



# Report of *The Lutheran*

## Organization

### Advisory Committee

The eleven members of the committee elected by the ELCA Church Council are:

Mr. Grieg L. Anderson, Portland, Ore. (2007)  
Pr. Karen G. Bockelman, Duluth, Minn. (2007)  
Ms. Janice M. Bowman, Thousand Oaks, Calif. (2003)  
Ms. Lori Lee Bocker, secretary, Portland, Ore. (2005)  
Ms. Judith M. Buddenbaum, Fort Collins, Colo. (2003)  
Mr. Gregory Favre, chair, St. Pete Beach, Fla. (2005)  
Ms. Linda S. Lockhart, Kirkwood, Mo. (2005)  
Pr. Kenneth E. Roberts, Plymouth, Mich. (2003)  
Pr. John R. Spangler Jr., Gettysburg, Pa. (2007)  
Ms. Nancy J. Stelling, Cary, N.C. (2007)  
Mr. Herbert Strentz, Des Moines, Iowa (2003)

### Advisors

Pr. Lowell G. Almen, secretary, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Bp. Rolf P. Wangberg, Northwestern Minnesota Synod

The committee met on March 19, 2001; October 20, 2001; April 15, 2002; October 14, 2002; and March 10, 2003.

### Editorial Staff

Editor: Pr. David L. Miller  
Managing Editor: Ms. Sonia C. Solomonson  
Section Editors: Ms. Elizabeth Hunter; Ms. Kathleen H. Kastilahn; Ms. Julie Sevig, associate in ministry  
Editorial Production Manager: Ms. Andrea Pohlmann  
Art Director: Mr. Michael D. Watson  
Web Manager/Graphic Designer: Ms. Lorel K. Fox  
Assistant Editor/Web Designer: Ms. Amber Leberman  
Director for Budget and Administration: Ms. Silvia Chavez  
Administrative Staff: Ms. Bette Bruce, Ms. Heidi Romero  
Contributing Editor: Mr. Jeff Favre  
Study guide editor: Mr. Robert Blezard

### Publishing House Staff

Publishing Director: Mr. James M. Huber  
Display and Classified Advertising Sales: Ms. Elizabeth O'Hara  
Subscription Sales and Circulation: Mr. Patrick Gibbons

## Constitutional Mandate

*The Lutheran* is the monthly magazine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, nurturing understanding of the mission and ministry of this church and providing informed editorial content about relevant concerns in the church's common life. The constitutional mandate of *The Lutheran* appears at 17.20. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the*

*Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* as printed in section X of this volume.

## Mission and Content 2001-2003

The magazine continues its profound commitment to maintain the highest possible standards of journalistic excellence as it serves the church of Jesus Christ through its ministry of journalism. In that ministry, we serve by reporting on the ELCA, its various ministries, congregations, and church members in their great diversity. Above all, the magazine and its staff remains committed to nurturing and deepening the faith of the church as it is revealed and expressed in Holy Scripture and the Lutheran confessions.

*The Lutheran's* mission statement concisely expresses the magazine's role and editorial purpose within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This has become the guiding principle among the editors and designers as they prepare the church's magazine for the people of the ELCA. The mission statement reads:

"*The Lutheran* magazine belongs to the people of the ELCA in all our diversity. The magazine:

- Nurtures an awareness of Christ's presence in our lives and the world.
- Shares the stories of God's people living their faith.
- Connects us with the global Christian community.
- Provides an open forum for discussion.
- Challenges us to bring God's grace and care to all."

During the biennium, this mission challenged the staff to reflect deeply upon its coverage of issues important to the mission and the life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Two overriding issues emerged: 1) the need for greater openness to the diversity of issues and opinions that exist within the ELCA; and 2) the need for greater balance in reporting and presenting this diversity, especially in highly controversial areas such as sexuality and ecumenism.

*The Lutheran's* commitment to take up these challenges is reflected in the presentation of divergent views, including the perspectives of those critical of the church and its leaders, in feature articles, and readers' opinion departments. Perhaps the most obvious adjustment has been the practice of printing, side-by-side, divergent views on issues involved in the sexuality studies in the October 2002 and March 2003 issues. This was appreciated by most of the readers who have communicated with the editor. This approach will be used in the future on other questions and issues.

Each issue of *The Lutheran* includes four major sections, as well as columns and departments. The major sections are:

### **1. People & Faith**

Edited by Kathy H. Kastilahn, this section reflects the magazine's awareness, confirmed by reader research, that readers want more articles that help them live out their faith in daily life. "People & Faith" focuses on the experience of God in personal life; stories of people living their faith in interesting ways amid the challenges of life; also articles on Scripture, Lutheran theology, prayer, and other aspects of Christian discipleship and spirituality. This section also includes articles that reflect theologically and ethically on issues in personal life and society, also offering Christian perspectives on a wide variety of topics including science and technology, war and peace, health and wellness, arts and entertainment, and others.

The "People & Faith" section is being deepened by assignment and acquisition of articles of greater intellectual, theological, and spiritual depth. We find a growing desire among certain groups of readers to "lift their heads" to consider the deep wisdom of our faith as they live in challenging times.

### **2. Congregations & Community**

Edited by Julie B. Sevig, "Congregations & Community" focuses on congregational life and how congregations function and serve within their communities. It reports innovative ministries and issues of congregational life from across the church. Correspondents in each of the ELCA's 65 synods contribute articles and provide valuable information and contacts from across the church. Ms. Sevig continues to deepen this section with articles and perspectives from experts in a variety of fields on issues relating to congregational life. These voices can help congregations examine and strengthen their ministries to reflect God's intention for their life and mission more fully.

### **3. Church & World**

Edited by Elizabeth Hunter, this section highlights the wider work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, its synods, agencies, institutions, and ecumenical and international relations. Feature articles and news briefs (Worldscan) in "Church & World" reflect the broad range of the life and mission not only of the ELCA, but also of the worldwide church.

*The Lutheran* has long been recognized for its excellence in providing informative and colorful stories about ELCA global mission work, its work with and through the Lutheran World Federation, and its partnerships with international, ecumenical and non-governmental agencies that respond to international humanitarian needs, such as feeding the hungry, and caring for refugees and AIDS victims. *The Lutheran's* editorial staff regularly travels internationally to conduct first-hand reporting. News and feature writers from several continents also provide direct coverage of ELCA-related ministries.

Major articles are chosen to highlight the church's work around the world, often bringing readers' attention to issues and countries overlooked by mainstream secular media. *The Lutheran* continues its commitment to be the news magazine of the ELCA and to cover the world of religion.

### **4. In Focus**

"In Focus," often called the theme section, is the fourth major section. This section offers in-depth treatment of a different topic each month; subjects covered may be theological, ethical, biblical, or issues of family and congregational life. International or major domestic news events also receive in-depth coverage in this section.

Other magazine departments and columns continue with one significant change:

Theologian and well-known speaker and author, Pastor Timothy F. Lull, president of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, replaced Marva Dawn as the magazine's featured columnist in November 2002. Renaming the page, "Our faith," Pr. Lull is presenting a 13-part series on central ideas of the Lutheran Reformation, focusing on "The Resilience of Lutheranism."

Frederick and Mary Ann Brussat's column, "Spiritual Practices," offers practices and wisdom from their experience and the spiritual classics of the Western church to enrich the prayer and spiritual life of readers.

The "Since You Asked," column continues to offer answers to frequently asked questions about church practice and doctrine. All questions answered are submitted by readers. The author is Pr. Wayne E. Weissenbuehler, pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church, Englewood, Colo.

The young readers' page, "Youngchurch," was expanded from one to two pages, allowing increased coverage of children and their activities and service in congregation and community. The expansion allows for regular reviews of books of interest to young children and their parents.

"Currents" may be the most commented upon part of the magazine in readers' letters. "Currents" is a four-page section that offers the actions and perspectives of the ELCA, its leaders, theologians or other experts on news and issues of the day. "Currents" always ends with "My View," a column of reader opinion.

*The Lutheran* continues to be 58 pages plus cover, however, an additional eight pages is needed in many months to accommodate the increased amount of advertising being sold. Advertising sales help keep the magazine's subscription price low.

Each month *The Lutheran* also prints synod news supplements that are stapled into issues going into the territory of a synod. *The Lutheran* provides four free supplements each year to each of the ELCA's 65 synods. Fifty-seven synods have supplements at least four times a year.

An audiotape version of the magazine is received by 555 persons, most of them visually impaired. Plans for

making the audio version easier to use are currently under discussion.

The Associated Church Press honored *The Lutheran* with five awards at its 2002 awards ceremony:

- First place for its in-depth coverage of September 11 (November issue) and for best news feature, "A city not forsaken," by editor David L. Miller.
- Second place in reader response for section editor Julie B. Sevig's story "Here's the game plan: Readers respond to committee survey."
- Third place for its Currents department and for Bible study, "Fed at Emmaus," by Reuben F. Duran.

### **World Wide Web**

*The Lutheran* makes an electronic version of the magazine available to computer users with access to the Web. In December 2002 there were approximately 167,000 visits to this site. The electronic edition of *The Lutheran* is on the Web two weeks before the hard-copy version of the magazine is delivered to homes. The front page is updated weekly. The site also has introduced discussion boards and additional Web only content. Articles from past issues are archived on the Web and can be accessed by browsers. Advertising and subscription information are available, along with a "Meet the Staff" page.

The Web site also offers study guides for four to seven major articles in each issue. Prepared by Robert Blezard, Gettysburg, Pa., each study guide provides ideas for using articles as resource material for classes or discussion groups, including theological and biblical background material relating to the articles. They also offer specific class plans, with additional questions and discussion starters. The study guides continue to be well received and provide strong support for congregations that subscribe to the congregational plan.

### **Publishing**

The ELCA constitution states that *The Lutheran* "shall be published by this church through the ELCA publishing house." In consultation with the editor, the publishing house produces and distributes the magazine, supplies editorial services for the synod supplements, and provides staff for circulation, promotion, subscription fulfillment, advertising solicitation, billing, collection of accounts, and other services. Quad Graphics, Sussex, Wis., prints the magazine under a contract that goes through 2003. The newly negotiated contract slightly lowered *The Lutheran's* production costs, partially offsetting postage increases that took effect in 2001. James M. Huber, Augsburg Fortress, Publishers' publishing director for *The Lutheran*, oversees all functions that the publishing house provides the magazine.

The publishing house provides two other people who work virtually full-time for the magazine. Elizabeth O'Hara heads display and classified advertising sales, and Patrick Gibbons focuses on circulation sales. Subscription fulfillment was out-sourced by Augsburg Fortress to Real Time, Danbury, Conn., in mid-1997. The publishing house is now studying and developing

internal systems to handle subscription fulfillment, which could result in significant annual savings to the magazine's budget.

### **Advertising**

Advertising is accepted in each issue, following advertising acceptability guidelines approved by the advisory committee and the ELCA Church Council. Advertising revenue remained steady in 2002, with a year-end total of \$945,000, in spite of significant declines throughout the industry due to the slow economy. Additional pages were added to five issues in 2002 (and in three of the first four issues of 2003), to handle the increased number of ad pages. The November 2002 educational issue featured more education related ads than any issue in the magazine's history.

### **Promotion/Circulation**

Some 97 percent of *The Lutheran's* circulation comes through group subscriptions. As of January 1, 2003, total circulation of *The Lutheran* was 510,000. Included in this figure are 4,987 congregations on group plans. Of these, 4,477 are the Congregation Plan. An additional 230 congregations send the magazine to their core leadership through the Leadership Plan. An additional 280 use the select plan, through which magazines are drop shipped to congregations in bulk. Individual subscriptions total about 11,000. In 2002, 414 individuals used the on-line form on *The Lutheran's* Web site to subscribe to the magazine.

A fall 2002 promotion offered congregations an opportunity to participate in the Congregation Plan at our best subscription rate, and if they could not, they were asked simply to send in their membership lists so we could mail individual subscription offers to their members. By January 15, 2003, we had received responses from 57 congregations, nine of which wanted to sign up for the Congregation Plan, with a total of 777 new subscribers; the others sent their membership lists with a total of almost 14,000 names.

Subscription rates are \$7.95 per subscription on the Congregation Plan. Individual subscriptions are \$15.95. The Leadership Plan is \$11.75 per subscription. Subscription income for 2001 totaled \$4,126,000. In 2000 the total subscription income was \$4,168,000.

### **Budget**

The editor of *The Lutheran* and the president of the Publishing House of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America prepare the magazine's budget. In addition to advertising and subscription revenue, the magazine receives an annual subsidy from the ELCA. The subsidy was \$100,000 both in 2002 and 2003. The operating budget for *The Lutheran* was \$5,353,000 in 2002 and \$5,038,000 in 2003.

### **Major Directions 2003-2005**

Subscription loss is the major challenge facing the magazine. *The Lutheran's* advisory committee has just begun an in-depth discussion and consideration of how

to stem the loss of circulation, which is the result of several factors, including: disenchantment with the ELCA, disagreement with magazine content, and congregational budget constraints that cause cancellation of congregational subscription plans.

*The Lutheran* and its predecessor publications have long had a powerful witness among American Lutherans. Congregations on *The Lutheran's* congregational subscription plan tend to have higher interest in and commitment to the broad mission and ministries of this church. These congregations contribute more generously to synodical and churchwide ministries. Cancellation of congregational subscription plans has a deleterious effect not only on the magazine but also on knowledge of and commitment to ELCA ministries.

Loss of connection to the broader church through loss of access to *The Lutheran* needs to be a matter of concern for this whole church, its bishops, and other leaders. If it does not become a priority for ELCA leaders, the magazine's circulation slide could continue

or even accelerate as other congregational costs rise. The result could be a deepening ignorance of and apathy toward ELCA ministries.

*The Lutheran* is planning to redesign and freshen departments, columns, and other sections of the magazine in the next biennium. We also plan to review editorial content through a major readership survey, focus groups, or some other means.

Members of the advisory committee for *The Lutheran* help critique the magazine at the committee's two meetings each year. The magazine is fortunate to have editors and executives of major publications on the advisory committee, along with journalism professors and pastors who are familiar with the publishing process.

THE LUTHERAN

Gregory Favre, *chair*

David L. Miller, *executive director and editor*