



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

STUDY GUIDE

Faith Sexism and Justice

A Call to Action

Leader's Welcome

Welcome to the study guide for the ELCA social statement *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action*. Adopted by the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, this document relies on the Gospel promise of abundance, justice, and new creation in Christ to name the ways the sins of patriarchy and sexism harm *all* people, particularly women and girls, whatever their age or racial or gender identity. Drawing on Lutheran theology, the social statement teaches that God's people are called to resist sexism and pursue gender justice for others and for themselves.

Faith, Sexism, and Justice is the culmination of a seven-year process across the ELCA. Led by a national task force and supported by synod-based volunteers, the process of the social statement was like a long conversation among ELCA members. The social statement is designed to help people hear God's promise of abundant life and call for justice, see the complex harm caused by sexism, and pursue gender justice through personal and collective actions.

"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

**—John 10:10b, cited in
Faith, Sexism, and Justice, p. 15**



Leader's Welcome

THE CONTENT OF THE *FAITH, SEXISM, AND JUSTICE: A CALL TO ACTION* STUDY GUIDE

The six sessions in this study guide follow the path laid out in *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*.

Session One:

All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

In this session participants hear the Scriptures' promise that God intends all people to experience justice and abundance in their lives.

Session Two:

Patriarchy and Sexism Cause Injustice for Everyone

In this session participants study sin from a Lutheran perspective and examine how the sins of patriarchy and sexism intertwine with other forms of oppression and injustice.

Session Three:

Language and Images for God Matter

In this session participants learn about the variety of images for God in the Scriptures and explore how inclusive and expansive language and images for God are consistent with Lutheran insights.

Session Four:

Creation Is Diverse, as Is the Body of Christ

In this session participants hear the Scriptures' affirmation of the diversity of all of God's creation and the New Testament's promise that the body of Christ is made up of members with a wide range of gifts, identities, and experiences.

Session Five:

Lutheran Insights Promote Gender Justice

In this session participants explore four Lutheran insights—theology of the cross, justification, Christian freedom, and neighbor justice—that empower ELCA members to resist sexism and work for gender justice.

Session Six:

God Calls Us to Action in Community

In this session participants connect neighbor justice to issues in their communities and discern how they might act in the public sphere for gender justice.

Though it is better to complete all six sessions in sequence, they can be completed in any order. If your community is engaging two sessions, starting with session one will introduce participants to the vision of the social statement.



Leader's Welcome

GUIDING HEALTHY CONVERSATIONS

As Lutheran Christians, we recognize that the Holy Spirit is present among us when we gather. We celebrate that God speaks to us through Word and Sacrament—through the Scriptures, the preached Word, baptism and holy communion, and through our words to one another. When we gather to study *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*, we trust that God is moving among us as we encounter new ideas and share our beliefs and hopes for justice for neighbors and ourselves.

As you encounter new information and see Lutheran teachings brought to bear on issues related to patriarchy and sexism, pay close attention to how you feel. You might feel curious, anxious, or empowered. Encourage participants to be patient and compassionate as you share your views with others. The study guide addresses complex issues that may affect people in a variety of ways. Several of the sessions refer to difficult topics, such as gender-based violence, homophobia, and racism, which many people have experienced and may reexperience as they use the study guide materials. While leading these sessions, please be attentive to participants' discomforts and needs.

Here are some tips for leading the sessions:

- Speak only for yourself and avoid language that sounds accusatory or lumps people together, such as “those people” or “anyone who believes ...”
- Rather than defend your opinion, listen carefully to others and ask questions that help them express what they're thinking, such as “What's your perspective on ...?” or “How do you understand this?”
- You can also ask people to clarify what they've said by using statements such as “What I heard you saying is ...” or “Is that correct, or what you intended to say?”
- You may ask participants to honor the session as confidential and not share what others said.

Being attentive to your own feelings and listening closely to others will deepen the conversation and create an honest environment where a diversity of voices can be heard.

You may encounter terms that are new to you. Explore the glossary at the end of the social statement for definitions of the terms. (The glossary begins on p. 75.)



Leader's Welcome

DETAILS FOR LEADERS REGARDING THE STUDY GUIDE

Handouts: A handout is included for each session and can be found at the end of each session. A PDF containing all six handouts is available [here](#).

In-person or Virtual Gatherings: The six sessions in the study guide were developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a way of making the study guide available remotely and for a wide variety of people, the activity section of each session can be offered in one of three ways. The session can be offered in person. Or you may use an online meeting platform for discussion only. Finally, you may use an online meeting platform that allows participants to post, view, and discuss their typed comments. If you offer the session virtually, it is a good idea to have an assistant manage the technology and the participants' posts so that you can focus on leading the activity or discussion. For tips on leading online sessions, see, for example, [Tips-for-Using-Zoom.pdf](#) (globallearningpartners.com).

Presenting the Digital Slides:

- To display the study guide slides, which are in PDF format, you will need to use a free PDF reader. Adobe Reader can be found at <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>.
- If you are using Windows 10, you can download a general PDF reader from the Windows store.
- With a PDF reader installed, download the study guide and double-click the file (in your "Downloads" folder) to open it.
- Then, display the slides so that one slide appears on the screen at a time. You may have to select full screen

mode or slide show from the "View" menu selection at the top left to configure this.

- The slides should then display so that either one mouse click or a tap of your space bar will advance to the next slide.

Reading Faith, Sexism, and Justice: Inspired by Martin Luther's Small Catechism and Large Catechism, the text was written in a dual format with a "short statement" and a "full statement." The full statement explains the content of the short statement with insights from Lutheran theology, the Scriptures, and current research to support the vision and content of the social statement.

Session Structure: The basic form of each study session should take about 45 minutes. The six sessions follow a similar structure and involve prayers, hearing from the social statement itself, watching and discussing a video, actively engaging the content of each session, and asking participants how they will live out the insights they have gained from the session. Each session also includes an optional Bible study and an optional conversation. The sessions can be extended to 60 or 90 minutes.

Spanish Resources: The social statement is [available](#) in Spanish (*Fe, sexismo y justicia: Un llamado a la acción*). A Spanish version of this study guide is expected on the ELCA website in the future. For the time being, if you are leading a session, please guide any Spanish-speaking participants to the Spanish version.

Videos for the Sessions: Each session has a video. The link for each video is in the individual session.

Citations and Sources: At the time of publication of this study guide in 2021, the URLs provided were live.



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

GETTING READY

This is the first session in the study guide on the ELCA's 2019 social statement *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action*. In this session, participants hear the Scriptures' promise that God intends for all people to experience justice and abundance in their lives. Participants also explore how *Faith, Sexism, and Justice* envisions God's abundance and connects it to God's justice.

The full text of the social statement can be found here: in [English](#) and in [Spanish](#).

MANAGING THE TIME TOGETHER

The basic version of each session should take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

If your group has 60 or 90 minutes, you can use the extra 15 or 30 minutes to do one or two of the following.

You can:

- explore the passages from the Scriptures, or
- engage the In the Coming Week activity, or
- reflect on the Continuing the Conversation prompts.

If the session is offered during a regularly scheduled 45-minute education gathering but you want to meet for a longer time, pause at 45 or 60 minutes and give people the chance to quietly leave the session.

ESTIMATED TIMELINE FOR THE BASIC 45-MINUTE SESSION

Welcome, Opening Prayer, Session Objectives, and Context (4 minutes)

Optional: Encounter the Scriptures (10-15 minutes)

Sharing Stories Video: "All Are Called to Lives of Abundance and Justice" (10 minutes)

Discuss the Video (7 minutes)

Explore *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: God's Justice and Abundance* (6 minutes)

Engage Justice and Abundance in *Faith, Sexism, and Justice* (10 minutes)

Live Out the Social Statement's Call to Action (6 minutes)

Optional: In the Coming Week (10 minutes)

Optional: Continuing the Conversation (10-15 minutes)

Closing Prayer (2 minutes)



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

OPTIONAL: SING TOGETHER

If you have 60 or 90 minutes, consider beginning and ending each session with a hymn. Try singing part of the hymn at the opening of the session and conclude with the rest of the hymn.

The hymns can be found in the following sources: *All Creation Sings (ACS)*, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)*, *Libro de Liturgia y Cántico (LLC)*, and *This Far by Faith (TFF)*.

The following hymns resonate with the themes of session one:

- Dios hoy nos llama (momento nuevo), *LLC* 490
- God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind, *ELW* 400
- My Soul Does Magnify the Lord, *TFF* 168
- The Play of the Godhead, *ACS* 946
- What Wondrous Love Is This, *ELW* 666
- When You Send Forth Your Spirit, *ACS* 945

DISCUSSION/ACTIVITY SECTION

This session has three different options for the section titled Engage Justice and Abundance in *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*. You can use the in-person, hands-on activity. Or you may use an online meeting platform for discussion only. Finally, you may use an online meeting platform that allows participants to submit and discuss their typed comments.

THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS ARE NEEDED FOR THE IN-PERSON SESSION:

- Bibles
- Access to hymns
- Print handouts for the participants, found at the end of this session. These include Bible references, quotes from *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*, and other necessary materials.
- All the session handouts are also in one document at https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/FSJ_Study_Guide_Session_ALL.pdf.
- Sharing Stories [Video](#): The URL for the video is also provided in the session.
- Medium-size markers for each participant
- Six 3-by-3-inch sticky notes for each participant—three in one color and three in a different color

Materials to have available: A chalkboard, large poster paper, or wall space where participants can place their sticky-note responses

If your group chooses to encounter the Scriptures, consider four different methods to read the Bible: devotional, historical, literary, and Lutheran theological. For more on this fourfold approach to the Scriptures, see https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Book_Of_Faith_4_Methods.pdf.



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

LEADER'S PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

Read the welcome to the entire study guide.

Read this study guide session.

You may want to have a paper copy with you when you lead the session.

Read pp. 12-15 in *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*.

Preview the video. Pastor Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld served as co-chair for the task force that developed *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*. In this video, she introduces the social statement and discusses her perspectives on God's abundance and gender justice.

If you know who the participants will be before the session meets, consider sending them a welcome email. You can encourage participants to read articles 1, 2, 4, and 5 on p. 2 and article 21 on p. 7 in *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*. Participants may also skim pp. 12-15 in the social statement.

Finally, you could ask participants to view the short video "What Do Lutherans Say About ... Gender Justice," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWIEKGleQa0>.

Set up the space so that everyone can see the screen, and test the audio to be sure everyone can hear the Sharing Stories video.

Consider sending an email to participants a few days after the session to encourage them to complete one of the In the Coming Week activities.



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

WELCOME AND CONTEXT (4 MINUTES)

The leader reads the following introduction to ELCA social statements.

ELCA social statements help us make sense of complex social and ethical concerns in our communities and the world, such as education and peace. These statements provide scriptural, theological, and contemporary insights about social issues. They govern the institutional witness of the ELCA and its teachings on social questions. ELCA social statements help communities and individuals think about, discuss together, and discern paths forward as we participate in God's work in the world. Many ELCA members are involved in creating social statements, and they are adopted by a two-thirds vote of an ELCA churchwide assembly.

OPENING PRAYER

The leader reads the following prayer aloud.

O God, when we are confused, bring us back to curiosity. Open new channels in us for listening. Help our doubt and misunderstanding to be transformed by you. Encourage us in your faithful abundance. Amen.



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

SESSION OBJECTIVES

Someone reads aloud.

We will explore what *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* teaches about God's abundance and God's justice.

We will describe where we experience—or do not experience—abundance and justice in our lives.

We will envision how we can live out the call to gender justice in our own lives so that we promote abundance for ourselves and our neighbors.

(In the 60 or 90 minute session, we will encounter the Scriptures' witness that God intends all people to experience abundant life and that justice—including gender justice—is a part of living abundantly.)



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

OUR CONTEXT FOR SESSION ONE

The leader reads aloud.

The social statement affirms that God intends for everyone to have life abundantly and to flourish. Abundance expresses the foundational trust that God provides what humans need to flourish. “Justice refers to an underlying sense of fairness, right treatment, and reciprocity” (*FSJ*, p. 78). The ELCA recognizes that many people suffer injustice and do not experience abundance.

In the United States there is a great deal of injustice based on biological sex and gender. For example, “American Indian and Alaska Native women are targets of gender-based violence at a rate of 37.5 percent.”¹ Many young girls (as well as young boys) struggle with eating disorders (in part) because they are attempting to achieve unrealistic standards for the ideal body. “LGBTQ youth are at more than double the risk of homelessness compared to non-LGBTQ peers.”² Finally, “Black, American Indian, and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women are two to three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women.”³

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The dynamics of race, location, and economics make the negative experiences more complex. These examples reveal that many individuals do not experience the abundant life God intends. And these examples demonstrate the need for God's people to pursue gender justice for all.

“Intersectionality describes the ways different forms of discrimination and systemic oppression affect each other and shape the lives of individuals and communities in distinct ways.”

(FSJ, p. 77)



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

OPTIONAL: ENCOUNTER THE SCRIPTURES (10-15 MINUTES)

Someone reads aloud.

The author of this psalm celebrates the abundance of God's care for creatures and creation. Read Psalm 65:8-12.

Someone else reads aloud.

In these verses, Mary expresses her joy at becoming Jesus' mother and announces her desire for justice for all God's people. Read Luke 1:46-55.

Spend one minute in silence reflecting on these passages from the Scriptures.

Then choose two of the following questions and discuss them for 10 minutes. You may want to break people into groups of three or four to give everyone the chance to contribute.

- A** What demands or challenges do I hear in these passages?
- B** What is God up to in these Scripture readings?
- C** What does abundance sound or feel like in these Scripture passages?
- D** What do I hear God saying to my community about justice in these readings from the Scriptures?



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

SHARING STORIES VIDEO: "ALL ARE CALLED TO LIVES OF ABUNDANCE AND JUSTICE" (10 MINUTES)

The link to the video for this session is <https://vimeo.com/467778127/b8e998b9f7>.

DISCUSS THE VIDEO (7 MINUTES)

After viewing the video, discuss one of the following questions. You may want to break into groups of three or four to give everyone the chance to contribute.

- A** At what point in the video were you most engaged, and why?
- B** How did Pastor Vivian Thomas-Breitfeld connect her own story to the hope for gender justice described in the social statement?
- C** How did Pastor Thomas-Breitfeld echo the language about abundant life or gender justice that we encountered in the Scriptures or in *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*?



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

EXPLORE *FAITH, SEXISM, AND JUSTICE*: GOD'S JUSTICE AND ABUNDANCE (6 MINUTES)

Someone reads aloud from *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*.

“We believe all people are created equally in the image of God. Every individual is dependent upon God, and all share in the God-given vocation to contribute their gifts to help all of creation flourish. Being in the image of the triune God means that we humans are relational, that we are interconnected. Just as we interact with God, we are social creatures relating with each other and all of creation.” (FSJ, p. 15)

Someone else reads aloud from *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*.

“In the Gospel of John, Jesus declares, ‘I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly’ (John 10:10b). Jesus put this into action by eating with everyone, including marginalized people. Jesus lived compassionately, healing and casting out evil spirits. Jesus criticized those who neglect justice and mercy and delivered God’s call to respond to the needs of anyone who is disadvantaged, marginalized, and unjustly treated.” (FSJ, p. 15)

Spend one minute in silence to reflect on the words from the social statement.



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

ENGAGE JUSTICE AND ABUNDANCE IN *FAITH, SEXISM, AND JUSTICE* (10 MINUTES)

In-person Activity

Each participant needs three sticky notes in one color, a marker, and three sticky notes in another color.

On the (color one) sticky notes, write one or two words or a phrase from your own life that you associate with gender justice or experiences of abundance related to biological sex or gender. Put these sticky notes on one side of the board.

On the (color two) sticky notes, write one or two words or a phrase that you associate with experiences of gender *injustice* or a time when someone or something prevented you from experiencing abundant life. Put these sticky notes on the other side of the board.

After everyone has placed sticky notes on the board, read all the sticky notes silently. Then pair up and discuss the patterns you see in the words and phrases posted on both sides of the board. (Your conversation should take about 5 minutes.)



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

Virtual Activity

The leader should moderate the discussion to ensure that everyone gets the chance to contribute. Participants can be put in small groups of three or four.

Using a shared electronic document or online meeting platform, ask each participant to post their answers to the following prompts. You may use a chat function, or a shared document, or a platform to have participants post their responses.

Post these questions one at a time and allow participants about two minutes to post their responses.

- A** Post or share one or two words or phrases from your own life that you associate with either gender justice or with abundance related to biological sex or gender.
- B** Post or share one or two words or phrases from your own life that you associate with gender *injustice*.

Take a moment to read what others have written.

Discuss what patterns you notice in the words or phrases shared about gender justice, abundant life, or gender injustice.

Discuss how the abundance and justice hoped for in *Faith, Sexism, and Justice* helps you see an experience of gender justice or gender injustice differently or in a new way.



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

Virtual Discussion Questions

The leader should moderate the discussion to ensure that everyone gets the chance to contribute. Engage one of the prompts below.

- A** Share one or two words or phrases from your own life that you associate with either gender justice or with abundance related to biological sex or gender. Then discuss the patterns you notice in the words or phrases shared about gender justice, injustice, or abundant life.
- B** How does the abundance and justice hoped for in *Faith, Sexism, and Justice* help you see an experience of gender justice or gender *injustice* in a new way?



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

LIVE OUT THE SOCIAL STATEMENT'S CALL TO ACTION (6 MINUTES)

During the Session

Choose one of the following activities to work on in pairs.

- A** Keeping in mind the call to join in God's work toward ensuring abundance for all, name one specific step you can take to advance gender justice and abundance in your home, at school, at work, in your congregation, or in the community.
- B** Describe any gender-justice-related ministries in your congregation and discuss how you might get involved in one of these ministries. (If you cannot name a gender-justice-related ministry, what forms of gender justice do you think are needed in your congregation and its community?)
- C** Was there a point in today's session when you became aware of any beliefs, assumptions, or attitudes that you hold that might prevent you from pursuing abundance and justice for self or others?



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

OPTIONAL: IN THE COMING WEEK (10 MINUTES)

Take a few minutes to read the optional activities below. Next, select one of these activities that you will pursue. Then reach out to another participant and agree to check in later in the week to discuss what you did to foster abundance and gender justice.

- A** Take a photo of the sticky notes about gender justice on the board. During the week, share this photo with someone and discuss the words you wrote to describe justice, abundance, or injustice.
- B** Read Implementing Resolution #4, at the end of the social statement (FSJ, p. 81), which calls all ELCA members to reflect on their use of mass media and social media. Consider how the films, videos, TV shows, video games, or social media that you consume perpetuate gender injustice or advance gender justice for women and girls.

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- C** Sometimes, as Pastor Thomas-Breitfeld said, intersecting factors related to who you are, such as your age, ability, race, economics, or ethnicity, shape your experiences of abundant life and justice. Take time this week and write down the intersecting aspects of your identity and one way each one affects something in your life, either positively or negatively. *Faith, Sexism, and Justice* describes intersectionality as “the ways different forms of discrimination ... affect each other and shape the lives of individuals. ... All human identities ... are made up of many intersections” (FSJ, p. 77). Think about ways you can use your agency (no matter how limited) to act for justice for yourself or your neighbor.
- D** Investigate the resources in the Explore section at the end of this session.



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

OPTIONAL: CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION (10-15 MINUTES)

Discuss two of the prompts below.

- A** What fills me with hope or delights me in this session about God's abundance and gender justice?
- B** What challenges me or confuses me in this session about God's abundance and gender justice?
- C** In your community and congregation, who are the neighbors who need to hear the promise of God's abundance and gender justice? What have these neighbors said they need?
- D** Where do you see God at work as the ELCA affirms God's abundance for all and pursues gender justice for neighbor and self?
- E** Discuss your reflections about the word association activity in the Engage *Faith, Sexism, and Justice* section.



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

CLOSING PRAYER (2 MINUTES)

Creating God, birth in us new ways of abundant being. Make space for Jesus' call of love and justice for neighbor. Push us to our growing edges and plant seeds in the fertile ground of our hearts that will yield abundant harvest. Amen.

“God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

(Micah 6:8)



End Notes

URLs were accessed between June and December 2021.

Session One:

All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

1. “Gender-based Violence” (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2015), 18, https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Gender_Based_Violence_SM.pdf.
2. “Missed Opportunities: LGBTQ Youth Homelessness in America,” Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, April 2018, <https://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/VoYC-LGBTQ-Brief-Chapin-Hall-2018.pdf>.
3. “Racial and Ethnic Disparities Continue in Pregnancy-Related Deaths,” Center for Disease Control, September 5, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2019/p0905-racial-ethnic-disparities-pregnancy-deaths.html>.

Session Two:

Patriarchy and Sexism Cause Injustice for Everyone

1. *The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, (1991), <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Church-in-Society>.
2. Johnson, Allan G., “The Tree as Metaphor,” *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), <https://www.agjohnson.us/essays/tree>.
3. “45th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women: Executive Summary—Clergy Questionnaire Report 2015” (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2015), https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/45th_Anniversary_of_the_Ordination_Women_Ordained_Full_Report.pdf.
4. “Thursdays in Black,” World Council of Churches, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/get-involved/thursdays-in-black>.

Session Three:

Language and Images for God Matter

1. Luther, Martin, “Against Latomus, 1521,” LW 32:196.



End Notes

Session Four:

Creation Is Diverse, as Is the Body of Christ

1. Hess, Cynthia, et al., "Providing Unpaid Household and Care Work in the United States: Uncovering Inequality," Institute for Women's Policy Research, <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/IWPR-Providing-Unpaid-Household-and-Care-Work-in-the-United-States-Uncovering-Inequality.pdf>.
2. Sears, Brad, and Christy Mallory, "Documented Evidence of Employment Discrimination and Its Effects on LGBT People," UCLA School of Law Williams Institute, July 2011, <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/employ-discrim-effect-lgbt-people/>.
3. "Discrimination Prevents LGBTQ People From Accessing Health Care," Center for American Progress, Jan. 18, 2018, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/news/2018/01/18/445130/discrimination-prevents-lgbtq-people-accessing-health-care/>.
4. ELCA Office of the Secretary, August 2015.
5. "Suicide and Violence Prevention," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/msmhealth/suicide-violence-prevention.htm>.

Session Five:

Lutheran Insights Promote Gender Justice

1. Parish, Anja, "Gender-based Violence Against Women: Both Cause for Migration and Risk Along the Journey," Migration Policy Institute, Sept. 7, 2017, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/gender-based-violence-against-women-both-cause-migration-and-risk-along-journey>.
2. Wallace, Beverly R., "Silent Voices, Still ... but Faith ... Lifting Up the Voices of the Daughters of Hagar in 'Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action,'" *Currents in Theology and Mission*, April 2020, <http://currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/235/260>.

Session Six:

God Calls Us to Action in Community

1. "Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Pregnancy-Related Deaths—United States, 2007-2016," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Sept. 6, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6835a3.htm>.



Glossary from Faith, Sexism, and Justice

Androcentric: Male-centered, focused on men.

Binary (Gender Binary): The concept that there are only two genders, man or woman, which are inherently distinct and “opposite.”

Complementary/Complementarity: The belief that God gave men and women inherently different roles and purposes that complement each other to mutual benefit. Men’s roles have often related to leadership and decision-making; women’s roles have included obeying males and caring for others. These roles are informed by the structural dynamic of dominance (male) and submission (female). The imbalance of power in the relationship contributes to male privilege.

Domestic violence: See entry for “Gender-based violence.”

Equality: The idea that people have the same rights and should receive the same resources. Equality can refer to the equal worth of all people or to people having equal experiences of their rights and their potential in life.

Equity: Fair treatment of people according to their needs.

The principle of equity takes into account that people exist on inherently uneven playing fields due to poverty, sexism, racism, etc. Because of these different contexts, individuals or groups may require different resources and support to ensure that they have the same rights and abilities to make choices as others do (such as having a choice of quality doctors, careers, neighborhoods, etc.).

The goal of equity is to ensure each person receives what each person needs to flourish and is not disadvantaged.

Ex. A simple example of equality in public restrooms would be having changing tables in all restrooms, because male caregivers may also need a space to change diapers. A simple example of equity in public restrooms would be putting more stalls in women’s restrooms in order to serve the specific needs women have.

Expansive language: Language (or imagery) referring to God that is not limited to humanity or human categories: water, a rock, a hiding place, a mighty fortress, etc. See “inclusive language.”

Gender: Identities, roles, behaviors, and attributes that cultures, societies, and individuals shape, most often linked to femininity and masculinity. The most common gender identities are woman/girl and man/boy, but other identities exist. For more, see “gender non-conforming.”

Gender identity: How a person understands one’s own gender; one’s internal sense of one’s gender.

Gender justice: Gender justice is expressed through equality and balanced power relations for people of all genders to live into their individual callings. Gender justice is sought by eliminating power imbalances among people at individual and societal levels, as well as eliminating discrimination against women and people who do not adhere to stereotypes associated with men and women.



Glossary from Faith, Sexism, and Justice

Gender non-conforming, Non-binary, Genderqueer:

Words that people who do not identify as “men” or “women” use to describe their gender (not sexuality). Their gender identity and/or biological characteristics may not completely fit with the dominant and expected ways of acting as, or being, a man or woman or a boy or girl. Each term might be used differently by different people, as an umbrella term or as a specific label for their gender identity. This document uses all three terms in an effort to be inclusive. (Terminology will change over time. Readers are referred to contemporary communities for up-to-date language.) For more, see “gender,” “intersex,” “transgender,” and “queer.”

Gender-based violence: Physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, or other personal harm inflicted on someone for gender-based reasons, including but not limited to intimate-partner violence and domestic violence. This can include such things as catcalling women or bullying boys who are not perceived as “man enough.” Perpetrators commit gender-based violence to assert power over someone.

Genderqueer: See “Gender non-conforming, Non-binary, Genderqueer.”

Hierarchy: A system in which groups are ranked and certain groups have power over other groups. Sometimes this power over others leads to more value being assigned to the group or individuals with dominance.

Human trafficking: Coercion, abduction, and/or imprisonment of people for forced labor, often of a sexual nature. This problem is pervasive around the world, including in the U.S. Also known as modern-day slavery.

Inclusive language: Language that includes all genders when referring to humanity or God, for instance, using humans or humankind to talk about humanity, rather than man or mankind. See “expansive language.”

Intersecting, intersectionality: Humans have multiple aspects to their identities, including gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, social class, etc. These aspects of human identities are tied to systemic privilege and oppression; gender is tied to sexism, ethnicity is tied to racism, etc. Intersectionality describes the ways different forms of discrimination and systemic oppression affect each other and shape the lives of individuals and communities in distinct ways. All human identities and all forms of privilege and oppression are made up of many intersections.

Ex. A woman of African descent may have a Ph.D. and make a healthy salary, but she will still suffer from racism and sexism. However, she would experience that racism and sexism differently from how a man of African descent, a white woman, or an impoverished person might experience them. The injustices she faces, therefore, may have solutions different from those for other people.



Glossary from Faith, Sexism, and Justice

Intersex: As described by the Intersex Society of North America, a term for a variety of conditions people are born with: physical characteristics, anatomy, and/or genes that vary from standards set by doctors' expectations for being "female" or "male." The term refers to the fact of biological variation among humans. Some people identify as intersex, rather than using the term solely to refer to a condition; others may also identify as gender non-conforming or a similar term.

Justice: Generally, justice refers to an underlying sense of fairness, right treatment, and reciprocity. This statement emphasizes the aspects of justice that include fair and equal treatment under the law, ending oppression based on power differences, and, as emphasized in the Bible, a right relationship with God and within community.

Neighbor justice: A term proposed in this social statement that is rooted in the biblical directive to "love your neighbor as yourself." This term expresses the idea that faith is active in love and love necessarily calls for justice in relationships and in the structures of society. Neighbor justice is meeting neighbors' needs across the globe and in our local communities.

Non-binary: See "Gender non-conforming, Non-binary, Genderqueer."

Objectification: Thinking of or portraying people as objects, erasing their humanity, emotions, and rights.

Ex. Catcalling, advertisements that use sexualized images to sell merchandise, and stories in which female characters exist only as props for male characters.

Patriarchy: A social system that enables men to have more power than, and power over, women and people who do not conform to socially accepted gender roles. A patriarchal social system is dominated by men, identified with men, and centered on men's actions, voices, and authority. In various ways, this kind of social system operates to control women, girls, and people who do not fit society's predominant ideas of maleness and masculinity.

Privilege: This term refers to the relationships between groups of people in society, to the social advantage or special treatment of a group or persons in a group. This advantage is unearned and results from how a group's identity is perceived as "normal" or "better." Privilege is lived out on an individual and societal scale. Privilege is not something a person deliberately opts into or out of, nor is it experienced by everyone in the same ways.

Ex. A man benefits from male privilege when his opinion is subconsciously valued more highly in a meeting, when he is paid more for equal work, or when he walks down a street without harassment or fear of sexual assault. White people benefit from white privilege when they can shop without being followed or monitored by staff who think they may shoplift, or when the majority of heroes in textbooks and movies look like them. For a white male, the combination of white privilege and male privilege can work together. A white man may have fewer risk factors for some stress-related illnesses such as Type 2 diabetes, while his complaints of pain are more likely to be taken seriously by his doctor. For more, see "intersectionality."



Glossary from Faith, Sexism, and Justice

Queer: Umbrella term regarding sex, gender, and sexual orientation, often used by individuals who identify as somehow “other” from society’s sexual, romantic, or gender norms.

Although historically used in a derogatory manner, the term has since been reclaimed as a positive label by some members within that community.

Rape culture: An environment in which the objectification of and assault on human bodies, particularly in a sexual way, is normalized and tolerated. Rape culture primarily harms women and girls. Blaming rape victims for their assaults and maintaining a biased justice system are both parts of rape culture and how it is propagated.

Reproductive health care: Health services related to the reproductive system at all stages of life for all genders, including the menstrual cycle, fertility, and cancer.

Sex (biological): A scientific label assigned at birth that describes an individual’s reproductive organs and whether they have XX chromosomes (female) or XY chromosomes (male). People whose biology varies from standards set by doctors’ expectations of being “female” or “male” are typically called “intersex.” Biological sex characteristics and traits of people who are said to be female or male are also variable.

Sexism: Refers to what supports male privilege and reinforces prejudice and discrimination against women and girls due to their gender and against people who do not conform to socially accepted gender roles. Human actions and speech can be sexist, as can institutions, policies, and practices.

Sexuality: A complex individual and social concept. Individually, sexuality includes the romantic and/or sexual feelings and desires that a person experiences. People’s sexuality is also influenced by the social and cultural forces in which they find themselves.

Toxic masculinity: Refers to forms of masculinity that emphasize aggression, power, and control and sometimes violent or unhealthy sexuality. It deemphasizes weakness, caring, and vulnerability. Masculinity itself is not harmful; however, it is described as toxic when these forms of masculinity cultivate harm to self, others, and society. Toxic masculinity limits the humanity and compassion of men.

Transgender: Describes a person whose gender is different from the sex assigned or identified at birth. Some transgender individuals identify as men or as women; others don’t identify with one of those words. Some people use this term to describe their identity; for others it serves as an umbrella term. Over time its meaning may change as language evolves. See “gender non-conforming.”



Acknowledgements

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All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

EXPLORE FAITH, SEXISM, AND JUSTICE: A CALL TO ACTION

“Gender justice is for all people and requires particular attention to seeking fuller justice for women and girls.” (FSJ, p. 14)

“In the Gospel of John, Jesus declares, ‘I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly’ (John 10:10b). Jesus put this into action by eating with everyone, including marginalized people. Jesus lived compassionately, healing and casting out evil spirits. Jesus criticized those who neglect justice and mercy and delivered God’s call to respond to the needs of anyone who is disadvantaged, marginalized, and unjustly treated.” (FSJ, p. 15)

“We believe all people are created equally in the image of God. Every individual is dependent upon God, and all share in the God-given vocation to contribute their gifts to help all of creation flourish. Being in the image of the triune God means that we humans are relational, that we are interconnected. Just as we interact with God, we are social creatures relating with each other and all of creation.” (FSJ, p. 15)

“Grounded in faith and love, we seek justice for ourselves and our neighbors within congregations, religious and secular institutions, governments, and societies. This love includes gender justice.” (FSJ, p. 21)

“Intersectionality describes the ways different forms of discrimination and systemic oppression affect each other and shape the lives of individuals and communities in distinct ways.” (FSJ, p. 77)

Participants are encouraged to read pp. 12-15 in *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*.

ENCOUNTER THE SCRIPTURES

Psalms 65:8-12: The author of this psalm celebrates the abundance of God’s care for creatures and creation.

Luke 1:46-55: In these verses, Mary expresses her joy at becoming Jesus’ mother and announces her desire for justice for all God’s people.

RESOURCES

Documents and history for *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* can be found at <https://www.elca.org/womenandjustice>.

Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action can be found at https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Faith_Sexism_Justice_Social_Statement_Adopted.pdf.

Fe, sexismo y justicia: Un llamado a la acción can be found at https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Fe_sexismo_y_justicia.pdf.

The study guide for *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* can be found at <https://www.elca.org/fsjstudyguide>.

The video for session one, “All Are Called to Lives of Abundance and Justice,” can be found at <https://vimeo.com/showcase/8989135/video/467778127>.

“God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

—Micah 6:8



All Are Called to Lives of Justice and Abundance

IN THE COMING WEEK

- A** Take a photo of the sticky notes about gender justice on the board. During the week, share this photo with someone and discuss the words you wrote to describe justice, abundance, or injustice.
- B** Read Implementing Resolution #4, at the end of the social statement (FSJ, p. 81), which calls all ELCA members to reflect on their use of mass media and social media. Consider how the films, videos, TV shows, video games, or social media that you consume perpetuate gender injustice or advance gender justice for women and girls.
- C** Sometimes, as Pastor Thomas-Breitfeld said, intersecting factors related to who you are, such as your age, ability, race, economics, or ethnicity, shape your experiences of abundant life and justice. Take time this week and write down the intersecting aspects of your identity and one way each one affects something in your life, either positively or negatively. (*Faith, Sexism, and Justice* describes intersectionality as “the ways different forms of discrimination ... affect each other and shape the lives of individuals. ... All human identities ... are made up of many intersections” (FSJ, p. 77). Think about ways you can use your agency (no matter how limited) to act for justice for yourself or your neighbor.
- D** Investigate the resources in the Explore section at the end of this session.

If You Want to Know More About God's Justice and Abundance,

EXPLORE ...

... the ELCA's teachings about God's abundance toward creation, read: Genesis 1; Psalm 8; Psalm 33; Psalm 104; Isaiah 65; Isaiah 66; John 10; 1 Corinthians 12; 2 Corinthians 9; and see *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*, pp. 2, 12-15, 37, and 50.

... the ELCA's principles of justice (sufficiency, sustainability, solidarity, and participation), see: *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*, pp. 48-50. Also see the ELCA social statement *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice*, pp. 6-7, <https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/EnvironmentSS.pdf>.

... God's intended justice—including gender justice—for creation, read: Genesis 1:26-28; Isaiah 61; Isaiah 65; Micah 6; Luke 1; Galatians 3; and see *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*, pp. 14-15, 20-21, 48-49, and 59-60.

... the ELCA's understanding of neighbor justice, read Leviticus 19; Mark 12; and Romans 13; and see *Faith, Sexism, and Justice*, pp. 20-21.

... how gender justice is connected to vocation, baptism, and Easter hope, read: the ELCA social statement *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries*, pp. 17-20, https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Criminal_JusticeSS.pdf.

... ELCA resources for advancing gender justice, go to: <https://www.elca.org/Resources/Justice-for-Women>.

... a Lutheran view of justice, read: the article “Foundations for a Neighbor Justice Ethic” by William Rodriguez, published in *Currents in Theology and Mission* (April 2020), <https://currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/236/259>.

... the global Lutheran communion's commitment to gender justice, read the Lutheran World Federation's “Gender Justice Policy,” <https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-lwf-gender-justice-policy>.

