



A Study Guide for *Faith and Civic Life*

For the Well-Being of All

Session 2:

God Calls All People to Robust Civic Participation

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.
- I will not ask individuals to speak on behalf of their social group, as I perceive that group.

Scriptural Reflection: Luke 4:14-21

Then Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding region. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set free those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Setting the Table – Theological Foundations and Definitions

Civic Life

Activities, organizations, and institutions in society that are not primarily individual or that occur within a family/household or private space. An activity is civic when it is in a public space, whether in one's neighborhood, state or nation, or beyond.

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.

What does this mean?

All the ways in which we live and act in the world are spheres for us to carry out our baptismal vocation of loving God and our neighbor. We do this not only as members of a congregation but also as family, neighbors, citizens, employees, etc.

Politics

Comes from the Greek word *polis*, meaning the city or place of the people. As used here, designates the activities of deciding how to govern and order life in community.

Ethics

The science and art of asking “How then shall we live?” or “What is the good?” Ethics implies extended reflection and dialogue toward critically considering, defining, negotiating, and determining what ought to be or what ought to be done. It is a practice done both by individuals and as a community.

What does this mean?

The very first social statement of the ELCA (*Church in Society*, 1991) calls for the whole church and for congregations to be “**communities of moral discernment**” so the topics of ethics and politics are necessary parts of living into that commitment.

Communities of Moral Discernment

...Christians will often disagree passionately on social questions. Yet because they share common convictions of faith, they are free, indeed obligated, to deliberate together on the challenges they face in the world. This is especially true when consensus is difficult or not reached. United in baptism with Christ and all believers, Christians are empowered to welcome and celebrate their diversity and to remain in conversation. (Article 14)

Handout:
Worship as Formation
for Civic Life

Table Talk for Today

What is the proper kind of attention to civic & political matters in a congregation? Does a congregation need to agree on everything in order to engage in civic life?

Why are congregations, and the church more broadly, a necessary and safe place to have these conversations?



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