



ELCA News in Brief

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ELCA Introduces Print Ads for Congregations

CHICAGO (ELCA) – The Department for Communication of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has introduced a series of print ads for congregations to use in their evangelism and outreach ministries, said Kristi S.

Bangert, director of internal church communication and marketing, ELCA Department for Communication. The ads are available as downloadable files at www.elca.org/elcaads on the ELCA web site.

The ads – developed by a work group in the ELCA churchwide organization in response to requests from

congregations – are aimed at young adults and families, Bangert said. Final copy was designed by Mindpower Inc., Atlanta, she said. The ads include headlines such as “Find Out How Amazing Grace Really Is” and “Think of Sunday as Your ‘Grace Period.’”



Responses to Drafts of Governance and Restructuring Proposals Invited

CHICAGO (ELCA) – The Rev. Mark S. Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), released a draft Aug. 25 of a proposal for restructuring the ELCA churchwide organization. The proposal aims to align the churchwide organization with the ELCA Plan for Mission, adopted at the 2003 Churchwide Assembly.

In a separate release on the same day, the ELCA Church Council executive committee announced a proposal for governance of the churchwide organization.

Copies of both proposals are at www.elca.org/planning on the ELCA web site, and responses to the proposals are invited. You may respond to the governance proposal through Oct. 4, and you may respond to the restructuring proposal through Oct. 17.

ELCA Membership Slips Below 5 Million in 2003

CHICAGO (ELCA) – The baptized membership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) slipped below 5 million in 2003, said the Rev. Lowell G. Almen, ELCA secretary.

Almen announced a reduction of 53,081 baptized members – a decrease of about 1 percent – for a total of 4,984,925 baptized members in 10,657 congregations.

“The statistical back door is far too large in our congregations,” Almen said. “Backdoor losses muffle front door gains. Too many members slip out the back door and disappear from membership in ELCA congregations each year.”

In the past 13 years the ELCA baptized membership has decreased 250,000 from 5,240,739 members reported in 1990. About half the decline occurred in 2002 and 2003.

The 2003 decrease, when combined with the decrease of 61,871 baptized members in 2002, resulted in a two-year decline of 114,952.

“Too many members slip out the back door and disappear from membership in ELCA congregations each year.”

-The Rev. Lowell Almen

Parochial reports showed the loss was due to a decrease in the number of new members, the disbanding of 36 congregations and “roll cleaning” in many remaining congregations. In 2003, “roll cleaning” resulted in a loss of 181,022 members on top of 186,162 members in 2002. Those reductions occur when long inactive members who indicate no interest in continued participation are removed from the congregation’s membership rolls.

Eight congregations with a combined baptized membership of 11,020 withdrew from the ELCA in 2003.

The average number of people in worship on Sundays decreased slightly in 2003. About 1.5 million or 30 percent of all baptized members participate in worship each week. Average worship attendance, an indicator of active participation by members in congregations, has fluctuated in the ELCA between 30 and 31 percent.

Confirmed membership in 2003 decreased by 33,402 to 3,724,321. Communing and contributing membership, which demonstrates active participation, decreased by 44,730 to 2,349,855 in 2003, following a decline of 65,911 in 2002, for a two-year total slide of 110,641.