



Rocky Mountain Synod tops list of World Hunger giving

In 2008, gifts to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal totaled \$21.4 million, a new record and a remarkable number given the difficult economic year! Notable are some significant bequests, without which the totals would not have been as impressive. Rocky Mountain Synod contributions to ELCA World Hunger in 2008 totaled \$580,156. Excluding major bequests received by several synods, the Rocky Mountain Synod tops the list of synod contributions. The highest three also include the Minneapolis synod, contributing \$560,397, and the East Central Synod of Wisconsin at \$551,006. Thank you for your many efforts in fundraising, and also in education, advocacy, organizing, and lifestyle stewardship. All of these actions continue to make a difference in people's lives all over the world.

Bicycle journey to El Paso will raise donations for World Hunger

Pastor Michael Mortvedt, an RMS pastor currently serving as the Vicar of Trinity Episcopal Church, Kremmling, CO, and as the Co-director of Alternatives for Simple Living, will be biking 650 miles to the Synod Assembly in El Paso, Texas, to raise donations for the ELCA World Hunger Appeal. You are invited to pledge on a per mile basis or for a set amount of your choice. Please make checks out to the *ELCA World Hunger Appeal* and send them to the Rocky Mountain Synod office and note that your donation is in support of the bicycle ride for world hunger.

"A different kind of assembly" is April 30 - May 2

Milagro de la Frontera is the *Miracle of the Border*. Planning has been underway for over two years for this "different kind of assembly." Contact Janice Ladd-Horkey in the synod office with questions. More information is at www.rmselca.org/elpaso including the pre-assembly materials in downloadable form.

Brand campaign features nationwide TV advertising

The ELCA brand campaign is going national! After two years of research, testing and tweaking (including a test run in Denver), the ads are ready for prime time. From May 11 to 31, during sweeps, a flight of television ads will broadcast nationally on CNN, CNN Headline News, Fox News, HGTV and DIY Network. This flight will be supported with print, outdoor and online advertising artwork that can be used by congregations. Congregations are encouraged to join in a unified identity by adopting the ELCA logo and tagline in their print and web presence. Resources for letterhead, envelopes, business cards, and more can be accessed at www.elca.org/brand.



God's work. Our hands.

Rocky Mountain Synod ■ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Faithfulness in these challenging times

As our constitution describes, we are all interconnected—an ecosystem. The health of one affects the health of everyone. This is especially apparent as the economic downturn affects congregations, which affects the Rocky Mountain Synod and the ELCA.

2009 pledged giving from congregations to the synod is significantly less than we anticipated when the \$3,796,970 budget was approved at last year's assembly. Thus, a budget reduced by \$480,428 (about 13%) will be presented to the assembly. The most significant changes are as follows:

SYNOD STAFF: The original 2009 budget included adding a new Assistant to the Bishop for Youth & Household Ministry. Since we can no longer afford a new staff person we decided to seek a part time Assistant to the Bishop for Youth & Household Ministry and to contract with Madelyn Busse (assistant to the bishop) who was set to retire May 31. She will serve 1/4 time to oversee the candidacy process and First Call Theological Education.

CAMPUS MINISTRY: Campus Ministry sites were asked to consider increased collaboration with local congregations (both within the ELCA and ecumenically) and creative approaches to adapt to significant cuts proposed for 2010.

MINISTRY PARTNERS: It grieves us greatly to make reductions in funding to our partners at Pacific Lutheran Seminary in California and Betela Seminary in Madagascar (serving our companion synods). We hope that congregations will go beyond their pledged giving to the synod to help make up the difference.

ELCA: Out of faithfulness and a desire to "walk the talk," we did not cut the *percentage* of giving to the ELCA, just as we hope congregations will not reduce the percentage they contribute to this synod. Currently 50% of every dollar from congregations is passed on to the ELCA. Though we did not cut the percentage, the reduced congregational income means less will be sent to the churchwide office of the ELCA for our mission and ministry together.

Even if all congregations fulfill their commitments, this budget will require us to use some of our cash reserves. Synod Council finds this acceptable because we believe it is temporary. While we are optimistic and trusting of your faithful support, we know that if things do not turn around soon, additional reductions will have to be made.

I am thankful for the faithful partnership we share in our ministry together. Thank you for your commitment to our ministry together, especially in these challenging times.

—Linda Bobbitt, RMS Vice President



Video conferencing creates new opportunities

New technology connects six sites together with audio and video

Our new shorthand for video conferencing is **vCon**, and now that all five sites are connected with the synod office, a new era of technological connection is just beginning.

The possibilities and potential for connecting together are not fully realized, since the final site connection was just recently completed. Our appreciation to these congregations who are the five vCon sites in addition to the synod office in Denver:



Our Saviour's, Casper, WY
Zion, Salt Lake City, UT
Good Shepherd, Glenwood Springs, CO
St. Luke, Albuquerque, NM
St. Timothy, El Paso, TX

Youth directors from areas previously disconnected are now participating in the monthly Front Range Youth Directors meetings. Members of the assembly planning committee have met by vCon. A gathering of the Conference Deans at the synod

office included a presentation about Book of Faith given by Pastor Anne Marie Burke while she remained in Utah. And four members of the Book of Faith planning team met together by vCon in Utah with two members in Denver.

Last fall, El Paso and Albuquerque folks participated in the Hunger Summit that took place at Bethany Lutheran Church (a large gathering site in Denver configured for our equipment in addition to the synod office).

The synod council envisioned using technology to our fullest advantage two years ago. A brief presentation highlighted the possibilities at last year's assembly in Denver.

The equipment was acquired from funds set aside by the LCA and ALC Rocky Mountain Synod/District prior to the 1988 merger forming the ELCA for the purpose of education and connection in the new Rocky Mountain Synod of the ELCA. An additional gift from Lutheran Advocacy Ministry - NM completed the needed funds.

The vCon equipment operates over the internet without any additional cost for each session.



ELCA staff, budgets reduced for 2009

Responding to an overall decline in mission support funds, the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) reduced the churchwide organization's current fund spending authorization for 2009 by \$5.6 million to \$76.8 million.

The reduction was needed because at least 35 of the ELCA's 65 synods (including the Rocky Mountain Synod) revised their mission support plans, resulting in a collective downward adjustment. Mission support funds are provided by congregations to synods, which share a portion of those funds with the churchwide organization.

Staff salaries for unit executives and other senior staff at churchwide ELCA offices were reduced by 3 per-

cent beginning April 1 through the end of the fiscal year.

Since the council met last November, the churchwide organization has eliminated 23.5 full-time equivalents – positions involving churchwide staff – and another 12 vacant positions were cut. Some churchwide staff were notified in January their jobs were to be eliminated, and more staff were notified in March.

Churchwide grants to global companion churches, colleges, universities, seminaries and social service agencies were reduced, said the Rev. M. Wyvetta Bullock, executive for administration, ELCA Office of the Presiding Bishop. Only "Each decision you make to end a ministry is very painful," Bullock told the council. "There is a lot of stress in the system now." She praised churchwide leaders and staff for taking on new responsibilities and keeping the organization stable.



The Book of Faith initiative invites the whole church to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered, and sent by the Word. For many people, the encounter with Scripture is limited to the excerpts that are read on Sunday morning. Many observers report that members are biblically illiterate, that they are afraid to engage Scripture. Book of Faith resources are now available to assist in strengthening our biblical fluency. Visit www.bookoffaioth.org.

RMS Roster Changes

Pastor Jim Gonia, from Atonement, Denver, CO, to Program Director for West Africa, Global Mission, ELCA

Kim Gonia, DM, from Holy Trinity, Littleton, CO, to study leave, Lutheran School of Theology Chicago

Pastor Steve Leiser, on leave from call to Shepherd of the Mountains, Park City, UT

Pastor John Bergren, retired, from SW Washington to Rocky Mountain Synod.