



## Sheer silence

By Bishop Wayne N. Miller

*Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence (I Kings 19:11-12).*

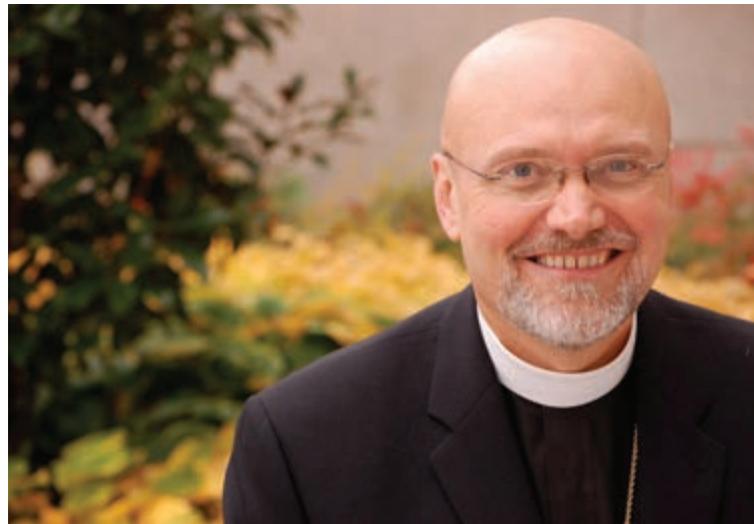
You may have noticed that it's campaign season—and for some reason I'm not inclined to celebrate by singing "Happy Days are Here Again." I will sing that later—in November.

It is all very important, of course. I mean, we need to hear what our future leaders have to say and what they plan to do. But after a while, it just makes my ears tired to listen to all the bombast and shouting and angry demonstrations and vicious debate.

It's hard to maintain interest in all of the warm but mighty wind rushing to split mountains and break rocks in pieces before the other person breaks them. Because, as we all know, if you don't breathe enough fire during a political campaign, and if you don't find a way to make an earthquake big enough to shake the foundations, you will probably end up sitting alone in a cave somewhere, talking to yourself.

But this year in particular, as I listen to all the hateful attacks, the noisy bluster that thinly covers the sheer terror and fear of loss, the scapegoating and cruel disparagement of everyone who is different, I must admit there is something deep inside that longs to hear the voices of those who are never heard.

These are the still, small voices of the poor and hungry, the invisible, the vulnerable, and the disabled or mentally and emotionally challenged whose support structures have been swallowed up into the earth underneath Springfield. These are the still, small voices of the kids who aren't



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sure if there will be a school for them to go back to this fall, the moms who send their kids off in the morning quietly wondering if they will make it back home for supper before a gangster's bullet silences them forever ....

For some odd reason it is the sound of this silence that I need more than the earthquake and fire of political rhetoric. Because, as Elijah once discovered, the living God is astonishingly present, wherever the noise is absent.

So maybe for us—as the children of one who says, "Be still and know that I am God"—it would be wise, in this season, to turn down the volume on our TV sets from time to time and listen. First to listen into the cavern of our own souls to remember that time when God listened into our silence, when we had nothing to say and nothing to do but wait for the Spirit to intercede with sighs too deep for words.

Then, having listened to our own place of quiet solitude, it's time to open our ears again to listen to those who are still living lives of quiet desperation. Because, sisters and brothers, it is still in the sheer silence of this conversation that you will come closest to the source of hope and life. **L**

## LSTC to host premiere of Steves' documentary

On Oct. 21 the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) welcomes Rick Steves, host of the public television series *Rick Steves' Europe*, for the Chicago premiere of his new documentary on Martin Luther and the Reformation. The 60-minute film will air on public television stations in 2017.

The showing at LSTC (1100 E. 55th St., Chicago) begins at 7 p.m., followed by a reception with Steves. A freewill offering to support Bread for the World will be gathered. This free premiere to Chicago audiences is one of a series of events that LSTC is sponsoring to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Steves, a member of Trinity, an ELCA congregation in Lynnwood, Wash., created the documentary in anticipation of the Reformation anniversary. The film shows the significance and world-changing effects of Martin Luther's questioning of church doctrine and practices. Steves and his crew filmed on location at Luther sites in Germany, Austria and Rome. It makes heavy use of artwork from the period to illustrate how both Luther and the Roman Catholic Church used the media of their time to promote their ideas.

This is the first documentary that Steves has produced, although in 2006 he hosted "Opening the Door to Luther with Rick Steves," a Mosaic video produced by the ELCA.

### **About Rick Steves**

After visiting Europe several times with his father, Steves began traveling on his own at age 18, funding his trips by teaching piano lessons. In 1976 he started his business, Rick Steves' Europe, which has grown from a one-man operation to a staff of 100. The company has produced more than 50 guidebooks on European travel, America's most popular travel series on public television, a weekly



hourlong national public radio show, a weekly syndicated column and free travel information on [ricksteves.com](http://ricksteves.com).

Steves is outspoken on the need for Americans to fit better into our planet by broadening our perspectives through travel. He is committed to his own community, Edmonds, Wash. He has provided his local YWCA with a 24-unit apartment building that houses homeless mothers. He is also a board member of NORML (National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws). Steves is a generous supporter of Bread for the World, a collective Christian voice that urges our nation's leaders to end hunger at home and abroad.

### **500th Reformation anniversary & LSTC**

The April 2016 issue of the free online journal *Currents in Theology and Mission*, edited by Barbara Rossing, professor of New Testament at LSTC, has the theme "Eco Reformation and the 500th Anniversary in 2017." Read it for free at [currentsjournal.org](http://currentsjournal.org).

LSTC will host a series of events in fall 2017 including ecumenical events on campus and at other Chicago locations, special exhibits at the seminary, and participation in Reformation anniversary events around the world. **L**

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# Covenant reminds that all are one in Christ

By Ruth Beck

Ecumenism has been an important part of our Metropolitan Chicago Synodical Women's Organization for many years. It all began in 1989 when a covenant was signed by Bishop Sherman Hicks and Joseph Cardinal Bernardin on the eve of Pentecost (see [mcselca.org/who/partnerships/ecumenical](http://mcselca.org/who/partnerships/ecumenical)).

The covenant is between the Metropolitan Chicago Synod and the Archdiocese of Chicago. In October 1989, a similar covenant was signed by the Metropolitan Chicago Synodical Women's Organization (SWO) and the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women (ACCW).

From the beginning the focus has been on the things we have in common and that promote unity. The things that brought us together were our baptism, our practices of praying, singing and sharing the peace, our social concerns, our faith in Jesus Christ and that we are *all* one in Christ.

In our covenant we set the following goals: "To encourage the women of our organizations and within our churches to share their faith and work with one another as God gives us opportunity; to promote a more localized covenant process; to experience together worship and prayer; and to formulate our goals for mutual work, cooperation and understanding."

Since 1990, when we had our first "Lutheran/Catholic Morning of Dialogue and Prayer," we have had annual events during Lent or after Easter. Each event has been unique. Not only have we alternated between a Catholic parish and Lutheran church, but each event has had a different theme, speakers and worship style. Members of both the ACCW and SWO have been involved in the planning of these events.



The 27th Annual Morning of Dialogue and Prayer was held April 16 at St. Mark Lutheran Church, Mount Prospect, with the theme "Be Doers of the Word, Not Just Hearers." More than 100 women from various parishes and congregations came to participate in the discussion, worship and fellowship that followed.

The keynote speakers were the Rev. Anna-Kari Johnson, ELCA associate director for new congregations, and the Rev. Joseph Chu, associated program director of Lutheran Disaster Response. Together they presented a program about immigration, focusing on the unaccompanied children coming from Central America.

The Rev. Christie Webb from St. Mark led the prayer service and Deacon John Lorbach from St. Raymond's Catholic Parish gave the homily. He talked about "reaching out in love" to those in need and to those whom we meet. In other words, "Be doers of the word, not merely hearers" (James 1:22).

Plans will soon be made for the 28th event, which will be in a Catholic parish in 2017.

When we began, we had no way of knowing how many years our partnership would continue. But each year, despite leadership changes, the tradition has continued. Over the years we have been blessed by the women we've worked with. Their lives have touched ours. They have become our friends and prayer partners. Each event has been a time to renew friendships with our sisters in Christ who just happen to be Catholic, but also to be reminded that we are *all* one in Christ. 卐

**Beck** is president of the Metropolitan Chicago Synodical Women's Organization and member of Bethany Lutheran Church, Batavia.

## Until all are fed

**Today 1 in 9 people** lives in extreme poverty, on less than \$1.90 a day. In the U.S., 46.7 million people live in poverty and 795 million people around the world don't know where their next meal is coming from. As ELCA members, we are called to respond. Your congregation's gifts to ELCA World Hunger help this church creatively and courageously work toward a world of justice in which all are fed.

**ELCA World Hunger is joining with the Metropolitan Chicago Synod** in celebration of our work together in communities here and around the world. Bishop Wayne Miller named the 500th anniversary of the Reformation as a time to challenge ourselves to express our love for Jesus even more by raising \$1 million in the coming year to feed Jesus' lambs now and far into the future.

**Working through Lutheran churches, congregations and partners in the U.S. and in more 60 countries,** ELCA World Hunger's approach is deeply relational and rooted in listening. As a long-standing presence in communities, we walk alongside our companion churches and partners to identify the unique needs of each community toward locally tailored solutions. ELCA World Hunger also continues to work with a network of trusted partners to expand its impact, including the Lutheran World Federation, Lutheran World Relief, Church World Service, Bread for the World and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service.



**ELCA World Hunger's comprehensive approach supports innovative solutions that get at the root causes of hunger.** In addition to supporting lifesaving relief and development work like microloans, health clinics, water and hygiene programs, and agriculture and animal husbandry, the ELCA is a publicly engaged church working for systemic change. By educating ourselves and advocating with our neighbors, this church participates as more informed citizens and works toward just, sound and compassionate social policies to break the cycle of hunger and poverty for good.

### Looking for ways to tell the story?

- See [elca.org/hunger/resources](http://elca.org/hunger/resources) for pew envelopes, bulletin inserts, piggy banks, reproducible stories, activity guides, toolkits, posters and more.
- Download videos at [elca.org/hunger/resources](http://elca.org/hunger/resources). Share “DIKO Marie’s Story” of clean drinking water in the Central African Republic, “The Lingson Family’s Story” of livestock in Malawi, and “Kenneth’s Story” of job readiness in Milwaukee.
- Use Team ELCA to spotlight your congregation’s fundraising activity—visit [elca.org/teamelca](http://elca.org/teamelca).
- Email [hunger@elca.org](mailto:hunger@elca.org) to ask questions and share the stories of your activities and successes.

**Working as the church alongside other partners, ELCA World Hunger has made a huge collective impact on hunger worldwide.** Progress is being made, but lasting change depends on your faithful support. Please join us—the time is now. God is calling us into the world—together. **L**

