



## Northwest Washington Synod

## Synod supplement

# Planning to care for others

By the Rev. Kemp Segerhammer

Since its founding in 1885, Gethsemane Lutheran Church has been a presence in downtown Seattle. Gethsemane was a congregation of the Augustana Lutheran Church and its members were primarily from the Swedish community in and around the city.

From its beginning, Gethsemane has been committed to ministry in the inner city. It works with Lutheran-sponsored ministries and ecumenical collaborative efforts to relieve homelessness and to provide concrete/practical aid and hope. Congregation-based programs such as “Saturday Soup and Movies” and “Gethsemane Community Services” are well-established and effective.

In the mid-90s, Gethsemane began to envision a bold plan of service for the new millennium. Ideas began to surface, with leaders knowing that the congregation’s land was becoming more valuable by the “dot-com day” and that there were more excellent ways to be good stewards of its property.

A new task force, Gethsemane Lutheran Asphalt Development, looked at several ministries, including St. Peter’s, New York City. The vision was to partner with a developer to build affordable housing and, together, create a new building to house the congregation and its ministries.

The economic downturn in the late 1990s dampened the plans, sending GLAD into hibernation. As years passed, the Seattle economy came back to life and the downtown expanded in the church’s direction. GLAD then revived itself and resumed its work with new energy.

One building occupying the whole footprint of land was not feasible. The congregation decided to sell the parking lot and the air rights above the church (above 90 feet) to Urban Part-

ners, a developer who proposed to build a 38-story apartment building, later named Aspira Seattle. The congregation retained the right to build up to 90 feet above its facilities and negotiated parking in two underground levels of the Aspira building.

In anticipation of the sale monies, three funds have been established. The first, a Mission Endowment Fund created with a tithe of the sale price, is for ministry efforts largely outside of the congregational means to support. The second fund replaces monthly income from the parking lot lease and is intended to sustain congregational ministry in the present and for the future.

The third fund was set up to hold the remaining monies until a clear, bold and exciting plan for outreach and facility renewal is ready. The monies from the sale are deposited in the ELCA Mission Investment Fund and Pooled Trust. The council decided that this was a “win, win” for congregational and churchwide ministry.

(Editor’s note: Ground was broken in September 2007 with expected completion in 2009. For more information and photos, visit the Gethsemane Web site at [www.urbanfaith.org](http://www.urbanfaith.org) and the Aspira site at [www.aspiraseattle.com](http://www.aspiraseattle.com). For more information about the ELCA Mission Investment Fund or to read about mission investments at work, visit [www.missioninvestmentfund.org](http://www.missioninvestmentfund.org). □



**An architect’s depiction of the Aspira Seattle apartment building with Gethsemane Lutheran Church in the lower front.**

*Segerhammer is pastor of Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Seattle.*

## Northwest Washington

# Caring for others in the city

By the Rev. Kristy Daniels

**T**he Church of Steadfast Love is a mission development within the main Compass Center building at 210 Alaskan Way, under the viaduct. We are an active but small congregation made up of individuals from the Men's Transitional Housing Program and from the streets, shelters and low-income housing.

We welcome volunteer groups to worship with us on Wednesday and Sunday nights. On Wednesdays we have compline, evening prayer, and on Sundays we have a full communion service.

Because of the nature of our ministry, our congregation is always changing—but our mission is not. We try and live into our name, to be a place of love and welcome where anyone and everyone can come, taste, see and hear that God is good, that their sins are forgiven and there is hope for a better tomorrow.

As a congregation of individuals who are homeless or low income, we don't have much to tithe monetarily. But we have been working on it, and we make a conscious effort to give back with our hearts, our gifts and our time. We are constantly looking for ways to serve our community, to share the good news through word and deed, and to rejoice in being children of God.

We also seek to welcome individuals from all walks of life in order to break down the barriers that divide us and to bring more stability to the congregation.

One of our projects involves helping at Immanuel Lutheran Food Bank, open the last two Fridays of every month. We have a core group



**Members of The Church of Steadfast Love and Immanuel Lutheran Church in Seattle volunteer at Immanuel's food bank.**

of men who usually attend. Anthony, one of the regular volunteers, has this to say about it: "I like to go because I like to help people. I have never been close to a church before. I feel really close to the members of The Church of Steadfast Love. I also feel close to Immanuel and I like how volunteering makes me feel closer to Jesus. The people are really nice, Doug and Nikki, and Pastor Kristy. The Compass Center has really given me a lot, and the church has changed me. I really want to give. I want to have a stronger relationship with Jesus."

Doug Starup, a member of Immanuel and a food bank volunteer, is always telling the men how much he appreciates them and what good workers they are. Doug is correct. The men work hard, without complaint, seeking out ways to be even more helpful. They are starving, not for the physical food we distribute but for the food that nourishes and sustains—love and understanding.

In seeking to serve, we have received. Jesus says, "It is written,

'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Matthew 4:4). As children of God we are told that we are loved, and we are sent out into the world to spread the good news through word and deed.

If you would like to worship with us, we gather at 6:30 p.m. Wednesdays and Sundays. Simply dial "05" on the intercom out front and someone will let you in.

To learn more about the congregation or The Compass Center, please consider inviting me to preach and/or teach on a Sunday or during the week. Or come serve a meal, take a tour or go on a night walk around downtown. You'll experience some of the very real issues faced by people on the margins or who struggle from paycheck to paycheck.

For more information, call me at 206-357-3112 or volunteer coordinator Lindsey Lund at 206-357-3108. □

*Daniels is pastor The Church of Steadfast Love in Seattle.*

# Moving forward in mission and ministry

By the Rev. Wm Chris Boerger, bishop

“In the City for Good” was the theme statement that was used a number of years ago to describe the ELCA’s commitment to working in urban areas of this country. It was a statement that can be read in a couple of ways. We are staying in the city or we are doing good work in the city. Either way, we are present.

In this supplement of *The Lutheran*, you will read about how our downtown congregations are moving forward in mission and ministry.

The Compass Center is the most recent addition to our mission developments in this synod. We are establishing a presence in Pioneer Square that will be a community gathering around word and sacrament. Immanuel, Gethsemane and Denny Park have long histories of service to the community and the world. We are present in the city.

What these congregations are doing is connecting with the people in their neigh-

borhoods. They all have histories of connecting with those in pain and those in need. They are responding with the love of Christ to the people who come to them.

In that way their ministry is exactly like that of all congregations. We do not have a system of parish boundaries, but we all have people living and working in proximity to our church buildings. How we connect with these people says much about our understanding of our mission.

We are placed here so we might reach out to those who are not yet a part of our fellowship. Our reason for being is for them. In that way we are different from most organizations and institutions of our communities. These congregations serve as examples to us of how we all might see our call to serve.

We will continue by God’s grace to be present in the city. We will continue to share God’s grace in word and deed. We are in the city for good. □



**The Rev. Wm  
Chris Boerger,  
bishop**

## Learning to trust one another

For Immanuel Lutheran Church in Seattle’s rapidly changing South Lake Union, the food bank, meals, showers, laundry and shelter provided throughout the week are integrally connected to Sunday’s communion bread and baptismal waters.

Members, clients and neighbors work together in the programs of Immanuel Community Services, becoming Christ’s presence to one another. A residential recovery program housed at Immanuel moves men from homelessness to transitional housing,

schooling and employment.

For many who live and work in the neighborhood, Immanuel has become “their parish”—even if they never come to worship. They have come to trust Immanuel as a long-term partner in caring for the city—both in direct services and in partnering in the community development and action.

**The Rev. Susan Burchfield**

*Burchfield is pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Seattle.*