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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Synod Plans Events, Identifies Leaders for 'Book of Faith'

By: Karris Golden

The Northeastern Iowa Synod plans a number of events to help congregations become engaged in the ELCA's *Book of Faith* initiative.

While some may believe it's simple to engage Lutherans in the Bible, that hasn't been the case, said Dr. Diane Jacobson, director of *Book of Faith*.

The goal is to help congregations "embark on biblical discovery," said Jacobson, who also serves as professor of Old Testament and associate dean of the MA/MSW programs at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn.

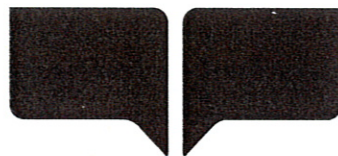
"I love scripture, and I'm interested in ways we can help others love Scripture," she said. "Getting to help others (love Scripture) is exciting and fun and a wonderful thing for a congregation."

The Rev. Roger McKinstry will serve as the synod's *Book of Faith* advocate. McKinstry serves four small, rural congregations: Peace Lutheran Church in Ryan; Immanuel Lutheran church in Earlville; St. Peter Lutheran Church in Lamont; and St. John Lutheran Church in Dundee.



Rev. Roger McKinstry

The synod staff contact person for *Book of Faith* is Pastor Mark A. Anderson, assistant to the bishop.



book of faith

Open Scripture. Join the Conversation.

During the next year, the synod will host introductory informative gatherings for rostered leaders and the laity. This will include a fall gathering, events in each of the 11 conferences and a day of renewal for rostered leaders next spring. *Book of Faith* will also be the emphasis of the June 2009 synod assembly.

Creators of *Book of Faith* hope to focus on helping the whole church "become more fluent in the first language of faith — the language of Scripture — ... that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened and empowered by the Word," according to the vision statement.

Jacobson has identified three goals for those who take part in the *Book of Faith* initiative: to experience more fully the power of the Word; learn together about historically Lutheran

approaches to Scripture; and enter fully into a deep, multigenerational, multi-cultural conversation that informs who Lutherans are as people of God.

Book of Faith is not a directive from synods or churchwide leaders, Jacobson added. Instead, it was developed so individual congregations and synods can shape their experiences with the material.

Jacobson describes *Book of Faith* as an "initiative process," because it invites congregations, synods and other organizations to assess and expand

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their commitment to Scripture and the sharing of ideas.

To that end, the initiative must be a grassroots effort — from the congregation up. Jacobson hopes *Book of Faith* will also welcome those not often reached by ELCA ministries. It will utilize a variety of multimedia tools, from face-to-face discussion to print- and Web-based materials.

As the ELCA has unveiled its plans for *Book of Faith*, some have asked what is specifically "Lutheran" about reading the Bible. Plenty, said Jacobson.

"In some senses, we share a lot of ways of reading the Bible with other people," she said. "That's been true from Martin Luther on. But there have also been some particular theological questions we bring as Lutherans: ... 'How does a text show forth Christ? How do we read Scripture in light of other Scripture?' It's not that other traditions don't have those questions; it's that they're not as core to other beliefs. I think [*Book of Faith*] will help us understand what it is that Lutherans bring to study of the Bible."

Book of Faith will benefit from a close partnership with Augsburg Fortress Publishers. The first piece, "Opening the Book of Faith," was released April 1. Jacobson sees it as a foundation for congregational *Book of Faith* activities.

The book describes biblical insights from a Lutheran perspective and includes four text studies that show how to apply the methods and insights. It also contains tools that help individuals and congregations assess their Bible usage, needs and hopes.

Among the writers of "Opening the Book of Faith" are Dr. Norma Cook Everist, professor of church administration and educational ministry at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, and the Rev. Dr. Kathryn Kleinhans, professor of religion and chair of the Religion and Philosophy Department at Wartburg College in Waverly.

"This book is written for the general adult reader, and the use of the book is a good way for congregations to deepen their efforts to expand engagement with the Bible," said Bishop Steven L. Ullestad.

Each 2008 Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly voting member who signs up for *Book of Faith* e-updates will receive a copy of "Opening the Book of Faith." It can also be ordered at www.elca.org/bookoffaith.

In 2009, Augsburg Fortress plans to release an adult Bible study based on "Opening the Book of Faith," as well as a Lutheran study Bible geared for church members in confirmation and beyond. Additional resources are also in the works.

By 2012, the ELCA hopes to reach several *Book of Faith* goals. By that time, all synods will be committed to *Book of Faith* participation, and it is hoped that 75 percent of ELCA congregations will be actively engaged in the process.

Jacobson also anticipates strong participation of most ELCA organizations, agencies, institutions and networks. The final 2012 goal is to offer 5,000 rostered leaders and 10,000 laypeople trained with enhanced skills for teaching Scripture.

— Golden is a freelance writer from Waterloo and belongs to Trinity American Lutheran Church.

Important *Book of Faith* Dates

Fall 2008:

The synod will host a *Book of Faith* gathering for all rostered persons.

Bishop Steven L.

Ullestad will

introduce the study and offer encouragement on how to teach the Bible.

Fall 2008-Winter 2009: The synod plans events for clergy and lay leaders in each of its 11 conferences. During the sessions, Assistants to the Bishop will lead an introduction of the study.

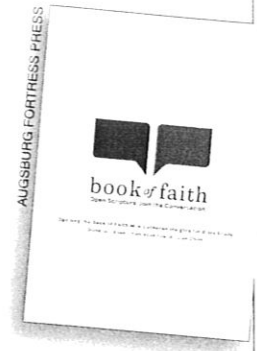
Fall 2008-Winter 2009: The three conferences involved in the mission support consultation will help the synod highlight the *Book of Faith* study.

Spring 2009: A Rostered Day of Renewal is planned, with focus on the *Book of Faith* initiative.

June 2009: Synod assembly will emphasize *Book of Faith*.

What Can You Do?

- Visit www.elca.org/bookoffaith and read for information and inspiration.
- Share your ideas with *Book of Faith* leaders through www.elca.org/bookoffaith or via e-mail at BookofFaith@elca.org



Congregations encouraged to study Book of Faith

By Karris Golden

Engaging Lutherans to study the Bible may seem like a simple concept.

That has not necessarily been the case, said Diane Jacobson, professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

"I love Scripture, and I'm interested in ways we can help others love Scripture. That's not easy," she said. "Getting to help others [love Scripture] is exciting and fun and a wonderful thing for a congregation."

As director of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's new "Book of Faith: Lutherans Read the Bible" initiative, she now has an opportunity to assist congregations that want to "embark on biblical discovery."

According to the vision statement issued by the ELCA, Book of Faith is focused on helping the whole church "become more fluent in the first language of faith—the language of Scripture ... that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened and empowered by the Word."

Three goals have been outlined: to experience more fully the power of the word, to learn together about historically Lutheran approaches to Scripture and to enter fully into a deep, multigenerational, multicultural conversation that informs who Lutherans are as people of God.

Jacobson describes Book of Faith as an "initiative process" because it invites congregations, synods and other organizations to assess and expand their commitment to

Scripture and the sharing of ideas.

To that end, the initiative must be a grass-roots effort—from congregations up. Jacobson hopes Book of Faith will also welcome those not often reached by ELCA ministries. It uses a variety of tools, from face-to-face discussion to print resources and Web-based multimedia materials.

Some may ask what is particularly "Lutheran" about reading the Bible. Plenty, Jacobson said.

"In some senses, we share a lot of ways of reading the Bible with other people," she said. "That's been true from Martin Luther on. But there have also been some particular theological questions we bring as Lutherans: 'How does a text show forth Christ?' 'How do we read Scripture in light of other Scripture?' It's not that other traditions don't have those questions. It's that they're not as core to other beliefs. I think [Book of Faith] will help us understand what it is that Lutherans bring to study of the Bible."

Book of Faith is not a directive from synods or churchwide leaders, Jacobson added.

"[Implementing Book of Faith] will depend on the congregation and the local context," she explained. "One of the things we're being careful about is that we're not saying, 'This is the program and you do it this way.' Individual congregations and individual synods will shape how they will engage Scripture in their context."

The initiative will, however, provide "very exciting materials"

Values about Book of Faith: Lutherans Read the Bible content

- Always engages with the Bible—it is never just about the Bible.
- Teaches Lutheran principles of reading the Bible in ways that open up Scripture.
- Keeps central the witness to Christ crucified and resurrected.



What can you do?

- Visit www.elca.org/bookoffaith for information and inspiration.
- Encourage your congregation to become a Book of Faith congregation.
- Share ideas with your neighbors, synod and partners.
- Share your ideas with Book of Faith leaders through www.elca.org/bookoffaith or via e-mail at bookoffaith@elca.org.

through its close partnership with Augsburg Fortress Publishers, Jacobson said. The first piece, scheduled for release in spring 2008, is "Opening the Book of Faith."

a slim volume that asks "How do Lutherans read the Bible?" and "What are ways I can read the Bible?" It also offers Bible studies and other activities for individuals and groups.

Voting members to 2008 synod assemblies will receive copies, and it will also be available through Augsburg Fortress. Jacobson anticipates congregations will purchase copies for use as the foundation for Book of Faith activities.

In 2009, Book of Faith and Augsburg Fortress will release an adult Bible study based on the methods in the forthcoming "Opening the Book of Faith," as well as a Lutheran study Bible for members in confirmation and beyond. Additional resources are also in the works.

Since its affirmation by the 2007 Churchwide Assembly, a Web site for Book of Faith (www.elca.org/bookoffaith) has been launched.

The site offers a variety of materials, with more to come, including a congregational assessment that will allow churches to gauge where they are in relation to the Book of Faith goals, Jacobson said. There will also be a similar assessment for individuals to complete, and the assessments will be included in "Opening the Book of Faith."

"Hopefully, Book of Faith will mean a lot to [members of congregations]," Jacobson said. "The idea is that people will get reconnected with Scripture. They'll be engaged by Scripture. They'll be excited with Scripture. It should be a freeing engagement and an

enlivened engagement. It should help individuals in a congregation as well as help entire congregations reconnect with their callings."

By 2012, the ELCA hopes to reach several Book of Faith goals. By that time all synods should be committed to Book of Faith participation, and 75 percent of ELCA congregations should be actively engaged in the process.

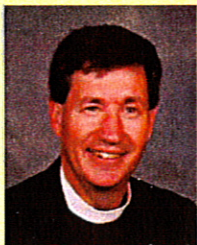
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Golden, a freelance writer from Waterloo, Iowa, belongs to Trinity American Lutheran Church.

Synod Assembly 2008

The 2008 Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly will be held June 13-15 at Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa. The assembly theme is *Living in God's Amazing Grace: Faithful and Bold*. The synod emphasis, "Word of Life," will be the focus of the assembly. Assembly actions will include election of a bishop, treasurer, churchwide voting members, as well as a synod council, board and committee members.



Mauney

James F. Mauney, bishop of the Virginia Synod, will provide two presentations focusing on the power of the word of God in the lives of individuals, families and communities. He is a graduate of Lutheran Southern Seminary, Columbia, S.C., and Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus,

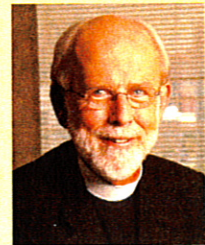


Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

*Living in God's Amazing Grace:
Faithful and Bold*

Ohio. He holds honorary doctorate degrees in divinity from Lenoir-Rhyne College, Hickory, N.C., and Roanoke College, Salem, Va.

The churchwide representative to the assembly will be Mark S. Hanson, who has served as ELCA presiding bishop since August 2001. Before being elected presiding bishop, he served as bishop of the Saint Paul Area Synod. He is a graduate of Union Theological Seminary, New York.



Hanson