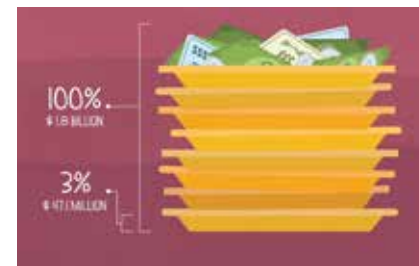
What would it look like for the ELCA to claim the importance of this work, raise the level of dialog about what it looks like and live it into everything we do? It might be seen when faith formation is made an integral part of every gathering of Lutherans across the church.

Perhaps theological conferences will focus with ministry leaders and practitioners on learning about effective ways of transmitting faith and encourage sharing ideas among participants and beyond. Maybe a focus on faith formation and discussing how it can be more fully realized will replace quick prayers and clearing calendars wherever there are staff, committee and council meetings.

The beautiful thing about raising the conversation level of faith formation is that it can look like many things and take many forms. Each setting and context will be unique but can also inform how others in the church nurture the gift of faith in those they accompany in ministry. How might your ministry setting raise the level of conversation about faith formation? Whatever your idea, it starts with you. Let's wonder together at what the Holy Spirit is up to in forming faith.

To learn more or to join the conversation about faith formation, go to the ELCA Faith Formation Summit website, faithformationsummit.wordpress.com. You can also contact the Rev. Paul Amlin, program director, ELCA Youth Ministry, at Paul.Amlin@elca.org or 800-638-3522, ext. 2844.

Visual resources show where your offering goes



Where does my offering go? Have you ever been asked this question? The ELCA has produced two great resources to help answer it.

Premiered at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly, the “Where Does Your Offering Go?” video gives a great overview of how Mission Support dollars are used within the ELCA to make a difference in the world—all in under 5 minutes. Visit vimeo.com/elca/youroffering and view “Where Your Offering Goes.”

Need a print version?

For those who don't have video capabilities or are looking for a companion to the video in printed form, the “Where Does Your Offering Go?” infographic poster is available for download. Visit ELCA.org/resources/stewardship and click the “Leadership” tab to download the poster. This is a perfect piece for use on your bulletin board or information table and shows the many ways your congregation's Mission Support dollars make an impact beyond the congregation.

We're making a difference

The ELCA is making a difference both locally and globally. These resources will help you to show how, through your Mission Support dollars, the ELCA is being church together for the sake of the world.

Become a Welcoming Congregation as part of AMMPARO



From California to Texas to Illinois to the District of Columbia, ELCA congregations are stepping forward as Welcoming Congregations as part of the newly adopted AMMPARO, the ELCA's strategy to Accompany Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities.

The latest congregation to join is Christ Lutheran in Aptos, Calif. Ruth Cruddas, a member of the congregation, said, “Christ Lutheran is a very loving community who has welcomed and embraced our Salvadoran family, Karla, Ronal and their daughter, Nathalia. Please continue to pray for all of us.”

This is the first congregation in the Sierra Pacific Synod to become a Welcoming

Congregation. Bishop Mark Holmerud said, “What a blessing for the people of Christ Lutheran and the people with whom they have chosen to stand in solidarity. Thank you for your work and witness in helping this ministry of accompaniment become a reality!”

At the Churchwide Assembly in August, voting members overwhelmingly adopted the AMMPARO strategy. This holistic, whole church response offers opportunities to make a difference in the lives of migrant children and families in their communities. A Welcoming Congregation provides spiritual and pastoral accompaniment in the critical stages of transition to life in a new place.

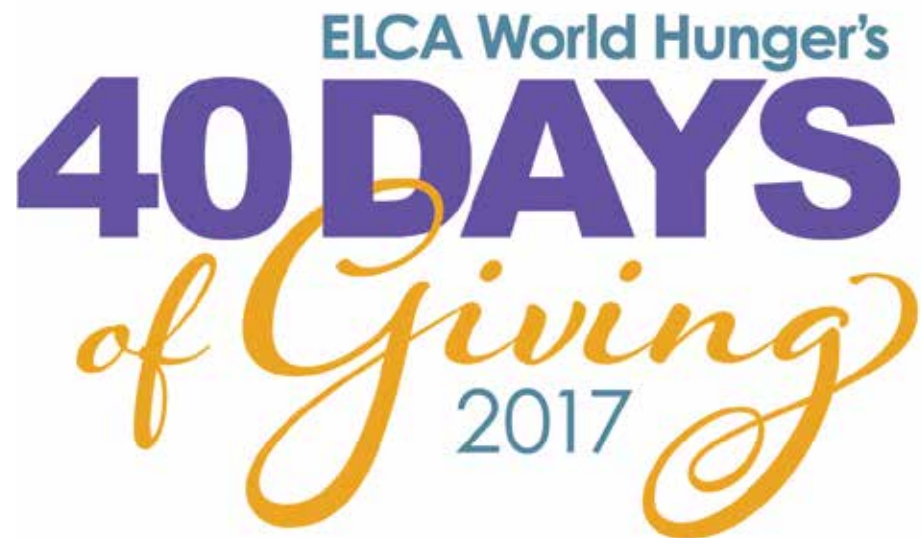
Welcoming Congregations make a commitment to:

- Welcome and minister to migrant guests and identify contacts with language skills to assist with communication
- Attend occasional meetings of the Welcoming Congregation Network in their synod for mutual support, fellowship and training
- Participate in AMMPARO conference calls for updates on the situation of migration of children and families
- Advocate for just public policies that positively impact the current immigration crisis

For more information, go to ELCA.org/ammparo/resources or contact Mary Campbell, program director for AMMPARO, at Mary.Campbell@elca.org. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service also has resources available on these issues at lirs.org.

FOR YOUR 40 DAYS OF LENT

Journey through Lent with ELCA World Hunger's 40 Days of Giving



ELCA World Hunger's 40 Days of Giving is a special opportunity for you and your congregation to lift up this church's hunger and poverty ministry during Lent. ELCA World Hunger has prepared special resources and opportunities for you and your congregation to use in this time of reflection and self-examination, ways to learn and participate in addressing hunger and poverty, specifically around economic justice.

Join ELCA World Hunger's 40 Days of Giving and journey through Lent with resources for individual and congregational use. Find a flip-calendar devotional that follows the lectionary and each day offers Scripture, questions, reflections, art, prayers or connections to our church's commitment to purs-

ing a just world where all are fed. Sign-up to receive each day's devotional in your email inbox. Use the accompanying Lenten Study for use in an adult education series.

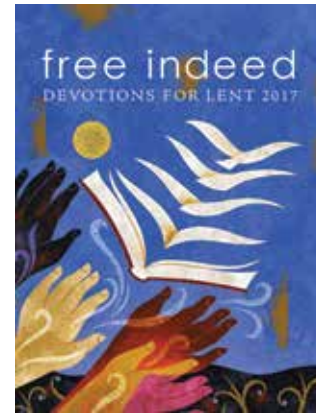
Through ELCA World Hunger's 40 Days of Giving, pray, act and hope that through economic life and justice there truly will be sufficient, sustainable livelihood for all. By joining together, we can achieve our goal for 2017 to raise \$1 million during Lent. Your gifts to ELCA World Hunger will help give our brothers and sisters around the world opportunities to earn a fair, sustainable living with dignity. Visit ELCA.org/40Days to learn more, sign-up and join in the journey.

Two resources explores the Small Catechism during Lent

The invitation to read and study Martin Luther's Small Catechism together during the Reformation anniversary year 2017 is taking root in congregations across the ELCA. As Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton put it, "One could argue that no other experience is more universally Lutheran than studying this little book. ... 'With New Voices—

the Small Catechism in the 21st Century' (elca500.org/withnewvoices) is an invitation to all of us—young and old alike, whether we come to the Small Catechism for the first time or return to it after many years. ... I encourage you to begin planning today, especially for a congregation-wide engagement with the Small Catechism in the season of Lent in 2017."

Another "little book" alongside the Small Catechism is available to assist with this congregation-wide Lenten engagement. "Free Indeed: Devotions for Lent 2017" is a striking, full-color, pocket-size devotional that takes the reader through Lent with daily excerpts from the Small Catechism. Each reading is accompanied by a thought-provoking contemporary photo, a quote to ponder, a brief reflection and a prayer.



Diverse writers, distinctive perspectives

The devotional's title is drawn from John 8:36, often heard on Reformation Day: "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." Each day's entry conveys how the freeing grace of God is revealed in the essentials of Christian faith, as expressed in the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments

and the sacraments. Writers serving in diverse ministries offer their distinctive perspectives: Javier Alanís, executive director of the Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest; Jennifer Baker-Trinity, deacon and cantor, who writes and leads assembly song in the Susquehanna Valley of central Pennsylvania; Anne Edison-Albright, a pastor at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa; Philip Ruge-Jones, a theology professor and biblical storyteller; and Rozella Haydée White, Houston city director for mission year.

In addition to the pocket edition, "Free Indeed: Devotions for Lent 2017" is published in large print and e-book editions. Call 800-328-4648 or visit augstburgfortress.org to order.

New outdoor ministry curriculum for 2017—not just for camps!

Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (LOM) has released its 2017 curriculum titled "The Water of Life." LOM produces a curriculum each year to be used by Lutheran camps, camps affiliated with other denominations, congregations and other organizations. "The Water of Life" is available for purchase and download at lomnetwork.org.

Three Christian education basics—God's creation, Christian community and faith formation—come together in "The Water of Life." Participants dive into five Bible stories and daily themes that shower them with new awareness of how water and life are gifts

from God. The curriculum also gives participants an opportunity to reflect on baptism, the sacrament that overflows with meaning about being cleansed, invited into a faith community and led to do God's mission in the world.

Included in the full curriculum package are five-day Bible study sessions for preschool, upper and lower elementary, junior high and senior high youth, and adults. In addition to Bible studies, the curriculum provides games,



crafts, worship resources, environmental activities and team-building activities for each age group. "The Water of Life" is also available in small bundles designed for Youth Ministry and vacation Bible school settings.

Special for this year only, the vacation Bible school bundle of the 2016 curriculum "The Jesus Way" is free for all ELCA congregations—yes, free! Each year the LOM curriculum provides a quality alternative for vacation Bible school

curriculum at an affordable price. The bundle includes Bible study activities, crafts and games for preschool children and upper and lower elementary youth. Also included are planning documents, including biblical and theme background information.

Lutheran Outdoor Ministries is an association of outdoor ministry organizations dedicated to encouraging, equipping, educating and empowering bold and faithful outdoor ministry leaders for service in the church and in the world. Learn more at lomnetwork.org.

'How Worship Re-forms Us'

Each year, during the second week of Easter, clergy, musicians and other worship leaders gather on Valparaiso University's campus for three days of continuing education, worship, community and renewal. This year's theme is "Liturgy Serving the Life of the Church: How Worship Re-forms Us," April 24-16, and serves as a fitting prelude as we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

For 69 years, the Institute for Liturgical Studies has provided a place for engaging emerging topics in liturgical renewal. This year's plenary speakers include Father John Baldovin, Lorraine Brugh, Edward Foley, Timo-Matti Haapianen and Timothy Wengert, and hymn commission contributors I-to Loh and Shirley Erena Murray. Monday afternoon seminars will offer participants opportunities to delve more deeply into a single aspect of worship leadership.

All the speakers will explore the deep currents in seasoned thinking about the Reformation and will examine cherished liturgical practices that have been

sustained in recent years by rich and robust ecumenical dialogue. The goal of the conference is to unpack how the reforming impetus of the 16th century continues to spawn enlivened worship. Then, from the inside of liturgy itself,

participants and speakers will examine how communities of faith are re-formed and re-shaped, challenged and renewed.

This year's conference promises to be a time to embody the tenor of the hymn by Shirley E. Murray that the institute has commissioned for this year's conference:

The Spirit comes to recreate
and shape our world to God's design:
new psalms to sing the timeless truths,
new songs to make the Gospel shine,
So let our worship, praise and prayer
be true to all we know and share.



Our eucharistic liturgies and prayer offices will lead us to reflect on adaptation and evolution in practice while joining us to the voice of the church throughout all the ages. The Chapel of the Resurrection, at the center of campus, will be the locus of our time together in worship. The Harre Student Union is the home for registration, plenary presentations, meals and exhibits. The Union is in proximity to the chapel and makes walking distances convenient.

Registration and information about workshops, seminars, worship and schedule are available at valpo.edu/ils.

Learn how to form disciples at May training institute



Join a diverse group of congregational leaders for the Catechumenate Training Institute, "Go Baptize, Make Disciples," May 4-6. Learn what it means to be a discipleship congregation at the institute hosted by Lutheran Church of the Nativity in Asheville, N.C. Pastors, musicians, seminarians and lay leaders are encouraged to attend this event offered by the North American Association for the Catechumenate and sponsored by the North Carolina Synod.

Training open to everyone

Tim Smith, bishop of the North Carolina Synod, says this training is not just for members of the North Carolina Synod. It is open to anyone, including members of other denominations. Participants will experience four stages of a faith formation process that invite people into baptismal living. They will be immersed in the rites and rituals of this ancient-future Christian practice called the Catechumenate, receive a variety of resources including a copy of "Go Make Disciples" (Augsburg Fortress), and will learn how to introduce this journey of discipleship to their congregations.

Scholarships available

Full scholarships are available for students and seminarians. For more information, call Lutheran Church of the Nativity at 828-684-0352, or contact the Rev. Mark Fitzsimmons at mfitzsimmons@nativityarden.org or the Rev. Rachel Hoffman at rhoffman@nativityarden.org. You can download a brochure and register online at the North American Association for the Catechumenate website, catechumenate.org.

A time and place for school administrators and educators to network and learn



Are you a pastor serving a congregation with a weekday school or early childhood program? Is that weekday school or early childhood center your congregation's best kept secret? It is time to connect, develop and be inspired to support this ministry.

Find the resources you need with Evangelical Lutheran Education Association's (ELEA) and the Association of Lutheran Development Executives' (ALDE,

org) well-known conference offerings of fellowship, worship, fun and professional development. From keynotes with Donna Schumell and Louise Derman-Sparks to workshops on school and center technology, fundraising, church/school relationships, admissions, professional development, staffing and more, there is bound to be something for you and your context.

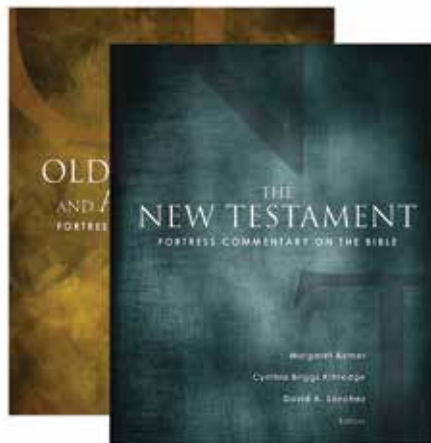
This year's conference will be Feb. 14-17 at the Norfolk Waterside Marriott in

Norfolk, Va. This elegant hotel is on the picturesque Elizabeth River waterfront in the heart of downtown Norfolk, steps away from the shopping and dining district.

Every year, administrators and pastors from the more than 1,400 ELCA congregationally based schools and early childhood centers gather together to network and learn to achieve the highest quality programming possible. This opportunity for leaders in education is the very best of its kind. For the sixth straight year, ELEA will be cohosting its Administrator & Pastor Conference with ALDE, but you don't have to be an ALDE or ELEA member to attend. To learn more about ELEA and the resources offered to congregationally based schools, visit elcaschools.org.

Come to the ELEA IGNITE Administrator & Pastor Conference in Norfolk and experience good people and the good news of our work for the people of God. Learn more and register at ignitespark.org.

Commentary on the Bible examines ancient contexts, interpretive tradition and contemporary questions



Featuring the work of more than 75 biblical scholars, the commentary presents a balanced synthesis of current scholarship, enabling readers to interpret Scripture for a complex and pluralistic world. The volumes balance attention to ancient biblical contexts with attention to contemporary challenges and to the ethics of responsible interpretation.

Each volume in the two-volume set contains introductory essays that address challenges that constitute the ethical and theological agenda for interpreting the Old or New Testament in the 21st century. Section introductions address questions of historical origin and context at the center of scholarship on each section of the Bible.

Commentary entries are provided for every book in the Old Testament, Apocrypha and New Testament. Each entry includes a brief introduction to the book, notes for “sense units” and a list of works cited. A unique feature of the commentary is the way every sense unit is addressed on three levels:

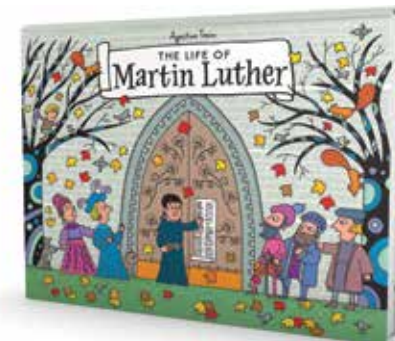
Choosing a Bible commentary is a daunting task. There are so many options in an array of formats and interpretive directions. How does one select a commentary that has a balance of historical insight and contemporary relevance?

This question was at the heart of the conversation when Fortress editors began to frame out how the “Fortress Commentary on the Bible” would be distinctively helpful to pastors, teachers and students.

1. The Text in Its Ancient Context. *What did the text probably mean in its original historical and cultural context?* Attention is given to the relevant text-critical, lexical, syntactic, stylistic and rhetorical issues, as well as literary, historical and cultural context.
2. The Text in the Interpretive Tradition. *What have people subsequently taken the text to mean?* Here the commentary explores the various ways Jewish, Christian or other traditions have interpreted or applied the text.
3. The Text in Contemporary Discussion. *What are the most important problems that arise for readers and hearers today?* The focus here is on the ways we “talk back” to the text. This section invites the reader to join a lively contemporary discussion about how the interpretation of the text matters.

The commentary is available as a two-volume set and will soon be released in smaller volumes encompassing the Gospels, the Pentateuch and others. For more information, visit fortresspress.com/fcob.

History jumps off the page in Martin Luther pop-up book



Published in time for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, “The Life of Martin Luther” takes readers on a journey from Luther’s decision to become a monk to his role in sparking the Protestant Reformation. The vibrant illustrations and intricate pop-ups of renowned paper engineer Agostino Traini will have readers coming back again and again to explore this chapter in the history of the Christian faith.

Introduce your congregation to this extraordinary pop-up book, along with other new titles, by hosting a book fair this spring. Sign up to host at info.sparkhouse.org/bookfair_seeds.

‘I (Heart) Francis: Letters to the Pope from an Unlikely Admirer’

Everyone is paying attention to Pope Francis, including the most unlikely of admirers, a female Baptist pastor, Donna Schaper. A minister and social justice advocate, Schaper has become a fan of Pope Francis, covering him for Religion Dispatches online magazine and taking up many of his issues. Schaper says that Francis is a pope for all of us, and in “I

(Heart) Francis,” she has written him in a series of letters—love letters, of a sort. She agrees with him on the environment, climate change, love of animals and concern for the poor. But she has a lover’s quarrel with him on the issues of women’s ordination and GLBT rights.

Schaper’s letters to Pope Francis are intimate and ornery, affirming and

challenging. She has high hopes that he can heal the church and the world, and she prods him to be even more inclusive than he already is. The book is available at fortresspress.com.



Still time to get early bird prices for Triennial Gathering—just barely

Early bird registration for Women of the ELCA’s Tenth Triennial Gathering ends Jan. 6. Women will gather July 13-16 in Minneapolis at the convention center under the theme “All Anew.”

Triennial gatherings bring Lutheran women together from across the church with life-changing workshops, worship, servant events, Bible study and more.

Early-bird registration, through Jan. 6,

is \$310; after that registration is \$350. Day registrations are \$175. Register at welcatg.org or email women.elca@elca.org for a registration book. You can also download the book at welcatg.org.

Because the Tenth Triennial 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 known as Women of the ELCA.

Color, pray, explore ‘All Anew’

Women of the ELCA is offering a series of five devotionals designed to help women prepare for the Tenth Triennial Gathering in Minneapolis, July 13-16—“All Anew.”

The free, downloadable devotionals were created around the gathering’s five theme verses and can be enjoyed as a meditative practice alone or in a group. Download them at welcatg.org.

Melissa Bills, associate pastor at First Lutheran Church in Decorah, Iowa, wrote the five devotionals, which include:

- Renewal of Creation (Psalms 104:30)
- Renewal of Sight (Isaiah 43:19)
- Renewal of Spirit (Romans 12:2)
- Renewal of Hope (2 Corinthians 4:16)
- Renewal of Life (Titus 3:4-5)



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