

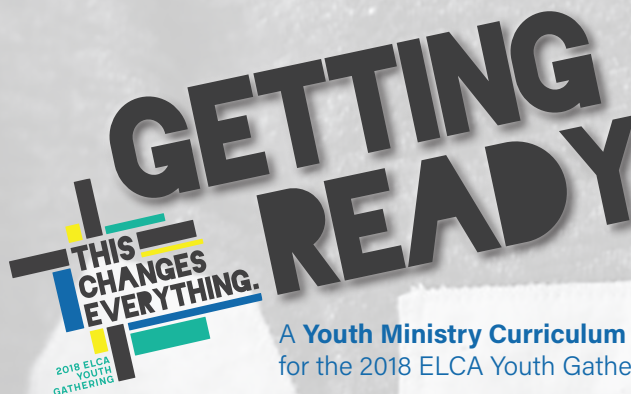
MARCH:

GATHERING FOR JUSTICE

PART 1



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



A **Youth Ministry Curriculum** ramping up
for the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering

In the ELCA, justice work is a priority. It is even in our baptismal covenant: “strive for justice and peace in all the earth.” And the Bible states: “And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8b) and “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9).

"ALONG WITH ALL CITIZENS, CHRISTIANS AND OTHERS HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS AND TO WORK FOR FREEDOM, JUSTICE, PEACE, ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING AND GOOD ORDER."

(ELCA SOCIAL STATEMENT, "THE CHURCH IN SOCIETY: A LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE," 1991, PAGE 5)

In terms of justice, here's what we, the ELCA, say: We celebrate the abundant blessings that are a part of this world. But we also walk in the struggle of human existence where we face our own sin, our self-centeredness, and the collective sin of human institutions, for example, the church, governments, the nations. In this struggle, however, we meet the suffering God who bears the sins of the world and sends us out, as ones who are joined in the crucified Christ and in his solidarity with the pain of the world. As believers in Christ we are called to be about the work of justice in our personal and public life. We recognize that God's justice is something deeper and purer than our own best understanding of justice. And yet, we are called to love our neighbor as we would love ourselves.

We speak the truth in love as we participate in God's mission of abundant life for all. With a deep awareness of our sinfulness and the sin of our society, with humility we speak with respect and promote change. And God calls us to speak out. An enemy of justice is silence.

A justice mindset is one key way we practice our faith. A mindset and a heart filled with peace is faith in practice. Practicing our faith is something that we may never master. We always have more to learn. The focus of our practice is our gracious God, not the practices. Our faith practices are always an offering of response to our gracious God. May God work on you as you practice your faith in the midst of life in God's church and God's world.

This session looks at justice and helps shape our understanding of what justice is and is not.



GATHERING CONNECTION:

Justice is work for all of us to engage in. It begins with our mindset of righting wrongs and helping give voice to those whose voices are ignored or are not heard. The Gathering seeks to lift up issues of justice in many ways through the Mass Gatherings, in Service Learning, in Interactive Learning and Synod Day. Justice is our work. If we don't know about the injustices in our world, how can we help change these to be a more just society?

The Gathering gives us an opportunity to look at justice issues, and we can allow it to shape and form us to change the world through our words and actions.

HANDBOOK TIMELINE:

March 2017 - Send the rooming list and housing deposit to your hotel!



MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Bible
- Christ Candle
- warm-up sheet in large print
- construction paper
- tape
- glue sticks
- scissors
- notebook paper
- rulers

GATHER (15 MINUTES):

Warmup

As the youth enter the space, encourage them to use the large-print version of the phrase "What is the greatest injustice of the past?" and markers to write their responses.

Call the group together when you are ready to begin the session. Ask them to share what they wrote and why. Remind them to keep these in mind as we move into the session.

The Intro

In this session, we gather for justice. We will pray, have fun, and engage in conversation around the theme of justice, discussing both how Jesus challenges our perception of it and what threats to justice exist today. When people talk about justice, Exodus 21:24 may come to mind for some, "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, hand for a hand, foot for a foot." To many, justice looks like law enforcement and the court system. And to others, true justice feels about as realistic as the Justice League. Author and 2012 ELCA Youth Gathering speaker Shane Claiborne shares in his book "Executing Grace" that "When it comes to words like 'justice,' people can say the same thing and mean something completely different. Capital punishment offers us one version of justice ... yet grace offers us another." As we dive into Scripture and see how Jesus flips traditional understandings of justice, we'll catch a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven and learn how we can join in welcoming the kingdom here on earth.

Gathering Prayer

Let's pray.

Ask for a volunteer to lead the gathering prayer.

God of all, you made us in your image, each of us, equal in your eyes. Open our hearts and our minds to you this day. May we encounter each other with respect and love. Give us confidence as we practice articulating our unique thoughts and beliefs in this safe space. Amen

Experiential Learning: That's Not Fair

Purpose: to highlight privilege and the advantages and disadvantages privilege creates for individuals and groups. This game will also create paper dolls that will be used for storytelling later in the session.

Supplies needed: Construction paper, various colors, notebook paper, scissors, glue and tape, rulers

Split your group into two teams to engage in an arts-and-crafts competition. Adult participants may judge the competition or participate alongside the youth. Give one team colorful construction paper, scissors, glue and tape, markers, and a ruler and the second team only notebook paper, pencils and older glue sticks.

Give both teams five minutes to create three paper dolls, one 6 inches tall, one a foot tall, and one 18 inches tall. At the end of the five minutes, have each team present the artwork to be judged. If you have more than 12 participants, you may choose to create additional teams. These additional teams can use either combination of the supplies, but manufacture some disadvantages for them to perform their task, such as blindfolds, the inability to speak, use of only one arm.

- Was the activity difficult or easy? What made it so?
- How did you feel doing the activity?
- Did you get frustrated? Why?
- How does this activity mirror or reflect life?



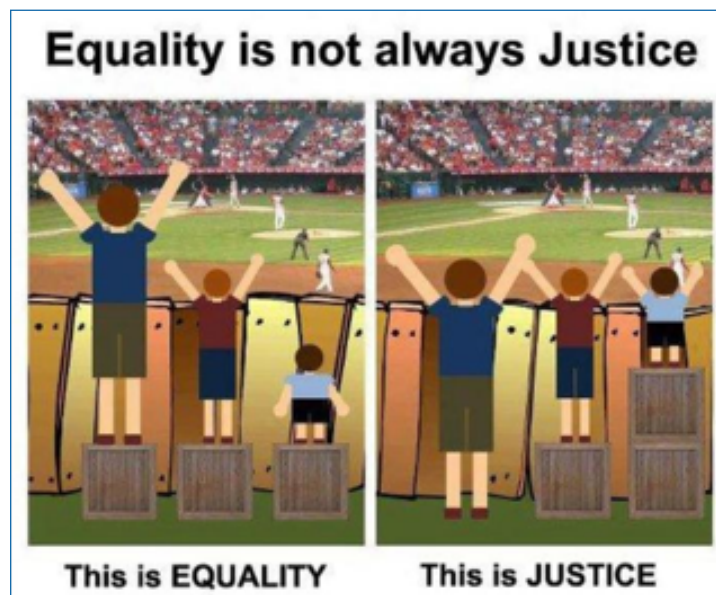
SOCIAL MEDIA SHARING:

Instagram your arts and crafts!
#NotFair #ELCAYG2018

WORD (30 MINUTES):

God's Story - Scripture

Creative storytelling: Take the three paper dolls of varying heights from the activity or make your own. For the telling of this story, you will need someone to read, a puppeteer to hang the dolls on the wall, plus something moveable to represent a fence as well as a scene that represents the kingdom of heaven. As the story is being told, you will recreate the following graphic, but instead of using boxes, the fence will be removed, revealing the kingdom of heaven to everyone, regardless of their privilege:





Print copies of the "Puppet" script on this page for all people participating in the show.

- **Puppeteer:** Hang a large picture that will represent the kingdom of heaven or draw the kingdom of heaven on a white board. You may want suggestions from the students for what the kingdom of heaven looks like. Create a fence, again either beforehand or with a dry-erase marker. The fence must be 16 inches from the bottom of the kingdom of heaven scene to match up with the height of the puppets.
- **Reader:** A reading from **Matthew 20:1-6**, *"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard.*
- **Puppeteer:** Tape the tall doll in front of the fence, just being able to peek over it, with a piece of tape on the top of its head.
- **Reader:** *When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went.*
- **Puppeteer:** Tape the doll of medium height in front of the fence next to the tall doll. It will not be able to see over the fence. Secure it with a piece of tape on the top of its head. Use a longer piece of tape connecting the top of the doll head to the kingdom and not the fence.
- **Reader:** *When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard."*
- **Puppeteer:** Place the shortest doll on the fence, next to the doll of medium height. Tape this doll like the previous one, using a longer piece of tape to connect the top of the doll head to the kingdom and not the fence.
- **Reader:** *When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first." When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage.*
- **Puppeteer:** Slide away, or erase, the fence from the shortest doll, giving it full access to the kingdom. Keep pulling and reveal the kingdom to the second.
- **Reader:** *Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage.*
- **Puppeteer:** Pull or erase the fence the entire way, completely revealing the kingdom to all the dolls.
- **Reader:** *And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat." But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous? So the last will be first, and the first will be last."*

The point:

- What does this story say about the kingdom of heaven? Who is it for?
- Since this story is a parable, what could showing up at 9 a.m., noon and 5 p.m. be symbolic for? Who could those workers represent?
- What does this story say about God's justice?

Our Story - Justice/Righteousness

LEARN:

We're going to watch a clip from the 2014 film "Selma." The scene takes place after a peaceful protest against the discrimination of black voters in Selma, Alabama, goes awry. The conflict results in many of the civil rights demonstrators, including Martin Luther King Jr., being thrown in jail, an act that many would have viewed as justice being served. This scene finds a tired and discouraged King lamenting to cellmate and fellow minister Ralph Abernathy about the layers of discrimination and systemic racism to which they were opposed.

LISTEN:

Show the clip "Selma - Martin Luther King in Jail" at youtube.com/watch?v=Tsa61euWa3A (2:49 min.)

CONNECT:

At this point in history, segregation had just been outlawed granting equal rights for black Americans. With equality achieved through the Civil Rights Act of 1964, why are they still fighting? What is the prize Abernathy encourages King to keep his eyes on?

Abernathy suggests they "take it piece by piece like we've been doing. Build the path as we can, rock by rock." Where does the path lead? When did, or does, this path end?

ENGAGE:

Often in the Bible, you will see "justice" used interchangeably with "righteousness," another tricky word that means different things to different people. Our God is in the business of justice and righteousness, restoring humanity into right relationship – last month's topic. When we think about the justice issues of our time, they are mostly due to broken relationships. Messy relationships exist between people, between tribes and between the environment. Through his death on the cross, Jesus has been restoring humanity, bringing us all back into right relationship with him. Remember Ephesians 2:8? "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God." Part of our calling as baptized Lutherans is to respond to that grace by joining Christ in this work to "strive for peace and justice in all the earth." That is how "This. Changes. Everything."

Next session, we will spend our time discussing the global justice problem of human trafficking, a form of modern-day slavery, and what we can do to help bring an end to it.



SENDING (5 MINUTES):

Ask for a volunteer to lead the sending prayer.

Sending Prayer

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

God of Justice, you call us to your work of restoration. Give us eyes to see your plan for our world and may your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, where "justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Amen.

Go and Do Likewise - (Blessing and Sending)

We will end our session today with a blessing, sending you on your way. When I say, "Stand up," we all stand up. When I say, "Stand with," put your arm around your neighbor's shoulder. When I say, "Stand for," mark the sign of the cross on your forehead.

Mother Teresa was intolerant of poverty. Bono is intolerant of AIDS. Nelson Mandela was intolerant of apartheid. Martin Luther King Jr. was intolerant of racism. Jesus was intolerant of bigotry. May God bless you with beautiful intolerance that you may:

- **Stand up** – against evil.
- **Stand with** – the marginalized.
- **Stand for** – justice.

St. Paul reminded the community of the Ephesians: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." This changes everything!

Amen.



MARCH:

GATHERING FOR JUSTICE

**PART 2:
GOING
DEEPER**

This session, we gather for justice. Youth and adults will engage in conversations about God's heart for justice, what God's justice looks like, and how both affect how we view and engage the problem of human trafficking, a form of modern-day slavery. Participants will also learn what makes Houston such a hub for human trafficking and what the city is doing to raise awareness of and fight against it.

Slavery is not just an ancient or antiquated practice that oppressed Jews in the Old Testament thousands of years ago and uprooted and commoditized tens of millions of Africans until it was abolished in the U.S. during the mid-19th century. Slavery still exists today, and per the End It Movement, an estimated 20 million to 45.8 million people are trapped in it worldwide, even though it's illegal in every country. Domestic and international efforts have helped shed light on human trafficking and bring it to the forefront in recent years with President Barack Obama declaring January National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month in 2011 and President Donald Trump vowing last year to "bring the full force and weight of our government to the federal and at the federal level, and the other highest levels, whatever we can do, to solve this horrific problem." Considering half the 600,000 to 800,000 people trafficked across international borders every year are children, according to the U.S. State Department, it's more important than ever that young people are aware of trafficking.

According to the Polaris Project, a domestic anti-human trafficking non-profit organization, "human trafficking is a multibillion-dollar criminal industry... no matter where you live,

chances are it's happening nearby. From the girl forced into prostitution at a truck stop, to the man discovered in a restaurant kitchen, stripped of his passport and held against his will!" All trafficking victims experience not only the loss of freedom but the loss of their humanity. In the eyes of their captors, trafficking victims are nothing more than a commodity to be bought and sold. To a God who became fully human so we may become fully human, this reality is heartbreaking.

This "getting ready" session will educate participants on the two most common forms of human trafficking, labor-trafficking and sex-trafficking and ask them to explore two well-known Bible stories through a new lens. For those participants heading to Houston, this session will provide emotional preparation, as human trafficking will surely be addressed in various ways due to its looming presence over the city. FBI Special Agent Suzanne Bradley has stated that Houston is seen as a major hub for human trafficking due to its proximity to the Mexican border as well as the Interstate-10 corridor, which straddles the south, connecting Los Angeles to Jacksonville, FLa. The concentration of human trafficking in Houston has led to the rise of many projects that raise awareness of trafficking, such as the Red Sand Project, as well as a strategic plan to eliminate trafficking led by Houston's mayor, Sylvester Turner.

Our hope for the following sessions is that they both raise awareness of the existence and reality of human trafficking as well as empower participants to join God's work for justice and restoration in the world.



GATHERING CONNECTION:

Human trafficking is high on Houston's radar. Because of Houston's proximity to the borders, large sporting events and functions, human trafficking is a problem that the city is working hard to eliminate.

This topic may come up at a Mass Gathering and will be a Service Learning emphasis. Houston is serious about eliminating this injustice from the city, the state and the world. By learning about this issue, we engage with Houston in its fight.

By digging deeper into this topic, you will help your group be prepared to hear more about this at the Gathering.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Bible
- Christ Candle
- warm-up sheet in large print
- copies of the session handout
- printouts of pictures with their fact-filled captions from the Instagram account [@redsandproject](#) around your meeting space

GATHER (15 MINUTES):

Warmup

As the youth enter the space, encourage them to use the large-print version of the question "What is a characteristic of someone who is fully human?" and markers (or sticky notes and markers) to write down their responses.

Call the youth together when you are ready to start the session. Ask them to share what they wrote and why.

The Intro

In the last session we explored and grappled with our understanding of justice. We learned that equal does not always mean just, and that we are called to work for justice with God to restore humanity to right relationship with God and one another. Unfortunately, in our world there are many relationships that are broken, sick and just plain wrong. Did you know that today there are between 20 million and 45 million people trapped in a form of modern-day slavery called human trafficking? In fact, there are more slaves today than at any other point in history. We are going to spend this time learning about the two most common forms of human trafficking, how Houston is working to end human trafficking, and how we can join God in the work to end it.

Gathering Prayer

(Ritual: You may choose to light your Christ Candle at this time.)

Ask for a volunteer to lead the gathering prayer.

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

God of Justice, thank you for gathering us here to learn and talk about a problem that surely breaks your heart. You are the light of the world; shine in dark places. Enable those who work for justice, be with the humans trapped in slavery, and make us advocates for justice and peace.

Experiential Learning: Through the Cracks

Using the printed pictures from the Red Sand Project on Instagram, tape the pictures around your space. Behind the picture, tape the caption that is with that picture. Ask the group to wander around the space, looking at the pictures and the captions found behind the pictures.

After all have had a chance to do this, call them back and ask what they discovered. Share with them what the Red Sand Project is: Overlooked populations – refugees, immigrants, girls and others – are most at risk of being enslaved, spending their lives being exploited for the profit of others. To recognize the overlooked, Red Sand Project's sidewalk interventions invite you to take the time to find and fill a sidewalk crack with red sand and to then document your sidewalk transformation on social media using #RedSandProject.

Give each person a small bag of red sand to participate. (Perhaps you could do this outside your building, teaching the congregation and neighborhood about this project and human trafficking.)



Have a youth print out the Red Sand Project Instagram pictures and captions for you.

WORD (30 MINUTES):

God's Story – Scripture

We are going to look at a story in the Bible that features one form of human trafficking – labor trafficking. Read the story of Joseph being sold by his brothers – **Genesis 37:12-16**.

Discussion:

- Read the story through twice. The first time, just listen. The second time, I want different people in our group to put themselves in the shoes of the characters in God's stories. The characters are:
 - God
 - Joseph
 - Joseph's parents
 - Joseph's purchaser
 - A bystander or witness
- After the story, ask the following questions of the characters:
 - What jumped out at you this time around?
 - Who were you listening as? What did you feel as that person?
 - How did listening to the story in this way, after learning about human trafficking, change how you heard it? Did it add to or take away from the story?

LEARN:

Our Story – Modern Slavery

Watch the "MTV Human Trafficking" YouTube clip (length, 4:09 minutes).
[youtube.com/watch?v=A-UX_EwQcy8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-UX_EwQcy8)

Reflections, questions, prompts:

- Initial reactions? Had you seen this public service announcement before? What surprised you? What saddened you? Other emotions?
- What questions does this raise? Is this public service announcement effective?

LISTEN:

Watch the following video on the Red Sand Project:
[youtube.com/watch?v=jOw1o6VKbFU&t=2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOw1o6VKbFU&t=2s) (2:51 min.)

- What did you hear?
- How did this affect you?

CONNECT:

Refer to the Red Sand Project pictures and statistics.

Say: Things like the Red Sand Project remind us that we can't merely walk over the most marginalized people in our communities — those who fall through the metaphoric cracks. The simple act of placing sand in a crack or posting a photo on social media may seem inconsequential, but small actions can help raise awareness of the issues facing those who are overlooked.

ENGAGE:

The following is from *Relevant Magazine* titled "You Can Make a Difference in the Fight Against Modern Slavery." It lists 10 ways we all help bring about change. You can:

1. Learn about it
2. Connect on social media
3. Give money
4. Consider foster care or support for at-risk kids
5. Buy fair trade every chance you get
6. Volunteer locally
7. Participate in Human Trafficking Awareness Month in January
8. Use your voice
9. Stop trafficking efforts in your community
10. Find your puzzle piece (what supporting the fight looks like for you)

We're passing out a handout with the URL for this list as well as websites that you can learn from, give to and share, including the Hotel Photo Project, which encourages everyone to take and send in photos of their room whenever they stay in a hotel. Traffickcam.com uses these photos to determine where perpetrators of sex trafficking are committing their crimes.

Choose one or two of these ideas and come up with an action plan to get involved in raising awareness in your community.



SENDING (5 MINUTES):

Sending Prayer

Gather around the Christ Candle and ask someone to share the following prayer.

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

God of all people, stir us with discomfort, shake us from apathy, and call us to action. Be with those trapped in trafficking and sustain those who work to free them. We cry out for justice not without offering ourselves to be your hands and feet in the world. Amen.

Go and Do Likewise - (Blessing and Sending)

We will end our session today with a blessing, sending you on your way. When I say, "Stand up," we all stand up. When I say, "Stand with," put your arm around your neighbor's shoulder. When I say, "Stand for," mark the sign of the cross on your forehead.

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St. Paul reminded the community of the Ephesians: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." This changes everything!

Amen.

GATHERING FOR JUSTICE

GOING
DEEPER
HANDOUT

Here are some great national as well as international organizations that are working to end human trafficking. Some raise awareness, some raise money, and some offer practical ways you can respond.

“You Can Make A Difference in the Fight Against Modern Slavery” magazine article:
archives.relevantmagazine.com/reject-apathy/you-can-make-difference-fight-against-modern-slavery

How you can help:

- The Hotel Photo Project – traffickcam.com
- Truckers Against Trafficking – truckersagainstrafficking.org
- Houston human trafficking tool kits – humantraffickinghouston.org

How you can spread awareness:

- End It Movement – enditmovement.com
- Red Sand Project – [instagram.com/redsandproject](https://www.instagram.com/redsandproject)
- Free the Captives – freethecaptiveshouston.com
- Modern-day slavery facts – endslaverynow.org/learn/slavery-today


How you can support the fight:


- International Justice Mission – ijm.org
- Polaris Project – polarisproject.org
- Hope for Justice – hopeforjustice.org
- Not for Sale Campaign – notforsalecampaign.org


HELPFUL WEBSITES:


- cnn.com/2016/08/11/us/the-hunt-john-walsh-diaz-juarez-texas-sex-slave-human-trafficking/
- theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/02/how-sex-trafficking-goes-unnoticed-in-america/470166/
- texasmonthly.com/articles/the-lost-girls/
- patch.com/texas/houston/houston-mayor-unveils-comprehensive-human-trafficking-plan-super-bowl-looms
- elca.org/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Justice-for-Women/Social-Issues/Human-Trafficking
- pressandjournal.com/stories/human-trafficking-is-a-domestic-problem,3589?
- uccfiles.com/pdf/2017-Interfaith-Toolkit-on-Human-Trafficking.pdf
- [sf-hrc.org/what-human-trafficking#What is](http://sf-hrc.org/what-human-trafficking#What_is)

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