



A Study Guide for *Faith and Civic Life*

For the Well-Being of All

Session 6:

*Selected Contemporary Concerns in Civic Life
and Implementing Resolutions*

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.

From Luther's Small Catechism

The Eighth Commandment

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light.

Setting the Table – Theological Foundations and Definitions

Partisanship

Strong loyalty or blind adherence to a specific party, group, set of beliefs, or person. The statement suggests we are in a current context of “hyperpartisanship,” contributed to by mega-identities.

Mega-identity

An interlocking set of social identifications: ethnic, religious, urban/rural, conservative/liberal. When these identifications cohere in a set that is semi fixed and loaded with huge emotional stakes, they become a mega-identity that walls off people from others, especially those who don't share the same characteristics or beliefs.

Polarization

As used in this study, a partisanship so strong that partisans are rigidly set apart from other groups, whose beliefs and views are considered utterly opposite and most often inferior, dangerous to society, and unworthy of consideration. There is no value of or respect for “those people.” In everyday speech, such polarization is often expressed in the saying “my way or the highway.”

What does this mean?

The current force of hyperpartisan polarization “undercuts the search for collaborative solutions and significantly damages individuals and the social fabric”

(Article 40). The more we are siloed according to our mega-identities, the less we talk across our differences, and the less we receive the wisdom of all in shaping our community together.

Misinformation

“Falsehood flies, and truth comes limping after it.” - Jonathan Swift

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Luther's Small Catechism

Practically

We should not share:

- Sensationalist headlines.
- Insulting memes.
- Information whose source we cannot verify.
- Information from sources whose purpose or chief likely effect is to stir up anger or hatred and to undermine, rather than foster, our civic unity.

Table Talk for Today

How do we avoid contributing to
hyperpartisanship in society & in our
congregation?

Implementing Resolutions

Sign Up for Advocacy Alerts!



ELCA Advocacy
(Federal)



Lutheran Advocacy
Ministry in PA - LAMPa
(State)

Confession and Forgiveness for Online Peacebuilding

We confess we are captive to sin, and cannot free ourselves.

We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed by things we have posted, and things we have left unposted.

We have forgotten our call to love you, even in digital spaces, because you transcend time and space.

Confession and Forgiveness for Online Peacebuilding

We have forgotten our neighbors' humanity when engaging with them online, because they appear just as words or images on a screen.

We have given into our own desires to win an argument, to humiliate the other, to boost our own egos, rather than to listen to your call to love one another, to strive for justice, and to be peacemakers.

Confession and Forgiveness for Online Peacebuilding

**For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us.**

**Remind us that we are called your disciples in all
spaces and should seek to love and promote
justice and peace among all your beloved children
wherever we find ourselves engaging with the
world, even online.**

**Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may
delight in your will, and post in your ways, to the
glory of your holy name. Amen.**

Absolution for Online Peacebuilding

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were engaging in social media and online chatter seeped in death;

And God has made us alive in Christ, calling us to proclaim life abundant in all we say and do and post.

Absolution for Online Peacebuilding

In the name of + Jesus Christ
your sins are forgiven.

Almighty God strengthen
you with power,

clothe you in compassion,

and walk with you in the way of peace, through the
Holy Spirit,

that Christ may live in your hearts and be shown in
your presence. Amen.