

Be sure to check out the We Are Church for the Sake of the World Podcast!



This quarter's episode features:



Bishop Shoo

*Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT)
and Bishop of the Northern Diocese of Tanzania*



Rev. David Wunsch

Director of Unit Operations and Programs, Global Mission, ELCA



Stacy Martin

President and CEO of Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska

Find it at:

[https://nebraskasynod.org/
learn/resources/congregations/
worship/we-are-church-for-the-
sake-of-the-world.html](https://nebraskasynod.org/learn/resources/congregations/worship/we-are-church-for-the-sake-of-the-world.html)

Don't miss the *Micah 6:8* Difficult Conversations Toolkit!

This newsletter includes the "Difficult Conversations Toolkit," a toolkit that gives congregations a framework to have hard conversations in community life, created by the Micah 6:8 Team of the Nebraska Synod.

We encourage you to use it to broach topics that will help your congregation accompany the communities around them.

With gratitude to the Immanuel Vision Foundation

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The foundation's mission is to: "Meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of seniors; respond to needs in community health, and support the ministry of the Church."



community for the sake of the world

Welcome to the second installment of our "We are Church for the Sake of the World newsletter!" Our first newsletter's resources were all about relationships, and this newsletter's theme is community. We hope you find this quarterly resource a helpful tool in your ministry context, your own discipleship, or your relationship with the wider community.

As we look toward Advent and then to Lent, we are gifted with time to pause from the hustle and bustle of life and reflect, meditate, ponder, and consider not only our relationship with God but also our relationships with our neighbors. Our neighbors make up our community with us and they are the ones we are called to love and serve through our daily callings.

When we consider "we are church for the sake of the world," it may be tempting to think that "world" is a place far away, somewhere overseas, a foreign land, or simply not in my backyard.

But the world is here, the world is exactly where you are, the world includes you and your community. You could easily swap out the word "world" with "neighborhood, or town, or people living under the overpass, or city, or farm down the way, or visitors to the local food bank or coat closet."

Jesus might say that the "world" is the "hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, and imprisoned."

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to notice our neighbors in our community. When we keep the "world" far away, it can be easier to feel good about benevolent work abroad, while the needs, rights, voices, representation, and opportunities of our neighbors right beside us are neglected.

God's Spirit gathers the scattered and forms into a community of saints and then scattered the gathered community back out into the world to share God's love and be the disciples whom God calls us to be.

This is why care and accompaniment, love and service with our neighbors, locally and globally, is how we are community together, this is how we are called to be church for the sake of the world!

COMMUNITY:

/kə'myōnedē/ | *noun* | A feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals.

Worship Resources for Advent and Lent

Liturgy focus: Baptism, Confession and Forgiveness, and/or Passing of the Peace

Advent Litany

Use this litany weekly in your worship service or include it in newsletters as you prepare for Christ's coming.

Leader: Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

L: Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord.
All: that we may walk in the paths of the Lord.

L: They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks;
All: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

L: A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
All: and a branch shall grow out of its roots.

L: The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
All: the desert shall rejoice and blossom.

L: The dead are raised,
All: and the poor have good news brought to them.

L: Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
All: and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, "God is with us."

L: Prepare the way of the Lord;
All: make straight the paths of the Lord.

L: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
All: so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

From ELCA World Hunger's "Action Guide for Congregations," Advent 2019.

Advent Prayers

Use these prayers weekly in your Sunday or mid-week worship service to ground your gathering in God's grace and the relationships and reconciliation needed in our world. From ELCA's World Hunger's "Advent Study," Advent 2018.

Advent 1

Gracious God, in your loving care, you bring forth good things from the earth to sustain and nourish your people. We give you thanks for these gifts and for the community that you gather to feast together this season. Open our hearts to our neighbors facing hunger that we may with love remember both those at the table and those absent from it. Preserve us and accompany us this Advent season as we await with eager anticipation the salvation of the world. In your name, amen.

Faith Formation Resources

study - Ephesians 2:13-22

**This Bible study could be used during Sunday school, small group, opening devotions, council or committee meetings, youth groups. Read the passage through once aloud to the group and then have folks read through it a second time silently. Discuss any or all of the following questions.*

The author of this letter to church in Ephesus wants the community to see that there is unity of Gentiles and Jews in Christ, that it is Christ who makes us one through the movement of the Holy Spirit.

- + Which word speaks the most to you?
- + What surprises you from the passage?
- + Does this encourage you to believe or do something?
- + What is the promise of God here?
- + What is the Living Word saying to us today through this passage?
- + What does it mean for Christ to be our peace?
- + What does reconciliation in God look or feel like?
- + How does it feel to no longer be a stranger?
- + What does this passage say about community?
- + How does this passage connect with being the church for the sake of the world?

interact

What does the word "community" mean?

Look it up and discuss it with your congregation. Places to explore the meaning of community include: in an adult forum, at youth group, Sunday Schooll, even in a sermon.

What communities are people a part of? How does your church community interact with the broader community of your town?

Go out into your broader community!

You might already be doing this in some form or another. If you are, take this time to intentionally connect what you are already doing with how we are church for the sake of the world. Perhaps you can do the "STUDY" section of this resource while you are in the midst of your community.

How are you serving your community now?
How could you better serve your community?

Organize a prayer walk.

Walk, bike, or drive around your community and pray at important places in your community (i.e. courthouse, police/fire station, schools, other churches in town, hospital, nursing homes, sports fields, etc.). By praying for each other and for the people that use these important places you are showing your church community how to better be church for the sake of the world.

engage

On occasion, having difficult conversations is part of being in community.

The Micah 6:8 Committee, the synod's committee for justice issues in Nebraska, developed a toolkit for these specific moments.

While the topical resources will be focused on justice issues, the general guidelines for communication in the theological rationale may be of some assistance to you for whatever difficult conversation you would like to engage.

See the Micah 6:8 Difficult Conversations Toolkit insert for more details.

reflect

- + What words or phrases come to mind when you see this photograph?
- + What do you think of first when hearing the word community?
- + What feelings do those communities evoke?
- + What is easy about being in community? What is hard?
- + How do you reflect your specific community out into the world?
- + What is the importance of community?
- + What would it look like for you to be in community for the sake of the world?



Resources for Listening to Your Community

1. “Learning to Lead” by Bishop Michael Rinehart
<https://bit.ly/2ksJgpA>
2. “Training Exercise to Practice Listening,” from LEAD-Gulf Coast Synod, ELCA
<https://bit.ly/2m9hkHl>

Resources for Using Contextual Language

1. “How Do We Talk about God in Worship?” by Pastor Emmy Kegler
<https://bit.ly/2mb8Fob>
2. “How is language used in worship?” from Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
<https://bit.ly/1ULR6mj>
3. “Worship Formation & Liturgical Resources: Frequently Asked Questions – What is ‘Exchange of the peace?’” from Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
<https://bit.ly/2kslcC8>
4. Burke, Suzanne and Martin Seltz, eds. Worship Matters: An Introduction to Worship Augsburg Fortress, 2012.
<https://bit.ly/2IMlqFC>

Coming Soon

Look for a weekly Lenten digital devotion coming soon. Each weekly email will contain a set of daily devotions and prayers for the week ahead. If you would like to receive it in your email inbox, please contact Brenda Rivas, Communications Manager at the synod office.



Advent 2

Loving God, you welcomed your people into relationship with you while we were still sinners, strangers to your promise. Guide us to show hospitality to the neighbors in our midst, that our church may reflect the grace and love you first showed us. Let our open table give rise to open hearts that witness to the dignity and worth of all of your creation. In your gracious name, we pray. Amen.

Advent 3

Loving God, you sent your Son to invite the world to the heavenly banquet, from which no one will go away hungry. Remember us in our hunger for union with you and fellowship with one another. Inspire us to join with our neighbors at tables together, where we may work together toward a just world where all are fed. In your gracious name, we pray. Amen.

Advent 4

Gracious God, we give you thanks for the many ways you nourish us – with food, with family, with friends, with faith. In you, we are made new to be instruments of your grace in the world. Recall to us the many places of need in our world – places of injustice and violence, of hunger and poverty. Enrich us with love at the tables you set that we may seek justice, love kindness and walk humbly with you into the future you have promised. In your holy name, amen.

Advent or Lenten Midweek Videos featuring Ministry Partners

These videos feature ministry partners that are lifted up by the mission share offered from congregations around the Nebraska Synod. They are one way to show the Word in the world in a mid-week congregational gathering setting, in worship, fellowship, or in a small group.

1. “What does it look like to work at Mosaic?”

Mosaic – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQYVtlmtwOs&t=28s>

This video takes you behind the scenes of employment at Mosaic. Our employees say, "You have to put yourself aside; it's a sacrificial job." But, "You get more out of it than you give. No matter how tired you go home at the end of the day, you know you've made a difference in someone's life."

2. “Coffee is Life. Here's what that means.”

Lutheran World Relief “Farmers Market Coffee” – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aV_xSEuhXVA

With LWR Farmers Market Coffee, farmers aren't just suppliers of coffee beans, they are partners in the coffee business. Because this coffee is sourced directly from LWR project participants, you will be able to see the faces and learn the stories of the actual farmers who grew your coffee, such as Maryering's grandpa, Gustavo Adolfo Talavera Herrera.

3. “LWR Quilts & Kits touch the lives of people around the world”

Lutheran World Relief “LWR Mission Quilts” and “Kits of Kare” feature –
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwCPIQxcTL8>

We can't control when disasters strike and we can't end poverty overnight. But there are things we can do now to help people around the world reach their full potential. Learn how simple items can transform lives

4. “Volunteers send LWR Quilts & Kits around the world.”

Lutheran World Relief – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSN9eLajeGs>
“A contribution is a contribution, no matter how small.”

Ways to Connect in Community

The ministry partners and organizations listed below are essential to helping the Synod carry out its work. As you look for ways to connect and serve in your community, we also encourage you to reach out to learn more about how your ministries intersect with our ministry partners!

Lutheran Planned Giving Services

mission: Our mission is to educate, motivate, and assist in developing planned gifts in support of ELCA ministries as tangible expressions of gratitude for God's blessings.

website: <http://www.lpgsgift.org/>

Blue Valley Lutheran Homes – Hebron, Nebraska

mission: The Mission of Blue Valley Lutheran Home Society is to enrich the lives of those we serve through Christian love with compassion, respect and integrity.

website: <http://bvlh.org/>

Good Shepherd Lutheran Community – Blair, Nebraska

mission: The mission of Good Shepherd Lutheran Community is to serve the social, physical, and spiritual needs of God's people, in a manner of love, dignity, and respect reflective of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd.

website: <http://www.goodshepherdblair.com/>

Immanuel – Multiple Locations

mission: Christ-Centered Service to Seniors, Each Other and the Community.

website: <https://www.immanuel.com>

Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska – Multiple Locations

mission: Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska expresses God's love for all people by providing quality human care services that build and strengthen individual, family and community life.

website: <https://www.lfsneb.org>

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago – Chicago

mission: The mission of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, a seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, is to form visionary leaders to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ. We seek to build up the Body of Christ and work for a world of peace and justice that cares for the whole creation. LSTC is Christ-centered, responsive to its context, attentive to diversity and committed to excellence.

website: <https://www.lstc.edu>

Midland University – Fremont, Nebraska

mission: to inspire people to learn and lead in the world with purpose.

website: <https://www.midlandu.edu>

Mosaic – Multiple Locations

mission: Embracing God's call, Mosaic relentlessly pursues opportunities that empower people.

website: www.mosaicinfo.org

Nebraska Lutheran Campus Ministry – Multiple Locations

mission: To invite people in academic settings more deeply into Jesus Christ and the community that bears His name, so they can discover and fulfill their vocation as disciples.

website: <http://www.nelcm.com>

Nebraska Lutheran Outdoor Ministries – Ashland, Nebraska

mission: We are called by God to be a Christ-centered, Spirit-powered ministry: to equip, teach and excite people for discipleship through camp experiences, to provide our conference and retreat guests with places set apart and serve with sacred hospitality, to nurture leadership for service in the church and world.

website: <https://www.nlom.org>

Oaks Indian Mission – Oaks, Oklahoma

mission: Our mission is to provide children in need with a safe and stable environment to grow and mature in God's love, learning qualities and building character that will help them lead and serve for others and their futures.

website: <https://www.oaksindianmission.org/>

Tabitha Health Care Services – Multiple Locations

mission: Motivated by Christian compassion, Tabitha delivers a continuum of exceptional and innovative Senior Care services that promote the dignity, independence and well-being of older adults.

website: <https://www.tabitha.org>

Wartburg Theological Seminary – Dubuque, Iowa

mission: Wartburg Theological Seminary serves Christ's church through the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by being a worship-centered community of critical theological reflection where learning leads to mission and mission informs learning. The community embodies God's mission by stewarding resources for engaging, equipping, and sending collaborative leaders who interpret, proclaim and live the gospel of Jesus Christ for a world created for communion with God and in need of personal and social healing.

website: <https://www.wartburgseminary.edu>

