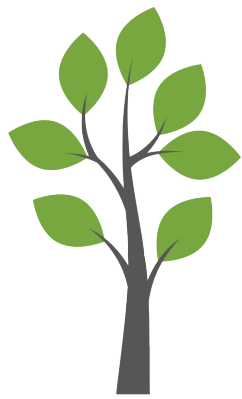


# Together by Grace

Introducing  
the Lutherans



*Study Guide*



AUGSBURG FORTRESS

TOGETHER BY GRACE: INTRODUCING THE LUTHERANS  
Study Guide

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References to ELW are from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Augsburg Fortress, 2006).

Pull quotes are from *Together by Grace: Introducing the Lutherans* (Augsburg Fortress, 2016).

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# How to use this study guide

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Thanks for agreeing to facilitate this study of the book *Together by Grace: Introducing the Lutherans!* You'll find this course offers an opportunity to discuss some of the foundations of Lutheranism while also using methods of learning that engage multiple intelligences. (For more on multiple intelligences, see <http://www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-research>.) Each session offers a variety of exercises and questions from which to choose, based on the interest expressed by those present. Not everyone learns in the same way, so take that into consideration when choosing options.

Announce the study in advance to determine who plans to attend. Encourage visitors and drop-ins, even if their schedules don't permit attendance at each session.

## Group leader options

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The same person can facilitate each session. Another option is to share facilitation among the group, with individuals choosing to lead sessions that fit with their interests and schedules. If you share leadership, it is helpful to have one person coordinate the sessions to be sure they are covered. This could be as simple as placing a list on the wall in the room where you meet and reminding the group who's on for the following week.

## Study guide

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Each session in this study guide begins with "A Note to Group Leaders" with tips and suggestions for facilitators. The session itself is written to be copied and shared with participants during your time together. Bring extra copies of the session each week to share with visitors and drop-ins.

The hope is that participants will read the articles in a section of the book in preparation for each session. Highlights of important themes will be shared each week in the session guide.

## Session options

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Plan on each session running 45 to 50 minutes. Each "Note to Group Leaders" includes suggestions for extending discussion on a particular topic into an additional session. Some sessions offer the opportunity for volunteers to do additional research during the week. Share these options with the group.

The use of smartphones is highly recommended if your group has questions for which no one has an immediate response. You'll also find resources in each week's "For further exploration" section that may assist you with questions that arise. Suggest that participants explore these resources on their own and share their thoughts with the group.

## Supplies

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Before the first session, distribute copies of the book *Together by Grace: Introducing the Lutherans* (Augsburg Fortress, 2016). Ask participants to read "The Faith We Confess," pages 9-45 in the book, in preparation for session 1.

Always have the following items on hand should you need them: paper, pens or pencils, Bibles, and copies of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Crayons, markers, or colored pencils can be used for drawings.

Also have *Luther's Small Catechism* (Augsburg Fortress, 2000, 2006, 2016) on hand for participants to use. It is available from Augsburg Fortress in a convenient pocket size and in a free app for Apple iOS and Android.

The "Note to Group Leaders" will remind you to have these and any additional supplies on hand for each week.

Have fun as you walk together by grace! Blessings for the journey!



# **Session 1**

## **The Faith We Confess**

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Thanks for agreeing to be a group leader for Together by Grace: Introducing the Lutherans!

You'll need to read the articles in "The Faith We Confess," pages 9-45 in *Together by Grace*, in preparation for this session. The session pages handed out to participants will highlight quotes from the articles. Use them as guides to help you prepare. Remember you don't need to know all the "answers." You just need to facilitate the conversation.

In fact, the Internet and smartphones have made it easier to facilitate conversation. Let participants know they can use their smartphones to look up additional information during sessions. Ask them to share what they learn from their search.

At the beginning of the session, ask participants which articles they have read. If some of those present have not read the material, be sure to point out the highlighted quotes in the session guide.

### **KEY POINTS**

Luther came to realize that we don't need to buy our way into God's favor. Our relationship with God is a gift. Justification by grace through faith, law and gospel, means of grace, theology of the cross, saint and sinner, and vocation are foundational concepts to our faith.

### **SUPPLIES**

Always have the following items on hand should you need them: paper, pens or pencils, Bibles, and copies of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and *Luther's Small Catechism*. Crayons, markers, or colored pencils can be used for drawings.

### **OPTIONS**

You have the option to pick from the questions and exercises based on interests expressed by those present. If you decide to use all the exercises, you may want to spend two or more sessions on this material. Doing so will give participants a chance to do additional research or reading to add to the discussion. Ask the group for their input into their preference.

Exercises such as drawing symbols of one's vocations can be done at home and shared the following week. Encourage participants to get creative!

And don't forget to have fun as you journey together by grace!



# Session 1

## The Faith We Confess

### Getting started

*Take a few moments for introductions and announcements.*

Since this is the first session, share your name, how long you've been a Lutheran (if you are one), and what sparked your interest in this study.

### Prayer

*Pray this prayer aloud in unison.*

O God, as we gather to study our Lutheran roots, we pray that you will enlighten and guide our conversation and time together. May your Holy Spirit give us new insights into how to more deeply connect with Christ in our daily lives so that we might be a living witness to his presence in all that we do. Amen.

### KEY POINTS

Luther came to realize that we don't need to buy our way into God's favor. Our relationship with God is a gift. Justification by grace through faith, law and gospel, means of grace, theology of the cross, saint and sinner, and vocation are foundational concepts to our faith.

### Reflection and discussion

*If your time is limited, focus on the questions of most interest to your group.*

***Understanding the gospel as a free gift has life-changing consequences [p. 14].***

***God doesn't need our good works. What God wants is our faith. It's our neighbors who need our good works [p. 15].***

1. Hymn writers share their theology through their words. Look at some of the following hymns of Martin Luther to examine his beliefs. What themes do you see in these hymns? (Hint: For help, see the list of core Lutheran themes on pages 19-22 in *Together by Grace*.)
  - From Heaven Above (ELW 268)
  - Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bonds (ELW 370)
  - O Lord, We Praise You (ELW 499)
  - Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word (ELW 517)
  - Our Father, God in Heaven Above (ELW 747)

***Ironically, a church that was born 'evangelical' hasn't been as intentional or effective as other denominations about actual evangelism [p. 24].***

***Faith in Christ isn't just about what happens when we die. It's about how we live [p. 26].***

2. Luther's "new obedience" in the Augsburg Confession reinterprets the relationship of work and faith. Luther says works are the result of faith, not vice versa. What examples of evangelistic outreach and social ministry that serve others do you see in "Lutheranism 202," pages 25-31?
  - In what ways do you participate in outreach and social ministry in your daily life?

- List ways in which your faith community engages in outreach and social ministry. List those you know of through your synod and the ELCA. Brainstorm other corporate and individual possibilities for outreach in your community.

***Faith requires the gathering of the Christian community, the ministry—God’s ministry to us—of word and sacrament. Christian faith is deeply personal but never private [p. 28].***

***When we trust God’s gracious promise, serving others is no longer a “got to” but a “get to” [p. 29].***

3. In “Lutheranism 101: Culture or Confession,” pages 17-24, the author speaks about vocation as a core Lutheran theme.
  - Draw symbols of all the vocations in which you live in service to your neighbor. Share your drawing with the rest of the group. What patterns do you see in your group’s drawings?

***No longer just a book of laws and judgment, the Bible’s whole message became for Luther a word of grace and redemption [p. 34].***

***What shows us Jesus in the scriptures communicates God’s favor; what does not shows us only human weakness and limitation [p. 35].***

4. How was Luther’s interpretation of scripture different from the prevailing tradition? What new aspects of biblical interpretation did Luther introduce?

***Only when we come to the second article of the Creed [‘I believe in Jesus Christ’] does the good news begin [p. 42].***

***‘Life in the Spirit’ comes when Christians are ‘led by the Holy Spirit’ and that Spirit’s leading always leads us to Christ [p. 44].***

5. What gospel elements did Luther highlight in his catechisms? How did these help define Luther’s spirituality?

## **For next week**

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Read “From the Sixteenth Century to Today,” pages 47-84 in *Together by Grace*.

The next session is a who’s who of Lutheran personalities and also explores the spread of Lutheranism. You could divide the session into two parts: a review of the four personalities, and a separate discussion of the growth of Lutheranism. Volunteers could do an Internet search on an assigned personality to get additional background. Others could explore the spread of Lutheranism. Plan on sharing your findings during the session.

## **Closing prayer**

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Gracious God, you bless us with your presence through your word and sacrament. Through your Holy Spirit, you call, gather, enlighten and make us holy. Empower us to serve in Jesus’ name as witnesses to your grace and power in our lives. May we go forth this week inspired by your deep love for all humanity to more deeply love and serve our neighbor. Amen.

## **For further exploration**

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*The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Fortress Press, 2000).

*Listen! God Is Calling! Luther Speaks of Vocation, Faith, and Work*, by D. Michael Bennethum (Augsburg Fortress, 2003).

For more on Martin Luther and the Reformation, visit: <http://www.luther2017.de/en/>.



## **Session 2**

# **From the Sixteenth Century to Today**

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Thanks for agreeing to be a group leader for Together by Grace: Introducing the Lutherans!

You'll need to read the articles in "From the Sixteenth Century to Today," pages 47-84 in *Together by Grace*, in preparation for this session. The session pages handed out to participants will highlight quotes from the articles. Use them as guides to help you prepare. Remember you don't need to know all the "answers." You just need to facilitate the conversation.

At the beginning of the session, ask participants which articles they have read. If some of those present have not read the material, be sure to point out the highlighted quotes as you proceed.

### **KEY POINTS**

Lutheranism began as Luther's response to abuses in the church. As it moved outside of Germany, it morphed and began to develop according to the local context and concerns. The Bible and Small Catechism were quickly translated into the language of each new region, following Luther's example of getting them into the hands of the people. The gift of God's grace remains a central teaching of the church throughout the world today.

### **SUPPLIES**

Always have the following items on hand should you need them: paper, pens or pencils, Bibles, and copies of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and *Luther's Small Catechism*. Crayons, markers, or colored pencils can be used for drawings.

### **OPTIONS**

You have the option to pick from the questions and exercises based on interests expressed by those present.

At the beginning of the "Reflection and discussion" time in this session, your group has an opportunity to create a Mind Map® to examine a topic. To learn about mind mapping, see *How to Mind Map®: The Ultimate Thinking Tool That Will Change Your Life* by Tony Buzan (Thorsons, 2002), or visit <http://www.tonybuzan.com/about/mind-mapping/>.

This session could be divided into eight sections, allowing participants to do additional research on the personality or topic, and using each exercise or question as a jumping-off point to delve deeper. Another natural division is to focus on the four personalities of the Reformation one week and then the expansion of the Reformation the next week. Do what works best for your group.

And don't forget to have fun as you walk together by grace!



# Session 2

## From the Sixteenth Century to Today

### Getting started

*Take a few moments for introductions and announcements.*

- Check in and introduce yourselves if there are any visitors.
- Did anyone do additional research on last week's topics? What did you discover?
- Consider watching the movie *Luther* (MGM Home Entertainment, 2004) together at another time and location.

### Prayer

*Pray this prayer aloud in unison.*

Creator God, be present with us as we study the roots of our Lutheran faith. Stir up your Spirit within us to give us a vision to see our connections with the past and our possibilities for the future. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

### Reflection and discussion

*If your time is limited, focus on the questions of most interest to your group.*

**[Luther] found that God initiates and sustains the relationship between God and God's people through speaking. God's word in oral, written, and sacramental forms, sustains and completes that relationship [p. 50].**

**Biblical lectures, hundreds of letters of counsel and consolation, devotional works, and other treatises mark Luther's last two decades [p. 54].**

1. Discuss the impact Martin Luther had on changing the way Christians viewed their faith. (Hint: Feel free to refer to the material from the first session.) Use mind mapping to illustrate this impact, if possible.

**A pioneer in many ways as a first-generation Protestant woman, Katharina was among the first women who married a priest; she set a model for the Lutheran parsonage life [p. 55].**

2. Give examples of how Katharina von Bora Luther lived out Luther's concept of vocation.

**After Luther's death in 1546, many viewed Melanchthon as the most important evangelical (Lutheran) theologian [p. 60].**

3. How did Philipp Melanchthon expand upon Luther's theology? Feel free to do an Internet search for additional information.

**[Bugenhagen] wrote several 'church orders,' Reformation church constitutions for cities and territories [p. 63].**

4. Reflect upon Martin Lohrmann's question in his article on Johannes Bugenhagen: "If people are saved by faith alone, why might "establishment" things like social institutions and church structures even matter?"

#### KEY POINTS

Lutheranism began as Luther's response to abuses in the church. As it moved outside of Germany, it morphed and began to develop according to the local context and concerns. The Bible and Small Catechism were quickly translated into the language of each new region, following Luther's example of getting them into the hands of the people. The gift of God's grace remains a central teaching of the church throughout the world today.



- Draw a picture of a church in which no structure is present. Now draw a picture of Bugenhagen’s blueprint for church order. What kind of church order is helpful? What kind of church order is not helpful?

***By the mid-seventeenth century Lutheranism was consolidated in northern German territories, Scandinavia, and the Baltic [p. 65].***

***In the area that now comprises the five Nordic nations, the impulse for reform was generated more by commercial and educational contact with German influences than as a response to abuses within the church [p. 67].***

***As [Lutheran immigrants] adapted to unfamiliar customs, they also established institutions, developed organized mechanisms for cooperation, and produced common worship materials suitable for their new setting [p. 68].***

***Although they now use many more languages, twenty-first-century Lutherans still teach the centrality of grace, and their churches are still identified by their commitment to word and sacrament [p. 71].***

5. Look at the cover of *Together by Grace*. How does the graphic symbolize the spread of Lutheranism? On this graphic, where would you place the various churches named in the article, “The Lutheran Reformation Goes Global,” (pages 65-71)? Why? Where are we now?

***Muhlenberg quickly began to gather together the scattered Lutheran pastors and congregations into the first Lutheran synod, the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, formed in 1748 [p. 72].***

***Lutherans learned to worship and do their theology in English and became more influenced by the English-speaking religious groups around them [p. 74].***

***In the United States, religion was voluntary, and if they wanted religious life the immigrants had to organize it (and pay for it!) themselves [p. 75].***

***American Lutheranism hit its statistical peak around 1965, with some nine million members [p. 76].***

6. Create a chart comparing the state-supported churches that evolved following Luther’s time and the voluntary churches that grew in the United States. What are the benefits of each model? What are the disadvantages? What are our contemporary realities?

***As Bonhoeffer puts it in Discipleship: In Christ ‘God is a God who bears. . . . Bearing constitutes being a Christian. . . . As Christ bears our burdens, so we are to bear the burden of our sisters and brothers’ [p. 80].***

***‘The God we serve is not a God of halfway [but] a God of wholeness,’ Gbowee said. God calls us to go beyond what we’re comfortable with and enter into the places that need reclaiming, the spaces God has given us [p. 84].***

7. How do Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Leymah Gbowee represent living one’s Christian faith amid turbulent times? What do their examples have to say to us today?

## For next week

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Read “Worship and the Arts,” pages 85-112 in *Together by Grace*.

In the next session we’ll take a look at God’s actions in worship and the sacraments and their centrality in our Christian faith. Then we’ll examine the music of Martin Luther and Johann Sebastian Bach and the art of Lucas Cranach as gifts of the Holy Spirit and as additional tools to teach and interpret the theology of the Reformation.

## Closing prayer

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O God of transformation, open our eyes, ears, and hearts to see that we are part of a long history of reformation and renewal. Help us to see the opportunities before us for reformation in our churches today. Fill us with your Holy Spirit so that we might be strengthened for the journey ahead and follow in the footsteps of those who came before us. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

## For further exploration

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“Johannes Bugenhagen: Reformer beyond the Limelight,” foreword from *Johannes Bugenhagen: Selected Writings, Volume I and Volume II* by Kurt K. Hendel (Fortress Press, 2015). Available at [http://www.augsburgfortress.org/media/downloads/9781451465556\\_Foreword%20Excerpt.pdf](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/media/downloads/9781451465556_Foreword%20Excerpt.pdf).

“Katharina von Bora, the Woman at Luther’s Side” by Martin Treu, *Lutheran Quarterly*, 13:156-178. Available at [http://www.lutheranquarterly.com/uploads/7/4/0/1/7401289/treu\\_katharina\\_von\\_bora.pdf](http://www.lutheranquarterly.com/uploads/7/4/0/1/7401289/treu_katharina_von_bora.pdf).

*Life Together: Reader’s Edition* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, ed. Victoria J. Barnett, tr. Daniel W. Bloesch (Fortress Press, 2015).

*Luther* (MGM Home Entertainment, 2004), starring Joseph Fiennes and Jonathan Firth.

For more on Leymah Gbowee, visit [https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2011/gbowee-bio.html](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2011/gbowee-bio.html).



# **Session 3**

## **Worship and the Arts**

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Thanks for agreeing to be a group leader for Together by Grace: Introducing the Lutherans!

You'll need to read the articles in "Worship and the Arts," pages 85-112 in *Together by Grace*, in preparation for this session. The session pages handed out to participants will highlight quotes from the articles. Use them as guides to help you prepare. Remember you don't need to know all the "answers." You just need to facilitate the conversation.

At the beginning of the session, ask participants which articles they have read. If some of those present have not read the material, be sure to point out the highlighted quotes as you proceed.

As group leader you may want to consider reading the articles by Gracia Grindal and/or John W. Kleinig listed in the "For further exploration" section for additional background. Or ask the participants if someone is interested in reading these articles to share the information with the group. The background will add to the depth of the conversation.

### **KEY POINTS**

The Reformation was a turning point in the use of music and arts in worship. A key concern of Luther's was that the German people more deeply connect with the gospel message in any way possible. Not only did he write and translate hymnody, he also included pictures in his Bible to aid in understanding.

### **SUPPLIES**

Always have the following items on hand should you need them: paper, pens or pencils, Bibles, and copies of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and *Luther's Small Catechism*. Crayons, markers, or colored pencils can be used for drawings.

A more detailed image of the interior of Saints Peter and Paul Church in Eisleben can be found here: <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/8d/cb/3d/8dcb3de877083cb1f1f748dc83ed21f7.jpg>. Print out color copies of this image so participants can more readily refer to it during the discussion of question 2.

Have highlighters on hand for use with question 5 on Bach. Participants can also use colored pencils.

Print out color copies of Lucas Cranach's Wittenberg Altarpiece for easier viewing with question 6. An image can be found here: <http://www.medievalhistories.com/ways-cranach/>.

### **OPTIONS**

Many groups will use Together by Grace during a Sunday school hour. You have the option to pick from the questions and exercises based on interests expressed by those present. If you decide to use all the exercises you may want to spend two or more sessions on this material. Doing so will give participants a chance to do additional research or reading to add to the discussion. Ask the group for their input into their preference. A natural break for this session occurs between the first three articles dealing with worship and the second three on the arts.

And don't forget to have fun as you walk together by grace!



# Session 3

## Worship and the Arts

### Getting started

*Take a few moments for introductions and announcements.*

- Check in and introduce yourselves if there are any visitors.
- Did you do additional research on last week's session? What did you discover?

### Prayer

*Pray this prayer aloud in unison.*

O Holy Spirit, we give you thanks for your presence among us. You constantly draw us into a deeper relationship with the Trinity so that our worship will feed us for our daily journey of faith. Open our ears and eyes to experience Christ's presence in music and the arts. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

#### KEY POINTS

The Reformation was a turning point in the use of music and arts in worship. A key concern of Luther's was that the German people more deeply connect with the gospel message in any way possible. Not only did he write and translate hymnody, he also included pictures in his Bible to aid in understanding.

### Reflection and discussion

*If your time is limited, focus on the questions of most interest to your group.*

***After we are fed and nourished by God's word and by bread and wine, we don't settle in for a long nap. We are not the same people who gathered [p. 90].***

1. Look at the graphic of the cycle of worship and life on page 90 in *Together by Grace*. Where in this cycle do you most deeply connect? How do you carry that connection with you into each week? Share your thoughts with one or two others in the group. (Hint: Feel free to refer to a worship bulletin or ELW to help you in your reflection.)

***God works through baptism to join us to Christ in profound ways, no matter our stage of life and regardless of our cognitive abilities [p. 92].***

2. Look at the photo of Saints Peter and Paul Church in Eisleben, where Martin Luther was baptized on November 11, 1483. (You can also refer to the photo on page 93 of *Together by Grace*.) The space still includes the baptismal font where Luther was baptized, but an immersion font has been added to intentionally express Luther's baptismal theology. What does the renovation say to you? Discuss. (Hint: Feel free to refer to the Small Catechism section on the Sacrament of Baptism for discussion ideas.)

***What matters is that the bread and the wine are Jesus' body and blood, given for us. What matters is that these finite elements contain an infinite measure of God's grace [p. 98].***

3. What does the following equation mean to you? How does it affect your daily living? (Hint: Feel free to use the Small Catechism section on the Sacrament of Holy Communion for ideas.)

God's Word + bread and wine = body and blood of Christ + forgiveness of sins = infinite grace.

***Liturgical reforms and the wish to incorporate congregational song into worship inspired the creation of a new repertoire of service music made up of hymns and liturgical songs [p. 100].***

**Luther identified music as an instrument through which the Holy Spirit works and said that the only thing of higher value than music was the word of God itself [p. 101].**

4. In the first session, The Faith We Confess, we explored some of Luther's theological themes through his hymnody. Now look at these additional hymns by Luther. What is the message of each hymn? What was the role of hymns in the Reformation? What is the role of hymns now? (Note: The asterisked hymns are mentioned in the session reading.)

- We All Believe in One True God, ELW 411
- A Mighty Fortress Is Our God, ELW 503\*
- Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice, ELW 594\*
- Out of the Depths I Cry to You, ELW 600\*

**A Bible owned by Bach has an annotation next to a section of 2 Chronicles that describes the presence of God in temple worship; Bach's notation reads 'Where there is devotional music, God is always at hand with his gracious presence' [p. 106].**

**Bach was the quintessential Lutheran church musician, living as a servant of the church through his vocation as musician [p. 107].**

5. Highlight the main points in the article about Johann Sebastian Bach using a marker or colored pencil.

- Read 2 Chronicles 5:11-13. How might this Bible passage have informed Bach's theology of music? (Hint: If you want to know more, read the suggested resource for further exploration by John W. Kleinig.)

**Luther explained that religious images are not necessary, but that Christians 'are free to have them or not,' as long as they are not worshiped (LW 51:81) [p. 108].**

**Cranach's contribution to the Reformation, especially the work of Luther, is undeniable. Through his art, he served as an interpreter of Luther's theology [p. 112].**

6. How did Lucas Cranach's art further Luther's Reformation theology? (Hint: Look at the altarpiece from St. Mary's Church, Wittenberg, for some ideas. See page 110 in *Together by Grace*.)

## **For next week**

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Read "Faith Active in Love," pages 113-146 in *Together by Grace*.

Luther's understanding of the gospel frees us from the need to earn points to gain God's grace. Instead grace is offered freely. God invites us to respond to this gift by loving and serving our neighbor. We will review the theological foundation of our vocation of service. We'll also look at Lutheran agencies and initiatives which focus on ministry and service in a variety of capacities.

## **Closing prayer**

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Creative God, we thank you for the variety of ways in which you invite us into a relationship with you. May we look for ways to extend your holy creativity so that others might come to know you, too. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## For further exploration

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*Bach, Chronicles and Church Music* by John W. Kleinig, *Logia*, vol. 9, no. 3, 7-10. Available at [http://www.johnkleinig.com/files/8613/2695/1384/Bach\\_Chronicles\\_etc.pdf](http://www.johnkleinig.com/files/8613/2695/1384/Bach_Chronicles_etc.pdf).

*The Hymns of Martin Luther: Set to Their Original Melodies with an English Version*, ed. Leonard Woolsey Bacon and Nathan H. Allen (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883). Free eBook (search on "luther hymns bacon allen").

*Lucas Cranach the Elder: Art and Devotion of the German Reformation* by Bonnie Noble (University Press of America, 2009).

*The Rhetoric of Martin Luther's Hymns: Hymnody Then and Now* by Gracia Grindal. *Word and World*, vol. 26, no. 2, Spring 2006, 178-187. Available at [https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/26-2\\_Renewing\\_Worship/26-2\\_Grindal.pdf](https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/26-2_Renewing_Worship/26-2_Grindal.pdf).



# **Session 4**

## **Faith Active in Love**

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Thanks for agreeing to be a group leader for Together by Grace: Introducing the Lutherans!

You'll need to read the articles in "Faith Active in Love," pages 113-146 in *Together by Grace*, in preparation for this session. The session pages handed out to participants will highlight quotes from the articles. Use them as guides to help you prepare. Remember you don't need to know all the "answers." You just need to facilitate the conversation.

At the beginning of the session, ask participants which articles they have read. If some of those present have not read the material, be sure to point out the highlighted quotes as you proceed.

### **KEY POINTS**

Luther's concept of vocation extends into the community and all of creation. Our faith is in action worldwide through networked social ministry agencies, education, and care for creation. Vocation is at the heart of our daily living and all of our interactions.

### **SUPPLIES**

Always have the following items on hand should you need them: paper, pens or pencils, Bibles, and copies of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and *Luther's Small Catechism*. Crayons, markers, or colored pencils can be used for drawings.

Consider having a couple of musicians demonstrate the concept of musical accompaniment in question 3 as an example of working and being stronger together.

### **OPTIONS**

You have the option to pick from the questions and exercises based on interests expressed by those present.

You could divide the session into two separate sessions. A natural split would be to do the first three exercises one week and the rest a following week.

And don't forget to have fun as you walk together by grace!



# Session 4

## Faith Active in Love

### Getting started

*Take a few moments for introductions and announcements.*

- Check in and introduce yourselves if there are any visitors.
- Did you do additional research on last week's session? What did you discover?

### Prayer

*Pray this prayer aloud in unison.*

O God, open our ears to hear your presence in our conversations as we explore the deeper meaning of your call to us as your baptized people. Help us to see the many possibilities before us to live our faith through action. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

#### KEY POINTS

Luther's concept of vocation extends into the community and all of creation. Our faith is in action worldwide through networked social ministry agencies, education, and care for creation. Vocation is at the heart of our daily living and all of our interactions.

### Reflection and discussion

*If your time is limited, focus on the questions of most interest to your group.*

***Grace alone liberates the Christian to engage social and political structures for the common good [p. 116].***

***Wherever the Reformation took root, legislation was developed that translated Luther's theology into social programs [p. 116].***

1. How did Luther's interpretation of vocation move Christians into social action and the political sphere? Draw a picture of your interpretation of this outward movement. Share it with your group. (Hint: Consider how the "Common Chest" was an important part of this shift.)

***In the early and middle part of the nineteenth century, this understanding of life lived in service to the neighbor found particular expression in a program of missional outreach known as the deaconess movement [p. 119].***

***Many of our most important and well-known Lutheran social service agencies can trace their origins directly to the work of these deaconesses and other pioneers of inner missions [p. 122].***

2. Have you known a deaconess or diaconal minister? In what capacity did she or he serve?
  - The article, "Lutherans and Diakonia," pages 119-123, points out that deaconesses and diaconal ministers are bridges between the church and the world. How would you either explain or draw this relationship based on your reading and/or experience?

***Lutherans are changing lives. We are lifting prayers of joy because of our sharing in the gospel—and we trust that the one who began this work among us will bring it to completion [p. 126]!***

***'[Lutheran World Relief] establishes a relationship with local partners based on mutual trust and respect to create a flexible plan to improve the wellbeing of the poor' [p. 129].***



3. What experiences and interactions have you had with the ELCA Malaria Campaign, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, Lutheran World Relief, and Lutheran Services in America?
- How have these networks of connections used the “accompaniment” or the relational model in serving the neighbor?
  - Consider the model of musical “accompaniment.” How do vocals or instrumentals support a musical piece to make it stronger? How did this campaign and these agencies strengthen the neighbor? (Hint: Feel free to visit their websites for additional information.)

***Teaching and learning are still key to discerning our way into God's good future [p. 131].***

***Adult learning happens in conversation, in worship, in service contexts, and in a variety of formal and informal education efforts [p. 131].***

4. In “The Lutheran Commitment to Education,” pages 131-135, the author says:

The essential connectedness of faith and education can be summarized in a little catechism:

Because of Jesus Christ, the world

Because of the world, vocation

Because of vocation, education

Because of vocation and education, Jesus Christ

- What does this mean to you? Take each phrase and either draw or list its meaning for you. Discuss each person's drawings or lists.

***As all branches of science 'closed the gaps' in areas that had been consigned to the mysterious operations of God, the need for God's activity as an explanation came into question, as did the role of religion itself [p. 137].***

***Science and religion both make valid truth claims within their respective realms. The intersection is the summons for faithful people to use science to care for human communities and God's creation [p. 139].***

5. List and discuss Barbour's four models of relating science and religion. What is the position of the ELCA? Where have you seen this position in action? (Hint: The article contains a footnote from the ELCA Social Statement on Genetics, Faith, and Responsibility [2011]. Here is a summary with additional information to inform your discussion: [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/GeneticsSS\\_Summary.pdf?\\_ga=1.269114481.1871471677.1427809396](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/GeneticsSS_Summary.pdf?_ga=1.269114481.1871471677.1427809396).)

***We have an ethic of faith-active-in-love for vulnerable neighbors, including the vulnerable throughout the whole Earth community [p. 141].***

***Lutherans are called to listen to the cry of the Earth along with the cry of the poor and to take leadership in these critical issues. Ecological justice is not an add-on. It is foundational for our faith [p. 142].***

6. The concept of “the finite holds the infinite” was presented in session 3's article “On Holy Communion.” How does this concept extend to Lutherans caring for creation?
- What would it look like to follow our biblical vocation to care for creation? Get as concrete as possible in your responses. (Hint: Feel free to refer to the article, “Why Lutherans Care for Creation: A Profile,” pages 140-142.)

***The metaphor of priesthood perpetuates a clerical misunderstanding of Christian vocation in the world, the notion that real ministry is only what 'priests' (clergy) do [p. 143].***

***In baptism the Holy Spirit 'ordains' every baptized person into a vocation of service to God and neighbor [p. 143].***

7. Using point number 7 in the article “Toward Reimagining the Universal Priesthood” (page 144), create a list or Mind Map® of what Shalom ministry looks like in your life. Share your map in pairs or with the whole group. What did you discover from this exercise? (Hint: You can use points 8-11 in the article to give you some starting points for your map.)

## **For next week**

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Read “Being Lutheran Together in a Wider World,” pages 147-174, in *Together by Grace*.

In the next session you’ll look at the many connections Lutheranism in the twenty-first century has with other faith communities. How do we continue to reform the church amid the gifts and challenges presented by diversity?

## **Closing prayer**

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O God, open our eyes and our hearts to see the many possibilities open to us to put our faith into action in our communities and in the world. Empower us to be bold in our service, knowing that all we do to care for the neighbor is a demonstration of your love for us. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

## **For further exploration**

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*Doing Justice: Congregations and Community Organizing* by Dennis A. Jacobsen (Fortress Press, 2001).

*Reclaiming the “V” Word: Renewing Life at Its Vocational Core* by Dave Daubert and Tana Kjøs, Lutheran Voices series (Augsburg Fortress, 2009).

“A Social Statement on Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice” (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1993). Available at [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/EnvironmentSS.pdf?\\_ga=1.264811279.1871471677.1427809396](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/EnvironmentSS.pdf?_ga=1.264811279.1871471677.1427809396).

“A Social Statement on Our Calling in Education” (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2007). Available at [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/EducationSS.pdf?\\_ga=1.203119505.1871471677.1427809396](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/EducationSS.pdf?_ga=1.203119505.1871471677.1427809396).



## **Session 5**

# **Being Lutheran Together in a Wider World**

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Thanks for agreeing to be a group leader for Together by Grace: Introducing the Lutherans!

You'll need to read the articles in "Being Lutheran Together in a Wider World," pages 147-174 in *Together by Grace*, in preparation for this session. The session pages handed out to participants will highlight quotes from the articles. Use them as guides to help you prepare. Remember you don't need to know all the "answers." You just need to facilitate the conversation.

At the beginning of the session, ask participants which articles they have read. If some of those present have not read the material, be sure to point out the highlighted quotes as you proceed.

### **KEY POINTS**

As Lutherans in the twenty-first century, we have relationships with Lutherans in other parts of the world, as well as with ecumenical and inter-religious groups. At the same time, we are called to continue to reform the church and share the good news of God's grace in a multicultural world.

### **SUPPLIES**

Always have the following items on hand should you need them: paper, pens or pencils, Bibles, and copies of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and *Luther's Small Catechism*. Crayons, markers, or colored pencils can be used for drawings.

### **OPTIONS**

You have the option to pick from the questions and exercises based on interests expressed by those present. If you decide to use all the exercises, you may want to spend two or more sessions on this material. Doing so will give participants a chance to do additional research or reading to add to the discussion. Ask the group for their input into their preference.

Consider spending three separate sessions on "Being Lutheran Together in a Wider World," with the first and second articles as one unit, the ongoing reformation as a second unit and the last two articles as a third. Be aware that questions 3 and 4 will likely require more time.

And don't forget to have fun as you walk together by grace!



# Session 5

## Being Lutheran Together in a Wider World

### Getting started

*Take a few moments for introductions and announcements.*

- Check in and introduce yourselves if there are any visitors.
- Did you do additional research on last week's topics? What did you discover?

### Prayer

*Pray this prayer aloud in unison.*

Creative God, we give you thanks for diversity and the many expressions of faith throughout your church on earth. Give us insight and wisdom as we explore the gifts and challenges this diversity offers us in the twenty-first century and beyond. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

#### KEY POINTS

As Lutherans in the twenty-first century, we have relationships with Lutherans in other parts of the world, as well as with ecumenical and inter-religious groups. At the same time, we are called to continue to reform the church and share the good news of God's grace in a multicultural world.

### Reflection and discussion

*If your time is limited, focus on the questions of most interest to your group.*

***Paul did more than talk about multiculturalism. He actively worked on transforming the early Christian community [p. 149].***

***When we envision a multicultural ELCA we see . . . all that we are together—reflecting the country's diversity [p. 151].***

1. What did the advancement of multiculturalism look like in Paul's day? What challenges did the early church face?
  - What does the advancement of multiculturalism look like in our day? What challenges do we face? (Hint: Feel free to refer to the book of Acts for additional information on the church in Paul's day. Consider reading Acts as homework. Share your discoveries in the next session.)

***[Lutheran World Federation] . . . has increasingly described its life as a journey to closer relationship, a 'spiritual journey where God's Spirit allows us to listen to one another and share our joys and sufferings' in 'solidarity, interdependence and mutual responsibility' [pp. 152-153].***

***Like all of world Christianity in recent decades, the LWF has experienced a shift in the balance of its membership toward the global South [p. 154].***

2. According to the article on LWF, how has their mission shifted over the years? How does the logo of the LWF visually describe its current vision? What new opportunities exist through their work?

***The significant advances the ELCA has made in ecumenical and inter-religious relations can therefore be understood as part of the ongoing reformation of our church in today's rapidly changing religious landscape [p. 157].***

***In an era of rapid change and increasing division, the ELCA's calling is to 'strive toward fuller expressions of unity with as many denominations as possible' (Ecumenism, p. 4) [p. 161].***

***By authentically engaging with others, we become more deeply grounded in who we are [p. 165].***

3. List or Mind Map® the Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations in which the ELCA is currently involved. What did you discover?
- Where have you seen ecumenical full-communion partnerships in action?

***Ours is the work of building honest relationship as the beloved community [p. 168].***

***People of color and people living in high-poverty circumstances are often seen more as recipients than resources [p. 169].***

***We are in a season that calls for more boldness than we've demonstrated, levels of investment that will draw on resources up to now left unengaged, and a willingness to go to some places we've only heard about from others [p. 170].***

4. In the article, "The Challenge to Be an Authentically Multicultural Church," pages 167-170, the author lifts up the lament as a theme as the ELCA continues to face the challenges of more fully welcoming and recognizing the gifts of people of color.
- Write a lament drawing upon points in the article. This may be done individually or in pairs. (Hint: Look at some communal psalms of lament, such as Psalms 44, 60, 74, 80, and 126.) Feel free to add your own thoughts to the lament.
  - Share your lament with the group. What challenges were identified? How might these challenges be embraced and engaged?

***Being the church is our commitment to how we are together in a world that is sometimes messy and confusing and mean [p. 172].***

***The things we have in common or that are different can threaten to rip us apart, but they also have the potential to bring us together [p. 174].***

5. The article, "Deciding to Choose," pages 171-174, focuses on the writer's journey of discovery and acceptance of her identity as a Lutheran. Consider how and when you became a Lutheran. Draw a timeline showing turning points or milestones along the way in this journey. Share your timelines and compare your thoughts and discoveries. Save your timeline for further use next week.
- What is important to you about being Lutheran? Share your thoughts with one or two people in your group.

## **For next week**

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Read "Voices and Places: Stories from the Global Lutheran Family," pages 175-204, in *Together by Grace*.

Next week you'll hear nine stories from Lutherans around the world and their personal experiences in their homelands. Are there people in your group who would like to serve as storytellers during the next session? Assign each one to a story from "Voices and Places." Encourage outside research to supplement the assigned story. Storytellers can prepare to tell the story in the first person if they like, speaking as the main character in the story.

## **Closing prayer**

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Holy Spirit, you are the gatherer of the church on Earth. We give you thanks that you have called us to be your holy people and to join our witness to Christ with others. Together may we amplify our praise and thanksgiving in Jesus' name. Amen.

## **For further exploration**

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*A House of Prayer for All Peoples: Congregations Building Multiracial Community* by Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook (Alban Institute, 2002).

“A Social Statement on Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture” (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1993). Available at [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/RaceSS.pdf?\\_ga=1.206288787.1871471677.1427809396](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/RaceSS.pdf?_ga=1.206288787.1871471677.1427809396).

“What does ‘Full Communion’ mean for Lutheran worship?” *Worship Formation and Liturgical Resources: Frequently Asked Questions* (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2013). Available at <http://www.elca.org/worshipfaq> under “Ecumenical and Inter-Faith.”



# **Session 6**

## **Voices and Places: Stories from the Global Lutheran Family**

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Thanks for agreeing to be a group leader for Together by Grace: Introducing the Lutherans!

You'll need to read the articles in "Voices and Places: Stories from the Global Lutheran Family," pages 175-204 in *Together by Grace*, in preparation for this session. The session pages handed out to participants will highlight quotes from the articles. Use them as guides to help you prepare. Remember you don't need to know all the "answers." You just need to facilitate the conversation.

At the beginning of the session, ask participants which articles they have read. If some of those present have not read the material, be sure to point out the highlighted quotes as you proceed.

### **KEY POINTS**

The thread of grace runs through stories from individual Lutherans around the world, in both the opportunities and struggles they face. We walk with them in the Spirit, together by grace.

### **SUPPLIES**

Always have the following items on hand should you need them: paper, pens or pencils, Bibles, and copies of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and *Luther's Small Catechism*. Crayons, markers, or colored pencils can be used for drawings.

### **OPTIONS**

You have the option to pick from the questions and exercises based on interests expressed by those present. If your group chose the option of assigning "tellers" of the stories, you will likely be spending three or more sessions on "Voices and Places" in order to honor each story.

And don't forget to have fun as you walk together by grace!



# Session 6

## Voices and Places: Stories from the Global Lutheran Family

### Getting started

*Take a few moments for introductions and announcements.*

- Check in and introduce yourselves if there are any visitors.
- Did you do additional research on last week's session? What did you discover?

### Prayer

*Pray this prayer aloud in unison.*

Creator God, you have drawn your church together as one great cloud of witnesses. As we gather today, open our eyes to our unity with those around the world who celebrate the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

#### KEY POINTS

The thread of grace runs through stories from individual Lutherans around the world, in the opportunities as well as the struggles they face. We walk with them in the Spirit, together by grace.

### Reflection and discussion

*If your time is limited, focus on the questions of most interest to your group.*

1. If your group chose the option of assigning “tellers” of the stories, let each person tell the story, in first person if they are comfortable doing so, and share any research they did on the background of the country in the story. Reflect on these questions for each story:
  - What were the joys or struggles at the heart of the story?
  - What opportunities does the story highlight for a new reformation?
  - What did you learn from hearing the story? What did the story stir up within you?

Hint: You can use these questions even if you don't have a story “teller.”

***The church in East Germany is, in my eyes, a mission field where the institution has to regain trust, and the stories of faith have to be told again and anew [p. 180].***

***This evangelical turnaround is an expression of the priesthood of all believers, for in 1743 the church was for Dutch planters only, with no evangelical outreach or openness to the African slaves or indigenous peoples [p. 182].***

***All these things—lively and Spirit-filled worship, a commitment to serving physical as well as spiritual needs, and a living memory of persecution—are part of what characterize the EECMY [Ethiopian Evangelical Church-Mekane Yesus] as it continues to grow in Jesus' name [p. 186].***

***Hope gives us a warmer attitude towards others, and it helps us to trust God, to make our ideas about God bigger and wider [p. 189].***

***One of the greatest challenges confronting the Palestinian Christian today is emigration [p. 191].***



***Too many Christian women still suffer due to the traditional and oppressive interpretations of the scriptures and theology [p. 196].***

***In times of crisis and violence, what keeps one going is the support of the Christian community and a lively hope in the resurrection [p. 198].***

***A country now estimated to be 90 percent Christian and 60 percent Lutheran, Namibia can teach us much about evangelism and church growth [p. 199].***

***In my experience, all congregations near and far are part of this large piece of godly handiwork, integrating different colors and materials into a beautiful picture of faith [p. 204].***

2. Above are quotes from each article in the last section of *Together by Grace: Introducing the Lutherans*. What do they highlight about the context in which Lutheranism exists today around the world? What are the commonalities in context? What are the differences in context?

- How has the context affected the gospel message and how it is shared?

Hint: Feel free to go through the articles and pick your own quote that highlights the message for you. Share it with the group.

3. *Together by Grace* started out with sharing the roots of our faith. This final section shares some of the realities of twenty-first-century Lutheranism around the world. Pick a story and draw a picture of the reality that the author faces. Share your picture with the group. How do the stories in this section connect? How are they different?

4. Turn to the table of contents in *Together by Grace*. Look at the themes you have covered in your conversations. How are these themes present in the stories included in “Voices and Places”? List them. Which are predominant? Which are not present?

Hint: Feel free to page through the first several sections for theological themes. How do the stories of Bonhoeffer and Gbowee connect with the personal stories in this last section?

## ***In conclusion***

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Together by Grace has been an opportunity to look at Lutheranism from its roots in the Reformation to its realities 500 years later. Hopefully this study has put you more in touch not only with the challenges we face, but also the opportunities of being Lutheran in the twenty-first century.

## ***Closing prayer***

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Gracious God, over these past weeks we have journeyed together, learning more about the depth of your love for us. Grant that we may be transformed by your grace, so that we might go forth and share your love with others whom we encounter in our daily journeys. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

## ***For further exploration***

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“In Martin Luther’s Church the Pastor Asks: Where Have All the Protestants Gone?” by Elisabeth Braw (*Newsweek*, February 24, 2014). Available at <http://www.newsweek.com/2014/02/28/martin-luthers-church-pastor-asks-where-have-all-protestants-gone-245572.html>.

*Reaching the World in Our Own Backyard: A Guide to Building Relationships with People of Other Faiths and Cultures* by Rajendra K. Pillai (Waterbook Press, 2010).

Do an Internet search on Lutherans in one or more of these countries: East Germany, Guyana, Ethiopia (Mekane Yesus), Poland, Palestine, India, Central America, and Namibia.