



HUNGER

Mission Possible: End Hunger Now

When you gather together people with a desire to address the issues surrounding hunger, provide a day filled with a variety of opportunities and then mix in a bit of high energy music, you end up with renewed commitment to do everything possible to bring an end to hunger NOW. On Saturday, September 23, about 75 people met at St. James Lutheran Church, Mason City, for the Northeastern Iowa Synod's annual Hunger event. Participants included fourth graders and high school students from a number of youth groups, as well as adults from across the synod.

Something for Everyone

For the younger set, there was the video game testing project spearheaded by LYO board member Brian Plagge. Presentations by Joe Young from the ELCA Domestic Hunger program, Tammy Walhof, Regional Director of Bread for the World and Russ Melby, Director for Church World Service, provided information and inspiration. We packed up health kits for Lutheran World Relief and served lunch at



the Community Kitchen. Some of us wrote letters to our elected leaders and others stocked shelves at Hawkeye Harvest Food Bank or spent some time painting at the Crisis Intervention Shelter. We worshipped and prayed, ate a simple meal of beans and rice and strengthened our resolve to make a difference. Together we learned about hunger both near and far, we served the hungry in the local community, and we advocated for the hungry with those in positions to impact our country's policies, laws and budget priorities.

The Power of Music

If all of that wasn't enough, then came Sheltered Reality!! Picture 25 teenagers on drums beating a powerful (and loud!) rhythm and telling the story of people struggling to find enough to eat and a place to live. Many of these teens have themselves been in that type of situation. They take their life experience, go on the road, beat their drums and make a real impact!!

Working Together

The mission to bring an end to hunger is not something we can do alone. When we join forces with a wide range of partners, we gain knowledge, energy, and power which adds up to a stronger impact. If you want to join forces with others in the battle against hunger and poverty, there is an abundance of possibilities. Here are just a few ideas to get you started:

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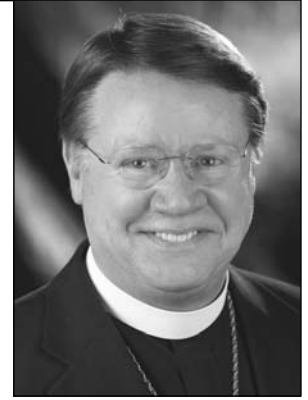
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Mission Support: What do you get?

Martin Luther claimed that the definition of sin is contained in the Latin phrase, “In curvatum se”. Translation: Curved into oneself.

I recently heard a phrase that defines “in curvatum se”. The question was: “What do we get from our mission support?”

Well...the term is “MISSION support.” This is not money given to the category of “take care of me”.

What do you “get” from your mission support? Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

Nothing...except...the joy of being a part of a church that honors the authority of the local congregation in the call process, conflict resolution and mission planning.

Nothing...except for being a part of a church that feeds hungry people, liberates the oppressed and declares the acceptable year of the Lord.

Nothing...except for being a part of a church that sends out missionaries, starts new congregations, supports campus ministries in order for those who have not yet heard of the love of God in Christ to hear Good News.



Nothing...except for being a part of the church that focuses its life on the Word of God in bible study, daily devotions and theological education.

Nothing...except for being a part of a church that reaches out to young people and engages them in shared ministry, invites men and women into the study of scripture and lives of service and creates social ministries to bring families together and keep families together.

What do you “get” from your mission support? Absolutely nothing other than the joy of being a part of a church that seeks faithfulness in response to the saving power of Jesus Christ in our lives.

The one who asks the question, “What do I get?” needs to fall to her/his knees in repentance.

The question that can rightfully be asked is: What does the Gospel get from our mission support? The answer? Arms, legs, feet, voices for the body of Christ.

Celebrate!

—Steven L. Ullestad
Bishop, Northeastern Iowa Synod

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- Consider becoming a part of the synod workgroup
- Invite workgroup chair, Norbert Strasser, to speak to your congregation
- Go online to the ELCA website and check out the Hunger pages where there is a wealth of information
- Encourage youth in the congregation to participate in the Souper Bowl of Caring

For additional information or assistance, contact Pastor Nancy Larson at the Northeastern Iowa Synod Office, 319-352-1414.

The Annual LYO Assembly

GET CONNECTED

Will be held **March 10-11, 2007**
at the Holiday Inn in Mason City

Details and registration
material are available at
www.neiasynod.org/youth

Free in Christ to Serve the Neighbor: Lutherans Talk about Human Sexuality

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the purpose of this study?

A: The purpose of the study “Free in Christ to Serve the Neighbor: Lutherans talk about Human Sexuality” is to invite the wider church “to the table” with the Task Force for the ELCA Studies on Sexuality. Together we can use the wisdom of our faith tradition to reflect on the complexities of sexuality in our lives and our culture.

Through this study, the task force hopes to:

- offer as a church of the Lutheran tradition a clear theological framework in which to carry out the discussion of sexuality.
- generate responses to gain a better sense of the concerns, issues, and urgency of the ethical decisions facing ELCA Lutherans.
- probe the resources members call upon to make decisions on these matters, including where they seek guidance from our church.



Q: Why are we writing a social statement on human sexuality?

A: Responding to a memorial from a synod assembly, the Churchwide Assembly in 2001 voted to request a social statement on human sexuality and reaffirmed that decision in 2003. The ELCA has two statements of predecessor church bodies on sexuality, but no social statement of its own on human sexuality. The ELCA’s message “Sexuality: Some Common Convictions” summarizes the areas of agreement of the predecessor church bodies.

Q: What will be in the study?

A: The core of the study is found in eight sessions devoted specifically to human sexuality and related topics. Participants are invited to engage in moral deliberation on these topics from the perspective of Paul’s letter to the Galatians and Martin Luther’s essay, “On the Freedom of a Christian.” Two resources in the booklet are provided to help interested readers understand the theological

framework provided by Galatians and Luther’s essay. The eight sessions of the study invite participants to think about and discuss a range of topics such as marriage, the commercialization of sexuality, sexuality and power, widespread cohabitation, and human trafficking.

Q: Why does the study use the letter of Galatians and Luther’s essay, “On the Freedom of a Christian” as foundation and guide for our approach to discussing sexuality?

A: Lutherans take the Bible seriously. The task force’s previous study included sections on how we read the Bible. These were received very positively.

Lutherans always intend to look at the Christian life through the lens of Scripture and Lutheran teaching. For this study, Galatians and “On the Freedom of a Christian” can help us think about the implications of the Gospel. We call this an “evangelical ethic.”

Q: What is the relationship of this study to the social statement?

A: “Free in Christ to Serve the Neighbor” is the third study resource produced for this church by the task force. The responses to “Free in Christ to Serve the Neighbor,” together with the responses from this church to the two previous studies, help the task force shape the social statement on human sexuality that will be considered by the Churchwide Assembly in 2009.

Q: How can I encourage others to use the study?

A: Tell people that the study aims to address the realities of sexuality in our society, engaging people with vexing issues they may face in their home and communities. Vignettes will evoke the kinds of conversations people have in their everyday lives.

Q: How should I plan for the study?

A: The task force recommends that participants plan for an educational setting such as a weekend retreat or a six-to-eight session format. This study can be particularly effective for:



When Soldiers Come Home

They may be out of the combat zone, but the war is far from over.

A soldier's safe return is a joyous occasion for both soldier and family, but many former soldiers continue to fight emotional and spiritual battles long after they don civilian clothes. As a result, pastors and churches will want to consider how best to minister to returning soldiers and their families. Major John Morris, a chaplain with the Minnesota Army National Guard, offers tips for churches ministering to military families when their loved one returns:

1. Listen, support, absolve, and don't condemn. Soldiers need a place where they can share the experiences of war that may trouble them. They need a safe place where they can do theological inquiry, to question and grow in their understanding of God, which is so necessary for anyone who has suffered trauma. They need a place where they can gain the strength needed to grow through their combat experience and on into the person God is calling them to be. A church that will provide a listening ear, a place for confession, and a heart of compassion will become a healing haven for soldiers and their families.

2. Be alert for signs of distress. Because a soldier and his family show up for Sunday worship regularly doesn't mean everything is going well with their reintegration. Check in with them periodically and watch for signs of distress. Depression, hyper-vigilance, withdrawal, inability to hold a job, anger issues, and discomfort with being in crowds are common signs of stress in combat veterans.

3. Support beyond the yellow ribbon. If the church thinks of the service member and family as people who have just survived a fire, it will guide efforts to help for the long haul. This may take many practical forms from bringing over a favorite meal once a week for several months after the soldier returns, to offering day care so the couple can rebuild their marriage, to paying for the couple to attend a marriage retreat, to providing counseling if the family needs help.

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<www.leadershipjournal.net>*

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- adult education series
- youth group discussions
- congregational bible study and retreats
- synod assemblies or breakout sessions
- any gathering of church leaders

Q: What about what's not in the study?

A: Taken together, all three studies that the task force has prepared for this church have provided a fairly comprehensive survey of human sexuality, but it is impossible to include every aspect of human sexuality in a social statement. The task force anticipates that feedback from this church will help focus the social statement.

Q: How can I get a copy?

A: Visit www.elca.org/faithfuljourney to pre-order printed copies or to download the study beginning December 4, 2006. For multiple copies please call 1-800-328-4648. Each ELCA congregation will receive a printed copy in early December.

Q: What's next?

A: Responses to the study are due to the task force on November 1, 2007. Respondents may fill in the form included with the booklet and mail it in or complete the form online at www.elca.org/faithfuljourney. The task force will develop the first draft of the social statement by early 2008. The proposed social statement will come to the church for consideration in the spring of 2009 and will be considered by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in August 2009.

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Send news for the April issue to Linda Hudgins by March 2.

ELCA REGION 5 EVENT

High Tech, High Touch: Tools for Meaningful Ministry

Saturday, March 24, 2007

Grace Lutheran Church
Tomahawk, Wisconsin

For more information contact
NWSW Resource Center at 715-833-1153
staff@synodresourcecenter.org

CREATIVE GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

Stocks, Bonds, and Mutual Funds provide great giving potential. These gifts allow the Synod to sell the stock, receive fair market value and not pay any capital gains tax. You as the donor, receive an income tax deduction for the full fair market value of the shares. Any donor who has the option of giving cash or stocks, bonds, and mutual funds would find it beneficial to give the stocks, bonds, and/or mutual funds to the Synod and use the cash to purchase stocks, bonds, and/or mutual funds. This results in a stepped-up basis in the new asset for the donor.

If you have any questions, please contact Gregg Piehl at the Synod office.

Global Language Villages: Volunteer in China!

The Global Language Villages program (GLV) of Concordia College (Moorhead, MN) offers the opportunity for Lutherans from northeastern Iowa to spend several weeks teaching English to youth in China this summer, July 8-31. No knowledge of the Chinese language is required.

Participants need not be certified teachers, but those with some teaching experience (Sunday School, etc.) will be most comfortable in the classroom. Participants need to be in good physical condition, able to walk, climb stairs, and deal with summer heat. High school youth must be accompanied by a parent/ guardian. Participants receive several days of orientation to Chinese culture by touring important sites, and then teach for two weeks.

For details, see
<http://clvweb.cord.edu/prweb/glv/>

Contact
Pastor Mark Johns, Luther College
563-387-1347
Email: johns@cord.edu

LIFELONG LEARNING



Life-Long Learning For Lutherans

Sundays 7:00-9:00

February 18, 25, March 4, 11, 18

Registrations due by **February 4**

Luther: **Lutheran Heritage #1**

Wartburg: **Introduction to Old Testament #1**

EWALU: **Introduction to New Testament #1**

Friday Eve and Saturday to 4:30

February 23 & 24

Registrations due by **February 9**

Harpers Ferry: **Jesus to Luther #2**

For Registration and Questions Contact:

Rev. Helen Beth Kuhens

658 Sojourn Way Harpers Ferry, IA 52146

563-586-2000

E-Mail: sojourn@acegroup.cc

Lenten Resource

Once again, ELCA Global Mission has produced a Lenten series for congregational use. The regular components include a sermon by an ELCA missionary, worship ideas, soup supper recipes, bulletin cover, and other materials that can be used to globalize the Lenten worship experience.

Please check

www.elca.org/globalmission/lent

for more information

FORUMS

February, March forums listed

Cedar Valley and North Iowa are sharing forums. They take place from 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at Messiah, Charles City.

Contact Rev. Paul Nelson, e-mail <stjames.pastor@mchsi.com>, phone 641/423-4702, or Rev. Irving Sandberg, e-mail <irving@mchsi.com>, phone 319/296-1387.

- *Law and Gospel: Guiding our mission*, Dr. Mark Mattes, religion professor, Grand View College, Des Moines, **Tuesday, February 20**.
- *Topic to be announced*, Dr. James Nestingen, Professor Emeritus of Church History —Luther Seminary, St. Paul, **Tuesday, March 13**.
Registration and meal is \$20 per event.

Tri-State forum

A Tri-State Forum takes place at Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, from 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Contact Julie Flater, e-mail <continued@wartburgseminary.edu>, phone 563/589-0324.

- *Preaching Lent and Easter*, Dr. David Lose, Marbury E. Anderson Chair in Biblical Preaching and academic dean at Luther Seminary, **Thursday, February 8**.

Turkey River forum

A Turkey River Forum takes place in February at Zion, West Union, from 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Contact Susan Friedrich, e-mail <susanaim@fbx.com>, phone 563/422-6242.

- *Biblical Interpretation and Public Theology*, Dr. Duane Larson, president of Wartburg Theological Seminary, **Tuesday, February 13**.

Center for Theology and the Land 26th Annual Rural Ministry Conference

March 4-6, 2007

Sustainable Ministry: Faith, Farm, and the Future

Featured speakers include: **Luther Snow**, author of the best-selling book *The Power of Asset Mapping*, and **Dr. Winston Persaud**, Professor of Systematic Theology, Wartburg Theological Seminary.

Additional information is available at
www.ruralministry.com