



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.



## ELCA Worship News

NOVEMBER 2015

Dear friends,

*"God of all creation, all you have made is good, and your love endures forever. You bring forth bread from the earth and fruit from the vine. Nourish us with these gifts, that we might be for the world signs of your gracious presence in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.*

It seems like it happened just yesterday...I had a glue stick in one hand and leaves in the other as I assembled and decorated my Thanksgiving placemat with my handprint, which was to be taken home at the end of kindergarten class that day. We wrote on our placemats what we were thankful for and drew and colored all around it. I remember our teacher saying to us, "Thanksgiving reminds us to be thankful for everything we have and to say thank you each day!"

We so often follow the pitter-patter pattern of daily life when we fall into the trap of aligning what is mine, what is theirs and what more needs to be "mine." All too often we forget that all we are and all we have are marvelous creations given to us by God. Our role, our responsibility, is to give thanks!

It is so easy to spend most of our days groaning and moaning about all the things we do not have or all the bills that we have to pay, or the many problems that each of us faces in our own personal and professional lives due to addictions, circumstances, health or environment.

Thanksgiving is about giving thanks! Giving thanks, like the one foreigner did when the other nine refused to take time out and return thanks to God in Luke's Gospel:

*<sup>16</sup>"He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan.<sup>17</sup>Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? <sup>18</sup>Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"<sup>19</sup>Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."*

When was the last time you ran to God giving thanks for the recovery that has happened in your life or that of a loved one? When was the last time you ran to God giving thanks for the breath that you and I breathe each day and yet take so for granted? When was the last time you ran to God giving thanks for daily bread, warm shelter, friends to walk with you and families that love you. When was the last time you woke up, sat up in bed and gave thanks for a new day?

We have a song of thankfulness that God intends for us to sing – singing this song with the melodies of our lives, the harmonies of our neighborly service to the stranger and the imperfect beats that mold so tenderly together, allowing us never to keep our thanks silent, but to live it out daily.

As Walter Brueggemann wrote in his poem titled “We will not keep silent”

*“We are people who must sing you, for the sake of our very lives. You are a God who must be sung by us, for the sake of your majesty and honor. And so, we thank you, for the lyrics that push past our reasons, for melodies that break open our givens, for cadences that locate us home, beyond all our safe places, for tones and tunes that open our lives beyond control and our futures beyond despair.*

*We thank you for the long parade of mothers and fathers who have sung you deep and true; We thank you for the good company of artists, poets, musicians, cantors, and instruments that sing for us and with us, toward you.*

*We are witnesses to your mercy and splendor; We will not keep silent ... ever again.  
Amen.*

How are you singing the song of thankfulness in your life? What are you thankful for? Whom are you thankful for?

In this world, it is easy for the trials and tribulations of our lives to cloud our eyes and taint our lips as we feebly attempt to give thanks. There are those, and maybe even some of you, who feel that the weight of the world is on their shoulders and giving thanks is not high on the to-do list these days.

May we remember these other words from Brueggemann:

*We count on you and intend our lives to be lived for God, and then we find ourselves among people who are always seeking elsewhere and otherwise. So we give thanks that you are the God who yearns and waits for us, and that our connection to you is always from your side, and that it is because of your goodness that neither life nor death nor angels nor principalities nor heights nor depths nor anything in creation can separate us from you. We give you thanks for your faithfulness, so much more durable than ours.*

May each day, be a day that we stop, praise and give thanks to God for all the blessings of this life!

The Rev. Kevin L. Strickland  
Assistant to the Presiding Bishop  
Executive, Worship



## An update: "Table and Font: Who is Welcome at the Table?" study and conversation



The "Table and Font" conversation has been taking place in this church for this past year in response to a memorial that was sent to the 2013 Churchwide Assembly. From this memorial and the Church Council's actions, this study guide was put together in the fall of 2014 and this church was encouraged by our presiding bishop and the executive for worship to engage in this conversation. Roughly 300 responses were submitted (individual, congregational and synodical). These responses showed a great diversity of practice and opinion on the sacramental practices of the ELCA.

The ELCA has been guided by "The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on The Practice of Word and Sacrament" since 1997. This document set out the sacramental practices of our church and addressed good stewardship for the care and fidelity of God's gifts of grace. This statement, while describing preferred practices, noted "this statement grows out of the church's concern for healthy pastoral action and strong congregational mission. It does not address our practice of Word and Sacrament out of antiquarian or legalistic interests but rather to ground the practice of our church in the Gospel and to encourage good order within our church." (Background 4a)

We are a church that centers itself on the central things of our faith – water, word and meal. These central things point us to Christ who is our center. We remember that "in every celebration of the means of grace, God acts to show forth both the need of the world and the truth of the Gospel. In every gathering of Christians around the proclaimed Word and the holy sacraments, God acts to empower the Church for mission. Jesus Christ, who is God's living bread come from heaven, has given his flesh to be the life of the world. This very flesh, given for the life of all, is encountered in the Word and Sacraments" (Principle 51).

The executive for worship on behalf of the Office of the Presiding Bishop presented a full report to the Church Council at its November meeting and recommended that there is no further need to research the practices of congregations with respect to "The Use of the Means of Grace" and sees this report as the conclusion of its work related to the 2012 memorial and the subsequent actions by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly and the 2014 Church Council.

We give thanks to each of you individually and congregationally that engaged this conversation and submitted your feedback. We pray that this process of engagement was fruitful for your individual context and that it allowed each to participate more fully in the richness, which is our sacramental practice statement, "The Use of the Means of Grace."



As part of the 500th anniversary observance of the Reformation, gather with other members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to rejoice in the freedom we have in Christ. The Grace Gathering, in partnership with the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, will be an opportunity to gather with voting members, prepare for the 500th anniversary and reflect on how the Reformation can continue to guide us today. It will be a time for workshops, worship and fellowship.

The Grace Gathering will provide an opportunity for all ELCA members to experience the same inspiring worship, Bible study, experiential learning activities and fellowship that voting members have when they attend

the Churchwide Assembly in New Orleans. At the same time, the Grace Gathering will offer workshops and presentations that equip congregational leaders and synod planning teams to prepare for observing the 500th anniversary in local communities.

**Registration is now open.** Learn more and register at <http://ELCA.org/gracegathering>.

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### Thinking about the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, 2017

#### *A reflection from Gail Ramshaw.*

Soon everyone will be thinking about how to observe the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Watch for the release of "Reformation 500 Sourcebook: Anniversary Resources for Congregations," arriving in late spring from Augsburg Fortress. In the meantime, here are a few pointers to begin your planning.

If you wish to celebrate the ministry of Martin Luther, schedule that on or near the anniversary of his death day, Feb. 18. As you honor him, please know that historians are now telling us that in affixing his theses to the church door, Luther would have used wax, not a hefty hammer and an impressive spike, despite how the artists of the last 150 years depicted him.

For your Reformation celebration, however, please do not horrify Luther by having too much focus on him. Luther always points us to the Bible, as seen in a window at St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Sellersville, Pa., shown here. The readings appointed for Reformation Day proclaim the new covenant given us in Christ, God's gift of grace, and the truth of our freedom in the house of God. The Scripture points us to Christ now in the church, not to Luther in 16th century Europe.



To embody the ongoing Reformation, avoid archaic worship. Were we to exhume 16th-century liturgy, Luther would have a fit. Use the best biblical scholarship available to our century, the most profound contemporary worship practices and faithful current translations of Luther's hymns. We are grateful to God for the insights of many reformers, but we no longer would sing Luther's original words in "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word" (ELW 517), which condemned des Papsts und Türken (the pope and the Turks). Mercifully, the Spirit keeps on reforming the church, and it is the continuing renewal of all the baptized for which in 2017 we offer our praise and plead for guidance.

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#### Share your event

Are you planning a worship event in your congregation or synod? [Share it](#) with us for this newsletter!  
*Due to publication schedule, items should be submitted a minimum of 10-12 weeks before the event.*

#### Share your story

We love highlighting worship events from across this church in this newsletter.  
To submit your story, send a brief article and pictures to [worship@elca.org](mailto:worship@elca.org)

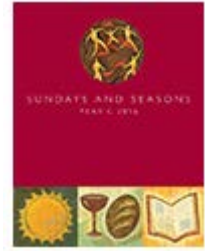
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## AUGSBURG FORTRESS

### Order Year C 2016 resources today!

"Sundays and Seasons" supports comprehensive week-by-week planning with content and ideas for liturgy and music, preaching and visuals, shaped by the Revised Common Lectionary, the church year, and the assembly gathered around word and sacrament. [Learn more.](#)

Standing orders are available. Instead of needing to remember to order your set each year, make it easy and create a standing order for your "Sundays and Seasons" resources! Call Augsburg Fortress Sales & Service at 800-328-4648/800-328-4648 FREE for more information and assistance.



## EVENTS AND RESOURCES

**Leading the Church's Song**  
**First United Methodist Church**  
**Corpus Christi, Texas**  
**Jan. 6-8, 2016**



The National Conference for Sacred Music is a unique conference designed to provide the practicing church musician with fresh ideas to help create a vital, growing music ministry. The emphasis of this conference is to provide a wide variety of new approaches to revitalize and reinvigorate the church's passion for music in worship.

This year's featured speakers are: David Cherwien, Eric Nelson, Susan Briebl, Heather Williams Potter, Jackson Henry and Ed Rollins. Sessions include:

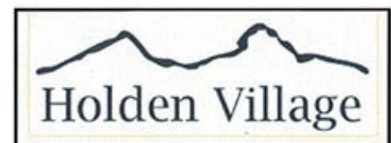
- New worship planning ideas for your congregation and choirs
- Choral technique classes with an emphasis on deepening the spiritual experience for the choir member
- Reading sessions featuring new publications from Augsburg Fortress, Hinshaw, and MorningStar Music
- Sponsored by three denominational groups: the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians, the Presbyterian Association of Musicians, and the Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts
- Workshops for working with children
- Handbells
- Morning worship creatively crafted by Susan Briebl

[Learn more and register.](#)

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### **Holden Village** **Artist Residency in Community, Ecology and Spirituality**

The Artist Residency in Community, Ecology, and Spirituality will award professional working artists the opportunity to work and live for six weeks during February, March and April in the remote mountain community of Holden Village.



Living space in one of our historic buildings, appropriate work space and meals will be provided. As a resident, you will become part of our dynamic winter community, participating in the common work of the village, sharing your vision and creativity, and interacting with staff and guests.

Selected artists can work in any medium, including drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, textiles, photography, film, writing, poetry, dance or music.



Applications need to be received by the village by Dec. 4, 2015.

For information about Holden Village and submissions, go to: [www.holdenvillage.org/village-life/2016-artist-residency/](http://www.holdenvillage.org/village-life/2016-artist-residency/) or contact Jessica Markusen at [arts@holdenvillage.org](mailto:arts@holdenvillage.org)

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**[Week of Renewal 2016: "Worship: Beyond Style"](#)**  
**Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, Calif.**  
**Jan. 11-14, 2016**

Presenters: Susan Briehl, Jonathan Rundman and Kyle Schiefelbein.

Join us after Christmas at Pacific Lutheran for a time of learning and renewal. Week of Renewal is now an integrative event, with morning plenary sessions and afternoon workshops. The week begins Monday afternoon and ends Thursday with lunch. Each afternoon has two workshops in which all participants partake.

**Susan Briehl** will lead a workshop on stewarding the words we use for worship, and the three aspects of this stewardship: *Cherishing* (receiving, recovering, and sometimes reforming the words that are our heritage, including knowing what words do), *Curating* (how to choose wisely from among the multiple resources available to us and where and when and how to use such texts), and *Crafting* (writing new texts or adapting other texts). Over the course of three days, spend time with songleader/composer **Jonathan Rundman** in an interactive discussion about worship and congregational participation. We will examine our personal histories as people-in-the-pews, explore our own creativity, focus on lots of practical application (technology, psychology, theology, repertoire), and crowd source best practices for worship/music planning in our congregations. In the mornings, **Dr. Kyle Schiefelbein** will facilitate a conversation among the two workshop leaders and participants about connecting liturgical language and participation with the larger Lutheran traditions that we do and will encounter. These interactive plenaries bring together the various themes throughout the week to look at worship's "deep meaning and purpose."

For a full schedule and to register, visit [www.plts.edu/programs/continuing-education/week-of-renewal.php](http://www.plts.edu/programs/continuing-education/week-of-renewal.php).

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**[Music that Makes Community](#)**

**The Bishop's Ranch, Sonoma County – Jan. 17, 2016**  
**Register now!**

**Music that Makes Community Inc.** is a not-for-profit organization that connects a worldwide network of practitioners and leaders who share a practice of paperless song leading. They partner with hosts to produce conferences and workshops to teach, to practice and to create resources for making connections and building a repertoire of songs for paperless song leading.



To learn more about upcoming events and see the growing number of resources on our newly redesigned site, go to [www.musicthatmakescommunity.org](http://www.musicthatmakescommunity.org).



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 **Bearing God's Creative and Redeeming Word to all the World: Vocation and Worship, April 4-6, 2016.**

For 68 years, the Institute of Liturgical Studies has provided a place of engaging emerging topics in liturgical renewal. This year is the second in a series exploring our relationship to creation as a site of liturgical renewal. In 2015 we considered how stewardship of creation takes on new urgency as we discover the fragile nature of our universe.

In 2016 we will explore how we frame our own vocation and worship in this interconnected cosmos. Our plenary presenters will consider how this theme takes root in our own lives. Plenary presenters Delores Dufner, Rafael Malpica-Padilla, Donald Salers and Paul Westermeyer will unpack those implications. In worship we will use global sources to connect our lives to those around us. We will consider what a global economy does to our lives, what justice requires of us, and how those realities shape the way we worship. Worship will lead us to connect our vocation to the world around us. Our liturgies will offer eucharistic and other prayer offices that lead us to reflect on God's creation and our place in it. Through plenary talks, seminars and workshops, we hope to engage in important questions about vocation in our own time.

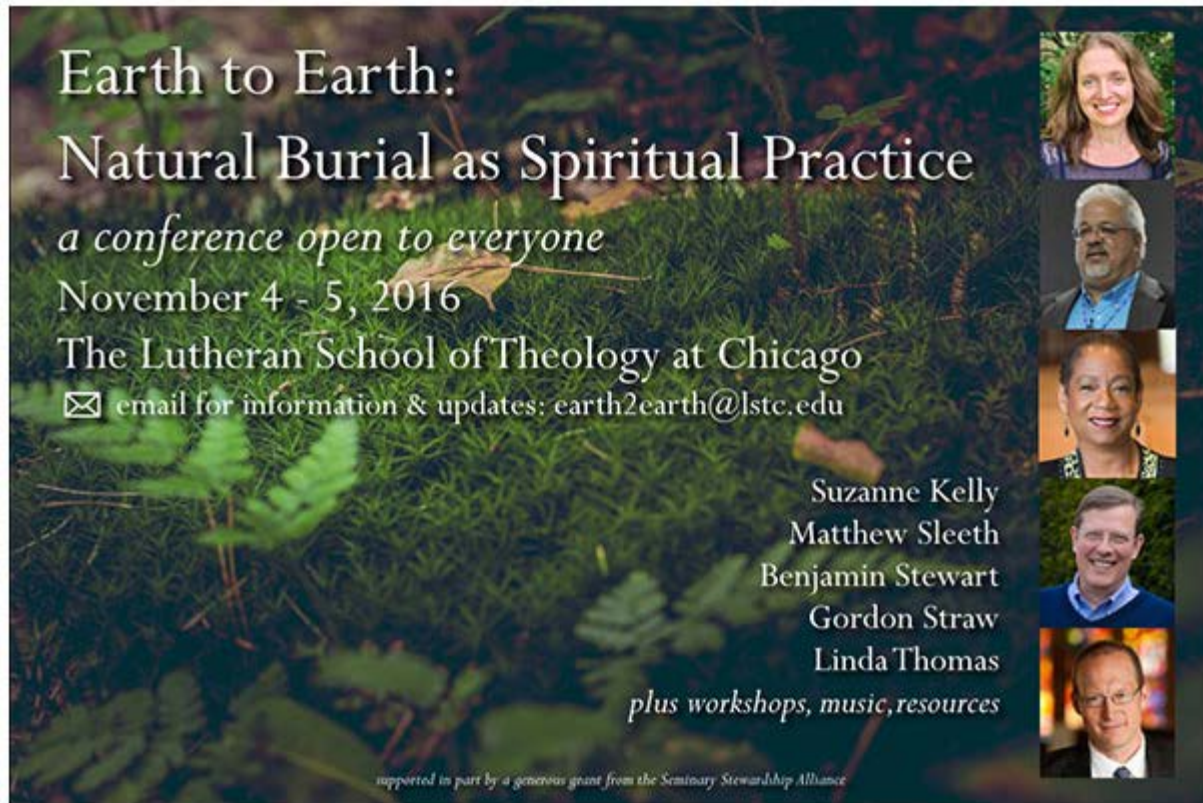
Optional Monday afternoon seminars offer participants the opportunity to delve more deeply into a single aspect of worship leadership. This year's seminar topics include preaching, enlivening worship, clergy-musician relationships and liturgy and life relationships.

The Chapel of the Resurrection is the center of our time together in worship. The Harre Student Union is the home for registration, plenary presentations, meals and exhibits. The union's proximity to the chapel makes walking distances convenient.

Information about workshops, seminars, worship and schedule are available at [www.valpo.edu/ils](http://www.valpo.edu/ils). [Register now.](#)

Lorraine S. Brugh  
Director, Institute of Liturgical Studies

Earth to Earth: Natural Burial as Spiritual Practice  
Save the Date! Nov. 4-5, 2016



Earth to Earth:  
Natural Burial as Spiritual Practice  
*a conference open to everyone*  
November 4 - 5, 2016  
The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago  
✉ email for information & updates: [earth2earth@lstc.edu](mailto:earth2earth@lstc.edu)

Suzanne Kelly  
Matthew Sleeth  
Benjamin Stewart  
Gordon Straw  
Linda Thomas  
*plus workshops, music, resources*

supported in part by a generous grant from the Seminary Stewardship Alliance



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