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NETWORK NEWS



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Sola tests 'one-room' Sunday school

by Betsy Carlson, editor

WordAlone Ministries' Sola Publishing is testing a "one-room" Sunday school series being designed for small churches, mission congregations and house churches, according to Pastor Steven King, WordAlone education director.

He wrote on the Sola Web site, "With all the changes taking place in the larger church, people have been looking for options in education materials.

"Since Sola Publishing exists to serve the specific needs of LCMC, WordAlone, Lutheran CORE and NALC—I've been asked to put a priority on producing a basic Sunday school series for churches to begin using this fall."

(LCMC is Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ and NALC stands for North American Lutheran Church, a planned new denomination being started by Lutheran CORE.)

He is taking an "old school" approach with emphasis less on activities and more on teaching Bible stories. He said each story will be presented several times in each lesson through story, rhyme and drama.

"The 'all-in-one' reproducible style allows for children of varying ages and grade lev-

els to meet together in a flexible manner, suitable to local needs," King said.

"In order to meet the immediate needs of congregations, the series will be added to as time goes on. I am looking for small/mission congregations to serve as 'beta test sites.' If you would be willing to try out the materials this year, and share ideas on [<http://solapublishing.blogspot.com/>], please contact me at: solapublishing@charter.net," he said.

Sola Publishing also has a number of resources already available for VBS and Sunday school, including a 5-week supplementary series for grades 1-6 on Luther's Small Catechism. Check out the catalog on the Sola Web site.

For those in transition out of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, two helpful Bible studies are available.

"We Still Believe" is a seven-session Bible study addressing key biblical doctrines that are at risk in the church today. "Of One Mind and Purpose" is a six-session series focusing on how Scripture describes the reality of division and unity in Christ. It contrasts faith in Christ with affiliation and membership in human institutions. ♦

New national youth event from Youth Encounter scheduled

by Meg Schmidt, Youth Encounter

Youth Encounter, a Christian, non-profit youth ministry based in the Twin Cities in Minnesota, announces a four-day national youth event called Impact that will run from July 7-10, 2011, in Chicago, Ill.

Impact's emphasis will be on equipping young people to live out their faith in Jesus Christ. The national youth event is for high school students who have completed grades 8-12 in the United States and Canada.

The program will include several messages from Christian speakers, music from nationally renowned Christian bands, small group workshops and a service project with Feed My Starving Children. Captive Free, a Youth Encounter music ministry team, also will be performing and relating with the youth throughout the four-day event.

'Youth Encounter events have always been focused on encouraging youth to go deeper in their faith in Jesus Christ,' said Lisa Rykken Kastler

"Youth Encounter events have always been focused on encouraging youth to go deeper in their faith in Jesus Christ," said Lisa Rykken Kastler, program executive of Youth Encounter. "Youth and leaders will have a chance to gather with other church groups as they worship, fellowship and serve as a larger community of Christ. Getting away from everyday life and journeying in Jesus' name to a new place is a shared experience that God uses to draw people together as He draws them deeper in their faith."

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Network News is published six times yearly by WordAlone Ministries.

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The great rescue endures

by Peter Churness, director of LEM Deeper Life, Buffalo, Minn.

On April 14, 1912, shortly before midnight, the RMS Titanic struck an iceberg, sinking early on April 15, 2 hours and 40 minutes later. The sinking resulted in the deaths of 1,517 of the 2,223 people on board.

It was a tragedy of epic proportions. And yet the tragedy was only made worse by the knowledge that many of these deaths could have been averted.

Many of the lifeboats launched from the Titanic were less than half full. One lifeboat meant to hold 40 people had only 12 on board. Another meant to hold 65 had 28.

This tragedy reminds me of a story Jesus once told. In Luke 14:16-24 the Master tells of a feast held by a man. But many of this man's invited guests did not come to his dinner. His tables were half full. Even after bringing in the poor, crippled, blind and lame, still there was more room. So the man commanded his servants to go out and compel anyone they could find to come in.

Elsewhere Jesus speaks of his primary mission – to seek and save the lost.

Two thousand years ago Jesus launched the greatest rescue mission in history. The world is sinking. By the death and resurrection of Jesus a secure means of rescue has been established. The Great Rescuer has launched his church that is to go out into the wreckage and pull people from the freezing waters and into the safety of his church.

Every church is like a lifeboat engaging in the mission of Jesus to seek and to save men and women drowning in their sin. And yet the tragedy of the human race is only made worse by the knowledge that many of our churches are anchored half full, a safe distance from the wreckage.

A little more than three years ago the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement began the

construction of some new lifeboats called Life Together Churches.

a joy to share the Gospel with these families each week and to see them come to a living faith

This past fall we launched our first Life Together Church and shortly thereafter saw three completely unchurched families come to faith in Christ. After the first couple of months, one woman in our new church told me, "I've learned more about God in the last two months than in the whole rest of my life combined."

Another had tears in her eyes the first week she was with us as she experienced the presence of Jesus. It's been a joy to share the Gospel with these families each week and to see them come to a living faith. When we started, these folks had never prayed out loud before, had never sung songs together in a group, didn't know the difference between the Old and New Testaments, didn't know what the chapters and verse numbers meant.

But they were hungry for God.

They knew they were drowning, and God pulled them from the freezing water and into Himself. This has been a work that God has done and our family has been privileged to witness it.

These families are not unique. The number of unchurched in our nation has grown to a staggering number. Millions are drowning in the freezing waters of their sin and separation from God.

(Continues on page four)

(‘Rescue...’ Continues from page three)

But many of these folks are not hardened against the Lord.

They will respond positively to the Gospel in the context of a loving Christian community. However, many of them have a negative impression of the institutional church and would not step foot into an established congregation for various reasons.

For these folks the church must instead come to them. And that’s what Life Together Churches are. Its churches are being launched right in the neighborhoods where people live and work and play.

Life Together Churches come in three forms: simple church, cell church and house church.

- Simple church is church at its most basic level. It may be a gathering in a coffee shop, on the beach or in a home. It is, by definition, simple. It focuses on people, rather than programs and structure.
- Cell churches can be seen as multiple simple churches linked together to form a hierarchy of support and accountability. Usually a pastor oversees the cell groups and leads a monthly large group gathering.
- A house church is more autonomous than a cell church, though it is often networked with other nearby house churches for occasional large group gatherings and other shared ministries.

These Life Together Churches can be started rapidly and supported without trained pastoral leadership because of a well-designed set of materials that provides all the required resources and services. These offerings leverage Internet technologies to create a network of churches that work together in mutual support.

For these folks the church must instead come to them. And that’s what Life Together Churches are.

To aid in moving this forward, the LEM has entered into a strategic partnership with WordAlone Ministries (formerly called WordAlone Network), and we are launching Life Together Churches together as a joint venture.

WordAlone has contact with many emerging small worshipping communities lacking pastoral leadership due to recent events within the larger church. Life Together Churches is helping some of these groups to formalize into missional congregations networked with other house churches and cell churches in our Life Together network.

Life Together Churches is not another new denomination, but rather is a network and resource for emerging cell churches and house churches. As we launch and serve these new churches, we aid them in linking up with appropriate denomina-

tional affiliations in step with the membership base and leadership of each emerging simple church.

To help launch a new Life Together Church, we first offer a startup workshop. This is a face-to-face, day-long workshop to help local leaders and participants get their Life Together Church started quickly and effectively. We then offer them ongoing pastoral care and leadership coaching through weekly interactive video sessions to support their learning and development.

A basic worship plan is designed and published each week to support worship in small group settings. This plan can be adjusted or replaced as needed by local Life Together Church leaders at their discretion. The Life Together network provides Web site and social networking facilities as well as a monthly email newsletter to help local groups gain a sense of the greater community of Life Together Churches.

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With all due haste, leave the ELCA

by Tom Walker, vice president, WordAlone Ministries

For more than a decade, WordAlone has assumed the role of the loyal opposition in relationship to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We clearly voiced opposition to prevailing trends, but always with the intention of getting the ELCA back on a faithful track with a future.

However, we see in the watershed events surrounding the August 2009 churchwide assembly the ELCA’s irrevocable change of direction.

WordAlone spent a decade of concerted effort prayerfully and patiently birthing faithful ministries, actively witnessing in the wilderness while waiting on the Lord’s directive through the Word. We now have concluded as a movement that the theological decay of the ELCA cannot be stemmed or reformed.

WordAlone has a new role with two aspects to it.

First, we are sounding the call for faithful Lutherans to leave the ELCA for new and better opportunities among orthodox, confessional Lutherans.

Secondly, we will even more enthusiastically continue our work of birthing new ministries to serve the needs of those leaving the ELCA.

Individuals, groups and congregations who are leaving the ELCA should understand themselves as choosing to stay with Christian orthodoxy and remaining in unity with the majority of the world’s 2.1 billion Christians.

The actions of the church council, the rejection of Biblical authority by the voting members, the weak-kneed response by the bishops and the increasingly strong-arm tactics of the church to repress critique make it clear that it is not a church body whose direction can be changed by a loyal opposition.

Therefore, the “loyal” in the equation is over. While our loyalty has always been to our one Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our

attempts to oppose gently and charitably have expired.

Upholding the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions and shining their light of truth and rebuke onto actions, decisions and rhetoric of the ELCA will be our only means of opposing.

The entire doctrinal infrastructure of the ELCA is extremely damaged and the pervasive apathy of the membership assures that the current tragic direction will continue indefinitely.

The vote in August 2009 was only the most recent and most flamboyant in a long series of evidence that the ELCA is no longer a thriving Christian denomination.

We urge confessional and biblical Lutherans to make plans to dissociate from the ELCA for the sake of their spiritual well being and particularly for the spiritual well being of their children and grandchildren.

The denomination’s clear departure from Christian orthodoxy during the past dozen years provides all the clarity you need for your decision.

We look forward to the day that all of the sheep are safely out of the ELCA.

An amazing opportunity is available to those joining the developing Lutheran church bodies in the promise of options and teamwork among Lutherans in ways never seen before.

Please keep your eyes on the various Web sites and newsletters of organizations such as Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ, Canadian Association of Lutheran Churches and the (yet to be constituted) North American Lutheran Church. Lutheran CORE seeks to gather together those who leave the ELCA as well as those who remain within the ELCA for whatever reasons.

In the next few weeks you will be amazed at the growth and wonderful potential for

(Continues on page seven)

WordAlone Ministries Web site is redesigned and expanded

WordAlone has launched redesigned Web pages and a new series of articles on leaving the ELCA. The new version of our Web site brings into focus the transition from WordAlone Network to WordAlone Ministries.

We invite you to go to www.wordalone.org to read about WordAlone's new ways of serving confessional Lutherans.

While you are checking out our Web site, go to our new series, "Leaving the ELCA." This article series is the largest and most complete listing of information available for individuals and congregations in transition.

We ask for your continued support as we move into our new mission of supporting ministries in the new Lutheran landscape. ♦

('Rescue...' Continues from page four)

We're also developing adult educational materials, as well as a new innovative program called DSTNY to aid in the discipleship of young and old. Periodic retreats and an annual conference will round out our program offerings to support this new paradigm of church planting.

We've run into many folks who are excited and intrigued by this new model of ministry and who would like to explore this unique way of doing church.

To aid such groups in evaluating whether this model is for them, we've developed a program called Starting Our Life Together. This is a series of worship plans and group activities designed to take a new congregation through its first 120 days. The content focuses on rediscovering the nature of church life in the New Testament. This timeframe is often used as a trial period for the group, ending in an evaluation about whether to continue.

If you would like more information about how you can start a Life Together Church in your area (or join an existing one), please check out our website at www.lifetogetherchurches.com. ♦

('Youth...' Continues from page two)

Impact will be held at the Holiday Inn Select in Naperville, Ill. The event runs Thursday evening through Sunday afternoon. Program fees start at \$189 per person and hotel rooms are \$85 per room per night. For more information on Impact go to www.youthencounter.org/impact.

Youth Encounter's mission is to partner with Christian communities to strengthen their youth ministry. Youth Encounter

confesses the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit revealed through Jesus Christ, according to the Scriptures; submits to the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God and the source and final norm of its proclamation, doctrine, faith and life; subscribes to the Lutheran confessions; and upholds the historical, Biblical, moral positions of the Christian tradition.

Youth Encounter works with congregations so that young people may be established in Christian faith, empowered for Christian living, engaged in Christian ministry and equipped for Christian leadership.

For more information on Youth Encounter please visit www.youthencounter.org. ♦

Lutheran Clergy Connect

These are congregations who are seeking salaried discipleship workers capable of discerning Law and Gospel. If you are a discipleship worker trying to discern whether God might be calling you to one of these positions, please contact the congregation to begin a mutual process of discerning your call to the position. If you are open to his work, the Holy Spirit is just as alive and active through this process as through any other.

If your congregation would like a listing here, please fax (651-633-4260) or mail your request on church letterhead, signed by an officer, pastor or call committee chair, to WordAlone Ministries, 2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220, New Brighton, MN 55112-2202. When doing so, please include the following information:

- Pastoral position
- Congregation's name, city and state, along with Web site address if applicable
- Contact person

When the position has been filled please let us know, and tell us if the listing was of any help.

If you have additions or corrections to this list, please let us know.

('Haste...' Continues from page five)

mission that will come as this new Lutheran landscape responds to Christ's great commission.

Second, in addition to sounding the call to leave, WordAlone's other role is to continue producing the services and resources needed by former ELCA Lutherans—churches, agencies, groups, families and individuals—to preach, teach and confess Jesus, God's Word alone.

We are now preparing to launch an Internet based, multimedia evangelism ministry called SALT (Salvation, Life and Truth) in order to reach out with the transforming Gospel of Jesus.

We are working to start new worshipping communities through our partnership with Lutheran Evangelistic Movement, also known as LEM, in a Lutheran house church network called Life Together Churches.

We continue to bring new Christian education publications for children, youth and adults through Sola Publishing.

We are spreading support for new mission

Peace Lutheran Church, Hazen, North Dakota

Position: Youth Director

Contact: Pastor Wolff, olavusmagnus@yahoo.com, 701-748-2150

St. John Lutheran Church, Boerne, Texas

Position: Full-time youth ministry director

Contact: pastorjeff@stjohnlutheran.com or fax it attention Pastor Jeff at 830-816-6449

Bethany Lutheran Church, LCMC Bigfork, Mont.

Position: Full-time senior pastor

Contact: Call committee chairperson Linda Dahlman, bethanylutheranbigforkmt@gmail.com or council president Randy Vogel, 406-886-2034

starts, interim pastors and pastoral acts through the Chaplain Corps.

We are upgrading our Clergy Connect service to help congregations and pastors find each other.

So, even as we carry forward our work of providing help for faithful transitions out of the ELCA, we are faithfully contributing to the new reality among confessional Lutherans.

Even though the loyal opposition to the ELCA has ended, please know that we have not forgotten our supporters and friends. We will speak out on your behalf; however, we will oppose the ELCA and other human, institutional church bodies preaching a false gospel.

We will speak words encouraging departure from them.

We invite you to take a careful look at our new "Leaving the ELCA" series on the WordAlone Ministries Web site (www.wordalone.org). We think it will give you insight and hope as you consider your new future apart from the ELCA. ♦