



CONFIRMATION

Students learn the Bible by *doing* it

The confirmation program at Zion, Clear Lake, is a happy combination—biblically based, yet relevant to seventh and eighth graders' lives.

"The Bible is everywhere in the program," said Rev. Derik Yarian, associate pastor.

Overhaulin'

During large-group time on Wednesday nights, students encounter the Bible through modern media. Rev. Dean Hess, senior pastor, described the skit and video that the confirmation team produced to illustrate the scripture's power to transform.

Hess said, "The ministry team borrowed the

MIKE BARKLEY (right), as Chef Luigi, illustrates points in ways that engage confirmation students. Parents of confirmation students at Zion, Clear Lake, assist him.



scenario of the program *Overhaulin'* where a person's car mysteriously disappears, then is delivered back overhauled. In the video, a student is *overhauled*, giving her a new computer system from

Proverbs, a new engine from Deuteronomy, shock absorbers and supports from Samuel, and a new exterior from Ephesians. What a fun and effective way to show scripture transforming people!"

Yarian said, "Then we used a DVD of the life of Mark Hall, lead singer of the Christian music group Casting Crowns. Hall compared his dyslexia and attention deficit disorder with Paul's *thorn in the flesh* and shared how God overhauled him.

"The students wrote down things in their lives that need overhauling, and each pinned the paper to a large cross. The next time they saw the cross, the papers had disappeared,

symbolizing God's power to overhaul them."

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Dr. Confirmation

The creative person responsible for the large-group time is Mike Barkley, a Clear Lake elementary school principal. He uses video, PowerPoint, DVD, skits, and secular and Christian CD music.

Sometimes Barkley dresses in character.

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HESS

YARIAN

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“One week he crafted an experiment as a moustached professor dressed in a lab coat,” Yarian said. “Another time he came as Chef Luigi, talking about sin ruining things. You know, garbage-in/garbage-out. He whipped up a batch of brownies with just a little foreign matter in the batch. Just a little ruined it; no one wanted to sample it.

Small groups

Wednesday confirmation begins at 5 o’clock with dollar-a-slice pizza and recreation. It’s a popular time.

“Youth unwind from school and enjoy safe, Christian fellowship,” Yarian said.

Some small-group leaders use this time to interact with the youth. There are 19 small groups of four-to-six students. At least two adults are members of each—totalling 40 adults and 80 students. Each participant signs a covenant promising confidentiality. Students stay in the same small group both years, and relationships grow deep.

Small group leaders receive written guides for each session, edited by Naomi Nowland, a volunteer. These plans can be changed quickly.

“When things like the Columbine High School (Colorado) incident occur or the Red Lake (Minnesota) shootings, we dump our plans and deal with what has happened,” Yarian said.

Small groups talk through situations as they arise, such as when a parent is diagnosed with cancer or the time a student found a body floating in the lake. The small groups reacted strongly when a classmate died.

“At the high school, confirmation small groups gathered spontaneously and drew others in,” Yarian said. “The high school students led each other in prayer.”

Students... become equipped to deal with life after confirmation classes end.



A CONFIRMATION SKIT at Zion, Clear Lake, uses a Survivor-style tribal council to vote a person off, highlighting how people outside of groups or cliques feel. Students discuss how the skit affects them, why God values them, where value and identity come from, and how to deal with rejection.

Worship

Youth leadership helps students feel part of the confirmation experience. Each week, a senior high band shapes large-group worship. The band plays a variety of songs, and some of the small groups help lead actions and singing.

As part of worship, participants donate toward the education of Nelima, a Ugandan child the confirmation classes have adopted.

Prayer

Zion emphasizes the catechism one year, the Bible the next.

“Can we teach the Bible in 24 sessions? Absolutely not,” Yarian said. “So we help students acquire their own tools for applying the Bible after confirmation instruction ends.”

Prayer skills are an example. The large-group opening begins with announcements, a Bible memory verse, then prayer requests. Some requests are specific, such as prayer for an uncle who is battling cancer. Others are general.

Following these requests, students pray silently for at least two-and-a-half minutes. Quiet background music plays with the words, “Hey, now, I’m gonna’ pray for you. Hey, now, you’re gonna’ pray for me...”

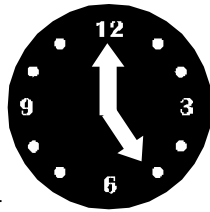
Students turn in weekly worship reports that encourage prayer. The reports ask for “One thing I am going to pray about this week.” Students reply with heavy concerns—I’ll pray for the troops...for a seventh grade girl who just became pregnant...about struggles at school...for family members who are sick...

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Wednesday confirmation

at Zion, Clear Lake

- 5:00 p.m. Pizza and recreation
- 5:40 p.m. Large-group worship with music, announcements, prayer requests, silent prayer
- 6:00 p.m. Large-group presentations using video, PowerPoint, DVD, skits, secular and Christian music
- 6:45 p.m. Small-group time
- 7:30 p.m. Leaders' meeting



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Popular media

Students discuss how to use the Bible to evaluate what's going on around them. The class watched an episode of *Without a Trace*, a procedural drama about the FBI missing persons' squad. They viewed a skit of the tribal council scene of *Survivor*, when the torch is extinguished of a girl whose peers do not want her or accept her.

"We try to show how to find a Christ message in a movie or TV show," Yarian said. "As students find the faith message in these programs and everyday life, they become equipped to deal with life after confirmation classes end."

Beyond confirmation

Each student writes a two-page faith statement or essay using 20 guide questions. Then the student and that student's parents meet with a pastor for an hour.

"The student and I walk through the affirmation of baptism service," Yarian said. "I tell the student,



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS use drums, guitar, and vocals to lead worship for seventh and eighth grade confirmation students at Zion, Clear Lake.

Gospel of Mark the center

Rev. Roger McKinstry teaches a confirmation program that includes all students from the four congregations he serves in Unity of the Cross Parish. The congregations are St. John, Dundee; Immanuel, Earlville; St. Peter, Lamont; and Peace, Ryan. The Bible is the center of the instruction.

My students read the entire Gospel of Mark and they learn it quite well. I believe that all students in confirmation class should hear and study the gospel story in its entirety at least once in their lifetime so they know and learn the good news we proclaim.

We use that Gospel of Mark (it's the easiest of the four to learn) as a jumping-off point to get the kids to discuss issues raised in the Gospel. What about divorce and remarriage? How does faith grow like a mustard seed? Do miracles happen today? Does Jesus still call us to be fishers of men? What does it mean for you to be a disciple? How do we share the good news about Jesus, like the women did who ran away from the empty tomb? Which should come first belief or baptism?

—Pastor Roger McKinstry, Unity of the Cross Parish

'Parents, the congregation, sponsors, and God made promises to you in the baptism service. Now, you will make your own promises.' We look at the student's essay, and I lift up good things the student wrote.

"Then I meet with the parents for 20 minutes to discuss their concerns and questions and challenge them to participate actively in mission and ministry. In the past, some parents have asked to be baptized during these sessions."

While the parents and pastor meet, the student writes a letter listing three goals the student could achieve during the next year—a personal goal, a family goal, and a spiritual goal. The student seals the letter into an envelope.

The final 20 minutes, the student, parents, and pastor meet as a group, marking the end of formal confirmation instruction and setting the stage for the student's faith life to come.

"After a year, I mail that letter to the student," Yarian said. "It's a positive reminder of the student's hopes for his or her faith life after confirmation."

Hopefully, that letter continues the progress of a growing faith.

—Elaine Main, coeditor

For information

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ADVOCACY

New ways to combat hunger

Congregations can support efforts to end hunger in four ways—

- **Gathering** *One Table, Many Voices* is a conference in Washington D.C. **June 4-7** to bring together people of many faiths. Expected to be the largest gathering of anti-hunger and anti-poverty activists in decades, it will broaden and empower a coalition to fight hunger and poverty and will work to change and direct national policy. In addition to workshops, it will assemble a convocation of faith leaders at the National Cathedral, including ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson. For information, go to the web site <www.elca.org/advocacy> or phone Jonathan Gordy, ELCA coordinator, 202/626-7935. Persons attending will be invited to a Lutheran reception.
- **E-cards** A bulletin insert explains new hunger e-cards. These e-mail messages announce gifts made to ELCA world hunger in honor of a person or occasion. To make a gift or print the reproducible insert, use the web site <www.elca.org/ecards>.
- **Postcards** World hunger all-occasion postcards announce gifts to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal that honor persons celebrating Father's

'YOU'RE GETTING A WHEELBARROW for Father's Day, and you don't have to haul a thing.' That's the message of new postcards and e-cards that announce gifts to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal. Order postcards from Augsburg Fortress, phone 800/328-4648. Arrange e-cards at <www.elca.org/ecards>.



Day, anniversaries, and birthdays. Get a sheet of seven cards without charge by ordering ISBN 6-0002-0433-7 from Augsburg Fortress, web site <www.augsburgfortress.org/elcahunger>, phone 800/328-4648.

- **Poster** A colorful 11 x 17-inch poster titled *Go and Do Likewise* also includes a hunger directory on the reverse side with a contact list, world hunger partners, and web sites. Order ISBN 6-0002-0434-5 from the Augsburg Fortress web site or by phone (above).

DISASTER RESPONSE

Clayton County granted \$12,000



RECEIVING a \$12,000 check from Lutheran Disaster Response are (from left) Larry Gibbs, Clayton County Disaster Recovery Committee chair; Rev. Mark Anderson, Northeastern Iowa Synod assistant to the bishop; Rev. Michael Stadie, disaster response coordinator for Lutheran Services in Iowa and Lutheran Disaster Response; Linda Fox, Lutheran Services in Iowa case advocate; and Sherri Stoffel, secretary, and Utoni Ross, treasurer, of the Clayton County committee.

The Clayton County Disaster Recovery Committee received a \$12,000 grant last April from Lutheran Disaster Response and Lutheran Services in Iowa. The committee is using the grant to respond to flooding at Elkport and Garber in May 2004.

Citizens began the committee several years ago to share recovery information, simplify resident access to assistance, and deal with needs related to flooding.

To date, the committee has spent \$13,000 from grants and donations. The new grant almost doubles that figure.

A buy-out process is taking place, although needs totaling thousands of dollars are anticipated. To help, write Clayton County Disaster Recovery Committee, PO Box 464, Elkader, IA 52043.

Lutheran Disaster Response is a cooperative ministry of the ELCA and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. It helps synods, social ministry organizations, and congregations meet emergency needs following a disaster.

Lutheran Services of Iowa is the social service agency of the three Iowa synods. It provides residential treatment, family centered services, home health care, early childhood programs, refugee resettlement, and services for people with disabilities.



Let's keep on with the church's mission

"When will the distractions stop so that we can get on with the mission of the church?"

This would be a stingy question of indictment if it reflected reality. Rather, the question demonstrates a lack of awareness and lack of participation in the mission of Jesus Christ.

The short list

Do you know about...

This year's mission trips to Guatemala, Mexico, and Nambia?

The exciting new men's Bible study and synod men's retreat?

The hope-filled mission of Barnabas Uplift—creating jobs, making health care accessible, and providing substance abuse education?

The Natural Church Development process?

The ACTS 29 event?

The synod's congregation-based evangelism strategies?

The Living Waters Retreat Centers?

The synod's Lay School of Theology?

The half-dozen youth leadership events in 2005?

Global Mission Events?

Safeguarding God's Children workshops?

The church's new adult Bible study and confirmation program?

This short list of exciting mission opportunities shows how heavily our church is invested in mission. There are no distractions, rather faithful response to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Participate

Are you participating in the joyful call to *Go and tell* and *Go and serve*?

Share the most recent time you told another person the story of Jesus's saving grace.

Which weekly Bible study are you part of?

Witness how tithing has shaped your faith and life journey.

How does your devotional life shape the way you live each day?

How do you feed hungry people, liberate those in oppressive situations, and seek God's justice in the world?

Which young people have you encouraged in faith, inviting them to full-time service of the church as pastors, diaconal ministers, and associates in ministry?

Celebrate

Join us to celebrate all that God is accomplishing in and through our church.

This is your personal invitation to the synod

assembly at Luther College, Decorah, **June 10-12**. It is an opportunity to share the joy. Come and see how we are witnessing together in God's name. Learn new ways of growing in faith as you share your experience with others. Struggle over the implications of the Gospel for our day, and recommit to being the church together.

This year, the synod assembly recognizes how God, *Through the Word Inviting*, calls us to a faith that enriches our lives and deepens our faith so that we share Good News with others. I look forward to our time together!

—Steven L. Ullestad
Bishop, Northeastern Iowa Synod

**THROUGH
THE WORD
INVITING**  **MARKED WITH
THE CROSS OF
CHRIST FOREVER**

Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly

Luther College, Decorah

Friday, June 10—Sunday, June 12

For information, web site <neiasynod.org>, phone 319/352-1414

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Send news for the September issue to Linda Hudgins by August 3.

HUNGER

ELCA grants benefit synod area

Five Northeastern Iowa agencies received ELCA domestic hunger grants. Totaling \$10,000, the grants were awarded to—

- **Christian Community Development, Waterloo**, \$1,000 for House of Hope, an in-house food pantry
- **Eastside Ministerial Alliance, Waterloo**, \$4,000 for its crisis prevention, intervention, and referral program
- **Fayette County Food Shelf, Fayette**, \$2,000 for emergency food relief
- **First, Decorah**, \$2,000 for its food pantry
- **Greater area pantry, Calmar**, \$1,000

Domestic hunger grants are funded through the ELCA World Hunger Appeal, which combats hunger within the United States and abroad.

STEWARDSHIP

Plan for gathering, visit, mailing

Each fall, each synod congregation receives mission support information from the synod in one of three ways—a gathering, visit, or mailing.

Sixty congregations in four synod conferences will be asked to send representatives to stewardship gatherings. Conferences and gathering dates are—

- **Mason City Conference, Trinity, Mason City**, 7-8:30 p.m., Thursday, September 8
- **Shechem Conference, Zion, West Union**, 7-8:30 p.m., Thursday, September 15
- **Shepherd of the Hills Conference, Norway, St. Olaf**, 7-8:30 p.m., Tuesday, September 13
- **Water of Life Conference, Lord of Life, Dubuque**, 7-8:30 p.m., Tuesday, September 20.

Sixty congregations in four conferences—**Bethany, Cedar River, Lake, and Riverside**—will schedule sessions with a synod visitor to learn about synod ministries.

The synod will communicate by mail with the 60 congregations in **Prairie Grace, Upper Iowa River, and Wartburg Conferences**.

“We look forward to learning how God is at work in your congregation,” said Rev. Nancy Larson, assistant to the bishop.

Contract Larson by e-mail <Nancy.Larson@ecunet.org>, or phone 319/352-1414.

CD, DVD

Two resources announced

MOSAIC, the ELCA video ministry, has produced two new resources.

- *Beyond Tsunami: Lutherans Respond* reports on the December 26, 2004, earthquake near Indonesia and massive ocean wave it triggered that killed tens of thousands of people across South Asia. Actions are reported of the ELCA International Disaster Response and a partner, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India. Order a CD or DVD for \$19.95 by e-mail <mosaic@elca.org>, phone 800/638-3522, ext. 6009, or web site <www.elca.org/mosaic>.



- *Faithful Travel with Rick Steves* includes five 30-minute programs on Luther, the Apostle Paul, Papua New Guinea, and south-central Los Angeles. Steves enables viewers to see their world as home to billions of equally precious children of God. The video is a faith journey rather than a travelogue. Order a CD or DVD for \$39.95 by e-mail <mosaic@elca.org>, phone 800/638-3522, ext. 6009, or web site <www.elca.org/mosaic>.



ON-LINE RESOURCE

Curriculum considers weekly Gospel lessons

Daily Discipleship is a new ELCA weekly curriculum that is available on line. It consists of a weekly two-page reflection guide based on each Sunday's gospel.

Each guide uses the theme *What does this Sunday's Gospel teach about being a disciple of Jesus Christ?* Fall term reflections use themes of forgiveness, grace, responsible living, courage, invitation, citizenship, love, and freedom.

Each guide includes the Gospel text and an application and faith practice for daily life.

It is designed for pastors' lectionary classes, small group breakfast and coffee meetings, before-work sessions, and on-line chat rooms.

The resource begins with the Sunday gospel for September 11 and is already available at www.elca.org/evangelism/dailydiscipleship.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE
to look into *Global Mission Events*. Go to web site www.elca.org/gme;
phone 800/638-3522,
ext. 2642 or 2645;
registration phone
866/382-6377.

