

# Pericope

## PARTNERS

The second half of Pentecost 2006

**Pericope Partners** are short stories that connect the ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with weekly lectionary readings. These vignettes are collected and shared by ELCA churchwide ministries, based on the Revised Common Lectionary Readings Cycle B pericopes for the 13th Sunday after Pentecost through Christ the King (Sept. 3 – Nov. 26, 2006).

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### The 13th Sunday after Pentecost (September 3, 2006 – Proper 17)

by Doug Haugen

*Lutheran Men in Mission*

The segment of the American population most absent from our churches is men ages 18–34. We know that the most effective way of engaging young men is through one-on-one relationships. Research shows that the most significant men in the faith lives of young men are the older men who take time to cultivate relationships with them.

Donn Escher, a man in his seventies, took on the ministry of forming relationships with younger men in his congregation and community. “After my wife died, I found myself open to what the Lord wanted me to do. I began to take notice of the young people at church, especially the young men, and I set out to form relationships with them.”

Donn found no “generation gap” between him and the young men he connected with. He learned to listen to them in a nonjudgmental way. As young men realized his genuine interest in them, they began to open up to him. They also became interested in him.

“Many of them are amazed that someone who is active in church would have the same kinds of doubts and bumps in life they have,” said Donn.

Donn made it his business to talk to young men wherever he found them — at church, in restaurants and other public places, and at Luther Seminary.

Donn died in February 2006. He lives on in a sense through the young men that he touched — young men who have a deeper relationship with Christ because Donn was not only a hearer of the word, but a doer.

*(Inspired by James 1:17–27)*

### The 14th Sunday after Pentecost (September 10, 2006 – Proper 18)

by Rafael Malpica-Padilla

*Global Mission*

Three hundred years ago King Frederik of Denmark sent a young German missionary, Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg, to India. Ziegenbalg spent 11 years learning the language and culture of the Tamil people and sharing the gospel with them. Unlike other Europeans of his time, this young German did not see the Tamil people as savages and uncivilized. He saw them as human beings. He sought their wisdom and relied on their knowledge to serve God’s mission of restoring community with them.

This summer I was fortunate to visit India to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Lutheran presence in India. Today the 11 Lutheran church bodies in India have 1.7 million members, most of whom are members of the Dalit or “untouchable” class. The Dalits are the most visible face of the poor and oppressed in India, and discrimination against “untouchables” continues. Like the woman in Mark 7, they are often excluded from the table — even prohibited from reaching for the crumbs that fall from the table.

Ziegenbalg was an early practitioner of the accompaniment model for mission — a model that avoids seeing others as objects of charity or mission, but as true companions in mission. Indian Lutherans do not engage in ministry to the oppressed, but rather with and among the oppressed. They seek to restore and make one another whole.

Through the woman in Mark and our Lutheran brothers and sisters in India, God is calling us to participate in God’s mission in restoring community with and among those who are excluded from the tables of today. May we say yes!

*(Inspired by Mark 7:24–37)*

## **The 15th Sunday after Pentecost (September 17, 2006 – Proper 19)**

*by Bryn Carlson  
Vocation and Education*

Mark 8:27–38 contains a passage known as the confession of Peter.

A few years ago my son and I began a hike along the Appalachian Trail. It started out easy enough, but when we had to climb the hills I realized I had bitten off more than I could chew.

Similarly, Peter confessed one thing with his mouth but found it was another thing altogether to follow with his feet.

In my thirty years of prison ministry, there was a rule among inmates: “If you talk the talk, then walk the walk.” In prison culture there is no leniency for those who talk and do not do the walk. They lose integrity, are looked upon with suspicion and are not trusted or confided in by fellow inmates.

We make our confession weekly in worship and daily in our prayer life. Yet we also find ourselves “biting off more than we can chew.” We do the confession and then falter in our walk.

The apostle Paul restates this in Romans, “I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do” (Romans 7:18–19).

Who among us is able to make confession and then never falter in our walk? Christ stands by us, walks with us, and picks us up when we falter. God’s grace and forgiveness enable us to continue when we fall short of our confession of faith.

*(Inspired by Mark 8:27–38)*

## **The 16th Sunday after Pentecost (September 24, 2006 – Proper 20)**

*by Bob Sitze  
Hunger Education*

His name is Blaine and Waterloo, Iowa, is his home town. He knows more about hunger and injustice than many adults. This teenaged hunger expert is no child.

Blaine hasn’t been left behind, either. Because of his synod’s hunger education efforts for children and teenagers, Blaine has a good grasp on the nature of hunger, poverty and injustice.

Blaine has traveled to other countries; he has studied the causes and cures of hunger, and Blaine is putting his experiences and knowledge to work. He knows how to get the attention of other teens, how to put adults on notice, how to plan and raise funds. Although he’s hard to spot in a crowd — like the young child Jesus noticed — Blaine’s as wise as the Christians James talks about in today’s second reading. He’s savvy about this culture and at the same time able to critique it with sharp insight.

Like thousands of young adults around this church, Blaine understands that the stakes are high — not only for people who are oppressed and starving, but for those who are slowly strangled by less-than-adequate wages and a deteriorating environment. He’s “hope for the future” but also hope for this place in time.

Because of the ELCA World Hunger Appeal and the wide array of hunger learning opportunities available at every turn at every expression of this church, Blaine continues to lead this church towards God’s will for the world.

Toward a world in which no child is ever left behind.

*(Inspired by James 3:13–4:3,7–8a)*

## **Lutheran World Federation Sunday (October 1, 2006 – Proper 21)**

*by Kathy Magnus  
Lutheran World Federation*

How much water have you used today? A cupful? A bucketful? A tubful? Did you use water to brush your teeth? To run a load of wash? Did you run the faucet until the water for your glass was icy cold, or the shower until it was steamy hot?

Not everyone has easy access to a cup of water. Khuth Chandy, a grandmother from Cambodia tells the story of her mornings. “I get up with the sunrise and take four buckets on a long pole down to the well. It isn’t a long walk, maybe just twenty minutes. Coming back I am careful not to spill! Some days my back hurts. When I get back to my house, I start my kitchen fire with wood that I gathered the night before. Soon I have hot water bubbling and can make morning tea. I dip some of the water into a bowl for washing faces and cleaning teeth. Then I cook our rice for breakfast. I wash a few clothes in a bucket of the hot water and hang them on the bushes to dry. Then I am off to the fields.”

The Lutheran World Federation gives cups of water daily. They dig wells, build dams, and teach about clean water. You are part of the LWF. Together we dug the well in Khuth’s village. Water is a gift of life!

### **Prayer:**

For the generous, splashing, refreshing, life-giving gift of water for all creation, we give thanks. Amen.

*(Inspired by Mark 9:38–50)*

## **The 18th Sunday after Pentecost (October 8, 2006 – Proper 22)**

*by Ben McDonald Coltvet  
Communication Services*

In Mark 10, Jesus celebrates the way that young people are open to God’s presence in the world. He invites them into the center of his ministry: “Jesus took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.” (Mark 10:16)

At the 2006 ELCA Youth Gathering in San Antonio, 40,000 people rejoiced in the spiritual gifts of young people — service to others, singing, laughing, and truth-telling.

More than 200 young people stopped in at the ELCA Communication Services booth to answer questions in front of our video camera. We wanted to find out why the ELCA matters to young people. The answers we received were amazing and affirming.

“My whole church is like a family to me. I don’t think I’d be the same without them,” said Caitlin.

Erin said, “If it weren’t for the ELCA, I would actually either be in a rehab center or a prison, and that’s the truth.”

Nathan reported, “I’ve been involved in so much through the ELCA and through my church that if I wasn’t part of it, I would have totally missed out. I wouldn’t have found God as easily, and who knows, I’d probably be home playing video games right now. I’d rather be here.”

The ELCA is a place where young people are speaking and listening, and where lives are being changed.

Jesus told his followers to “receive the dominion of God as a little child.” Following Jesus’ lead we are called to take young people in our arms and bless them for service in the world.

*(Inspired by Mark 10:13–16)*

## **The 19th Sunday after Pentecost (October 15, 2006 – Proper 23)**

*by Keith T. Nelson  
ELCA Foundation*

What a nice surprise, an invitation to a 125th anniversary.

Years ago I had been called to serve this suburban congregation as pastor, and while my wife and I were there, youth choirs, a day care center and elder housing were established. Fun!

But it was not all fun. Many said they had “done all that was needed,” like the man who ran up to Jesus, whenever following Jesus required their money.

“Who says the church needs to build low income elderly housing?” many wondered. “There aren’t any poor elderly in our town.” “What does God require of us, to give more money just because some people don’t stay home to take care of their kids? Day care building code requirements cost a fortune. When is the church going to stop asking for money?”

Objections abounded, but by the grace of God they did not rule the day. Rather, the members decided to struggle, to study God’s word, to ask, “Is this required of us to follow Jesus?”

As my wife and I greeted people we heard their stories. One man asked, “Do you remember when we built the low income elderly housing facility? I live there now.” Another asked, “Do you remember how I objected to having day care in our church? Well, I volunteer there now,” she said. “I just love the kids.”

An anniversary is a time to remember. Today, we remembered: It’s not easy to give, to follow Jesus, but when you do, there is great joy to be had.

*(Inspired by Mark 10:17–31)*

## **The 20th Sunday after Pentecost (October 22, 2006 – Proper 24)**

*by Josselyn Bennett  
Church in Society*

I recently read an article about Mrs. Moore, a woman I knew from my home congregation when I was growing up. As I read the article it brought back a flood of memories about her influence in my life.

At first, the memory of her being the church organist came to mind and how she directed us in the choir. Then I remembered that she had also taught Sunday school and that she had been a school teacher in the public system.

She was one of those mentors who do not always come to my mind right away. After all these years she is still serving where God has planted her.

She created and directed a summer math and reading academy for 40 children from kindergarten to eighth grade. She responded to the increasing number of children in her community who are struggling to read and do math.

Jesus gave us the model to serve and Mrs. Moore has been serving in a poverty-stricken community for more than 40 years. She understands the saying, “It takes a village to raise a child.”

The program received funding from ELCA churchwide ministries, meals from the city, and volunteers and space from the congregation.

If more people embrace this servant lifestyle, we would raise up children who could make poverty history in their lifetime.

Well, Mrs. Moore, I offer a big “thank you” for continuing to be a role model for a new generation of children in need.

*(Inspired by Mark 10:35–45)*

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## **Reformation Sunday** **(October 29, 2006)**

*by Kristen Glass*  
*Vocation and Education*

Eric is a 20-year-old ELCA member who is bilingual, a lifeguard, tutors children, loves math, likes to be with his friends, spends frequent time with his grandmother, likes to run, dance, and eat, dabbles in community organizing, and has absolutely no idea about what “job” he might have in the future. Ask him who he is and he will say, “I am a person who likes to help people, it is what gives me energy.”

I have never met someone with a better understanding of his own vocation.

God promises us in Jeremiah, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Martin Luther didn’t plan on starting a movement, but he responded with the gifts that had been given to him in order to meet the needs of his community.

God’s people act out of love and service with the lives that they have been given. No life is too big or small for service as a child of God. Some people have one “aha” moment. Some people — like Eric — have a lot of aha moments. Big or small, eventually those aha moments thread together and like moments of grace begin to reveal a pattern like a giant game of “connect the dots.”

God’s people are invited to connect the dots. Vocation isn’t about what you are going to be in the future. It’s about who you already are — a blessed child of God, called to respond to the needs around you as exactly the person you are.

*(Inspired by Jeremiah 31:31–34)*

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## **All Saints Sunday** **(November 5, 2006)**

*by Kristina Diaz*  
*Global Mission*

We can plan our lives down to the minute, but when plans change abruptly it can be hard to tell ourselves that maybe it’s all for the best. This was the case for Bageni Museruka, one of our international guests at the ELCA Youth Gathering. He and two youth from Rwanda missed their connecting flight home and were stranded in Chicago. In the meantime, they spent time with Global Mission staff in the churchwide office, helping out where they could.

On the third day of their layover, I saw the three of them crowding around a computer screen. Earlier that day, Bageni had recorded a video message about the Lutheran Church in Rwanda in his native language with help from the ELCA Communication Services staff. The video clip was posted online and they were viewing the results for the first time. “It is a young church, only ten years old, with 20,000 members,” he said in Kinyarwanda.

Their last day in the office, Bageni walked up to my desk to wish me a good day. He paused for a moment. “Did you see me on the Internet?” I nodded and smiled. He told me that at first he thought it was a bad thing to be stuck in Chicago. Then he looked up and said, “God, forgive me. My will is not your will. My plan is not your plan.”

In that moment of thankfulness, we stopped and listened to how God is at work in our lives.

*(Inspired by John 11:37)*

## **The 23rd Sunday after Pentecost (November 12, 2006 – Proper 27)**

*by Kathryn Sime  
ELCA World Hunger Appeal*

“Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury.” — Mark 12:43b

We met Godfrey in Bukoba, Tanzania. We were visiting Huyawa, a ministry of the Northwestern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania serving the 35,000 orphaned or vulnerable children in this region. Godfrey, 15 years old, and his younger brothers lost their parents to AIDS. Our ELCA World Hunger gifts to Stand With Africa help support Huyawa and help keep the boys in their family home and in school.

As we sat and talked with Godfrey, he held a squirmy chicken tightly on his lap. At the end of our visit, Godfrey whispered nervously in our host’s ear, who smiled and said to us, “Because you have given gifts, Godfrey has a gift for you. He would like you to have this chicken.”

“Godfrey,” we asked, “How many chickens do you have?” His answer stunned us. “Just two,” he replied.

Godfrey, this child of God with all the responsibility of an adult, was going to give us 50 percent of his potential for household income, 50 percent of his bank account. Nearly half of all he owned was wrapped up in this bedraggled and beautiful chicken.

Godfrey and the widow from Mark’s Gospel both gave gifts from their heart that defy understanding. God blesses and multiplies even our humbler offerings, for they, too, come from the heart. Thanks be to God!

*(Inspired by Mark 12:38–44)*

## **The 24th Sunday after Pentecost (November 19, 2006 – Proper 28)**

*by Molly Knutson-Keller  
Lutheran Campus Ministry*

“You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy.” — Psalm 16:11

I remember my first day walking on the campus where I serve as Lutheran campus pastor. San Diego State University has more than 34,000 students. The college I attended has 1,500 students — a big difference! As I walked the main path of campus that first day of work, I felt like a first-year student all over again.

Suddenly someone yelled out my name: “Pastor Molly?” I turned and recognized Kate, a youth from the church where I served as an intern in northern California, now a junior at SDSU. What a small world! We embraced, caught up, and I invited her to stop by the Lutheran Center.

Not only did Kate stop by, she moved into the Lutheran Center as peer minister. She needed to find a healthy living situation. Her presence became a vital addition to the ministry. What a gift it was that Kate and I happened to be on the same path that first day.

Christian community is a blessing. It reaches not only within our church walls, but across states, countries and continents. Lutheran Campus Ministry is our church’s way of extending the gift of Christian community and connectedness. It is one way the church fulfills our baptismal promise to walk with people through all times of life, including young adult years. God shows us the path of life and, walking together, we find deep joy.

*(Inspired by Psalm 16:3,11; Hebrews 10:25)*

## Christ the King – The Last Sunday after Pentecost (November 26, 2006 – Proper 29)

by Katie Blobaum  
*Global Mission*

The feast was spread and the room lavishly decorated for *karneval*, a yearly costume dance.

The guests were adults of all ages and abilities. I came with other staff and 12 residents from a home for moderately disabled adults in Senec, Slovakia, where I served as an ELCA Young Adult in Global Mission. The dancing was lively, without the usual self-consciousness. But now the lights had dimmed and it was time to draw for prizes.

“And the winner is . . . Miro!” Clapping his hands excitedly, Miro leapt up to receive the small wooden stool from the announcer.

Though in his thirties, Miro’s joyful energy could be mistaken for that of a 6-year-old. Diagnosed with a developmental disorder similar to Asperger’s Syndrome, Miro had lived at the home in Senec for most of his life.

As he returned to our table, laughing, we congratulated him. All of us, that is, except one resident, who not-so-quietly complained, “Why didn’t I win a stool?” Miro promptly handed over the treasure with a sparkling smile.

This amazing act was commonplace for Miro, who loved to give. He couldn’t help but give. He was a different kind of winner. When he gave away prize stools, toys, and books, he was giving something greater — love. No one, no authority, told him to give the stool away; he chose to pass on his prize.

“My kingdom is not of this world,” Jesus declared. On this Sunday, we remember and celebrate the one who gave his life and his kingdom so freely to us.

*(Inspired by John 18:33–37)*

**Pericope Partners** are available for download at [elca.org/pericope](http://elca.org/pericope). These stories are examples of ELCA churchwide ministries suggested by the pericopes for the 15th Sunday after Pentecost through Christ the King (Cycle B). Please send your comments to **Pericope Partners**, ELCA Communication Services, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631, or e-mail the editor at [ben.mcdonaldcoltvet@elca.org](mailto:ben.mcdonaldcoltvet@elca.org).

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