

MAY:

GATHERING FOR PURPOSE

PART 1

**GETTING
READY**



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



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

The ELCA teaches us about our calling, or what God wants us to do in our lives and in the world through its resource: Faith Practices in the ELCA – Living our baptismal covenant. This resource can be found here:

download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Living_Our_Baptismal_Covenant.pdf?_ga=2.261763661.1591641643.1497585995-1211622384.1493906241.

It's not just the question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" It's what does God desire you to do in the world today, tomorrow and for the future? Here is an excerpt from the introduction in the above resource:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people" (**Acts 2:42, 46-47**).

"... their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints — and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us ... "(**2 Corinthians 8:2-5**).

LIVING IN COMMUNITY AS GOD'S FAITHFUL PEOPLE IS A GIFT OF LOVE AND AN INVITATION TO SERVE IN MISSION.

We are chosen not for position or privilege but to live as faithful witnesses to the good news of Jesus Christ. In our baptism, we were made children of God and members of the body of Christ, the church. God's message of hope and reconciliation strengthens us in our faith walk. Our life in Christian community supports us as we experience the joys and struggles of life. In our walk, we are encouraged to equally embrace all differences and celebrate the diversity of gifts that can strengthen us. So, what are we to do? That's what this session hopes to answer.

GATHERING CONNECTION:

The Gathering encourages people to think more about vocation in our lives. The Gathering has been a catalyst for many youth and adults to experience God more fully and live life in response to our call from God, helping to discern our vocational calling from God. (What is God asking me to do?) Sometimes it's a small nudge to do something kind for someone. Sometimes it's a whole life focus shift to care for others in ways we never even thought about. For many, the Gathering has been the place that fed the fire burning inside them to live out their baptismal identity. The story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch shares this same idea. The eunuch heard the word interpreted from Philip and asked to be baptized, a baptism in the living waters of Jesus Christ, teaching us that grace changes everything. You can read this story in Acts 8:26-39. As Philip was called to offer interpretation and baptism, what are our youth sensing God is calling them to do? That's vocation.



HANDBOOK TIMELINE:

May 2017 – Registration closes and final payment due. Have a final parent-participant information meeting.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Bible
- Christ Candle
- warm-up sheet in large print
- tape
- markers
- notecards with professions written on them

GATHER (15 minutes):

Warmup

As the youth enter the space, encourage them to use the large-print version of the phrase "Something to do to change the world" and markers to write things they think they might do today, tomorrow or in the near future.

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

The Intro

In this session, we will be focusing on understanding what God wants us to do in this world, using the talents God has given us.

It's not just the question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" It's what does God desire you to do in the world today, tomorrow and for the future?.

Gathering Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to lead a gathering prayer asking God to be present in your conversation and to guide your learning. Feel free to add specific prayer requests of your community.



SOCIAL MEDIA SHARING:

Tweet or Instagram YOUR vocation!
#Purpose #ELCAYG2018

Experiential Learning: What Do I Do?

Headband-style game using vocations on the cards but not using the “vocation” language quite yet.

- Objective: To identify the card you’re holding on your head given the clues that other people give you.
- Sample vocations to write on cards: doctor, lawyer, pastor, mother, president, congressional representative, judge, law enforcement officer, firefighter, paramedic, teacher, principal, custodian, lunchroom worker, baseball player (or any iteration of a professional sports player), gardener, naturalist, father, scientist, surgeon.
- Supplies needed: index cards and something to write the vocations on the cards with (should be done before the session begins). Each participant takes one of the cards and tapes it on their forehead without looking at it.
- At the beginning of a player’s turn, the timer is turned over. During a player’s turn, they ask yes or no questions in order to help them figure out what word is written on the card in their headband. Players can continue asking questions until their time runs out. When a player asks a question, all of the other players may only answer the question with “yes,” “no,” “could be” or “I don’t know.” At any time, a player can guess what word is written on their card. They can make as many guesses as they want with no penalty for guessing incorrectly. If they are right, they remove the card go and help others identify their vocations on their cards, embodying the profession that they identified on their own card. (For example, if they had “doctor” on their card, they might use lots of medical jargon when interacting with others, or act like they’re in the emergency room and interacting with haste.)
- Processing questions
 - What did you discover in this experience? (all “jobs” that people do)
 - What is the definition of a “job” (a paid position of regular employment, a task or piece of work, which one usually gets paid for)

We as Christians do hold “jobs” where we “work,” but as Christians, we have a wider understanding of “work.” In this session, we are going to look at our “work.” But we don’t call it “work or job” we call it “vocation.” In the church, we seem to have fancy names for just about everything, not just to be different but to bring a deeper definition to how we live in the world. We’ll look at this word “vocation” as we move through this session. But to start, vocation is more than a job, so keep an open mind as we learn more.



WORD (30 minutes):

God's Story - Scripture

The story of Mary from Luke's Gospel, **Luke 1:26-56; 2:1-24**

Read the story in sections, from one or multiple translations, talking through questions and insights from the group and then addressing the theme of vocation in the characters in that specific section, writing them down on paper or a whiteboard:

Read Luke 1:26-38

Vocational themes:

- Mary: openness and willingness to accept God's purpose for her
- Angel: messenger, doing God's work, teaching and interpreting, proclamation of God's promises

Read Luke 1: 39-56

Vocational themes:

- Mary: impending motherhood, proclamation, musician
- Elizabeth: impending motherhood, proclamation, musician, hospitality

Read Luke 2:1-7

Vocational themes:

- Mary and Joseph: faithfulness, travelers, obedient to authority, relationship and engagement to one another, parenthood

Read Luke 2:8-20

Vocational themes:

- Shepherds: working (being shepherds, caring for the sheep), obedient, trusting, curious, proclamation
- Angels: proclamation, reassuring, directors, musicians
- Mary: reflection

Read Luke 2:21-24

Vocational themes:

- Mary and Joseph: abiding by God's law, being faithful to their beliefs, parents

Our Story - Vocation

LEARN:

Watch "Vocation 101: What is Vocation?" together, [youtube.com/watch?v=ihnzFH2L818&t](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihnzFH2L818&t) (2:42 min.)

As a group, define what gifts, talents and passions are (from the 1:25 mark). Have words written on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper and write down the ideas from the group.

- Sample definitions for each of these words for the leader to have for a common definition to be able to use:
 - Gifts: a special ability or capacity; natural endowment; talent
 - Talents: a special natural ability or aptitude
 - Passions: a strong or extravagant fondness, enthusiasm or desire for anything
- Together, brainstorm examples in each of the categories: gifts, talents and passions.

LISTEN:

Vocation definition: Where gifts, talents and passions collide is our vocation.

Share with the group the following definition of Vocation: **“The thing you do that was given to you to do in the way you do for the benefit of those you are doing it for.”** (Jacobson, RA; Jacobson, KN; Wiersma, H. Crazy Talk: A Not So Stuffy Dictionary of Biblical Terms, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009. Print) Got that? Vocation – not to be confused with vacation (taking a break from things) or evacuation (getting stuff out of your system) – is the thing(s) you are called by God to do, with gifts and talents God has given you, to which you commit your passion and excitement and energy for the sake of God's creation.

The word comes from a Latin term, “vocare,” meaning “calling” – which implies a caller: God. God calls more than just pastors. God calls each of us, gives us many gifts, and gives us a lift by means of the Spirit. We all have more than one vocation. Our Christian vocations include our jobs, our roles as family members, our roles as friends, as neighbors, as citizens, and so on. Vocation is all about loving the neighbor and serving in God's name.



Post a large sheet with the words *How is God Calling You?* written on it. Encourage your congregation to write their thoughts on the sheet.

CONNECT:

What do we see in Mary's vocational journey that can help us understand our own?

- How have you experienced a change or growth in your own vocation?
 - Do you see the things you are passionate about now being what you will do your whole life? How might they change as you grow?
 - Are there changes that you are you looking forward to?

ENGAGE:

Watch “Vocation 201: How Do I Discover My Vocation?”

[youtube.com/watch?v=li1kICU31wA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=li1kICU31wA) (1:47 min.)

- That's a lot to take in. Remember what was said in the video. This doesn't happen overnight. It takes time to figure this out.
- Vocation calling is a lifetime thing. Be open to how God is calling you today, tomorrow and in the future.



SENDING (5 MINUTES):

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

Sending Prayer

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe. You made the whole earth for your glory; all creation praises you. We lift our voices to join the songs of heaven and earth in thanksgiving for the many blessings you have given us. Renew in us the commitment to use our vocations in the service of others, especially of those in need. Let us be your hands to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, comfort the weary and outcast, welcome the stranger, care for creation, and be loving neighbors to all people. We pray all these things through your son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Go and Do Likewise – (Blessing and Sending)

When I 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 the forehead of someone beside you.

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Mary was called to be the mother of God – to love, nurture, raise, and protect Jesus until he was grown. Elizabeth was called to proclaim God's amazing presence in our world. Joseph was called to protect Mary and Jesus and to publicly present Jesus to the world. The angels were called to proclaim Jesus' birth and to encourage others to seek him out. The shepherds were called to seek Jesus and to proclaim his coming to others. God also has blessed you with a holy vocation:

Stand up – using your gifts to serve God.

Stand for – using your talents to care for all people.

Stand with – God's creation using your passions to better God's creation and change the world.

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.

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.



MAY:

GATHERING FOR PURPOSE

**PART 2:
GOING
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GETTING READY IN REVIEW! This session will review the learnings from the past year, reminding your group of how they have been shaped and formed to engage in the Gathering and in the world. You have shared a lot, learned a lot and changed a lot! Take the time to review so you are poised to go deeper at the Gathering next month!

Encourage your group to continue their action items in your community. Continue to look for ways to engage, serve and reform!



GATHERING CONNECTION:

See previous page. :)

HANDBOOK TIMELINE:



May 2017 – Do a final check of your group schedule, meal plans, etc., “The Official Gathering Handbook,” pages 35, 41.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Bible
- Christ Candle
- printout of “This Changes Everything” page from the appendix (or a newsprint sheet you have written those words on)
- markers
- the warm-up sheets from all your sessions (hung around your space)
- sticky notes
- four pieces of poster board with the words: Learn, Listen, Connect and Engage written in bold print (one word per board)

GATHER (5 MINUTES):

Warmup

As the youth enter the space, encourage them to use the large-print version of the Gathering theme “This Changes Everything” to write down what they remember from this past year in your time together that reminds them that Jesus’ life, death and resurrection changes everything.

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

The Intro

We have learned and shared a whole lot this past year. We’ve done so much, we want to take some time to remember all that we did and how it prepares us to engage in the Gathering next month!

Gathering Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to lead the gathering prayer.

God of community, we have done, learned and experienced so much this past year about you, Jesus, our faith and the world. Let all we have continue to shape and inform our daily lives, our decisions and our work in the world.

In your name, we pray. Amen.



SOCIAL MEDIA SHARING:

Instagram a group photo surrounded by your “warm-up” word posters from the past year to @ELCAGathering2018 #YourGroupName.

Experiential Learning: Year in Review

- Have the group go around the room, looking over the warm-up sheets, have them pay attention to what they wrote.
- Ask your group to see if there are things they would add to the sheets now that they have been through the whole year.
- If they have anything to add, have them use a sticky note and stick it to the page.
- After all have had a chance to do this, reflect on what they saw and any insights they had.

WORD (30 MINUTES):

God's Story - Scripture

Together read the Gathering theme text from **Ephesians 2:8**.

- Ask the group what they learned about this text over the last year.
- Remind them that it is by God's grace through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus that we are saved. There is nothing we can do for our salvation. God has already done it through Jesus!
- Grace is a foundational and distinctive piece of the Lutheran faith. This gift, undeserved and freely given, changes lives and perspectives as people realize they are enough because of what Christ has done and are called into the world to serve their neighbor and share the good news.
- The Gathering logo is a visual representation of the Gathering theme and the 2018 Gathering experience. It incorporates the coming together of a mosaic to reflect the diverse host city of Houston, as well as the idea that we are a church where all are imperfect and incomplete, yet we each belong in – and have an important place in – God's masterpiece. The cross at the center of the logo is the focus – it is God's grace, through Christ's life, death and resurrection, that changes everything for all people.
- This changes everything!



Our Story - Looking Back to Move Forward

Throughout these sessions in the "Our Story" portion, we focus on the service learning process of learn, listen, connect and engage. Today we are going to look over the past year and use that to build preparation for the Gathering. (Use the poster boards with the words Learn, Listen, Connect, and Engage for this portion.)

LEARN:

Using markers, write down things you have learned over the last year that have made an impression on you.

After all are done, share what was written.

LISTEN:

Using markers, write down things you heard over the last year that stuck with you or sparked your interest.

After all are done, share what was written.

CONNECT:

Using markers, write down ways that they saw opportunities for connection with our congregation and our community. They can also include ways they felt connected to the topic or something they learned.

After all are done, share what was written.

ENGAGE:

Using markers, write down ways they have engaged or are planning to engage the learnings and experiences from this past year in the congregation and community. Include ways they are better prepared to engage in the Gathering.

After all are done, share what was written.

Review the poster boards and give any final thoughts. Thank the group for their great work and engagement over the last year.



Post the sheets from the "Our Story" section of this lesson where the congregation can see and refer to them as you depart for Houston!

SENDING (5 MINUTES):

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

Sending Prayer

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe. You made the whole earth for your glory; all creation praises you. We lift our voices to join the songs of heaven and earth in thanksgiving for the many blessings you have given us. Renew in us the commitment to serve others, especially of those in need. Let us be your hands to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, comfort the weary and outcast, welcome the stranger, care for creation, and be loving neighbors to all people. We pray all these things through your son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

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