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Caryn D. Riswold, *ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Abortion* (2024)

Mary Elise Lowe and Mary J. Streufert, *ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Faith, Sexism, and Justice* (2025)

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#### **Forthcoming**

Roger A. Willer, *ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching: A Primer*

# REENGAGING ELCA SOCIAL TEACHING ON **FAITH, SEXISM, AND JUSTICE** FACILITATOR GUIDE

REENGAGING ELCA SOCIAL TEACHING ON FAITH, SEXISM,  
AND JUSTICE  
Facilitator Guide

This Facilitator Guide accompanies the book *ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Faith, Sexism, and Justice* by Mary Elise Lowe and Mary J. Streufert (Print ISBN 979-8-8898-3209-6. eBook ISBN 979-8-3419-0086-8).

This resource also references the ELCA social statement “Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action,” found here:  
[https://elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/Faith\\_Sexism\\_Justice\\_Social\\_Statement\\_Adopted.pdf](https://elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/Faith_Sexism_Justice_Social_Statement_Adopted.pdf)

The “Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action” six-session study guide is found here:  
<https://www.elca.org/faith/faith-and-society/social-statements/sexism/fsjstudyguide>

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Writer: Heather Clauson  
Series editor: Laura Gifford  
Series design: Josh Eller  
Cover and interior design: Josh Eller

Use the following prayer, liturgy, song, and challenge together as a closing worship, or use the parts that best fit your group and community.

**Prayer:** *Creator God, you sent Jesus as a human form of purest justice. Christ’s love equalizes everything and everyone. Deepen our awareness of injustice and help us to be your voice and your love to all our neighbors, near and far. Forgive us for times we have allowed injustice to hurt those around us, and grant us opportunities to be advocates and supporters for those who need us. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.*

**Scripture:** For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become enslaved to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Galatians 5:13-14

**Liturgy:** Service of Word and Prayer, *All Creation Sings*, pp. 42–45 (Download from *Sundays and Seasons*, or use your copy of ACS.)

**Song:** “All Are Welcome,” Evangelical Lutheran Worship 641

**Challenge:** ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Faith, Sexism, and Justice *is a call to action. What action steps does your faith call you to take today to advocate for people who suffer from expressions of sexism and injustice? Take a moment to develop three specific actions to be an advocate and an ally. Write these down and place them somewhere you will see them often.*

*This does not take into account immigrants and refugees, who come to the United States and are forced to take jobs well below their educational and vocational training just to barely make ends meet for their families.*

**LEADER:** *Of course, pay inequity is just one area of injustice in the world today. Inequity and injustice are all around us and in every system we have created: government, education, religion, health care . . . What other areas can you think of?*

The following questions are designed for use at the end of your last session on the topics of faith, sexism, and justice.

**LEADER:** *Let's take time for some closing reflections in light of all that we have discussed about faith, sexism, and justice:*

*How do people of all genders and gender expressions understand our faith?*

*How do we welcome and accept all forms of gender and gender expression?*

*How can our church be a safe place for those who have experienced sexism?*

*How can we be safe people for those who have experienced sexism?*

*How can we advocate for justice for our neighbors?*

*What steps can we take to improve our own personal welcome and acceptance of others?*

*Where do we find equity within the diverse body of Christ?  
Where does inequity still exist?*

## Facilitator Guide

This is a three-session guide, complete with suggested readings, activities, and discussion questions. This guide is meant to be used in conjunction with the book *ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Faith, Sexism, and Justice*. It is highly suggested that the book is read before gathering for discussion using this facilitator guide. The book and facilitator guide can be used as a whole, or as individual sessions on each topic. This guide is written with the intent of providing support for conversation and digging deeper into these topics. Each session is written as a stand-alone topic, and sessions can be used in any order. Additionally, this guide is written as a three-part discussion and can be used for such. The italicized parts are meant to be read aloud to your group.

These are difficult topics to discuss and even, at times, to understand. As the facilitator of these sessions, please honor participants who remain quiet, who ask difficult questions, who have opinions that oppose yours or other group members', and who may have experienced trauma around faith, sexism, and justice. All conversation and discussion should be voluntary and no one, at any time, should feel forced to participate. All discussions should remain confidential among and within the group.

This guide can be used for in-person meetings as well as for online, remote gatherings.

### **Please begin every session with these reminders and challenges:**

*You are welcome here. Your presence matters and strengthens our group and conversation.*

*This is a safe space. All conversations will remain private and within this group only.*

*You are invited to share as much as you are comfortable sharing. Silence is also welcome.*

*Instead of judgment, let's turn to wonder: "I wonder why I am responding the way I am. . . . I wonder how they came to that conclusion. . . . I wonder how I can learn more. . . ."*

*We invite the Holy Spirit into this space with us—to lead us, guide us, and fill us with compassion for ourselves, each other, and our healing world.*

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

*What were the different experiences of the volunteers, as opposed to those who were witnessing?*

*Did those who were witnessing want to help equalize the situation? Did they feel powerless to help?*

*Did the volunteers feel resentful or angry with the inequality?*

*Would they have shown up at the church on Saturday if they were only going to be paid \$10 for their work? How about \$25 for a day's worth of work? What about those who would be paid \$65, or \$100?*

*What would your price be for a full day of work?*

*What amount of money would make you feel like your time is valuable?*

After a good amount of discussion time, bring the group back together and ask whether anyone is willing to share their thoughts or feelings about this role-play scenario with the large group.

**LEADER:** *It is easy to feel some detachment from this situation because we know it was a role-play. However, this scenario is real life for millions of people every day, all over the world—even in the United States, where there is still a huge pay gap in the workforce. ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Faith, Sexism, and Justice shares the following information:*

*A white woman earns 79 cents for every dollar earned by a white man. A Black woman earns 63 cents for every dollar earned by a white man. A Latina woman earns 55 cents for every dollar earned by a white man. A recent report shows that cisgender employees make 32 percent more than employees who are transgender. (paraphrased, p. 81)*

**ROLE-PLAY SCENARIO:** Explain that you need some help with a project at the church and need three or four people to come work on a Saturday. At random, choose three or four participants (without asking for volunteers—just pick them). Tell them that the project is this weekend, rain or shine or snow, and to please rearrange their schedules to be here.

Check in with your volunteers. At this point, this will already seem unfair, unjust—not giving people a choice, requiring that they rearrange their schedules and responsibilities at the last minute, . . .

**LEADER:** *Now, before anyone gets to work, there is good news—you will all get paid for your work!*

Check in with your volunteers. They may be feeling a little better now, knowing they will get paid for this inconvenience. Some might be feeling more willing to come and less stressed or anxious about this whole situation. . . .

**LEADER:** *Remember, you are all needed all day for this project, and we will all be working together.* Tell each person a different amount of money they will get paid: *You will get paid \$100, you will get paid \$25, you will get paid \$65, and you will get paid \$10.*

Check in with your volunteers. Probably only one of them is now feeling good about this project.

**LEADER:** Thank your “volunteers” and have participants share in small groups the thoughts and feelings that this scenario brought up for them. Try to spread out the people you picked as “volunteers” into different small groups for the discussion. Provide a copy of the discussion questions below to each small group.

## SESSION: FAITH

Welcome all who have arrived, and provide name tags if that is helpful to your group. Begin every session with the reminders and challenges on page 4 of this facilitator guide.

You can ask the following questions all at once, or one at a time, leaving ample time for silent reflection.

**LEADER:** *Let’s all take a moment to reflect on what “faith” means to us:*

*Who brought you into a life of faith?*

*Who mentored you along the way?*

*How has your faith grown and changed throughout the years?*

*What has challenged your faith?*

*Was there ever a time you doubted your faith?*

After time for reflection, invite participants to share their thoughts and responses, allowing for silence as well.

You know your group and the dynamics among participants. You can invite people to share with one person sitting next to them, in a small group of three or four, or as a large group all together.

Leave time for participants to respond, or not.

**LEADER:** *Let's continue by thinking about our expressions of faith:*

*How do you express your faith? Is your faith expression different depending on where you are or who you are with?*

*How is your faith expressed to those who are familiar with what you believe? How is it expressed to those who are not familiar with it?*

*Specifically, how do you think a neighbor or community member understands our faith when walking by the church building or interacting with us? How do we share and express what we believe about our faith with those outside our walls?*

**LEADER:** *It is easy to have conversations and interactions with the people who agree with our faith. It is sometimes difficult to talk with those who disagree with us.*

*How can we share the loving welcome of Christ with those who fundamentally disagree with the core beliefs of our faith?*

*When people use one or two isolated scripture verses to support their beliefs that contradict the truth of the Bible, how can we respond with grace, truth, and kindness?*

*The book ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Faith, Sexism, and Justice is a call to action. Chapter 3 calls readers to embody three empowering Lutheran convictions to help them work for gender justice: Christian freedom, neighbor justice, and celebration of the diverse body of Christ. When this guide references “gender” and “gender justice,” the reference encompasses male/female as well as cis/trans and all forms of gender (in)justice and sexism.*

*a neighbor means pursuing justice for individuals and groups who are harmed and discriminated against by patriarchal, sexist, racist, homophobic, and ableist beliefs and systems. (pp. 77–78)*

*Serving our neighbor is something that Lutherans are very good at. We look outside our buildings to help those in need in our local communities and around the world. Lutheran World Relief, ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Community Services, Lutheran Disaster Response, local food banks, and shelters are consistently serving and helping people who need assistance. This is a form of justice.*

## Scripture for Reflection

**LEADER:** *Let's reflect on some scripture verses that can help us continue to understand the idea of justice.*

Ask for different volunteers to read the scripture passages. Take a few minutes after each reading to discuss as a group how justice is understood through it.

Luke 4:18

John 8:36

John 10:10

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Galatians 5:13-14

**LEADER:** *After hearing all of these scripture readings, what overall theme or message about justice can we understand as Christians?*

After a few minutes of discussion, redirect the group and introduce the role-play activity.

# SESSION: JUSTICE

Before this session, print out the Discussion Questions on page 17.

Welcome all who have arrived, and provide name tags if that is helpful to your group. Begin every session with the reminders and challenges on page 4 of this facilitator guide.

**LEADER:** *The word “justice” can evoke many different images for people—trials and lawyers, juries, jails or prisons, wanting revenge, getting even with someone. Let’s take a minute to come to a common understanding of what justice means as we move forward in conversation today, especially in the context of faith, sexism, and justice. The following is an excerpt from ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Faith, Sexism, and Justice:*

*Luther wrote, “I will give myself as a kind of Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me. I will do nothing in this life except what I see will be necessary, advantageous, and salutary for my neighbor, because through faith I am overflowing with all good things in Christ.” Serving the neighbor is a core conviction of Lutheran theology, and pursuing neighbor justice, especially gender justice, is at the heart of [the 2019 social statement] “Faith, Sexism, and Justice.” . . . Today, being*

*What does Christian freedom mean to you?*

*How can we use our faith in Christ to ensure that all people around us are truly free? Is there anyone in your life who might not be completely free?*

*How can we use our faith to advocate for our neighbors who experience sexism and injustice?*

*Beyond being advocates and welcoming those who express their faith and gender in different ways, how do we become allies?*

As a group, brainstorm or research places within your community that support and advocate for people who express their gender in various ways. Develop a list of places individuals can go in your community to learn more and to volunteer as advocates and allies. For a visual aid, post a map of your community as you discuss these places, and mark the named places with stickers or pins.

## Scripture for Reflection

If your group will not be using the closing liturgy below, you are invited to read the following scripture passages, leaving time for reflection and/or discussion, based on the dynamics of your group.

Luke 10:25-37

John 13:34

Romans 6:4

Hebrews 11:1

Use the following prayer, liturgy, song, and challenge together as a closing worship, or use the parts that best fit your group and community.

**Prayer:** *Creator God, you sent Jesus as a human form of purest faith. Deepen and strengthen our own faith so we can walk humbly with you by welcoming and accepting all your people. Open our minds and our hearts to ways we can express our faith by accepting those who express themselves differently than we do, and by welcoming others with love and acceptance. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.*

**Scripture:** I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. John 13:34

Feel free to include any or all of the scripture passages listed above.

**Liturgy:** Service of Word and Prayer, *All Creation Sings*, pp. 42–45 (Download from *Sundays and Seasons*, or use your copy of ACS.)

**Song:** “All Are Welcome,” Evangelical Lutheran Worship 641

**Challenge:** *This week, look for ways you can welcome someone who expresses their faith in a different way than you do. If you know someone who expresses their gender differently than you do, engage them in conversation with the intent of learning more about their journey, challenges they have faced, and ways you can be a supportive presence in their life.*

*Do women who don't have a “perfect” body get cast in leading roles of TV shows or movies? What message does this send to our society? To the children growing up now? To adults who have been a part of this system their whole lives?*

*What can you do to take action against sexism?*

If it fits the dynamics of your group, have participants turn and share with a partner or in a small group. Give enough time for everyone to share, and then redirect the group to the closing worship.

Use the following prayer, liturgy, song, and challenge together as a closing worship, or use the parts that best fit your group and community.

**Prayer:** *Creator God, you sent Jesus as a human form of purest love. Deepen and strengthen our own love for others so we can walk humbly with you by honoring and respecting all your people. Forgive us for the times we have allowed sexism to affect those around us, and strengthen our awareness of how we can be advocates for those who need us. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.*

**Scripture:** So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being! 2 Corinthians 5:17

**Liturgy:** Service of Word and Prayer, *All Creation Sings*, pp. 42–45 (Download from *Sundays and Seasons*, or use your copy of ACS.)

**Song:** “All Are Welcome,” Evangelical Lutheran Worship 641

**Challenge:** *This week, notice the advertising all around you. Be aware of what pops up on your social media feeds. Watch TV shows and movies. While doing all of this, pay close attention to the difference in how women and girls are portrayed versus how men and boys are portrayed.*

*What body types are cast in the media? Do female bodies look a certain way? Do male bodies look a certain way?*

## SESSION: SEXISM

If feasible, contact group participants ahead of your session and invite them to bring advertisements from magazines, the internet, catalogs, etc.

Welcome all who have arrived, and provide name tags if that is helpful to your group. Begin this session by sharing aloud the reminders and challenges on page 4 of this facilitator guide.

**LEADER:** *Let’s take time to look at different advertisements.* Use resources that have been brought in by the participants, or use cell phones to look up advertisements online, on social media, in magazines, and so on.

*What do you notice right away? What captures your attention?*

*Based on what you see, who/what does this advertisement say it is targeting? Who do you think it is really targeting? (For example, in an advertisement for jewelry, is the jewelry the focus of the advertisement, or is a person more the focus? What type of person?)*

*How are women being portrayed? How are girls being portrayed?*

*How are men being portrayed? How are boys being portrayed?*

*What about the products or services being advertised? Are they equally targeting men and women, boys and girls?*

*Is the advertising accurately representing the product/service? (For example, in an advertisement for soap, is it showing dishes being washed or a car being cleaned, or is the advertisement mainly focused on women showing the product?)*

**LEADER:** *Is anyone comfortable sharing a story about how sexism has personally affected you or someone you know?* Give some time for responses, also understanding that this might be too difficult for people to discuss in this setting. Remind the group that all genders experience sexism and anyone is welcome to share from their perspective.

If your group would benefit from personal stories about how sexism has affected two different women, please reference pages 42–45 in *ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Faith, Sexism, and Justice*. These stories can help frame your conversation and give context for those who have not experienced sexism and the lingering trauma it produces.

**LEADER:** After some time for discussion and reflection, redirect the group to take some time for silence. Introduce the silence in this or a similar way: *During this silence, you are invited to reflect on the ways advertising has affected you, or the ways sexism has affected you; confess to God your own sins in this area, or ask God for strength and wisdom to make changes to this system.*

**LEADER:** After several minutes for silent reflection, lead the group through this prayer: *God, be with us in this space and outside these walls. Guide us to work for a world where sexism does not exist and where everyone feels safe and fully respected. Open our minds and hearts to ways we can advocate for and protect vulnerable people and be your light in this world. Amen.*

## Scripture for Reflection

**LEADER:** *Let's focus on scripture to seek wisdom and understanding in this area. Many scripture passages are very difficult to understand when it comes to sexism. Let's remember what Martin Luther said about this. Luther said that if a passage or story in the Bible was difficult to understand, a reader should look within it for the message of God's love in Christ (ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Faith, Sexism, Justice, p. 6). For that reason, we will focus on New Testament passages and look for the message of love in Christ.*

John 4:1-42 (Samaritan woman at the well)

John 13:1-15 (Jesus washing the feet of his disciples; traditionally, only women or slaves washed feet.)

Galatians 3:28 (All are one in Christ Jesus)

*How does sexism show up in these readings?*

*How is love present in each of these readings?*

*What can we learn about how Jesus viewed women, based on these scripture readings?*

*What do you believe is the message of God's love in Christ in these readings?*

**LEADER:** *What are your responses or reactions to the following statement from ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Faith, Sexism, and Justice?*

*Patriarchy prevents women and girls from experiencing flourishing and abundance. It hinders all people from seeing themselves as equal members of the body of Christ in God's new creation. It suppresses the diversity of God's good creation. (p. 54)*