



# A Study Guide for

## *Faith and Civic*

For the Well-Being of All

## *Life*

*Session 1: Foundational Teaching:*

*God Acts for the Well-being of All Through Civic Life*

# Group Covenant and Guidelines

*Sample covenant is based on those written by Dr. Marsha Foster Boyd and the University of Michigan Center for Research on Teaching and Learning and used with permission from Luther Seminary. From the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa.*

- I affirm that all have something of value to share or contribute. I also acknowledge that everyone has the chance to speak.
- I will show up as fully as possible.
- I will maintain confidentiality and expect the same in return. I will not share others' stories without their consent.
- I will encourage self-care.
- I listen to understand, not to respond.
- I assume positive intent.
- I am allowed to test issues and not necessarily own them, and I understand others may do the same. Curiosity is encouraged.
- I will both support and challenge others, will expect to be both supported and challenged by others, and will offer explanations if needed.
- I will criticize ideas, not individuals.
- I will avoid assumptions about any member of the group or generalizations about social groups.

# Scriptural Reflection: Matthew 6:9-15

“Pray, then, in this way:

Our Father in heaven,

may your name be revered as holy.

May your kingdom come.

May your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And do not bring us to the time of trial,

but rescue us from the evil one.

“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

# How does the ELCA Adopt a Social Statement?

“This church shall develop social statements ... that will guide the life of this church as an institution and inform the conscience of its members in the spirit of Christian liberty.” (ELCA social statement, “The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective”)

# The Social Statement Process

1. Memorials from Synods
2. Churchwide Assembly Approves
3. Taskforce is formed
4. Initial Study Documents Written
5. Listening and Feedback
6. Draft is Written
7. Feedback from Draft
8. Taskforce amends/rewrites
9. Church Council approves
10. Submits to Churchwide Assembly
11. Churchwide Assembly votes (2/3 vote required)
12. Statement becomes “official social teaching” -

# What the Social Statement is NOT

Social Statements and Messages are NOT  
prescriptive for all members of the ELCA.

They do, however, *govern* official policy,  
teaching, and statements by rostered  
leaders: “this is what our church teaches.”

Why  
“Faith and  
Civic Life”?

# Setting the Table – Theological Foundations and Definitions



# *Shalom*

Hebrew word used in the Scriptures to denote God's intent for whole, healthy, peaceful, joyous, just relations among all elements in God's creation. It is often translated as "peace," but it means far more than mere peace of mind or absence of violence.

# Well-being of All, or Common Good

What benefits a society in terms of justice and peace for all people and creation. For example, the term here conveys the belief that the purpose of government is to seek these outcomes for the well-being of all members of the public.

# Vocation

A calling from God that comes as both gift and responsibility. The ELCA understands baptismal vocation as fundamental; it is God's saving call, lived out in joyful response through service to the neighbor in daily life.

# Two reigns, hands, or regimens of God (aka “Two Kingdoms”)

Lutheran teaching that distinguishes between God’s activity in the world through secular means and God’s gracious activity through explicitly gracious means in the church.

The ELCA teaches that both of God’s two reigns (hands, ways, regimens) are necessary for governing creation and that they are interrelated.

# *What does this mean?*

God works in both secular and church-centered means, but the character of God and the intention for the well-being of all remains consistent no matter which “hand” we may be thinking about.

# Three Estates

Fundamental Structures in Society

(1) the church,

(2) the government, and

(3) the family

(which in the middle ages included all  
of society's economic functions)

# *What does this mean?*

These are the arenas where we live  
out our vocation.

We cannot simply be disciples of  
Jesus without also being citizens and  
related to the larger human family.

# Law and Gospel

“The Law” is a summary term for God’s directives for human living, such as the Ten Commandments.

“The Gospel” is the good news of God’s mercy, received in faith on account of Jesus Christ



# *What does this mean?*

We are set free by the Gospel of God's mercy, AND God has given us the gift of commandments for understanding how we can work towards the common good, even as we know we will fail to make that happen ourselves.

# Table Talk for Today

What does “civic life” mean for you?

How are you active in civic life?

Where might God be calling you to be  
more active?

# Closing Reflection: Matthew 6:9–15

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