



Welcome, Readers!

*Supporting and Encouraging Ministries of Resource Centers
for the
Building Up of the Body of Christ*

ASSOCIATION OF LUTHERAN RESOURCE CENTERS
Loaves & Fishes
March 2008 Volume 12 Issue 1



Beth A. Lewis,
President &
CEO
Augsburg
Fortress

As I travel around this church, everywhere I go there is one common request: “When will we have resources from Augsburg Fortress to support the ELCA’s Book of Faith initiative?”

It’s a great question that reflects the energy and enthusiasm surrounding this focus on Biblical fluency that is building throughout this church, from the grass roots of local congregations and campus ministries to synods, seminaries and the churchwide organization. Just this past week, the Augsburg Fortress executive staff participated in a two day retreat. Wanting to lead by example, we started with a one-hour Book of Faith Bible study.

So, what’s coming to support your Book of Faith initiatives?

The first resource due in April 2008, will be *Opening the Book of Faith: Lutheran Insights for Bible Study*. It will teach readers how Lutheran theological insights and hermeneutical principles guide understanding and interpretation of Scripture. The book also introduces four methods for studying the Bible that, when used together, provide a way to experience the Bible more fully.

Adult Bible study resources will make up the second Book of Faith offering to be published by Augsburg Fortress. These resources will provide a comprehensive, holistic, Lutheran approach to engaging Scripture using the four methods of study. The Bible studies, to be released in fall 2008 and spring 2009, will be flexible and customizable to any size group and feature strong leader materials so that lay leaders can feel comfortable leading the study.

The third Book of Faith resource is the *Lutheran Study Bible*, also to be released in March 2009. Using the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translation, this study Bible will integrate study notes reflective of Lutheran perspectives and theology, helpful Bible section introductions, maps, timelines and biblical historical background, as well as articles introducing the Bible, Luther and the Bible, and Lutheran principles for Bible study.

These are thrilling times in the ELCA with our renewed focus on the central place of scripture in our faith and in our lives. We at Augsburg Fortress are honored to be central players in this initiative through the works we are publishing to support it.

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Interchange with Irene

The Rob Bell Phenomenon

Background as taken from Christianity Today:

Rob Bell, founder and pastor of Mars Hill Bible church in Grand Rapids Michigan is a product of Wheaton College. He seems to be at the forefront of the "Emergent Church" movement. Rob Bell and his wife, Kristen were happy and successful young evangelicals, yet that very world became constricting—black and white. Everything changed when they read Brian McLaren's book, A New Kind of Christian. In Kristen Bell's words, the "world took on color again." Brian McLaren claims that "It's not about the church meeting your needs; it's about you joining the mission of God's people to meet the world's needs." The world is bigger than yourself and your personal salvation. The Bell's view of the Bible changed from being one that is a literal list and guidebook that we have figured out to being a mysterious book of wonder.



**Irene Flynn,
President of the
ALRC**

Bell, himself, has the comic timing, the charisma, and the confidence you'd expect from someone who speaks to thousands every week. And he has a gift for the preacher's memorable phrase. "Swords appear strong," Bell says, "but they're actually quite weak. Jesus appears weak, but he's actually quite strong."

You can read the complete article at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/november/12.36.html?start=1>

Views of Rob Bell, his book, Velvet Elvis, and his DVD series, Nooma from around ELCA Resource Centers are below:

From Julie Aageson, Eastern North Dakota Resource Center:

Yes, I've read it (Velvet Elvis) twice (which is not my usual pattern) and continue to recommend it. It's a remarkable book to my mind. I've watched all the Noomas, some of which are better than others. I'm fascinated by them maybe most of all for the way they convey grace on so many different levels. AND yet, one of our campus ministries has not liked them. The students are bothered by Rob Bell's style. Our staff has read it and viewed several of the Noomas. Communications staff in Chicago are reading and discussing it as well.

From Pastor Cynthia Schnaath, Church Resource Center, Central States Synod:

I have read the book and love Rob Bell! Youth Leaders are into his books and DVDs so if you want a review check out their web page - <http://www.elcaymnet.org>. We have a hard time keep copies of the DVDs on the shelves.

From Carol Hughes, Chambersburg Resource Center, Lower Susquehanna Synod:

The Nooma videos have been very well received here. I am constantly juggling the set I have between 3 or 4 congregations plus I am using them for Stephen Ministry Continuing Ed with both of my groups. Many times as we are discussing things, one of the Stephen Ministers will refer back to one of the Noomas we've seen. They just kind of stick with you and you find yourself thinking about them at the strangest times. I particularly like "Lump" and "Dust". I admit to not yet seeing all of them and yes, some of them are better than others but I think they are all grace-filled.

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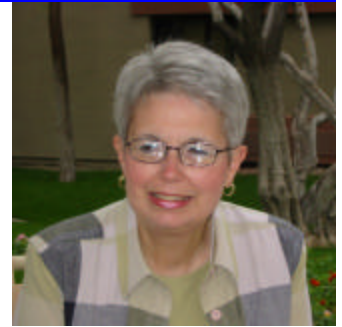
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ELCA Churchwide Support—by Julie Ageson

Announcing the Ecumenical Resource Ministry Alliance – The Alliance

The board of the National Training Center for Resource Center Directors (NTC) is visioning for the future as it expands its support for resource centers nationwide. It is pleased to announce a new name, **the Ecumenical Resource Ministry Alliance**, to be known as **The Alliance**, a new mission statement, and an expanded organization including representatives from resource center associations, seminaries, denominations, and publishers.

2008 will be a transition year with projections of a new program in place in early 2009. Go to www.resourcecenters.org to follow developments.



Julie Ageson, Co-ordinator, ELCA Resource Centers

Mission Statement

The Ecumenical Resource Ministry Alliance (The Alliance) empowers resource center directors in their ministry. It is a collaborative effort among resource providers, including resource center directors, publishers, seminaries, denominations, and others. Resource centers are vital communication links between these entities and local congregations in their common commitment to building up the body of Christ. The Alliance provides this support through opportunities for theological education, professional training, advocacy and networking.

Did you know.....?

...in your Request Manager...you can create “boilerplate messages” to attach to printed Client invoices? To create a list of boilerplate messages go from the main menu to Admin/Data Lists tab/Invoice Messages button and click on “New...”. Now you can write a message or several messages that will streamline your invoicing whether you are sending a return reminder or a greeting for the season - this can be a real time saver.

How do I apply one of my boilerplate messages to an invoice? When you are creating a new invoice everything is business as usual, until you reach the New Invoice Details. When you are looking at the New Invoice Details screen “Invoice Details” tab you will see a “Choose from list...” button just to the right of the field for the printed client message. Click the “choose from list...” button and select the message of your choice!

...“Network Power” is the theme for the communicator’s gathering that will be held in Chicago, August 7-10. The ELCA Resource Center directors/workers will get together the day before, on August 6, that will take the place of Lutheran Day at the ERCCG which will not be held this year. A mailing will be arriving in a week or less about this event. Be sure to watch for it and make your plans to attend.

...that 3 RQM (Request Manager) grants have been given by the ALRC (Association of Lutheran Resource Centers) to Mary Housholder, Northwest Pennsylvania Synod Resource Center; Ray & Sandy Brandstiter of the Lost and Found Ministry, Moorhead, MN; and, for Barbara Beale, SW Texas Center in Seguin, TX.

www.elca.feautor.org

Rob Bell Phenomenon...continued

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From Karen Mathias-Long, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Resource Center:

I know that when I read "Velvet Elvis" I thought Rob Bell must be a Lutheran! It just oozes of Lutheran theology without using heavily theological terms. When he talks about interpreting the Bible, for instance, it's a very Lutheran stance he takes. (Without using these words) he talks about it as being the LIVING word, the inspired Word of God. He points out the fact that when it comes to biblical interpretation, we can't do it in isolation. It requires a community of believers – so we hold one another accountable. My understanding of Lutheranism is that we don't live in a world of black in white. We live in a lot of gray. It seems to me that Rob Bell affirms the gray – and the okay-ness of living in that gray. Not all decisions are clear cut AND some decisions revolve around choosing the better of two evils, so the only thing we can do is be faithful in our decision making. Luther says to "Sin boldly." I think Rob Bell's materials affirm that....The good news is that God's grace is what sees us through, even when we screw up or make the wrong decision. His videos focus on the nitty gritty of daily life – and helps us look at our daily life through the lens of faith. He seldom provides answers. He does guide the viewer through some thought provoking questions and ideas. He makes the important connection between faith and daily life.

Pastor David H Webb, Florida-Bahamas Synod:

Media preaching is a real asset to any parish especially for Adult and High School Sunday School programs. Irene Flynn, director of our synod resource center, referred me to Rob Bell as a potential resource for our Adult SS class. He is an exceptional media preacher! He challenges us or touches us with the gospel message literally every time. Each 10 minute DVD is fresh, dynamic and relevant.

What's hot in your center?

♦Julie Aageson in Fargo, SD: The resources being used most consistently here are Rob Bell's "Nooma" films. They are being used intergenerationally, for small group discussion, for Lenten reflection, congregational committees, confirmation, youth groups.

♦Darlene Kalfahs in Appleton, WI: Nooma's still tend to be the most popular resource in our center. Living the Questions seems to be next.

♦Cynthia Schnaath in Kansas City, Mo: Beside Nooma, the other items are the Living Questions/ Saving Jesus and our prayer labyrinths that our resource center board made themselves!

♦Carol Hughes in Chambersburg, PA: The Nooma DVDs continue to be my most popular item. They are being used for Wednesday Lenten services, adult Sunday School, youth groups and I'm using them with my Stephen Ministers for continuing ed. I also find that the old favorites by Philip Yancey, "What's So Amazing About Grace" and "The Jesus I Never Knew" are almost always checked out.

♦Karen Matthias-Long in Wescosville, Pa: Our most popular resource recently has to be the NOOMA DVD series with Rob Bell.

♦Karen Harthan in Clear Lake, IA: our most popular purchased resources: Mayberry, For the Love of It - DeWitt Jones, Beth Moore's study Living Beyond Myself (fruits of the spirit), Power of Forgiveness from Paraclete and Eating and Drinking in the Word! and right behind that is a video, Martin! God Loves You.

♦Irene Flynn in Tampa, FL: The most popular resource in my center is the Nooma Series by Rob Bell

♦Dee Wright in Fresno, CA: Right now, Jamie Buckingham's series: Ten Bible People Like Me; Parables of Jesus; and Miracles of Jesus-- are in and out all the time, as well as Ray Vander Laan Faith Lessons, Promised Land, and Death of the Messiah.

Thanks to everyone for contributing to this article!

Partnerships...by Karen Kaufman

Most of us do not have the close geographic proximity similar to Greg Kaufmann & Bonnie Weber of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin and Darlene Kalfahs, of East Central Synod of Wisconsin; and so it is easy to think partnering with resource centers for mutual events and support is a long shot. But think again! Look for resource centers in your area from other denominations and try these steps.

Ecumenical Partnerships

Contact closest resource center(s) of another denomination regarding:

- Visit to get new ideas
- Familiarity and response to new resource or publisher
- Recommendations for potential seminar leaders
- Partnering to present workshops in geographic area.
- Promoting workshops of interest

Expanding the partnership

Once familiarity has been gained with 1 or more leaders from other denominations

– Set mutually agreeable date for meeting of resource center staff within the state

- Locate existing centers
- Create a participatory agenda
- Issue an invitation with personal follow-up
- Encourage email response of information sharing for those unable to attend but interested.
- Expand the territory of invitation to assure a minimum of 5 participants.

Strengthening the partnership

Follow up with:

- Appreciation to those who participate in gatherings or host visit.
- Phone call to encourage each other in ministry, share a 'hot' new resource.
- Conversation about ways to jointly resource congregations.



**Karen Kaufman -
ALRC Events
Coordinator**



The next conference call with Augsburg Fortress representatives will be held on

Tuesday, March 25 at 10am Central Daylight Time.

Be sure to join in. Codes to dial will be listed in the ALRC Membership site as the date nears.

You won't want to miss being part of these informative and energizing contacts with our ELCA publishers and mentors, Augsburg Fortress Publishing House.

Fun and Games in November

WHO STOLE THE ELW?



→→→

She done it!

→→→

